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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.

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.

Friday, May 16

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, creamy coleslaw, corn, peach crisp.

Faculty In-Service

Saturday, May 17

GHS Graduation, 2 p.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.

Temporary Trade Truce

The US and China agreed to a 90-day pause on most tariffs yesterday, easing tensions in the ongoing trade dispute between the world's two largest economies. Under the deal, the US will reduce its tariff on Chinese goods from 145% to 30%, while China will lower its tariff on American imports from 125% to 10%. The deal aims to allow further negotiations, with President Donald Trump expected to speak with Chinese leader Xi Jinping this week.

The 30% rate includes a 20% duty imposed earlier this year, targeting Chinese efforts to curb fentanyl shipments, along with a 10% baseline tariff applied to most countries. Tariffs from Trump's first term—affecting more than \$300B in Chinese goods—will remain in place, as will targeted tariffs on steel, aluminum, and autos. China also agreed to ease some nontariff barriers, including easing restrictions on rare earth material permits to the US.

The deal, described as an "executive agreement" rather than a formal treaty, does not require Senate approval. US stock markets rose on the news (S&P 500 +3.3%, Dow +2.8%, Nasdaq +4.4%).

Trump Visits Gulf States

President Donald Trump is in Saudi Arabia today, the first of three stops on his Middle East trip. The visit marks Trump's first overseas trip of his second term, excluding a visit to Italy earlier this month to attend the late Pope Francis' funeral.

Trump prioritized Saudi Arabia for his first foreign trip last term as well, breaking with past presidents who prioritized trips in Europe or North America. In his first term, Trump's interest in the Middle East helped lead the Abraham Accords. This visit, Trump will emphasize economic ties. A US-Saudi investment summit will reportedly include top executives from Nvidia, Palantir, Citigroup, Blackstone, and Uber. Trump visits Qatar tomorrow, followed by the United Arab Emirates Thursday.

Trump ultimately hopes to announce large-scale US-Gulf trade and investment deals. Saudi Arabia has so far pledged \$600B in US investments over four years, while the UAE has committed to a \$1.4T investment over the next decade.

Early Migraine Relief

A new clinical trial has found the migraine drug ubrogepant can reduce nonheadache symptoms—such as fatigue, brain fog, and light sensitivity—that occur in the hours before a migraine attack begins. The findings, released yesterday, suggest ubrogepant (which blocks pain-related receptors in the brain) may be the first acute treatment to help manage the run-up to migraines.

Migraines are intense headaches often accompanied by nausea and sensitivity to light or sound, affecting roughly 14% to 15% of the world's population. Many experience early warning signs, known as "prodrome" symptoms, like mood changes, neck pain, or food cravings, hours before the headache starts.

In the trial, researchers studied 438 adults ages 18 to 75 with at least a one-year history of migraines. Compared to a placebo, participants who took ubrogepant during the prodrome phase reported faster and greater relief, including improved concentration within one hour, reduced light sensitivity after two, less fatigue and neck pain after three, and decreased dizziness and sound sensitivity between four and 24 hours.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 78th Cannes Film Festival kicks off today in France; see preview of the most anticipated films. Limited series Madonna biopic in development at Netflix.

"The Office" spinoff "The Paper" sets September premiere at Peacock.

"Wicked" stars Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande to perform live at a special in November ahead of release of the film's sequel.

The Dallas Mavericks win NBA Draft Lottery for first time, will get top pick in 2025 draft.

NBA legend Michael Jordan tapped as special contributor for NBC's NBA coverage starting this fall.

Science & Technology

Weight loss drug Zepbound outperforms rival Wegovy in first head-to-head clinical trial, with Zepbound averaging about 20% drop in weight over 72 weeks compared to just under 14% with Wegovy.

Saudi Arabia launches government-backed AI firm Humain to provide a range of data infrastructure capabilities, including Arabic-based large language models; company to be funded from country's \$925B Public Investment Fund.

The parasite *E. histolytica* kills human cells, wearing their components on its outer membrane to avoid detection by the immune system; amoeba is responsible for 50 million infections and about 70,000 deaths per year.

Business & Markets

Perplexity AI reportedly in talks to raise \$500M at \$14B valuation; AI search engine also plans to release own web browser, Comet, to compete with Google Chrome and Apple's Safari.

Online education firm Chegg to lay off 22% of workforce as students turn to AI-powered tools for assistance.

Treasury Department reports the US collected record \$16.3B in customs duties in April, above \$8.7B collected during March and more than double the \$7.1B a year ago; comes after the US imposed 10% global tariffs on imports last month.

Bitcoin mining company backed by Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr. set to go public on Nasdaq through all-stock merger with Gryphon Digital Mining.

Coinbase shares rise in after-hours trading as crypto exchange set to join S&P 500, replacing Discover Financial.

Politics & World Affairs

Nearly 60 white South Africans arrive at Virginia's Dulles International Airport on a private charter plane; group is the first to arrive in the US following federal directive to fast-track Afrikaners' refugee claims.

President Donald Trump signs executive order directing pharmaceutical companies to lower drug costs to prices in other high-income countries; companies have one month to comply with the order or risk incurring steep limits on earnings.

Hamas releases American-Israeli hostage Edan Alexander, believed to be the last living US hostage in Gaza; release comes as Hamas pursues ceasefire deal with Israel, including resumption of humanitarian aid.

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Johnson places sixth at Groton Golf Invitational

Carlee Johnson placed sixth in the Groton Invitational Golf Meet held Monday. She shot a 95 on the course. Rylie Rose placed eighth with a 103, Halee Harder was 10th with a 105, Claire Schuelke was 11th with a 106 and Carly Gilbert was 16th with a 127.

Aberdeen Roncalli took first with a 367 while Groton Area was second with 409, Redfield was third with a 492 and Milbank was fourth with a 514.

The Girls Region 1A Golf Meet has been moved once more. It will now be held on Thursday, May 22nd in Volga starting at 9:00AM!

Groton American Legion Auxiliary

Memorial Day

May 19th at 5 p.m., members of the Groton Legion Auxiliary will meet at the Groton Cemetery to place flags on the graves. This is a great opportunity for young people to serve their community. In the case of rain they will meet May 20th at 5 p.m.

Memorial Day Ceremony will be Monday May 26th at noon with Todd Oliver as the speaker and lunch to follow at the Groton American Legion.

Salad Luncheon

The American Legion Auxiliary's annual Salad Luncheon will be July 9th at 11:00 am at the Groton American Legion.

The next meeting will be Tuesday September 2nd at 6:30pm with light super at 6:00pm hosted by Samantha and Jan.

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

May 13, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. First Reading of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #294 – Rezone for Timothy & Kelly Serr
 - b. Ord. #295 – Rezone for Adam Monson
 - c. Ord. #296 – Rezone for Jeffery & Tamara Sahli
 - d. Ord. #297 – Rezone for Shane Reich
 - e. Ord. #298 – Rezone for James Johnson/William Mundhenke
5. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Gaga Ball Pit Contract
 - b. Fairgrounds Updates
6. Brad Borge, Public Defender
 - a. Discuss Software Purchase
7. Judy Dosch, Building Superintendent
 - a. Courthouse Security Grant
8. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes for May 6, 2025
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Claim Assignments
 - e. Lease Agreement
9. Other Business
10. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
11. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

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

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



Tourism leaders worried soft economy will slow revenues

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

PIEDMONT, S.D. – John Carley joined about 100 other business operators in early May for a meeting of the Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association to preview the 2025 tourism season.

The mood in the room, he said, was “a little muted” compared to recent years, when South Dakota set repeated records for visitors and tourism spending.

“I wouldn’t say they were jumping up and down like, ‘Yeah, we’re going to have a great year,’” said Carley, manager of the Elk Creek Resort and Petrified Forest in Piedmont.

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism officials across the state are feeling cautious, and perhaps even a bit worried, that tourist numbers and revenues will be lower this year.

From Sioux Falls to Rapid City, officials said stubborn inflation, the rising cost of living, cuts to federal jobs and programs and a general malaise over the national economy could curtail visitor counts and spending.

“Anxiety is starting to grow among American travel consumers,” said James Hagen, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. “People are being very cost-conscious right now.”

Comments by President Donald Trump about annexing Canada is also blunting the state’s typical rush of visitors from north of the border, officials said.

A recent industry survey showed that while most Americans remain excited about potential travel this year, more than half are worried about a pending national recession, Hagen said. One quarter of those respondents said their worries will cause them to travel less this year, he said.

Hagen said when travel budgets were tight in the past, such as during the 2008 Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, South Dakota still performed well because it is mostly a driving destination that is seen as affordable compared to its competition.

“There are some things that are out of our control, national and world politics for example, so we need to keep a close pulse of what’s going on,” Hagen said. “But we can adjust our message in a heartbeat nine ways to Sunday to reach the right consumers at the right time to get in front of those consumers to inspire them to pull the trigger.”

Any reduction in visitors and tourism dollars will cause ripples across the economy of South Dakota, which has seen falling sales tax revenues in recent years.

According to the state, tourism generated nearly \$400 million in tax revenues, making up 17% of all state sales tax collections in 2024. An estimated 14.9 million visitors spent \$5.1 billion in 2024, supporting nearly 59,000 jobs, state data show.

Tourism has been on a roll in South Dakota in recent years, with increases in visitors and spending in seven of the past eight years, dipping only during the pandemic in 2020.

Worrisome hotel data in Sioux Falls

Teri Schmidt, CEO of Experience Sioux Falls, said the East River tourism outlook for 2025 “isn’t looking the worst, but it’s not looking the best either.”

Signs of market weakness are showing up in Sioux Falls hotel vacancy rates. Schmidt said year-over-year occupancy was down 5.7% in March and down 11.4% in April.

“I don’t ever remember that happening, so that’s a tough one to swallow,” she said. “We’re working as hard as ever, but it’s just not happening so far.”

Schmidt said she’s hearing potential tourists indicate they might cut back on travel or reduce the length or extent of vacations this year.

“Some are saying, we’re just not going to come because, what if we lose our Medicare or tariffs cause

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my groceries to increase or the cost of gas or my medications?" she said. "And it's not just the older generations that feel this way. ... There's a lot of young people just getting established who are being a bit more careful with their money."

New data also show soft tourism bookings in locations that compete with Sioux Falls, including in Fargo, North Dakota, Madison, Wisconsin, and Omaha, Nebraska, Schmidt said.

A tour group of 18 people recently cancelled their trip to South Dakota over economic uncertainty, and she's not hearing the usual travel interest from Canadians, many of whom are upset over Trump's effort to make the country the 51st U.S. state.

"Canada has always been a great visitor market for our state and we're just not seeing it all," she said.

'Booking window' tighter when money is tight

Michelle Thomson, CEO of the Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association, said she is hearing about "financial uncertainty" and worry over a possible economic recession among potential visitors, which is causing the so-called booking window to shorten.

That means visitors aren't locking in travel plans as early as usual, which adds to unease for tourism businesses that can't be sure if people are coming, Thomson said.

"Optimism is still very high, and people are still talking about vacations," she said. "But ultimately, the financial concerns people are having is causing some visitors a little bit of heartache over whether they're going to take a vacation this year."

Thomson said she expects visitors to come to western South Dakota, but they might be more frugal than in the past.

"After COVID, people really feel like a vacation is something that is automatic for them," she said. "They're just taking another look at where they go and they may spend a little less time and a little less money."

Spending at Sturgis rally could fall this year

Toni Woodruff, spokeswoman for the Buffalo Chip campground and event venue in Sturgis, said the annual motorcycle rallies tend to draw bigger crowds in anniversary years marked by a zero or a five, including this year's 85th.

And while bookings for the early August event are very strong so far, Woodruff said the high cost of living could reduce spending by bikers this year.

"The people are coming and they're very excited," she said. "Where we might see some of the impact (from the economy) will be more in how much disposable income they're spending, maybe less on food and beverage and merchandise."

Any tightness in spending will hurt businesses across the Black Hills and among the nearly 900 temporary vendors that arrive for the event, she said.

Woodruff said she attended the Daytona Bike Week in Florida earlier this year and spoke to vendors who were concerned about rising food costs and the tariffs placed on goods from China, where they order much of the merchandise they sell.

"Food vendors are going to have to pay higher prices and those higher costs will be pushed onto tourists," she said. "And like what we saw happened during COVID, when those prices went up, they never went back down."

Like other South Dakota tourism officials, however, Woodruff remains confident that 2025 will be a good year for the tourism industry, at least during the rally.

"The rally is really an affordable vacation option, and it's like Mecca in how people prepare for it in advance so it's on their radar and on their calendar," she said. "They'll say, 'Yes, It's going to cost some money, but I'm going to find a way to make it happen.'"

So far, so good at Elk Creek Resort

From his vantage point, Carley said 2025 is off to a good start at Elk Creek Resort, which opened on May 1. The sprawling recreational vehicle, camping and cabin resort with a pool and a lake sits a mile east of Interstate 90 between Rapid City and Sturgis.

Early bookings are above average for the resort's two big annual events – the Black Hills Bluegrass

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Festival in June and the Sturgis motorcycle rally in August.

"Those are both barometers for us, and so far they're looking good," he said.

Early season interest in the Petrified Forest has been solid, and he's hoping to attract both visitors with plans in place and those just passing through.

Carley said predictions about visitors can be gauged largely on inflation rates and gas prices. While prices for many things remain high, he said the \$3.39 per-gallon unleaded gas price in Rapid City in early May is acceptable.

His only concern is that the 2025 season might be soft in times when there isn't a big event scheduled in the area. "Those in-between periods, that's where I'd say we don't have the same level of bookings as we've had in the past."

Schmidt said she and her team continue to promote aggressively to keep the doors open to anyone who wants to visit Sioux Falls or elsewhere in South Dakota, even if it's for a shorter or less extravagant stay.

"I'm just so concerned for those businesses who live by the tourism dollar because that is their livelihood," she said. "Especially if you're a seasonal business, and we certainly have many of those in our state, if that tourism season doesn't come through with a bang, it's pretty hard to take."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit organization. Read more stories and donate at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email to get stories when they're published. Contact Bart Pfankuch at bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org.

School board sees preliminary budget, curriculum overhaul

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area school board got its first look at the upcoming fiscal year's budget and significant updates to the district's curriculum framework.

The board will evaluate priorities to fund for the 2025-2026 school year in the coming months. Expense projections for the fiscal year include about \$6.2 million for the general fund, \$2.3 million for capital outlay, \$1.1 million for special education, \$295,000 for food services and \$119,000 for OST/driver's education.

Some increases in expenses are coming down the line for the district, said Business Manager Becky Hubsch. The district's property and liability insurance is going up 9 percent, and health insurance is going up 3 percent.

The district is also facing some new expenses, including about \$300,000 for new curriculum programs and costs to upgrade iPads at the elementary school, as well as various capital projects like parking lot repairs, replacing the heat in the industrial technology shop, fixing sewer piping in the older part of the high school and upgrades to the greenhouse.

The preliminary budget presentation also included some options to allow the board to name priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget presented to the board included football field improvements, costs to create a softball program, and amounts set aside for an Educators Rising program, robotics program lead, and prom advisor.

Money has been earmarked for a softball coach position, should the school board want to start a program, Hubsch said. There would also be some capital funds, about \$8,000, for uniforms and equipment, though cost-sharing for the program would also be discussed.

Board member Marty Weismantel asked, "realistically, do we have kids for softball?"

Superintendent Joe Schwan nodded his head, and other board members discussed the growing numbers the baseball and softball foundation has had.

Middle school/high school principal Shelby Edwards said the athletic director has asked some area schools about scheduling some games.

"The longer we wait to start softball, the further behind we'll get," she said.

Teachers/board members review curriculum options

The board also heard from teachers who presented findings from their curriculum reviews. Teachers were tasked with evaluating options for middle and high school social studies, middle and high school science, and elementary English/language arts.

The group reviewing the elementary school language arts and English curriculum narrowed down the options to two, and the stronger curriculum appears to be from Intuit, said second grade teacher Anne Zoellner. However, there are some AI components the group would like to include to assist in writing and phonics.

While that curriculum comes from the same provider the district has been using, those looking at the middle school science information are looking to switch to a new provider. Middle school science and math teacher Lance Hawkins said the district has been working with McGraw Hill. However, they are looking at switching to Savvas, which is the same program the elementary school uses for science.

High school science teacher Kristen Gonsoir said that while she reviewed what Savvas had, McGraw Hill has a more math-focused science program that helps with college preparedness.

Middle school/high school social studies teacher Scott Thorson reported that the social studies teachers will "make it work, for sure."

After years of talks about updating curriculum standards at the state level, the district is looking to work with Savvas for new curriculum.

"What we're doing is difficult," he said. "We have to incorporate not only American history, world geography, things like that. But we also have to include things with tribal history and South Dakota history."

The curriculum purchased can be enhanced with information the Department of Education has shared

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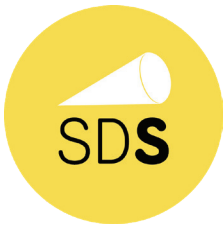
to incorporate tribal and South Dakota history, he said.

Much of the discussion included utilizing additional resources available online through the curriculum providers.

"Technology is changing the way we teach," said Shaun Wanner, social studies teacher. "Years ago we were teaching with putting things on the board, ...now with this new Savvas instructional material, there's so much more you can do on a computer with the students."



Groton Area senior Ashley Johnson received a cord to wear at graduation to honor her enlistment. She was among about a dozen students, including those from Northern State University and Aberdeen Central, Roncalli, Ipswich, Northwestern and Warner high schools, to receive a cord at the American Legion Cording Ceremony, held Wednesday, May 7 at Northern State University.



Noem revokes temporary deportation protections for some Afghans in the U.S.

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 12, 2025 3:25 PM

WASHINGTON — Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem Monday announced about 9,000 Afghans living in the United States who had been protected from deportation will no longer be shielded as of mid-July.

After the United States withdrew from Afghanistan in 2022, the Biden administration designated Temporary Protected Status, along with other legal temporary status pathways, for thousands of Afghans who aided the U.S. against the Taliban terrorist group and fled their home country. Thirteen U.S. military members were killed in the chaotic withdrawal at the Kabul airport.

About 80,000 Afghans came to the U.S. and settled in various programs that offered legal protections and work authorization. Of that group, 9,000 were designated TPS.

TPS is granted to nationals whose home country is deemed too dangerous to return due to violence or disasters.

The TPS designation for Afghanistan will expire on May 20 and deportation protections will lift on July 12. The order is likely to face legal challenges, since Noem's moves to curtail TPS for other nationals have faced lawsuits.

"This administration is returning TPS to its original temporary intent," Noem said in a statement. "We've reviewed the conditions in Afghanistan with our interagency partners, and they do not meet the requirements for a TPS designation. Afghanistan has had an improved security situation, and its stabilizing economy no longer prevent(s) them from returning to their home country."

The termination of the status comes as the Trump administration fast-tracked the classification of refugees for white South Africans who landed in the U.S. Monday at Dulles International Airport in Virginia.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order in February that noted Afrikaners — an ethnic group in South Africa made up of European descendants, predominantly Dutch — are "victims of unjust racial discrimination" after South Africa's government passed a land ownership law in an effort to address land dispossession that occurred under apartheid.

The Trump administration suspended all refugee services in late January and has resisted a district court's order to reinstate the program, along with contracts to organizations that facilitate refugee resettlement services.

Noem said that determination to end TPS for Afghanistan was based on a review from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services on Afghanistan's conditions along with input from the State Department.

The Taliban currently control the government and the State Department's travel advisory for the country is the highest level, a 4, which means it advises against traveling.

DHS added in a statement that Noem "further determined that permitting Afghan nationals to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States."

Noem has also ended TPS for Venezuelans and Haitians.

The Trump administration asked the U.S. Supreme Court in early May to lift a lower court's order that reversed Noem's decision to end TPS for one group of Venezuelans.

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

Senator again asks Interior to consider South Dakota for federal tribal police academy

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 12, 2025 2:02 PM

For the second time in as many years, South Dakota Republican U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds has formally asked the federal Department of the Interior to establish a tribal law enforcement training center in his home state.

This year's request took the form of a letter from Rounds to Doug Burgum, who served as North Dakota's governor before ascending to the role of Interior secretary for the Trump administration.

Rounds and U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson of South Dakota agitated for a regional Bureau of Indian Affairs law enforcement training center last year. Johnson had previously pushed for field hearings that would bring members of Congress to tribal areas to learn the challenges of policing them.

Their advocacy last year dovetailed with the controversy sparked by comments from former South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem Noem, who's now secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. She said Native American reservations in South Dakota were overrun by Mexican drug cartel members and that some tribal leaders were benefiting from it. She also said that unemployment and absent parents had left Native American children bereft of hope.

Leaders of all nine tribes in the state voted to ban her from their lands in the months that followed. Some have since rescinded the bans.

Noem, who said a lack of tribal law enforcement exacerbates public safety problems, worked with Attorney General Marty Jackley to sponsor an additional state-level basic law enforcement training academy session last summer that gave priority to Native American recruits.

Typically, potential Native American officers from South Dakota attend 12 weeks of basic law enforcement training in Artesia, New Mexico — 1,000 miles or more from home.

The 11 recruits trained in Pierre last year were able to get their certification to work in policing in South Dakota, but were also given the chance to remotely complete an additional BIA training module called the Bridge Training Program that would typically take place in New Mexico.

As Noem sparred with tribes rhetorically and pushed to train more tribal officers in South Dakota's state training academy, the congressional delegation pushed the BIA to establish a regional training center in Pierre.

Such a center, they argued, would allow potential Native American police officers to train during the week and return home to their families on weekends.

Rounds reiterated that point in Monday's letter to Burgum.

"Many tribal law enforcement leaders believe that the distance to the New Mexico facility is a barrier to recruitment," Rounds wrote.

He suggested that an existing training center could serve as a satellite training location for tribal policing, and pointed to last summer's training in Pierre as an "encouraging" sign that such a setup can work.

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

End of FEMA program affects drinking water, building code updates, tornado shelter in SD

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 12, 2025 9:23 AM

Drinking water upgrades for Mobridge, efficiency boosting software systems for Rapid City and a tornado shelter for Chancellor are among the South Dakota projects that now count as formerly funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

FEMA announced the axing of its Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program last month in a press release lambasting the Biden-era creation as "wasteful" and "politicized."

The 2021 program aimed to direct \$1 billion in funding toward infrastructure projects to help communities across the U.S. "reduce their hazard risk" as they "build capability and capacity."

The press release from the Trump administration's incarnation of FEMA says all awards from 2020 through 2024 are rescinded, and that all the money that hasn't been distributed won't be. The unspent \$882 million will flow into the U.S. Treasury or be reallocated by Congress, the release says.

FEMA falls under the leadership of Homeland Security Secretary and former South Dakota governor Kristi Noem.

The program "was more concerned with political agendas than helping Americans affected by natural disasters," the FEMA release says. "Under Secretary Noem's leadership, we are committed to ensuring that Americans in crisis can get the help and resources they need."

The South Dakota Democratic Party issued a press release of its own on the cessation of the grant program, one trashing Noem's agency and Trump's policies as damaging to South Dakota communities.

"Because of these cuts, city and county leaders will now have to scramble to either figure out where the rest of the money will come from, or ditch their projects altogether, leaving their communities vulnerable to disasters" wrote Shane Merrill, chair of the state party.

According to a tally of federal cuts compiled and updated weekly by the administration of Noem's successor, Gov. Larry Rhoden, \$8.9 million in South Dakota projects were set to benefit from BRIC grants. Based on South Dakota Searchlight calls to local governments involved in the projects, it's unclear if that total figure represents the amount of grant money lost, or the total project costs including other funding sources.

Mobridge water treatment

Some BRIC money was collected and spent before the shuttering of the program. The city of Mobridge got \$311,000 for phase one of a three-phase project to replace the piping that delivers Missouri River water from Lake Oahe to the city's water treatment plant on its way to residents' taps.

That first round of BRIC money paid for engineering, planning and a dive team survey, all undertaken in preparation of the second round of BRIC funding, which Mobridge Finance Officer Heather Beck said would've set the physical piping upgrade portion of the project in motion.

"We had been told by the FEMA folks that if phase one is awarded, they had never seen the second phase not get awarded," Beck said.

The anticipated grant assistance with the pipe rebuild was a boon to Mobridge's larger \$11.2 million drinking water project. Water bills paid by the north-central South Dakota community's residents are enough to keep the city "self-sustaining" for the most part, Beck said, but the cost of major upgrades can be a heavy one to spread around.

"With only 3,200 people, it takes more from them to be able to pay for these projects," Beck said.

The city's on the lookout for more state or federal funding sources now, Beck said. The city had taken in some grant funding from the American Rescue Plan Act for the wider water treatment project already, but "a lot of that \$11.2 million has had to be borrowed."

City leadership has reached out to South Dakota's congressional delegation in hopes that some of the grant funding can be restored through a program that's not shuttered.

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Mobridge's nearly \$4 million BRIC-funded project, with grant funding passed through to the city by Walworth County, was the largest project on the \$8.9 million list of grant-supported projects in South Dakota. The city was set to pay 20% of the cost, meaning it lost out on about \$3.2 million.

Rapid City building codes, tornado shelters

The project with the second-highest price tag on the state's tally of lost grant funding was \$2.6 million. That project was meant to help Rapid City cover the labor costs of updating its fire codes, pay for software that would allow citizens or companies to submit documents like building permits or developer plans online, and to upgrade its computing systems to connect departments and avoid duplicate work between departments managing development and permitting.

A letter from Mayor Jason Salamun to the U.S. Senate majority leader, South Dakota Republican John Thune, says the work aligns "with the priorities of the Trump-Vance administration."

"Our project was specifically designed to enhance operational efficiency within our local government, ultimately saving taxpayer dollars and reducing administrative burdens for both city staff and the general public, including housing developers," the letter reads.

Rapid City's share of the project was \$623,093; the BRIC program was set to cover a little under a million dollars.

The city also hoped to create an inventory of potentially hazardous buildings, although Grants Division Manager Jamie Toennies said decisions on what the city might do to address those buildings would come later.

"Opportunities are there to proactively keep the buildings from getting in worse shape," she said.

The city is on the lookout for more funding sources, Toennies said, as "we had identified this need before this grant."

The third-largest South Dakota project was \$485,973 for the town of Chancellor, home to 316 people and one large ethanol production plant. According to a map of FEMA-funded mitigation projects maintained by the state, the town was in line for BRIC support of a severe wind and tornado shelter.

Hill City, a city of around 1,000 in Pennington County, had asked for, but wasn't awarded, money for a floodplain study of Spring Creek, which runs through town. Finance Officer Stacia Tallon said the federal share of the \$167,200 project would have helped the city determine where to put replacement box culverts to mitigate flood risk, and to map out areas that might be safe for building.

The box culvert piece of the project in particular is still necessary, Tallon said, although it's unclear when or how the city will be able to move forward with the plans.

"We're still looking at them, but they've been kind of put on the back burner," Tallon said.

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

U.S. and China hit the pause button on trade war for 90 days, as talks continue

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 12, 2025 11:26 AM

The United States and China agreed Monday to lower steep tit-for-tat tariffs for 90 days, temporarily cooling a trade war but still leaving a cloud of uncertainty over businesses in the world's two largest economies.

American and Chinese officials announced the pause will go into effect Wednesday, following talks in Geneva, Switzerland, as negotiations on a final deal continue. U.S. markets rallied following the announcement.

U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods will drop to a universal 10% baseline, down from the 145% President Donald Trump imposed last month. Trump's previous 20% emergency tariffs announced in February on

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all products because of illicit fentanyl chemicals from China will remain in place, as will protective tariffs on goods still in place from the president's first term. New duties on small packages sent to the U.S. from China, valued at less than \$800, will also remain.

Fentanyl discussion

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Monday that he and Chinese counterparts "had a very robust and highly detailed discussion" on preventing fentanyl and the chemicals to make the synthetic opioid from entering the U.S.

"The upside surprise for me from this weekend was the level of Chinese engagement on the fentanyl crisis in the United States. They brought the deputy minister for public safety," Bessent said.

Bessent told reporters that overall negotiations were "always respectful."

"We had the two largest economies in the world. We were firm — and we moved forward ... We came with a list of problems that we were trying to solve and I think we did a good job on that," Bessent said.

The White House touted the 90-day pause as a "landmark deal" in a Monday press release.

China has agreed to lower its tariffs on U.S. goods to 10%, down from 125%, according to a joint statement.

Tariffs are taxes on goods coming across the border. Companies and small businesses that import items from China must pay them to the U.S. government to receive their purchases.

Business reaction unclear

"I see the president's approach to this as him putting a knife in your back and then pulling it out an inch and calling it a win," said Alex Duarte, senior economist at the Tax Foundation, a think tank that advocates for lower taxation.

"Depending on the good, the rate could be close to 55%, so the tariffs on China are still pretty high. It's hard to say how businesses are supposed to react to this because there's so much uncertainty and the president behaves very erratically," Duarte told States Newsroom Monday.

States Newsroom spoke to several business owners who were extremely nervous ahead of Trump's April 2 "liberation day" tariffs. That announcement sent markets plummeting.

Marcus Noland, executive vice president and director of studies at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said in an interview Monday the situation has "gone from OK to apocalyptic to bad."

"It's clearly preferable to a tariff that would have essentially ended trade between the two countries, but it's still significantly more restrictive than where we started the year," Noland said.

The White House released a statement Monday saying the administration will continue "working toward a rebalancing" of a trade deficit with China. In 2024, the U.S. purchased \$295.4 billion more in goods from China than China purchased from the U.S.

"Today's agreement works toward addressing these imbalances to deliver real, lasting benefits to American workers, farmers, and businesses," according to the White House press release.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Trump signs order aiming to lower U.S. drug costs to match prices abroad

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 12, 2025 11:21 AM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Monday aimed at lowering drug prices by pressuring pharmaceutical companies to align their U.S. pricing models with those in similarly wealthy countries.

"We'll slash the cost of prescription drugs and will bring fairness to America," Trump said at a morning White House event. "We're all gonna pay the same."

The executive order, which the White House dubbed the "most-favored-nation" policy, gives pharmaceutical companies 30 days to negotiate lower drug prices with the government.

If no deal is reached in that time, Trump said a new rule will be set so that the United States will have a price model similar to the lower rates patients abroad pay. According to the executive order, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. would be responsible for the rulemaking "to impose most-favored-nation pricing."

"We are going to pay the lowest price there is in the world," Trump said.

Prescription pricing for brand-name drugs in the U.S. is more than four times higher than in similar countries, according to a 2024 study by the nonpartisan research nonprofit RAND.

Clear price targets

A White House official previewing the policy in a background call with reporters Monday said the president will direct the Department of Commerce to "take all appropriate action" on countries that "suppress drug pricing abroad."

The Food and Drug Administration will also consider expanding imports of pharmaceutical drugs from nations beyond Canada, the White House official said.

Former President Joe Biden issued an executive order to direct the FDA to work with states to import prescription drugs from Canada.

The White House official said Kennedy "will set clear targets for price reductions across all markets in the United States."

Kennedy appeared at the White House alongside the president Monday morning.

"The United States will no longer subsidize the health care of foreign countries, which is what we were doing," Kennedy said. "If the Europeans raise their price of their drugs by just 20%, that is tens of trillions that can be spent on innovation and the health of all people all across the globe."

Trump said Monday the drug pricing policy would be included in the "one, big, beautiful," reconciliation bill that is the top priority of congressional Republicans. The measure is also expected to provide tax cuts and a significant funding increase to border security.

Staff on the House Energy and Commerce Committee told reporters twice during a background briefing around the same time that most favored nation prescription drug pricing would not be in that reconciliation package.

First term

The order is similar to an effort the president made in his first term, which was struck down in federal court.

The White House official said Monday's order is an expansion of those first-term efforts, which tried to apply the pricing model for those with Medicare – the health insurance program for those who are 65 or older and certain people under 65 who have disabilities – to 50 drugs.

"The expectation should not be that we will just be pursuing that same rulemaking," a White House official said. "We have moved on from that for broader action."

The pharmaceutical industry has long opposed such a move and is already bracing for the president's

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planned tariffs on prescription drugs.

More details on specific actions in Medicare will be announced later, according to a White House official.

"We will be taking action in the Medicare program if the pharmaceutical companies do not come to the table and lower their prices across markets," the White House official said.

Effort unserious, leading Democrat says

U.S. Senate Finance Committee ranking member Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, slammed Monday's executive order.

"If Trump was serious about lowering drug prices, he would work with Congress to strengthen Medicare drug price negotiations, not just sign a piece of paper," Wyden said.

The Inflation Reduction Act that Democrats passed along party lines in 2022 when they held unified control of Washington allowed for drug negotiating pricing that aims to lower drug costs for those with Medicare.

"Democrats took on Big Pharma and won by finally giving Medicare the power to negotiate lower drug prices on behalf of seniors and capping their out-of-pocket costs for expensive prescriptions," Wyden said, referring to the law.

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

OPENING MAY 2ND
CLOSING JUNE 2ND

WEBER LANDSCAPING GREENHOUSE

620 WEST THIRD AVENUE

GROTON

HOURS OF OPERATION

M-F 10-6

SAT 10-4

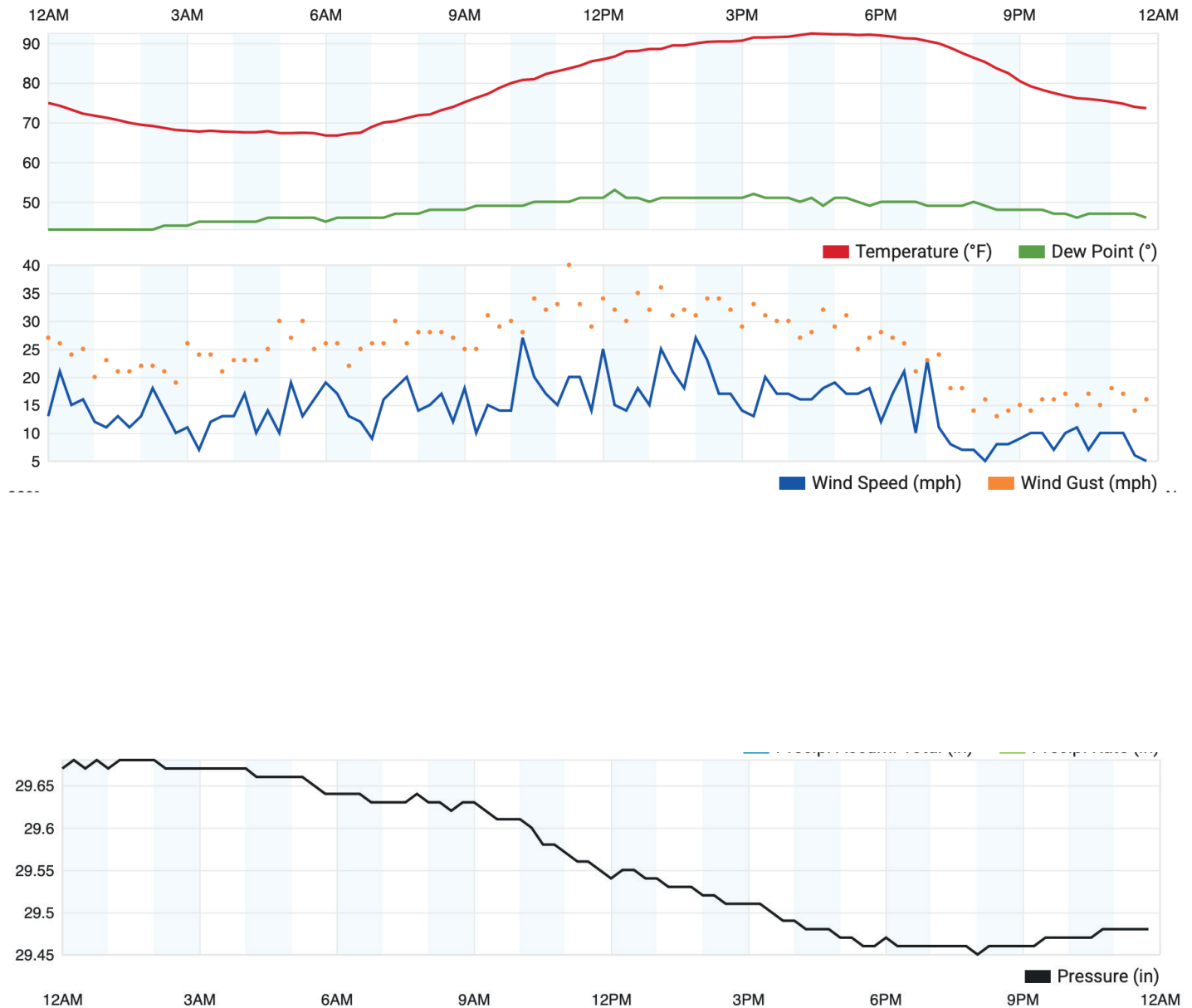
SUN 12-4



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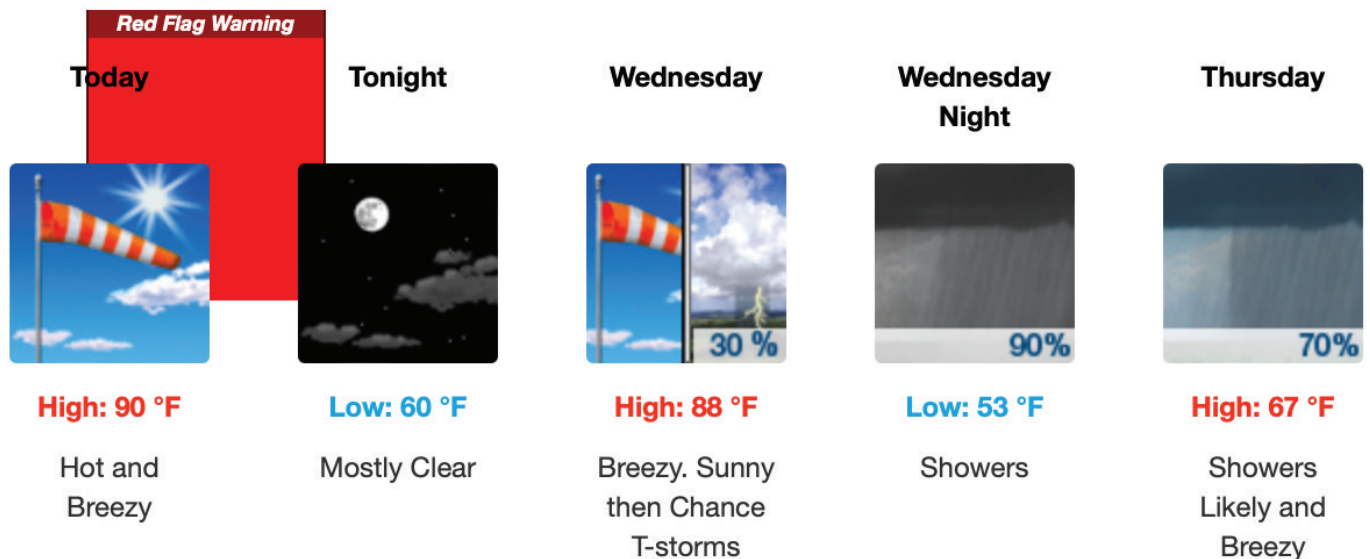
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Severe Weather Threat Overview

May 12, 2025
2:32 PM

Wednesday afternoon and evening

Timing/Location

Severe storms are possible across portions of central through northeastern South Dakota into west central Minnesota Wednesday afternoon and evening.

The threats for the area in **Yellow** are below.

Tornado Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High

Max Hail Size

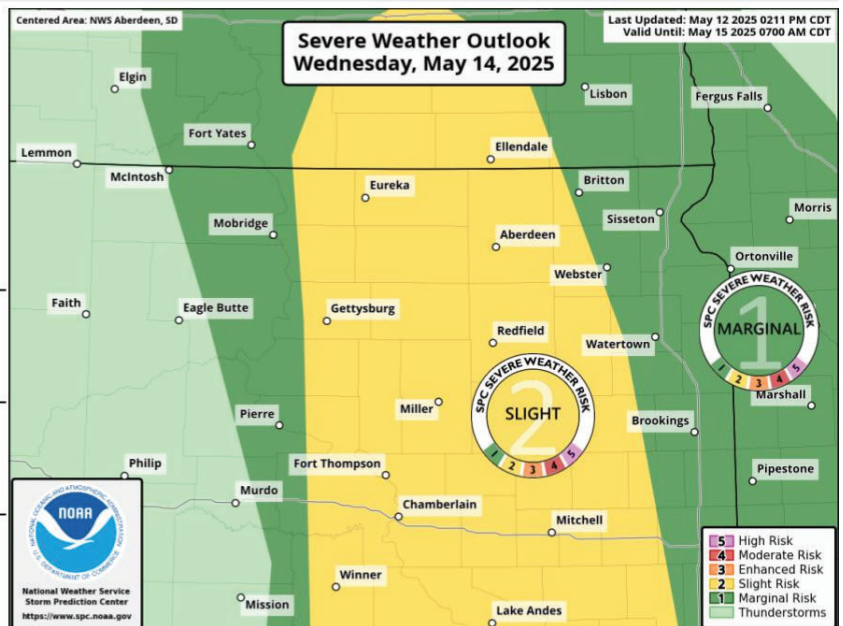
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The Storm Prediction Center has issued a Slight Risk (Level 2 out of 5) for severe weather on Wednesday. Wind and hail are the primary threats, with an isolated tornado possible as well. These storms may bring over an inch of rainfall to the area, particularly into the James River Valley.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 93 °F at 4:22 PM

Low Temp: 66 °F at 6:09 AM

Wind: 40 mph at 11:10 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 53 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1932

Record Low: 24 in 1899

Average High: 69

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in May.: 1.43

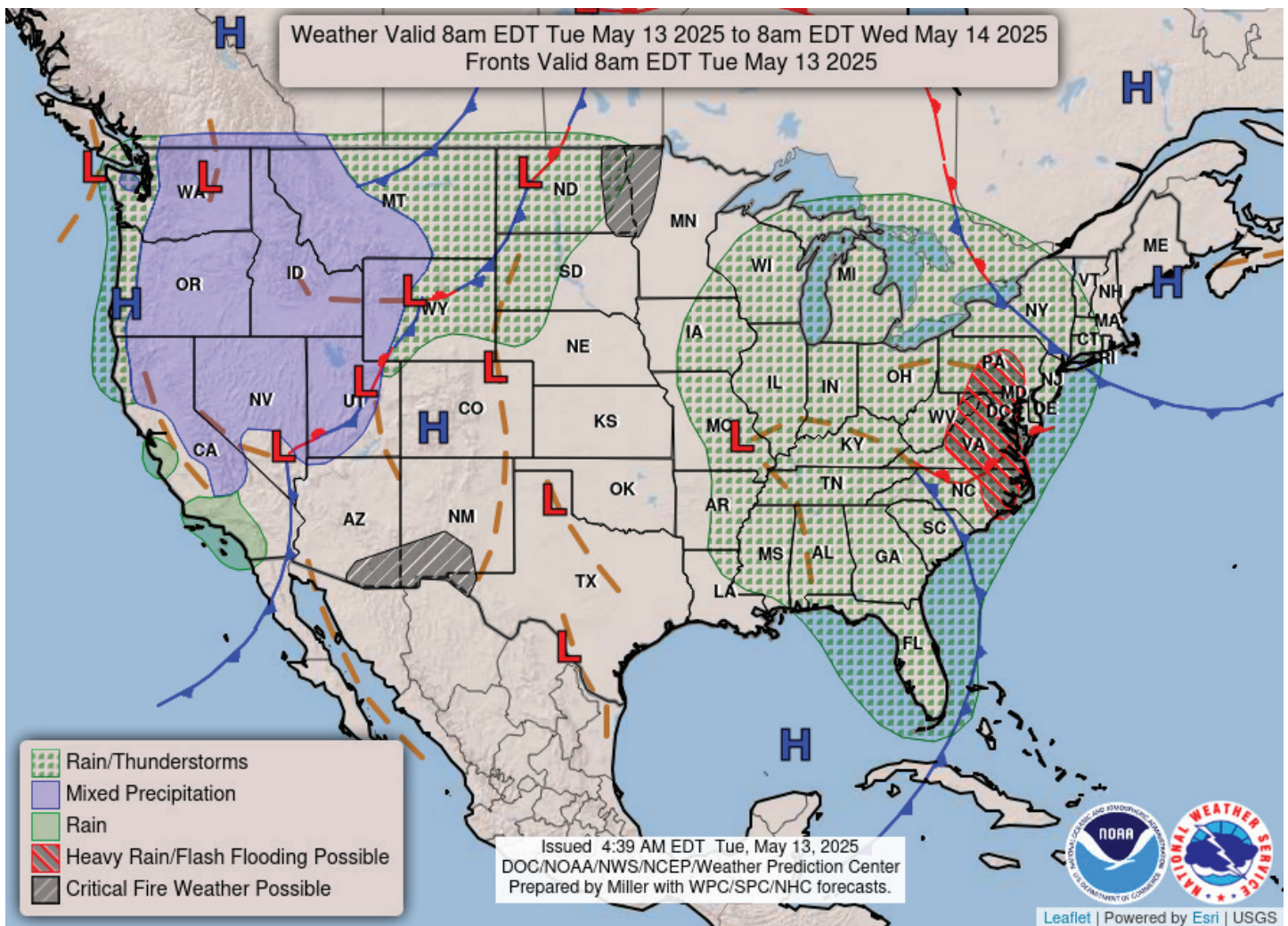
Precip to date in May.: 0.30

Average Precip to date: 5.40

Precip Year to Date: 2.93

Sunset Tonight: 8:55:41 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:00:38 am



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Today in Weather History

May 13th, 2005: Runoff from heavy rain resulted in minor flooding along the White River from south of Belvidere to Oacoma, mainly affecting agricultural land. The river rose over its banks and briefly flooded U.S. Highway 83 south of Murdo. No property damage was reported.

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 Blueders 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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Years ago my counseling practice was located in a building with a family physician and his staff. We had many productive discussions about how best we could work together to meet the needs of patients who were struggling with both physical and emotional issues of life.

Again and again, Dr. Howard Press would look me in the eye and say, "Larry, don't look at the person's problem, look at the whole person. If you only look at the problem, you will only see a small part of the person. Every person has many parts, and you must be certain that all of the parts are working together properly or the person won't work properly."

Then, he would give me his "lecture" on the "person as a complex network of systems." If one of the systems didn't work properly, he would remind me, the other systems will eventually fail.

"Think of the cardiovascular system," he would say. "If the heart does not pump blood to the brain, the person will die. It must also pump blood to the stomach, or the digestive system will fail. What good is the brain or the stomach if the heart quits?" It certainly made sense.

But, this idea did not begin with Howard. We read in Proverbs that God's words of wisdom bring "life... and health to a man's whole body."

The benefits of "walking" in God's wisdom can do two things:

It can keep us from making foolish decisions that will erode our spiritual, mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

And, if we are not well, it can provide guidance that will bring us back to a state of "wholeness" through Christ's forgiveness and healing power.

Prayer: Lord, the solution to each problem we have is in Your Word. May we read it, accept it, and follow Your ways! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture:

"For they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body." — Proverbs 4:22

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: 17 Hrs 35 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.12.25

2 8 9 20 42 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$34,030,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 50 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.12.25

9 13 15 16 48 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 5 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.10.25

11 22 24 26 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 5 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.12.25

23 45 53 54 57 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 34 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.12.25

15 16 41 48 60 21

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$106,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 34 Mins 27 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

China seeks a united front with Latin America in countering Trump's trade war

By SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China is moving to strengthen its alliances with other countries as a counterweight to President Donald Trump's trade war, presenting a united front with Latin American leaders a day after China and the U.S. agreed to a 90-day truce in their tariffs stalemate.

China's leaders have positioned the world's second-largest economy as a reliable trade and development partner, in contrast to the uncertainty and instability from Trump's tariff hikes and other policies.

On Monday, Beijing and Washington announced their breakthrough on tariffs after weekend talks in Geneva, Switzerland, where they agreed to cut sky-high import duties on both sides for 90 days to allow for negotiations.

Still, Beijing's ire over the trade war remains apparent. Speaking to officials from China and Latin America on Tuesday, Chinese leader Xi Jinping reiterated Beijing's stance that nobody wins a trade war and that "bullying or hegemonism only leads to self-isolation."

Having moved to defuse antagonisms with the U.S., Xi said China stands ready to "join hands" with Latin countries "in the face of seething undercurrents of pure political and bloc confrontation and the surging tide of unilateralism and protectionism."

"There are no winners in tariff wars or trade wars," Xi said, reiterating a phrase China has used repeatedly when referring to Trump's policies.

When Trump began raising tariffs on Chinese products during his first term in office, China retaliated by diversifying its purchases of key farm products, such as soybeans and beef, away from U.S. suppliers. Brazil and other Latin American countries have benefited from that strategy.

Also Tuesday, the head of the World Trade Organization appealed to Japan to fight disruptions to world commerce from Trump's fast-changing tariffs and other policies.

"Trade is facing very challenging times right now and it is quite difficult," Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director-general of the Geneva-based WTO, told Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba while on a visit to Tokyo.

Japan, as "a champion of the multilateral trading system" must help maintain, strengthen and reform the WTO, the Japanese Foreign Ministry cited her as saying.

Japan is among many countries yet to reach a deal with the Trump administration on hikes to U.S. tariffs, including those on autos, steel and aluminum.

The WTO played a pivotal role in past decades as the U.S. and other major economies crusaded for the more open markets that facilitated the growth of global supply chains, many of which are anchored in China.

By dismantling many protectionist barriers to trade, it has aided the ascent of Japan and China, and many other countries, as export manufacturing hubs.

Since taking office for a second time, Trump has prioritized higher tariffs to try to reduce U.S. imports and compel companies to locate factories in the United States, doubling down on a trade war that he launched during his first term.

The realities of Trump's global trade offensive overshadowed an initial burst of optimism over the China-U.S. deal among investors, as rallies in stocks and oil prices faded on Tuesday.

Speaking to the China-CELAC, or Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Forum, Xi, the Chinese leader, announced plans to build closer ties with Latin America through political, economic, academic and security exchanges.

He promised to boost imports from the region, to encourage Chinese companies to increase their investments, and said Beijing plans to expand cooperation in clean energy, 5G telecommunications and artificial intelligence. He also announced a new 66 billion yuan (\$9.2 billion) credit line to support Latin American and Caribbean financing.

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China's trade with the region has been growing rapidly, exceeding \$500 billion for the first time last year, as it imported more farm products such as soybeans and beef, energy resources such as crude oil, iron ore, and critical minerals.

Beijing's investments in the region through Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, have included installing 5G networks and building ports and hydropower plants.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro announced Monday that his country would formally join the BRI – in a vote of confidence after several Chinese projects in Latin America hit snags in recent months.

In other pledges, Beijing plans to invite 300 members from Latin American political parties to China annually for the next three years and facilitate 3,500 government scholarships and various other types of exchanges.

Five Latin American countries will receive visa exemptions for travel to China, with more to follow, Xi said. It was not immediately clear which countries would become visa exempt.

World shares make modest gains as euphoria over China-US trade truce wavers

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Shares logged modest gains in most world markets on Tuesday as the initial euphoria over the 90-day truce in the trade war between the United States and China faded.

Investors were sobered after Monday's rallies by uncertainties over the longer term, as analysts warned President Donald Trump's policies could still change.

The future for the S&P 500 slipped 0.4% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.2%. On Monday, stocks soared on Wall Street after the United States said in a joint statement with China that it will cut tariffs on Chinese goods to 30% from as high as 145%, for 90 days.

China, meanwhile, said its tariffs on U.S. goods will fall to 10% from 125%. The agreement allows time for more talks following the weekend's negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, which the U.S. side said yielded "substantial progress."

The outcome surpassed most expectations, reassuring investors, said Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management.

"Make no mistake, this was highly stage-managed diplomacy. But the optics are good and the implications real. It signals that even this administration recognizes the economic drag of unrelenting tariffs," he said in a commentary.

Still, big challenges remain in the negotiations between Beijing and Washington and many countries have yet to negotiate tariff-alleviating deals of their own.

European markets edged higher, with Germany's DAX up 0.1% at 23,588.06. The CAC 40 in Paris gained 0.2% to 7,863.60, while Britain's FTSE 100 climbed less than 0.1% to 8,609.27.

Beijing's anger over the trade war remained apparent. Speaking to officials from China and Latin America on Tuesday, leader Xi Jinping reiterated China's stance that nobody wins a trade war and that "Bullying or hegemonism only leads to self-isolation."

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 jumped 1.4% to 38,183.26. Automakers were among the big gainers after the U.S. dollar surged against the Japanese yen. Toyota Motor Corp. gained 3.5% and Suzuki Motor Corp. was 2.4% higher.

Nissan Motor Co. added 3% ahead of an announcement that it plans to lay off 20,000 of its workers as part of its restructuring efforts. The automaker said Tuesday that it racked up a loss of 670.9 billion yen (\$4.5 billion) in the last fiscal year.

The Kospi in South Korea was nearly unchanged at 2,608.42.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng, which gained 3% a day earlier after Chinese and U.S. officials announced the agreement to pause tariffs and reduce them, fell 1.9% to 23,108.27 on heavy selling of technology shares.

The Shanghai Composite index edged 0.2% higher to 3,374.87 and Taiwan's Taiex jumped 1%.

India's Sensex fell 1.5%.

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In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.4% to 8,2769.00.

On Monday, the tariffs agreement between the world's two biggest economies propelled the S&P 500 up 3.3% to within 5% of its all-time high set in February. It had fallen nearly 20% below that mark but bounced back last month on hopes that President Donald Trump will lower his tariffs after reaching trade deals with other countries.

The index at the heart of many 401(k) accounts is back above where it was on April 2, Trump's "Liberation Day," when he announced stiff worldwide tariffs that ignited worries about a potentially self-inflicted recession.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 2.8% and the Nasdaq composite surged 4.3%.

Oil prices slipped Tuesday after a rally on Monday. U.S. benchmark crude oil gave up 15 cents to \$61.80 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, shed 18 cents to \$64.78 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar had strengthened Monday against everything from the euro to the Japanese yen to the Swiss franc. By early Tuesday, the dollar was trading at 147.93 Japanese yen, down from 148.47 yen. But it gained against the euro, climbing to \$1.1104 from \$1.1088.

Economic reports scheduled for later this week, including on inflation and sentiment among U.S. consumers, could show how much damage uncertainty over tariffs has caused the economy.

Saudi crown prince welcomes Trump to kingdom as US leader begins four-day Middle East tour

By ZEKE MILLER, AAMER MADHANI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — President Donald Trump opened his four-day Mideast trip on Tuesday by paying a visit to Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for talks on U.S. efforts to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, end the war in Gaza, hold down oil prices and more.

Prince Mohammed warmly greeted Trump as he stepped off Air Force One and kicked off his Middle East tour.

The two leaders then retreated to a grand hall at the Riyadh airport, where Trump and his aides were served traditional Arabic coffee by waiting attendants wearing ceremonial gun-belts.

The pomp began before Trump even landed. Royal Saudi Air Force F-15s provided an honorary escort for Air Force One as it approached the kingdom's capital.

Trump and Prince Mohammed were scheduled to appear at a lunch at the Royal Court. Several major business executives were invited to the event, including Blackstone Group CEO Stephen Schwarzman, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, and Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk.

Musk is also leading the Department of Government Efficiency, a controversial second term effort tasked with waste, fraud and abuse in the U.S. government.

Later, the crown prince will fete Trump with a formal dinner. Trump is also slated to take part Tuesday in a U.S.-Saudi investment conference.

"When Saudis and Americans join forces, very good things happen — more often than not, great things happen," Saudi Investment Minister Khalid al-Falih said.

Saudi Arabia and fellow OPEC+ nations have already helped their cause with Trump early in his second term by stepping up oil production. Trump sees cheap energy as a key component to lowering costs and stemming inflation for Americans. The president has also made the case that lower oil prices will hasten an end to Russia's war on Ukraine.

But Saudi Arabia's economy remains heavily dependent on oil, and the kingdom needs a fiscal break-even oil price of \$96 to \$98 a barrel to balance its budget. It's questionable how long OPEC+, of which Saudi Arabia is the leading member, is willing to keep production elevated. The price of a barrel of Brent crude closed Monday at \$64.77.

"One of the challenges for the Gulf states of lower oil prices is it doesn't necessarily imperil economic diversification programs, but it certainly makes them harder," said Jon Alterman, a senior Middle East analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

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Trump picked the kingdom for his first stop because it has pledged to make big investments in the U.S., but Trump ended up traveling to Italy last month for Pope Francis' funeral. Riyadh was the first overseas stop of his first term.

The three countries on the president's itinerary — Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — are all places where the Trump Organization, run by Trump's two elder sons, is developing major real estate projects. They include a high-rise tower in Jeddah, a luxury hotel in Dubai and a golf course and villa complex in Qatar.

Trump is trying to demonstrate that his transactional strategy for international politics is paying dividends as he faces criticism from Democrats who say his global tariff war and approach to Russia's war on Ukraine are isolating the United States from allies.

He's expected to announce deals with the three wealthy countries that will touch on artificial intelligence, expanding energy cooperation and perhaps new arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The administration earlier this month announced initial approval to sell \$3.5 billion worth of air-to-air missiles for Saudi Arabia's fighter jets.

But Trump arrived in the Mideast at a moment when his top regional allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia, are far from neatly aligned with his approach.

Ahead of the trip, Trump announced that the U.S. was halting a nearly two-month U.S. airstrike campaign against Yemen's Houthis, saying the Iran-backed rebels have pledged to stop attacking ships along a vital global trade route.

The administration didn't notify Israel — which the Houthis continue to target — of the agreement before Trump publicly announced it. It was the latest example of Trump leaving the Israelis in the dark about his administration's negotiations with common adversaries.

In March, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wasn't notified by the administration until after talks began with Hamas about the war in Gaza. And Netanyahu found out about the ongoing U.S. nuclear talks with Iran only when Trump announced them during an Oval Office visit by the Israeli leader last month.

"Israel will defend itself by itself," Netanyahu said last week following Trump's Houthi truce announcement. "If others join us — our American friends — all the better."

William Wechsler, senior director of the Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East Programs at the Atlantic Council, said Trump's decision to skip Israel on his first Middle East visit is remarkable.

"The main message coming out of this, at least as the itinerary stands today, is that the governments of the Gulf ... are in fact stronger friends to President Trump than the current government of Israel at this moment," Wechsler said.

Trump, meanwhile, hopes to restart his first-term effort to normalize relations between the Middle East's major powers, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Trump's Abraham Accords effort led to Sudan, the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco agreeing to normalize relations with Israel.

But Riyadh has made clear that in exchange for normalization it wants U.S. security guarantees, assistance with the kingdom's nuclear program and progress on a pathway to Palestinian statehood. There seems to be scant hope for making headway on a Palestinian state with the Israel-Hamas war raging and the Israelis threatening to flatten and occupy Gaza.

Prince Mohammed last week notably hosted Palestinian Vice President Hussein Sheikh in Jeddah on the sheikh's first foreign visit since assuming office in April.

Hussain Abdul-Hussain, a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the crown prince appeared to be subtly signaling to Trump that the kingdom needs to see progress on Palestinian statehood for the Saudis to begin seriously moving on a normalization deal with the Israelis.

"Knowing how the Saudis telegraph their intentions, that's a preemptive, 'Don't even think of asking us to show any goodwill toward normalization,'" Abdul-Hussain said.

French actor Gérard Depardieu found guilty of sexual assault and given 18-month suspended sentence

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A Paris court on Tuesday found actor Gérard Depardieu guilty of having sexually assaulted two women on a 2021 film set, giving him an 18-month suspended prison sentence.

The actor, 76, has been convicted of having groped a 54-year-old set dresser and a 34-year-old assistant during the filming of “Les Volets Verts” (“The Green Shutters”).

The case was widely seen as a key post-#MeToo test of how French society and its film industry address allegations of sexual misconduct involving prominent figures.

Depardieu, who has denied the accusations, didn’t attend Tuesday’s hearing.

Depardieu’s long and storied career — he told the court that he’s made more than 250 films — has turned him into a French movie giant. He was Oscar-nominated in 1991 for his performance as the swordsman and poet Cyrano de Bergerac.

During the four-day trial in March, Depardieu rejected the accusations, saying he’s “not like that.” He acknowledged that he had used vulgar and sexualized language on the film set and that he grabbed the set dresser’s hips during an argument, but denied that his behavior was sexual.

The two accusers testified in court

The set dresser described the alleged assault, saying the actor pincered her between his legs as she squeezed past him in a narrow corridor.

She said he grabbed her hips then started “palpating” her behind and “in front, around.” She ran her hands near her buttocks, hips and pubic area to show what she allegedly experienced. She said he then grabbed her chest.

The woman also testified that Depardieu used an obscene expression to ask her to touch his penis and suggested he wanted to rape her. She told the court that the actor’s calm and cooperative attitude during the trial bore no resemblance to his behavior at work.

The other plaintiff, an assistant, said that Depardieu groped her buttocks and her breasts during three separate incidents on the film set.

The Associated Press doesn’t identify by name people who say they were sexually assaulted unless they consent to be named. Neither woman has done so in this case.

Prosecutor requested suspended prison sentence

Paris’ public prosecutor had requested that Depardieu be found guilty and given an 18-month suspended prison sentence and a fine of 20,000 euros (\$22,200). The prosecutor denounced the actor’s “total denial and failure to question himself.

Some figures in the French cinema world have expressed their support for Depardieu. Actors Vincent Perez and Fanny Ardant were among those who took seats on his side of the courtroom.

Depardieu has been accused publicly or in formal complaints of misconduct by more than 20 women, but so far only the sexual assault case has proceeded to court. Some other cases were dropped because of a lack of evidence or the statute of limitations.

The actor may have to face other legal proceedings soon.

In 2018, actor Charlotte Arnould accused him of raping her at his home. That case is still active, and in August 2024 prosecutors requested that it go to trial.

A titan of French cinema

For more than a half-century, 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.

Hamas releases Israeli-American hostage in goodwill gesture toward Trump administration

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hamas on Monday released an Israeli-American soldier who had been held hostage in Gaza for more than 19 months, offering a goodwill gesture toward the Trump administration that could lay the groundwork for a new ceasefire with Israel.

Edan Alexander, 21, was the first hostage released since Israel shattered an eight-week ceasefire with Hamas in March and unleashed fierce strikes on Gaza that have killed hundreds of Palestinians.

He was handed over to the Red Cross and then to Israeli forces before being flown by helicopter to a hospital in Tel Aviv. Israeli authorities released video and photos showing a pale but smiling Alexander in an emotional reunion with his mother and other family members.

Israel has promised to intensify its offensive, including by seizing Gaza and displacing much of the territory's population again. Days before the ceasefire ended, Israel blocked all imports from entering the Palestinian enclave, deepening a humanitarian crisis and sparking warnings about the risk of famine if the blockade isn't lifted. Israel says the steps are meant to pressure Hamas to accept a ceasefire agreement on Israel's terms.

Wearing shirts emblazoned with his name, Alexander's extended family gathered in Tel Aviv to watch the release. They chanted his name when the military said he was free, while in the city's Hostage Square, hundreds of people broke out into cheers.

Alexander's grandmother, Varda Ben Baruch, beamed. She said her grandson looked mostly all right in the first photo of him after nearly 600 days in captivity.

"He seemed like a man. He has really matured," she said. Reports that Alexander cracked a joke on the phone while speaking to his mother for the first time did not surprise her. "He's got such a sense of humor," she said.

Alexander was 19 when he was taken from his military base in southern Israel during Hamas' cross-border attack on Oct. 7, 2023, which set off the war in Gaza.

In his hometown of Tenafly, New Jersey, hundreds of supporters packed the streets, holding signs with his image and listening to speakers blasting Israeli music. As they watched the news of his release on a large screen, the crowd hugged and waved Israeli flags. Since he was taken hostage, supporters there gathered every Friday to march for the hostages' release.

Israel says 58 hostages remain in captivity, with about 23 of them said to be alive. Many of the 250 hostages taken by Hamas-led militants in the 2023 attack were freed in ceasefire deals.

Trump calls expected release 'hopefully' a step toward ending war

Hamas announced its intention to release Alexander shortly before U.S. President Donald Trump was set to arrive Tuesday in the Middle East on the first official foreign trip of his second term.

Trump on Sunday called the planned release "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 social media.

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

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Monday with the U.S. special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, and discussed efforts to release the remaining hostages, his office said.

Netanyahu "directed that a negotiations team leave for Doha tomorrow," the prime minister's office said, adding that Netanyahu "made it clear that the negotiations would only take place under fire."

Netanyahu said Alexander's release "was achieved thanks to our military pressure and the diplomatic pressure applied by President Trump. This is a winning combination."

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The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents relatives of hostages, welcomed the news that an Israeli delegation was headed to the Qatari capital for talks.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu, the ball is in your court," the group said in a statement after Alexander was released. It urged the prime minister to announce that he was ready to negotiate a deal for the return of all remaining hostages and end the war.

"Don't miss this historic opportunity facing the State of Israel. Prove to the Israeli public and President Trump that you are willing to take a regional initiative that transcends narrow political considerations," the group said.

Israel says it still plans to escalate its offensive

On Monday, a statement from Netanyahu's office said Israel did not make any concessions for Alexander's release and had only agreed to create a "safe corridor" to allow Alexander to be returned.

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

Early Tuesday, an Israeli strike hit the surgery department at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. Officials at the hospital said two people were killed and 10 wounded. They had initially reported three deaths but later amended their tally.

The Israeli military said it had precisely struck Hamas militants operating from within a command and control center at the hospital.

Netanyahu faces criticism for not freeing all hostages

Alexander's release created a backlash against Netanyahu, whom critics accuse of having to rely on a foreign leader to help free the remaining hostages.

At the opening of his trial on corruption allegations, 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 assert that Netanyahu's insistence on keeping up the war in Gaza is politically motivated. Netanyahu says he aims to achieve Israel's goals of freeing the hostages and dismantling Hamas.

Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people 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.

Israel's offensive has obliterated vast swaths of Gaza's urban landscape and displaced 90% of the population, often multiple times.

Cannes set to open with a 3-film salute to Ukraine and De Niro getting an honorary Palme d'Or

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — The 78th Cannes Film Festival opens Tuesday with expectations running high for what could be a banner edition.

All of the ingredients — an absurd number of stars, top-tier filmmakers, political intrigue — seem to be lined up for the French Riviera spectacular. Over the next 12 days, Cannes will play host to megawatt premieres including those of "Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning," Spike Lee's "Highest 2 Lowest" and Ari Aster's "Eddington."

Things get underway Tuesday with the unveiling of Juliette Binoche's jury, a three-film tribute to Ukraine and the opening night film, Amélie Bonnin's French romance "Leave One Day." At the festival's opening ceremony, Robert De Niro will receive an honorary Palme d'Or, 49 years after "Taxi Driver" won Cannes' top prize.

Cannes is coming off a 2024 festival that produced a number of eventual Oscar contenders, including "Emilia Perez," "The Substance," "Flow" and the best picture winner, "Anora." Asked if he's feeling the pressure this time around, festival director Thierry Frémaux said the only kind of pressure he believes in is in beer. (Beer on tap in France is "bière à la pression.")

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"Indeed last year was a beautiful year," Frémaux said Monday. "But at the very time when I was with (journalists) as the festival started, we didn't know if it was going to be a good year or not."

This year's Cannes Film Festival, the premier international cinematic gathering, is unspooling following U.S. President Donald Trump's call for tariffs on movies made overseas. While Frémaux expressed sympathy to the cause of strengthening local movie production, he said it was too soon to comment on the still-unformed plans.

"It's far too early in the game," said Frémaux. "But if I say one thing here at the Cannes Film Festival, we wouldn't want the American cinema to cease to be strong. And right now, it's very strong."

Cannes will follow up Tuesday's festivities with the return Wednesday of Tom Cruise to Cannes. Three years after he brought "Top Gun: Maverick" to the festival, he's back with the latest "Mission: Impossible" movie.

Twenty-two films will vie for Cannes' top prize, the Palme d'Or. Those films include Wes Anderson's "The Phoenix Scheme," Richard Linklater's "Nouvelle Vague," Lynne Ramsay's "Die, My Love," Joachim Trier's "Sentimental Value," Kelly Reichardt's "The Mastermind," Oliver Hermanus' "The History of Sound," Julia Ducournau's "Alpha" and Jafar Panahi's "A Simple Accident."

Binoche will be leading the jury that picks the Palme d'Or winner, along with jurors including Halle Berry and Jeremy Strong. The festival closes May 24.

Cannes is kicking off the same day Gérard Depardieu, one of France's most famous actors, is to receive a verdict in a closely watched sexual assault case. Depardieu, 76, has been accused of groping two women on the set of the 2022 film "Les Volets Verts."

In Cannes' Un Certain Regard section, three prominent actors are making their directorial debuts: Harris Dickinson ("Urchin"), Kristen Stewart ("The Chronology of Water") and Scarlett Johansson ("Eleanor the Great").

Geopolitics are likely to play a starring role at Cannes, which is beginning by screening three 2025 Ukraine documentaries: "Zelensky," Bernard-Henri Lévy's "Notre Guerre" and The Associated Press-Frontline co-production "2000 Meters to Andriivka," by "20 Days in Mariupol" Oscar-winner Mstyslav Chernov.

"This 'Ukraine Day' is a reminder of the commitment of artists, authors and journalists to tell the story of this conflict in the heart of Europe," the festival said in a statement.

Cannes will also celebrate its opening by turning to an old favorite. A restoration of Charlie Chaplin's "The Gold Rush" is to debut Tuesday, timed to the film's centenary.

World trade chief says global free trade is in a 'crisis' while on visit to Japan

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Global free trade is in crisis, the head of the World Trade Organization chief said Tuesday while meeting Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Tuesday.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director-general of the World Trade Organization, told Ishiba that she has high expectations for Japan as a champion of open markets as U.S. President Donald Trump disrupts world commerce with his fast-changing tariffs and other policies.

"Trade is facing very challenging times right now and it is quite difficult," she said. "We should try to use this crisis as an opportunity to solve the challenges we have and take advantage of new trends in trade."

Japan, as "a champion of the multilateral trading system" must help maintain, strengthen and reform the WTO, the Japanese Foreign Ministry cited her as saying.

They met a day after the United States and China said they had agreed to slash recent sky-high tariffs for 90 days to allow time for negotiations.

Japan is among many countries yet to reach a deal with the Trump administration on hikes to U.S. tariffs, including those on autos, steel and aluminum.

The WTO played a pivotal role in past decades as the U.S. and other major economies championed the trade liberalization that facilitated the growth of global supply chains, many of which are anchored in China.

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By dismantling many protectionist barriers to trade, it has aided the ascent of Japan and China, and many other countries, as export manufacturing hubs.

Since taking office for a second time, Trump has prioritized higher tariffs to try to reduce U.S. imports and compel companies to locate factories in the United States, doubling down on a trade war that he launched during his first term.

The two leaders agreed that WTO member countries should unite to restore the organization's capacity to address challenges.

Okonjo-Iweala was visiting Japan to strengthen cooperation between Japan and the WTO to maintain and reinforce the multilateral trading system, Japanese officials said.

She also was scheduled to meet with Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya, Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato and Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yoji Muto.

Trump and Pope Leo are now Earth's most powerful Americans. They lead in different roles and realms

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

The motto of one newly elected American world leader: "Fight!" The other introduced himself to the world with his first public word as pope: "Peace."

The contrast between President Donald Trump and Chicago-born Pope Leo XIV couldn't be more stark — politically, personally or in their world views. They lead in different roles and realms.

But Leo's historic election last week to lead the world's 1.4 billion Catholics as the first U.S.-born pope means that the two most powerful people on the planet are Americans. That raises questions about American influence at a time when Trump's tariff wars and "one way or the other" threats have upended eight decades of global order and sparked distrust among allies toward the United States.

The prospect of too much American power in geopolitics is widely considered one reason that the Catholic Church had not elected an American to the papacy across the country's nearly 250-year history. Until, that is, the former Cardinal Robert F. Prevost of Chicago — Pope Leo XIV — was chosen last week to be the 267th pontiff.

"The irony of Leo's election is that many in the rest of the world will view it as a sign of hope — as an American who can speak for them rather than act against them," said David Gibson, director of Fordham University's Center on Religion and Culture.

Pope Leo is another kind of American on the world stage

The shock and delight of the not-well-known cardinal's election soon shifted into robust discussion about how the top of the global pecking order could be populated by two Americans.

Trump is known to not enjoy sharing attention or primacy, as his "America first" foreign policy approach makes clear. American Catholics chose Trump over his Democratic rival, Kamala Harris.

In one apparent appeal to them, Trump posted an AI-generated image of himself dressed as a pope during the days of mourning for Pope Francis, who died April 21. The move was not appreciated by some Catholics and Italians. Trump denied posting the image himself and said anyone who was offended "can't take a joke." He insisted that "the Catholics loved it."

Even so, Trump wished Leo well and called it a "great honor" that the new pope was American.

Pope Leo, meanwhile, is in some senses a politician as well, with a calm manner and the approach of talking to his fellow cardinals in small groups before the conclave, they said. Though he was born in Chicago, Leo — then Prevost — spent two decades as a missionary in Peru before being appointed by Pope Francis in 2023 to lead the Vatican's powerful office that vets bishops around the world.

He wouldn't be the first pope to wade into world politics. Pope John Paul II, for example, is rightly credited with helping bring down communism. But Leo enters the papacy having already criticized Vice President JD Vance, the highest-profile Catholic in American politics, on social media. Leo is at odds with the administration on such policy issues as immigration — Trump's signature issue — and the environment.

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Like Trump, Leo has turned his attention to the media. On Monday in Vatican City, he called for the release of imprisoned journalists and affirmed the calling for "all of us to safeguard the precious gift of free speech and of the press." In contrast, Trump's approach to journalists has been combative, from the White House to the courts.

Trump and Pope Leo are in 'different lanes' as leaders

In early February, Leo — then still Prevost — shared an article from a Catholic publication with the headline, "JD Vance is wrong: Jesus doesn't ask us to rank our love for others."

It came days after Vance — a convert to Catholicism — discussed immigration in a Fox News interview by referencing a Christian tenet "that you love your family and then you love your neighbor, and then you love your community, and then you love your fellow citizens, and then after that, prioritize the rest of the world."

Leo, speaking Italian to thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square, described a different vision for the Church and human relations: "We have to be a church that works together to build bridges and to keep our arms open, like this very piazza, welcoming."

Vance suggested the papacy is "bigger" than politics and social media. "It's very hard to fit a 2,000-year-old institution into the politics of 2025 America," he said during an interview with conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt, adding that "it's better for all of us if we allow the church to be about the saving of souls."

In the rise of Trump at the same time as Leo, "the gospel meets the culture," said Steven Millies, director of The Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Religion and politics, he added, are misaligned because they are "oriented toward different purposes."

"What both Francis and then Cardinal Prevost were doing was being bishops — teaching the Gospel, and reminding us the Gospel always is on the side of the poor, the afflicted, the suffering," Millies said in an email. "That's not Trump's lane as a president, a reality TV star or a businessman."

How American is Pope Leo's world view, anyway?

Leo's decades in Peru — he is a citizen of both countries — can give him a broader view of humanity and power, and religion and politics, scholars say.

Beyond the obvious personality differences with Trump, Leo is expected to wield power differently — to the neediest people first, for example, whereas Trump cut off American aid. Leo did not mention his American roots during his first speech, nor did he speak in English — a sign, some Vatican watchers said, of his global priorities.

"Even though it is factually true that Leo is the first U.S.-born pope, it makes more sense to think about him as the second pope of the Americas. This challenges 'America first' approaches and imagines the region more holistically, as Pope Francis did first, with its center of gravity in the global south," said Raul Zegarra, assistant professor of Roman Catholic theological studies at Harvard Divinity School.

"All of this points to a pope that understands global leadership through dialogue instead of isolation; who understands power through service, instead of domination," he said. "It is hard to imagine a sharper contrast with the current administration in the U.S."

To hear some of the American cardinals tell it, Leo actually is not all that American in style or outlook, and his U.S. heritage played little if any part in his selection as pope. But Trump hovered over the proceedings.

Six American cardinals who had participated in the conclave took the stage at a press conference as "Born in the USA" and "American Pie" blared from speakers. Then, one after another downplayed Leo's American roots. One quoted a phrase that was going around, that Leo is "the least American of the American" cardinals. Several said they expected Leo to be a "bridge-builder" with the Trump administration — the meaning of the Latin word "pontiff."

Asked whether the cardinals elected Leo to offset Trump, several said no.

"I don't think at all my brother cardinals would have thought of him as a counterweight to any one person," said Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York.

"Obviously the cardinals were quite aware of things that have occurred in the United States, statements that have been made, political actions that have been taken," said Wilton Gregory, archbishop emeritus of Washington. But the conclave's goal, he said, was choosing "who among us" could strengthen the faith.

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Said Millies: "It's not that the world should fear a U.S.-born pope. Quite the reverse: As 'the least American of the Americans,' he is untainted by our recent politics and may seem safer even as, still, he is an American intimately familiar with this nation's better angels."

R&B singer Cassie set to testify in Sean 'Diddy' Combs sex trafficking trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The R&B singer Cassie could testify as soon as Tuesday in Sean "Diddy" Combs sex trafficking trial, as the Bad Boy Records founder faces charges that he orchestrated a deviant empire of exploitation that forced women into drugged-up sex parties called "freak-offs."

Testimony in the trial began Monday. Prosecutors told jurors that, for years, Combs used his status as a powerful executive to coerce women into abusive sexual encounters and became violent if they refused.

Lawyers for three-time Grammy winner argue that, though he could be violent, Combs never veered into sex trafficking and racketeering, telling jurors the sexual acts were consensual. Combs, 55, has pleaded not guilty.

Cassie, whose legal name is Casandra Ventura, has been at the center of Combs' stunning downfall. She sued him in 2023 alleging years of abuse. A surveillance video made public last year showed Combs beating her at a Los Angeles hotel in 2016. CNN aired the video last year, leading Combs to apologize.

The video, which was played for jurors, shows Combs wearing only a white towel, punching, kicking and dragging Cassie in a hotel hallway.

Israel Florez, a former security officer at the hotel, testified Monday that he came across Combs while responding to a call about a woman in distress, and found Combs sitting in a chair with "a devilish stare." Florez said Combs offered him a stack of money and said "Don't tell nobody."

Florez said he refused the cash and told Combs, "I don't want your money. Just go back into your room."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Johnson said Combs beat Cassie often and with little provocation and threatened to ruin her music career by releasing videos of her engaging in sexual acts with male escorts during encounters he arranged.

Johnson said Combs sexually exploited and beat other women, including a woman identified only as Jane, who Combs is accused of attacking after she confronted him about the "freak-offs."

Cassie's lawsuit against Combs was settled within hours but it was followed by dozens of similar legal claims and touched off a criminal investigation.

An attorney for Combs, Teny Geragos, told the jury Combs' accusers were after his money, adding that jurors might think he's a "jerk" and might not condone his "kinky sex," but that "he's not charged with being a jerk."

The Associated Press doesn't generally identify people who say they are victims of sexual abuse unless they come forward publicly, as Cassie has done.

Combs has been jailed in Brooklyn since his arrest in September. If convicted, he could get at least 15 years and up to life in prison.

Trump starts his foreign trip with a crush of problems — and outsized certainty he has the answers

By AAMER MADHANI and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump set out on a three-nation visit to the Middle East on Monday, a trip he had originally intended to use to focus on his efforts to press wealthy Gulf nations to pour billions in new investment into the United States.

But now Trump finds himself navigating a series of geopolitical crises — and searching for glimmers of hope in the deep well of global turmoil — that are casting greater import on the first extended overseas

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trip of his second term.

"This world is a lot safer today than it was a week ago," Trump crowed to reporters as he sized up the foreign policy challenges he's facing as he heads to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. "And a lot safer than it was six months ago."

The president was brimming with an overabundance of confidence about some of the world's most intractable problems, from tensions in South Asia to the future of sanctions in Syria to the war in Ukraine.

But behind closed doors, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim al-Thani, and Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed will be looking to get a read on how Trump intends to push ahead on resolving the war in Gaza, dealing with Iran's rapidly progressing nuclear program and addressing India-Pakistan tensions.

And after weeks of threats and cajoling, it remains to be seen if Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will listen to Trump, who is demanding they meet in Istanbul this week to discuss ending Russia's war on Ukraine.

Trump, for his part, projected confidence that the meeting will happen and even seemed somewhat optimistic that the end to the conflict is near. He floated the idea of making a detour from his itinerary to visit Turkey if he thinks his presence would be constructive.

"I was thinking about flying over. I don't know where I am going to be on Thursday," Trump said. "I've got so many meetings. ... There's a possibility there, I guess, if I think things can happen."

But Ukraine's allies remained deeply skeptical Monday about prospects for talks and whether Putin was serious about peace.

"If there is no ceasefire, there cannot be talks under fire," European Union commission vice president Kaja Kallas told reporters at a meeting on Ukraine in London. "We want to see that Russia also wants peace. It takes two to want peace, it takes only one to want war, and we see that Russia clearly wants war."

Trump sees opening in Gaza

Just as Trump was preparing to depart Washington for the Saudi capital of Riyadh, the last living American hostage in Gaza, Edan Alexander, was released.

Trump and administration officials framed the moment — a goodwill gesture toward Trump by Hamas — as a chance to get foundering peace negotiations between Israel and Hamas back on track.

"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 one," Trump posted on social media after Hamas extended the offer Sunday. "Hopefully this is the first of those final steps necessary to end this brutal conflict."

While Trump pumped up Alexander's release as a potential turning point, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was far more subdued. Israel, notably, has not stepped back from plans to expand its war in Gaza.

Netanyahu's office, in a statement Monday, underscored it had "not committed to a ceasefire of any kind or the release of terrorists" in exchange for Alexander.

"The negotiations will continue under fire, during preparations for an intensification of the fighting," the prime minister's office statement said.

Trump takes a different tone on Syria

As he prepared to leave Washington, Trump also said he's weighing removing sanctions on the Syrian government. It's an issue that's top of mind for the three Gulf leaders, who have rallied behind the new government in Damascus and will want Trump to follow through.

"We may want to take them off of Syria, because we want to give them a fresh start," said Trump, adding that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has urged him to do so.

The comments marked a striking change in tone from Trump, who has been deeply skeptical of Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa.

Al-Sharaa took power after his Islamist group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led an offensive that toppled former President Bashar Assad in December.

The Trump administration has yet to formally recognize the new Syrian government. Sanctions imposed

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on Damascus under Assad also remain in place.

Cajoling India and Pakistan with trade

Trump also took credit for his administration keeping India and Pakistan from returning to a state of all-out war amid the deadliest fighting in six years between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

The president said he and aides were ultimately able to talk sense to India and Pakistan's leadership and guide them away from further escalation by dangling carrots, while also threatening both nations with sticks.

"I said, 'Come on, we're going to do a lot of trade with you guys,'" Trump said. "If you stop it, we'll do trade. If you don't stop it, we're not going to do any trade.' People never use trade the way I used it."

The situation remains tenuous. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday that his country has only "paused" its military action and will "retaliate on its own terms" if there is any future terror attack on the country.

Big differences remain in Iran nuclear talks

The president will arrive in the region after his special envoy, Steve Witkoff, held the fourth round of nuclear talks Sunday in Oman with Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi.

As the talks continue, the Trump administration has sent mixed messages about what nuclear work Iran would be allowed to do under a potential deal.

Senior administration officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, have said that Tehran would be required to import enriched material to run nuclear reactors for civilian purposes. Trump, however, said last week that his administration hasn't made a decision on the issue.

It's also unclear if Trump will insist that Tehran give up support of Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthi militants in Yemen as part of any nuclear deal.

Whatever his negotiating frame may be, Trump seemed confident that Iran is engaging rationally, and that he will cement a deal soon.

"You can't have a nuclear weapon," Trump said of his demand for Iran. "But I think that they are talking intelligently."

However, the two sides still appear a long way from any deal, even as time passes on a two-month deadline imposed by Trump.

Who is Edan Alexander, the Israeli-American hostage released by Hamas?

By JULIA FRANKEL and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Edan Alexander was 19 when Hamas militants stormed the Israeli military base where the American-Israeli from New Jersey was a soldier and dragged him into the Gaza Strip.

Hamas released Alexander, the last living American hostage in Gaza, on Monday ahead of President Donald Trump's visit to the region this week. The militant group called it a goodwill gesture aimed at reviving mediated efforts to end the 19-month war.

Alexander was among 251 people taken hostage in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war. Fifty-eight remain in Gaza. Around a third are believed to be alive. Most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

After Hamas announced on Sunday he would be released, Alexander's family said it "received the greatest gift imaginable — news that our beautiful son Edan is returning home after 583 days in captivity in Gaza."

Alexander's parents flew to Israel on Monday. Trump's hostage negotiator, Adam Boehler, posted a picture on social media showing Alexander's mother, Yael, aboard the flight.

A native of Tenafly, a suburb of New York City, Edan Alexander moved to Israel in 2022 after high school and enlisted in the military. Hamas militants seized him from his military base after he volunteered to stay there over the Jewish Sabbath.

In a video Hamas released of Alexander over Thanksgiving weekend in November 2024, he cried and pleaded for help. Though the video was difficult to watch, his family said, it came as a relief to see he

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was alive.

Hostages freed since then have given the family more news, his father said. Some said Alexander had lost a lot of weight. Others said he'd been an advocate for fellow hostages, standing up for captive Thai workers and telling their captors that the workers weren't involved in the conflict and should be freed.

Alexander, like other male soldiers held in Gaza, was not included among hostages released during a ceasefire earlier this year. Hamas released 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others in January and February in return for nearly 1,800 Palestinian prisoners. The sight of some emaciated hostages among those freed brought fresh despair to families whose loved ones remained in Gaza.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, along with the release of more Palestinian prisoners. Israel has rejected those terms, saying it will continue the war until all the hostages are freed and Hamas is defeated.

Hamas said in March it would release Alexander and the bodies of four other hostages if Israel recommitted to the stalled ceasefire agreement. Alexander's father, Adi, said at the time he was speaking with Trump's hostage negotiators almost daily, pressing for his son's release.

Days later, Israel shattered the truce with a surprise bombardment that killed hundreds of Palestinians. Israel called the renewed bombardment a tactic to pressure Hamas to negotiate different ceasefire terms. Hamas said the offensive puts remaining hostages at risk.

In April, Hamas published another video of Alexander in which he spoke from a dark room. His family believes he has been held in Hamas' vast tunnel network.

Days later, Hamas said it had lost contact with the militants holding Alexander after an Israeli airstrike targeted their location. Israeli officials have not commented on the claim.

The Alexander family Monday urged the Israeli government to continue efforts to free all the hostages — a plea that other families have echoed since the Hamas announcement on Sunday.

"Please don't stop," Alexander's family said. "We hope our son's release begins negotiations for all 58 remaining hostages, ending this nightmare for them and their families."

Russian drones attack Ukraine after the Kremlin turns down a ceasefire proposal but promises talks

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and DMYTRO ZHYHINAS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched more than 100 Shahed and decoy drones at Ukraine in nighttime attacks, the Ukrainian air force said Monday, after the Kremlin effectively rejected an unconditional 30-day ceasefire in the more than three-year war, but reiterated it would take part in possible peace talks later this week without preconditions.

There was no direct response from the Kremlin, meanwhile, to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's challenge for Russian leader Vladimir Putin to meet him for face-to-face peace talks in Turkey on Thursday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to say who might travel to Istanbul from the Russian side.

"Overall, we're determined to seriously look for ways to achieve a long-term peaceful settlement. That is all," Peskov said.

The United States and European governments are making a concerted push to stop the fighting, which has killed tens of thousands of soldiers on both sides, as well as more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians. Russia's invading forces have taken around one-fifth of Ukraine in Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

U.S. President Donald Trump said he's optimistic about the Istanbul talks. There is "the potential for a good meeting" between Putin and Zelenskyy, Trump said in Washington, adding that he was "thinking about flying over" to the talks from his visit to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates that day.

Zelenskyy supported the prospect of Trump attending the negotiations. "I supported President Trump with the idea of direct talks with Putin. I have openly expressed my readiness to meet," he said. "And of course, all of us in Ukraine would appreciate it if President Trump could be there with us at this meeting in Turkey."

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In a flurry of diplomatic developments over the weekend, Russia shunned the ceasefire proposal tabled by the U.S. and European leaders, but offered direct talks with Ukraine on Thursday.

Ukraine, along with European allies, had demanded that Russia accept a ceasefire starting Monday before holding peace talks. Moscow effectively rejected that proposal and instead called for direct negotiations in Istanbul.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he had discussed Russian-Ukrainian peace efforts in separate calls with Zelenskyy, Putin and Trump.

Erdogan said "a new window of opportunity has emerged for peace," and claimed that previous talks hosted by Turkey in 2022 came close to success but were derailed by "war barons."

"We support my dear friend Trump's determination to resolve active conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy," he said.

West increases pressure on Putin

Trump insisted that Ukraine accept the Russian offer of talks. Zelenskyy went a step further Sunday and put pressure on Putin by offering a personal meeting.

France added its voice to that offer Monday, with Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot urging Putin to accept — though Barrot repeated the European position that a truce must be in place before the talks.

Russia's failure to join the ceasefire offered by Ukraine would bring further sanctions on Moscow, European leaders say. Germany on Monday reminded Russia of that intention.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, who met with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday, said the pressure on Russia was increasing.

"Everybody wants peace now. Ukraine wants peace, Europe wants peace, the US wants peace," he told The Associated Press during an interview in London. "Now Russia needs to make up their mind whether they also want peace or not, an unconditional ceasefire."

Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, said that giving ultimatums to Russia was "unacceptable" and wouldn't work. "You cannot talk to Russia in this language," he told reporters.

Also on Monday, U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy was hosting in London senior diplomatic officials from France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Poland and the European Union to discuss how best to fight back against Russian aggression.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said he expected the two sides to reach a compromise in the coming days that might break the deadlock over whether talks could begin without a truce in place.

Russian and Ukrainian officials are mindful of public opinion in their countries and are trying to secure the support of the United States for their stances, he said in explaining the delay.

Ukrainians react to peace prospects

In Kyiv, residents expressed a mixture of hope and despondency at the latest peace efforts.

Putin doesn't want a truce to halt the war, because "it will mean that he has lost," Antonina Metko, 43, told The Associated Press. "That is why they are postponing it. And everything will continue in the same way. Unfortunately."

Vladyslav Nehrybetskyi, 72, was more upbeat, saying that "the seeds" of a peace agreement are being sown, even though "a difficult process" lies ahead. "So let's hope."

Ukraine's government has tried to keep up the momentum for a peace deal started by the Trump administration.

"Ukraine wants to end this war and is doing everything for this," Zelenskyy said on Telegram. "We expect appropriate steps from Russia."

The Ukrainian leader said that he told Pope Leo XIV about peace efforts during his first phone conversation with the new pontiff.

Ukraine is counting on the Vatican's help in securing the return of thousands of children that the government says have been deported by Russia, Zelenskyy said, adding that he had invited the pope to visit Ukraine.

In his first Sunday noon blessing as pontiff, Leo called for a genuine and just peace in Ukraine.

"I carry in my heart the sufferings of the beloved Ukrainian people," he said.

In 2022, in the war's early months, Zelenskyy repeatedly called for a personal meeting with Putin but was rebuffed, and eventually enacted a decree declaring that holding negotiations with him had become impossible.

Putin and Zelenskyy have only met once, in 2019. Trump says that "deep hatred" between the sides has made it difficult to push peace efforts forward.

Mercury fuels gold mining in Senegal. And it's poisoning the people who use it

By ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG Associated Press

KEDOUGOU, Senegal (AP) — The quickest way to separate gold from rock, Sadio Camara says, is with a drop of mercury. She empties a dime-sized packet of the silvery liquid into a plastic bucket of muddy sediment outside her home in southeastern Senegal. With bare hands and no mask, she swirls the mixture as her children look on.

"I know mercury isn't good for your health — that's why I don't drink the water it comes into contact with," she said. "I only process small amounts of gold, so there's no danger."

But even small-scale exposure can carry serious risks.

Across West Africa, mercury — a potent neurotoxin — remains the dominant method for extracting gold from ore in the region's booming informal mining sector, much of it illegal and unregulated. In Senegal's gold-rich Kedougou region, women like Camara use the metal regularly, often without protective gloves and masks, to make a living.

Mercury exposure can cause irreversible brain damage, developmental delays, tremors and loss of vision, hearing and coordination. Once released, it spreads easily through air, water and soil. Particularly after heavy rains, it contaminates rivers, poisons fish and accumulates up the food chain.

A 2018 Duke University-led study found mercury levels in soils, sediments and water near artisanal gold mining villages in southeastern Senegal that exceeded safety thresholds set by the World Health Organization and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by 10 to 100 times.

In artisanal mining, mercury is prized for its ability to bind quickly and easily to gold. Miners mix the liquid metal into crushed ore, and the mixture is then heated — often over open flames — to evaporate the mercury and leave behind a lump of gold. The process is cheap, effective and dangerous.

"If it hurt right away, like a knife, people would stop. But the issue is that it takes years for the dangers to manifest," said Doudou Dramé, president of the Observatoire Territoriale du Secteur Extractif, an organization that advocates for safer conditions for gold miners in Kedougou. "People are dumping it directly into the river. They're burning it in the open, releasing toxic smoke into the air. It's extremely dangerous."

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining is the largest global source of mercury emissions, even more than the burning of coal, according to the UN Environment Programme. In Senegal alone, artisanal mines are estimated to release between 12 and 16 metric tons of mercury each year.

"Kedougou has rich land — very rich land," Dramé said. "Now mercury is everywhere. Our animals consume it, and it comes back to us. Even the soil is no longer fertile."

For women, a life that puts them in mercury's way

Along the muddy banks of a rust-colored pond, dozens of women wade knee-deep as they rinse piles of sediment in search of gold. Children dart between mounds of earth while the runoff pools around their feet. With little access to clean water, many women spend long hours in local waterways to work, bathe their children, wash clothes and clean dishes.

"Women are much more exposed than men," said Modou Goumbala, the monitoring and evaluation manager at La Lumiere, an NGO that supports community development in southeastern Senegal.

That exposure can be especially dangerous for pregnant and nursing women. Mercury can cross the placenta, putting fetuses at risk of developmental delays and birth defects. Infants may also absorb the toxin through contaminated breast milk.

Inside her kitchen hut not far from the stream, Camara heats a nugget of mercury-laced sediment with

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a metal spoon over an open flame. The toxic metal evaporates and leaves behind a kernel of gold. There's no mask, no gloves — just the raw materials and her bare hands. Her children stand just a few feet away, watching and breathing the fumes.

Camara said she doesn't usually handle the burning herself; that task is typically left to men. But she and other women regularly mix and shape the mercury amalgam with no protection. One of her children suffers from frequent stomachaches, though she hasn't noticed any other symptoms. Still, the risks loom.

Why take the risks? Because gold pays

"The easiest way to earn money today is gold mining," Camara said. "Subsistence agriculture will not provide you enough for food or other needs."

In Senegal, gold processors like Camara typically process between 5 and 10 grams of gold per month, earning the equivalent of \$370 to \$745 — more than double the national average salary of about \$200.

Senegal ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2016, pledging to reduce mercury use and pollution. But the substance remains widely accessible. Most of the country's supply comes from Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana, with smaller amounts smuggled from dental clinics in Dakar, according to a 2022 report by the Institute for Security Studies.

In 2020, the government promised to build 400 mercury-free gold processing units. So far, only one has been constructed — in Bantaco, about 15 miles from Camara's home. The facility uses gravity to separate gold from ore, eliminating the need for mercury by relying on sluices and shaking tables.

During a recent visit, the rusting slab of metal sat unused beneath a corrugated roof.

"People used it for a while, but then they stopped, because one single unit can't cover an entire community," Goumbala said. "Naturally, those who were nearby could use it. But for those who are very far away, they can't afford to transport the ore all the way, process it and then go back. It's extra work. That's a problem."

Camara said she tried the unit, but in addition to being far away, it was less effective at isolating gold — some was lost in the process.

Repeated efforts to schedule an interview with Senegal's director of artisanal and small-scale mining were unsuccessful. The director later said the department had been suspended. He did not provide a reason.

Senegal swore in a new president in 2024, but residents say the problems remain.

"There's a new administration in place, but promises are still just promises," Goumbala said. He believes the lack of progress is due to limited funding.

In an effort to curb pollution, authorities temporarily suspended mining within 500 meters (1,640 feet) of the Faleme River, which cuts through Senegal's gold belt and forms part of the border with Mali.

But enforcement is weak as officials struggle to stem the influx of informal miners, many of whom arrive from neighboring countries. Critics say the measure barely scratches the surface of the problem.

"The solution is to install the gold processing units within the communities — at least one per village," Goumbala said.

Even so, he acknowledged the challenges: The machines are expensive, difficult to maintain and require replacement parts that are only available abroad.

There's also resistance among miners, who say mercury is more efficient and profitable.

"We need to convince communities that even if they make more money using mercury, in the end, they'll spend that profit on treating illnesses caused by it," Goumbala said. "The long-term consequences are far worse."

Trump's mediation offer renews focus on Kashmir after India-Pakistan clash risked broader war

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — A series of military strikes last week by India and Pakistan brought the nuclear-armed rivals closer to a broader war. The possibility of a nuclear conflagration seemed real and the fighting only stopped when global powers intervened.

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Experts say the crisis deepened the neighbors' rivalry as both crossed a threshold with each striking the other with high-speed missiles and drones. The tit-for-tat strikes also brought Kashmir again into global focus, as the U.S. President Donald Trump offered mediation over the simmering dispute that has long been described as the regional nuclear flashpoint.

Paul Staniland, South Asia expert and a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, said the four days of fighting shows that "India now feels substantial space to directly target Pakistan, as well as that Pakistan is willing to escalate in response."

Unlike in past years, when fighting was largely limited to Kashmir, the two armies last week fired missiles and drones at each other's military installations deep inside their cities and exchanged gunfire and heavy artillery along their frontier in Kashmir.

Dozens of people were killed on both sides. Each claimed it inflicted heavy damage on the other and said its strikes met the country's objectives.

Trump touts a possible 'solution' for Kashmir

The fighting began Wednesday after India retaliated for last month's attack that killed 26 people, mostly Hindu tourists, in Kashmir, a Himalayan territory claimed in entirety by both nations. India blamed Pakistan for supporting the attackers, an accusation Islamabad denied, saying no evidence was shared.

The Indian military said it could again strike Pakistan if it felt threatened. Pakistan's military also warned against any violation of the country's sovereignty and vowed to respond.

Pakistan and India have fought two wars over Kashmir and the specter of two nuclear-armed foes once again trading blows over the region alarmed international community. Trump on Saturday broke news that the two countries had agreed to stop fighting after U.S.-led talks. On Sunday, Trump once again offered to help and said he will work to provide a "solution" regarding the dispute over Kashmir.

Pakistan thanked the U.S and Trump for facilitating the ceasefire. India, however, has not said anything about Trump's mediation offer and only acknowledged the ceasefire was reached after military contacts with Pakistan.

Trump's Kashmir offer also provoked criticism against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, which has insisted Kashmir is India's internal issue and had opposed any third-party intervention, arguing it was fighting "Pakistan's proxy war."

Pakistan is trying to raise Kashmir as global issue

Pakistan's position is that divided Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute and must be solved according to the U.N. resolutions and wishes of Kashmiri people.

South Asia analyst Michael Kugelman called Trump's offer "a diplomatic coup for Pakistan."

"A core and consistent Pakistani foreign policy goal is to internationalize the Kashmir issue. And that's exactly what has happened here, much to the chagrin of an Indian government that takes a rigid position that the issue is settled and there's nothing to discuss," he said.

Meanwhile, people on both sides of the border have heaved a sigh of relief after the ceasefire but some insisted a lasting peace will only be possible if Kashmir dispute is solved.

Praveen Donthi, senior analyst with the International Crisis Group, said "the two countries have to give Kashmiris a chair at the table of negotiations for a more durable peace process and faster resolution of the problem." He said Kashmiris have lost more lives due to the conflict than government forces on both sides.

"They always have more to lose ... in the absence of mechanisms that resolve the Kashmir dispute," Donthi said.

For residents in Kashmir, the dispute is not just about India and Pakistan, or mere geopolitics and diplomacy, but about survival and peace.

"Let's be honest, India and Pakistan are fighting over Kashmir. So let it be resolved once and forever," said student Shazia Tabbasum.

China's army of food delivery drivers get by with help from discount 'loving meals'

By TIAN MACLEOD JI Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — After the lunchtime rush, it's time for China's food delivery drivers to eat.

Liu Lijie, halfway through a 13-hour workday, parked his electric scooter in front of a restaurant in Beijing for his go-to choice, lamb noodle soup with a side of pickles, for 12 yuan (\$1.65), a discount of 6 yuan off the regular price.

The reduced-price meal is part of a movement that offers free or discounted meals to people in need, no questions asked.

Known as "aixincan" (eye-sheen-zan), or "loving meals," they are available at some restaurants in major Chinese cities, home to large populations of migrant workers who come looking for jobs.

"There is a lot of pressure in life since I came to Beijing to work, so eating aixincan is both economical and practical," said the 40-year-old Liu, who arrived two years ago from nearby Shanxi province.

Eager to get back to earning money, he digs into his meal at a branch of the Yushiji restaurant chain without even stopping to remove his helmet, branded with the name of the popular Ele.me food delivery app.

The movement, also known as "suixincan" or "follow-the-heart meals," can be traced back to the early 2000s. It has been featured in China's government-run media and on social media, including posts in which influencers pose as hungry customers in need to highlight the generosity of the restaurants.

Luo Shuai, a driver for Meituan, China's largest food delivery service, learned of Yushiji's discounted meal initiative through colleagues and has since become a daily customer at the Beijing chain, which serves food from his native Henan province.

"It reminded me of my hometown," said the 27-year-old Luo, who moved to Beijing at the end of last year.

Among China's nearly 300 million migrant workers, an increasing preference for gig-based work such as delivery driving over factory work has emerged in recent years. There are now more than 200 million gig-economy workers, according to government data.

For a full-time driver, the average monthly pay at Meituan can reach more than \$1,500. But only 11% of the app's drivers work full-time. Part-timers in the biggest cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, averaged closer to \$1,000 a month in 2024.

The existence of discounted meals reflects a shift in China's urban landscape, according to Xiang Biao, head of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany.

Previously, migrant workers could carve out their own spaces by helping each other, he said, but those networks have disappeared with the erosion of informal restaurants in cities for hygiene and safety reasons.

"They will have to seek help from strangers," Xiang said.

The state-implemented cleanup since the late 2000s of "urban villages" — spaces where migrant workers would live that grew alongside urban development — has increased those pressures.

The stigma of asking for free food exists in all societies, Xiang said, though it may not be an issue for delivery drivers in China, as they are already socially marginalized.

Feng Yong, the 43-year-old manager of "Doornail Meat Pie" — so named because its food resembles the round wooden nail covers on classical Chinese doors — spends much of his day kneading, filling and wrapping the pies at the Muslim Chinese restaurant in Beijing.

He said the restaurant began serving aixincan to help people in need and inspire others to do the same. A Shandong province native who moved to the Chinese capital more than 20 years ago, Feng said he has a deep understanding of being an outsider struggling in a new city.

The key, he said, is to avoid any embarrassment for customers who are in need. Some hesitate at the entrance. The staff do what they can to help and don't inquire about a potential customer's circumstances.

"We don't refuse them anything, just as long as they're full," Feng said.

Judge refuses to block IRS from sharing tax data to identify and deport people illegally in U.S.

By The Associated Press undefined

A federal judge on Monday refused to block the Internal Revenue Service from sharing immigrants' tax data with Immigration and Customs Enforcement for the purpose of identifying and deporting people illegally in the U.S.

In a win for the Trump administration, U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich denied a preliminary injunction in a lawsuit filed by nonprofit groups. They argued that undocumented immigrants who pay taxes are entitled to the same privacy protections as U.S. citizens and immigrants who are legally in the country.

Friedrich, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, had previously refused to grant a temporary order in the case.

The decision comes less than a month after former acting IRS commissioner Melanie Krause resigned over the deal allowing ICE to submit names and addresses of immigrants inside the U.S. illegally to the IRS for cross-verification against tax records.

"The plaintiffs are disappointed in the Court's denial of our preliminary injunction, but the case is far from over. We are considering our options," Alan Butler Morrison, the attorney representing the nonprofit groups, wrote in an email. He noted that the judge's ruling made it clear that the Department of Homeland Security and the IRS can't venture beyond the strict limitations spelled out in the case.

"So far, DHS has not made formal requests for taxpayer data and plaintiffs will be keeping a close watch to be sure that the defendants carry out their promises to follow the law and not use the exception for unlawful purposes," Morrison said.

The IRS has been in upheaval over Trump administration decisions to share taxpayer data. A previous acting commissioner announced his retirement earlier amid a furor over Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency gaining access to IRS taxpayer data.

The Treasury Department says the agreement with ICE will help carry out President Donald Trump's agenda to secure U.S. borders and is part of his larger nationwide immigration crackdown, which has resulted in deportations, workplace raids and the use of an 18th century wartime law to deport Venezuelan migrants.

The acting ICE director has said working with Treasury and other departments is "strictly for the major criminal cases."

Advocates, however, say the IRS-DHS information-sharing agreement violates privacy laws and diminishes the privacy of all Americans.

In her ruling, Friedrich said the agreement doesn't violate the Internal Revenue Code, so the IRS hasn't substantially changed the way it handles taxpayer information. Instead, the Trump administration has decided to use already existing "statutorily authorized tools" to help with criminal investigations, Friedrich wrote.

Federal law allows the IRS to release some taxpayer information to other agencies if the information may assist in criminal enforcement proceedings, and the requesting agency meets certain criteria, the judge said.

Still, that doesn't mean that all the information the IRS holds can be turned over, Friedrich said.

First, the investigating agency has to already have the name and address of the person whose information is being sought. Then the agency has to provide that information to the IRS, along with the time span for which the information relates, the law that allows the information to be released and the reason why any IRS-disclosed information would be relevant to the investigation.

"In other words, the IRS can disclose information it obtains itself (such as through audits), but not information it obtains exclusively from the taxpayer (such as a tax return filed by the taxpayer)," Friedrich wrote. She noted the law contains a significant exception — a taxpayer's identity, including the individual's name, address or taxpayer identifying number, isn't considered part of the protected tax return information.

Defense concedes Sean 'Diddy' Combs had violent outbursts, but say no federal crimes occurred

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The public knew Sean "Diddy" Combs as a larger-than-life music and business mogul, but in private he used violence and threats to coerce women into drug-fueled sexual encounters that he recorded, a prosecutor said Monday in opening statements at Combs' sex trafficking trial.

"This is Sean Combs," Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Johnson told the jury, pointing at Combs, who leaned back in his chair in a Manhattan courtroom. "During this trial you are going to hear about 20 years of the defendant's crimes."

Those crimes, she said, included kidnapping, arson, drugs, sex crimes, bribery and obstruction.

Combs' lawyer Teny Geragos, though, described the closely watched trial as a misguided overreach by prosecutors, saying that although her client could be violent, the government was trying to turn sex between consenting adults into a prostitution and sex trafficking case. The judge said he expects the trial to take eight weeks.

"Sean Combs is a complicated man. But this is not a complicated case. This case is about love, jealousy, infidelity and money," Geragos told the jury of eight men and four women. "There has been a tremendous amount of noise around this case over the past year. It is time to cancel that noise."

Geragos conceded that Combs' violent outbursts, often fueled by alcohol, jealousy and drugs, might have warranted domestic violence charges, but not sex trafficking and racketeering counts. She told jurors they might think Combs is a "jerk" and might not condone his "kinky sex," but "he's not charged with being a jerk."

Witnesses allege observing violence from Combs

Prosecutors seized on Combs' violence as they questioned their first witness and showed jurors a key piece of evidence: a now-infamous video without audio of him kicking and dragging the R&B singer Cassie, his longtime girlfriend, at a Los Angeles hotel in March 2016.

Combs shook his head slowly side to side as the footage played. Jurors ended up seeing it four times as former hotel security officer Israel Florez testified, including once as Combs' lawyer tried to poke holes in his recollection.

After CNN aired the video last year, Combs apologized and said he was "disgusted" by his actions.

Florez testified that he encountered Combs near the sixth floor elevators while responding to a security call for a "woman in distress." Combs, wearing only a white towel, was slouching in a chair "with a blank stare ... like a devilish stare, just looking at me," Florez told jurors.

Florez, who is now a Los Angeles police officer, said that as he was escorting Cassie and Combs to their room, she indicated she wanted to leave and Combs told her, "You're not going to leave." Florez said he told Combs, "If she wants to leave, she's going to leave."

Cassie left, and Florez said Combs, while holding a stack of money with a \$100 bill on top, told him, "Don't tell nobody." Florez said he considered it a bribe and told Combs, "I don't want your money. Just go back into your room."

Cassie, whose legal name is Casandra Ventura, is expected to testify Tuesday.

The second witness, Daniel Phillip, said he was a professional stripper who was paid \$700 to \$6,000 to have sex with Cassie while Combs watched and gave instructions, with the first encounter in 2012.

Phillip told jurors that he stopped meeting with the couple after he saw Combs throw a bottle at her and then drag her by her hair into a bedroom as she screamed.

On cross examination, defense attorney Xavier Donaldson tried to attack Phillip's credibility, mocking Phillip's former employer, a male review show company whose slogan promised "the ultimate ladies night experience."

Combs watched Monday's proceedings attentively. He hugged his lawyers and gave a thumbs-up to family and friends as he entered the courtroom. He also blew a kiss to his mother and mouthed, "Hi mom, I love you," as she arrived for the start of testimony.

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Some of Combs' children also attended, including three daughters who left the courtroom when the testimony turned lurid.

The case has drawn intense public interest, and the line to get into the courthouse stretched down the block. As Combs' family and lawyers left court Monday, some people were already lining up to snag a seat for Tuesday.

The allegations against Combs

Combs, 55, pleaded not guilty to a five-count indictment that could result in a 15-year-to-life prison sentence if he is convicted. Since his September arrest, he's been held at a federal jail in Brooklyn.

Judge Arun Subramanian has granted Combs permission to wear regular clothes in court, instead of jail garb. On Monday, he sported a gray sweater and a white button-down shirt. Because hair dye isn't allowed in jail, his normally jet black mane is now mostly gray.

Lawyers for the three-time Grammy winner say prosecutors are wrongly trying to make a crime out of a party-loving lifestyle that may have been indulgent, but not illegal.

Prosecutors say Combs coerced women into drugged-up group sexual encounters he called "freak-offs," "wild king nights" or "hotel nights," then kept them in line by choking, hitting, kicking and dragging them, often by the hair.

In her opening, Johnson said Cassie was far from the only woman Combs beat and sexually exploited.

The prosecutor said Combs last year brutally beat another woman — identified only as Jane — when she confronted him about enduring years of freak-offs in dark hotel rooms while he took other paramours on date nights and trips around the globe.

The sex parties are central to Combs' sexual abuse, prosecutors say. Combs' company paid for the parties, held in hotel rooms across the U.S. and overseas, and his employees staged the rooms with his preferred lighting, extra linens and lubricant, Johnson said. Combs compelled women, including Cassie, to take drugs and engage in sexual activity with male escorts while he gratified himself and sometimes recorded them, Johnson said.

Combs would beat Cassie over the smallest slights, such as leaving a freak-off without his permission or taking too long in the bathroom, Johnson said. Combs threatened to ruin Cassie's singing career by publicly releasing videos of her sexually involved with male escorts, the prosecutor said. "Her livelihood depended on keeping him happy," Johnson said.

Cassie sued Combs in 2023, and the lawsuit was settled within hours, but it touched off a law enforcement investigation and was followed by dozens of lawsuits making similar claims.

Geragos claimed Combs' accusers were motivated by money. She told jurors that Cassie demanded \$30 million when she sued him, and another witness will acknowledge demanding \$22 million in a breach of contract lawsuit.

She also conceded that Combs is extremely jealous and "has a bad temper," telling the jury that he sometimes got angry and lashed out when he drank alcohol or "did the wrong drugs." But, she said, "Domestic violence is not sex trafficking."

The Associated Press doesn't generally identify people who say they are victims of sexual abuse unless they come forward publicly, as Cassie has done.

Trump's plan to accept free Air Force One replacement from Qatar raises ethical and security worries

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, ZEKE MILLER and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For President Donald Trump, accepting a free Air Force One replacement from Qatar is a no-brainer.

"I would never be one to turn down that kind of an offer," the Republican told reporters on Monday. "I could be a stupid person and say, 'No, we don't want a free, very expensive airplane.'"

Critics of the plan worry that the move threatens to turn a global symbol of American power into an airborne collection of ethical, legal, security and counterintelligence concerns.

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"This is unprecedented," said Jessica Levinson, a constitutional law expert at Loyola Law School. "We just haven't tested these boundaries before."

Trump tried to tamp down some of the opposition by saying he wouldn't fly around in the gifted Boeing 747 when his term ends. Instead, he said, the \$400 million plane would be donated to a future presidential library, similar to how the Boeing 707 used by President Ronald Reagan was decommissioned and put on display as a museum piece.

"It would go directly to the library after I leave office," Trump said. "I wouldn't be using it."

However, that did little to quell the controversy over the plane. Democrats are united in outrage, and even some of the Republican president's allies are worried. Laura Loomer, an outspoken conspiracy theorist who has tried to purge disloyal officials from the administration, wrote on social media that she would "take a bullet for Trump" but said she's "so disappointed."

Congressional Republicans have also expressed some doubts about the plan.

"My view is that it would be better if Air Force One were a big, beautiful jet made in the United States of America. That would be ideal," said Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley.

And Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul flatly said he was a "No" on whether Trump should accept the plane. When asked to elaborate on his reasoning, Paul replied: "I don't think it looks good or smells good." The Republican shrugged when asked by a reporter if there were "constitutional questions."

Trump will likely face persistent questions about the plane in the coming days as he travels to the Middle East, including a stop in Qatar.

Why does Trump want the Qatari plane?

The two planes currently used as Air Force One have been flying for nearly four decades, and Trump is eager to replace them. During his first term, he displayed a model of a new jumbo jet in the Oval Office, complete with a revised paint scheme that echoed the red, white and dark blue design of his personal plane.

Boeing has been working on retrofitting 747s that were originally built for a now-defunct Russian airliner. But the program has faced nearly a decade of delays — with perhaps more on the way — from a series of issues, including a critical subcontractor's bankruptcy and the difficulty of finding and retaining qualified staff who could be awarded high-level security clearances.

The new planes aren't due to be finished until near the end of Trump's term, and he's out of patience. He has described the situation as "a total mess," and he has complained that Air Force One isn't as nice as the planes flown by some Arab leaders.

"It's not even the same ballgame," he said.

Trump said Qatar, which hosts the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East, offered a replacement plane that could be used while the government was waiting for Boeing to finish.

"We give free things out," he said. "We'll take one, too."

He bristled at suggestions that he should turn down the plane, comparing the potential gift to favors on the golf course.

"When they give you a putt, you pick it up and you walk to the next hole and you say, 'Thank you very much,'" he said.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota expressed skepticism.

"I understand his frustration. They're way behind schedule on delivering the next Air Force One," the Republican told reporters. "Whether or not this is the right solution or not, I don't know."

Mississippi GOP Sen. Roger Wicker said that any plane "needs to be gifted to the United States of America."

He added that it whether the U.S. should accept a Qatari plane warranted further inquiry. "There'll be some questions about that, and this issue, I expect, will be vetted by the time a decision needs to be made."

Will the new plane be secure?

The Qatari plane has been described as a "palace in the sky," complete with luxurious accommodations and top-of-the-line finishes.

But security is the primary concern when it comes to presidential travel. The current Air Force One planes were built from scratch near the end of the Cold War. They are hardened against the effects of a nuclear blast and include a range of security features, such as anti-missile countermeasures and an onboard op-

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erating room. They are also equipped with air-to-air refueling capabilities for contingencies, though it has never been utilized with a president on board.

A former U.S. official briefed on the Air Force One replacement project said that while it would be possible to add some features to the Qatari jet, there was no way to add the full suite of capabilities to the plane on a tight timetable.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive program, said it would be a risk for presidents to fly on such a jet.

One of the most important features of Air Force One is the communications capabilities. Presidents can use the plane as a flying Situation Room, allowing them to respond to crises anywhere on the globe.

However, on Sept. 11, 2001, Republican President George W. Bush was frustrated by communications issues and ordered up massive technology upgrades over subsequent years to improve the president's ability to monitor events and communicate with people around the world.

The new ones under development by Boeing are being stripped down so workers can replace the standard wiring with shielded cabling. They're also modifying the jet with an array of classified security measures and communications capabilities.

Because of the high standards for ensuring a president can communicate clearly and securely, there are fears that Trump would be compromising safety by rushing to modify the Qatari jet.

"Disassembling and evaluating the plane for collection/spy devices will take years," William Evanina, who served as director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center during Trump's first term, wrote on social media.

He said the plane should be considered nothing more than "a gracious presidential museum piece."

Is any of this legal or ethical?

Even for a president who has blurred traditional lines around public service and personal gain, Trump's plans to receive a jumbo jet as a gift has rattled Washington.

The Constitution prohibits federal officials from accepting things of value, or "emoluments," from foreign governments without congressional approval.

"This is a classic example of what the founders worried about," said Richard Painter, a law professor at the University of Minnesota and former White House ethics chief under Bush. "But I don't think the founders anticipated it would get this bad."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News on Monday that the details of the donation are "still being worked out" but would be done "in full compliance with the law."

She dismissed the idea that Qatar wanted to influence Trump.

"They know President Trump, and they know he only works with the interests of the American public in mind," she said.

Trump faced a legal fight over emoluments during his first term, when he opened the doors of his D.C. hotel to lobbyists, business executives and diplomats. His lawyers argued that the founders didn't intend to ban transactions representing an exchange of a service like hotel space for money, only outright gifts. But some ethics lawyers disagreed, and it's not clear if Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines and other countries were paying full price or more for when they used the hotel.

In his second term, Trump's family business has been very busy overseas. In December, it struck a deal for two Trump-branded real estate projects in Riyadh with a Saudi firm that two years earlier it had partnered with for a Trump golf resort and villas in Oman. And in Qatar, the Trump Organization announced last month another Trump branded resort along the coast.

Four Democratic senators on the Foreign Relations Committee — Brian Schatz of Hawaii, Chris Coons of Delaware, Cory Booker of New Jersey and Chris Murphy of Connecticut — issued a statement saying Trump's plan "creates a clear conflict of interest, raises serious national security questions, invites foreign influence, and undermines public trust in our government."

"No one — not even the president — is above the law," they said.

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What to know about food poisoning illnesses caused by listeria

By The Associated Press undefined

A listeria outbreak linked to ready-to-eat sandwiches and snacks has sickened at least 10 people in the U.S., and a producer is voluntarily recalling dozens of products sold to retail stores, hospitals, hotels, airports and airlines, federal officials said.

The products were made by Fresh & Ready Foods LLC and were sold in Arizona, California, Nevada and Washington.

Those who fell ill and were hospitalized were in California and Nevada. The outbreak has been simmering for many months: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said cases date to December 2023.

Listeria poisoning is caused by a particularly resilient type of bacteria that can survive and grow even during refrigeration. About 1,600 people are infected with it — and 260 die — each year in the U.S., according to the CDC.

Here's what you need to know:

What was recalled?

The voluntary recall covers more than 80 specific products distributed between April 18 and April 25. The products have "Use By" dates from April 22 to May 19.

Brand names include: Fresh & Ready Foods, City Point Market Fresh Food to Go and Fresh Take Crave Away.

Federal officials say anyone with the products should throw them away or return them. They also suggest cleaning any surfaces that touched the recalled foods.

Where does listeria come from?

Listeria bacteria thrive in moist environments, including soil and water and decaying vegetation and are carried by some animals.

The hardy germs are typically spread when food is harvested, processed, transported or stored in places that are contaminated with the bacteria.

When the bacteria get into a food processing plant, they can be tough to eradicate.

What are the symptoms of listeria?

Foods contaminated with the bacteria can make people sick. Symptoms can be mild and include fever, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. More serious illness can include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and convulsions.

Listeria poisoning is tricky because symptoms can start quickly, within a few hours or days after eating contaminated food. But they also can take weeks or up to three months to show up.

Those most vulnerable to getting sick include the very young, people older than 65 and those with weakened immune systems or who are pregnant.

Does cooking kill listeria?

Listeria can survive and grow in refrigerated food. It can be killed by heating foods to "steaming hot," or 165 degrees Fahrenheit (74 degrees Celsius), the CDC says. But that's not always possible — or palatable — for foods that are made to be eaten cold.

Because listeria can survive under refrigeration, it's important to clean and sanitize any surfaces, including refrigerator drawers and shelves, that may have come in contact with the products.

More than 100 killed in jihadi attack in northern Burkina Faso

By BABA AHMED and WILSON MCMAKIN Associated Press

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) — An attack by a jihadi group in northern Burkina Faso killed more than 100 people, mostly soldiers, an aid worker and local residents said Monday.

The attack on several locations, including a military base and the long besieged strategic town of Djibo, occurred early Sunday, said an aid worker actively involved in dialogues in Burkina Faso's hard-hit communities. A student from the area said her father was among those killed.

Both individuals spoke to The Associated Press on Monday on the condition of anonymity due to fear

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of reprisals.

A jihadi group aligned with Al-Qaida known as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin, or JNIM, which is active in the Sahel region, claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack.

Run by a military junta, the landlocked nation of 23 million has been among the worst hit by the security crisis in Africa's Sahel region, known as the global hot spot for violent extremism. About half of Burkina Faso is outside of government control as a result of the violence that contributed to two coups in 2022. Government security forces have also been accused of extrajudicial killings.

The aid worker, as well as Charlie Werb, an independent analyst focusing on the Sahel, recounted how Sunday's attack began simultaneously in different locations at 6 a.m. local time on Sunday.

"JNIM fighters attacked eight localities simultaneously to disperse the Burkina Faso air force. The main attack occurred in Djibo, where JNIM fighters first took control of all the town's entry checkpoints before attacking the military camps, particularly the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit's camp," said the aid worker.

Werb, who studied videos posted online, said the attackers spent several hours in the areas without air support from Burkina Faso's military, unlike similar attacks on Djibo in the past, when security forces have successfully repelled the extremists.

The latest attack shows JNIM's escalating power and widening reach in Burkina Faso, said Wassim Nasr, a Sahel specialist and senior research fellow at the Soufan Center security think tank. "The fact that Djibo was targeted confirms the extent of JNIM's freedom of movement within Burkina Faso."

Analysts have warned that the junta's strategy of military escalation, including the mass recruitment of civilians into poorly trained militias, has worsened inter-ethnic tensions.

Dow leaps 1,100 points and S&P 500 rallies 3.3% following a 90-day truce in the US-China trade war

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks rallied Monday after China and the United States announced a 90-day truce in their trade war. Each of the world's two largest economies agreed to take down temporarily most of its tariffs against the other, which economists had warned could start a recession and create shortages on U.S. store shelves.

The S&P 500 shot up 3.3% to pull back within 5% of its all-time high set in February. It's been roaring higher since falling nearly 20% below the mark last month on hopes that President Donald Trump will lower his tariffs after reaching trade deals with other countries. The index at the heart of many 401(k) accounts is back above where it was on April 2, Trump's "Liberation Day," when he announced stiff worldwide tariffs that ignited worries about a potentially self-inflicted recession.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 1,160 points, or 2.8%, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 4.3%.

It wasn't just stocks rising following what one analyst called a "best case scenario" for US-China tariff talks, which reduced tariffs by more than what many investors expected.

Crude oil prices climbed because a global economy less burdened by tariffs will likely burn more fuel. The value of the U.S. dollar strengthened against everything from the euro to the Japanese yen to the Swiss franc. And Treasury yields jumped on expectations that the Federal Reserve won't have to cut interest rates as deeply this year as earlier expected in order to protect the economy from the damage of tariffs.

Gold's price fell, meanwhile, as investors felt less need to buy something safe.

The move announced Monday could add 0.4 percentage points to the U.S. economy's growth this year, according to Jonathan Pingle, U.S. chief economist at UBS. That's a significant chunk, and every bit counts when the U.S. economy shrank at a 0.3% annual rate in the first three months of the year.

The United States said in a joint statement that it will cut tariffs on Chinese goods to 30% from as high as 145%. China, meanwhile, said its tariffs on U.S. goods will fall to 10% from 125%. The 90-day pause gives time for more talks following the weekend's negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, which the U.S. side said yielded "substantial progress."

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The 90-day reprieve also comes at a vital time for the economy, allowing retailers and suppliers to “ensure that shelves are stocked for the all important back-to-school and holiday shopping seasons,” said Carol Schleif, chief market strategist at BMO Private Wealth.

Of course, conditions could change quickly again, as Wall Street has seen all too often in Trump’s on-again-off-again rollout of tariffs. Big challenges still remain in the negotiations between China and the United States, and there is “no reason to believe that this will be anything other than a slow process,” said Scott Wren, senior global market strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

The U.S.-China pause followed a deal the United States announced last week with the United Kingdom that will bring down tariffs on many U.K. imports to 10% but will still require weeks to finalize all the details.

Economic reports scheduled for later this week, including on inflation and sentiment among U.S. consumers, could also show how much damage the U.S. economy has already taken because of uncertainty about tariffs. But the mood was nevertheless ebullient across Wall Street on Monday, and gains were widespread.

Stocks of smaller companies rallied. Their livelihoods can be more dependent on the strength of the U.S. economy than their bigger and more insulated rivals, and the smaller stocks in the Russell 2000 index jumped 3.4%.

Apparel companies were also strong. Lululemon leaped 8.7%, for example. More than a quarter of its fabric came from mainland China last fiscal year, and a reduction in tariffs would mean a less-tough decision on whether to pass along increases to costs to customers or to eat them through reduced profits. Nike rose 7.3%.

Travel companies jumped on hopes that lower tariffs would encourage more customers to feel comfortable enough to spend on trips. Carnival rose 9.6%, and Delta Air Lines climbed 5.8%.

Many retailers rose because much of what they sell comes from China and elsewhere in Asia. Best Buy jumped 6.6%, and Amazon rallied 8.1%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 184.28 points to 5,844.19. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 1,160.72 to 42,410.10, and the Nasdaq composite leaped 779.43 to 18,708.34.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across most of Europe and Asia, though often by less than the U.S. market.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury jumped to 4.47% from 4.37% late Friday.

The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for what the Fed will do with interest rates, jumped even more. It rose to 4.00% from 3.88% as traders ratcheted back expectations for how many cuts to interest rates the Fed may deliver this year.

Many traders are now betting on just two cuts this year, according to data from CME Group.

Trump administration welcomes 59 white South Africans as refugees

By MATTHEW LEE, REBECCA SANTANA and MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

DULLES, Virginia (AP) — The Trump administration on Monday welcomed a group of 59 white South Africans as refugees, saying they face discrimination and violence at home, which the country’s government strongly denies.

The decision to admit the Afrikaners also has raised questions from refugee advocates about why they were admitted when the Trump administration has suspended efforts to resettle people fleeing war and persecution who have gone through years of vetting.

Many in the group from South Africa — including toddlers and other small children, even one walking barefoot in pajamas — held small American flags as two officials welcomed them to the United States in an airport hangar outside Washington. The South Africans were then leaving on other flights to various U.S. destinations.

A group of 49 Afrikaners had been expected, but the State Department said Monday that 59 had arrived.

“I want you all to know that you are really welcome here and that we respect what you have had to deal with these last few years,” Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau said.

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President Donald Trump told reporters earlier Monday that he's admitting them as refugees because of the "genocide that's taking place." He said that in post-apartheid South Africa, white farmers are "being killed" and he plans to address the issue with South African leadership next week.

That characterization has been strongly disputed by South Africa's government, experts and even the Afrikaner group AfriForum, which says farm attacks are not being taken seriously by the government.

South Africa's government says the U.S. allegations that the white minority Afrikaners are being persecuted are "completely false," the result of misinformation and an inaccurate view of the country. It cited the fact that Afrikaners are among the richest and most successful people in the country.

The view from South Africa

Speaking at a business conference in Ivory Coast, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said Monday that he spoke with Trump recently and told him his administration had been fed false information by groups who were casting white people as victims because of efforts to right the historical wrongs of colonialism and South Africa's previous apartheid system of forced racial segregation, which oppressed the Black majority.

"I had a conversation with President Trump on the phone and he asked me, 'What's going on down there?' and I told him that what you are being told by those people who are opposed to transformation back in South Africa is not true," Ramaphosa said.

Afrikaners make up South Africa's largest white group and were the leaders of the apartheid government, which brutally enforced racial segregation for nearly 50 years before ending it in 1994. While South Africa has been largely successful in reconciling its many races, tensions between some Black political parties and some Afrikaner groups have remained.

The Trump administration has falsely claimed white South Africans are having their land taken away by the government under a new expropriation law that promotes "racially discriminatory property confiscation." No land has been expropriated.

Trump has promoted the allegation that white farmers in South Africa are being killed on a large scale as far back as 2018 during his first term.

Conservative commentators have promoted the allegation about a genocide against white farmers, and South African-born Trump ally Elon Musk has posted on social media that some politicians in the country are "actively promoting white genocide."

South Africa has extremely high levels of violent crime, and white farmers have been killed in rural Afrikaner communities. It has been a problem for decades. The government condemns those killings but says they are part of the country's problems with crime.

"There is no data at all that backs that there is persecution of white South Africans or white Afrikaners in particular who are farmers," South African Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola said Monday. "White farmers get affected by crime just like any other South Africans who do get affected by crime. So this is not factual, it is without basis."

Trump administration says white South Africans have been targeted

Landau said many of those who arrived Monday experienced "threatening invasions of their homes, their farms and a real lack of interest or success of the government in doing anything about this situation."

They all had met stringent vetting standards, including the ability to assimilate into American culture, Landau said. Critics of the refugee program suggest that refugees aren't properly vetted, though supporters say they go through some of the strictest vetting of anyone seeking to come to America.

Trump indefinitely suspended the refugee resettlement program — which historically had widespread bipartisan support — on his first day in office. A month later, he announced a plan to resettle white South African farmers and their families as refugees.

Supporters of the refugee program question how the administration can justify admitting this small group while keeping out others from conflict zones around the world.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a New Hampshire Democrat, called it an effort to "rewrite history."

"The Administration must clarify why these individuals qualify for refugee status and resettlement in the U.S. and why they have been prioritized over refugees like Afghans, Burmese Rohingya and Sudanese who

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have fled their homes due to conflict and persecution," she said in a statement Monday.

Who can come from South Africa under Trump's order

According to the U.S. Embassy in South Africa, applicants have to be South African citizens who are of Afrikaner ethnicity or a member of a racial minority, and they have to be able to show a history of or a fear of persecution.

Afrikaners, who are the descendants of mainly Dutch and French colonial settlers, number around 2.7 million among South Africa's population of 62 million, which is more than 80% Black.

The U.S. refugee program was created by Congress in 1980, and groups have sued to restart it after Trump's halt.

Traditionally, to qualify as a refugee, applicants must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees are distinct from asylum-seekers because refugees must be outside of the U.S. to qualify.

A network of resettlement agencies generally helps refugees settle in their new homes, and they get 90 days of federal assistance for things like rent. The Episcopal Church's migration service, however, is refusing a directive from the federal government to help resettle the white South Africans, citing the church's longstanding "commitment to racial justice and reconciliation."

US businesses that rely on Chinese imports express relief and anxiety over tariff pause

By MAE ANDERSON and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — American businesses that rely on Chinese goods reacted with muted relief Monday after the U.S. and China agreed to pause their exorbitant tariffs on each other's products for 90 days.

Importers still face relatively high tariffs, however, as well as uncertainty over what will happen in the coming weeks and months. Many businesses delayed or canceled orders after President Donald Trump last month put a 145% tariff on items made in China.

Now, they're concerned a mad scramble to get goods onto ships will lead to bottlenecks and increased shipping costs. The temporary truce was announced as retailers and their suppliers are looking to finalize their plans and orders for the holiday shopping season.

"The timing couldn't have been any worse with regard to placing orders, so turning on a dime to pick back up with customers and our factories will put us severely behind schedule," said WS Game Company owner Jonathan Silva, whose Massachusetts business creates deluxe versions of Monopoly, Scrabble and other Hasbro board games.

Silva said the 30% tariff on Chinese imports still is a step in the right direction. He has nine containers of products waiting at factories in China and said he would work to get them exported at the lower rate.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the U.S. agreed to lower its 145% tariff rate on Chinese goods by 115 percentage points, while China agreed to lower its retaliatory 125% rate on U.S. goods by the same amount. The two sides plan to continue negotiations on a longer-term trade deal.

National Retail Federation President and CEO Matthew Shay said the move was a "critical first step to provide some short-term relief for retailers and other businesses that are in the midst of ordering merchandise for the winter holiday season."

The news sent the stock market and the value of the dollar soaring, a lift that eluded business owners confronting another dizzying shift.

Marc Rosenberg, founder and CEO of The Edge Desk in Deerfield, Illinois, invested millions of dollars to develop a line of \$1,000 ergonomic chairs but delayed production in China that was set to begin this month, hoping for a tariff reprieve.

Rosenberg said it was good U.S.-China trade talks were ongoing but that he thinks the 90-day window is "beyond dangerous" since shipping delays could result in his chairs still being en route when the temporary deal ends.

"There needs to be a plan in place that lasts a year or two so people can plan against it," he said.

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Jeremy Rice, the co-owner of a Lexington, Kentucky, home-décor shop that specializes in artificial flower arrangements, said the limited pause makes him unsure how to approach pricing. About 90% of the flowers House uses are made in China. He stocked up on inventory and then paused shipments in April.

"Our vendors are still kind of running around juggling, not knowing what they're gonna do," Rice said. "We ordered in what we could pre-tariff and so there's stock here, but we're getting to the point now where there's things that are gone and we're going to have to figure out how we're gonna approach it."

"There's no relief," he added. "It's just kind of like you're just waiting for the next shoe to drop."

Before Trump started the latest U.S. tariff battle with China, Miami-based game company All Things Equal was preparing to launch its first electronic board game. Founder Eric Poses said he spent two years developing The Good News Is..., a fill-in-the-blank game covering topics like politics and sports. He plowed \$120,000 into research and development.

When the president in February added a 20% tariff on products made in China, Poses started removing unessential features such as embossed packaging. When the rate went up to 145%, he faced two options: leave the goods in China or send them to bonded warehouses, a storage method which allow importers to defer duty payments for up to five years.

Poses contacted his factories in China on Monday to arrange the deferred shipments, but with his games still subject to a 30% tariff, he said he would have to cut back on marketing to keep the electronic game priced at \$29.99. With other businesses also in a rush to get their products, he said he is worried he won't be able to his into shipping containers and that if he does, the cost will be much more expensive.

"It's very hard to plan because if you want to go back to production in a couple of months, then you're worried about what will the tariff rate be when it hits the U.S. ports after that 90-day period," Poses said.

Jim Umlauf's business, 4Knines, based in Oklahoma City, makes vehicle seat covers and cargo liners for dog owners and others. He imports raw materials such as fabric, coatings and components from China.

Umlauf said that even with a lower general tariff rate, it's hard for small businesses to make a profit. He thinks the U.S. government should offer small business exclusions from the tariffs.

"I appreciate any progress being made on the tariff front, but unfortunately, we're still far from a real solution — especially for small businesses like mine," Umlauf said. "When tariffs exceed 50%, there's virtually no profit left unless we dramatically raise prices — an option that risks alienating customers."

Zou Guoqing, a Chinese exporter who supplies molds and parts to a snow-bike factory in Nebraska as well as fishing and hunting goods to a U.S. retailer in Texas, also thinks the remaining 30% tariff is too high to take comfort in.

With the possibility Washington and Beijing will negotiate over the 20% tariff Trump imposed due to what he described as China's failure to stem the flow of fentanyl, Zou said he would wait until the end of May to decide when to resume shipments to the U.S.

Silva, of WS Game Company, said he planned to begin placing his holiday season orders this week but won't be as bold as he might have been if the ultra-high tariff had been suspended for more than 90 day.

"We will order enough to get by and satisfy the demand we know will be there at the increased pricing needed, but until we get a solid foundation of a long-term agreement, the risks are still too high to be aggressive."

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

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans have unveiled the cost-saving centerpiece of President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill," 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 revealed late Sunday is touching off the biggest political fight over health care since Republicans tried but failed to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, during Trump's first term in 2017.

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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.

One Republican, Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, warned his colleagues in an op-ed Monday that cutting health care to pay for tax breaks would be “morally wrong and politically suicidal.”

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 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. The bill also adds a more rigorous income verification for those who enroll in the Affordable Care Act’s health care coverage.

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.

Some Medicaid recipients who make more than 100% of the federal poverty level — about \$32,000 a year for a family of four — would be required to pay out-of-pocket costs, too, for some services. Those fees, which would not apply to emergency room visits, prenatal care, pediatric visits or primary care check-ups, would be limited to \$35 per visit.

And applicants could not qualify for Medicaid if they have a home that is valued at more than \$1 million.

The proposed bill also targets any immigrants who are living in the country illegally or without documentation. It reduces by 10% the share the federal government pays to states — such as New York or California — that allow those immigrants to sign up for Medicaid. To qualify for the ACA coverage, enrollees would have to prove they are “lawfully present.”

Other moves would shift costs to all states.

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.

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 allows states to inflate their budgets.

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.

6 Bulgarians convicted in UK of spying for Russia get prison terms up to nearly 11 years

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Six Bulgarians convicted of carrying out a sophisticated spying operation for Russia were sentenced by a London judge Monday to prison terms up to nearly 11 years.

The group that used Hollywood code names discussed kidnapping or killing Kremlin opponents as they targeted reporters, diplomats and Ukrainian troops in the U.K., Germany Austria, Spain and Montenegro between 2020 and 2023, prosecutors said.

No one was physically harmed but the group put lives in jeopardy, prosecutors said.

"It is self-evident that a high price attaches to the safety and interests of this nation," Justice Nicholas Hilliard, said. "The defendants put these things at risk by using this country as a base from which to plan the various operations. ... Anyone who uses this country in that way, in the circumstances of this case, commits a very serious offense."

Ringleader Orlin Roussev, who operated out of a former guesthouse in the English seaside resort town of Great Yarmouth, was given the stiffest sentence — 10 years and 8 months in prison — for being involved in all six operations discovered by police. He and the others faced up to 14 years behind bars.

Roussev worked for alleged Russian agent Jan Marsalek, an Austrian national who is wanted by Interpol for fraud and embezzlement after the 2020 collapse of German payment processing firm Wirecard, prosecutors said. His whereabouts are unknown.

Stiff sentences send a message

Security Minister Dan Jarvis said the case sends a warning to other foes that Britain will use its "full range of tools" to "detect, disrupt, and deter malicious acts from hostile states and protect the public."

Roussev, 47, and his lieutenant Biser Dzhambazov, 44, pleaded guilty in London's Central Criminal Court last year to espionage charges and having false identity documents. Dzhambazov was sentenced to 10 years and 2 months in prison.

Roussev called himself Jackie Chan and Dzhambazov was dubbed Mad Max, or Jean-Claude Van Damme. Their underlings were dubbed "Minions" from the animated "Despicable Me" franchise.

Police said their fanciful pseudonyms masked a deadly serious gang.

In one operation, members tried to lure a journalist who uncovered Moscow's involvement in the 2018 Novichok poisoning of a former Russian spy in Salisbury, England, into a "honeytrap" romance with another member of the group, Vanya Gaberova.

The spies followed Christo Grozev, a Bulgarian researcher for the online publication Bellingcat, from Vienna to a conference in Valencia, Spain, and the gang's ringleaders discussed robbing and killing him, or kidnapping him and taking him to Russia.

"Learning only in retrospect that foreign agents have been monitoring my movements, communications and home, surveying my loved ones over an extended period — has been terrifying, disorientating and deeply destabilizing," Grozev said in a statement read during the four-day sentencing hearing. "The consequences have not faded with time — they have fundamentally changed how I live my daily life and how I relate to the world around me."

Ringleader claimed he was 'no James Bond'

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In another operation, members of the group conducted surveillance on a U.S. air base in Germany where they believed Ukrainian troops were training.

After police raided his house and arrested Roussev, he denied doing anything on behalf of any government.

"I would be thrilled to see how on God's earth there is a connection between me and Russia or any other state because I haven't been a spy or government agent," Roussev said in a police interview. "No James Bond activity on my end, I guarantee you."

Messages to Marsalek, however, showed him talking about his "Indiana Jones warehouse" of spy equipment and said he was becoming like "Q," the mastermind behind Bond's gadgets.

Roussev's house was loaded with spy tech. He had equipment used to jam Wi-Fi and GPS signals, along with eavesdropping devices and car trackers. Cameras were hidden in sunglasses, pens, neckties and cuddly toys, including one in a Minion doll.

A selfie of Marsalek wearing a Russian uniform was found on Roussev's phone.

Three of the so-called minions were convicted at trial in March of spying for an enemy state.

Katrin Ivanova, 33, was sentenced to 9 years and 8 months in prison; Gaberova, 30, was sentenced to 6 years and 8 months; and Tihomir Ivanov Ivanchev, 39, was sentenced to 8 years.

Ivan Stoyanov, 33, a mixed martial arts fighter who pleaded guilty to spying for Russia, was sentenced to 5 years and 3 weeks.

Each convict faces deportation after they are released from prison.

Spy ring contains love triangle

Both women had claimed during the trial that they had been deceived and manipulated by Dzhambazov.

Dzhambazov, who worked for a medical courier company but claimed to be an Interpol police officer, was in a relationship with both women — his laboratory assistant and longtime partner Ivanova and beautician Gaberova.

Gaberova had ditched painter-decorator Ivanchev for the "ugly" Dzhambazov, who took her to a Michelin-starred restaurant and stayed with her in a five-star hotel during a surveillance mission. When police arrested the suspects in February 2023, they found Dzhambazov naked in bed with Gaberova rather than at home with Ivanova.

Defense lawyer Anthony Metzger said Gaberova was naive and her case was tragic as she "slipped into criminality" under Dzhambazov's romantic spell.

But the judge said she knew what she was doing was for Russia.

"You found what you were doing exciting and glamorous, as demonstrated by the film you took of yourself wearing surveillance glasses in Montenegro," Justice Hilliard said.

Giant lily pads and a bronze tree are among designs for Queen Elizabeth II's memorial

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — What could be a better memorial to Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's longest-reigning monarch, than a pod of faintly psychedelic giant lily pads? Perhaps a big bronze tree or a recording of the late monarch's voice.

All those ideas feature among the five finalists for a permanent London monument to Elizabeth, who died in September 2022 at the age of 96 after 70 years on the throne.

The government is asking for public feedback on an online exhibition of the designs that opened Wednesday.

Competition organizers put out the call to designers for "an emotionally powerful place and a space for pause and reflection." The memorial will be built near Buckingham Palace in St. James's Park, an immaculately landscaped green space known for its waterfowl-filled lake, resident pelicans and neatly pruned flower beds.

Computer-generated images of the five finalists show a park transformed.

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The entry by designer Thomas Heatherwick's Heatherwick Studio includes a canopy of giant limestone lily pads with twisting stems towering over a statue of the queen.

Another concept is "a tranquil family of royal gardens" linked by "a natural stone tessellated path" designed by architect Norman Foster's firm Foster + Partners, with a rippling "wind sculpture" by artist Yinka Shonibare and audio installations featuring Elizabeth's voice.

The other concepts include a bedrock bridge – because "the queen was the nation's bedrock" – and forested glades by landscape architects J&L Gibbons; a memorial by garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith centered on a bronze cast of an ancient oak tree; and a thread of pathways and landscapes "gently woven through the natural fabric" of the park by architects WilkinsonEyre.

The queen's former private secretary Robin Janvin, who is chairing the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee, said the goal is to create "a landmark memorial of outstanding beauty that celebrates and honors the life of Queen Elizabeth II."

"Memories of her long reign are still fresh for so many of us and we need to capture the essence of them for future generations," he said.

Separately, the committee will select an artist to create a sculpture of Elizabeth as part of the final design. Several of the shortlisted proposals feature statues of the queen on horseback.

The public consultation closes on May 19 and the committee is expected to announce the winning bid in the summer. The final design is scheduled to be submitted to King Charles III and Prime Minister Keir Starmer for approval in 2026, the 100th anniversary of the queen's birth.

Building the memorial is expected to cost between 23 million pounds and 46 million pounds (\$30 million and \$60 million), the government said.

A split jury and a lie sent him to prison. Now he's working to change Louisiana's law

By SARA CLINE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — As 18-year-old Bobby Gumpright rode his bike home from his bartending job in New Orleans in 1999, he began to concoct a story about why he didn't have any money. In the throes of addiction and not wanting to admit he had spent his paycheck on drugs, Gumpright lied to his father and said a Black man had robbed him at gunpoint.

The fabrication spun out of control when a detective, armed with photos of potential suspects, asked Gumpright to point to the culprit.

Across town, Jermaine Hudson, a 20-year-old Black man, was pulled over for a traffic stop and taken into custody. He figured he would soon be released to go home to his pregnant wife and 10-month-old daughter.

Instead, he was charged with a crime he didn't commit.

Even though two jurors didn't believe Gumpright's story, Hudson was found guilty by a split jury, a practice that 20 years later would be deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, which acknowledged its origins from racist Jim Crow laws.

Nearly 1,000 people convicted by split juries remain in prison in Louisiana.

Now, 25 years after Gumpright's lies sent Hudson to prison, the two unlikely friends are sharing their story in a push for legislation to give some of those people a chance to have their cases retired.

A split decision

As Hudson sat in the courtroom in 2001, he grappled with a reality that he didn't create.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought my life would have been at a standstill ... missing out on my kids' life, on my life," Hudson told The Associated Press last month.

Two witnesses testified: the officer who responded to the 911 call and Gumpright.

As Gumpright took the stand, Hudson prayed the stranger would acknowledge the wrongful allegation and his nightmare would end.

A prosecutor asked Gumpright, who is white, if he was sure it was Hudson who robbed him. He re-

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sponded, "110%."

In a 10-2 vote, the jury convicted Hudson of armed robbery. The judge sentenced him to 99 years in prison.

A practice rooted in racism

At the time of Hudson's trial, only Louisiana and Oregon allowed convictions if one or two jurors disagreed. Louisiana adopted the practice in 1898, fueled by efforts to maintain white supremacy after the Civil War. Diluting the voice of Black jurors allowed the often-white majority to determine the outcome.

In 2018, Louisiana voters did away with the use of nonunanimous jury convictions, two years before the Supreme Court ruling.

Of the 1,500 people in Louisiana prisons from split jury convictions at that time, about 80% were Black and most were serving life sentences, according to a Project of Justice Initiative analysis.

Following the high court decision, Oregon's Supreme Court granted new trials to hundreds of people. But Louisiana's Supreme Court rejected arguments to apply the ruling retroactively, leaving people like Hudson locked up with scarce legal options or waiting on a miracle.

Waiting 22 years for freedom

Years of Hudson's life dwindled away as he missed the birth of his second daughter, graduations and other milestones. He prayed Gumpwright would "come forward with the truth."

"This can't be my final destination. This can't be the end of my life," Hudson often thought.

Gumpwright tried to numb his guilt with drugs and alcohol, but it never went away. "I was either gonna kill myself or I was gonna come forward," he told the AP.

In 2021, Hudson was preparing to take a new deal: plead guilty to armed robbery in exchange for a sentence of time served. Just days before the bargain was finalized, Hudson received news he long waited for. Gumpwright, who had entered a drug treatment facility, had come clean about his lies.

After spending 22 years behind bars, Hudson was released.

A few months later, Gumpwright answered a phone call from a blocked number.

"I bet you never thought you'd hear from me," Hudson said.

Fixing an injustice

A packed committee room at the state Capitol fell silent last month as a man wearing a suit and tie took to the microphone.

"My name is Bobby Gumpwright," he said, his hand trembling. "I come before you as a citizen of Louisiana. ... I'm also a man who lives each day with the consequences of a terrible sin."

Gumpwright told lawmakers his story, the true one. Sitting behind him was Hudson.

The pair first met in New Orleans, six months after Hudson's release. They have spent the past two years advocating for a bill that would give inmates convicted by split juries the opportunity to ask for a retrial. The measure does not automatically grant a retrial.

The duo say their story is an example of how an innocent man can be imprisoned for decades under an unconstitutional practice and that it's never too late to right a wrong.

"I couldn't change the past, but I could refuse to live the lie any longer while injustice continued," Gumpwright told lawmakers. "Louisiana can't change the past. But Louisiana can refuse to let its injustice live on."

The measure failed last year, but a legislative committee backed a similar bill in April. It still needs approval from the governor, House and Senate, which could debate it this week.

People cheered as the bill cleared its first hurdle. Gumpwright and Hudson hugged, holding each other up, as they cried tears of joy.

An unlikely bond

Both men said they needed one another to heal.

Hudson wanted to know why Gumpwright lied. Gumpwright sought forgiveness.

"I'm not the type of man to hold grudges or to hate anyone," Hudson said. "I have a forgiving heart. And in order for me to really move on I forgave him, because I understood what he was going through."

Sober for four years, Gumpwright, 44, is now an addiction counselor. Hudson, 47, moved to Texas, got

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married, bought a house, is starting a business and spends time with his two grandsons.

Gumpright attended Hudson's housewarming and met his family. They text each other words of encouragement every day and keep photos of each other close by.

"My friend? That's an understatement," Hudson said about his relationship with Gumpright. "He's my brother."

US and China reach a deal to slash sky-high tariffs for now, with a 90-day pause

By JAMEY KEATEN, DAVID McHUGH, ELAINE KURTENBACH and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press
GENEVA (AP) — The United States and China agreed Monday to slash their massive recent tariffs, restarting stalled trade between the world's two biggest economies and setting off a rally in global financial markets.

But the de-escalation in President Donald Trump's trade wars did nothing to resolve underlying differences between Beijing and Washington. The deal lasts 90 days, creating time for U.S. and Chinese negotiators to reach a more substantive agreement. But the pause also leaves tariffs higher than before Trump started ramping them up last month. And businesses and investors must contend with uncertainty about whether the truce will last.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the U.S. agreed to drop the 145% tax Trump imposed last month to 30%. China agreed to lower its tariff rate on U.S. goods to 10% from 125%.

A deal averts a total blockade

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

The officials struck a positive tone as they said the two sides had set up consultations to continue discussing their trade issues. Bessent said that the triple-digit tariffs the two countries imposed on each other last month — in an escalation of tensions Trump started — amounted to "the equivalent of an embargo, and neither side wants that. We do want trade."

The delegations, escorted around town and guarded by scores of Swiss police, met for at least a dozen hours on both days of the weekend at a sunbaked 18th-century villa that serves as the official residence of the Swiss ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

At times, the delegation leaders broke away from their staffs and settled into sofas on the villa's patios overlooking Lake Geneva, helping deepen personal ties in the effort to reach a much-sought deal.

Finally, a deal

The 30% levy that America is now imposing on Chinese goods includes an existing 20% tariff intended to pressure China into doing more to prevent the synthetic opioid fentanyl from entering the United States. It also includes the same 10% "baseline" tariff Trump has slapped on imports from most of the world's countries. The 30% tax comes on top of other levies on China, including some left over from Trump's first term and kept by former President Joe Biden.

Trump had ratcheted the combined tariff to 145% last month, furious that China was retaliating, before backing down Monday.

China's Commerce Ministry called the agreement an important step for the resolution of the two countries' differences and said it lays the foundation for further cooperation.

"This initiative aligns with the expectations of producers and consumers in both countries and serves the interests of both nations as well as the common interests of the world," a ministry statement said.

China hopes the U.S. will stop "the erroneous practice of unilateral tariff hikes" and work with China to safeguard the development of economic and trade relations, injecting more certainty and stability into the global economy, the ministry said.

The joint statement by the two countries said China also agreed to suspend or remove other measures it has taken since April 2 in response to the U.S. tariffs. China has increased export controls on rare earths, including some critical to the defense industry, and added more American companies to its export control and unreliable entity lists, restricting their business with and in China.

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Markets rally as two sides de-escalate

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.

Bessent said in an interview with CNBC that U.S. and Chinese officials will meet again in a few weeks. But investors rejoiced as trade envoys from the world's two biggest economies blinked.

Futures for the S&P 500 jumped 2.6% and the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 2%. Oil prices surged more than \$1.60 a barrel, and the dollar gained against the euro and the Japanese yen.

"This is a substantial de-escalation," said Mark Williams, chief Asia economist at Capital Economics. But he warned "there is no guarantee that the 90-day truce will give way to a lasting ceasefire."

Dani Rodrik, an economist at Harvard University, said that the two countries had stepped back "from a needless trade war" but that U.S. tariffs on China remain high at 30% "and will mainly hurt U.S. consumers."

"Trump has obtained absolutely nothing from China for all the chaos he generated. Zilch," Rodrik wrote, posting on Bluesky.

Craig Singleton, senior director of the China program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the speed at which the agreement came about suggested that "both sides were more economically boxed in than they let on."

"For China, the economic pain was real: Rising unemployment, capital flight, and export orders falling at their fastest rate in nearly two years," Singleton said. "For Trump, markets mattered, and this deal gives him a win without abandoning leverage."

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 drop from sky-high to merely high tariffs, along with the uncertainty about the path of future tariffs, will still serve as a constraint on trade and investment flows between the two economies," said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

"Nevertheless, it is a positive omen for the world economy that U.S. tariffs might eventually end up as significant trade barriers but not unsurmountable walls," he said.

Jay Foreman — CEO of Basic Fun, the Florida-based company behind such toys as Care Bears and Tonka trucks — said he was relieved to see the tariff rate on Chinese goods now down to 30%. But he wants that to drop to 10%.

Foreman said he'd just advised his team in China to release its toy shipments, which had been paused since early April. Before Monday's deal, he said, he thought he'd have to double prices — but they'll still go up, by 10% to 15% for the third and fourth quarters.

"It's like they tried to feed us a rotten egg sandwich and hope we're happy to drink spoiled milk instead," Foreman said.

Trump's tariffs have launched global trade wars. Here's a timeline of how we got here

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer
NEW YORK (AP) —

Long-threatened tariffs from U.S. President Donald Trump have plunged the country into trade wars abroad — all while on-again, off-again new levies continue to escalate uncertainty.

Trump launched a trade war during his first term as well, taking particular aim at China by putting taxes on most of its goods. Beijing responded with its own retaliatory tariffs on a range of U.S. products. Trump used the threat of more tariffs to force Canada and Mexico to renegotiate a North American trade pact, called the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, in 2020.

When President Joe Biden took office, he preserved most of the tariffs Trump had enacted against China, in addition to imposing some new restrictions. But his administration claimed to take a more targeted

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approach.

Fast-forward to today, and economists stress there could be greater consequences on businesses and economies worldwide under Trump's more sweeping tariffs this time around — and that higher prices will likely leave consumers footing the bill. There's also been a sense of whiplash from Trump's back-and-forth tariff threats and responding retaliation seen over the last few months.

Here's a timeline of how we got here:

January 20

Trump is sworn into office. In his inaugural address, he again promises to "tariff and tax foreign countries to enrich our citizens." And he reiterates plans to create an agency called the External Revenue Service, which has yet to be established.

On his first day in office, Trump also says he expects to put 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico starting on Feb. 1, while declining to immediately flesh out plans for taxing Chinese imports.

January 26

Trump threatens 25% tariffs on all Colombia imports and other retaliatory measures after President Gustavo Petro's rejects two U.S. military aircraft carrying migrants to the country, accusing Trump of not treating immigrants with dignity during deportation.

In response, Petro also announces a retaliatory 25% increase in Colombian tariffs on U.S. goods. But Colombia later reversed its decision and accepted the flights carrying migrants. The two countries soon signaled a halt in the trade dispute.

February 1

Trump signs an executive order to impose tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada and China — 10% on all imports from China and 25% on imports from Mexico and Canada starting Feb. 4. Trump invoked this power by declaring a national emergency — ostensibly over undocumented immigration and drug trafficking.

The action prompts swift outrage from all three countries, with promises of retaliatory measures.

February 3

Trump agrees to a 30-day pause on his tariff threats against Mexico and Canada, as both trading partners take steps to appease Trump's concerns about border security and drug trafficking.

February 4

Trump's new 10% tariffs on all Chinese imports to the U.S. still go into effect. China retaliates the same day by announcing a flurry of countermeasures, including new duties on a variety of American goods and an anti-monopoly investigation into Google.

China's 15% tariffs on coal and liquefied natural gas products, and a 10% levy on crude oil, agricultural machinery and large-engine cars imported from the U.S., take effect Feb. 10.

February 10

Trump announces plans to hike steel and aluminum tariffs starting March 12. He removes the exemptions from his 2018 tariffs on steel, meaning that all steel imports will be taxed at a minimum of 25%, and also raises his 2018 aluminum tariffs from 10% to 25%.

February 13

Trump announces a plan for "reciprocal" tariffs — promising to increase U.S. tariffs to match the tax rates that countries worldwide charge on imports "for purposes of fairness." Economists warn that the reciprocal tariffs, set to overturn decades of trade policy, could create chaos for global businesses.

February 25

Trump signs an executive order instructing the Commerce Department to consider whether a tariff on imported copper is needed to protect national security. He cites the material's use in U.S. defense, infrastructure and emerging technologies.

March 1

Trump signs an additional executive order instructing the Commerce Department to consider whether tariffs on lumber and timber are also needed to protect national security, arguing that the construction industry and military depend on a strong supply of wooden products in the U.S.

March 4

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Trump's 25% tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico go into effect, though he limits the levy to 10% on Canadian energy. He also doubles the tariff on all Chinese imports to 20%.

All three countries promise retaliatory measures. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announces tariffs on more than \$100 billion of American goods over the course of 21 days. And Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum says her country would respond with its own retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods without specifying the targeted products immediately, signaling hopes to de-escalate.

China, meanwhile, imposes tariffs of up to 15% on a wide array of key U.S. farm exports, set to take effect March 10. It also expands the number of U.S. companies subject to export controls and other restrictions by about two dozen.

March 5

Trump grants a one-month exemption on his new tariffs impacting goods from Mexico and Canada for U.S. automakers. The pause arrives after the president spoke with leaders of the "Big 3" automakers — Ford, General Motors and Stellantis.

March 6

In a wider extension, Trump postpones 25% tariffs on many imports from Mexico and some imports from Canada for a month.

Trump credited Sheinbaum with making progress on border security and drug smuggling as a reason for again pausing tariffs. His actions also thaw relations with Canada somewhat, although outrage and uncertainty remains. Still, after its initial retaliatory tariffs of \$30 billion Canadian (US\$21 billion) on U.S. goods, the government says it's suspended a second wave of retaliatory tariffs worth \$125 billion Canadian (US\$87 billion).

March 10

China's retaliatory 15% tariffs on key American farm products — including chicken, pork, soybeans and beef — take effect. Goods already in transit are set to be exempt through April 12, per China's Commerce Ministry previous announcement.

March 12

Trump's new tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports go into effect. Both metals are now taxed at 25% across the board — with Trump's order to remove steel exemptions and raise aluminum's levy from his previously-imposed 2018 import taxes.

The European Union takes retaliatory trade action promising new duties on U.S. industrial and farm products. The measures will cover goods from the United States worth some 26 billion euros (\$28 billion), and not just steel and aluminum products, but also textiles, home appliances and agricultural goods. Motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans will be hit, as they were during Trump's first term. The 27-member bloc later says it will delay this retaliatory action until mid-April.

Canada, meanwhile, announces plans to impose more retaliatory tariffs worth Canadian \$29.8 billion (\$20.7 billion) on U.S. imports, set to go into effect March 13.

March 13

Trump threatens a 200% tariff on European wine, Champagne and spirits if the European Union goes forward with its previously-announced plans for a 50% tariff on American whiskey.

March 24

Trump says he will place a 25% tariff on all imports from any country that buys oil or gas from Venezuela, in addition to imposing new tariffs on the South American country itself, starting April 2.

The tariffs would most likely add to the taxes facing China, which in 2023 bought 68% of the oil exported by Venezuela, per the U.S. Energy Information Administration. But a number of countries also receive oil from Venezuela — including the United States itself.

March 26

Trump says he is placing 25% tariffs on auto imports. These auto imports will start being collected April 3 — beginning with taxes on fully-imported cars. The tariffs are set to then expand to applicable auto parts in the following weeks, through May 3.

April 2

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Trump announces his long-promised “reciprocal” tariffs — declaring a 10% baseline tax on imports across the board starting April 5, as well as higher rates for dozens of nations that run trade surpluses with the U.S. to take effect April 9.

Among those steeper levies, Trump says the U.S. will now charge a 34% tax on imports from China, a 20% tax on imports from the European Union, 25% on South Korea, 24% on Japan and 32% on Taiwan. The new tariffs come on top of previously-imposed levies, including the 20% tax Trump announced on all Chinese imports earlier this year.

Meanwhile, for Canada and Mexico, the White House says USMCA-compliant imports can continue to enter the U.S. duty-free. Once the two countries have satisfied Trump’s demands on immigration and drug trafficking, the White House adds, the tariff on the rest of their imports may drop from 25% to 12%.

April 3

Trump’s previously-announced auto tariffs begin. Prime Minister Mark Carney says that Canada will match the 25% levies with a tariff on vehicles imported from the U.S.

April 4

China announces plans to impose a 34% tariff on imports of all U.S. products beginning April 10, matching Trump’s new “reciprocal” tariff on Chinese goods, as part of a flurry of retaliatory measures.

The Commerce Ministry in Beijing says it will also impose more export controls on rare earths, which are materials used in high-tech products like computer chips and electric vehicle batteries. And the government adds 27 firms to lists of companies subject to trade sanctions or export controls.

April 5

Trump’s 10% minimum tariff on nearly all countries and territories takes effect.

April 9

Trump’s higher “reciprocal” rates go into effect, hiking taxes on imports from dozens of countries just after midnight. But hours later, his administration says it will suspend most of these higher rates for 90 days, while maintaining the recently-imposed 10% levy on nearly all global imports.

China is the exception. After following through on a threat to raise levies against China to a total of 104%, Trump says he will now raise those import taxes to 125% “effective immediately” — escalating tit-for-tat duties that have piled up between the two countries. The White House later clarifies that total tariffs against China are actually now 145%, once his previous 20% fentanyl tariffs are accounted for.

China upped its retaliation prior to this announcement — vowing to tax American goods at 84% starting April 10. Also earlier, EU member states vote to approve their own retaliatory levies on 20.9 billion euros (\$23 billion) of U.S. goods in response to Trump’s previously-imposed steel and aluminum tariffs. The EU’s executive commission doesn’t immediately specify which imports it will tax, but notes its counter tariffs will come in stages — with some set to arrive on April 15, and others May 15 and Dec. 1.

Separately, Canada’s counter tariffs on auto imports take effect. The country implements a 25% levy on auto imports from the U.S. that do not comply with the 2020 USMCA pact.

April 10

The EU puts its steel and aluminum tariff retaliation on hold for 90 days, to match Trump’s pause on steeper “reciprocal” levies. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen says the commission wants to give negotiations with the U.S. a chance — but warns countermeasures will kick in if talks “are not satisfactory.”

April 11

China says it will raise tariffs on U.S. goods from 84% to 125%, in response to Trump’s heightened levies. The new rate is set to begin April 12.

Later, the Trump administration unveils that electronics, including smartphones and laptops, will be exempt from so-called “reciprocal” tariffs. But in the days following, U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick signals that this is only a temporary reprieve, saying that sector-specific levies on semiconductors will arrive in “probably a month or two.” And other, non-“reciprocal” tariffs that tax some electronics, notably from China, remain.

April 14

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Trump says he might temporarily exempt the auto industry from tariffs he previously imposed on the sector, to give carmakers time to adjust their supply chains.

The Trump administration also launches investigations into imports of computer chips, chipmaking equipment and pharmaceuticals — signaling next steps toward imposing tariffs on these sectors. The U.S. Commerce Department posts notices about these probes, seeking public comment within the next three weeks.

Separately, the Commerce Department says it's withdrawing from a 2019 agreement that had suspended an antidumping investigation into fresh tomato imports from Mexico. That termination, set to take effect July 14, means most tomatoes from Mexico will be subject to a 20.91% tariff.

April 29

Trump signs executive orders to relax some of his 25% tariffs on automobiles and auto parts — aimed at easing import taxes for vehicles that are made with foreign parts, but assembled in the U.S.

For one year, the administration says it will provide a rebate of 3.75% relative to the sales prices of a domestically-assembled car — a figure reached by putting the previously-imposed 25% import tax on parts that make up 15% of that price. And for the second year, the rebate would equal 2.5% of the sales price, applying to a smaller share of the vehicle's parts.

May 3

The latest round of Trump's auto tariffs takes effect. The previously-announced 25% levies now apply to a range of imported auto parts.

May 4

Trump threatens a 100% tariff on foreign-made films, while claiming that the movie industry in the U.S. is dying. It isn't immediately clear how such a tariff on international productions could be implemented, but Trump says he's authorized the Commerce Department and the U.S. Trade Representative to "immediately begin the process."

May 6

The U.S. trade deficit soared to a record \$140.5 billion in March as consumers and businesses tried to get ahead of Trump's tariffs. Federal data showed an enormous stockpiling of pharmaceutical products. The deficit — which measures the gap between the value of goods and services the U.S. sells abroad against what it buys — has roughly doubled during the past year.

Also, the U.S. government announced that top officials are set to meet with a high-level Chinese delegation over the weekend in Switzerland in the first major talks between the two nations since President Trump sparked a trade war. No country has been hit harder by Trump's trade war than China, the world's biggest exporter and second largest economy. U.S. tariffs against China are set at 145% and China tariffs on the U.S. at 125%.

May 7

The Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged at 4.3%, saying that the risks of both higher unemployment and higher inflation have risen due to uncertainty about how and when Trump's tariffs might impact the U.S. economy. Chair Jerome Powell underscored that the tariffs have dampened consumer and business sentiment and that there's currently too many unknowns to be able to predict how the Fed might adjust its interest rate policy going forward.

May 8

The United States and Britain announced a trade deal, potentially lowering the financial burden from tariffs while creating greater access abroad for American goods. The president said the agreement would lead to more beef and ethanol exports to the U.K., which would also streamline the processing of U.S. goods through customs. Trump said final details were being written up. "In the coming weeks, we'll have it all very conclusive," Trump said.

Britain said the deal will cut tariffs on U.K. cars from 27.5% to 10%, with a quota of 100,000 U.K. vehicles that can be imported to the U.S. at a 10% tariff. It also eliminate tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Separately, the European Union published a list of U.S. imports that it would target with retaliatory duties if no solution is found to end U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff war. The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, also said it would begin legal action at the World Trade Organization over the

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"reciprocal tariffs" that Trump imposed on countries around the world a month ago.

May 12

The United States and China agreed to roll back most of the tariffs each nation had imposed on the other and declared a 90-day truce in their trade war.

The Trump administration said it would reduce the 145% duties it had imposed on imports from China to 30%, while China said it would cut its 125% tariffs on U.S. goods to 10%. Some of the U.S. tariffs — 24 percentage points — will be delayed for 90 days, while the rest of have been removed.

The deal was celebrated by financial markets, which soared in response. Yet economists noted that tariffs between the two countries remained noticeably higher than they were a few months ago.

Pope Leo XIV urges release of imprisoned journalists, affirms gift of free speech and press

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV on Monday called for the release of imprisoned journalists and affirmed the "precious gift of free speech and the press" in an audience with some of the 6,000 journalists who descended on Rome to cover his election as the first American pontiff.

Leo received a standing ovation as he entered the Vatican auditorium for his first meeting with representatives of the general public.

The 69-year-old Augustinian missionary, elected in a 24-hour conclave last week, called for journalists to use words for peace, to reject war and to give voice to the voiceless.

He expressed solidarity with journalists around the world who have been jailed for trying to seek and report the truth. Drawing applause from the crowd, he asked for their release.

"The church recognises in these witnesses — I am thinking of those who report on war even at the cost of their lives — the courage of those who defend dignity, justice and the right of people to be informed, because only informed individuals can make free choices," he said.

"The suffering of these imprisoned journalists challenges the conscience of nations and the international community, calling on all of us to safeguard the precious gift of free speech and of the press."

Leo opened the meeting with a few words in English, joking that if the crowd was still awake and applauding at the end, it mattered more than the ovation that greeted him.

Turning to Italian, he thanked the journalists for their work covering the papal transition and urged them to use words of peace.

"Peace begins with each one of us: in the way we look at others, listen to others and speak about others," he said. "In this sense, the way we communicate is of fundamental importance: we must say 'no' to the war of words and images, we must reject the paradigm of war."

After his brief speech, in which he reflected on the power of words to do good, he greeted some of the journalists in the front rows and then shook hands with the crowd as he exited the audience hall down the central aisle. He signed a few autographs and posed for a few selfies.

Journalists later shared some of the few words they exchanged with him, including hints that Vatican plans are going ahead for Leo to travel to Turkey to commemorate an important event in Catholic-Orthodox relations: the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicea, Christianity's first ecumenical council.

Other tidbits emerged: Journalists offered to play doubles in tennis, or to organize a charity match. Leo, a regular tennis player, seemed game "but we can't invite Sinner," he joked, referring to the world No. 1 Jannik Sinner, who is playing just up the Tiber at the Italian Open.

It was in the 2013 audience with journalists who covered the election of history's first Latin American pope that Pope Francis explained his choice of name, after St. Francis of Assisi, and his desire for a "church which is poor and for the poor!"

During his 12-year pontificate, Francis too spoke about the value of journalism and as recently as January, he appealed for the release of imprisoned journalists during a Holy Year event with the media.

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 Ma 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 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

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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.

In Pittsburgh, candidates face their future voters, part of a national effort to engage the young

By GARY FIELDS and AYANNA ALEXANDER Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — At Perry Traditional Academy, students took time out from classes on a recent Thursday to listen quietly in the school auditorium while a small group of their classmates questioned the four candidates running in Pittsburgh's upcoming mayoral primary.

The topics covered an array of issues important to the teens: policing, school funding and youth involvement in their administrations.

The forum, coordinated by the Allegheny Youth Vote Coalition working with Pittsburgh Public Schools, was the eighth held at a public high school in the city, all designed to get the youngest and future voters involved in elections. After the candidates left, they had a short oral civics test on elections, with prizes for correct answers.

What's happening in Pittsburgh and surrounding Allegheny County is part of a national trend.

Young people have consistently turned out to vote at lower rates than older Americans. Civic organizations are hoping to reverse that by getting teenagers engaged in public debate before they are even eligible to vote, seeing it as foundational to the future of U.S. democracy.

A Pew Research Center analysis found that voters under the age of 30 made up 15% of voters in the 2020 election and 27% of nonvoters, a slight improvement in both categories over 2016, when that demographic was 13% of all voters and 33% of nonvoters. Voters were also much older than nonvoters, on average, in the 2018 and 2022 midterm elections, according to Pew.

Allowing teens to have a voice in local elections

Among the groups leading the effort nationally is the Civics Center, which works with high schoolers to run voter registration drives and hold forums that are geared toward raising their participation in elec-

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tions. Others, such as The Gem Project Inc., in Newark, New Jersey, have pushed for students to be able to register and cast ballots in local elections before they turn 18.

Last year, the Newark City Council dropped the minimum voting age to 16 for school board elections, making it the first municipality in the state and the second largest city in the country to do so for any election. Oakland was the largest city in the U.S. to lower its voting age in 2020, but teens voted for the first time last year.

Breanna Quist, 18, and one of the recent registrants in Newark, said the push was especially important to her because it allowed students to vote for an office, school board, that directly affects them.

"This just shows how young people should always just take action. They shouldn't be fearful. They should always advocate for what they believe is right," she said during an interview at a voter registration town hall earlier this year.

Nishani Ward, 16, said it was an inspiration when Newark lowered the voting age for local elections.

"Doing this right now, I'm more likely to do it in the future and do it more routinely in the future," she said.

Media reports said turnout among 16- and 17-year-old registered voters in the April school board election was less than 4% but outpaced the overall turnout.

Helping young people learn their role in democracy

In some places across the country, young people have had success when demanding a greater voice in political decisions. They've argued that voting adults don't always consider them or their needs when casting their ballots. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 21 states and the District of Columbia allow 17-year-olds who will turn 18 by the time of a general election to vote in primaries.

Even though the youth vote tends to bend left politically, this might be a good time to reconsider the minimum age because it's become less predictable, said Daniel Hart, a professor of psychology at Rutgers University who has studied lowering the voting age.

Data from AP VoteCast, a survey of interviews with registered voters in all 50 states, found that Democrat Kamala Harris had a slight edge over Republican Donald Trump among young voters, but young men swung to the right for Trump even if they didn't agree with him on all issues.

The Allegheny Youth Vote Coalition held two vote huddles in 2024, drawing students from throughout the county. They learned about the electoral process and held more than 20 voter registration drives, said Rachel Martin Golman, senior director of social impact of the National Council of Jewish Women Pittsburgh and a coalition member.

During a workshop earlier this year, one student attendee asked why the candidates didn't come speak to them, Golman said: "And we all thought, yes, why not, and worked to make it happen."

Laura Brill, the founder and CEO of the Civics Center, a Los Angeles-based coalition member, said the point is that "most teens today have few opportunities to consider their important role in our democracy." She said engaging the candidates directly is "the kind of formative experience we believe has been missing from high schools for decades and has undoubtedly led to the low rates of engagement we see among the up-and-coming voters."

'You are the future'

At Perry, the students in the audience didn't shy away from asking questions important to them and their peers.

Makaila Nyambe, 17, asked each mayoral candidate about funding for schools, while fellow junior Deahmi Mobley questioned how they might establish a good relationship between law enforcement and teens. Previous forums at other schools included questions on other issues, including how each candidate would implement diversity, equity and inclusion into their administrations.

Trash, homelessness and public safety came up constantly, along with a disagreement over whether more school spending would improve academic performance. Infrastructure, road repairs and cuts to public transit also generated discussion.

The students listened closely when all four candidates talked about neighborhood policing and building relationships -- and about the importance of young people at such a forum.

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"You are the leaders we have been waiting for," said one of the mayoral candidates, retired Pittsburgh police detective Tony Moreno.

"You are the future of Pittsburgh," said another candidate, Thomas West, a business owner and former television news producer. "You are the future of America."

Stalea Chapman, a 17-year-old senior, said afterward she was glad the candidates were taking the students seriously and reaching out to them because their futures are intertwined with politics and policies, especially now.

"It is a lot of pressure being young and seeing what the economy is turning to and what's going on in the world," she said. "It's frightening for young people because we want to be successful."

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.

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

Today in History: May 13, United States declares war on Mexico

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, May 13, the 133rd day of 2025. There are 232 days left in the year.

On May 13, 1846, the United States Congress formally declared war against Mexico, following battles along the disputed U.S.-Mexico border in the preceding weeks; the Mexican-American War would continue for nearly two years until the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February 1848.

Also on this date:

In 1940, in his first speech to the House of Commons as British prime minister, Winston Churchill said, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

In 1973, in tennis' first so-called "Battle of the Sexes," Bobby Riggs defeated Margaret Court 6-2, 6-1 in Ramona, California. (Billie Jean King soundly defeated Riggs at the Houston Astrodome later that year.)

In 1980, a tornado struck downtown Kalamazoo, Michigan, killing five people and injuring 79.

In 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot and seriously wounded in St. Peter's Square by Turkish assailant Mehmet Ali Ağca. (Ağca was sentenced to life in prison in Italy in July 1981, but was pardoned in 2000 at the Pope's request.)

In 1985, a confrontation between Philadelphia authorities and the radical group MOVE ended as a police helicopter dropped two bombs onto the group's row house, igniting a fire that killed 11 people (including five children) and destroyed 61 homes.

In 2016, the Obama administration issued a directive requiring public schools to permit transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their chosen gender identity.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Harvey Keitel is 86. Musician Stevie Wonder is 75. Screenwriter-producer David Simon ("The Wire") is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Dennis Rodman is 64. TV host/comedian Stephen Colbert is 61. Musician Darius Rucker (Hootie and the Blowfish) is 59. Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., is 48. Actor Samantha Morton is 48. Actor-writer-director Lena Dunham is 39. Actor Robert Pattinson is 39. Actor Debby Ryan is 32. Country musician Morgan Wallen is 32.