

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, May 24

Sunday, May 25

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

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

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

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

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

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



Monday, May 26

MEMORIAL DAY

State High School Baseball at Brookings

Tuesday, May 27

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, wild rice green beans, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Girls Golf Region at Sioux Valley (Volga), 10 a.m.

State High School Baseball at Brookings

Wednesday, May 28

Senior Menu Turkey mashed potato with gravy, California blend, orange and pineapple, dinner roll.

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 29

Senior Menu: Taco salad with chips, Mexican rice with beans, fruit, breadstick, cookie.

State Track at Sioux Falls

James Valley Annual Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

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Newsweek

The Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

WORLD IN BRIEF

JD Vance issues new warning: Vice President JD Vance warned about the end of an "era of uncontested U.S. dominance" during his commencement speech at the Naval Academy on Friday.

Billy Joel concerts cancelled: Billy Joel has announced the cancellation of all his upcoming tour dates due to a diagnosis of normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH), a neurological condition that affects hearing, vision and balance.

Chinese College's offer to Harvard students: A Hong Kong college has promised "unconditional offers" for international students at Harvard after the Trump administration revoked the Ivy League's ability to enroll them.

Trump removes dozens of NSC officials: President Donald Trump has initiated a sweeping downsizing of the White House's National Security Council.

Joe Rogan ripped over bad habit: Joe Rogan is being criticized online for a bad habit during a recent episode of his podcast, The Joe Rogan Experience.

American Bishops' War With Trump Admin Is Heating Up

The rundown: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) seems to be battling with President Donald Trump's administration over some of its policies. Know more about what's causing this rift.

Why it matters: Last week, the USCCB, the official assembly of the Catholic Church in the United States, slammed U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for rescinding a policy that gave guidance on the care, custody and documentation of pregnant women they encounter. "This decision is all the more concerning as the Administration simultaneously ramps up family detention in place of safer, more cost-effective alternatives to detention," said Bishop Mark J. Seitz, of El Paso, Texas, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration. It comes amid an ongoing civil case in which the USCCB is suing the Trump administration over its suspension of refugee programs.

TL/DR: Trump's relationship with the Catholic Church has made headlines recently, following the election of the first American pope, Leo XIV, this month.

What happens now? "Much of the future approach of the USCCB to the White House will depend also on the signs they will receive from Pope Leo XIV in the Vatican in the next few weeks and months," theology and religious studies professor Massimo Faggioli told Newsweek.

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Service Notice: Carroll Dean

Funeral services for Carroll Dean, 98, of Aberdeen and formerly of Groton will be 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, May 27th at Aldersgate Church in Aberdeen. Pastor Mike Waldrop, Rev. Bill Duncan and Rev. Derek Baum, will officiate. Services will be live streamed at GDILIVE.com. Burial with military honors will follow at 1:30 p.m. in Groton Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the chapel on Monday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Carroll passed away May 22, 2025 at Parkside Retirement Community in Aberdeen.

Flags at Half-Staff in Honor of Memorial Day

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden ordered that flags be flown at half-staff from sunrise until noon, then briskly raised to full-staff until sunset statewide on Monday, May 26, 2025, in honor of Memorial Day.

"Our brave soldiers are the backbone that holds our nation together, and their sacrifices will never be forgotten," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "This Memorial Day and every day, we honor those that paid the ultimate sacrifice to keep our nation strong, safe, and free."



Track and Field Awards

The Groton Area Tigers Varsity Track boys and girls season award winners. L-R McKenna Tietz, Ryelle Gilbert, Laila Roberts, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Keegen Tracy, Ethan Kroll, Blake Pauli, and Jayden Schwan. Not pictured Emma Kutter, Elizabeth Fliehs, Brevin Fliehs, and Faith Traphagen. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

Ryelle Gilbert, MVP Distance

Kella Tracy, MVP Middle Distance

Laila Roberts, MVP Sprinter

Emma Kutter, MVP Field Events

McKenna Tietz, Most Improved

Taryn & Faith Traphagen, Tiger "Guts" Award

Jayden Schwan, MVP Distance, Most Improved

Blake Pauli, MVP Middle Distance, Tiger "Guts" Award

Keegen Tracy, MVP Sprinter

Ethan Kroll, MVP Field Events

Academic Class A All-State: Laila Roberts, Emma Kutter, Faith Traphagen, Elizabeth Fliehs, Blake Pauli, Brevin Fliehs

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Boys win team title at Warner Track Meet

The competition was tough on Friday at the Dial-A-Move Track meet held in Warner. With that level of competition, the boys won three events, placed second in two events and realed in a few more places to rack up 80 points to win the team title. Britton-Hecla was a distant second with 68. Warner won the girls title with 135 points while Groton Area took second with 102.5.

Keegen Tracy won the 400m run, Blake Pauli and Faith Traphagen both won their respective 800m run events, the boys 4x400m relay team took first, Rylee Gilbert won the 1600m run and the girls won three relay events (4x100, 4x200, SMR 1600).

Boy's Division

Team Scores: 1. Groton Area 80, 2. Britton-Hecla 68, 3. Aberdeen Roncalli 52, 4. Stanley County 50, 5. Hitchcock-Tulare 49, 6. Warner 47, 6. Faulkton Area 47, 8. Frederick Area 46.5, 9. Mount Vernon/Plankinton 45, 10. Leola 41, 11. North Central 39, 12. Aberdeen Christian 31.5, 13. Redfield 30, 13. Herreid/Selby Area 30, 15. Webster Area 24, 16. Mobridge-Pollock 22, 17. Langford Area 19, 17. Northwestern 19, 19. Waverly-South Shore 10, 20. Sully Buttes 5, 21. Ipswich 4

100 Meters: 2. Keegen Tracy, 11.63; 3. Lincoln Krause, 11.87; 7. Brevin Fliehs, 12.17; 20. Ryder Schelle, 12.89.

200 Meters: 20. Ryder Schelle, 26.47.

400 Meters: 1. Keegen Tracy, 51.05; 6. Jordan Schwan, 56.42; 7. Tristin McGannon, 56.43.

800 Meters: 1. Blake Pauli, 2:02.38; 4. Jace Johnson, 2:19.26; 6. Tristin McGannon, 2:27.68.

1600 Meters: 2. Jayden Schwan, 4:36.24; 7. Jace Johnson, 5:19.57.

4x100 Relay: 6. (Brevin Fliehs, Ryder Schelle, Ethan Kroll, Lincoln Krause), 46.80.

4x200 Relay: 4. (Brevin Fliehs, Ryder Schelle, Ethan Kroll, Lincoln Krause), 1:36.68.

4x400 Relay: 1. (Keegen Tracy, Blake Pauli, Jayden Schwan, Jordan Schwan), 3:34.62.

Shot Put - 12lb: 9. Karter Moody, 40' 7.5".

Discus - 1.6kg: 21. Karter Moody, 95' 11".

Javelin - 800g: 24. Karter Moody, 99' 0"; 30. TC Schuster, 94' 2".

Long Jump: 20. TC Schuster, 14' 3".

Triple Jump: 6. Ethan Kroll, 38' 8.75"

Girl's Division

Team Scores: 1. Warner 135, 2. Groton Area 102.5, 3. Hitchcock-Tulare 71.5, 4. North Central 53, 5. Mobridge-Pollock 51.5, 6. Webster Area 51, 7. Herreid/Selby Area 42, 8. Britton-Hecla 41.5, 9. Aberdeen Roncalli 37.5, 10. Langford Area 29, 11. Northwestern 26, 12. Sully Buttes 23, 13. Redfield 22, 14. Aberdeen Christian 19, 15. Faulkton Area 18, 16. Stanley County 15, 17. Ipswich 10.5, 18. Waverly-South Shore 8, 19. Frederick Area 5, 20. Leola 1,

100 Meters: 5. MaKenna Krause, 13.42; 13. Rylee Dunker, 14.21; 30. Suri Jetto, 18.13.

200 Meters: 4. Rylee Dunker, 29.50; 37. Suri Jetto, 38.48.

800 Meters: 1. Faith Traphagen, 2:26.87; 2. Rylee Gilbert, 2:27.74; 6. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:38.15

1600 Meters: 1. Rylee Gilbert, 5:36.24; 2. Ashlynn Warrington, 5:52.16.

100m Hurdles - 33": 6. Tevan Hanson, 19.17; 8. Talli Wright, 19.25; 9. Ella Kettner, 19.64; 10. Emerlee Jones, 19.65; 16. Hannah Sandness, 20.15; 17. Teagan Hanten, 20.66.

300m Hurdles - 30": 2. McKenna Tietz, 48.61; 4. Emerlee Jones, 51.89; 8. Tevan Hanson, 54.60; 9. Talli Wright, 54.74; 13. Ella Kettner, 56.16; 14. Hannah Sandness, 57.79; 15. Teagan Hanten, 58.10.

4x100 Relay: 1. (Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, McKenna Tietz, MaKenna Krause), 51.99.

4x200 Relay: 1. (Rylee Dunker McKenna Tietz, Laila Roberts, Taryn Traphagen), 1:46.91.

SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]: 1. (MaKenna Krause, Taryn Traphagen, Laila Roberts, Kella Tracy), 4:18.35.

Shot Put - 4kg: 6. Emma Kutter, 32' 5"; 29. Aimee Heilman, 20' 6.5".

Discus - 1kg: 15. Avery Crank, 80' 8"; 37. Aimee Heilman, 43' 1".

Javelin - 600g: 10. Avery Crank, 83' 2"; 19. Emma Kutter, 71' 11".

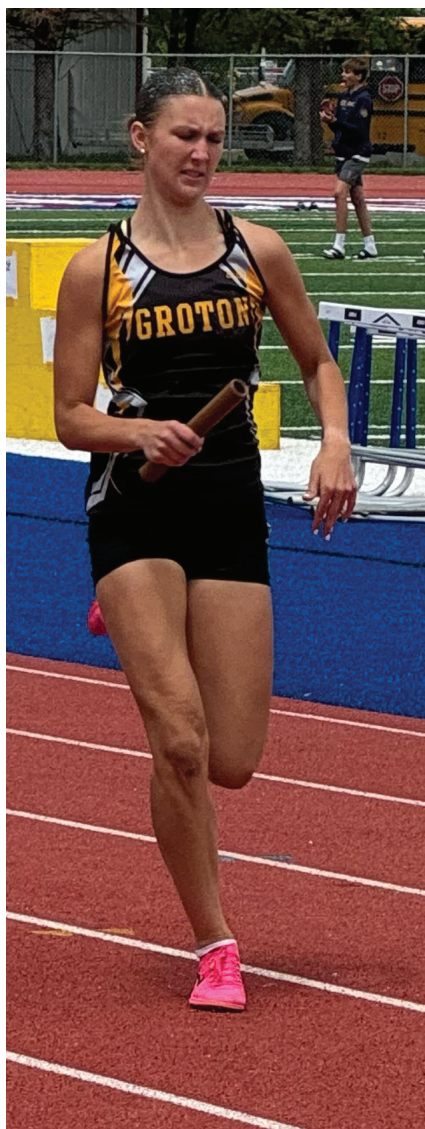
High Jump: 7. Emerlee Jones, 4' 6".

Long Jump: 7. MaKenna Krause, 15' 7.5"; 31. Teagan Hanten, 12' 1".

Triple Jump: 22. Teagan Hanten, 25' 8.5".

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Sophomore Taryn Traphagen anchors the winning 4x200m relay and setting a new personal record. (Photo by

Bruce Babcock)



Freshman Makenna Krause leaps in the long jump in the Warner Last Chance meet on Friday. She finished in 7th place and set a personal record.

(Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Freshman distance standout Ryelle Gilbert nears the finish line in her winning race of the 1600m (1 mile) run. (Photo by Bruce

Babcock)

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Groton Area Tiger competitive 100m High hurdles L-R Ella Kettner, Emerlee Jones, Talli Wright, Tevan Hanson, and Hannah Sandness. Tevan Hanson and Talli Wright placing 6th and 8th respectively. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



L-R Groton Area Tiger Freshman Ryder Schelle and Senior Brevin Fliehs sprint in the 100m dash. Brevin placed 7th. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



L-R Juniors sprinter standouts Lincoln Krause and Keegen Tracy place 3rd and 2nd respectively in the 100m dash. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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Kella Tracy hands off to McKenna Tietz in the winning 4x200m relay and set a personal record. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Groton Area Tigers distance standout Junior Jayden Schwan and Senior Daniel Person of Britton-Hecla battle in the highly competitive 1600m (mile) run. Jayden placed 2nd and set a new personal record while Daniel won the event separated by only .36 seconds. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Sophomore Ashlynn Warrington placing second in the 1600m (1 mile) run. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Laila Roberts hands off to Riley Dunker in their winning 4x100m relay. They also set a new personal record. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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Junior sprinter standout Kee-gen Tracy wins and sets a new personal record in the 400m run. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Senior Brevin Fliehs hands off to 8th grader Jordan Schwan in the 6th place finishing 4x100m relay team. They also set a new personal record. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

Groton Area Tiger hurdlers L-R Emerlee Jones, Talli Wright, and McKenna Tietz race in the 300m hurdles. McKenna placed second while Emerlee placed 4th.

(Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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Sophomore Taryn Traphagen hands off to Senior Laila Roberts in the winning and setting a personal record in the SMR 1600m relay (200, 200, 400, & 800m). (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Groton Area Tigers L-R Freshman Ella Kettner and 8th grader Tevan Hanson hurdle in the 300m hurdles. Tevan placed 8th. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Senior Laila Roberts hands off to Sophomore Kella Tracy in the winning SMR 1600m relay. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Tiger distant standouts Senior Faith Traphagen and Freshman Ryelle Gilbert run one and two in the 800m race. Taryn finished 1st and set a personal record while Ryelle placed 2nd. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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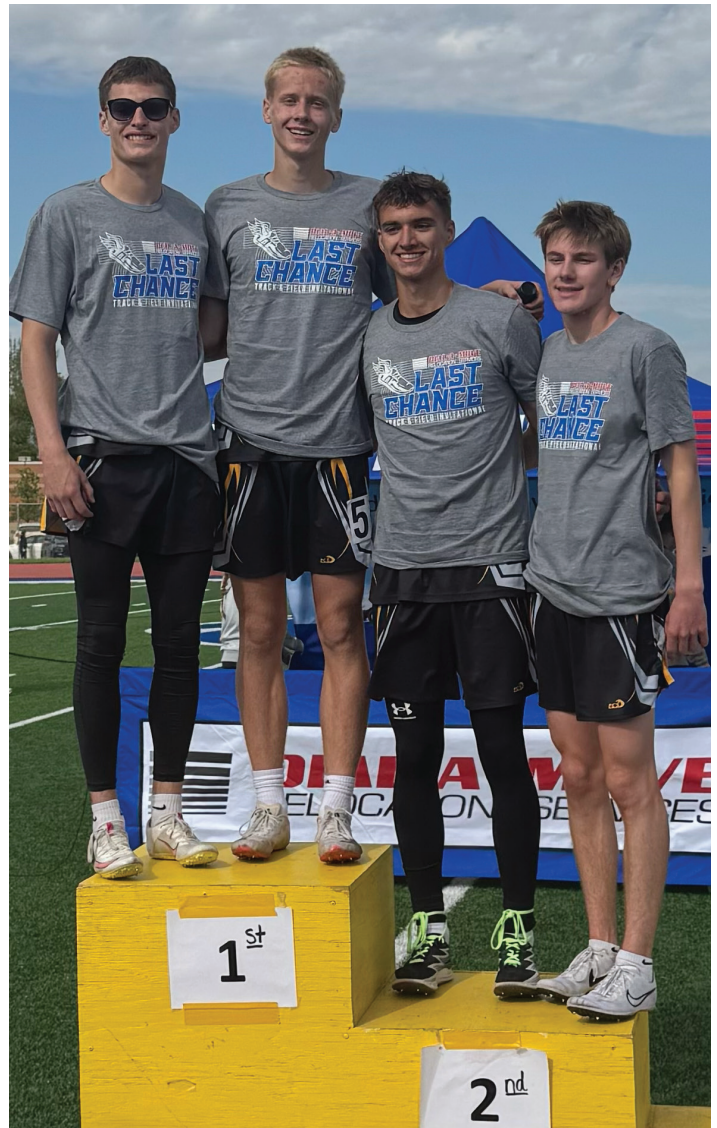
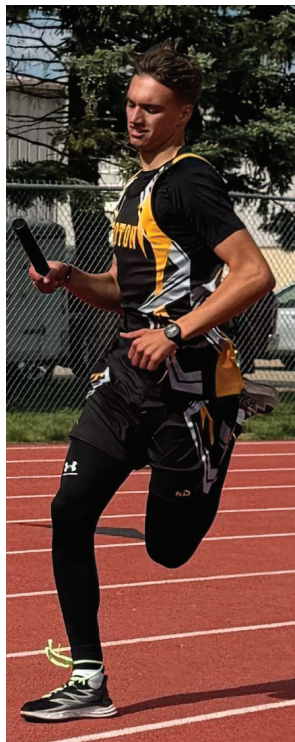
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Senior middle distant standout **Blake Pauli** wins another 800m race while setting a personal record. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Ethan Kroll (above) **Jayden Schwan** (below right) and **Blake Pauli** (below left) running the 4x400m relay. (Photos by Bruce Babcock)



Groton Area standout 4x400m relay team wins and sets a new personal record. L-R **Keegen Tracy**, **Ethan Kroll**, **Jayden Schwan**, and **Blake Pauli**. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



MEMORIAL DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



Groton Post #39 Memorial Day Schedule

Hufton at 7:30 a.m.

James at 8:15 a.m.

Verdon at 8:45 a.m.

Bates-Scotland at 9:15 a.m.

Ferney at 10 a.m.

Andover Union at 11 a.m.

Groton at Noon
Guest speaker at Groton
is Todd Oliver.

Lunch to follow at the Groton Post
#39 home served by the
Legion Auxiliary.

In the event of inclement weather,
the ceremony will be held at the
Post home.

Groton Post #39 is sponsoring
the FREE viewing of the broadcast
at

GDILIVE.COM

People in their vehicles can listen
on the radio at 89.3 FM.

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Groton Area Fourth Quarter Honor Roll

Seniors:

4.0 GPA: Axel Warrington, Payton Mitchell, Gretchen Dinger, Elizabeth Fliehs, Diego Eduardo Nava Remigio, Logan Pearson, Faith Traphagen, Turner Thompson, Emma Kutter, Brooklyn Hansen, Kennedy Hansen, Jeslyn Kosel, Kayla Lehr, Blake Pauli, Laila Roberts, Abby Yeadon

3.99-3.50: Kaden Kampa, Carter Simon, Brevin Fliehs, Korbin Kucker, Ashly Johnson, Teylor Diegel, Emma Bahr, Drew Thurston, Ashlyn Feser, Rebecca Poor

3.49-3.00: Aiden Heathcote, Kellen Antonsen, Christian Ehresmann, Karsten Jeschke

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Nathan Unzen, Jerica Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Talli Wright, Carly Gilbert, Ryder Johnson, Natalia Warrington, Karsten Fliehs, Mia Crank, De Eh Tha Say, Keegen Tracy, Rylee Dunker, Gage Sippel, Raelee Lilly

3.99-3.50: Lincoln Krause, Becker Bosma, London Bahr, Lucas Carda, Paisley Mitchell, Logan Warrington, Karter Moody, Hannah Sandness, Garrett Schultz, Drake Peterson, Aiden Meyers, Olivia Stiegelmeier

3.49-3.00: Cali Tollifson, Jayden Schwan, Breslyn Jeschke, Cambria Bonn, Benjamin Hoeft

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Liby Althoff, Kira Clocksene, Teagan Hanten, Carlee Johnson, Ashlynn Warrington, Colt Williamson

3.99-3.50: Brody Lord, Taryn Traphagen, Brenna Imrie, Addison Hoffman Wipf, Hailey Pauli, Claire Schuelke, McKenna Tietz, Avery Crank, Gavin Kroll, Blake Lord, Halee Harder, Jackson Hopfinger, Leah Jones, Emerlee Jones

3.49-3.00: Kella Tracy, Zander Harry, Walker Zoellner, Hayden Zoellner, Dylan Alexander Lopez Marin

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Makenna Krause, Sydney Locke, Thomas Schuster

3.99-3.50: Chesney Weber, Jace Johnson, Layne Johnson, Easton Weber, Elizabeth Cole, Rylén Ekern, Mya Feser, Taryn Thompson, Ethan Kroll, Kyleigh Kroll, Rylie Rose, Ryder Schelle, Karson Zak

3.49-3.00: Brayden Barrera, Brysen Sandness, Alex Abeln, Aimee Heilman, Gracie Pearson, Addison Hoeft, Braeden Fliehs,

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Wesley Borg, Zachary Fliehs, Asher Johnson, Novalea Warrington

3.99-3.50: Tevan Hanson, Brooklyn Spanier, Abby Fjeldheim, Aspen Beto, Sydney Holmes, Logan Olson, Neely Althoff, Kolton Antonsen, Madison Herrick, Jordan Schwan, Lincoln Shilhanek, Arianna Dinger, Raquel Tracy

3.49-3.00: Samuel Crank, Tenley Frost, Connor Kroll, Kaedynce Bonn, Adeline Kotzer, Jose Fernando Nava Remigio, Wesley Morehouse, Lillian Cowan, Tate Johnson, Aurora Washenberger

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Axel Abeln, Hudson Eichler, Amelia Ewalt, Sophia Fliehs, Gavin Hanten, Liam Johnson, Liam Lord

3.99-3.50: Asher Zimmerman, Andi Gauer, Elias Heilman, Ryder Schwan, Jameson Penning, Trey Tietz, Ilyanna Dallaire, Rowan Patterson

3.49-3.00: Jace Hofer, Kinleigh Furman, Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Gavin Younger, Kyson Kucker, Haden Harder, Xzavier Klebch, Nolan Bahr

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Lillian Davis, Brynlee Dunker

3.99-3.50: Gracie Borg, Libby Johnson, Addison Steffes, Rylee Stoltenburg, Amara El Salahy, Andi Iverson, Victoria Schuster, Ayce Warrington, Ambrielle Feist, Rylee Hofer, Zoe Olson, Kinley Sandness, Kendyll Kroll, Maycee Moody, Taylynn Traphagen, Parker Zoellner, Hank Hill, Easton Larson, Knox Mulder, Bella Barrera, Hadley Heilman, Drew Fjeldheim, Brinley Guthemiller, Mason Locke

3.49-3.00: Mya Moody, Kinton Tracy, Grady Rowen, Jaella Fliehs, Charlie Jacobsen, Ivan Schwan, Keith Furman, Emmett Zoellner, Preston Hinkelman

OPENING MAY 2ND
CLOSING JUNE 2ND

WEBER LANDSCAPING GREENHOUSE

620 WEST THIRD AVENUE

GROTON

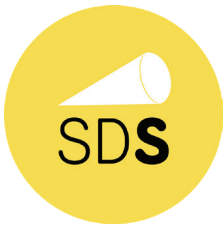
HOURS OF OPERATION

M-F 10-6

SAT 10-4

SUN 12-4





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'I question it myself': South Dakota vaccination rates fall amid mistrust and misinformation

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FRIDAY MAY 23, 2025 5:20 PM

Grant Vander Vorst is at the epicenter of vaccine hesitancy in South Dakota: Just 56% of incoming kindergartners in Faulk County, where he lives, were up to date on their measles, mumps and rubella vaccination during the 2023-24 school year, which was the lowest rate of any county in the state with available data.

Vander Vorst is the superintendent of Faulkton Area Schools. He said some parents are skeptical about the safety of administering multiple childhood vaccinations in a short window of time, "and justifiably so."

"I question it myself, and a lot of others do as well," he said.

Vander Vorst said his views are influenced by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a longtime vaccine skeptic whose statements about vaccines have been called false and misleading by medical professionals.

"I haven't looked into the research, but he obviously has," Vander Vorst said.

Faulk County is not alone. Across South Dakota, vaccine hesitancy that took hold during the COVID-19 pandemic has expanded beyond skepticism of new vaccines to doubts about long-established ones, said Erin Tobin, a nurse practitioner and Republican former state senator from Winner.

Tobin said a growing number of parents are trusting web posts and social media influencers over local health care professionals.

"It used to be that I could start a discussion with a patient with the words 'the CDC recommends,'" Tobin said, referencing the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "and now I'm cautious to use that because people don't trust the CDC."

During the 2018-19 school year, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 96% of kindergartners in South Dakota received all their required vaccinations. That number fell to 91% during the 2023-24 school year, the most recent year of available statewide data.

Public health advocates are sounding the alarm about declining vaccination rates as the United States experiences its most severe measles outbreak since 2000, with over 1,000 confirmed cases across 31 states, including 12 confirmed cases in North Dakota. South Dakota has not had a confirmed case of measles so far this year, but last July, it reported its first measles case in nine years.

According to the CDC, a measles vaccination rate of 95% is needed to achieve herd immunity and prevent outbreaks, given the highly contagious nature of the virus.

Ten years ago, only six South Dakota counties had MMR rates below 95%, with the lowest being 80%. Now, more than 40 counties in the state are below 95%, with 12 below 80% and five below 70%. The rates could be even lower than the numbers indicate, because kindergarten-age students being home-schooled or attending other forms of alternative instruction are not required to report their vaccination status. There were 431 alternative-instruction kindergarten students statewide last fall.

The MMR vaccine is a key indicator for public health, said Dr. Amy Winter, an epidemiologist at the University of Georgia College of Public Health. When MMR vaccination rates fall, it signals broader vulnerabilities.

"Where there is measles, there could be other outbreaks, other infectious diseases, depending on the dearth of vaccination that may be happening," Winter said.

Mark Sternhagen, a retiree who formerly taught at South Dakota State University, knows those risks well. He was born soon after the polio vaccine came out in 1955. He contracted polio before his parents were able to get him vaccinated, and has used a wheelchair ever since.

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"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that if I got the vaccine, I would not have gotten polio," he said. "I look at these declining rates and it just makes me sick."

Sternhagen said his mother carried guilt, but he doesn't blame her. He said vaccinations in South Dakota were less accessible, and parents were less informed, but modern parents who do have access to vaccines and valid information don't have those excuses.

"You're putting your children and others' children at risk, and there is no question about that," he said.

Requirements and religion

The first laws requiring immunization appeared in the 1800s, coinciding with the development and spread of a smallpox vaccine. In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a local government's vaccination mandate as a prerequisite to attending public school, leading states to implement similar requirements.

States began allowing religious exemptions in the mid-20th century following advocacy from religious minorities, like the Christian Scientists. Adherents generally rely on prayer over medical care, and often decline to vaccinate children, according to the Harvard Divinity School.

South Dakota's immunization law requires children entering school or early childhood programs to be immunized against poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, rubeola, rubella, mumps, tetanus, meningitis and varicella.

There are two exemptions in South Dakota's law. One is a medical exemption for children with certification from a licensed physician that immunization would threaten their life or health. Those exemptions have remained steady over the past decade at 0.2% of kindergartners or less.

There's also a religious exemption, requiring a written statement from a parent or guardian that the child is an adherent of a religious doctrine whose teachings are opposed to immunization.

Religious exemptions are growing in South Dakota, where 5.4% of kindergartners had them last school year, compared to 1.5% a decade ago. In raw numbers, that's a change from 181 kindergartners to 636.

Tobin, the nurse practitioner and former legislator, said the claiming of a religious exemption is probably not religiously motivated in many cases.

"I do think they're using that as this all-encompassing exemption, and so it's probably something they just don't believe in, but not necessarily something that is against the religion," she said.

One factor contributing to South Dakota's declining vaccination trend is falling rates among Hutterite people, members of a communal branch of the Anabaptist faith who have dozens of agricultural-based colonies in the state.

During the 2019-20 school year, six of the approximately 50 Hutterite colony elementary schools in the state reported vaccination rates of 0%. Thirty-two of them did so during the 2023-24 school year.

There are questions about the validity of the data. A state Department of Health dashboard shows some Hutterite colony schools with 0% of their kindergarten students vaccinated, but also shows some of those same schools with less than 100% of the students claiming a religious or medical exemption. South Dakota Searchlight asked the Department of Health and the Department of Education to explain the discrepancy but did not receive a full explanation from either department.

Searchlight followed-up by asking the departments what the state is doing to address the discrepancies.

"If any students are identified as neither vaccinated nor exempted (medical or religious), the accreditation team identifies that as a 'finding, which requires the school district to resolve the deficit,'" Department of Education spokeswoman Nancy Van Der Weide said in written statement. "If the school takes action to correct the situation within the allotted timeframe, the district receives accreditation. If they fail to do so, the school may be placed on probation or ultimately suspended."

As of Friday, Van Der Weide had not identified which schools, if any, are currently on probation or facing suspension over vaccination exemption issues.

Upland Colony Elementary near Letcher, within the Sanborn Central School District, is one such school where the data does not add up. Laura Licht is an administrative assistant with the district. She said students at the colony have filed exemptions, and the data may not be getting pulled properly by the state.

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Vander Vorst said his school district of 36 kindergarteners includes three Hutterite colony schools in its borders, and he said that likely contributes to the county's low vaccination rate. The numbers show that Faulkton Area School's kindergarten vaccination rate for required immunizations was 77% last year, while the rates for the three colony schools in the district ranged from zero to 50%.

Josh Oltmanns, CEO and elementary principal of Hanson School District, echoed that. The vaccination rate among kindergarteners at Hanson Elementary last year was 94%. The rates at the district's colony schools were as low as 50%.

"I'd bet, if you look, a lot of these lower school districts have colonies," Oltmanns said. "And that's within those peoples' rights."

It's unclear why Hutterite people would be less supportive of vaccinations now than previously.

South Dakota Searchlight made multiple calls to Hutterite colonies and to educators who serve Hutterite students, but most were unwilling to speak about the potential reasons for vaccine hesitancy. An academic who studies the Hutterite faith said he doesn't know why vaccination rates at colonies would be falling.

At one colony, a member who declined to provide her name said hesitancy is driven by the number of vaccines now being given to children.

"They've added so many more," she said. "It's a risk we don't want to take."

Answering concerns

Medical professionals say those fears are unfounded.

The CDC says vaccines contain weakened or killed versions of germs that cause a disease. These elements of vaccines, and other molecules and micro-organisms that stimulate the immune system, are called "antigens."

Dr. Allie Alvine, founder of South Dakota Families for Vaccines, said children encounter more antigen exposure during "one play session in a sandbox" than during an entire vaccine schedule.

"And the ones we expose a child to via vaccination are proven to be good for them," Alvine said. "What we expose them to is targeted and saves lives."

Dr. Ashley Sands, a specialist in pediatric infectious diseases with Sanford Health, said parents are more frequently asking questions about the efficacy of vaccinations. She finds herself debunking some of Kennedy's claims, like rumored links between vaccines and autism.

The claim that the MMR vaccine causes autism originated from a 1998 study by Andrew Wakefield, which was discredited due to serious methodological flaws, undisclosed conflicts of interest, and ethical violations. Multiple large-scale studies since then have found no credible evidence supporting the claim. Wakefield lost his medical license, and his paper was retracted.

"The medical community can read the research it conducts," Sands said. "Is it not far more likely Kennedy, who has never done medical research nor formally studied medicine, is misinterpreting or misrepresenting the data?"

Sands emphasized that vaccination recommendations are built on decades of peer-reviewed and replicated research.

"A good doctor is keeping up with the medical journals pertinent to their field and adjusting patient recommendations as our shared science evolves," Sands said. "Meanwhile, Kennedy is using his position to push conspiracies."

Sands also hears parents romanticize "natural immunity" over vaccination. She warns that natural infection with diseases like measles can be deadly. Plus, infants and immunocompromised people rely on those around them to be immune, blocking the disease's spread. If enough people are vaccinated, the disease can't reach those most at risk.

"A child with cancer should have the freedom to go to school without being exposed to illnesses that are easily preventable," Sands said.

Vaccinations and Pierre politics

Alvine said vaccine misinformation has taken hold in South Dakota politics. She cited recent failed legis-

lation targeting vaccines, including bills promoting “conscience exemptions” to vaccination mandates and separating blood donations based on COVID-19 vaccination status — all based on misinformation, Alvine said.

“They prey on parents’ fears,” Alvine said. “Once you instill fear, it’s hard to fix that.”

Republican House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach of Spearfish voted for the conscience exemptions bill. He said “the ‘trust the science’ phase of COVID” is why people are more vaccine hesitant.

“I think wisdom is needed to make the distinction between true public health emergencies and those situations, more often, where personal bodily autonomy has to remain inviolate,” Odenbach said.

Alvine said she’s trying to educate people to accept vaccines, not force them against their will.

“Anytime we can save a child’s life, to grow up and live, it’s worth it,” she said. “It’s not, ‘Most kids will get through it and be fine.’ They will be miserable. A portion will get lifelong, deadly diseases stemming from measles, and some will even die.”

Nearly every child in the U.S. caught measles before the vaccine became available in 1963. In 2000, health officials declared measles eliminated in the U.S. thanks to nearly universal vaccination.

The South Dakota Department of Health declined an interview for this story but provided a statement noting the downward trend in childhood vaccinations is concerning. The department highlighted ongoing marketing efforts, refreshed ad campaigns, and 1,700 more total immunizations – combined among children and adults – administered in 2024 than 2023.

“We can have a positive impact on all health outcomes, including childhood vaccination rates, by addressing access to care, social drivers of health care outcomes, and public awareness campaigns,” the department said.

President Donald Trump’s federal spending cuts have included \$1.7 million in reduced or eliminated grants to the department, including \$83,500 labeled as being for immunizations and vaccines for children.

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

South Dakota Attorney General clarifies scope of immigration enforcement agreement

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 23, 2025 3:05 PM

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley shared Friday that the new immigration enforcement agreement he aims to enter into with federal authorities is the same type Gov. Larry Rhoden aims for, but said his agents will only use that authority in limited circumstances.

The agreements let officials trained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) ask people about their immigration status and make warrantless arrests for suspected violations.

Jackley’s requested agreement between ICE and the state Division of Criminal Investigation is limited in scope, however, he said in a Friday press release.

“To be clear, I am restricting the use of this federal authority to violent criminals and drug dealers,” Jackley said.

Jackley first announced his intent to pursue the agreement during a news conference this week with Republican attorneys general at the U.S.-Mexico border. At the time, the type of agreement was not specified.

The news came via the release of Jackley’s proposed agreement, which operates under Jackley’s direction. ICE had not yet signed the shared agreement signed stateside by DCI Director Dan Satterlee.

ICE offers three types of agreements under Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. One, the Jail Enforcement Model, lets trained jailers ask those in their custody about their immigration status, and lets those jailers search ICE databases and issue immigration detention orders.

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Another trains local jail staff as ICE Warrant Service Officers, allowing them to serve immigration warrants obtained from a judge by ICE officers to inmates already in local custody. Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead and Hughes County Sheriff Patrick Callahan both made those types of agreements earlier this spring.

The third type of agreement offers the broadest scope of authority to local officers. The Task Force Model trains locals who work outside detention centers to act as limited immigration agents, enabling them to ask those they encounter in the normal course of police business about their immigration status, and to arrest them if they're suspected of violating immigration law. The Obama administration discontinued the type in 2012 due to concerns about racial profiling and civil rights violations. They were revived by the Trump administration earlier this year.

Jackley and Rhoden, both Republicans and potential 2026 gubernatorial candidates, have characterized their support for the agreements as moves showing them to be in lockstep with President Trump's immigration policies.

While Jackley said in a press release that his agents would use their immigration enforcement authority in limited situations, Rhoden spokeswoman Josie Harms would not expand upon the scenarios under which state troopers would use their authority once an agreement is in place for the highway patrol.

Taneeza Islam, CEO of South Dakota Voices for Peace, said the general message will make victims of labor and sex trafficking less likely to come forward, and lets perpetrators threaten to turn their victims in for deportation if they attempt to flee.

"You have legal protections if you come forward, but victims don't know that," Islam said.

ICE has authority and supervision over all immigration-related activities, according to Jackley's agreement. Authorities must undergo ICE-led training and pass federal exams. ICE covers training-related travel costs and provides instructors and materials.

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

COMMENTARY

Problems could outpace savings from proposed cuts to federal food and health programs

by Lori Dykstra

As Congress weighs the latest budget reconciliation bill, it's important to take a step back and consider how these decisions will affect everyday people in South Dakota. Reducing federal spending and promoting self-reliance are important goals, but some of the proposed changes could unintentionally create more problems than they solve.

If you've been to the grocery store lately, you've likely noticed how much harder it has become to afford the basics. For many families in South Dakota this isn't just a budget concern – it's a daily challenge.

We urge Rep. Dusty Johnson, Sen. Mike Rounds and Senate Majority Leader John Thune to consider the concerning impacts that the current proposal by the House could have. Federal support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) would be significantly reduced, shifting more of the cost to states. South Dakota's share of that expense could range from \$9 million to \$18 million as early as 2028 — an increased pressure on a state budget already stretched thin.

At the same time, it would impact the South Dakota economy as SNAP supports 789 retailers in the state to the tune of over \$156 million. Each SNAP dollar has up to \$1.80 of economic impact, supporting the supply chain from farmer to store. Reduce the program, reduce the revenue.

The increased state cost and reduced revenue would force states to make tough choices: cut benefits,

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limit eligibility or raise taxes to cover the gap.

Proposed Medicaid cuts would hit rural hospitals especially hard, many of which are already stretched thin. These facilities are often the only source of care in their communities, and losing access would be devastating.

The bill also includes new requirements tied to work. SNAP already includes work incentives and gradually reduces benefits as income rises. In South Dakota, over 80% of SNAP recipients live in a family that has one working adult.

Congress modernized SNAP by requiring regular updates to the monthly benefits. However, the current bill includes a proposal to limit future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, which determines SNAP benefit levels. This would reduce support over time, even as food prices remain high. The average SNAP benefit is still just \$6.57 per person, per day, in our state.

At Feeding South Dakota, we are seeing more working families, seniors, children and veterans through our programs and partners; in fact, 15% more than this time last year. We are operating at full capacity and have already felt the very real impact of federal changes after food for 147,000 meals was immediately discontinued in April. It is critical that federal programs stay strong to support the fight to end hunger, or the gap between need and resources will become too great for us to close.

If you take nothing else from this, know that the proposed cuts would:

Increase hunger.

Decrease local revenue.

Overwhelm already strained food pantries.

We urge our lawmakers to think critically about any cuts through a budget reconciliation bill that undermines SNAP and Medicaid.

Lori Dykstra is the CEO of Feeding South Dakota, the state's largest hunger-relief organization and a member of the Feeding America Network. A graduate of the University of South Dakota, she spent the first two decades of her career building executive leadership skills in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Along with team members, communities and partners, Lori strives to support Feeding South Dakota's vision of a state where no one person's health, well-being or potential is hindered by the availability of nutritious food.

More than 3 million people would lose SNAP benefits under GOP bill, nonpartisan report says

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MAY 23, 2025 3:27 PM

The massive tax and spending bill passed by U.S. House Republicans would likely result in 3.2 million people losing food assistance benefits, and saddle states with around \$14 billion a year in costs, according to a new analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

Democrats have argued the bill, which the House passed, 215-214 early Thursday without any Democrats in support, would cut programs for the needy to fund tax breaks for high earners.

The CBO document, issued late Thursday, responded to a request to the office from the top Democrats on the Senate and House Agriculture committees, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Rep. Angie Craig, both of Minnesota, and somewhat bolsters that claim. The panels oversee federal food aid programs.

"This report is truly devastating," Craig said in a Friday statement to States Newsroom. "As a mother and someone who at times relied on food assistance as a child, these numbers are heartbreaking. It is infuriating that Republicans in Congress are willing to make our children go hungry so they can give tax breaks to the already rich."

A provision in the bill to tighten work requirements, including by excluding single parents of children older than 6 and by raising the age of adults to whom the work requirements apply, of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, would result in 3.2 million people losing access to the program in an average month, the CBO report said.

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Of those, 1.4 million would be people who currently have a state waiver from work requirements that would be disallowed under the bill and 800,000 would be adults who live with children 7 or older, the report said.

In a Friday statement, Ben Nichols, a spokesman for the House Agriculture Committee led by Pennsylvania Republican Glenn 'GT' Thompson, said the proposed change would be more fair to the people SNAP is supposed to help and noted the program is the only state-administered entitlement program that is paid fully by the federal government.

"No one who is able-bodied and working, volunteering, or training for 20 hours a week will lose benefits," Nichols wrote.

Republicans want to use the legislative package to extend the 2017 tax law and its cuts, increase spending on border security and defense by hundreds of billions of dollars, overhaul American energy production, restructure higher education aid and cut spending.

Toll on states

The cost-share changes, which would require states for the first time to pay for a portion of SNAP benefits, would also limit participation and add a massive line item to state budgets, according to the CBO.

Starting in 2028, states would be responsible for paying 5% to 25% of SNAP benefits, with a state's share rising with its payment error rate. The federal government currently pays for all SNAP benefits.

Under the House bill, which will likely undergo substantial changes as the Senate considers it in the coming weeks, states collectively would be responsible for just less than \$100 billion from 2028 to 2034, about \$14 billion per year.

States would respond in a variety of ways, CBO Director Phillip Swagel wrote, including potentially dropping out of the program.

"CBO expects that some states would maintain current benefits and eligibility and others would modify benefits or eligibility or possibly leave the program altogether because of the increased costs," he wrote.

The office took a "probabilistic approach to account for a range of possible outcomes" to determine what the effect on households would be and estimated that 1.3 million people would lose benefits because of state responses to the new cost-share.

Nichols, with the House Agriculture Committee, disputed the CBO's estimate regarding the cost share change. The lowest state cost-share of 5% would be available for states with error rates below 6%. Every state has hit that mark at some point in the last decade, he said.

With that favorable of a cost-share, the Republican committee members did not believe states would drop out of the program, he added.

"We reject the hypothetical assumption that some states may not chip into 5 percent of a supplemental nutrition program," Nichols wrote. "Every state is capable of paying for a portion SNAP... Federal policy should encourage states to administer the SNAP program more efficiently and effectively, and this bill does just that."

CBO's forecasters determined the impacts of the work requirements and cost-share provisions separately, meaning some people potentially losing benefits could have been counted in both categories.

Move to the Senate

The House vote Thursday sent the measure to the Senate, where the debate over SNAP benefits may fall along similar party lines.

Republicans who hold control in that chamber are planning to employ the budget reconciliation process, which allows them to skirt the Senate's usual 60-vote requirement for legislation.

During the House Agriculture Committee's debate over its portion of the legislation, Republicans on the panel said the work requirement and state cost-share measures were needed reforms to SNAP that would protect the program for those it was meant to serve, while limiting the costs associated with benefits to adults who were able and unwilling to work or in the country illegally.

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In a Friday statement, Sara Lasure, a spokeswoman for Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman, an Arkansas Republican, also said the panel would seek reforms to the program but did not offer specifics.

"The Senate Agriculture Committee is in the process of crafting its budget reconciliation package and will work as good stewards of taxpayer dollars to make commonsense reforms to SNAP that encourage employment," she wrote in an email.

Klobuchar, in a statement after House passage Thursday, blasted the House bill and indicated she would oppose efforts to cut SNAP benefits.

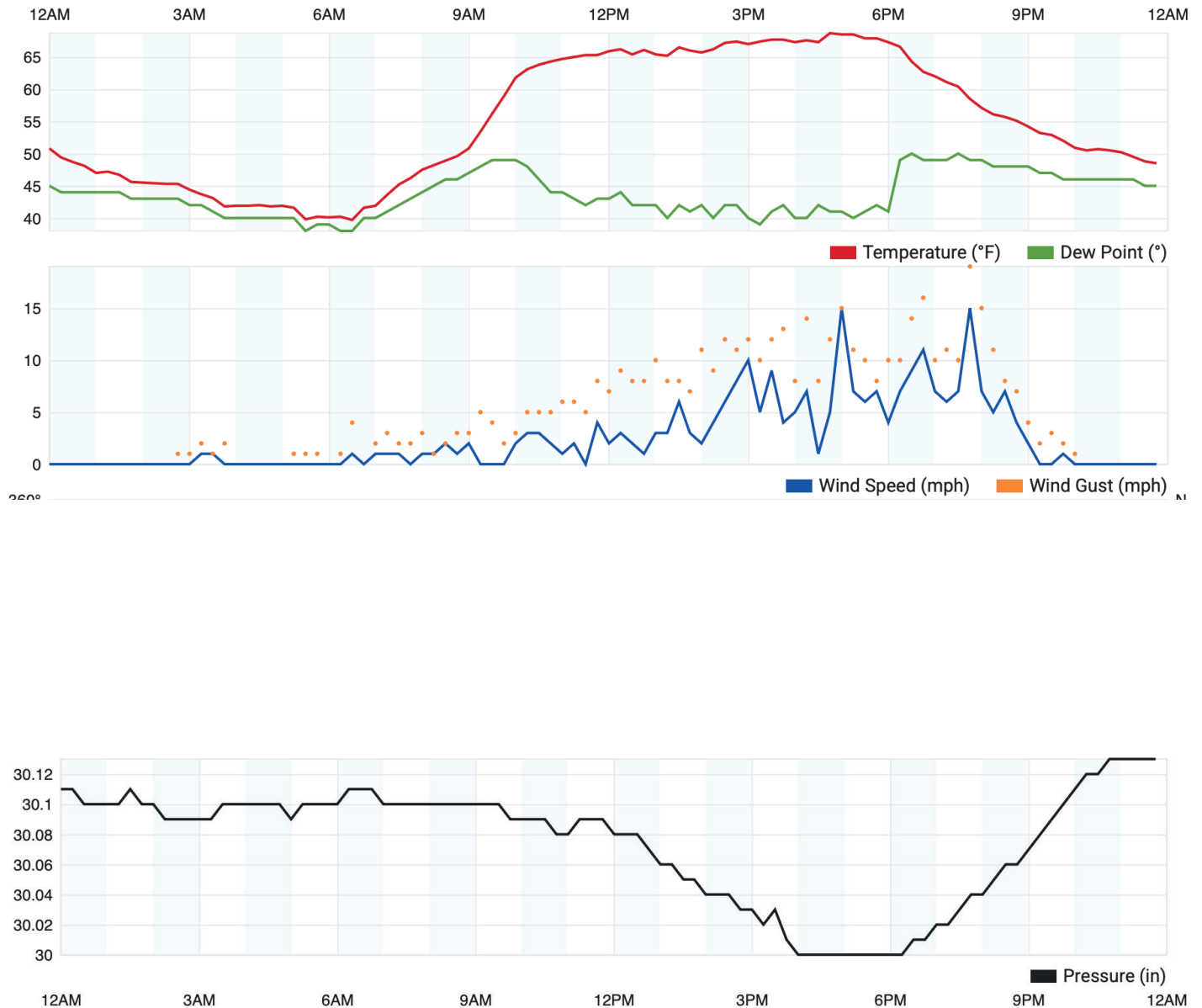
"House Republicans are pulling the rug out from under millions of families by taking away federal assistance to put food on the table," she said. "They're doing that even as President Trump's tariff taxes raise food prices by more than \$200 for the average family, all to fund more tax breaks for the wealthy. That's so very wrong—and we will fight against it in the Senate."

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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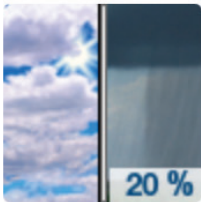
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 67 °F

Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers

Tonight



Low: 42 °F

Mostly Cloudy

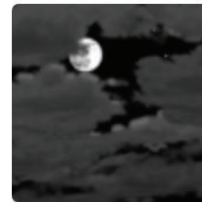
Sunday



High: 70 °F

Mostly Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 46 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Memorial Day



High: 68 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
Showers

Through the Holiday Weekend

Saturday



Highs: 55-68°F

20-40% chance
for showers west
of the James
River Valley

Sunday



Highs: 57-70°F

Lows: 40-48°F

20-50% chance
for showers west
of the James
River Valley

Monday



Highs: 57-70°F

Lows: 44-50°F

30-60% chance
for showers



Aberdeen, SD

There will be a chance for showers through the weekend, mainly west of the James River Valley spreading east through the day Monday. Temperatures will be slightly cooler than normal, with highs in the 50s-70s and lows in the low to mid 40s.

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Rain Through the Weekend

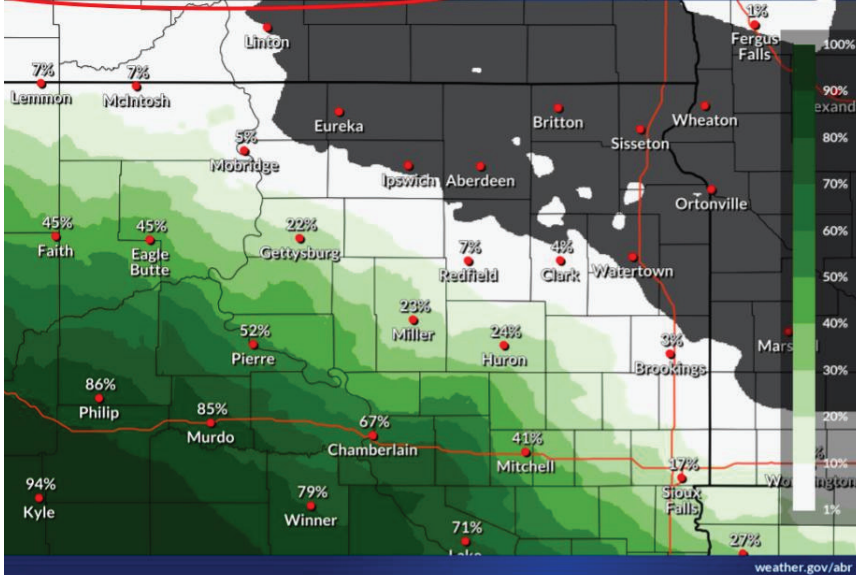
May 24, 2025
4:20 AM

Rainy conditions for Memorial Day are possible.

Percent Chance of 0.5" Liquid Precipitation or More

Valid 1 AM Sat May 24, 2025 through 7 PM Mon May 26, 2025

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued May 24, 2025 3:16 AM CDT



- ★ Rain chances will be in place each day through at least Memorial Day.
 - Chances for rain pop up again today through Monday.
- ★ Rain showers are expected to remain light.
 - A rumble of thunder may be possible, but strong to severe storms are not expected.
- ★ The majority of the rain over the holiday weekend will be over central South Dakota.

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

There is a 20-40% chance for rain this weekend mainly over central South Dakota, spreading east and increasing to 30-60% Monday. These rain showers are expected to be light, but parts of the area may see up to a quarter or half an inch of rainfall through Monday afternoon. Strong to severe storms are not expected.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 4:39 PM

Low Temp: 39 °F at 6:22 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 7:42 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 17 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1926

Record Low: 25 in 1897

Average High: 73

Average Low: 48

Average Precip in May.: 2.61

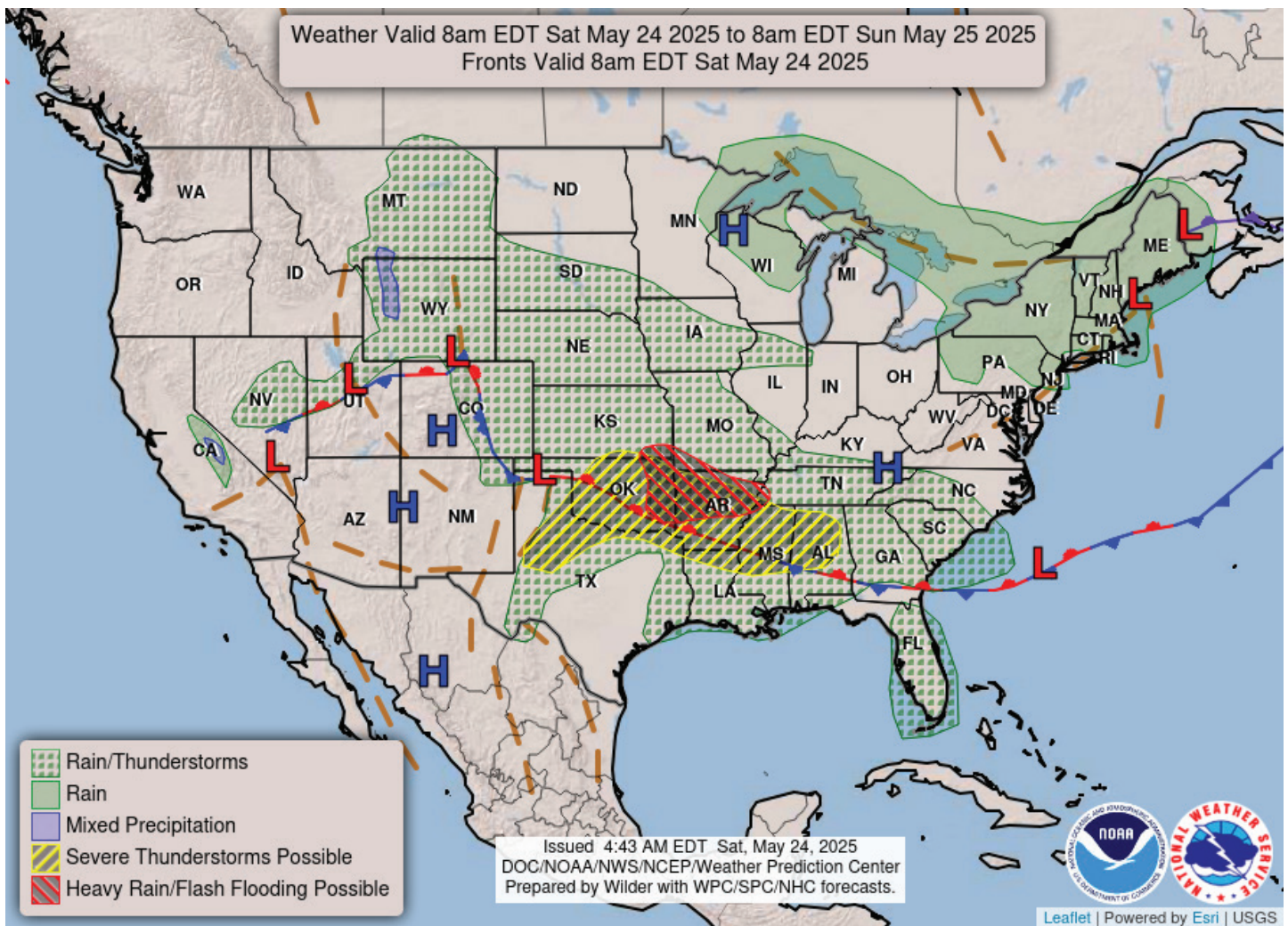
Precip to date in May.: 3.35

Average Precip to date: 6.88

Precip Year to Date: 5.98

Sunset Tonight: 9:07:59 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49:48 am



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Today in Weather History

May 24th, 1960: A tornado touched down about 7 miles northwest of Roscoe and destroyed a small shed near a country schoolhouse. Funnel clouds were also observed in the Hosmer area, near Eureka, and 30 miles west of Aberdeen. An unofficial report of 4 inches of rain fell at Hosmer.

May 24th, 2008: A supercell thunderstorm produced seven tornadoes in Dewey County. Since these tornadoes remained in the open country, all were rated EF0.

1894 - Six inches of snow blanketed Kentucky. Just four days earlier as much as ten inches of snow had fallen across Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Six days earlier a violent storm had wrecked nine ships on Lake Michigan. (David Ludlum)

1930 - A tornado touched down near the town of Pratt, KS, and traveled at the incredibly slow speed of just 5 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1940 - Hail fell near Ada OK to a depth of six to eight inches, and rainfall runoff left drifts of hail up to five feet high. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas spawned a couple of tornadoes near Silverton, and produced golf ball size hail east of the town of Happy. Thunderstorms also produced large hail and damaging winds in Louisiana and Texas. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 88 mph at Columbia, NC. Baseball size hail was reported near Tifton GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather across the Upper Midwest through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned 30 tornadoes, and there were 158 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-3) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Corning, IA, and a powerful (F-4) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Traer, IA. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 88 mph killed one person and injured five others at Stephenville, WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Severe thunderstorms spawned two dozen tornadoes from Montana to Oklahoma. Four tornadoes carved a 109-mile path across central Kansas. The third of the four tornadoes blew 88 cars off an 125-car train off the track, stacking them three to four cars high in some cases, and the fourth tornado caused 3.9 million dollars damage. The third tornado injured six persons who were trying to escape in vehicles. A woman was "sucked out" of a truck and said that at one time she was "airborne, trying to run but my feet wouldn't touch the ground". She also saw a live deer "flying through the air". (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Sexual promiscuity, in the eyes of many, is “not all that bad” or “something that can’t be helped” or is “just the way things are.”

For some, it has been labeled an “addiction” that needs to be “cured.” For others, it is not “what I had planned — but just happened.”

And far too many have been desensitized to the fact that it is a sin and simply wrong — or if it’s “consensual,” it’s OK.

Not in God’s sight. It is sin and wrong.

God, speaking through Solomon, graphically set the standards for a sexual lifestyle that He would bless — and the consequences for those who disregard His commandment.

Following God’s wisdom brings:

Justice

Safety

Deliverance

Good, godly friends

Pleasure

Peace

Security

Longevity

Wellness

Wholesome living

And certainly — His very best blessings.

On the other hand...

The “passing pleasure” of indulging in a life of adulterous living, however, has its own “rewards.” Solomon writes:

“Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng.”

It would seem that this would cause many to pause and ponder about sexual misconduct.

But it does not stop there: “Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.”

What a powerful exposé of the sin of adultery.

Our choice is very clear:

We can enjoy intimacy and pleasure that comes from following God’s plan for sex,
or follow a path that ends in the chamber of death.

Prayer: Lord, as always, the choice is ours. If we want a “God-blest life” as You designed for us, we must follow Your commands. Lead us in paths of righteousness. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Scripture: “Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.” — Proverbs 7:26–27

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: 05.23.25

7 18 40 55 68 18

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$173,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

1 14 15 19 31 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$35,560,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 48 Mins 3
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.23.25

4 11 15 19 38 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 3 Mins 3
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

1 14 16 17 25

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 3 Mins 3
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

4 9 21 37 56 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 32 Mins 3
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

9 29 31 34 43 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$163,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 32 Mins 3
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

A Planned Parenthood affiliate plans to close 4 clinics in Iowa and another 4 in Minnesota

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

Four of the six Planned Parenthood clinics in Iowa and four in Minnesota will shut down in a year, the Midwestern affiliate operating them said Friday, blaming a freeze in federal funds, budget cuts proposed in Congress and state restrictions on abortion.

The clinics closing in Iowa include the only Planned Parenthood facility in the state that provides abortion procedures, in Ames, home to Iowa State University. The others are in Cedar Rapids, Sioux City and the Des Moines suburb of Urbandale.

Two of the clinics being shut down by Planned Parenthood North Central States are in the Minneapolis area, in Apple Valley and Richfield. The others are in central Minnesota in Alexandria and Bemidji. Of the four, the Richfield clinic provides abortion procedures.

The Planned Parenthood affiliate said it would lay off 66 employees and ask 37 additional employees to move to different clinics. The organization also said it plans to keep investing in telemedicine services and sees 20,000 patients a year virtually. The affiliate serves five states — Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

"We have been fighting to hold together an unsustainable infrastructure as the landscape shifts around us and an onslaught of attacks continues," Ruth Richardson, the affiliate's president and CEO, said in a statement.

Of the remaining 15 clinics operated by Planned Parenthood North Central States, six will provide abortion procedures — five of them in Minnesota, including three in the Minneapolis area. The other clinic is in Omaha, Nebraska.

The affiliate said that in April, President Donald Trump's administration froze \$2.8 million in federal funds for Minnesota to provide birth control and other services, such as cervical cancer screenings and testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

While federal funds can't be used for most abortions, abortion opponents have long argued that Planned Parenthood affiliates should not receive any taxpayer dollars, saying the money still indirectly underwrites abortion services.

Planned Parenthood North Central States also cited proposed cuts in Medicaid, which provides health coverage for low-income Americans, as well as a Trump administration proposal to eliminate funding for teenage pregnancy prevention programs.

In addition, Republican-led Iowa last year banned most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant, causing the number performed there to drop 60% in the first six months the law was in effect and dramatically increasing the number of patients traveling to Minnesota and Nebraska.

After the closings, Planned Parenthood North Central States will operate 10 brick-and-mortar clinics in Minnesota, two in Iowa, two in Nebraska, and one in South Dakota. It operates none in North Dakota, though its Moorhead, Minnesota, clinic is across the Red River from Fargo, North Dakota.

What issues to watch as 'big, beautiful bill' moves to the Senate

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, MATT BROWN and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans were jubilant after muscling through President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful" tax and immigration package by a single vote. But across the Capitol, senators were more cautious.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune can afford to lose three Republican senators and still pass the bill,

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and there are more than that, right now, who have problems with it. Like the House, he will have to balance the concerns from moderate and conservative members of his conference.

Republicans' aspirational deadline is July 4, ahead of a potential debt default. Thune said groups of senators had already been meeting to discuss the legislation and that they would want to take some time to review it. "And then we'll put our stamp on it," he said.

"We'll see how it goes," Thune said. "What does it take to get to 51?"

A look at a few of the potential sticking points in the Senate:

Spending

Several Republican senators have said the House's multi-trillion-dollar tax package doesn't have enough savings. Thune said many in his GOP conference favor the tax breaks in the bill but "when it comes to the spending side of the equation, this is a unique moment in time, in history, where we have the House and the Senate and the White House, and an opportunity to do something meaningful about how to control government spending."

Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., a sharp critic of the House bill, wants the United States to go back to pre-pandemic spending levels. He has indicated he would be a no on the bill as it stands now, and he says he has at least three other senators aligned with him.

Medicaid and food stamp cuts

Senate Republicans are generally on board with stricter work requirements for older Medicaid recipients that make up much of the bill's \$700 billion savings from the program. But Republican Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri, Jerry Moran of Kansas and Susan Collins of Maine, among others, have voiced concerns about other changes in the bill that could potentially cut funding to rural hospitals or increase copays and other health care costs for recipients.

The senators could have a powerful ally in Trump, who has frequently said he doesn't want cuts to Medicaid, even as he's endorsed the House bill. Hawley said he talked to Trump this week on the phone and "his exact words were, 'Don't touch it, Josh.'"

Others have been wary of the House bill's effort to shift some costs of the food stamp program to states, potentially a major issue for some red states that have high numbers of food aid recipients. The House bill saves \$290 billion from the food aid, and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman said the Senate savings will be "probably be a little bit lower."

Permanent tax cuts

Thune said this week that "one of the principal differences" between the House and Senate is that Republican senators want to make many of the tax cuts permanent while the House bill has shorter time frames for many of its cuts — including no taxes on tips, overtime pay, car-loan interest and others.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Mike Crapo said Thursday that trying to make some of the cuts permanent is "an objective right now."

How to pay for it all

One of the biggest questions for the Senate: whether the tax breaks really need to be offset by cuts elsewhere.

To offset the costs of lost tax revenue, House Republicans have proposed more than \$1 trillion in spending reductions across Medicaid, food stamps and green energy program rollbacks. However, Republicans in the Senate do not believe there is a cost associated with permanently extending the existing taxes, setting up a political and procedural showdown ahead.

Debt limit

The House bill includes a \$4 trillion increase in the debt limit. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has warned that the United States is on track to run out of money to pay its bills as early as August without congressional action.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said he won't support the bill if the debt ceiling increase is included. He said he's willing to consider it if it's taken out.

But most Republican senators want it to avoid a separate fight that would require 60 votes in the Senate. Texas Sen. John Cornyn said that if they deal with the debt ceiling outside of the legislation then they

would have to “pay a king’s ransom” to Democrats to get enough votes.

Energy tax credits

Several Republican senators have said they are concerned about House provisions that repeal or phase out clean energy tax credits passed in 2022 that have spurred investment in many states.

Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Thom Tillis of North Carolina, John Curtis of Utah and Moran wrote Thune a letter last month arguing that removing the credits could “create uncertainty, jeopardizing capital allocation, long-term project planning, and job creation in the energy sector and across our broader economy.”

Artificial intelligence

The House bill would ban states and localities from regulating artificial intelligence for a decade, giving the federal government more control over the policy. It’s an approach that has been favored by the AI industry but has drawn concern from members on both sides of the aisle.

And even if it has enough support, the provision may not pass muster from the Senate parliamentarian because it’s unlikely to have impact on the federal budget.

Other issues

With a narrow margin for victory and only 53 Republicans in the Senate, every senator’s top priority takes on outsize importance. South Dakota Sen. Mike Rounds said he supports the House bill but that the way that it deals with spectrum auctions — selling off telecommunications signal rights — is a “dealbreaker” for him. He said he’s in talks with other senators on the issue.

Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., said one of his main goals is that they include money for certain farm safety net programs and set up passage for a broader farm bill later this year.

“In the end, we have to have 50 plus one supporting it,” Hoeven said. “So we’ve got some work to do.”

Trump is returning to West Point to speak at the US Military Academy’s graduation

By SEUNG MIN KIM WEST POINT, N.Y.

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is delivering his first military commencement address since returning to office.

The Republican president is set to speak to West Point’s graduating class on Saturday morning.

Trump gave the commencement address at West Point in 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The president urged the graduating cadets to “never forget” the soldiers who fought a war over slavery during his remarks, which came as the nation was reckoning with its history on race after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Trump also paid tribute to the military academy’s history and its famed graduates, including Douglas MacArthur and Dwight D. Eisenhower. The ceremony five years ago drew scrutiny because the U.S. Military Academy forced the graduating cadets, who had been home because of COVID-19, to return to an area near a pandemic hot spot.

Just outside campus, about three dozen demonstrators gathered before the ceremony and were waving miniature American flags. One in the crowd carried a sign that said “Support Our Veterans” and “Stop the Cuts,” while others held up plastic buckets with the message: “Go Army Beat Fascism.”

Trump traveled to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, earlier this month to speak to the University of Alabama’s graduating class. His remarks mixed standard commencement fare and advice with political attacks against his predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden, musings about transgender athletes and lies about the 2020 election.

On Friday, Vice President JD Vance spoke to the graduating class at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Vance said in his remarks that Trump is working to ensure U.S. soldiers are deployed with clear goals rather than the “undefined missions” and “open-ended conflicts” of the past.

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You should wear sunscreen even if you have darker skin.

Here's why

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — People with darker skin still need to wear sunscreen — for more reasons than one. Too much ultraviolet exposure from the sun can lead to sunburn, dark spots and wrinkles, and increased risk of skin cancer.

The melanin in darker skin offers some extra protection from the sun, but dermatologists say that isn't enough on its own.

"Everyone needs sunscreen. But the reasons that one might be reaching for sunscreen may differ depending on your skin tone," said Dr. Jenna Lester, who founded the Skin of Color Clinic at the University of California, San Francisco.

Do darker-skinned people need sunscreen?

White people are overall more likely to get skin cancer compared to Black and Hispanic people. But Black and Hispanic people are less likely to survive the most dangerous kind of skin cancer called melanoma, according to the American Cancer Society.

Black patients more commonly get melanoma on their hands and feet — places that are more shielded from the sun. Still, sunscreen is an additional protective layer that helps prevent a host of other problems including sunburns, hyperpigmentation after acne, rosacea and dark patches on the face.

Dr. Oyetewa Asempa at Baylor College of Medicine often reminds her darker-skinned patients: "All of the problems that you're coming to see me for are caused or worsened by the sun."

How much sunscreen do people of color need?

To stay safe in the sun, it's important to grab sunscreen with a sun protection factor or SPF of at least 30 and reapply every two hours. People headed for the pool or beach should put on sunscreen beforehand, remembering to reapply liberally and after getting out of the water.

Most people don't wear enough sunscreen when they apply, Lester said. Make sure to put two long fingers' worth on the face and a hefty blob for the body.

Look for chemical-based sunscreens to avoid ashy white cast. Two key ingredients in mineral-based products — zinc oxide and titanium oxide — are the culprits for that pesky discoloration on dark skin.

Tinted sunscreens contain pigments that block visible light from the sun, offering additional protection against dark spots. And wearing a hat or sun-protective clothing with an ultraviolet protection factor or UPF grading can provide an extra safety boost.

Whatever the sun protection routine, it's important to keep it up, Lester said. Some UV rays can climb right through car and house windows to cause sun damage even when indoors, making it even more important to take care of the skin while the sun shines.

"It's about trying to make it a daily habit," she said. "Consistency over intensity."

Israeli use of human shields in Gaza was systematic, soldiers and former detainees tell the AP

By SAM MEDNICK and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The only time the Palestinian man wasn't bound or blindfolded, he said, was when he was used by Israeli soldiers as their human shield.

Dressed in army fatigues with a camera fixed to his forehead, Ayman Abu Hamadan was forced into houses in the Gaza Strip to make sure they were clear of bombs and gunmen, he said. When one unit finished with him, he was passed to the next.

"They beat me and told me: 'You have no other option; do this or we'll kill you,'" the 36-year-old told The Associated Press, describing the 2 1/2 weeks he was held last summer by the Israeli military in northern Gaza.

Orders often came from the top, and at times nearly every platoon used a Palestinian to clear locations,

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said an Israeli officer, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Several Palestinians and soldiers told the AP that Israeli troops are systematically forcing Palestinians to act as human shields in Gaza, sending them into buildings and tunnels to check for explosives or militants. The dangerous practice has become ubiquitous during 19 months of war, they said.

In response to these allegations, Israel's military says it strictly prohibits using civilians as shields — a practice it has long accused Hamas of using in Gaza. Israeli officials blame the militants for the civilian death toll in its offensive that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians.

In a statement to the AP, the military said it also bans otherwise coercing civilians to participate in operations, and "all such orders are routinely emphasized to the forces."

The military said it's investigating several cases alleging that Palestinians were involved in missions, but wouldn't provide details. It didn't answer questions about the reach of the practice or any orders from commanding officers.

The AP spoke with seven Palestinians who described being used as shields in Gaza and the occupied West Bank and with two members of Israel's military who said they engaged in the practice, which is prohibited by international law. Rights groups are ringing the alarm, saying it's become standard procedure increasingly used in the war.

"These are not isolated accounts; they point to a systemic failure and a horrifying moral collapse," said Nadav Weiman, executive director of Breaking the Silence — a whistleblower group of former Israeli soldiers that has collected testimonies about the practice from within the military. "Israel rightly condemns Hamas for using civilians as human shields, but our own soldiers describe doing the very same."

Abu Hamadan said he was detained in August after being separated from his family, and soldiers told him he'd help with a "special mission." He was forced, for 17 days, to search houses and inspect every hole in the ground for tunnels, he said.

Soldiers stood behind him and, once it was clear, entered the buildings to damage or destroy them, he said. He spent each night bound in a dark room, only to wake up and do it again.

The use of human shields 'caught on like fire'

Rights groups say Israel has used Palestinians as shields in Gaza and the West Bank for decades. The Supreme Court outlawed the practice in 2005. But the groups continued to document violations.

Still, experts say this war is the first time in decades the practice — and the debate around it — has been so widespread.

The two Israeli soldiers who spoke to the AP — and a third who provided testimony to Breaking the Silence — said commanders were aware of the use of human shields and tolerated it, with some giving orders to do so. Some said it was referred to as the "mosquito protocol" and that Palestinians were also referred to as "wasps" and other dehumanizing terms.

The soldiers — who said they're no longer serving in Gaza — said the practice sped up operations, saved ammunition, and spared combat dogs from injury or death.

The soldiers said they first became aware human shields were being used shortly after the war erupted on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas attacked Israel, and that it became widespread by the middle of 2024. Orders to "bring a mosquito" often came via radio, they said — shorthand everyone understood. Soldiers acted on commanding officers' orders, according to the officer who spoke to the AP.

He said that by the end of his nine months in Gaza, every infantry unit used a Palestinian to clear houses before entering.

"Once this idea was initiated, it caught on like fire in a field," the 26-year-old said. "People saw how effective and easy it was."

He described a 2024 planning meeting where a brigade commander presented to the division commander a slide reading "get a mosquito" and a suggestion they might "just catch one off the streets."

The officer wrote two incident reports to the brigade commander detailing the use of human shields, reports that would have been escalated to the division chief, he said. The military said it had no comment when asked whether it received them.

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One report documented the accidental killing of a Palestinian, he said — troops didn't realize another unit was using him as a shield and shot him as he ran into a house. The officer recommended the Palestinians be dressed in army clothes to avoid misidentification.

He said he knew of at least one other Palestinian who died while used as a shield — he passed out in a tunnel.

Troops unsuccessfully pushed back, a sergeant says

Convincing soldiers to operate lawfully when they see their enemy using questionable practices is difficult, said Michael Schmitt, a distinguished professor of international law at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Israeli officials and other observers say Hamas uses civilians as shields as it embeds itself in communities, hiding fighters in hospitals and schools.

"It's really a heavy lift to look at your own soldiers and say you have to comply," Schmitt said.

One soldier told the AP his unit tried to refuse to use human shields in mid-2024 but were told they had no choice, with a high-ranking officer saying they shouldn't worry about international humanitarian law.

The sergeant — speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal — said the troops used a 16-year-old and a 30-year-old for a few days.

The boy shook constantly, he said, and both repeated "Rafah, Rafah" — Gaza's southernmost city, where more than 1 million Palestinians had fled from fighting elsewhere at that point in the war.

It seemed they were begging to be freed, the sergeant said.

'I have children,' one man says he pleaded

Masoud Abu Saeed said he was used as a shield for two weeks in March 2024 in the southern city of Khan Younis.

"This is extremely dangerous," he recounted telling a soldier. "I have children and want to reunite with them."

The 36-year-old said he was forced into houses, buildings and a hospital to dig up suspected tunnels and clear areas. He said he wore a first-responder vest for easy identification, carrying a phone, hammer and chain cutters.

During one operation, he bumped into his brother, used as a shield by another unit, he said.

They hugged. "I thought Israel's army had executed him," he said.

Palestinians also report being used as shields in the West Bank.

Hazar Estity said soldiers took her from her Jenin refugee camp home in November, forcing her to film inside several apartments and clear them before troops entered.

She said she pleaded to return to her 21-month-old son, but soldiers didn't listen.

"I was most afraid that they would kill me," she said. "And that I wouldn't see my son again."

Ex-Minneapolis police chief recalls 'absolutely gut-wrenching' moment of seeing George Floyd video

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Former Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo vividly remembers receiving a call around midnight from a community activist. The caller told him to watch a video spreading on social media of a white officer pinning a Black man to the ground, despite his fading pleas of "I can't breathe."

The dying man was George Floyd. The officer was Derek Chauvin. And Arradondo was the city's first Black police chief.

"It was absolutely gut-wrenching," Arradondo, 58, recalled in an interview ahead of the fifth anniversary of Floyd's murder.

What he saw conflicted with what his own people had told him about the deadly encounter, and he knew immediately it would mean changes for his department and city. But he acknowledged he didn't immediately foresee how deeply Floyd's death would reverberate in the U.S. and around the world.

"I served for 32 years," he said. "But there's no doubt May 25th, 2020, is a defining moment for me in my public service career."

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The video shows Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck, pinning him to the pavement outside a convenience store where Floyd had tried to use a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy cigarettes. Chauvin maintained the pressure for 9 1/2 minutes despite pleas from onlookers to stop, even after an off-duty firefighter tried to intervene and another officer said he couldn't find a pulse.

"Remnants of pain and anger"

Arradondo sat for the interview in a public library that was heavily damaged in the unrest that followed Floyd's death. It's on Lake Street, a major artery that saw some of the worst destruction, a street that he says still bears "remnants of the pain and anger of what occurred five years ago."

Just down the block, there's the empty shell of a police station that was torched during the riots. And within sight is a Target store and a Cub Foods supermarket that were looted. Storefronts remain boarded up. While some businesses were rebuilt, empty lots sit where others did not.

Arradondo still stands by his and Mayor Jacob Frey's decision to abandon the Third Precinct and let it burn. Protesters breached the building, and police — who were spread thin — didn't have the resources to hold it. So he ordered his officers to evacuate.

"During the most significant crisis we've ever experienced, arguably in the state, when it's life or death, I've got to go on the side of keeping people alive and safe," he said.

Police reform

Arradondo subsequently helped launch an overhaul of policing in the city despite a resistant police culture and a powerful officers union. He testified against Chauvin in his 2021 murder trial, a rare breach of the "blue wall" that traditionally protects officers from being held accountable for wrongdoing.

Five years on, Arradondo, who retired in 2022, said he believes law enforcement agencies nationwide have made progress on police accountability — albeit incremental progress — and that police chiefs and sheriffs now move faster to hold officers responsible for egregious misconduct.

Arradondo was promoted to chief in 2017, and his elevation was greeted with hope among local African Americans who affectionately called him "Rondo." But his department had a reputation for being too quick to use force and many were angry about police killing young Black men in Minnesota and beyond.

Arradondo said he wishes he had made more changes to the police department before Floyd was killed.

"I would have pushed harder and sooner at trying to dismantle some of the toxic culture that allowed that indifference to exist that evening, on May 25th, 2020," he said. "I certainly would have invested more time elevating the voices in our community that had been pleading with police departments for decades to listen to us and change."

Making amends

Arradondo just published a book, "Chief Rondo: Securing Justice for the Murder of George Floyd," that explores leadership, justice and race, the broader impacts of policing, and the challenges of working within a flawed system. He closes it with a letter dedicated to Floyd's daughter, Gianna.

"I never had an opportunity to meet Gianna, but I wanted her to know that, even though I was not out there that evening, at that intersection when her father was pleading for help, that I heard him, and I was going to do everything I could to bring him justice," he said.

He wanted to say the words that she has not heard from the four former officers who were convicted for their roles in George Floyd's death:

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry for your father being taken from you."

Russia and Ukraine swap hundreds more prisoners, hours after a massive attack on Kyiv

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and ALEX BABENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia and Ukraine exchanged hundreds more prisoners on Saturday as part of a major swap that amounted to a rare moment of cooperation in otherwise failed efforts to reach a cease-fire. The exchange came hours after Kyiv came under a large-scale Russian drone and missile attack that left at least 15 people injured.

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russia's defense ministry said each side brought home 307 more soldiers on Saturday, a day after each released a total of 390 combatants and civilians.

"We expect more to come tomorrow," Zelenskyy said on his official Telegram channel. Russia's defense ministry also said it expected the exchange to be continued, though it did not give details.

Hours earlier, explosions and anti-aircraft fire were heard throughout Kyiv as many sought shelter in subway stations as Russian drones and missiles targeted the Ukrainian capital overnight.

In talks held in Istanbul earlier this month — the first time the two sides met face to face for peace talks since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion — Kyiv and Moscow agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners of war and civilian detainees each.

'A difficult night'

Officials said Russia attacked Ukraine with 14 ballistic missiles and 250 Shahed drones overnight while Ukrainian forces shot down six missiles and neutralized 245 drones — 128 drones were shot down and 117 were thwarted using electronic warfare.

The Kyiv City Military Administration said it was one of the biggest combined missile and drone attacks on the capital.

"A difficult night for all of us," the administration said in a statement.

Posting on X, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called it "clear evidence that increased sanctions pressure on Moscow is necessary to accelerate the peace process."

Meanwhile, the EU's ambassador to Kyiv described it as "horrific."

"If anyone still doubts Russia wants war to continue — read the news," Katarina Mathernová wrote on the social network.

The debris of intercepted missiles and drones fell in at least six Kyiv city districts. According to the acting head of the city's military administration, Tymur Tkachenko, six people required medical care after the attack and two fires were sparked in Kyiv's Solomianskyi district.

The Obolon district, where a residential building was heavily damaged in the attack, was the hardest hit with at least five wounded in the area, the administration said.

Yurii Bondarchuk, a local resident, said the air raid siren "started as usual, then the drones started to fly around as they constantly do." Moments later, he heard a boom and saw shattered glass fly through the air.

"The balcony is totally wiped out, as well as the windows and the doors," he said as he stood in the dark, smoking a cigarette to calm his nerves while firefighters worked to extinguish the flames.

The air raid alert in Kyiv lasted more than seven hours, warning of incoming missiles and drones.

Kyiv's mayor, Vitalii Klitschko, warned residents ahead of the attack that more than 20 Russian strike drones were heading toward the city. As the attack continued, he said drone debris fell on a shopping mall and a residential building in Obolon. Emergency services were headed to the site, Klitschko said.

Separately, 13 civilians were killed on Friday and overnight into Saturday in Russian attacks in Ukraine's south, east and north, regional authorities said. Three people died after a Russian ballistic missile targeted port infrastructure in Odesa on the Black Sea, local Gov. Oleh Kiper said.

Russia's defense ministry on Saturday claimed its forces overnight struck various military targets across Ukraine, including missile and drone-producing plants, a reconnaissance center and a launching site for anti-aircraft missiles.

A complex deal

The prisoner swap on Friday was the first phase of a complicated deal involving the exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the first phase of the deal brought home 390 Ukrainians, with further releases expected over the weekend, which will make it the largest swap of the war. Russia's Defense Ministry said it received the same number of people from Ukraine.

The swap took place at the border with Belarus, in northern Ukraine, according to a Ukrainian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

The released Russians were taken to Belarus for medical treatment, the Russian Defense Ministry said. However, the exchange — the latest of dozens of swaps since the war began and the biggest involving

Ukrainian civilians so far — did not herald a halt in the fighting.

Battles continued along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed, and neither country has relented in its deep strikes.

After the May 16 Istanbul meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the prisoner swap a “confidence-building measure” and said the parties had agreed in principle to meet again.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that there has been no agreement yet on the venue for the next round of talks as diplomatic maneuvering continued.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow would give Ukraine a draft document outlining its conditions for a “sustainable, long-term, comprehensive” peace agreement, once the ongoing prisoner exchange had finished.

European leaders have accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in peace efforts while he tries to press his larger army’s battlefield initiative and capture more Ukrainian land.

The Istanbul meeting revealed that both sides remained far apart on key conditions for ending the fighting. One such condition for Ukraine, backed by its Western allies, is a temporary ceasefire as a first step toward a peaceful settlement.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said it had shot down 788 Ukrainian drones away from the battlefield between May 20 and May 23.

As Pope Leo XIV faces scrutiny, victims of abusive Catholic group say he helped when others didn’t

By NICOLE WINFIELD and FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV made plenty of enemies helping dismantle a powerful Catholic movement whose leaders physically, sexually, spiritually and psychologically abused members. As Leo’s past record of handling clergy sexual abuse cases comes under scrutiny, victims of the now-disgraced group are stepping up to defend his record.

These survivors say that starting in 2018, when Robert Prevost was a bishop in Peru, he met with them. He took their claims seriously when others did not. He got the Vatican involved and worked concretely to provide financial reparations for the harm they had endured.

They credit him with helping arrange the key 2022 meeting with Pope Francis that triggered a Vatican investigation into the group, known as the Sodalitium Christiane Vitae, that resulted in its suppression earlier this year.

“What can I say about him? That he listened to me,” said José Rey de Castro, a teacher who spent 18 years in the Sodalitium as the personal cook for its leader, Luis Fernando Figari. “It seems obvious for a priest. But that’s not the case, because the Sodalitium was very powerful.”

A conservative army for God

Figari founded the Sodalitium in Peru in 1971 as a lay community to recruit “soldiers for God.” It was one of several Catholic societies born as a conservative reaction to the left-leaning liberation theology movement that swept through Latin America starting in the 1960s. At its height, the group counted about 1,000 core members and several times that in three other branches across South America and the United States. It was enormously influential in Peru and has its U.S. base in Denver.

Starting in 2000, stories about Figari’s twisted practices began to filter out in Peru when a former member wrote a series of articles in the magazine Gente. A formal accusation was lodged with the Lima archdiocese in 2011 but neither the local church nor the Holy See took concrete action until former member Pedro Salinas and journalist Paola Ugaz exposed the practices of Sodalitium in their 2015 book “Half Monks, Half Soldiers.”

In 2017, a report commissioned by the group’s new leadership determined that the charismatic Figari was “narcissistic, paranoid, demeaning, vulgar, vindictive, manipulative, racist, sexist, elitist and obsessed with sexual issues and the sexual orientation of SCV members.” The report found that Figari sodomized

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his recruits and forced them to fondle him and one another, that he liked to watch them "experience pain, discomfort and fear," and humiliated them in front of others to enhance his control over them.

Yet when members found the courage to escape and denounce the abuses they suffered, they say they often met a wall of silence and inaction from the Peruvian Catholic hierarchy and the Holy See. Both were slow to act against a movement that had been formally approved by St. John Paul II's Vatican, which had looked fondly on conservative, wealthy movements in Latin America, like the similarly-disgraced Mexican-based Legion of Christ.

Prevost stands out

But not Prevost, whom Francis made bishop of Chiclayo, Peru in 2014 and later was elected vice president of the Peruvian bishops conference. He headed the bishops' commission created to listen to victims of abuse, and became a critical "bridge" between victims and Sodalitium, the victims say.

Rey de Castro, the former Figari cook who got out in 2014 and now teaches public policy to Peruvian police, turned to Prevost in 2021. He had been critical of a 2016 Sodalitium reparations program that, according to the group, provided some \$6.5 million in academic, therapeutic and financial support to nearly 100 Sodalitium victims over the years.

He and Prevost met in the offices of the Peruvian bishops conference and stayed in touch via text message up until Prevost's election as pope.

From the start, Rey de Castro said, "Prevost was very clear in saying 'For me, Sodalitium doesn't have a charism,'" the church term for the fundamental inspiration and reason for a religious movement to exist. After their 2021 meeting, Prevost helped arrange a confidential settlement with Sodalitium, he said.

"For Prevost to get the Sodalitium to do something just was exceptional, which was more or less what happened," he said in an interview in Lima.

Salinas and Ugaz, for their part, say Prevost also stepped in when the Sodalitium started retaliating against them with legal action for their continued investigative reporting on the group. After the Sodalitium's archbishop of Piura, José Eguren, sued Salinas in 2018 for defamation, Prevost and the Vatican's ambassador to Peru helped craft a statement from the Peruvian bishops conference backing the journalists.

"It was the first time that anyone had done anything against the Sodalitium publicly," Ugaz said. "And not only did they make this declaration, but they communicated with Francis, told him what was happening and Francis got mad."

Ugaz and Salinas provided years of emails, text messages and anecdotes dating back to 2018 to demonstrate how committed Prevost was to the cause of the Sodalitium victims. While not all his initiatives succeeded, Prevost stepped in at critical junctions.

"I assure you I share your concern and we are looking for the best way to get the letter directly to the pope," Prevost wrote one victim Dec. 11, 2018, about getting a letter from Sodalitium victims to Francis.

"I will continue working so that there is justice for all those who suffered at the hands of Sodalitium," Prevost wrote another victim on Dec. 23, 2018. "I ask forgiveness for the errors of the church."

After the Sodalitium criticism accelerated against Ugaz and Salinas, Prevost helped arrange for Ugaz to meet with Francis at the Vatican on Nov. 10, 2022, during which she laid out her findings and convinced Francis to send his top sex crimes investigators to Peru.

Their 2023 investigation uncovered physical abuses "including with sadism and violence," "sect-like abuses of conscience, spiritual abuse, abuses of authority including the hacking of Ugaz's communications and economic abuses in administering church money. The probe also identified a publicity campaign some Sodalitium members had mounted against critics.

The investigation resulted in Francis taking a series of initiatives, starting with the April 2024 resignation of Eguren which Prevost handled. It continued with the expulsion of Figari, Eguren and nine others, and finally the formal dissolution of the Sodalitium in April this year, just before Francis died.

The Sodalitium has accepted its dissolution, asked forgiveness for "the mistreatment and abuse committed within our community" and for the pain caused the entire church.

"With sorrow and obedience, we accept this decision, specifically approved by Pope Francis, which brings our society to an end," the group said in an April statement after the decree of dissolution was signed.

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There was no reply to an email sent to the group with specific questions about Prevost's role.

Prevost now a target

Leo's record of handling sex abuse cases while he was an Augustinian superior and bishop in Peru has come under renewed scrutiny since his election May 8. And overall, one of the biggest challenges facing history's first American pope will be how he addresses the clergy abuse scandal, which has traumatized thousands of people around the world and devastated the Catholic hierarchy's credibility.

The idea Prevost might have enemies as a result of his tough line against the Sodalitium was crystalized in a recent podcast hosted by Salinas on Peru's La Mula streaming platform. Salinas dedicated most of the hourlong episode to reading aloud seven years of glowing correspondence between Sodalitium victims and Prevost.

But he also said Prevost had become the target of a defamation campaign asserting he covered up for abusers. Salinas blamed the campaign on Sodalitium's supporters trying to discredit the new pope.

One of the cases in question is Prevost's handling of abuse allegations made in 2022 by three sisters against one of his priests in Chiclayo. The diocese and Vatican say Prevost did everything he was supposed to do, including restricting the priest's ministry, sending a preliminary investigation to the Vatican's sex crimes office, offering psychological help to the victims and suggesting they go to Peruvian authorities, who archived the case because it happened too long ago.

Nine days after Peruvian authorities closed the case, Prevost was named to head the Vatican's office for bishops and left the diocese.

The Vatican archived the case for lack of evidence, but it was reopened in 2023 after it gained traction in the media. Victims' groups are demanding an accounting from Leo.

Salinas, Ugaz and even some in the Vatican believe Sodalitium supporters fueled publicity about the case and its reopening to discredit Prevost. They note that the victims' lawyer is a former Augustinian antagonist of Prevost who has since been defrocked and barred from presenting himself as a canon lawyer in Peru.

"So, when I read about Prevost's 'alleged cover-ups,' something doesn't add up," Salinas told AP.

Rocío Figueroa, another Sodalitium victim who now works as a researcher and theologian in New Zealand, concurred.

"It is very strange if someone is so strong and honest to do like that with victims of Sodalitium and not do it with other victims," she said.

Anne Barrett-Doyle, of the online abuse database BishopAccountability.org, said even if the Chiclayo case is being exploited by Sodalitium supporters, "it doesn't mean that he handled the case correctly."

"Both things could be true: that then-Bishop Prevost acted valiantly on behalf of the victims of the Sodalitium and that he didn't do nearly enough to investigate the allegations in Chiclayo," she said.

Signing off his podcast, Salinas read aloud a WhatsApp message he had exchanged with Prevost on Oct. 16, 2024, when he warned him to beware of retaliation from the group.

"I have it very much on my mind," Prevost wrote back.

San Diego plane crash is a devastating loss to the alternative rock music community

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The alternative music community is in mourning after a private jet hit a power line in foggy weather early Thursday and crashed into a San Diego neighborhood, killing multiple people on board.

Among them was the groundbreaking music executive Dave Shapiro, a pillar of his music scene, and Daniel Williams, a former drummer for the popular Ohio metalcore band The Devil Wears Prada. Also killed were two employees of Shapiro's Sound Talent Group agency: Kendall Fortner, 24, and Emma Huke, 25.

Both Williams and Shapiro served as success stories for their respective rock music scenes — proof that these subcultural sounds had real mainstream appeal.

Williams' band, which had two releases reach the Top 10 of the Billboard 200, was a client of Sound Tal-

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ent Group. He co-founded the company in 2018 with fellow agents Tim Borrer and Matt Andersen, who previously worked at the Agency Group and United Talent Agency.

Sound Talent Group's roster focused on bands in and across pop-punk, metalcore, post-hardcore and other popular hard rock sub-genres — such as Sum 41, Pierce the Veil, Parkway Drive, Silverstein, I Prevail — plus pop acts like the '90s brother-boy band, Hanson, best known for their song "MMMBop," and "A Thousand Miles (Interlude)" singer-songwriter Vanessa Carlton.

The post-hardcore band Thursday called Shapiro, 42, an inspiration "who despite achieving success never forgot the scenes and the communities they came from."

"It's hard to put into words how much this man meant to so many of us," Pierce the Veil, which has been performing for nearly two decades including a sold-out concert this week at New York's Madison Square Garden, said in a tribute on the social platform X.

The World Alive, a band signed on Shapiro's label, said he was among "the most influential and positive forces in our music scene and beyond. And Dan was one of the most influential and positive forces behind the kit."

Shortly after punk rock entered the cultural zeitgeist in the late '70s, it inspired musical sub-movements fueled by its "do-it-yourself," community-minded ethics: hardcore punk begat post-hardcore, metalcore, emo and so on. Across decades, these music genres evolved in sound and scope, moving from underground popularity at concerts held in garages and basements to real mainstream fame, while refusing to abandon its independent ethos.

Thomas Gutches, who manages Beartooth and Archetypes Collide, recalled a time when now-popular bands like The Devil Wears Prada were getting their start playing in "DIY shows" in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio, in which you could see 10 bands perform for \$5.

Shapiro was "single-handedly developing this next wave of bands that are coming in," Gutches said. "He was able to take those bands, package them together and put them on a larger scale. ... He took a risk in being like, 'Okay, I'm going to go and take them to that next level.'"

These artists reached a kind of apex in the 2000s and 2010s. Once-obscure bands that had found audiences on early online social media platforms like MySpace, at the mall goth haven Hot Topic, or in the pages left-of-center publications like "Alternative Press" became MTV staples, celebrities in their own right.

Although many of these acts played similar-yet-different music — think of the blast beats of metalcore and the palm-muted power chords of pop-punk associated with the Vans Warped Tour — they were brought together by a shared punk rock spirit. And for the last few decades, these tight-knit groups have proven to be the dominant force in alternative rock, according to Mike Shea, founder of "Alternative Press," who used the word "community" to describe the scene.

Shea said Shapiro was "vital" in bringing these punk rock subcultures to the masses.

"In this music industry, there are just too many people ripping people off and using people," he said. "Dave was not like that. He was a beautiful soul, and beautiful person, a guiding force, just someone who would end up being an inspiration for so many people. And he will continue to be an inspiration."

And it was not only musicians but also many booking agents, band, and tour managers and promoters that got their big breaks because of Shapiro, Gutches said.

The bands Shapiro represented are many of the most popular of their genre and scene, like the Grammy-nominated Sum 41 or the platinum-selling Pierce the Veil.

That also includes The Devil Wears Prada, one of the best-known metalcore bands of the last few decades, celebrated for their ability to marry melodic punk rock with metallic detouring. When Williams "was in the band, that's when they broke out," Shea said.

Gutches said Williams captivated audiences at shows with his drumming as much as a band's front man does: "Daniel was putting on a show from his style of playing."

The tributes will continue for both, Shea said, as more and more artists reveal the impact Williams and Shapiro had on their lives.

Case in point: "There is no single person more responsible for my identity as a professional adult than Dave Shapiro," metalcore band Issues bassist Skyler Acord said via Instagram.

His band coined a phrase they would use when things got heated "to remind us to chill out and try to understand each other," he wrote.

"We'd say, 'Do it for Dave.'"

Trump says US Steel will keep HQ in Pittsburgh in a sign he'll approve bid by Japan-based Nippon

By MARC LEVY and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that U.S. Steel will keep its headquarters in Pittsburgh as part of what he called a "planned partnership" that seemed to signal that he'll approve a bid by Japan-based Nippon Steel to make a big investment in the iconic American steelmaker, if not buy it outright.

Still, Trump's statement left it vague as to whether he is approving Nippon Steel's bid after he vowed repeatedly to block the deal to prevent U.S. Steel from being foreign-owned.

More recently, Trump suggested that Nippon Steel would invest in U.S. Steel, not buy it, and one union official suggested Friday that the federal government will have a role in the company's management going forward. But investors seemed to take Trump's statement as a sign that he's approving some sort of merger, sharply pushing up U.S. Steel's shares, and the companies issued approving statements.

Nippon Steel said the partnership is a "game changer — for U.S. Steel and all of its stakeholders, including the American steel industry, and the broader American manufacturing base." U.S. Steel said it "will remain American, and we will grow bigger and stronger through a partnership with Nippon Steel that brings massive investment, new technologies and thousands of jobs over the next four years."

Nippon Steel's nearly \$15 billion bid to buy U.S. Steel was blocked by former President Joe Biden on his way out of office and, after Trump became president, subject to another national security review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

In his statement Friday, Trump said that "after much consideration and negotiation, US Steel will REMAIN in America, and keep its Headquarters in the Great City of Pittsburgh."

What Trump called a "planned partnership" will add \$14 billion to the U.S. economy, he said, although it wasn't clear what the terms of the deal would be or who would control U.S. Steel under the arrangement. Neither company explained Friday how the partnership would be structured.

Japan's chief tariff negotiator Ryosei Akazawa told reporters Friday that he was closely watching the development. He said Nippon Steel has made a proposal that could win support from U.S. Steel and make a good investment for both Japan and the U.S.

Josh Spoore, the Pennsylvania-based head of steel Americas analysis for commodity researcher CRU, said that, from what he's seeing, "this 'partnership' is a green light for the acquisition."

Shares of U.S. Steel jumped 21% on the news, and continued rising in aftermarket trading.

U. S. Steel's board and stockholders approved Nippon Steel's bid last year. It has been opposed by the United Steelworkers union. The union had no immediate comment Friday.

A union official who defied the United Steelworkers' leadership to support Nippon Steel's bid said Friday that the federal government could take on a major role in the deal.

"It's sounds like the deal's done," said Jason Zugai, vice president of the United Steelworkers union local at U.S. Steel's Irvin finishing plant near Pittsburgh.

Zugai said he was "relieved, happy and thankful."

He hadn't seen anything on paper but, he said, his understanding was that Nippon "will make all the profit" and the federal government will have "a golden chair" that allows it to veto any plans to idle or shut down U.S. Steel plants.

Keeping U.S. Steel's headquarters had always been part of Nippon Steel's bid to buy it. To sweeten the deal, Nippon Steel had offered up a \$2.7 billion commitment to upgrade U.S. Steel's two blast furnaces and pledged that it wouldn't import steel slabs that would compete with the facilities.

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Nippon Steel also had pledged not to conduct layoffs or plant closings during the term of the existing labor agreement and to protect the best interests of U.S. Steel in trade matters.

U.S. Steel's CEO David Burritt warned last September that blocking Nippon Steel's bid would mean U.S. Steel would "largely pivot away" from investing in its two blast furnaces — one just outside Pittsburgh and one in Gary, Indiana — and it would raise "serious questions" about remaining headquartered in Pittsburgh.

As recently as December, Trump said he was "totally against the once great and powerful U.S. Steel being bought by a foreign company."

Then in February, Trump suggested that Nippon Steel wouldn't buy U.S. Steel, as it had planned, but that it would instead invest in U.S. Steel.

Last month, Trump ordered a new national security review of Nippon Steel's proposed bid.

Cannes prepares to award the Palme d'Or, with Neon positioned to add to an unprecedented streak

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

Can Neon extend one of the most unprecedented streaks in movies?

That's one of the big questions heading into the presentation of the Palme d'Or on Saturday at the Cannes Film Festival. The past five winners in Cannes have all been released by the indie distributor, including last year's victor and eventual best-picture Oscar winner, "Anora."

On Saturday, Neon could make it six in a row, adding to its Palmes for "Parasite," "Titane," "Triangle of Sadness," "Anatomy of a Fall" and "Anora." As far-fetched as that might sound, it might even be likely.

Four of the most widely acclaimed film of the festival — Joachim Trier's family drama "Sentimental Value," Jafar Panahi's revenge thriller "It Was Just an Accident," Kleber Mendonça Filho's political thriller "The Secret Agent" and Oliver Laxe's desert road trip "Sirât" — will be distributed in the U.S. by Neon.

No one knows which way the nine-member jury headed by Juliette Binoche might vote. Their deliberations are done privately, and there are several other films seen as contenders. But critical reception is often a decent guide to what's in the mix at Cannes.

Other films will strong support include Ukrainian filmmaker Sergei Logznitsa's period drama "Two Prosecutors"; Richard Linklater's New Wave ode "Nouvelle Vague"; and Spanish filmmaker Carla Simón's personal coastal tale "Romeria."

Saturday's ceremony brings to a close a 78th Cannes Film Festival where geopolitics cast a long shadow, both on screen and off. Shortly before the French Riviera extravaganza, which is also the world's largest movie market, U.S. President Donald Trump floated the idea of a 100% tariff on movies made overseas.

Most filmmakers responded with a shrug, calling the plan illogical. "Can you hold up the movie in customs? It doesn't ship that way," said Wes Anderson, who premiered his latest, "The Phoenician Scheme" at the festival.

That was one of the top American films in Cannes, along with Spike Lee's "Highest 2 Lowest," the Christopher McQuarrie-Tom Cruise actioner "Mission: Impossible — Final Reckoning" and Ari Aster's "Eddington."

See a penny, pick it up? In the future, probably not as often — and, some say, that matters

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ask someone for their thoughts: Could it now cost you a nickel? If you want to call somebody stingy, would you say they're a quarter-pincher? And if they spend money unwisely, are they now dime-wise but pound-foolish?

OK, maybe those are some minor, small-stakes, dare we say penny-ante concerns in the wake of the U.S. Treasury confirming Thursday that it will stop making shiny new penny coins after the current production run is complete.

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But it is the end of an era in the United States. While there will still be over a billion already existing pennies in circulation, rattling around in jars, gathering dust under the sofa cushions and waiting to be picked up from sidewalks, no new cents will be joining their ranks for the first time in more than two centuries.

Answering advocates' demands to abandon the coin

The Trump administration made the call as a cost-saving measure - it costs almost four cents to make a penny (which, by the way, are now primarily made up of zinc with a copper coating). They're not as financially useful as they were in other times as prices have gone up, and digital technologies have overall reduced the use of physical bills and coins for many people. Advocates have been calling for the penny to drop for decades.

But will no one think of the archeologists?

"Since 1793, we have continuously seeded the archeological record with datable pennies, and now we're going to stop doing that," laments Frank Holt, an emeritus professor at the University of Houston who has studied the history of coins in his work.

"In 2,000 years, there are going to be archeologists pulling out what hair they have left saying, 'What am I going to do now that I don't have these datable objects there?'"

And for something with such a small face value, the copper-colored coin has punched above its denomination in the culture, Holt says.

"It's not just an economic argument, because pennies and all coins are embedded in our culture. They reflect our politics, our religion, our art, our sense of ourselves, our ideals, our aspirations," he says. "We put mottos on them and self-identifiers and we decide — in the case of the United States — which dead persons are most important to us and should be commemorated."

Holt points to traditions of putting pennies in loafers, of rhymes like "See a penny, pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck," of people who think an unexpected penny sighting could be a sign from a loved one who's passed on.

A larger conversation is happening behind it all

When it does come to economics, the discussion of whether or not there should be pennies is actually part of a larger conversation, says Ursula Dalinghaus, an assistant professor of anthropology at Ripon College in Wisconsin who studies the anthropology of money.

For example, a bedrock of American culture is the price tag ending in \$.99, somehow trying to convince buyers that the 1-cent difference keeping the cost from the next dollar makes it a good deal, she points out. What happens to that price now?

Also, while many people have switched over to digital forms of payments and couldn't even tell you the last time they carried a coin around or had a bill in their wallets, there are many people who still use all kinds of physical currency — yes, even pennies.

"Cash is very important for a lot of people to budget, to keep control of costs. Even just donating a penny to someone asking for small change, it does add up," she says. "I feel like we're far too quick to only look at what is the cost of minting it or distributing it and we're not really willing to look at the everyday experiences and interactions people have. So maybe if we don't use small change, we don't think about it. But other people do."

In a final irony, news of the penny's fate came out on the eve of Lucky Penny Day, no less! (Yes, there is such a thing, on May 23rd.)

"We don't have a lucky nickel day. We don't have a lucky dime day, lucky quarter day, we only have a Lucky Penny Day," Holt says. "And why is that? It's more than money. It is more than an economic tool. We've endowed the penny with almost mystical, magical powers to bring us luck, to change our fortunes."

Harvard has long been the world's top college. Trump's sanction puts its allure at risk

By COLLIN BINKLEY and MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — For students around the world, an acceptance letter to Harvard University has represented the pinnacle of achievement, offering a spot among the elite at a campus that produces Nobel Prize winners, captains of industry and global leaders.

That allure is now in jeopardy. In its intensifying fight with the White House, Harvard was dealt its heaviest blow yet on Thursday, when the government blocked the Ivy League school from enrolling foreign students. The move threatens to undermine Harvard's stature, revenue and appeal among top scholars globally.

Even more than the government's \$2.6 billion in research cuts, the administration's action represents an existential threat for Harvard. The school summed it up in a lawsuit seeking to block the action: "Without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard."

Within hours of the decision, the consequences started becoming clear. Belgium's Princess Elisabeth, who just finished her first year in a Harvard graduate program, is waiting to find out if she can return next year, the palace said. The Chinese government publicly questioned whether Harvard's international standing will endure.

"The relevant actions by the U.S. side will only damage its own image and international credibility," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a briefing in Beijing.

A federal judge on Friday blocked the administration's decision as the lawsuit plays out, but the order is only temporary.

Students say their hopes and dreams are at stake

On the Harvard campus, international students said they were stunned, confused and deeply concerned about what the government's action means for their degrees, future plans and legal status in the United States.

Walid Akef, a Harvard graduate student in art history from Egypt, said the Trump administration action would cost him "20 years of my life."

"Coming to Harvard — I'm not exaggerating — I planned for it for 15 years," Akef said. He earned two master's degrees and learned multiple languages before arriving at the university. He also worries what the changes will mean for his family, since his wife is pregnant and will soon be unable to travel.

"This is absolutely disastrous. I'm going to lose not just stability, but I also lose my dreams and then lose, I don't know, my beautiful life."

Akef is cautiously optimistic that Harvard "will take care of this," but he is also considering other options as U.S. policy becomes increasingly inhospitable to foreign students.

A graduating law student from Asia said he had planned to stay in the United States and find work, "but not anymore."

"I don't know what I'll do, but my future doesn't appear to be here," said the student, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation.

Changes could erase a quarter of the student body

With a \$53 billion endowment, Harvard can weather federal funding losses that would cripple other institutions. But this new sanction strikes at the heart of its campus.

Already, the change is causing disarray, as thousands of students consider whether to transfer or risk being in the country illegally. It could wipe out a quarter of the university's student body, while halving some of its graduate schools and threatening students who work as researchers and teaching assistants. Some sports teams would be left nearly empty.

For many, it has been a time of panicked calls home and huddles with fellow international students. For Kat, a data science student from China, the news comes as she prepares to graduate. Foreigners set to receive degrees from Harvard next week can still do so.

"My biggest fear is whether I would get deported immediately" after graduation, Kat said. She spoke

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on the condition that she be identified only by her first name out of concern about retaliation. "We're not sure about our status."

If the government's action stands, Harvard would be banned from admitting new international students for at least two school years. Even if it regains its place as a global magnet, top students may shy away for fear of future government reprisals, the school said in its lawsuit.

The university enrolls almost 6,800 foreign students at its campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, near Boston. Roughly 30% of those come from India and China.

Asked if he was considering restrictions on other universities, President Donald Trump said Friday: "We're taking a look at a lot of things."

"Harvard's going to have to change its ways. So are some others," the president told reporters in the Oval Office. "We don't want troublemakers here" from other countries.

A time to weigh other opportunities

In its court filing, Harvard listed some of its most notable alumni who enrolled as foreign students. The list includes Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan; Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former president of Liberia; Empress Masako of Japan; and many leaders of major corporations.

Many of the world's top students spend years preparing for their college applications, sometimes working with admissions consultants such as Crimson Education, a company named after Harvard's school color. Crimson clients recently admitted to Harvard were shocked by the government's action, said Jamie Beaton, a Harvard alumnus from New Zealand who founded the company. But rather than looking for other options, many students quickly shifted to finding a way forward with Harvard, he said.

Still, some current students and those bound for the university in the fall were weighing other opportunities. Two universities in Hong Kong on Friday extended invites to affected students.

"It feels like my world has exploded," said Fang, a Chinese student who was accepted to Harvard for a master's program. She also spoke on the condition that only her first name be used out of fear that she could be targeted.

Her student visa was approved just this week. "If America becomes a country that doesn't welcome me, I don't want to go there."

The recent developments forced Aleksandra Conevska, a Canadian graduate student researching climate change, to cancel her summer research and briefly look for jobs in Canada. But her thinking has since shifted, and she says she plans to remain at Harvard.

"I've already invested in this country, and I'm not going to give in," she said.

The U.S. government's action against Harvard has dominated news in countries around the world, said Mike Henniger, president and CEO of Illume Student Advisory Services, which helps colleges in the U.S., Canada and Europe recruit international students. He is traveling in Japan and awoke to the news Friday with dozens of emails from colleagues.

The reactions from the international community, he said, were incredulous: "'Unbelievable!' 'Oh My God!' 'Unreal!'"

For incoming freshmen who just got accepted to Harvard — and already committed — the timing could not be worse, but they are such strong students that any top university would want to offer them a spot, he said.

"The bigger story is the students around the country that aren't a Harvard student, the students that scraped by to get into a state university and are thinking: 'Are we next?'" he said. "The Harvard kids are going to be OK. It's more about the damage to the American education brand. The view of the U.S. being a less welcoming place for international students."

Kim Kardashian's robbers found guilty in Paris but won't face prison time

By JOHN LEICESTER and THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A Paris court on Friday found the ringleader and seven other people guilty in the 2016 armed robbery of Kim Kardashian, but did not impose any additional time behind bars for their roles in what the U.S. celebrity described as “the most terrifying experience of my life.”

The chief judge, David De Pas, said that the defendants’ ages — six are in their 60s and 70s — and their health issues weighed on the court’s decision to impose sentences that he said “aren’t very severe.”

He said that the nine years between the robbery and the trial — long even by the standards of France’s famously deliberate legal system — were also taken into account in not imposing harsher sentences. The court acquitted two of the 10 defendants.

Aomar Aït Khedache, 69, the ringleader, got the stiffest sentence, eight years imprisonment but five of those were suspended. Three others got seven years, five of them suspended. Three more got prison sentences ranging from five to three years, mostly or completely suspended, and an eighth person was found guilty on a weapons charge and fined.

With time already served in pretrial detention, none of those found guilty will go to prison and all walked out free. The trial was heard by a three-judge panel and six jurors.

Still, the chief judge said that Kardashian had been traumatized by the Oct. 2, 2016, jewel heist in her hotel during Fashion Week.

“You caused harm,” the judge said. “You caused fear.”

Kardashian, who wasn’t present for the verdict, said in a statement issued afterward that she was “deeply grateful to the French authorities for pursuing justice in this case.”

“The crime was the most terrifying experience of my life, leaving a lasting impact on me and my family. While I’ll never forget what happened, I believe in the power of growth and accountability and pray for healing for all. I remain committed to advocating for justice, and promoting a fair legal system,” said the celebrity who is working to become a lawyer.

A separate statement from her legal team said that “Kim appreciates the court’s decision.”

“It has been a long journey from that terrible night,” it said. “She looks forward to putting this tragic episode behind her.”

Khedache’s walking stick clicked on the courthouse’s marble floors as he walked out free. His DNA, found on the bands used to bind Kardashian, was a breakthrough that helped crack open the case.

Wiretaps captured him giving orders, recruiting accomplices and arranging to sell the diamonds in Belgium. A diamond-encrusted cross, dropped during the escape, was the only piece of jewelry ever recovered. The men made off with more than \$6 million in jewelry, including a diamond ring she’d worn that night to a Givenchy show. They also took a watch her late father had given her when she graduated high school.

Two of the robbers, dressed as police, forced their way into her suite in the glamorous Hôtel de Pourtalès and bound Kardashian with zip ties and tape.

The theft subsequently forced celebrities to rethink how they live and protect themselves.

Because of their ages, the accused became known in France as “les papys braqueurs,” or the grandpa robbers. They faced charges including armed robbery, kidnapping and gang association.

Paris was once a sanctuary for Kardashian

Kardashian’s testimony earlier this month was the trial’s emotional high point. In a packed courtroom, she recounted how she was thrown onto a bed and had a gun pressed to her.

“I absolutely did think I was going to die,” she said. She said she pleaded: “I have babies. I have to make it home. They can take everything. I just have to make it home.”

She was dragged into a marble bathroom and told to stay silent. When the robbers fled, she freed herself by scraping the tape on her wrists off against the sink, then hid with her friend, shaking and barefoot.

She said that Paris had once been her sanctuary — a city she would wander at 3 a.m., window shopping, stopping for hot chocolate. That illusion was shattered.

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Forgiveness

Khedache's lawyer pleaded for clemency, pointing to one of the trial's most visceral moments — when he and Kardashian came face to face during her testimony.

"She listened to the letter he had written to her, and then she forgave him," lawyer Franck Berton told The Associated Press.

Kardashian, typically shielded by security and spectacle, had locked eyes with Khedache as the letter was read aloud.

"I do appreciate the letter, I forgive you," she said. "But it doesn't change the feelings and the trauma and the fact that my life was forever changed."

Khedache on Friday asked for "a thousand pardons," communicated via a written note in court. Other defendants also used their final words to express remorse.

Privacy became luxury

The robbery echoed beyond the City of Light. It forced a recalibration of celebrity behavior in the age of Instagram. For years, Kardashian had curated her life like a showroom: geo-tagged, diamond-lit, public by design. But this was the moment the showroom turned into a crime scene. In her words, "People were watching ... They knew where I was."

Afterward, she stopped posting her location in real time. She stripped her social media feed of lavish gifts. Other stars followed suit.

Federal judge blocks Trump administration from barring foreign student enrollment at Harvard

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Friday blocked the Trump administration from cutting off Harvard's enrollment of foreign students, an action the Ivy League school decried as unconstitutional retaliation for defying the White House's political demands.

In its lawsuit filed earlier Friday in federal court in Boston, Harvard said the government's action violates the First Amendment and will have an "immediate and devastating effect for Harvard and more than 7,000 visa holders."

"With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the University and its mission," Harvard said in its suit. "Without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard."

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs puts the sanction against Harvard on hold, pending the lawsuit.

The Trump administration move has thrown campus into disarray days before graduation, Harvard said in the suit. International students who run labs, teach courses, assist professors and participate in Harvard sports are now left deciding whether to transfer or risk losing legal status to stay in the country, according to the filing.

The impact would be heaviest at graduate schools such as the Harvard Kennedy School, where about half the student body comes from abroad, and Harvard Business School, which is about one-third international. Along with the impact on current students, the move would block thousands of students who were planning to come for summer and fall classes.

Harvard said it immediately puts the school at a disadvantage as it competes for the world's top students. Even if it regains the ability to host students, "future applicants may shy away from applying out of fear of further reprisals from the government," the suit said.

If the government's action stands, Harvard said, the university would be unable to offer admission to new international students for at least the next two academic years. Schools that have that certification withdrawn by the federal government are ineligible to reapply until one year afterward, Harvard said.

Harvard enrolls almost 6,800 foreign students at its campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Most are graduate students, and they come from more than 100 countries.

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The Department of Homeland Security announced the action Thursday, accusing Harvard of creating an unsafe campus environment by allowing "anti-American, pro-terrorist agitators" to assault Jewish students on campus. It also accused Harvard of coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party, contending the school had hosted and trained members of a Chinese paramilitary group as recently as 2024.

Harvard President Alan Garber earlier this month said the university has made changes to its governance over the past year and a half, including a broad strategy to combat antisemitism. He said Harvard would not budge on its "its core, legally-protected principles" over fears of retaliation. Harvard has said it will respond at a later time to allegations first raised by House Republicans about coordination with the Chinese Communist Party.

Lawrence Summers, a former Harvard president and U.S. treasury secretary, wrote on X that the decision would mean losing key people, "some small fraction of whom are going to go on to be Prime Ministers of countries who've now been turned into enemies of the United States." He said the administration's action "is madness."

The threat to Harvard's international enrollment stems from an April 16 request from Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who demanded that Harvard provide information about foreign students that might implicate them in violence or protests that could lead to their deportation.

Harvard says it provided "thousands of data points" in response to Noem's April 16 demand. Her letter on Thursday said Harvard failed to satisfy her request, but the school said she failed to provide any further explanation.

"It makes generalized statements about campus environment and 'anti-Americanism,' again without articulating any rational link between those statements and the decision to retaliate against international students," the suit said.

Harvard's lawsuit said the administration violated the government's own regulations for withdrawing a school's certification.

The government can and does remove colleges from the Student Exchange and Visitor Program, making them ineligible to host foreign students on their campus. However, it's usually for administrative reasons outlined in law, such as failing to maintain accreditation, lacking proper facilities for classes, or failing to employ qualified professional personnel.

Noem said Harvard can regain its ability to host foreign students if it produces a trove of records on foreign students within 72 hours. Her updated request demands all records, including audio or video footage, of foreign students participating in protests or dangerous activity on campus.

The lawsuit is separate from the university's earlier one challenging more than \$2 billion in federal cuts imposed by the Republican administration.

Billy Joel cancels touring after being diagnosed with a brain disorder

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Billy Joel has canceled all his upcoming concerts across North America and England after being diagnosed with fluid buildup in his brain that has affected his "hearing, vision and balance."

Joel revealed on Instagram that he has Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus, "a brain disorder that can affect brain-related abilities, including thinking and concentrating, memory, movement and more," the Cleveland Clinic says.

"This condition has been exacerbated by recent concert performances, leading to problems with hearing, vision and balance," according to a statement from Joel's team. "Under his doctor's instructions, Billy is undergoing specific physical therapy and has been advised to refrain from performing during this recovery period."

In an accompanying statement, Joel said, "I'm sincerely sorry to disappoint our audience, and thank you for understanding."

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In March, "The Piano Man" and "Uptown Girl" singer announced that he underwent surgery and had to undergo physical therapy. A statement at the time said doctors expected him to make a full recovery. It is unclear if his medical issues at the time were related to Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus.

The condition can cause problems with walking, bladder control and thinking, with symptoms worsening if left untreated. It's relatively rare and can be hard to diagnose. It can be treated successfully with surgery to install a tube to drain excess fluid. Patients may need physical therapy in addition to surgery.

Joel, 76, wrapped up his decadelong residency at Madison Square Garden in July 2024 and continued to tour. His planned summer stops included shows at Yankee Stadium and Citi Field in New York, and MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Tickets for all the shows will be refunded.

New Orleans' jail system was troubled decades before 10 inmates made an audacious escape

By JIM MUSTIAN and JACK BROOK Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — In the city that care forgot, the party had made its way into the prison.

More than a decade before the recent New Orleans jailbreak, the city's lawless lockup went viral in a series of videos showing inmates chugging Budweiser, snorting drugs, gambling with handfuls of cash and ejecting bullets from a handgun.

"You can get what you want in here," an inmate boasted without a supervisor in sight. "Medication. Pills. Drugs. Heroin."

The jaw-dropping footage fueled a sweeping 2013 court order intended to reform one of the most violent jails in the country — a decaying emblem of the crime and corruption that have long plagued New Orleans.

A dozen years and tens of millions of dollars later, much of that makeover remains an aspiration despite oversight from a federal judge and the U.S. Justice Department.

The city's correctional chaos reached a new nadir last week when a guard stepped away to get food, allowing 10 inmates to yank open a faulty cell door, remove a toilet and escape through a hole in the wall where steel bars had been cut away. No one noticed the men scaling a fence and sprinting across an interstate around 1 a.m. Hours passed before the public or even law enforcement was notified.

Five of the fugitives remained on the loose Friday as some 200 federal, state and local officers searched for them. Four people have been arrested for allegedly helping the escapees after they broke out of jail. Also, an inmate was charged Friday with assisting in the escape, Attorney General Liz Murrill's office said. Authorities did not elaborate on his alleged role.

The dysfunction dates back generations and continued even after the 2015 opening of the state-of-the-art Orleans Justice Center, billed as a \$150 million panacea when it replaced its seemingly-cursed predecessor. There were major issues with the building from the outset, including a lack of supervision and adequate housing for mentally ill inmates.

"Now we've got a jail with 900 cameras, but that's cold comfort if no one is watching them," said Rafael Goyeneche, a former prosecutor who is president of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, a New Orleans-based watchdog group.

"The inmates-gone-wild videos from years back don't even approach this," Goyeneche added. "If the sheriff or anyone was thinking about terminating the jail consent decree, this escape has ended any serious discussion about that."

Jail monitor warned about lax supervision

Conditions for catastrophe had been ripe for months. An independent jail monitor warned of "extremely inadequate" staffing levels and dangerously lax supervision — both factors in a jailbreak that exposed figurative and literal holes in security. At the same time, court records show the number of "internal escapes" within the jail has skyrocketed over the past two years, underscoring jailers' inability to govern the nearly 1,400-inmate population.

"Too often the failure to follow policy is blamed on the lack of staff or training," the monitors wrote in a report. "Neither is an acceptable excuse."

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Orleans Parish Sheriff Susan Hutson initially deflected blame for the jailbreak, implying without evidence that it was politically motivated as she runs for reelection. Appearing before the City Council several days later, she accepted "full accountability" for the "failures."

She told the City Council she needs millions of dollars to fix "outdated surveillance, aging infrastructure, blind spots in supervision and critical staffing shortages." The council pushed back, saying the jail had received substantial injections of taxpayer dollars without sufficient oversight.

Perhaps most startlingly, Hutson warned she "cannot guarantee" inmates would not be left unattended in the future.

"The jail is the same today as it was a week ago, the same as when we submitted our 2024 budget request, and the same as it has been for years," Hutson said in a statement.

55 years ago, a judge said New Orleans' jail was unconstitutional

The escape has drawn new attention to deplorable jail conditions that have persisted for decades in New Orleans, a history of neglect that stands out even in a state long associated with overincarceration. The situation became so dire in 2016 that Hutson's predecessor, Marlin Gusman, was stripped of control of the jail as part of a deal to avert federal receivership.

"I think it's gotten worse," said Ricky Peterson, who recalled inmates roaming the facility "at their own leisure" when he was jailed about a decade ago.

"As time progressed, it started going down and down and down," added Mario Westbrook, 48, who was jailed around the same time on gun possession and marijuana charges. "You shouldn't have to go through those type of conditions."

In 1970, a federal judge declared the overcrowded Orleans Parish Prison to be unconstitutional, saying conditions amounted to cruel and unusual punishment and "shock the conscience as a matter of elemental decency." A later lawsuit alleged that female inmates were shackled during childbirth. Suicides and in-custody deaths abounded, including the fatal beating of a man by two deputies in 2004.

Then as now, the sheriff accused the city of chronically underfunding the jail, while city officials countered the lockup was most afflicted by incompetent management.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 wrought unspeakable havoc at the jail, as inmates found themselves stranded in chest-high water and the lockup lost power.

A 2009 Justice Department report warned of "calculated abuse" by deputies who would beat inmates so frequently they developed a code of ordering an inmate to "tie his shoes" when they wanted to brawl.

The jailhouse videos

A major landmark came in 2013 when a class-action lawsuit resulted in the consent decree, a detailed plan for overhauling jail policies, reducing violence and improving inmate medical treatment.

That litigation unearthed the viral jailhouse videos, which also included a 2009 clip of an apparently escaped inmate cavorting on the city's famed Bourbon Street for what the Justice Department described as "an evening of leisure."

"The conduct in the video may have occurred several years ago," the Justice Department said at the time, "but the policies, practices and culture that enabled the outrageous conduct remain relevant."

Justice Department reaches deal to allow Boeing to avoid prosecution over 737 Max crashes

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has reached a deal with Boeing that will allow the airplane giant to avoid criminal prosecution for allegedly misleading U.S. regulators about the 737 Max jetliner before two of the planes crashed and killed 346 people, according to court papers filed Friday.

Under the "agreement in principle," which still needs to be finalized, Boeing would pay or invest more than \$1.1 billion, including an additional \$445 million for the crash victims' families, the Justice Department said.

In return, the department has agreed to dismiss the fraud charge against Boeing, allowing the manufacturer to avoid a possible criminal conviction that could have jeopardized the company's status as a federal

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contractor, according to experts.

"Ultimately, in applying the facts, the law, and Department policy, we are confident that this resolution is the most just outcome with practical benefits," a Justice Department spokesperson said in a statement.

"Nothing will diminish the victims' losses, but this resolution holds Boeing financially accountable, provides finality and compensation for the families and makes an impact for the safety of future air travelers."

Boeing on Friday declined to comment.

Some relatives of the passengers who died in the crashes, which took place off the coast of Indonesia and in Ethiopia less than five months apart in 2018 and 2019, have been pushing for a public trial, the prosecution of former company officials, and more severe financial punishment for Boeing. The Justice Department noted that the victims' families had mixed views on the proposed deal.

"This kind of non-prosecution deal is unprecedented and obviously wrong for the deadliest corporate crime in U.S. history," said Paul Cassell, an attorney for many of the families in the long-running case. "My families will object and hope to convince the court to reject it."

Javier de Luis, whose sister, Graziella, died in the Ethiopia crash, said the Justice Department is walking away "from any pretense to seek justice for the victims of the 737Max crashes."

"The message sent by this action to companies around the country is, don't worry about making your products safe for your customers," he said in a statement. "Even if you kill them, just pay a small fine and move on."

Boeing was accused of misleading the Federal Aviation Administration about aspects of the Max before the agency certified the plane for flight. Boeing did not tell airlines and pilots about a new software system, called MCAS, that could turn the plane's nose down without input from pilots if a sensor detected that the plane might go into an aerodynamic stall.

The Max planes crashed after a faulty reading from the sensor pushed the nose down and pilots were unable to regain control. After the second crash, Max jets were grounded worldwide until the company redesigned MCAS to make it less powerful and to use signals from two sensors, not just one.

The Justice Department charged Boeing in 2021 with deceiving FAA regulators about the software, which did not exist in older 737s, and about how much training pilots would need to fly the plane safely. The department agreed not to prosecute Boeing at the time, however, if the company paid a \$2.5 billion settlement, including the \$243.6 million fine, and took steps to comply with anti-fraud laws for three years.

Federal prosecutors, however, last year said Boeing violated the terms of the 2021 agreement by failing to make promised changes to detect and prevent violations of federal anti-fraud laws. Boeing agreed last July to plead guilty to the felony fraud charge instead of enduring a potentially lengthy public trial.

But in December, U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor in Fort Worth rejected the plea deal. The judge said the diversity, inclusion and equity, or DEI, policies in the government and at Boeing could result in race being a factor in picking a monitor to oversee Boeing's compliance with the agreement.

The plea deal had called for an independent monitor to be named to oversee Boeing's safety and quality procedures for three years. Under the agreement announced Friday, Boeing must retain an "independent compliance consultant" who will make recommendations for "further improvement" and report back to the government, according to court papers.

Russia and Ukraine swap hundreds of prisoners in first phase of a major exchange

By SAMYA KULLAB and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

CHERNIHIV REGION, Ukraine (AP) — Russia and Ukraine began a major prisoner exchange Friday, swapping hundreds of soldiers and civilians in the first phase of an exchange that was a moment of cooperation in otherwise failed efforts to reach a ceasefire in the 3-year-old war.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the first phase brought home 390 Ukrainians, including soldiers and civilians, with further releases expected over the weekend that will make it the largest swap of the war. Russia's Defense Ministry said it received the same number from Ukraine.

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"It's very important to bring everyone home," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram, thanking all who worked to secure their return and pledging to continue diplomatic efforts to make more exchanges possible.

Dozens of relatives of prisoners cheered and chanted "Thank you!" as buses carrying the freed captives arrived at a medical facility in Ukraine's Chernihiv region. The men, some with expressionless faces and others unable to contain their emotions, got off the buses wrapped in Ukrainian flags for joyful reunions.

Kyiv and Moscow agreed in Istanbul last week to the exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side in their first direct peace talks since the early weeks of Russia's 2022 invasion. That meeting lasted only two hours and brought no breakthrough in U.S.-led efforts to stop the fighting.

Exchanges at the Belarus-Ukrainian border

The swap took place at the border with Belarus in northern Ukraine, according to a Ukrainian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

The released Russians were taken to Belarus for medical treatment, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

The exchange, which would be the latest of dozens of swaps since the war began and the biggest involving Ukrainian civilians at one time, didn't herald any halt in fighting.

Battles continued along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed, and neither country has relented in its deep strikes.

Russia launched two ballistic missiles at infrastructure targets in the southern Ukrainian port of Odesa, killing two workers and injuring eight others, according to regional Gov. Oleh Kiper. It was the first recorded attack on the port since March 11.

Moscow's forces attacked settlements in the Kherson region with artillery, mortars and drones throughout the day, killing three civilians and injuring 10, according to the Kherson Regional Prosecutor's Office.

They also shelled Kostyantynivka with artillery, killing one civilian, said Serhii Horbunov, head of the city's military administration.

Emotional reunions for some, but others must wait

As the freed men entered the medical facility, people holding signs and photos of their relatives shouted names or brigade numbers, seeking any news of a loved one. The returning men inspected the photos, and a serviceman said he shared a cell with one of those on the sea of portraits held out toward him.

"Vanya!" cried Nataliia Mosych, among the gathered relatives, "My husband!"

She hadn't seen her husband, Ivan, for almost two years, she said, beaming.

"It is an unbelievable feeling. I am still in shock," Mosych said after he came outside to greet his family following registration procedures inside the facility. "I am really glad, and we were not forgotten, and we still mean something for Ukraine."

Many who were freed expressed shock and disbelief that they had been exchanged. Some had trouble remembering names and details of their lives before their capture.

One released POW joked in a video call with his girlfriend that he got a bit older in his three-year absence, and she replied he was as beautiful as ever.

Many relatives wept when it became clear their loved ones were not among those returning, and they hoped those who were released could at least offer some information about their husbands, brothers and sons.

"Maybe my dad will come tomorrow," one small boy cried.

News of the prisoner release emerged when U.S. President Donald Trump said Russia and Ukraine had carried out a large exchange.

"A major prisoners swap was just completed between Russia and Ukraine," Trump said on the Truth Social platform. He said it would "go into effect shortly."

He added in the post that "this could lead to something big???" — apparently referring to other diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting.

No new Russia-Ukraine talks are set

After the May 16 talks, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the prisoner swap a "confidence-building measure" and said the parties had agreed in principle to meet again.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that there has been no agreement yet on the venue for the next round of talks as diplomatic maneuvering continued.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Friday night that Moscow would give Ukraine a draft document outlining its conditions for a “sustainable, long-term, comprehensive” peace agreement once the ongoing prisoner exchange had finished.

European leaders have accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in peace efforts while he tries to press his larger army’s battlefield initiative and capture more Ukrainian land.

The Istanbul meeting revealed that both sides remained far apart on key conditions for ending the fighting. One such condition for Ukraine, backed by its Western allies, is a temporary ceasefire as a first step toward a peaceful settlement.

The Kremlin has pushed back on a temporary halt to hostilities, and Putin has said any such truce must come with a freeze on Western arms supplies to Ukraine and an end to Ukraine’s mobilization drive.

A senior Ukrainian official said in Istanbul that Russia had introduced new, “unacceptable demands” to withdraw Ukrainian forces from huge swaths of territory. The official, who was not authorized to make official statements, spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The proposal had not been previously discussed, the official said.

Putin has long demanded as a key condition for a peace deal that Ukraine withdraw its troops from the four regions that Russia annexed in September 2022 but never fully controlled.

Zelenskyy has warned that if Russia continues to reject a ceasefire and make “unrealistic demands,” it will signal deliberate efforts to prolong the war — a move that should bring tougher international sanctions.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said it had shot down 788 Ukrainian drones away from the battlefield between May 20 and May 23.

Ukraine’s air force said Russia fired 175 Shahed and decoy drones, as well as a ballistic missile since late Thursday.

A stabbing at Hamburg’s central train station causes multiple injuries. A woman is arrested

BERLIN (AP) — A stabbing attack at the busy central train station in the German city of Hamburg left multiple people injured, some of them in life-threatening condition, authorities said. A woman was arrested as the suspect.

The attacker targeted people on the platform between tracks 13 and 14 in the station at around 6 p.m., according to police. The station in downtown Hamburg, Germany’s second-biggest city, is a major hub for local, regional and long-distance trains.

Police said that “several” people had life-threatening injuries, but didn’t give specific figures. Late Friday evening, Hamburg’s fire service said that 17 people were hurt in total — four of them with life-threatening injuries, another six with serious injuries and seven with light injuries, German news agency dpa reported.

Police said a 39-year-old woman, a German national, was arrested at the scene without putting up resistance and that they believe after watching video footage that she acted alone. They secured the knife.

There was no immediate indication of any political motive, and investigators were looking into whether the suspect may have been mentally ill, police spokesperson Florian Abbenseth said.

A high-speed ICE train with its doors open was still at the platform hours after the attack, but Abbenseth said that it was not a crime scene.

Railway operator Deutsche Bahn said it was “deeply shocked” by the attack. Four tracks at the station were closed Friday evening, and some long-distance trains were delayed or diverted.

Carrying weapons, including knives, is banned at the station and on local transport in Hamburg.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s office said the German leader was appalled by the news and told Hamburg Mayor Peter Tschentscher in a call Friday evening that “my thoughts are with the victims and their relatives.”

At least 60 people killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza as Israel lets minimal aid in

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — At least 60 people were killed by Israeli strikes across Gaza in a 24-hour period, Gaza's health ministry said Friday, as Israel pressed ahead with its military offensive and let in minimal aid to the strip.

The dead included 10 people in the southern city of Khan Younis, four in the central town of Deir al-Balah and nine in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the north, according to the Nasser, Al-Aqsa and Al-Ahli hospitals where the bodies were brought.

Israel faces mounting international criticism for its offensive and pressure to let aid into Gaza amid a humanitarian crisis. Gaza has been under an Israeli blockade for nearly three months, with experts warning that many of its 2 million residents are at high risk of famine.

Even the United States, a staunch ally, has voiced concerns over the hunger crisis.

The strikes that lasted into Friday morning came a day after Israeli tanks and drones attacked a hospital in northern Gaza, igniting fires and causing extensive damage, Palestinian hospital officials said on Thursday. Videos taken by a health official at Al-Awda Hospital show walls blown away and thick black smoke billowing from wreckage.

Israel said it will continue to strike until Hamas releases all of the 58 remaining Israeli hostages and disarms. Fewer than half of the hostages still in Gaza are believed to be alive, after most of the rest were returned in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Suspect charged with murder over deaths of Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington

The strikes come a day after two Israeli Embassy staffers were shot while leaving a reception for young diplomats at the Capital Jewish Museum, in Washington, DC. The suspect told police he "did it for Palestine," according to court documents filed Thursday as he was charged with murder. He didn't enter a plea.

On Thursday night, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the killings in Washington horrific and blasted France, the UK and Canada for proposing to establish a Palestinian state.

"Because by issuing their demand, replete with a threat of sanctions against Israel — against Israel, not Hamas — these three leaders effectively said they want Hamas to remain in power," he said.

Earlier this week the three leaders issued one of the most significant criticisms by close allies of Israel's handling of the war in Gaza and its actions in the West Bank, threatening to take "concrete actions" if the government did not cease its renewed military offensive and significantly lift restrictions on humanitarian aid.

Aid starts entering, but agencies say nothing like enough

Amid pressure, Israel started letting in aid. Israeli officials said Friday they let in more than 100 trucks of aid, including flour, food, medical equipment and drugs. The trucks came in through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

But U.N. agencies say the amount is woefully insufficient, compared with around 600 trucks a day that entered during a recent ceasefire and that are necessary to meet basic needs. U.N. agencies say Israeli military restrictions and the breakdown of law and order in Gaza make it difficult to retrieve and distribute the aid. As a result, little of it has so far reached those in need.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday that Israel had so far authorized what "amounts to a teaspoon of aid when a flood of assistance is required," with no supplies at all reaching northern Gaza.

On Friday dozens of people crowded a charity kitchen in Khan Younis, holding empty pots and plastic containers in the air in hopes of receiving a share of lentil soup.

Halima Abu Amra, a displaced woman from Rafah, said she had been struggling to feed a daughter injured in the fighting. She said she had been collecting discarded bread from the streets, washing and soaking it so her daughter can eat, while her younger children get by on soup.

"We want this war to end in any way," she said. "My family is dying slowly."

The World Food Program said that 15 of its trucks were looted Thursday night in southern Gaza while going to WFP-supported bakeries.

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It said that hunger and desperation about whether food was coming in is contributing to rising insecurity, and called on Israel to allow greater volumes of food to enter, faster and more efficiently.

Israel says the aid now is to bridge the gap until a U.S. backed initiative starts soon. A new group known as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation says it will take over aid distribution in Gaza, and armed private contractors will guard the distribution. Israel says the system is needed because Hamas siphons off significant amounts of aid.

The U.N. denies that claim and has rejected the foundation's proposal for delivering aid, saying it fails to respect international law and humanitarian principles. Guterres said Friday that the UN already has a structure in place capable of delivering enough aid to fill 9,000 trucks.

A Geneva-based advocacy group said Friday it was taking legal action to urge Swiss authorities to monitor the privately run GHF, which is registered in Switzerland.

A foundation spokesman said that it adheres to humanitarian principles and that its operations are free from Israeli control. It said the foundation was not a military operation and its decision to integrate armed security contractors allows it the ability to access and operate in Gaza.

No movement on ceasefire negotiations in Doha

Earlier this week, Netanyahu said he was recalling his high-level negotiating team from the Qatari capital, Doha, after a week of ceasefire talks failed to bring results. A working team will remain.

Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said a "fundamental gap" remained between the two parties and that none of the proposals was able to bridge their differences.

Hamas said no real ceasefire talks have taken place since last week in Doha. The group accused Netanyahu of "falsely portraying participation" and attempting to "mislead global public opinion" by keeping Israel's delegation there without engaging in serious negotiations.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251 others.

Israel's retaliatory offensive, which has destroyed large swaths of Gaza, has killed more than 53,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

Settler violence in the occupied West Bank

Palestinians in the village of Bruqin, in the northern West Bank, said Israeli settlers attacked them Thursday afternoon, burning cars and damaging houses. The U.N.'s humanitarian agency said eight residents were injured, with most sustaining burns while trying to extinguish fires.

"We've been suffering since Wednesday from settler attacks and assaults — verbal abuse, stone throwing, and constant harassment at all times," said Mustafa Khater, whose house was attacked. He said he had previously evacuated his wife and four children for fear of attacks, but had stayed behind to protect the house. The attack follows last week's killing of a pregnant Israeli woman near Bruqin.

The war in Gaza has sparked a surge of violence in the West Bank, with the Israeli military carrying out large-scale operations targeting militants that have killed hundreds of Palestinians and displaced tens of thousands. That has coincided with a rise in settler violence and Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

Iran-US talks made 'some but not conclusive progress,' mediator Oman says

By JON GAMBRELL and GIADA ZAMPANO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Iran and the United States made "some but not conclusive progress" Friday in a fifth round of negotiations in Rome over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, the talks' Omani mediator said.

The remarks by Badr al-Busaidi suggested the negotiations between the two longtime enemies would continue even as the talks run up against their toughest challenge: Trying to find middle ground between American demands that Iran stop enriching uranium while Tehran insists its program must continue.

"The fifth round of Iran US talks have concluded today in Rome with some but not conclusive progress," al-Busaidi wrote on X. "We hope to clarify the remaining issues in the coming days, to allow us to proceed

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towards the common goal of reaching a sustainable and honourable agreement."

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi after the talks told Iranian state television that al-Busaidi presented ideas that will be conveyed to the two nations' capitals "without creating any commitments for either side."

"These negotiations are too complex to be resolved in just two or three meetings," he said. "I am hopeful that in the next one or two rounds — especially given the better understanding of the Islamic Republic's positions — we can reach solutions that allow the talks to progress."

He added: "We are not there yet, but we are not discouraged either."

The U.S. was again represented in the talks by Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Michael Anton, the State Department's policy planning director, at the negotiations in the Omani Embassy in Rome's Camil-luccia neighborhood.

A senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks, said the direct and indirect negotiations "continue to be constructive."

"The talks continue to be constructive — we made further progress, but there is still work to be done," the official said.

Enrichment remains key in negotiations

The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the U.S. has imposed on the Islamic Republic, closing in on half a century of enmity.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

"Iran almost certainly is not producing nuclear weapons, but Iran has undertaken activities in recent years that better position it to produce them, if it chooses to do so," a new report from the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency said. "These actions reduce the time required to produce sufficient weapons-grade uranium for a first nuclear device to probably less than one week."

However, it likely still would take Iran months to make a working bomb, experts say.

Enrichment remains the key point of contention. Witkoff at one point suggested Iran could enrich uranium at 3.67%, then later began saying all Iranian enrichment must stop. That position on the American side has hardened over time.

Asked about the negotiations, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said "we believe that we are going to succeed" in the talks and on Washington's push for no enrichment.

"The Iranians are at that table, so they also understand what our position is, and they continue to go," Bruce said Thursday.

One idea floated so far that might allow Iran to stop enrichment in the Islamic Republic but maintain a supply of uranium could be a consortium in the Mideast backed by regional countries and the U.S. There also are multiple countries and the International Atomic Energy Agency offering low-enriched uranium that can be used for peaceful purposes by countries.

However, Iran's Foreign Ministry has maintained enrichment must continue within the country's borders and a similar fuel-swap proposal failed to gain traction in negotiations in 2010.

Meanwhile, Israel has threatened to strike Iran's nuclear facilities on their own if it feels threatened, further complicating tensions in the Mideast already spiked by the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Araghchi warned Thursday that Iran would take "special measures" to defend its nuclear facilities if Israel continues to threaten them, while also warning the U.S. it would view it as being complicit in any Israeli attack. Authorities allowed a group of Iranian students to form a human chain Thursday at its underground enrichment site at Fordo, an area with incredibly tight security built into a mountain to defend against possible airstrikes.

Talks come as US pressure on Iran increases

Yet despite the tough talk from Iran, the Islamic Republic needs a deal. Its internal politics are inflamed over the mandatory hijab, or headscarf, with women still ignoring the law on the streets of Tehran. Rumors also persist over the government potentially increasing the cost of subsidized gasoline in the country, which has sparked nationwide protests in the past.

Iran's rial currency plunged to over 1 million to a U.S. dollar in April. The currency has improved with the talks, however, something Tehran hopes will continue as a further collapse in the rial could spark further economic unrest.

Meanwhile, its self-described "Axis of Resistance" sits in tatters after Iran's regional allies in the region have faced repeated attacks by Israel during its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The collapse of Syrian President Bashar Assad's government during a rebel advance in December also stripped Iran of a key ally.

The Trump administration also has continued to levy new sanctions on Iran, including this week, which saw the U.S. specifically target any sale of sodium perchlorate to the Islamic Republic. Iran reportedly received that chemical in shipments from China at its Shahid Rajaei port near Bandar Abbas. A major, unexplained explosion there killed dozens and wounded over 1,000 others in April during one round of the talks.

Suspect in shooting of Israeli Embassy staffers railed against Gaza war in online posts

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the years before he was accused of killing two Israeli Embassy employees, the suspect in the fatal shootings was an active participant in Chicago's left-wing protest scene, speaking out against police violence and a proposed Amazon headquarters. Then the war in Gaza ignited his fury into violence.

Elias Rodriguez, 31, was charged Thursday with the murder of foreign officials and other crimes in connection with the deaths of Israeli citizen Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim, an American, as they left an event at a Jewish museum. The couple had plans to become engaged.

He told police after his arrest, "I did it for Palestine, I did it for Gaza," according to court filings.

Rodriguez lived in a modest 850-square-foot apartment on Chicago's north side and worked as an administrative assistant at a medical trade group. He had no apparent criminal record.

In his activism, he protested police violence against minorities and the power of corporations. His online posts had recently become fixated on the war in Gaza, calling for retaliation against Israel.

In the window of his apartment hung a photo of Wadee Alfayoumi, a 6-year-old Muslim boy killed in a stabbing in Chicago shortly after the start of the war, which was sparked by the Oct. 7, 2023, attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas that resulted in the deaths of some 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians, and the abductions of 251 others.

A neighbor, John Wayne Fry, told reporters that Rodriguez and a woman who lived with him appeared to be "very sensitive people, especially about the issue of Palestine."

Suspect protested outside Chicago mayor's home

An October 2017 article in Liberation, the online newspaper for the Party for Socialism and Liberation, quoted Rodriguez as a member of the group participating in a protest outside the Chicago home of then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel over the police shooting of black teenager Laquan McDonald and the city's bid to be the site for a new Amazon headquarters. A photo of a man holding a protest sign published with the article appeared to match photos of Rodriguez posted on social media.

The organization denied Thursday that Rodriguez was an active member, though it acknowledged a "brief association" in the past. The group also scrubbed the 2017 article identifying Rodriguez as a member from its website.

"We reject any attempt to associate the PSL with the DC shooting," the group said in a statement. "We know of no contact with (Rodriguez) in over 7 years. We have nothing to do with this shooting and do not support it."

As recently as this week, the group's X feed posted pro-Palestinian statements calling for an end to the war in Gaza and characterizing Israel's attacks on Palestinians as genocide.

Family members of Rodriguez and his defense attorney, Elizabeth Mullin, did not return messages seeking comment.

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The FBI did not respond to questions about whether he was on the bureau's radar before the shooting. A GoFundMe page from 2017 sought to raise money to pay Rodriguez's way to People's Congress of Resistance, an event in Washington that September to "fight the Trump agenda and the Congress of millionaires!" As part of the appeal, Rodriguez recounted his father's military service in the Iraq War.

"When my dad came home from Baghdad, he came with souvenirs," Rodriguez was quoted as saying. "One was a magazine pouch with a warning in Arabic to back away or my dad would shoot and kill you. ... He also gave me a patch of Iraq's national flag, one he ripped off of an Iraqi soldier's uniform because he could. I don't want to see another generation of Americans coming home from genocidal imperialist wars with trophies."

The effort raised \$240.

Social media posts show he became focused on Gaza

Social media accounts tied to Rodriguez suggest he had become increasingly focused over the last two years on the Israeli bombing campaign and ground invasion in Gaza, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 53,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

An account on X that used a variation of a screen name Rodriguez had used on other sites, along with his given name and photo, frequently featured pro-Palestinian posts, including a video from an October 2023 protest in downtown Chicago against U.S. aid to Israel.

Last October, the account also reposted two videos of speeches by Hassan Nasrallah, a Lebanese cleric and a former leader of Islamic militant group Hezbollah. Nasrallah had been killed two weeks earlier in an Israeli airstrike.

Less than an hour after the shooting in Washington on Thursday night, the X account posted, "Escalate For Gaza, Bring The War Home," along with screen grabs of a nearly 1,000-word essay signed with Rodriguez's name. It was not immediately clear whether Rodriguez, who was in police custody at the time, had used a feature on X to schedule the release of the post in advance or if another person might have had access to the account.

In the piece, Rodriguez railed against the mounting death toll in Gaza, saying Israel "had obliterated the capacity to even continue counting the dead, which has served its genocide well."

He sought to justify what he called "the morality of armed demonstration."

"The atrocities committed by Israelis against Palestine defy description and defy quantification," he wrote.

Rodriguez also invoked the death last year of Aaron Bushnell, an active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force who set himself ablaze outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington while declaring that he "will no longer be complicit in genocide."

Israel has repeatedly denied that it is committing genocide in Gaza.

Rodriguez's employer, the American Osteopathic Information Association, issued a statement Thursday expressing shock and saying it would cooperate with investigators.

"As a physician organization dedicated to protecting the health and sanctity of human life, we believe in the rights of all persons to live safely without fear of violence," the group said.

Music talent agent among dead after jet crashes into San Diego neighborhood

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A private jet carrying a music talent agent and five others hit a power line in foggy weather early Thursday and crashed into a San Diego neighborhood, slamming into a home and killing multiple people on the flight.

With the home engulfed in flames and jet fuel rolling down the streets, half a dozen vehicles ignited while residents in the neighborhood of U.S. Navy-owned housing were shaken awake just before 4 a.m. by the thunderous crash and subsequent explosions. Out their windows, they saw a wall of fire.

"I can't quite put words to describe what the scene looks like, but with the jet fuel going down the street,

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and everything on fire all at once, it was pretty horrific to see," San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said.

No one in the neighborhood died, but eight were taken to the hospital for smoke inhalation and injuries that were not life-threatening, including a person who was hurt climbing out a window, police officer Anthony Carrasco said.

Dave Shapiro, co-founder of Sound Talent Group, and two employees were among those killed, the music agency said in a statement. Sound Talent Group has represented artists including American pop band Hanson, American singer-songwriter Vanessa Carlton and the Canadian rock group Sum 41. Hanson is perhaps best known for its earworm 1990s pop hit, "MMMBop." Shapiro also owned Velocity Records.

"We are devastated by the loss of our co-founder, colleagues and friends. Our hearts go out to their families and to everyone impacted by today's tragedy," the agency said.

Six people were on board the plane, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. Authorities were still combing the scene and recovering the bodies before releasing an official number and identifying the dead, though there were not believed to be any survivors aboard the flight.

Daniel Williams, former drummer for metal band The Devil Wears Prada, posted on his Instagram on Wednesday afternoon that he was boarding the plane with Shapiro. The band posted a tribute to Williams on their Instagram page.

"No words. We owe you everything. Love you forever," the band wrote.

A representative for the band referred to their social post when asked about Williams' death.

Parts of Shapiro's 1985 Cessna 550 Citation littered a large area, including fragments under the power lines and a section of wing on a road behind the homes, said Elliot Simpson of the National Transportation Safety Board.

Neighborhood hit hard

The home that was struck was destroyed, with its front heavily burned and its roof partially collapsed, and about 10 others were damaged in Murphy Canyon, the largest neighborhood of Navy-owned housing in the country, officials said.

Ben McCarty and his wife, who live in the home that was hit, said they felt heat all around them.

"My wife was screaming, and she's like, 'There's a fire,'" McCarty, who has served in the Navy for 13 years, told local ABC affiliate KGTV.

When he walked toward the front of the house, he saw that the roof had fallen off and flames blocked their exit. They grabbed their children and dogs and ran to the back, where their neighbors helped them climb over the fence to escape.

The plane also hit both of the couple's vehicles, which burned.

"It put my truck into our living room," McCarty said.

Other vehicles along the block were melted and scorched into burned shells. One stubborn car fire sent smoke billowing up for hours.

Ariya Waterworth said she woke up to a "whooshing sound" and then saw a giant fireball outside. She screamed for help as firefighters arrived and helped her get out with her two children and their family dog.

One of the family's cars was "completely disintegrated," and the other had extensive damage. Her yard was littered with plane parts, broken glass and debris.

"I definitely do feel blessed, because we've been spared," she said.

At least 100 residents were evacuated. Hours after the crash, jet fuel rolled down Salmon Street. The smell of fumes lingered throughout the day, and officials said it was unclear when it would be safe for people to return.

"We have jet fuel all over the place," Assistant San Diego Fire Department Chief Dan Eddy said.

Eddy added that the fog was so thick in the morning that "you could barely see in front of you."

The plane originated from a small New Jersey airport

The flight took off from Teterboro, New Jersey, near Manhattan, at about 11:15 p.m. Wednesday and made a fuel stop in Wichita, Kansas, before continuing on to San Diego, according to Simpson.

Based on the flight path, it was bound for Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport when it struck power lines about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) southeast of the airfield, Simpson said.

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Audio recorded by www.liveATC.net includes a brief transmission from the pilot saying he was on final approach to the airport and was about 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) out at 3:45 a.m.

NTSB investigators planned to spend Thursday and Friday at the scene gathering evidence, Simpson said. He welcomed video or other details from any witnesses.

The plane was attempting to land in foggy weather

At that hour and in foggy weather, the plane was likely operating on an instrument flight rules plan, which is typically used during reduced visibility, said Barry Newman, a board-certified aviation attorney.

However, for that airport, once an aircraft reaches 673 feet (205 meters), the pilot also has to rely on sight.

"If a pilot descends to that level and he can't see the runway, he has to call for a missed approach or divert to another airport," Newman said.

In October 2021 a twin-engine plane plowed into a San Diego suburb, killing the pilot and a UPS delivery driver on the ground and burning homes. It was preparing to land at the airport.

And in December 2008, a Marine Corps fighter jet slammed into a house in San Diego's University City neighborhood, causing an explosion that killed four people inside. The Marine Corps blamed the crash on mechanical failure and human error.

Urban fires can mean long trips for helicopters to get water.

One firefighter had a better idea

By DORANY PINEDA and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

CABAZON, Calif. (AP) — Mark Whaling and a crew raced up and down a hill in a tanker truck as they battled a wildfire in Los Angeles County, scrambling to get water from a street hydrant in time to stay ahead of flames moving up a ridge. A helicopter flew in to drop water, but it had to fly a long distance to refill — and a fire that might have been stopped went on to destroy homes.

As they fought that early 2000s blaze, Whaling says, he spotted a sealed, million-gallon water tank nearby that firefighters had no way of accessing. He thought that was ridiculous.

"We don't tell fire engines, 'Protect the city and go find your own water.' We put fire hydrants every 600 feet all around cities," said Whaling, who has since retired from the county fire department. "But when it comes to the helicopters, we weren't supporting them as robustly as we should."

His frustration sparked an idea: the Heli-Hydrant, a relatively small, open tank that can be rapidly filled with water, enabling helicopters to fill up faster for urban fires rather than flying to sometimes distant lakes or ponds.

As wildfires become more frequent, Whaling's invention is getting the attention of officials eager to boost preparedness. First used for the 2020 Blue Ridge Fire in Yorba Linda, 10 Heli-Hydrants have been built across Southern California and 16 more are in progress, according to Whaling.

Helicopters are essential for firefighting. They can drop 1,000 gallons (about 3,785 liters) of water at once — some much more. That's far more than hoses can get on a fire all at once, and can be the best way to attack fires that are difficult for ground crews to reach.

But pilots sometimes have to fly a long way to scoop up water, and in drought-prone areas, natural sources can sometimes dry up or diminish so they're hard to draw from. In Southern California's Riverside County, helicopters have had to fly up to 10 miles (about 16 kilometers) to find water, eating critical time from battling fires.

An innovative solution

On a remote plot in the Southern California town of Cabazon, contractor Glenn Chavez stood on a ladder and peered into an empty Heli-Hydrant. A radio in hand, he clicked a button to activate the system and watched as water roared into the tank. In about six minutes, it filled with 8,500 gallons (32,176 liters).

Chavez, a general contractor, was testing the Cabazon Water District's latest investment — a second Heli-Hydrant that local officials are counting on to help protect the town. At \$300,000, it cost slightly less than the average price of a single home in Cabazon.

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"Living in a beautiful desert community, you're going to have risks of fire," said Michael Pollack, the district's general manager. "And to have these Heli-Hydrants is a major advantage. People will have a little bit of comfort knowing that they have another tool for fighting fires in their community."

Pilots can remotely activate the tanks from half a mile away, with the tank typically filling quickly from a city's water system. Helicopters can fill up in less than a minute. Once it's activated, solar panels and backup batteries ensure the system can still be used during power outages. And at night, lights from the tank and a tower nearby guide pilots toward it.

In November, fire responders in San Diego put the product to the test when the 48-acre Garden Fire in Fallbrook, a community known for its avocado groves, prompted evacuation orders and warnings. Helicopters tapped the tank nearly 40 times.

Pilot Ben Brown said its proximity to the fire saved not just time but fuel.

"They're great for when you don't have other water sources," he said. "The more dip sites, especially in some of the more arid environments in the county, the better."

But they don't always help

Heli-Hydrants have raised some concerns about their placement in urban areas where houses, buildings and power lines can be obstacles to flight and they might have to squeeze into tighter spaces.

In those cases, firefighters may choose to fly farther to a natural source that gives the helicopter more room, said Warren Voth, a deputy pilot with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department. A pilot's goal is to always to face the wind while entering and exiting an area, for safety, and they need room to accomplish that.

In some cases, the municipal systems needed to fill Heli-Hydrants could go empty during major fires. As the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles burned, three 1-million gallon tanks that helped pressurize city hydrants in the Pacific Palisades ran dry as demand soared and burning pipes leaked water.

Other times, helicopters just can't access them. When winds are fierce, flying is nearly impossible; hurricane-force winds that supercharged the Los Angeles infernos initially grounded firefighting aircraft. When multiple helicopters respond to large blazes, they can't all use the Heli-Hydrant. And smoke can make it hard to see it.

Portable water tanks can accomplish some of the things that Heli-Hydrants do, but can require time, people and equipment to set up.

A Heli-Hydrant gives one community hope

Areas where wildland vegetation intersects with human development have always been vulnerable to fires, but more people are living in them today, and climate change is creating conditions that can make these regions drier and more flammable.

Jake Wiley has seen intensifying wildfires devastate his community. Two blazes — in 2007 and 2017 — collectively scorched more than 400 structures in San Diego. The last one forced Wiley, now general manager for the Rainbow Municipal Water District, to evacuate.

That fire also prompted local agencies to install a Heli-Hydrant — and when the Garden Fire erupted in November, it played a big role helping firefighters protect homes.

"It seems like when you've seen the worst, you haven't yet," Wiley said. "Anything we can do helps."

Trump administration says Columbia violated civil rights of Jewish students

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Trump administration is accusing Columbia University of violating the civil rights of Jewish students by "acting with deliberate indifference" toward what it describes as rampant antisemitism on campus.

The finding was announced late Thursday by the Health and Human Services Department, marking the latest blow for an Ivy League school already shaken by federal cutbacks and sustained government pres-

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sure to crack down on student speech.

It comes hours after the Department of Homeland Security said it would revoke Harvard University's ability to enroll international students, a major escalation in the administration's monthslong attack on higher education.

The civil rights division of HHS said it had found Columbia in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which blocks federal funding recipients from discrimination based on race, color or national origin. That final category, the press release notes, includes "discrimination against individuals that is based on their actual or perceived Israeli or Jewish identity or ancestry."

The announcement did not include new sanctions against Columbia, which is already facing \$400 million in federal cuts by the Trump administration over its response to pro-Palestinian campus protests.

A spokesperson for Columbia said the university is currently in negotiations with the government about resolving its claims of antisemitism.

"We understand this finding is part of our ongoing discussions with the government," the spokesperson said in an email. "Columbia is deeply committed to combatting antisemitism and all forms of harassment and discrimination on our campus."

The civil rights investigation into Columbia was based on witness interviews, media reports and other sources, according to HHS. The findings were not made public. A spokesperson did not respond to a request for further information.

"The findings carefully document the hostile environment Jewish students at Columbia University have had to endure for over 19 months, disrupting their education, safety, and well-being," Anthony Archeval, acting director of the HHS civil rights office, said in a statement.

Last spring, Columbia became the epicenter of protests against the war in Gaza, spurring a national movement of campus demonstrations that demanded universities cut ties with Israel.

At the time, some Jewish students and faculty complained about being harassed during the demonstrations or ostracized because of their faith or their support of Israel.

Those who participated in Columbia's protests, including some Jewish students, have said they are protesting Israel's actions against Palestinians and have forcefully denied allegations of antisemitism.

Many have also accused the university of capitulating to the Trump administration's demands — including placing its Middle East studies department under new leadership — at the expense of academic freedom and protecting foreign students.

At a commencement ceremony earlier this week, a speech by Columbia's acting president, Claire Shipman, was met with loud boos by graduates and chants of "free Palestine."

China criticizes US ban on Harvard's international students

By HUIZHONG WU and RAJESH ROY Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The Chinese government said Friday that the Trump administration's move to ban international students from Harvard would harm America's international standing, as anxious students and parents overseas fretted over what would come next.

Among the two largest parts of the international student community in Harvard are Chinese and Indian students. The university enrolled 6,703 international students across all of its schools in 2024, according to the school's data, with 1,203 of those from China and 788 from India.

The Trump administration's move, announced Thursday, was a hot topic on Chinese social media. State broadcaster CCTV questioned whether the U.S. would remain a top destination for foreign students, noting Harvard was already suing the U.S. government in court.

"But with the long litigation period, thousands of international students may have trouble waiting," the CCTV commentary said.

It went on to say that it becomes necessary for international students to consider other options "when policy uncertainty becomes the norm."

Educational cooperation with the U.S. is mutually beneficial and China opposes its politicization, Foreign

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Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing in Beijing.

"The relevant actions by the U.S. side will only damage its own image and international credibility," she said.

She added that China would firmly protect the rights and interests of Chinese students and scholars abroad but she didn't offer any details on how it would do so in this situation.

Indian authorities say they currently assessing the impact of the U.S. order on Indian students who are already enrolled with Harvard, as well as those aspiring to study there in future, but have not issued any statements of criticism.

Chinese students in U.S. previous point of tension

The issue of Chinese students studying overseas has long been a point of tension in the relationship with the United States. During Trump's first term, China's Ministry of Education warned students about rising rejections rates and shorter terms for visas in the U.S.

Last year, the Chinese foreign ministry protested that a number of Chinese students had been interrogated and sent home upon arrival at U.S. airports.

Chinese state media has long played up gun violence in the U.S. and portrayed America as a dangerous place. Some Chinese students are opting to study in the U.K. or other countries rather than the U.S.

Meanwhile, two universities in Hong Kong extended invites to affected students. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology said it would welcome international students already at Harvard and those who have been admitted in a statement Friday. City University in Hong Kong did as well without mentioning Harvard by name.

Some people in China joked online about having the university open a branch in the northeastern Chinese city of Harbin, whose name shares the same character as Harvard's name in Chinese.

Wait and see

Mumbai-based higher education and career advisory firm, ReachIvy, is receiving anxious queries from aspirants and their parents about the impact of Trump administration's latest move.

The company's founder, Vibha Kagzi, herself an alumnus of the Harvard Business School, said they were advising students to keep calm, and wait to see how the situation unfolds as legal challenges were underway.

"Harvard will surely fight back," she said, adding that the situation remains fluid.

Kagzi, while recalling her days from 2010 at Harvard, said the U.S. was then welcoming international students and its immigration policies supported educational aspirants.

"Indian students should stay hopeful. Universities value global talent and are exploring all options to ensure continuity in admission and learning," she said.

Today in History: May 24, the Uvalde school shooting

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, May 24, the 144th day of 2025. There are 221 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 24, 2022, an 18-year-old gunman opened fire at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, killing 19 children and two teachers. The gunman, Salvador Ramos, a former student at the school, was also killed. It was the deadliest shooting at a U.S. elementary school since the 2012 attack on Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

Also on this date:

In 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse transmitted the message "What hath God wrought" from Washington to Baltimore as he formally opened America's first telegraph line.

In 1883, New York's Brooklyn Bridge, at the time the world's longest suspension bridge, opened to traffic.

In 1935, the first Major League Baseball game to be played at night took place at Cincinnati's Crosley Field as the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies, 2-1.

In 1937, in a pair of rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Social Security Act of 1935.

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In 1941, during World War II, the German battleship Bismarck sank the British battle cruiser HMS Hood in the North Atlantic, killing all but three of the 1,418 men on board. (The Bismarck would be sunk by British battleships three days later.)

In 1962, astronaut Scott Carpenter became the second American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard the Aurora 7 spacecraft.

In 1974, American jazz composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, 75, died in New York.

In 1994, four Islamic extremists convicted of bombing New York's World Trade Center in 1993 were each sentenced to 240 years in prison.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian Tommy Chong is 87. Musician Bob Dylan is 84. Actor Gary Burghoff (M(asterisk)A(asterisk)S(asterisk)H) is 82. Singer Patti LaBelle is 81. Actor Priscilla Presley is 80. Actor Jim Broadbent is 76. Cinematographer Roger Deakins is 76. Actor Alfred Molina is 72. Musician Rosanne Cash is 70. Actor Kristin Scott Thomas is 65. Author Michael Chabon is 62. Basketball Hall of Famer Joe Dumars is 62. Actor John C. Reilly is 60. Basketball Hall of Famer Tracy McGrady is 46. Dancer-choreographer Mark Ballas is 39. Country singer Billy Gilman is 37. Rapper G-Eazy is 36. Actor Brianne Howey is 36. Actor Daisy Edgar-Jones is 27.