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Wednesday, June 18

Senior Menu: Breaded fish, pea and cheese salad, fruit cocktail, brownie, whole wheat bread.

Legion vs. Spearfish at Clark, 5:30 p.m.

U12 R&B vs. Aberdeen at North Complex, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

U10 B&W at Milbank, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Softball: U8B at Warner, 5:30 p.m.; U8G vs. Ipswich at Redfield, 5:30 p.m.; U10B at Warner, 5:30 p.m.; U10G vs. Ipswich at Redfield, 5:30 p.m.; U12 at Warner, 6:30 p.m.

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



Thursday, June 19

Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, three bean salad, fruit, breadstick.

Transit fundraiser, 5 p.m., Groton Community Center

Legion at Milbank Tourney

U10 W&R hosts Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

U8 W&R at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Softball: U14/U18 at Claremont, 6 p.m. (DH)

T-Ball: G&B scrimmage, 6 p.m.

Friday, June 20

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato, California blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.

Legion at Milbank Tourney

Jr. Teeners host Redfield, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Saturday, June 21

U8 Youth Baseball Tournament

Groton Triathlon

Legion at Milbank Tourney

U12 at Webster Tourney

U8 Groton Tourney

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Iran Tone Shift

President Donald Trump called on Iran to unconditionally surrender yesterday, saying the US knows the location of its leader-in-hiding, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but will not target him at this time. The comments came after Trump returned early from the G7 meeting in Canada for a Situation Room meeting.

The US has not formally entered Israel's six-day-long war with Iran, though the military has relocated assets to the Middle East. Since Friday, Israel says it has achieved air superiority over Tehran and destroyed one-third of the country's ballistic missile arsenal. Israel also said it killed the country's top military commander—appointed to the role after Israel killed his predecessor.

Israel has targeted military and nuclear installations across Iran, including its underground nuclear facility in Natanz. Key elements of Iran's nuclear program are believed to be in its Fordo nuclear facility. A strike on that site—buried 260 feet into a mountain—would require the use of US bunker-buster bombs.

Panthers Pounce Again

The Florida Panthers secured their second consecutive Stanley Cup last night, defeating the Edmonton Oilers 5-1 in Game 6 of the NHL Final and becoming the third team since 1998 to clinch back-to-back titles.

The Panthers' victory in the repeat matchup of last year's final once again dashed the Oilers' hopes of becoming the first Canadian team to win the Cup since 1993. Veteran forward Sam Reinhart led the Panthers with four goals, while forward Matthew Tkachuk scored one goal. Goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 of 29 shots he faced. Panthers forward Sam Bennett, who led all goal-scorers this postseason with 15, was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as the playoffs' most valuable player.

The Stanley Cup returns to Florida for the fourth time in six seasons—the Tampa Bay Lightning won in 2020 and 2021.

Kraft Goes All Natural

Kraft Heinz said yesterday it will remove all artificial food, drug, and cosmetic dyes from its US products by the end of 2027, becoming the first major food company to commit to the shift since the Food and Drug Administration announced plans to phase out synthetic food colorings.

The company, whose brands include Jell-O, Capri Sun, and Kool-Aid, said nearly 90% of its US products by sales volume are already dye-free, and it will stop launching new products containing petroleum-based additives, effective immediately. The move follows pressure from the FDA and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who are urging food makers to voluntarily eliminate synthetic dyes by the end of 2026, citing concerns about potential behavioral effects in children. That includes Red 40, Yellow 5, and Blue 1, which together make up 90% of all dyes used in the US.

Kraft Heinz already uses natural alternatives like beet juice and vegetable extracts in most products sold in Canada and Europe, where some synthetic dyes require warning labels.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2025 James Beard Award winners announced; Jungsik Yim of New York City's Jungsik named outstanding chef, while Frasca Food and Wine in Boulder, Colorado, wins outstanding restaurant.

R. Kelly suffers near-fatal overdose in prison, alleges he was purposely given too much medication by prison staff; Kelly is serving a 30-year sentence on sex trafficking charges.

Doctor in Matthew Perry's death case to plead guilty to providing Perry with ketamine in month leading up to the actor's overdose death.

Anne Burrell, chef and Food Network star, dies at age 55.

TV viewership via streaming tops combined broadcast and cable viewing in the US for first time with 44.8% of TV consumed via streaming.

Science & Technology

OpenAI awarded \$200M defense contract to develop AI tools for the Pentagon; company partnered with autonomous defense tech firm Anduril in December,

Octopuses use their arms to sample the microbial populations on different surfaces, distinguishing between food, eggs, and regular objects.

Genetically modified yeast creates hydroxyapatite—a naturally produced mineral with commercial applications—out of human urine; process may eventually lower the cost of wastewater treatment.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -0.7%, Nasdaq -0.9%) as Israel-Iran conflict continues. Federal Reserve's two-day policy meeting concludes today; the central bank is expected to keep its benchmark interest rates steady.

Elon Musk's AI startup xAI reportedly in talks to raise \$4.3B in equity funding.

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy says rollout of generative AI will reshape company's workforce.

Amazon expands Prime Day event to four days, will take place July 8 to 11.

Eli Lilly to acquire gene-editing biotech firm Verve Therapeutics for up to \$1.3B; Verve shares rise over 80% on the news.

Politics & World Affairs

Department of Homeland Security directs ICE agents to continue raids on farms, hotels, and restaurants, reversing guidance issued last week.

ICE agents arrest New York City comptroller and mayoral candidate Brad Lander for allegedly assaulting and impeding officers while escorting a defendant from immigration court; Lander was released hours later.

At least a dozen killed—including a US citizen—and over 100 wounded in Russian drone and missile barrage in Kyiv, marking one of the deadliest attacks on the Ukrainian capital.

At least 59 killed and over 200 wounded while waiting for aid trucks in Gaza; Israeli forces say they are reviewing the incident.

Indonesia issues highest-level alert after Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki erupts in the south-central region, spewing hot ash around 30,000 feet high.

Groton Transit Fundraiser



When: Thursday, June 19, 2025

Time: 5:00 pm-7:00 pm

Where: Groton Community Center

*** Groton Transit Fundraiser will be held at the Groton Community Center-
109 N 3rd Street- One block East of Groton Transit***

Let us do the Cooking for you!! Burgers, Brats, Beans, Watermelon, Chips,
and the Famous Mini Donuts!!

Food*Fun*Door Prizes

FREE WILL DONATION

Please join us & Help support Groton Transit!

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Claim Victory Over Milbank

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion were triumphant over Milbank 8-5 on Tuesday.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion got on the board in the top of the third inning after Tristin McGannon doubled, scoring one run, McGannon scored after tagging up, an error scored two runs, and Braeden Fliehs singled, scoring one run.

Mack Koplin homered to center field, scoring three runs in the bottom of the seventh for the Milbank.

Ryder Schelle earned the win for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The right-handed pitcher surrendered six hits and four runs over six innings, striking out four and walking two. Aiden Kelly took the loss for Milbank. The pitcher went five innings, allowing seven runs (two earned) on six hits, striking out seven and walking six. Fliehs appeared in relief for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion.

Alex Abeln led Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion with three hits in four at bats. Lincoln Krause, Fliehs, McGannon, Abeln, and Nick Groeblichhoff each drove in one run for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion had a strong eye at the plate, collecting seven walks for the game. Krause and Fliehs led the team with two walks each.

Koplin provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Milbank with three runs batted in. The number three hitter went 1-for-4 on the day. Jaxson Wiese and Kelly each collected two hits for Milbank. Milbank turned two double plays in the game.

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion 8 - 5 Milbank

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday June 17, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	5	2	0	1	0	8	7	1
MLBN	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	5	7	2

BATTING

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (CF)	2	1	1	1	2	1
A Abeln #5 (SS)	4	1	3	1	0	0
N Groeb... #13 (1B)	4	0	0	1	0	1
R Schelle #8 (P)	4	1	1	0	0	0
E Kroll #14 (2B)	2	0	0	0	1	1
B Fliehs #19 (P)	1	0	1	1	2	0
I Scean... #20 (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
K Oswald #12 (C)	3	0	0	0	0	3
X Ellene... #21 (RF)	2	1	0	0	1	2
T McGan... #22 (LF)	2	2	1	1	1	1
CR: T Schuster #3	0	1	0	0	0	0
CR: T Schelle #3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	27	8	7	5	7	10

2B: T McGannon, **TB:** B Fliehs, R Schelle, L Krause, T McGannon 2, A Abeln 3, **CS:** B Fliehs, **SB:** E Kroll, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
R Schelle #8	6.0	6	4	2	4	0
B Fliehs #19	1.0	1	1	1	1	1
Totals	7.0	7	5	3	5	1

W: R Schelle, **P-S:** B Fliehs 22-12, R Schelle 95-67, **BF:** B Fliehs 5, R Schelle 27

Milbank	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J Wiese #12 (2B)	4	1	2	0	0	0
Z Karges #21 (C)	4	0	0	0	0	1
M Koplin #27 (RF)	4	1	1	3	0	1
B Hunt #34 (3B)	3	1	1	1	1	1
A Kelly #36 (P)	4	0	2	1	0	0
D Karst #44 (1B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
S Rick #40 (SS)	3	0	0	0	0	2
W Muelle... #16 (LF)	2	1	0	0	1	0
J Sconlar #18 (CF)	2	1	0	0	1	0
Totals	29	5	7	5	3	5

2B: B Hunt, **HR:** M Koplin, **TB:** D Karst, A Kelly 2, M Koplin 4, B Hunt 2, J Wiese 2, **SB:** A Kelly, B Hunt, **LOB:** 6

Milbank	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Kelly #36	5.0	6	7	2	6	7	0
J Sconlar #18	2.0	1	1	0	1	3	0
Totals	7.0	7	8	2	7	10	0

L: A Kelly, **P-S:** A Kelly 97-56, J Sconlar 33-19, **BF:** A Kelly 27, J Sconlar 7

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Storm Back To Defeat Milbank

By GameChanger Media

Despite trailing by as many as four runs, Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion rallied to top Milbank 9-7 on Tuesday.

Milbank jumped out to the lead in the bottom of the third inning after Mack Koplin tripled, scoring three runs, and Kason Oswald induced Zack Karges to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

In the top of the fifth inning, Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion went back into the lead after Wesley Borg singled to the left side of the infield, Alex Abeln hit a sacrifice fly, Zach Fliehs walked, and Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion scored on a wild pitch, each scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion took the lead in the top of the seventh. Abeln singled, scoring one run, to give Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion the upper hand, 7-6.

Bennet Hunt singled to center field, which helped Milbank tie the game at seven in the bottom of the seventh.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion took the lead, 9-7, in the top of the eighth thanks to two walks.

Ethan Kroll earned the win for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The righty surrendered one hit and one run over two innings, striking out three and walking two. Karges took the loss for Milbank. The reliever went one and one-third innings, allowing three runs on two hits, striking out two and walking four. Oswald began the game for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The starting pitcher allowed three hits and five runs (four earned) over three innings, striking out two and walking four. Koplin stepped on the bump first for Milbank. The hurler allowed two hits and five runs (three earned) over four and one-third innings, striking out nine and walking five. Nick Groeblichhoff collected the save. Tristin McGannon pitched two innings of scoreless ball for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion in relief. The reliever allowed zero hits, striking out three and walking two.

Abeln went 1-for-4 at the plate and led the team with two runs batted in. McGannon, Abeln, Kroll, and Borg each collected one hit for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 15 walks for the game. Lincoln Krause and Kolton Antonsen led the team with three bases on balls each. Krause and McGannon each stole multiple bases for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion stole seven bases in the game.

Koplin drove the middle of the lineup, leading Milbank with two runs batted in. The pitcher went 1-for-3 on the day. Koplin, Hunt, Aiden Kelly, Kaleb Lindstrom, and Sam Wilson each collected one hit for Milbank. Jaxson Wiese led Milbank with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting eight walks for the game. Milbank turned one double play in the game.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion play at home on Monday against Smittys 16U 2025 Aberdeen in their next game.

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion 9 - 7 Milbank

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	2	4	0	1	2	9	4	1
MLBN	0	0	4	1	1	0	1	0	7	5	2

BATTING

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (C)	1	2	0	0	3	1
A Abeln #5 (SS)	4	0	1	2	0	1
N Groeb... #13 (DH)	1	2	0	0	2	0
E Kroll #14 (3B)	3	1	1	0	1	2
Z Fliehs #23 (1B)	1	0	0	1	2	1
I Scepa... #20 (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
T Schelle #3 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
X Ellene... #21 (LF)	1	1	0	0	1	1
T McGa... #22 (CF)	2	1	1	0	2	1
S Crank #20 (2B)	2	1	0	0	1	1
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	1	0	0	0	3	1
A Zimmer... #6 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
W Borg #12 (2B)	3	1	1	0	0	1
Totals	23	9	4	3	15	13

TB: W Borg, A Abeln, T McGannon, E Kroll, **SAC:** S Crank, L Krause, **SF:** A Abeln, **CS:** T McGannon, **HBP:** N Groeblichhoff, **SB:** N Groeblichhoff, K Antonsen, T McGannon 2, L Krause 3, **LOB:** 9

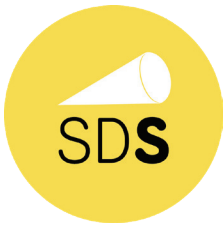
Milbank	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
K Lindstr... #29 (LF)	4	0	1	0	0	3
J Wiese #12 (2B)	1	1	0	0	2	1
W Muel... #16 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
A Kelly #36 (3B)	3	1	1	0	1	0
M Koplin #27 (P)	3	2	1	2	1	0
B Hunt #34 (CF)	4	0	1	1	0	1
Z Karges #21 (C)	3	0	0	1	1	0
D Karst #44 (1B)	1	0	0	0	1	0
J Sconlar #18 (1B)	1	1	0	0	1	0
S Rick #40 (SS)	3	0	0	0	1	2
S Wilson #7 (RF)	4	1	1	0	0	2
Totals	29	7	5	4	8	10

3B: M Koplin, **TB:** S Wilson, B Hunt, A Kelly, M Koplin 3, K Lindstrom, **LOB:** 7



Storm causes electrical outage in Groton

An intense, short lived storm went through Groton late Tuesday afternoon. The wind blew the tree down over the power lines behind the Groton Police Station, breaking the cross arm and causing an outage on the east alley of Main Street from Railroad Avenue to the park. Power was restored quickly to the first block which included the Jungle. The longest duration of the outage was getting the tree completely removed with the help of Todd Anderson, Todd McGannon and Joe Foertsch. Bill Shilhanek of Locke Electric had to come to repair the mast on Topper Tastad's house which was bent at a 45 degree angle. Todd Gay and Landon Johnson quickly did the repairs on the pole. Paul Kosel was also on the scene assisting. Topper Tastad assisted with some of the work to his mast on his house.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Man who says he can move TikTok to South Dakota is a bust in Wyoming politics

Reid Rasner lost by 43 points in a U.S. Senate race and has offered few details in support of his multibillion-dollar bid, but has won over the Rushmore State's governor

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 17, 2025 11:14 AM

Excluding the money he loaned himself, Reid Rasner raised less than \$35,000 for his failed attempt to unseat a U.S. senator last year.

This year, the 41-year-old Wyoming Republican says he's assembled more than a million times that amount to buy the social media app TikTok and potentially move its operations to South Dakota.

South Dakotans following the story on his \$47.45 billion bid since mid-April, through traditional media channels or on social media outlets like Instagram or TikTok, have likely seen the term "billionaire" attached to Rasner's name.

But his background offers no definitive proof to support that descriptor. Instead, disclosures filed during his Senate campaign show a self-employed financial adviser who owns some real estate, sells used goods on eBay for a sizable portion of his income, and is more than \$1 million in debt due to a loan he received from a family trust.

Even so, he's won over South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden, who's sung Rasner's praises in press releases and television appearances.

Rhoden appeared with Rasner on May 23 at Dakota State University in Madison, where Rasner said South Dakota is the "front-runner" for the U.S. headquarters of TikTok.

"South Dakota is lucky to have such a visionary governor," Rasner said.

Meanwhile, the Cowboy State Daily news outlet in Wyoming reported earlier this month that Rasner "has maintained he would bring the company to Wyoming." The outlet quoted Rasner saying "I'm from Wyoming and have always championed Wyoming."

Wyoming lawmaker calls effort 'self-promotion'

TikTok's Chinese parent company is under congressional order to sell the app or be banned from the United States, due to concerns about the Chinese government's potential access to Americans' data. President Donald Trump has delayed the ban and is encouraging a sale, while reportedly considering another extension beyond Thursday's deadline.

Rumored or confirmed bidders include Oracle and Amazon, former U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Reddit cofounder Alexis Ohanian.

South Dakota Searchlight messages sent to TikTok on its interactions with Rasner Media — or lack thereof — were not returned.

Rhoden and his lieutenant governor are the only high-level politicians in South Dakota to have publicly voiced support for Rasner so far, but some other officials outside of the political sphere have followed the governor's lead. The Board of Regents, South Dakota Retailers Association, and South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry have each endorsed Rasner's vision.

Rasner has gathered less support for his TikTok bid in his home state.

A spokesperson for Wyoming Republican Gov. Mark Gordon told South Dakota Searchlight that the governor wants to "respect the president's deliberative process to procure the organization he feels is best-suited to operate the platform."

John Bear, a Republican state lawmaker from Gillette and a leader of Wyoming's Freedom Caucus, said

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he doesn't think Rasner's bid is legitimate.

"It seems to me that this is a publicity stunt, just like his last run for Senate was," Bear said. "I went and listened to him speak one time, and I didn't get a feel that he was doing anything other than self-promotion."

Little information forthcoming on TikTok bid

Rasner calls his TikTok bid the most Trump-friendly, pointing to a post on Trump's Truth Social as proof. In it, Trump, without offering any comment, shared a link to a story about Rasner from a site called JustTheNews.com with the headline "TikTok's highest bidder is also its most Trumpian."

Rasner Media, the company Rasner says will buy TikTok, was founded on Feb. 17, exactly one month after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law forcing the social media site to be sold. Two days later, the Rasner Media website announced the \$47.45 billion bid. Rasner posted his first video to his personal TikTok account in early March.

His media company's website posted a press release in mid-April headlined "South Dakota Leaders Back Rasner Media's TikTok Deal, Urge Trump Administration Support."

Rasner has disclosed little about who his investors are but said during his Madison visit that he's lined up "more than" \$50 billion.

He's also still asking for money.

Rasner's FoundersTok website — which recently still said an American TikTok would be headquartered in Wyoming — sells hats and T-shirts, and asks people to invest in advance of the sale at differing support levels.

Pledge \$12,000 a year, and you'll be a "Founding Father" who gets content boosts, early access to new features, discounts on premium features and a blue verification badge.

"No payment will be requested until after Rasner Media acquires TikTok," the site promises.

Rasner Media has also issued a press release about a "major financial and strategic partnership" with a company called Adaly, which was founded last year.

The press release calls Adaly "a leading organizational intelligence platform." But in reality, Adaly appears to be in its formative stage.

A January story from a publication called Marketing Brew said Adaly was "pitching to indie agencies and brands" and had raised \$1.2 million in seed funding to launch its AI marketing venture.

When reached via text message, Adaly co-founder Kyle Csik did not respond to questions and referred South Dakota Searchlight back to the Rasner Media press release on the partnership.

Rasner Media also recently announced support for its TikTok bid from "a coalition of over 50 conservative content creators with a combined audience of more than 15.5 million followers" who say they've had their voices silenced on the platform.

Neither the press release on the influencers' support nor a TikTok video announcing it mention a financial commitment from the influencers.

Questions about billionaire status

When asked in Madison about the gulf between his fundraising clout on the campaign trail and the multibillion-dollar offer he's presented for TikTok, Rasner told South Dakota Searchlight that the bid is "business, not politics," while declining to disclose details.

Earlier, in a mid-April phone interview, Rasner said "it's called 'private equity' for a reason."

A press release on the Rasner Media website about Trump's Truth Social post refers to Rasner as a "Wyoming billionaire," and several media outlets have referred to him as a billionaire since. Dakota State University's marketing office referred to him as a "Wyoming billionaire" in a press release on his visit to the school with Gov. Rhoden.

Rasner is not on the Forbes list of billionaires.

When asked in April if he is a billionaire, Rasner told South Dakota Searchlight "I guess you'll have to

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get my financial statements.”

“Everything’s going to be disclosed soon, who the investors are and how much the investments are,” Rasner said. “I will certainly provide all of that very soon, as soon as we get the deal taken care of.”

U.S. Senate candidates are required to file financial disclosure statements with the Select Committee on Ethics. In one of the reports he filed during his failed Senate campaign, Rasner reported \$108,000 of self-employment income from Omnivest Financial, the company name under which he offers wealth management services. He reported earning another \$70,000 through eBay, an auction site on which he sells goods such as vintage police badges, cowboy boots and aluminum beach chairs under the name “Omnisellers.”

Rasner’s disclosure forms also list commercial real estate, from which he collected between \$15,001 and \$50,000 in rent, a mutual fund worth less than \$100,000, and unimproved land in Casper, Wyoming, worth less than \$15,000.

Owes more than \$1 million to a family trust

Rasner additionally disclosed a liability of between \$1 million and \$5 million, due to a loan he received from a family trust at a rate of 5% interest over a 20-year term.

Meanwhile, his reports to the Federal Election Commission show that he loaned \$1.2 million to his own Senate campaign.

A September letter from the commission to the Rasner campaign approved a request to terminate the 2024 campaign committee, but noted the campaign treasurer had failed to submit the required letter from Rasner signaling forgiveness of the loan.

The commission asked the campaign treasurer to submit the missing information. The information has yet to be filed.

Rasner’s Senate financial disclosures divulge little about the trust that loaned him the money, listing it only as a “family trust” in Casper, Wyoming. South Dakota Searchlight found public records of trusts registered under Rasner’s name and his mother’s name, but the values of the trusts are not public records.

Both trusts are listed as owners of property in Natrona County, Wyoming, according to the county assessor’s office.

The trust under Rasner’s name owns a dental office whose address appears on his Senate financial disclosures as his rental property.

The trust under his mother’s name is listed as the owner of a handful of properties in the county. The properties include the building that once housed her former family business, Wyoming Glass, and properties owned by her deceased former husband, who was a gravel contractor.

South Dakota politicians skeptical

Multiple South Dakota state lawmakers either declined to speak on the record about Rasner, or did not return calls and texts seeking comment.

Rep. Erik Muckey, D-Sioux Falls, said he’s unfamiliar with the details of the TikTok pitch from Rasner, but said he has his doubts. Efforts to bolster employment opportunities for Dakota State graduates who’ve developed and honed high-tech skillsets are welcome, he said, but he’d want to see a firmer business plan to be convinced the Rasner deal is a real opportunity.

“Until we see an actual plan and some actual investment, I’m not holding my breath,” Muckey said.

Former longtime lawmaker Lee Schoenbeck, a Watertown Republican who retired as president pro tempore of the state Senate, told South Dakota Searchlight that his knowledge of Rasner’s TikTok bid is limited. Schoenbeck suggested that Rasner’s position as a maker of promises in the economic development sphere, however, is not a unique one in South Dakota history.

He pointed to examples including a hoped-for aquaculture facility in the city of Madison that received state assistance in 2019 but has never been constructed. While he can’t speak to Gov. Rhoden’s motivations or level of due diligence in the TikTok bid, Schoenbeck said economic development work requires a governor and his team to do the necessary homework to avoid too-good-to-be-true pitches.

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"These kinds of people are all over," Schoenbeck said.

Wyoming politicians 'incredulous' about Rasner claims

Rasner's U.S. Senate campaign wasn't his first run for public office. In the 2010s, he ran unsuccessfully for the Las Vegas City Council. He and his then-husband — they've since divorced — were living in the city at the time. Rasner sold real estate.

As an 18-year-old, Rasner ran unsuccessfully for city council in Casper, Wyoming, which is his hometown. His Senate campaign website's biography says he "landed his first job sweeping floors at Wyoming Glass" at age 13 — without mentioning that the company was his family's business — and that he began investing at age 16.

"These formative experiences laid the groundwork for his entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to financial independence," the website reads.

Bear, the Wyoming state lawmaker, said he hasn't spent time looking into Rasner's background because "he was never a serious candidate."

In the U.S. Senate primary last year, Rasner presented himself as the most conservative option on the ballot. He said incumbent Republican Sen. John Barrasso wasn't a strong enough supporter of Donald Trump. Trump endorsed Barrasso, and Rasner lost by 43 points.

On the way to his Senate primary loss, Rasner was served a cease-and-desist letter by Wyoming Republican U.S. Rep. Harriet Hageman. The letter asked that he remove photos he'd taken with her from his campaign social media sites, because according to Hageman, the photos erroneously suggested she'd endorsed him. Rasner told the Cowboy State Daily it was an attempt to stifle his free speech.

A representative from Hageman's office did not respond to Searchlight requests for comment. Barrasso's office also did not respond.

Bryan Miller was recently elected chairman of the Wyoming Republican Party, and said he couldn't comment for the party. That said, he personally was "not impressed" with Rasner during their interactions last year, when Miller led the Sheridan County GOP.

Miller said he asked Rasner who was funding his U.S. Senate campaign, but Rasner wouldn't tell him.

"I said, 'Well, because you can't tell me, you're not likely to ever get my personal support, or anyone else I know's support, because we want to know where money comes from,'" Miller said.

The situation with the Hageman photograph turned Miller off, as well.

"The thing he did with Harriet, trying to get pictures, he tried to do that with me at the state convention, but I wouldn't do it," Miller said.

From where Democratic state Rep. Mike Yin sits, it appeared that the opposition party got "annoyed" with Rasner's efforts on social media.

Yin said a lot of people in Wyoming were "utterly incredulous" when Rasner first announced his TikTok bid, especially after he raised so little for his U.S. Senate campaign from sources beyond his family.

"So the idea that he could convince people to give \$50 billion?" Yin said. "It seems like he's trying to raise his own profile."

Rasner hasn't announced his intention to challenge Wyoming's other Republican U.S. senator, Cynthia Lummis, in 2026. Rasner has created a new fundraising committee, though, and loaned it a little more than \$48,000. His disclosure forms identify it as a U.S. Senate campaign committee.

South Dakota comes along for the ride

It's unclear how much South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden knows about Rasner.

Rhoden's spokesperson, Josie Harms, confirmed that Rasner reached out to South Dakota first, not the other way around, about the TikTok bid. Rasner told South Dakota Searchlight he'd done outreach with governors from all the surrounding states.

Rhoden has since appeared on news segments with Rasner, which Rhoden has shared on his own X (formerly Twitter) page. After the press conference at Dakota State University, Rhoden said on The Scouting

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Report podcast that Rasner's team is "ready to go," but that South Dakota may need to offer incentives to data centers if it hopes to land technology companies.

Lawmakers rejected a bill that would have offered tax breaks to data centers during this winter's session of the South Dakota Legislature. Rhoden could offer assistance in other ways without needing legislative approval, such as offering a grant or loan from the Future Fund for economic development, which is under the governor's control.

Among Rasner's other supporters, the Retailers Association and Chamber offered their support at the same time as Rhoden first did, in mid-April. Nathan Lukkes, head of the state Board of Regents, sent a letter of support for the Rasner bid just over a week later.

"We are ready to position South Dakota as the launchpad for the next generation of secure, ethical, and impactful digital media," the letter reads.

David Owen, president of the South Dakota Chamber, told South Dakota Searchlight he got a call from Joe Fiala, deputy director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, shortly before the first press release mentioning South Dakota was issued by Rasner Media.

"It was, 'Here's an opportunity. You've got 12 hours,'" Owen said.

Owen said his organization had nothing to lose.

"What's your risk by suggesting publicly it would be a good thing?" he said. "And if it doesn't come about, what are you out?"

Northern State University Government Professor Jon Schaff said there could be reputational damage to the governor "if Rasner turns out to be something of an empty suit."

"To the extent they are depicting themselves as partners rather than mere supporters-encouragers, yes, there is potential backlash," Schaff said.

Rhoden's spokesperson, Harms, declined to comment about Rasner's financial disclosures, political aspirations and TikTok investors.

Rasner declined to respond directly to a dozen questions on his companies, political ambitions, investors and personal life. He sent a statement through a spokesperson that accused South Dakota Searchlight of approaching this story with a "tone and accusatory nature" that is "completely unprofessional."

"Your biased attacks will not deter Rasner Media's mission to free TikTok from Chinese control," the statement said, in part.

Reid Rasner statement

In response to a dozen questions from South Dakota Searchlight about his finances, his bid for TikTok and other topics, a representative of Reid Rasner sent an emailed statement.

Here is that statement in full:

"While we respect the media's role and have cooperated with credible outlets, the tone and accusatory nature of your questions toward Mr. Rasner are completely unprofessional. Rasner Media's TikTok acquisition efforts are a business transaction, not a political campaign. Mr. Rasner is unapologetically one of the most pro-Trump, MAGA businessmen in America, dedicated to protecting conservative voices on platforms like TikTok. This has naturally drawn opposition from Communist China and parts of the Democrat machine, including outlets like yours. Your biased attacks will not deter Rasner Media's mission to free TikTok from Chinese control, support President Trump's efforts to establish a United States sovereign wealth fund, and protect conservative influencers who are being censored by foreign adversaries and woke leftists behind keyboards."

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

Regulators begin reviewing Otter Tail Power's proposed 12.5% electric rate increase

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 17, 2025 8:22 PM

South Dakota regulators will take six months to study Otter Tail Power Company's proposed 12.5% electric rate increase, which the company says would cost a typical residential customer an additional \$14.39 per month, or \$172.68 per year.

The proposal would generate an additional \$5.7 million in annual revenue for Otter Tail, which delivers electricity to about 11,500 northeastern South Dakota customers.

The company applied for the rate increase on June 4. The state Public Utilities Commission voted Tuesday to delay the rate increase from going into effect for six months, giving the commission's staff time to assess the request, which is a typical procedure for the commission.

The commission also voted Tuesday to charge Otter Tail up to \$500,000 for costs associated with reviewing the request.

The company argues rising operational costs and infrastructure investments necessitate the increase. The current rates were set in 2019.

"This increase is needed for the company to continue providing high-quality, reliable, and safe electric service," Otter Tail wrote in a letter to the commission.

Otter Tail also increased fees in September, raising the typical resident's electric bill by \$4.14 monthly. It was part of a rate adjustment mechanism that allows utilities to adjust customers' bills for specific projects. Those projects for Otter Tail include buying a natural gas plant in Deuel County, building a wind farm in North Dakota, and replacing and upgrading turbine blades and parts to increase the efficiency and lifespan of multiple wind farms.

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.

GOP senators warn mega-bill's new Medicaid cuts will hurt rural hospitals

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JUNE 17, 2025 6:04 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republican leaders expressed confidence Tuesday they'll be able to tamp down opposition to various elements of the party's "big, beautiful bill" in time to approve the measure before the Fourth of July, though they acknowledged there's considerable work left to do.

GOP senators from across the political spectrum have debated the broad strokes of the tax and spending cut legislation for weeks, but raised fresh concerns after the influential Finance Committee released its portion of the package, which addresses taxes and Medicaid. Some GOP senators objected to a change in Medicaid policy they said could harm rural hospitals.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said during a press conference that reducing the Medicaid provider tax rate that states can charge from the current 6% to 3.5% by 2031 represented "important reforms."

"We think they rebalance the program in a way that provides the right incentives to cover the people who are supposed to be covered by Medicaid," Thune said. "But we continue to hear from our members specifically on components or pieces of the bill that they would like to see modified or changed or have concerns about. And we're working through that."

While the complex provision is deep in the weeds of Medicaid policy, several GOP senators expressed concern during interviews Tuesday that changing the provider tax rate in states that expanded Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act would be a problem for rural hospitals.

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Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley said he opposes that provision and wants to see GOP leaders put back in the House language that would freeze the Medicaid provider tax rate at 6%.

"We have to do something," Hawley said. "If we pass this as it is, there's going to be a lot of rural hospitals in Missouri that close. So that's a big problem."

West Virginia Sen. Jim Justice said he had "all kinds of concerns" about provisions in the Finance Committee's portion of the "big, beautiful bill," which the panel released Monday.

"The House side on the provider tax and everything said, freeze it," Justice said. "Now there's a whole lot (of) different gyrations going on with that and everything. And there's other things that we just need to — just give us some time. We need to work our way through it."

Justice said he didn't plan to be a "rubber stamp" on anything and appeared to discourage GOP leaders from bringing the package to the floor next week ahead of their self-imposed Fourth of July deadline.

"I would love to get it done, like the president wants to get it done, by the Fourth of July. I would love for us to be able to do that and everything," Justice said. "But I think, way more importantly than anything, we got to get it right."

Other Medicaid issues

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski declined to weigh in on the changes to the Medicaid provider tax rate since her state doesn't use it the way many others do.

"I don't have a dog in that fight, because we don't have provider taxes in Alaska," Murkowski said. "We're the only state that's actually maybe playing by the rules."

But Murkowski told reporters she does have issues with other ways the legislation would change Medicaid, the state-federal health program for lower income people, and expects the bill will undergo revisions before a final floor vote.

"I don't think it's going to stay in this form, let's just put it that way," Murkowski said.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson said he'd vote against the package if leaders bring it to the floor next week as planned and said he expects that if they rush floor consideration, the entire bill will fail to pass.

"I hope not because my guess is it'll fail and I don't want to see it fail. I want this thing to succeed," Johnson said. "Again, the ball has been in the Senate court for two weeks — two weeks. But now we're seeing language. Now we're finally seriously considering some of these ideas, let's have time to seriously consider it and hopefully get them incorporated in the bill."

The House voted mostly along party lines to approve its version of the package in late May, but Senate Republicans have been reworking the bill in the weeks since.

Among the changes in the Senate, Republicans plan to raise the country's debt limit by \$5 trillion, a full \$1 trillion more than House GOP lawmakers proposed in their version.

Possible recess delay

Arkansas Sen. John Boozman said that if the Senate doesn't vote to approve the package the week of June 23, they'll likely stay in town the following week to debate the bill, instead of heading home for the Fourth of July week break.

But he cautioned that "the longer it hangs out, the more difficult it is" to pass.

Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley declined to answer questions about whether he supports or wants to change his chamber's newly unveiled Medicaid provisions.

"Ask me that question in a couple days because there's still discussion going on about it," he said.

Sen. James Lankford praised aspects of the bill, including, "long-term tax policy that's actually permanent," which he said is "important for individuals and for small businesses."

"We're doing the full expensing, making that permanent — that doesn't change a dollar as far as the income coming into the Treasury, but very significant for our economy," the Oklahoma Republican said.

Lankford said he also likes "the R&D tax credit piece to make sure we're competing with China on it," "modernization of the air traffic control system," as well as "some dollars that are going to border security,

which has been very important to me, which they have been asking for for a long time and trying to get into structural things to the border that are needed there.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

U.S. Sen. Padilla blasts Trump and Noem ‘path toward fascism’ in LA immigration crackdown

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 17, 2025 5:57 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, a California Democrat who was forcibly removed from a press conference with the secretary of Homeland Security, said Tuesday that his home state is the testing ground for President Donald Trump’s push to deploy the military within the United States.

Trump is using immigrants in the country without legal status as scapegoats to send in troops, said Padilla, who in a speech on the Senate floor choked up as he related how he was wrestled to the ground by law enforcement officials. “I refuse to let immigrants be political pawns on his path toward fascism,” Padilla said.

It’s the first floor speech the senior senator from California has given since the highly publicized incident in Los Angeles last week. The Secret Service handcuffed Padilla after he tried to question Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who was defending to reporters Trump’s decision to send 4,000 National Guard members and 700 Marines to LA.

Trump sent in the troops following multi-day protests over Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and against California Gov. Gavin Newsom’s wishes. An appeals court Tuesday is hearing arguments on a suit by California contending that the president unlawfully took control of the state National Guard.

“He wants the spectacle,” Padilla said of the president. “To justify his undemocratic crackdown and his authoritarian power grab.”

The LA protests were sparked after ICE targeted Home Depots, places where undocumented day laborers typically search for work, for immigration raids.

Arrests, confrontations

The Padilla incident, widely captured on video, was a stark escalation of the tensions between Democratic lawmakers and the administration over Trump’s drive to enact mass deportations.

A Democratic House member from New Jersey is facing federal charges on allegations that she shoved immigration officials while protesting the opening of an immigrant detention center in Newark. And on Tuesday, in New York City, ICE officers arrested city comptroller and mayoral candidate Brad Lander while he was escorting an immigrant to their hearing in immigration court, according to The Associated Press.

In a statement to States Newsroom, DHS Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs Tricia McLaughlin said Lander “was arrested for assaulting law enforcement and impeding a federal officer.”

“No one is above the law, and if you lay a hand on a law enforcement officer, you will face consequences,” McLaughlin said.

The president late Sunday directed ICE to conduct immigration raids in New York, LA and Chicago, the nation’s three most populous cities, all led by elected Democrats in heavily Democratic states.

“We will follow the President’s direction and continue to work to get the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens off of America’s streets,” McLaughlin said.

‘They opened the door for me’

Padilla in his Senate remarks gave an account of the events that led to him being handcuffed and detained last week.

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On June 12, he had a meeting scheduled with General Gregory M. Guillot, commander of the U.S. Northern Command, to discuss the military presence in LA.

Padilla, the top Democrat on a Judiciary panel that oversees DHS and immigration policy, said his meeting with the general was delayed because of a press briefing across the hall with Noem.

Padilla said he has tried to speak with DHS because for weeks LA has "seen a disturbing pattern of increasingly extreme and cruel immigration enforcement operations targeting non-violent people at places of worship, at schools, in courthouses."

So Padilla said he asked to attend the press conference, and a National Guard member and an FBI agent escorted him inside.

"They opened the door for me," he said.

As he listened, he said a comment from Noem compelled him to ask a question.

"We are not going away," Noem, the former governor of South Dakota, told the press. "We are staying here to liberate the city from the socialists and the burdensome leadership that this governor and that this mayor have placed on this country and what they have tried to insert into the city."

Padilla said her remarks struck him as "an un-American mission statement."

"That cannot be the mission of federal law enforcement and the United States military," he said. "Are we truly prepared to live in a country where the president can deploy the armed forces to decide which duly elected governors and mayors should be allowed to lead their constituents?"

Padilla said before he could finish his question, he was physically removed and the National Guard member and FBI agent who escorted him in the room "stood by silently, knowing full well who I was."

As he recounted being handcuffed, Padilla paused, getting emotional.

"I was forced to the ground, first on my knees, and then flat on my chest," he said.

Padilla said a flurry of questions went through his head as he was marched down a hallway, and as he kept asking why he was being detained: Where are they taking me? What will a city, already on the edge from being militarized, think when they see their U.S. senator being handcuffed just for trying to ask a question? What will my wife think? What will our boys think?

"I also remember asking myself, if this aggressive escalation is the result of someone speaking up about the abuse and overreach of the Trump administration, was it really worth it?" Padilla asked. "If a United States senator becomes too afraid to speak up, how can we expect any other American to do the same?"

Padilla-Noem meeting

In a statement, DHS, said that the Secret Service did not know Padilla was a U.S. senator, although video of the incident shows that Padilla stated that he was a member of the Senate.

"I'm Sen. Alex Padilla and I have questions for the secretary," he said as four federal law enforcement officers grabbed him and shoved him to the ground.

Noem met with Padilla after he was handcuffed, his office told States Newsroom.

"He raised concerns with the deployment of military forces and the needless escalation over the last week, among other issues," according to his office. "And he voiced his frustration with the continued lack of response from this administration. It was a civil, brief meeting, but the Secretary did not provide any meaningful answers. The Senator was simply trying to do his job and seek answers for the people he represents in California."

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson has suggested that the Senate take action against Padilla, such as a censure. Johnson criticized the senator's actions and accused him of charging at Noem, which Padilla is not seen doing in the multiple videos of the incident.

"I'm not in that chamber, but I do think that it merits immediate attention by other colleagues over there," the Louisiana Republican said. "I think that behavior, at a minimum, rises to the level of censure. I think there needs to be a message sent by the body as a whole."

Senate Democrats have coalesced their support around Padilla. During a Tuesday press conference, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer praised Padilla for his speech on the Senate floor.

"It was basically a strong plea for America to regain the gyroscope of democracy, which has led us forward for so many years and now we're losing it," the New York Democrat said. "It's a wake-up call to all Americans."

Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.

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

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem taken to hospital after allergic reaction

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 17, 2025 5:32 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem Tuesday was taken to a D.C.-area hospital after having an allergic reaction, a DHS spokesperson said.

"She was transported to the hospital out of an abundance of caution," DHS Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement to States Newsroom.

"She is alert and recovering," McLaughlin said, but did not specify the allergy.

Noem, 53, the former governor of South Dakota, was confirmed by the Senate in late January and is one of the top Trump administration officials tasked with carrying out the president's mass deportation plans.

She was recently in Los Angeles amid city-wide protests against the administration's aggressive immigration crackdown.

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

U.S. senators call for security funding boost after Minnesota assassination

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JUNE 17, 2025 1:37 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. senators emerged from a briefing with federal law enforcement officials Tuesday saying they'll likely boost funding on safety and security for members and their families in an upcoming government funding bill.

The hour-long briefing by U.S. Capitol Police and the Senate sergeant-at-arms followed the weekend assassination of a Minnesota state lawmaker and her husband as well as the attempted murder of a state senator and his wife.

The gunman had a list of Democratic elected officials, including members of Congress, and their home addresses, which renewed long-standing security concerns among lawmakers.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., spoke about the shootings during a floor speech shortly after the meeting, pressing for an end to political violence.

"I'm profoundly grateful to local law enforcement that the alleged shooter is in custody and I look forward to seeing him prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," Thune said. "There is no place for this kind of violence in our country. None."

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, of New York, said that California Democrat Adam Schiff and Pennsylvania Republican Dave McCormick suggested during the closed-door meeting that Congress bolster funding for member safety.

"The Capitol Police and the sergeant at arms gave a very detailed discussion of how they can protect members here, back in our states, at our homes, in our offices," Schumer said. "The violence, threats against elected officials, including people in the Senate, has dramatically increased, and that means we

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need more protection. We need more money.”

The USCP and other law enforcement agencies, Schumer said, are taking some immediate steps to bolster security, though he said “there are other things that will take a little while with more resources.”

Schumer also called on political leaders to be more cautious about how they discuss policy differences.

“The rhetoric that’s encouraging violence is coming from too many powerful people in this country,” Schumer said. “And we need firm, strong denouncement of all violence and violent rhetoric — that should be from the president and from all of the elected officials.”

Minnesota Democratic Sen. Tina Smith called the meeting “very productive,” but didn’t want to elaborate.

“I’m not going to comment any more,” Smith told reporters. “I think it’s important for members’ safety that we don’t talk a lot about what is being done to keep us safe in order to keep us safe.”

Support for funding increase

Senate Appropriations ranking member Patty Murray, D-Wash., said she expects the panel will increase funding for USCP in the bill that covers the upcoming fiscal year.

“I believe we need to do that,” Murray said.

Delaware Democratic Sen. Chris Coons said the current situation is “incredibly concerning, gravely concerning.”

“And I appreciate the prompt and thorough bipartisan response,” Coons said.

Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville, who is running for governor in Alabama, said USCP will increase its security measures for members of Congress.

“They’re going to try to do as much as they can, that’s about it,” he said after the briefing. “You know, security at home and here.”

Asked whether there’s a legislative solution or anything lawmakers can do, Oklahoma GOP Sen. James Lankford told reporters “there’s a cultural solution.”

Sen. Martin Heinrich did not go into details about the meeting but said “everybody is having a very robust discussion about the sort of heightened security, dangerous environment we’re all operating in right now and what to do about that, both tactically to meet some of that threat, but also how to reduce the volatility of the environment that we’re in every day.”

The New Mexico Democrat is the ranking member on the Senate Appropriations Legislative Branch Subcommittee, which funds USCP and the sergeant at arms.

Asked about boosting USCP funding, Heinrich said this is “an obvious place that lawmakers will look,” but added that senators should be strategic about funding.

“We also just need to be smart and targeted about this,” he said. “There are a lot of things that can be done that don’t require a lot of funding that would reduce the scale of the target that is on the backs of anybody in public office these days.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom’s Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Two-thirds of those in nonpartisan poll view GOP's tax and spending cut bill unfavorably

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 17, 2025 8:44 AM

WASHINGTON — Republicans and backers of President Donald Trump's Make America Great Again platform support the party's "big, beautiful bill" as passed by the U.S. House, though Americans overall view the legislation unfavorably, according to a poll released Tuesday by the nonpartisan health research organization KFF.

The survey shows that nearly two-thirds of those polled, or 64%, don't support the tax policy changes and spending cuts Republicans have included in the sweeping House version of the bill that the Senate plans to take up this month.

When broken down by political affiliation, just 13% of Democrats and 27% of independents view the legislation favorably. Those numbers are in sharp contrast to Republicans, with 61% supporting the bill and 72% of those who identify as MAGA supporters.

But those views fluctuated when the people surveyed were asked specific questions about certain elements of the package and the real-world impacts of the legislation:

The overall percentage of those surveyed with an unfavorable view of the bill increased from 64% to 67% when they were told it would lower federal spending on Medicaid by more than \$700 billion, an estimate by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

Dislike of the legislation rose to 74% when those polled were told policy changes would lead to 10 million people losing their health insurance coverage, another estimate from the CBO analysis.

Opposition rose to 79% when people were told the legislation would reduce funding for local hospitals. "The public hasn't had much time to digest what's in the big, beautiful, but almost incomprehensible bill as it races through Congress, and many don't have a lot of information about it," KFF President and CEO Drew Altman wrote in a statement. "Our poll shows that views toward the bill and its health-care provisions can shift when presented with more information and arguments about its effects, even among MAGA supporters."

Senators wrestling with what to do

The House voted mostly along party lines to approve its 11-bill package in late May, sending the legislation to the Senate.

GOP senators have spent weeks internally debating which parts of the House legislation to keep, which to change and which to remove, while also conducting closed-door meetings with the parliamentarian to determine which parts of the bill comply with the rules for the complex reconciliation process.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., plans to bring his chamber's version of the package to the floor next week, though that timeline could slip. Before the Senate can approve the rewritten bill, lawmakers will spend hours voting on dozens of amendments during what's known as a vote-a-rama.

Significant bipartisan support for Medicaid

The KFF poll released Tuesday shows that 83% of Americans support Medicaid, slated for an overhaul and spending reductions by GOP lawmakers.

That support remains high across political parties, with 93% of Democrats, 83% of independents and 74% of Republicans holding a favorable opinion of the state-federal health program for lower-income people and some with disabilities.

Those surveyed appeared supportive of a provision in the House bill that would require some people on Medicaid to work, participate in community service, or attend an educational program at least 80 hours a month.

The change is supported by about two-thirds of those surveyed, though the numbers shift depending on how the question is asked.

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For example, when told that most adults on Medicaid already work and that not being able to complete the paperwork associated with the new requirement could cause some to lose coverage, 64% of those polled opposed the new requirement.

Planned Parenthood

There was also broad opposition, 67% overall, to language in the House bill that would block any Medicaid funding from going to Planned Parenthood for routine health care. There is a long-standing prohibition on federal funding from going toward abortion with exceptions for rape, incest, or the life of the pregnant patient.

Opposition to the Planned Parenthood provision increased to 80% when those polled were told that no federal payments to Planned Parenthood go directly toward abortion and that ending all Medicaid payments to the organization would make it more challenging for lower-income women to access birth control, cancer screenings and STD testing.

Republicans are more supportive of that change, with 54% backing the policy and 46% opposing the new block on Medicaid patients going to Planned Parenthood. But 78% of independent women and 51% of Republican women oppose the change.

Food assistance program

Those surveyed also had concerns about how changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, would impact lower-income people's ability to afford food, with 70% saying they were either very or somewhat concerned.

Democrats held the highest level of concern at 92%, followed by independents at 74% and Republicans at 47%.

Overall, Republicans hold the highest share of people polled who believe the dozens of GOP policy changes in the "big, beautiful bill" will help them or their family.

A total of 32% of Republicans surveyed believe the legislation will benefit them, while 47% said it will not make much of a difference and 21% said it will hurt them or their family.

Thirteen percent of independents expect the legislation will help them, while 39% said it likely won't make a difference and 47% expect it will harm them or their family.

Of Democrats polled, just 6% said they expect the GOP mega-bill to help them, while 26% said it wouldn't matter much and 66% expected it to hurt them or their family.

When asked whether the bill would help, not make much of a difference, or hurt certain groups of people, the largest percentage of those polled expect it to help wealthy people.

Fifty-one percent of those surveyed said they expect wealthy people will benefit from the bill, 21% believe it will help people with lower incomes and 20% said they think middle-class families will benefit.

Seventeen percent think it will help immigrants, 14% expect it to help people who buy their own health insurance, 13% believe it will help people on Medicaid, 13% think it will help people on SNAP and 8% expect it will benefit undocumented immigrants.

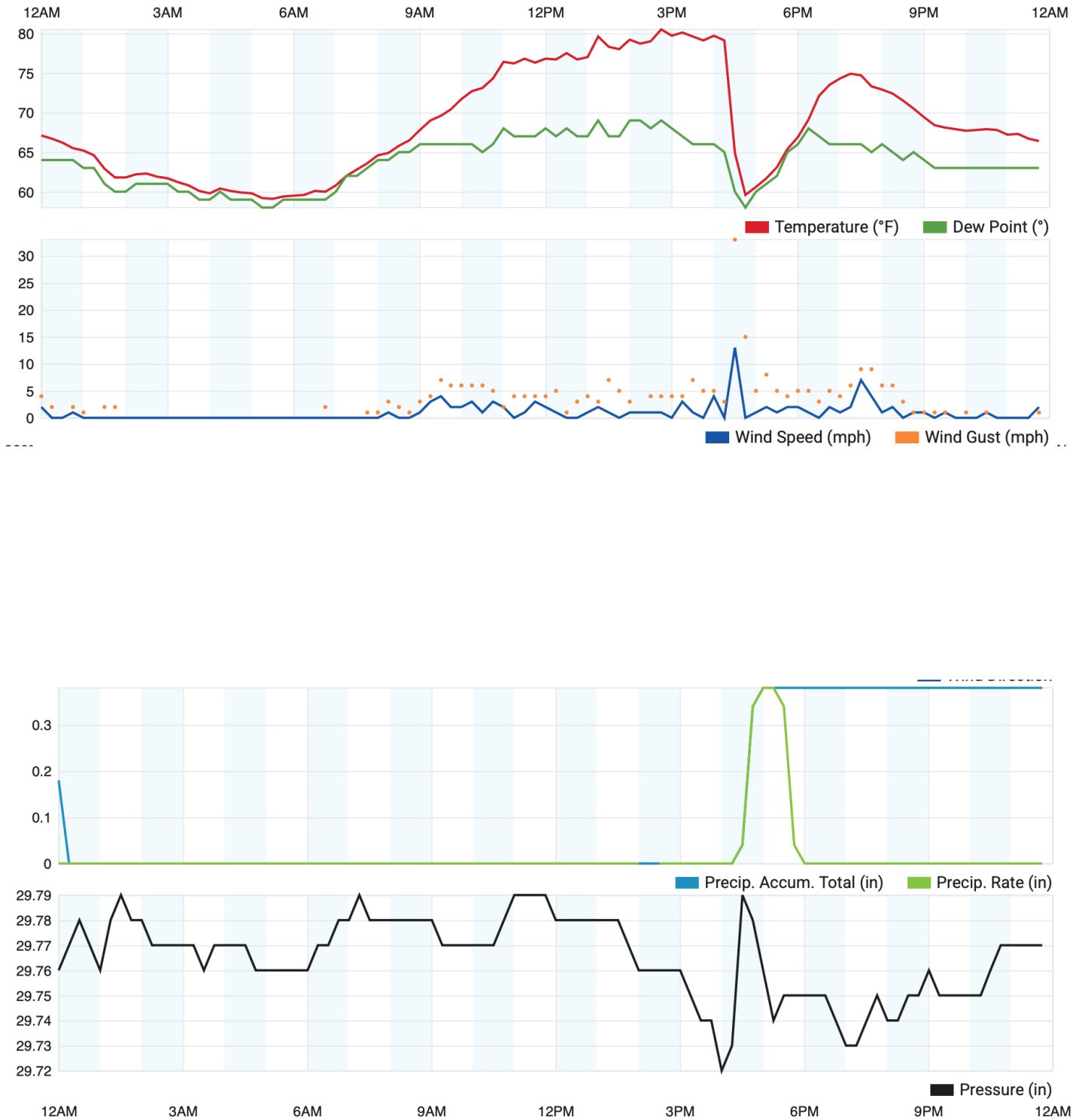
KFF conducted the poll June 4 – 8, both online and by telephone, among a nationally representative sample of 1,321 U.S. adults. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the full sample size.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 82 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear

Juneteenth



High: 90 °F

Hot

Thursday
Night



Low: 64 °F

Chance
Showers

Friday



High: 93 °F

Hot



Incoming Heat

High Temperatures Wednesday, Jun 18 - Tuesday, Jun 24

	Wed 6/18	Thu 6/19	Fri 6/20	Sat 6/21	Sun 6/22	Mon 6/23	Tue 6/24
Aberdeen	81	89	95	98	93	71	71
Miller	80	91	99	102	92	71	70
Mobridge	83	93	96	99	86	70	72
Murdo	79	92	102	100	86	68	68
Ortonville	76	84	89	94	93	70	68
Pierre	82	94	102	103	88	72	72
Sisseton	81	89	93	98	97	72	71
Watertown	77	86	92	97	94	71	69

Max Temperature (°F)

Cold front moves through

Information:

The table displays the weather element values based on model predictions from the National Blend of Models.

Additional Details



Potential Impacts:

- Hottest days will be Friday and Saturday
- Increased risk of heat related illnesses in as little as 30 minutes



What To Do:

- Avoid prolonged outdoor exposure
- Take frequent breaks
- STAY HYDRATED
- Do not leave children and pets in unattended vehicles!

Valid: Wed 07 pm CDT - Tue 07 pm CDT

Issued: Wed, Jun 18, 2025, 3 am CDT



The Summer Solstice officially starts Friday evening (9:41 PM CDT) with it feeling like summer, as high temperatures will surge into the 90s to even the lower 100s! The hottest day will be Saturday. A cold front will bring in cooler air behind it on Monday.

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Heat Risk for Friday and Saturday

Risk of Heat-Related Impacts

Little to None

- Little to no risk from expected heat.

Minor

- This level of heat affects primarily those individuals extremely sensitive to heat, especially when outdoors without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration.

Moderate

- This level of heat affects most individuals sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration.
- Impacts possible in some health systems and in heat-sensitive industries.

Major

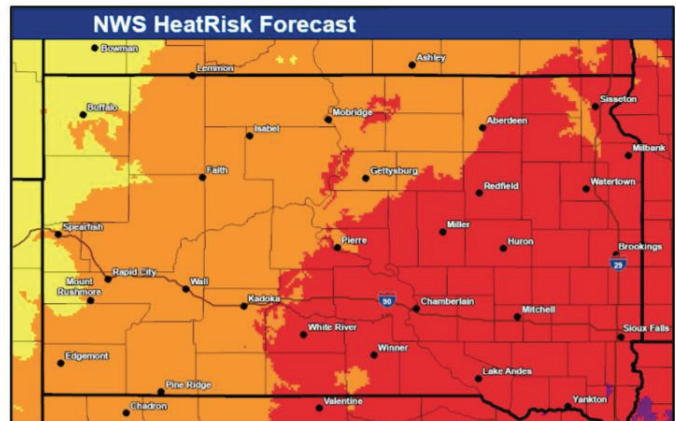
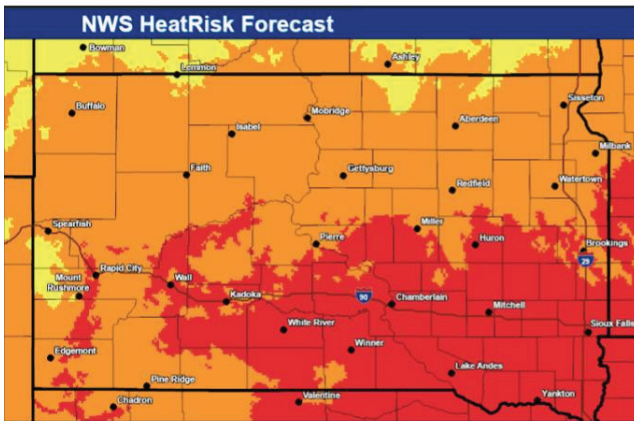
- This level of heat affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration.
- Impacts likely in some health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure.

Extreme

- This level of rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration.
- Impacts likely in most health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure.

Friday- moderate to major Heat Risk

Saturday- moderate to major Heat Risk



June 18, 2025 4:16 AM

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated severe storms possible

TIMING

Evening into overnight for areas in green

PRIMARY THREATS



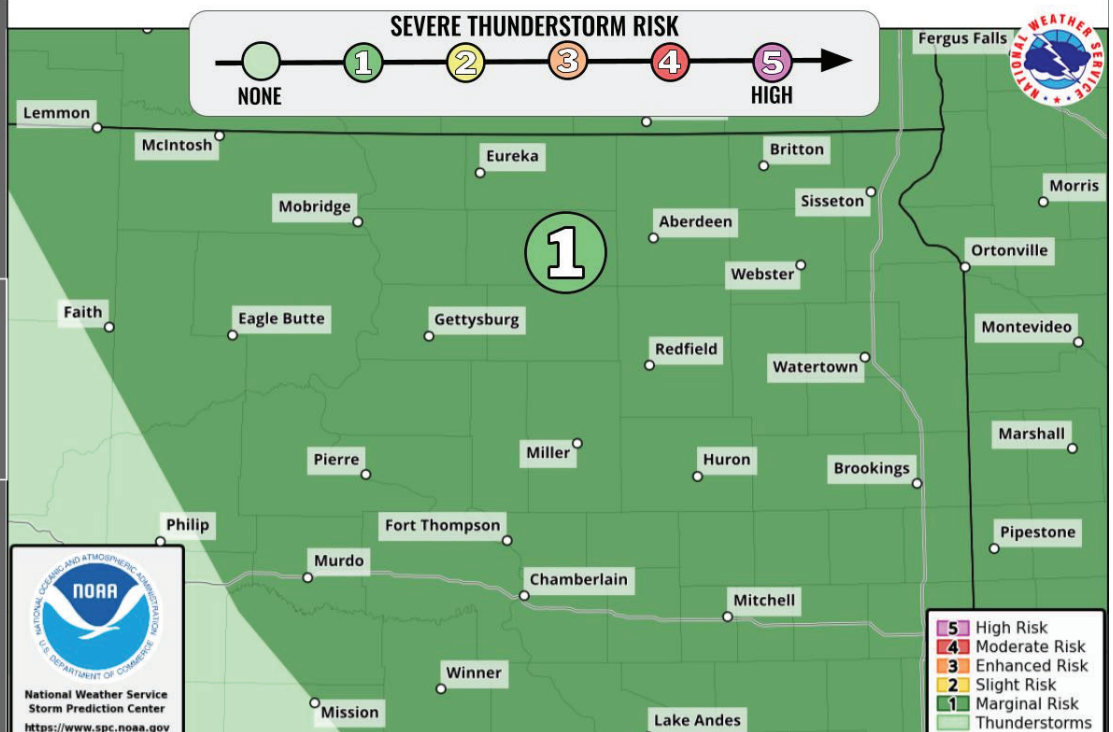
LARGE HAIL



DAMAGING WIND

Get your up to date forecast at weather.gov/abr

SEVERE STORMS Possible Late Thursday Evening/Overnight



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THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

WHAT THIS MEANS:
scattered severe storms
possible

TIMING

Evening into
overnight

PRIMARY THREATS



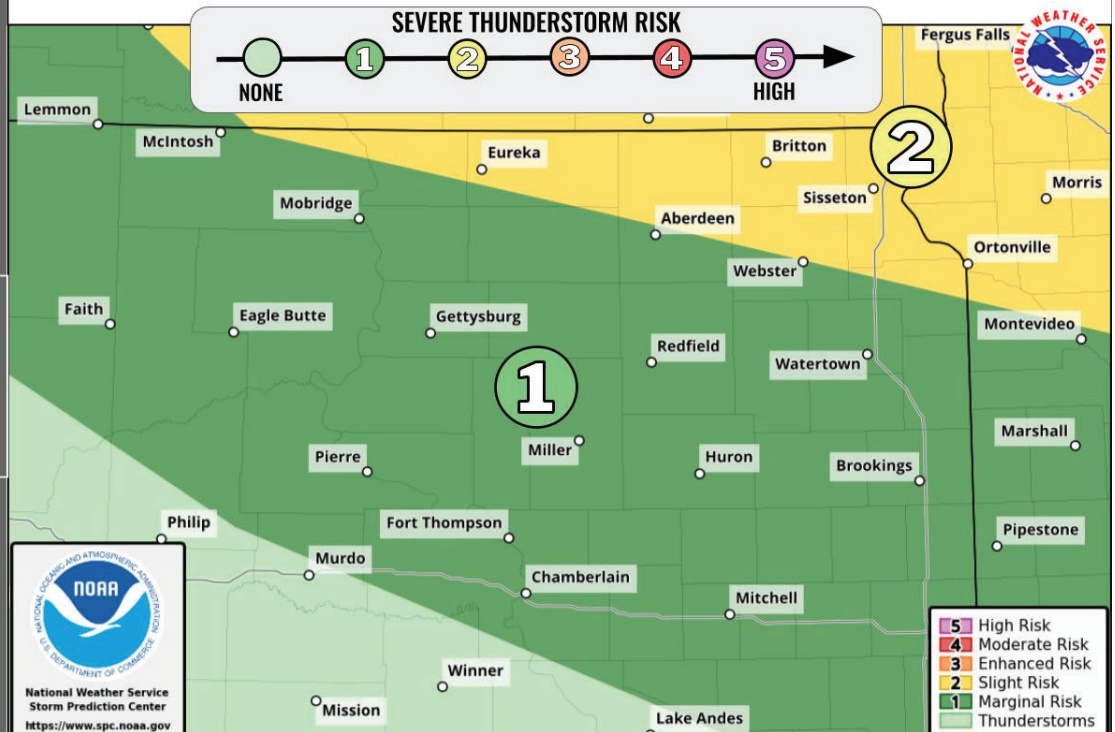
LARGE HAIL



DAMAGING
WIND

Get your up to date
forecast at weather.gov/abr

SEVERE STORMS Possible Friday/Friday night



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 81 °F at 2:41 PM

Low Temp: 59 °F at 5:17 AM

Wind: 33 mph at 4:23 PM

Precip: : 0.38

Day length: 15 hours, 44 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1933

Record Low: 38 in 1902

Average High: 81

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in June.: 2.16

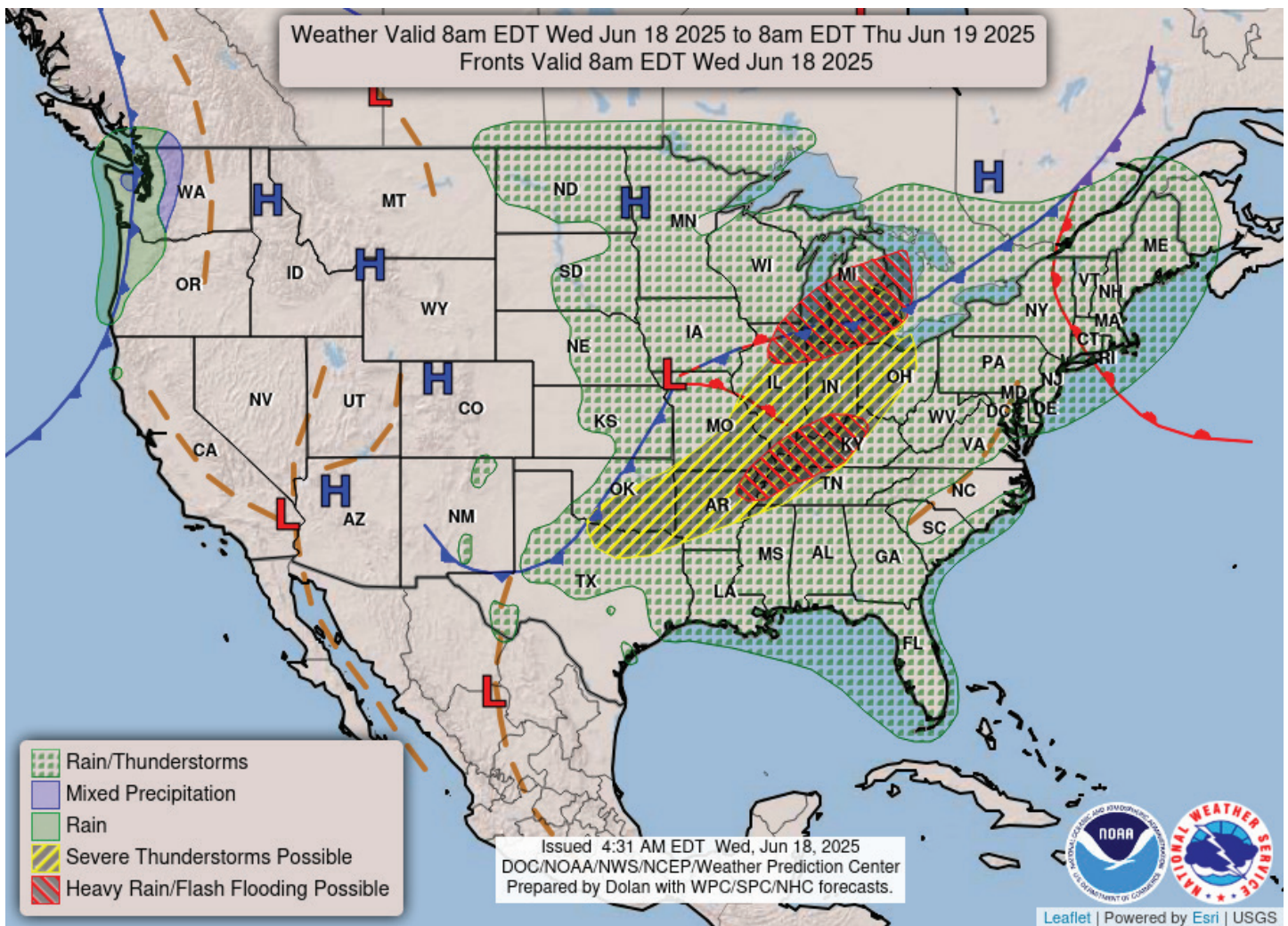
Precip to date in June: 2.54

Average Precip to date: 9.41

Precip Year to Date: 8.59

Sunset Tonight: 9:25:43 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:47 am



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Today in Weather History

June 18th, 1964: A tornado moved from SSW to NNE, damaging three farmsteads between Hoven and 8 NNW of Bowdle. This tornado was estimated to have F2 strength. An estimated five inches of rain fell in three hours near Bowdle, causing soil erosion just before the tornado hit.

Another storm moved from south to north and intensified as it moved northward. Winds between 50 and 100 mph were reported. The highest damage was in McPherson County, where an estimated 2 million dollars in crop damage occurred. Heavy rain was also observed on this day. Some storm total rainfall includes 6.73 inches in Eureka, 4.28 in Roscoe, 3.75 in Leola, 2.68 in Shelby, 2.45 in Britton, and 2.31 inches in Ipswich.

June 18th, 1991: Large hail, up to 2 inches in diameter, broke windows and caused widespread tree damage in Watertown and its vicinity. Extensive damage was caused to surrounding soybean and corn fields. Approximately 25,000 acres of crops were destroyed. Thunderstorm winds of 55 mph uprooted trees and downed power lines, primarily in the Revillo area. Trees fell on cars, and an apartment complex was damaged.

1875 - A severe coastal storm or possible hurricane struck the Atlantic coast from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia. Eastport ME reported wind gusts to 57 mph. (David Ludlum)

1958 - Hailstones up to four inches in diameter killed livestock as a storm passed from Joliet to Belfry in Carbon County MT. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - Wind and rain, and hail up to seven inches deep, caused more than five million dollars damage at Oberlin KS. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - It was a hot day in the Upper Great Lakes Region. Nine cities in Michigan and Wisconsin reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 90 degrees at Marquette, MI, marked their third straight day of record heat. Severe thunderstorm in the Northern and Central High Plains Region spawned half a dozen tornadoes in Wyoming and Colorado. Wheatridge, CO, was deluged with 2.5 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota produced hail three inches in diameter and spawned four tornadoes in Steele County. Thunderstorms also produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Clearbrook MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. In Arizona, afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Winslow, 113 degrees at Tucson, and 115 degrees at Phoenix were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

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"Be patient! God's not finished with me yet!"

Many of us use those words as an excuse every time we make a mess of things. While I'm not sure it ever worked for that reason, it was comforting until reality set in.

There are days when God seems to be shaking us by the nape of our necks to get our attention. There are other days when His grace grants one blessing after another.

It cannot be denied, however, that we are all a "work in progress" as long as we are alive. The question we must ask ourselves is: What is progress, and how will we know when God is finished with us?

If the "godly look forward to a reward," what happens when we falter, fail, or fall?

Are we doomed? Is godliness or righteousness ever attainable in this life? Or, is it something we are to struggle with and strive for as long as we live?

In this instance, "look forward" is the outcome of those who have "righteousness" or "godliness" as a goal.

It is what God's children focus their heads, hearts and hands on.

It is not something that "happens" as a byproduct of life. Righteous living is a core value at the center of all that believers do. Unrighteousness, which is the opposite, must be avoided at all costs!

"The wicked can expect only God's wrath."

Now, that should get everyone's attention.

Wrath, God's wrath, is His overflowing anger against the unrighteous. God's wrath can be compared to a fire that is slowly growing, and, at the moment in time, will be all-consuming.

This verse should remind us that the unrighteous face God's impending judgment and eventual wrath. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the time to repent!

Prayer: May we understand, Father, that our desires determine our destiny. May righteousness rule in our hearts, be the center of our heart, and the work of our hands.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath." Proverbs 11:23

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: 06.17.25

16 23 39 46 55 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$302,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 43 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.16.25

4 19 35 43 51 1

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,200,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 58 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.17.25

4 7 28 36 46 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 13 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.14.25

13 21 22 23 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$29,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 13 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.16.25

32 42 52 55 56 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 42 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.16.25

17 21 23 27 52 19

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$101,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 42 Mins 31 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
09/6-7/25 Fly in/Drive in at Groton Municipal Airport
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
11/30/2025 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Iran's leader rejects call to surrender, saying US intervention would cause 'irreparable damage'

By JOSEPH KRAUSS, JON GAMBRELL and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's supreme leader on Wednesday rejected U.S. calls for surrender in the face of blistering Israeli strikes and warned that any military involvement by the Americans would cause "irreparable damage" to them, in an official statement read by a state TV anchor.

The remarks from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has only been seen once since the strikes began, came after U.S. President Donald Trump demanded "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER" in a social media post and warned Khamenei that the U.S. knows where he is but has no plans to kill him, "at least not for now."

Trump initially distanced himself from Israel's surprise attack on Friday that triggered the conflict, but in recent days has hinted at greater American involvement, saying he wants something "much bigger" than a ceasefire. The U.S. has also sent more warplanes to the region.

An Iranian official had earlier warned Wednesday that U.S. intervention would risk "all-out war."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei did not elaborate, but thousands of American troops are based in nearby countries within range of Iran's weapons. The U.S. has threatened a massive response to any attack.

Another Iranian official said the country would keep enriching uranium for peaceful purposes, apparently ruling out Trump's demands that Iran give up its disputed nuclear program.

Strikes in and around Tehran

The latest Israeli strikes hit a facility used to make uranium centrifuges and another that made missile components, the Israeli military said. It said it had intercepted 10 missiles overnight as Iran's retaliatory barrages diminish. The U.N. nuclear watchdog said Israel had struck two centrifuge production facilities in and near Tehran.

The Israeli military said it also carried out strikes in western Iran, hitting missile storage sites and a loaded missile launcher.

Israeli strikes have hit several nuclear and military sites, killing top generals and nuclear scientists. A Washington-based Iranian human rights group said at least 585 people, including 239 civilians, have been killed and more than 1,300 wounded.

Iran has fired some 400 missiles and hundreds of drones in retaliatory strikes that have killed at least 24 people in Israel and wounded hundreds. Some have hit apartment buildings in central Israel, causing heavy damage, and air raid sirens have repeatedly forced Israelis to run for shelter.

Iran has fired fewer missiles as the conflict has worn on. It has not explained the decline, but Israel has targeted launchers and other infrastructure related to the missiles.

Casualties mount in Iran

The Washington-based group Human Rights Activists said it had identified 239 of those killed in Israeli strikes as civilians and 126 as security personnel.

The group, which also provided detailed casualty figures during 2022 protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, crosschecks local reports against a network of sources it has developed in Iran.

Iran has not been publishing regular death tolls during the conflict and has minimized casualties in the past. Its last update, issued Monday, put the toll at 224 people killed and 1,277 others wounded.

Shops have been closed across Tehran, including in its famed Grand Bazaar, as people wait in gas lines and pack roads leading out of the city to escape the onslaught.

A major explosion could be heard around 5 a.m. in Tehran Wednesday morning, following other explosions earlier in the predawn darkness. Authorities in Iran offered no acknowledgement of the attacks, which has become increasingly common as the Israeli airstrikes have intensified.

At least one strike appeared to target Tehran's eastern neighborhood of Hakimiyeh, where the paramili-

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tary Revolutionary Guard has an academy.

No signs of backing down

Israel says it launched the strikes to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon, after talks between the United States and Iran over a diplomatic resolution had made little visible progress over two months but were still ongoing. Trump has said Israel's campaign came after a 60-day window he set for the talks.

Iran long has insisted its nuclear program was peaceful, though it is the only non-nuclear-armed state to enrich uranium up to 60%, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. U.S. intelligence agencies have said they did not believe Iran was actively pursuing the bomb.

Israel is the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons but has never publicly acknowledged them.

Iran's ambassador to Geneva, Ali Bahreini, told reporters that Iran "will continue to produce the enriched uranium as far as we need for peaceful purposes."

He rejected any talk of a setback to Iran's nuclear research and development from the Israeli strikes, saying, "Our scientists will continue their work."

He said Trump's remarks were "completely unwarranted" and "very hostile," and that Iran could not ignore them. He said Iranian authorities were "vigilant" about the comments and would decide if the U.S. crossed any lines. "Once the red line is crossed, the response will come."

Israel welcomes first repatriation flights

Israelis began returning on flights for the first time since the country's international airport shut down at the start of the conflict.

Two flights from Larnaca, Cyprus, landed at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Airport on Wednesday morning, said Lisa Dvir, an airport spokesperson.

Israel closed its airspace to commercial flights because of the ballistic missile attacks, leaving tens of thousands of Israelis stranded abroad. The conflict has disrupted flight patterns across the region.

Fear stalks Tehran as Israel bombards, shelters fill up and communicating grows harder

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The streets of Tehran are empty, businesses closed, communications patchy at best. With no bona fide bomb shelters open to the public, panicked masses spend restless nights on the floors of metro stations as strikes boom overhead.

This is Iran's capital city, just under a week into a fierce Israeli blitz to destroy the country's nuclear program and its military capabilities. After knocking out much of Iran's air defense system, Israel says its warplanes have free rein over the city's skies. U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday told Tehran's roughly 10 million residents to evacuate "immediately."

Thousands have fled, spending hours in gridlock as they head toward the suburbs, the Caspian Sea, or even Armenia or Turkey. But others — those elderly and infirm — are stuck in high-rise apartment buildings. Their relatives fret: what to do?

Israeli strikes on Iran have killed at least 585 people and wounded over 1,300, a human rights group says. Local media, themselves targets of bombardment, have stopped reporting on the attacks, leaving Iranians in the dark. There are few visible signs of state authority: Police appear largely undercover, air raid sirens are unreliable, and there's scant information on what to do in case of attack.

Shirin, 49, who lives in the southern part of Tehran, said every call or text to friends and family in recent days has felt like it could be the last.

"We don't know if tomorrow we will be alive," she said.

Many Iranians feel conflicted. Some support Israel's targeting of Iranian political and military officials they see as repressive. Others staunchly defend the Islamic Republic and retaliatory strikes on Israel. Then, there are those who oppose Iran's rulers — but still don't want to see their country bombed.

To stay, or to go?

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The Associated Press interviewed five people in Iran and one Iranian American in the U.S. over the phone. All spoke either on the condition of anonymity or only allowed their first names to be used, for fear of retribution from the state against them or their families.

Most of the calls ended abruptly and within minutes, cutting off conversations as people grew nervous — or because the connection dropped. Iran's government has acknowledged disrupting internet access. It says it's to protect the country, though that has blocked average Iranians from getting information from the outside world.

Iranians in the diaspora wait anxiously for news from relatives. One, an Iranian American human rights researcher in the U.S., said he last heard from relatives when some were trying to flee Tehran earlier in the week. He believes that lack of gas and traffic prevented them from leaving.

The most heartbreaking interaction, he said, was when his older cousins — with whom he grew up in Iran — told him "we don't know where to go. If we die, we die."

"Their sense was just despair," he said.

Some families have made the decision to split up.

A 23-year-old Afghan refugee who has lived in Iran for four years said he stayed behind in Tehran but sent his wife and newborn son out of the city after a strike Monday hit a nearby pharmacy.

"It was a very bad shock for them," he said.

Some, like Shirin, said fleeing was not an option. The apartment buildings in Tehran are towering and dense. Her father has Alzheimer's and needs an ambulance to move. Her mother's severe arthritis would make even a short trip extremely painful.

Still, hoping escape might be possible, she spent the last several days trying to gather their medications. Her brother waited at a gas station until 3 a.m., only to be turned away when the fuel ran out. As of Monday, gas was being rationed to under 20 liters (5 gallons) per driver at stations across Iran after an Israeli strike set fire to the world's largest gas field.

Some people, like Arshia, said they are just tired.

"I don't want to go in traffic for 40 hours, 30 hours, 20 hours, just to get to somewhere that might get bombed eventually," he said.

The 22-year-old has been staying in the house with his parents since the initial Israeli strike. He said his once-lively neighborhood of Saadat Abad in northwestern Tehran is now a ghost town. Schools are closed. Very few people even step outside to walk their dogs. Most local stores have run out of drinking water and cooking oil. Others closed.

Still, Arshia said the prospect of finding a new place is too daunting.

"We don't have the resources to leave at the moment," he said.

Residents are on their own

No air raid sirens went off as Israeli strikes began pounding Tehran before dawn Friday. For many, it was an early sign civilians would have to go it alone.

During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Tehran was a low-slung city, many homes had basements to shelter in, and there were air raid drills and sirens. Now the capital is packed with close-built high-rise apartments without shelters.

"It's a kind of failing of the past that they didn't build shelters," said a 29-year-old Tehran resident who left the city Monday. "Even though we've been under the shadow of a war, as long as I can remember."

Her friend's boyfriend was killed while going to the store.

"You don't really expect your boyfriend — or your anyone, really — to leave the house and never return when they just went out for a routine normal shopping trip," she said.

Those who choose to relocate do so without help from the government. The state has said it is opening mosques, schools and metro stations for use as shelters. Some are closed, others overcrowded.

Hundreds crammed into one Tehran metro station Friday night. Small family groups lay on the floor. One student, a refugee from another country, said she spent 12 hours in the station with her relatives.

"Everyone there was panicking because of the situation," she said. "Everyone doesn't know what will

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happen next, if there is war in the future and what they should do. People think nowhere is safe for them.”

Soon after leaving the station, she saw that Israel had warned a swath of Tehran to evacuate.

“For immigrant communities, this is so hard to live in this kind of situation,” she said, explaining she feels like she has nowhere to escape to — especially not her home country, which she asked not be identified.

Fear of Iran mingles with fear of Israel

For Shirin, the hostilities are bittersweet. Despite being against the theocracy and its treatment of women, the idea that Israel may determine the future does not sit well with her.

“As much as we want the end of this regime, we didn’t want it to come at the hands of a foreign government,” she said. “We would have preferred that if there were to be a change, it would be the result of a people’s movement in Iran.”

Meanwhile, the 29-year-old who left Tehran had an even more basic message for those outside Iran:

“I just want people to remember that whatever is happening here, it’s not routine business for us. People’s lives here — people’s livelihoods — feel as important to them as they feel to anyone in any other place. How would you feel if your city or your country was under bombardment by another country, and people were dying left and right?”

“We are kind of like, this can’t be happening. This can’t be my life.”

Los Angeles mayor lifts downtown curfew she imposed during protests against immigration raids

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Downtown Los Angeles businesses hoped customers would return quickly on Tuesday after Mayor Karen Bass lifted a curfew she had imposed last week to prevent vandalism and break-ins during nighttime protests against President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown.

The protests, which have been concentrated in a few blocks of downtown where federal and local government buildings are, were in response to President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown in the city and subsequent deployment of the National Guard and Marines.

The curfew set in place June 10 provided “successful crime prevention and suppression efforts” and protected stores, restaurants, businesses and residents, the Democratic mayor said. It covered a relatively tiny slice of the sprawling city.

Little Tokyo neighborhood hit hard

On Tuesday afternoon, the impact of days of protests could be seen in the boarded-up windows lining the streets of Little Tokyo, a historical Japanese American district right next to a federal detention building still heavily guarded by military troops.

A steady stream of tourists stopped in the neighborhood to take photos of baseball superstar Shohei Ohtani wearing Dodgers blue in a massive mural on the side of a hotel.

Don Tahara, the owner of Far Bar, said businesses in the area have been hit hard with vandalism and some break-ins.

On June 8, thousands of protesters took to the streets in response to Trump’s deployment of the Guard, blocking off a major freeway as law enforcement used tear gas, rubber bullets and flash bangs to control the crowd. Photos captured several Waymo robotaxis set on fire.

A day later, police officers used flash bangs and shot projectiles as they pushed protesters through Little Tokyo, where bystanders and restaurant workers rushed to get out of their way. Some protesters set off fireworks and threw water bottles at the officers, yelling, “Shame!”

But Tahara, a third-generation Japanese American immigrant, said he also understands why the protests were necessary, seeing similarities between the current administration’s immigration raids and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

“The problems that Little Tokyo had 75 years ago was basically the federal government coming in and imprisoning all of them in concentration camps,” Tahara said. “They were uprooted from their homes and businesses, their churches ... we’re seeing a repeat of that.”

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Since people assumed the curfew would still be in place Tuesday, Far Bar has still had many cancellations of reservations and events. They decided to open earlier for lunchtime in the past few days, but employees have lost hours from their paychecks. Combined with the lingering effects of the LA wildfires earlier this year, tariff-induced price increases and other increased costs, it has been a challenging climate for businesses to navigate, Tahara said.

On Monday, Bass trimmed back curfew hours from beginning at 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. after a drop in arrests in the area. Bass faulted a relatively small group of "bad actors who do not care about the immigrant community," a nod to thousands of protesters who exercised their rights peacefully. Trump directed federal immigration officials Sunday to prioritize deportations from Democratic-run cities, a move that comes after a weekend of large protests all across the country against his administration.

Cindy Reyes, head server at Rakkan Ramen, said they completely shut down the shop for Saturday's protests and closed early on Sunday. The curfew was especially difficult for their night-shift workers because the ramen joint is usually open until midnight.

"Dinner shift makes the most money because we're the last restaurant standing so people come to us in the end," she said.

Historic Core of downtown LA also hurt

The Historic Core of downtown LA, further away from where the protests have occurred and home to many nightclubs and bars, has also suffered from break-ins. Many closed down for the duration of the curfew because their core business happens in the evening.

Rhythm Room owner Vincent Vong said he has lost tens of thousands of dollars from closing for a whole week, not just from the loss of business but also to keep paying his employees.

"I have to schedule people to come in because I need to get them paid somehow," he said.

He wished there was more support from the city and deployment of law enforcement resources to protecting the "most vulnerable areas," pointing out that his street has often been the target of vandalism and theft during large demonstrations.

Even as the curfew is lifted, Vong said it will be difficult to bring customers back to an area that still has boarded-up windows and feels "apocalyptic."

"I have to double down in showing that downtown LA is still a safe place to go," he said.

Firms led by US military veterans deliver aid in Africa and Gaza, alarming humanitarian groups

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, SAM MEDNICK and FLORENCE MIETTAUX Associated Press

ON A PLANE OVER UPPER NILE STATE, South Sudan (AP) — Swooping low over the banks of a Nile River tributary, an aid flight run by retired American military officers released a stream of food-stuffed sacks over a town emptied by fighting in South Sudan, a country wracked by conflict.

Last week's air drop was the latest in a controversial development: private contracting firms led by former U.S. intelligence officers and military veterans delivering aid to some of the world's deadliest conflict zones, in operations organized with governments that are combatants in the conflicts.

The moves are roiling the global aid community, which warns of a more militarized, politicized and profit-seeking trend that could allow governments or combatants to use life-saving aid to control hungry civilian populations and advance war aims.

In South Sudan and Gaza, two for-profit U.S. companies led by American national security veterans are delivering aid in operations backed by the South Sudanese and Israeli governments.

The American contractors say they're putting their security, logistics and intelligence skills to work in relief operations. Fogbow, the U.S. company that carried out last week's air drops over South Sudan, says it aims to be a "humanitarian" force.

"We've worked for careers, collectively, in conflict zones. And we know how to essentially make very difficult situations work," said Fogbow President Michael Mulroy, a retired CIA officer and former senior

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defense official in the first Trump administration, speaking on the airport tarmac in Juba, South Sudan's capital.

But the U.N. and many leading non-profit groups say U.S. contracting firms are stepping into aid distribution with little transparency or humanitarian experience, and, crucially, without commitment to humanitarian principles of neutrality and operational independence in war zones.

"What we've learned over the years of successes and failures is there's a difference between a logistics operation and a security operation, and a humanitarian operation," said Scott Paul, a director at Oxfam America.

"Truck and chuck' doesn't help people," Paul said. "It puts people at risk."

'We don't want to replace any entity'

Fogbow took journalists up in a cargo plane to watch their team drop 16 tons of beans, corn and salt for South Sudan's Upper Nile state town of Nasir.

Residents fled homes there after fighting erupted in March between the government and opposition groups.

Mulroy acknowledged the controversy over Fogbow's aid drops, which he said were paid for by the South Sudanese government.

But, he maintained: "We don't want to replace any entity" in aid work.

Shared roots in Gaza and U.S. intelligence

Fogbow was in the spotlight last year for its proposal to use barges to bring aid to Gaza, where Israeli restrictions were blocking overland deliveries. The United States focused instead on a U.S. military effort to land aid via a temporary pier.

Since then, Fogbow has carried out aid drops in Sudan and South Sudan, east African nations where wars have created some of the world's gravest humanitarian crises.

Fogbow says ex-humanitarian officials are also involved, including former U.N. World Food Program head David Beasley, who is a senior adviser.

Operating in Gaza, meanwhile, Safe Reach Solutions, led by a former CIA officer and other retired U.S. security officers, has partnered with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a U.S.-backed nonprofit that Israel says is the linchpin of a new aid system to wrest control from the U.N., which Israel says has been infiltrated by Hamas, and other humanitarian groups.

Starting in late May, the American-led operation in Gaza has distributed food at fixed sites in southern Gaza, in line with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's stated plan to use aid to concentrate the territory's more than 2 million people in the south, freeing Israel to fight Hamas elsewhere. Aid workers fear it's a step toward another of Netanyahu's public goals, removing Palestinians from Gaza in "voluntary" migrations.

Since then, several hundred Palestinians have been killed and hundreds more wounded in near daily shootings as they tried to reach aid sites, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Witnesses say Israeli troops regularly fire heavy barrages toward the crowds in an attempt to control them.

The Israeli military has denied firing on civilians. It says it fired warning shots in several instances, and fired directly at a few "suspects" who ignored warnings and approached its forces.

It's unclear who is funding the new operation in Gaza. No donor has come forward, and the U.S. says it's not funding it.

In response to criticism over its Gaza aid deliveries, Safe Reach Solutions said it has former aid workers on its team with "decades of experience in the world's most complex environments" who bring "expertise to the table, along with logisticians and other experts."

South Sudan's people ask: Who's getting our aid drops?

Last week's air drop over South Sudan went without incident, despite fighting nearby. A white cross marked the drop zone. Only a few people could be seen. Fogbow contractors said there were more newly returned townspeople on previous drops.

Fogbow acknowledges glitches in mastering aid drops, including one last year in Sudan's South Kordofan region that ended up with too-thinly-wrapped grain sacks split open on the ground.

After gaining independence from Sudan in 2011, South Sudan has struggled to emerge from a civil war

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that killed nearly 400,000 people. Rights groups say its government is one of the world's most corrupt, and until now has invested little in quelling the dire humanitarian crisis.

South Sudan said it engaged Fogbow for air drops partly because of the Trump administration's deep cuts in U.S. Agency for International Development funding. Humanitarian Minister Albino Akol Atak said the drops will expand to help people in need throughout the country.

But two South Sudanese groups question the government's motives.

"We don't want to see a humanitarian space being abused by military actors ... under the cover of a food drop," said Edmund Yakani, head of the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, a local civil society group.

Asked about suspicions the aid drops were helping South Sudan's military aims, Fogbow's Mulroy said the group has worked with the U.N. World Food Program to make sure "this aid is going to civilians."

"If it wasn't going to civilians, we would hope that we would get that feedback, and we would cease and desist," Mulroy said.

In a statement, WFP country director Mary-Ellen McGroarty said: "WFP is not involved in the planning, targeting or distribution of food air-dropped" by Fogbow on behalf of South Sudan's government, citing humanitarian principles.

A 'business-driven model'

Longtime humanitarian leaders and analysts are troubled by what they see as a teaming up of warring governments and for-profit contractors in aid distribution.

When one side in a conflict decides where and how aid is handed out, and who gets it, "it will always result in some communities getting preferential treatment," said Jan Egeland, executive director of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Sometimes, that set-up will advance strategic aims, as with Netanyahu's plans to move Gaza's civilians south, Egeland said.

The involvement of soldiers and security workers, he added, can make it too "intimidating" for some in need to even try to get aid.

Until now, Western donors always understood those risks, Egeland said. But pointing to the Trump administration's backing of the new aid system in Gaza, he asked: "Why does the U.S. ... want to support what they have resisted with every other war zone for two generations?"

Mark Millar, who has advised the U.N. and Britain on humanitarian matters in South Sudan and elsewhere, said involving private military contractors risks undermining the distinction between humanitarian assistance and armed conflict.

Private military contractors "have even less sympathy for a humanitarian perspective that complicates their business-driven model," he said. "And once let loose, they seem to be even less accountable."

Back-to-back Cats: Panthers repeat as Stanley Cup champions by beating the Oilers in 6 games

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Stanley's stay in South Florida is getting extended.

The Florida Panthers repeated as Stanley Cup champions by beating the Edmonton Oilers 5-1 in Game 6 of the final on Tuesday night, becoming the NHL's first back-to-back winners since Tampa Bay in 2020 and '21 and the third team to do it this century.

Sam Reinhart scored four goals, becoming just the sixth player in league history and first since Maurice Richard in 1957 to get that many in a game in the final. His third to complete the hat trick sent rats, along with hats, flying onto the ice. Matthew Tkachuk, one of the faces of the franchise, fittingly scored the Cup clincher.

More rats were part of the victory celebration when the clock hit zeroes. Panthers players mobbed in the corner, while the Oilers watched in dismay.

"Good evening, South Florida," Commissioner Gary Bettman said before presenting the trophy to captain

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Aleksander Barkov. "It feels like we just did this."

Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 of the 29 shots he faced, closing the door on a rematch with the same end result. The only goal came from fellow Russian Vasily Podkolzin in garbage time, long after the outcome was decided and the NHL put a bow on a remarkable season that included Alex Ovechkin's milestone as the all-time leading goal scorer and Olympics-like buzz around the 4 Nations tournament in February.

There were chants of "We want the Cup!" as the final moments ticked away. The Panthers already had it. Now they get to keep it.

"This is as good as the first one," Reinhart said. "We learned some lessons. We stayed on the gas, foot on the pedal, and obviously the result speaks for itself."

Not long after the Lightning made three trips to the final in a row, Florida has done the same and now has the makings of a dynasty. The Panthers have won 11 of 12 playoff series since Tkachuk arrived by trade and Paul Maurice took over as coach in the summer of 2022.

"We've got to be a dynasty now," Tkachuk said. "Three years in a row finals, two championships. This is a special group."

The only time they have been on the wrong side of a handshake line was the final in Vegas in 2023, only after several key players were banged up and gutting through significant injuries.

From the core of Tkachuk, Reinhart, Barkov and Sam Bennett on down the roster, they were much healthier this time around and were boosted by key trade deadline additions Brad Marchand and Seth Jones. Bennett led all goal-scorers this postseason with 15, and Marchand had six in the final alone.

Bennett won the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP. Barkov handed the Cup to first-time champion Nate Schmidt, and all the others winning it for the first time got it soon after.

"It's amazing to be able to be here," Schmidt said. "I don't know whether to laugh or cry."

Getting depth contributions from throughout the lineup allowed them to overpower Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and the Oilers, who struggled with Florida's ferocious forecheck and switched goaltenders multiple times in the final. Stuart Skinner got the nod in Game 6 and was again done in by mistakes in front of him that ended with the puck in the net behind him and had his own blunder on Reinhart's second goal.

McDavid tried to take over but was again stymied by Barkov, Jones and Bobrovsky. He finished with seven points in his second career trip to the final, again denied his first title.

The Panthers spent more time leading during this Stanley Cup Final than any previous team in history, 255:49 minutes in all.

"We lost to a really good team," McDavid said. "Nobody quit, nobody threw the towel in, but they're a heck of a team. They're back-to-back Stanley Cup champions for a reason."

Canada's Stanley Cup drought reached 31 seasons and 32 years dating to Montreal in 1993. Teams in the U.S. Sun Belt have won it five of the past six times, four of them in Florida.

This run through Tampa Bay in five games, Toronto in seven, Carolina in five and Edmonton in six showed how clinical the Panthers have become under Maurice, who has coached more NHL games than everyone except Scotty Bowman and is now a two-time champion.

So is Marchand, who last hoisted the Cup in 2011 with the Boston Bruins. The 14-year gap is the third-longest in league history, just shy of 16 for Chris Chelios from 1986 to 2002 and 15 for Mark Recchi from '91 to '06.

"It's incredible," Marchand said. "It's a feeling you can't really describe. Seeing the family and everyone up there and everyone that supported me and helped me get to this point, words can't put this into reality how great it feels. Such an incredible group."

Takeaways from AP report on President Javier Milei's dramatic cuts to Argentine health care

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Argentina used to have an extensive, free public health system that pretty much ensured that everybody who couldn't afford private insurance was covered for everything.

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But in the year-and-a-half since President Javier Milei rode to power on a promise to eliminate the nation's sky-high inflation and huge budget deficits, the radical economist's austerity program has taken a brutal toll on the nation's public hospitals and its population of poor, retired and unemployed patients who have lost access to vital treatment.

In gutting key federal health agencies, Milei's sweeping layoffs and deep spending cuts have mirrored moves taken by the administration of his close ally, U.S. President Donald Trump.

Here are takeaways from an Associated Press report about how a libertarian revolution cheered by the global far-right is affecting the health of Argentines.

Life-or-death stakes for cancer patients

President Milei's suspension of a government agency, known as DADSE, that provided prohibitively expensive medication to uninsured cancer patients and others with rare diseases has left thousands of Argentines without lifesaving treatment.

The changes forced patients to seek help outside the traditional health care system. Some surreptitiously manage to secure spare drug donations via Facebook groups.

Others are not so lucky. A lawsuit filed by patient advocacy groups said at least 60 cancer patients died last year due to the government's suspension of the DADSE medication program. The AP spoke with four families whose loved ones died while waiting for the agency to pay for cancer drugs that it had covered and delivered before Milei took office.

A federal judge ordered the government to resume drug deliveries, but the state has appealed, saying DADSE no longer exists.

Milei's spokesperson, Manuel Adorni, did not respond to requests for comment. Health Minister Mario Lugones did not respond to questions on the impact of policy changes.

Officials have also gutted the National Cancer Institute, suspending early detection programs for breast and cervical cancer.

Progress against infectious diseases upended

Since taking office in December 2023, Milei has slashed Argentina's health care budget by 48% in real terms. His administration fired over 2,000 Health Ministry employees — nearly a quarter of its workforce — including 1,400 over just a few days in January.

Employees describe the worst funding crunch in the ministry's recent history and say the layoffs have allowed an upsurge of diseases once under control.

The National Directorate for HIV, Hepatitis and Tuberculosis has lost 40% of its staff and 76% of its annual budget. Hospitals now face shortages of everything from virus testing supplies to medications to condoms. Patients who have the near-totally drug-resistant form of HIV say they're not being treated.

The cuts have coincided with a surge in sexually transmitted infections. Last year HIV cases spiked by 20% and syphilis by 50%.

Tuberculosis cases also climbed by 25% last year. TB clinics report delays in obtaining test results and say that family members of infected people are not being put on preventive therapy.

Overwhelmed hospitals

The government has curtailed medical coverage for retirees and lifted price controls on prescription medication and private health plans, causing prices to spike by 250% and 118% respectively, official data shows.

Free public hospitals have been flooded with Argentines who dropped their private plans due to increased premiums or who lost their jobs — and with it, social security plans funded through payroll contributions.

Buenos Aires facilities reported a 20%-30% increase in demand in the first quarter of 2025 compared to the same period last year.

Pharmacists have reported drug shortages as mass layoffs caused administrative chaos and the government froze a program that provided basic medications to Argentine public health centers.

With hiring frozen, doctors said they're handling double the patients they did a couple years ago. Besieged by staff burnout and ever-increasing workloads, Argentina's leading public Garrahan Pediatric Hospital in

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Buenos Aires has hemorrhaged 200 medical professionals since Milei took office.

As annual inflation neared 200% last fall, their salaries lost half of their purchasing power. Doctors left for jobs abroad or better-paying work in private clinics. None were replaced. Mass protests and strikes by low-paid medical residents paralyzed Buenos Aires last month.

Vaccines on the chopping block

Milei froze federal funds for immunization campaigns, hobbling vaccine access as Argentina confronts a measles outbreak that in April led to its first measles death in two decades.

Authorities did not renew national contracts with vaccine suppliers, in some cases disrupting deliveries to provinces.

Last month Argentine officials welcomed Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the Trump administration's Health and Human Services secretary and a longtime vaccine skeptic, for meetings on health policy in Buenos Aires.

Health Minister Lugones, vowed to refocus the ministry's functions on holistic health rather than infectious disease, in line with Kennedy's Make America Healthy Again movement.

Milei finalized Argentina's decision to follow the U.S. in withdrawing from the World Health Organization, which had provided the nation with discounts on vaccines and medications and helped it track outbreaks.

"Argentina has been one of the most advanced South American countries and here we see it abandoning public health," said Dr. Stanley Plotkin, an American physician who helped develop the measles vaccine in the 1960s.

Argentines reel from health care cutbacks as President Milei's state overhaul mirrors Trump's

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — To outsiders, the Facebook group chat reads like a snarl of nonsensical emojis and letters. To uninsured Argentine cancer patients, it's a lifeline.

The surreptitious network connects advocates who have spare drugs to Argentines with cancer who lost access to their treatment in March 2024 when President Javier Milei suspended a federal agency, known as DADSE, that paid for their expensive medications.

Whenever Facebook cracks the coded pleas and removes the group for violating its rules on drug sales, another appears, swelling with Argentines who say they've grown sicker since the radical libertarian president took a chainsaw to health care.

"All I need for my body to function is this medication, and Milei is saying, 'There's no money,'" said Ariel Wagener, a 47-year-old pizza chef with leukemia who was hospitalized this year with failing kidneys after losing access to his medication. Without DADSE, a month's worth of his leukemia drug costs \$21,000.

Wagener's condition stabilized after he got leftover medication via Facebook, donated by a family whose loved one had died of cancer.

The halting of millions of dollars of free cancer drugs is just one way Milei's austerity drive has torn through the public health system that once set Argentina apart in Latin America, ensuring that health care was free for pretty much everyone who couldn't afford private insurance.

Since taking office in December 2023, Milei has slashed Argentina's health care budget by 48% in real terms. His administration fired over 2,000 Health Ministry employees, including 1,400 over just a few days in January.

As part of Milei's plan to remake Argentina's troubled economy and cut waste and bureaucracy, officials gutted the National Cancer Institute, suspending early detection programs for breast and cervical cancer.

They froze federal funds for immunization campaigns, hobbling vaccine access as Argentina confronts a measles outbreak for the first time in decades. They dismantled the National Directorate for HIV, Hepatitis and Tuberculosis, leading to testing and treatment delays. They defunded emergency contraception and stopped distributing abortion pills.

"We're seeing setbacks we haven't seen in decades," said María Fernanda Boriotti, president of Argentina's Federation of Health Professionals. "HIV patients without treatment, cancer patients dying for lack

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of medication, hospitals without resources, health professionals pushed out of the system."

The government curtailed medical coverage for retirees and lifted price controls on prescription medication and private health plans, causing prices to spike by 250% and 118% respectively, official data shows.

"We've stopped buying milk, yogurt, anything that's not absolutely essential," said Susana Pecora, 71, who lost the insurance plan that covered her husband's antipsychotic drugs when the price jumped 40% last year.

Milei and Trump see eye-to-eye

Milei campaigned on a promise to shrink the state two years before President Donald Trump and Elon Musk took up their own chainsaws.

The Argentine has become a close ally of the Trump administration, including on health policy. Argentina has followed the U.S. out of the World Health Organization, and last month received a visit from U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Meeting Kennedy in Buenos Aires, Argentine Health Minister Mario Lugones announced a review of Argentina's health system to align it with Kennedy's Make America Healthy Again movement.

"We have similar visions about the path forward," Lugones said of Kennedy.

Milei has not yet attempted to replace universal coverage with an insurance-based system, as he vowed on the campaign trail.

But in stripping Argentines of coverage and increasing premiums and out-of-pocket expenses, he is moving Argentina closer to the U.S. model, said Macarena Sabin Paz, health team coordinator at Argentina's Center for Legal and Social Studies.

"We are beginning to see the idea ... where if you lose your job, or become seriously ill, you may have to sell your car, whatever you have, to pay for health care," she said.

Milei's staffing cuts have eviscerated agencies tasked with planning, financing and tracking immunization campaigns, disrupting data collection and jeopardizing the country's respected childhood vaccine program.

The cuts have coincided with a measles outbreak that in April led to Argentina's first measles death in two decades.

"Argentina has been one of the most advanced South American countries and here we see it abandoning public health," said Dr. Stanley Plotkin, an American physician who helped develop the measles vaccine in the 1960s.

Milei's spokesperson, Manuel Adorni, did not respond to requests for comment. Lugones also did not respond to questions on the impact of policy changes.

A tidal wave of cuts

After decades of unbridled spending by left-wing populist governments that brought Argentina infamy for defaulting on its debts, Milei delivered on his campaign promises of taming extreme inflation and notching a fiscal surplus.

But even experts who agree Argentina's health care system needed reform say the cutbacks have been so deep and fast that they've hit like a tidal wave.

"In terms of the destruction of the state, we've never experienced anything like this, not even during the military dictatorship," said Fabio Nuñez, ex-coordinator of the National Directorate for HIV, Hepatitis and Tuberculosis who was among hundreds fired from the agency.

Charged with leading prevention efforts and treatments for infectious diseases, the agency has lost 40% of its staff and 76% of its annual budget. Hospitals now face shortages of everything from virus testing supplies to medications to condoms.

The cuts have coincided with a surge in sexually transmitted infections. Last year HIV cases spiked by 20% and syphilis by 50%.

"They're avoiding the expense now but will pay for it later as people seek emergency care," said Cristian Pizzuti, a 31-year-old with HIV who documented 103 cases of patients deprived of their daily antiretroviral pills for weeks at a time last year. Pizzuti said he recently received expired medication and suffered a severe allergic reaction after being switched to a cheaper drug.

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Tuberculosis cases also climbed by 25% last year. TB clinics report delays in obtaining test results. "As people go about their lives, waiting for results, they are spreading the disease to others," said Dr. Santiago Jimenez, who treats HIV and TB patients in an impoverished Buenos Aires neighborhood. "It's an epidemiological disaster."

Hospitals under strain

Free public hospitals have become flooded with Argentines who dropped their private insurance due to increased premiums or who lost their job — and with it, their social security plans funded through payroll contributions. Buenos Aires facilities reported a 20%-30% increase in demand in the first quarter of 2025 compared to the same period last year.

The strain was visible at the free public Rodolfo Rossi Hospital in La Plata last month, where crowds jostled in the outpatient clinic and long lines spilled from the pharmacy.

Pharmacists have reported drug shortages as mass layoffs caused administrative chaos and the government froze a program that provided basic medications to Argentine public health centers.

Silvana Mansilla, 43, spent half the day waiting to pick up her monthly supply of thyroid medication — which has doubled in price to \$22 — only to find the hospital had run out. "Where's the government? What are they doing about this?" she asked.

With hiring frozen, doctors said they're handling double the patient load.

Overwhelmed by ever-increasing workloads, Argentina's leading public Garrahan Pediatric Hospital in Buenos Aires has hemorrhaged 200 medical professionals since Milei took office.

As annual inflation neared 200% last fall, their salaries lost half of their purchasing power. Doctors left for jobs abroad or better-paying work in private clinics. None were replaced. Medical residents ran a weeklong strike in May, displaying their pay slips for a month of 70-hour work weeks: \$700.

Waiting for treatment

A lawsuit filed by patient advocacy groups said more than 60 cancer patients have died due to the government's suspension of the DADSE medication program, and over 1,500 patients were waiting for their drugs.

A federal judge ordered the government to reinstate the drug deliveries, but it appealed, arguing that DADSE no longer exists. It said it had created a new, more efficient program to fulfill outstanding requests. But the timeline varies and sometimes the drugs don't come at all.

Timing was everything for patients like Alexis Almirón.

His medical records show the government drug bank received his request for an expensive medication to shrink his malignant tumor on Dec. 11, 2023, the day after Milei's inauguration. His doctor told the agency immediate treatment was urgently needed for the aggressive cancer.

Months passed. His mother, Claudia Caballero, bombarded DADSE with desperate calls asking what was taking so long as Almirón's lymphoma spread from his neck to his brain and stomach. He vomited blood. He lost his eyesight. Caballero tried to crowd-source the \$20,000 for a month's supply of the drug but couldn't raise enough.

On March 12 last year, Almirón died at 22.

"They didn't give him the chance to choose to live," Caballero said, her voice breaking.

The day after she buried her son, Caballero received a call from the Health Ministry. They had good news, the caller said: Her son's medication had finally arrived.

UK lawmakers vote to decriminalize abortion amid concern about the prosecution of women

By BRIAN MELLEY and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British lawmakers voted Tuesday to decriminalize abortion in England and Wales after a lawmaker argued it was cruel to prosecute women for ending a pregnancy.

The House of Commons approved an amendment to a broader crime bill that would prevent women from being criminally punished under an antiquated law.

Labour MP Tonia Antoniazzi, the Labour member of Parliament who introduced one of the amendments,

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said the change was needed because police have investigated more than 100 women for suspected illegal abortions over the past five years, including some who suffered natural miscarriages and stillbirths.

"This piece of legislation will only take women out of the criminal justice system because they are vulnerable and they need our help," she said. "Just what public interest is this serving? This is not justice, it is cruelty and it has got to end."

The amendment passed 379-137. The House of Commons will now need to pass the crime bill, which is expected, before it goes to the House of Lords, where it can be delayed but not blocked.

Under current law, doctors can legally carry out abortions in England, Scotland and Wales up to 24 weeks, and beyond that under special circumstances, such as when the life of the mother is in danger. Abortion in Northern Ireland was decriminalized in 2019.

Changes in the law implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic allow women to receive abortion pills through the mail and terminate their own pregnancies at home within the first 10 weeks.

That has led to a handful of widely publicized cases in which women were prosecuted for illegally obtaining abortion pills and using them to end their own pregnancies after 24 weeks or more.

Anti-abortion groups opposed the measures, arguing it would open the door to abortion on demand at any stage of pregnancy.

"Unborn babies will have any remaining protection stripped away, and women will be left at the mercy of abusers," said Alithea Williams, public policy manager for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, which describes itself as the U.K.'s biggest pro-life campaign group.

The debate came after recent prosecutions have galvanized support to repeal parts of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act.

In one case, a mother of three was sentenced to more than two years in prison in 2023 for medically inducing an abortion about eight months into her pregnancy.

Carla Foster, 45, was released about a month later by an appeals court that reduced her sentence. Judge Victoria Sharp said that case called for "compassion, not punishment" and there was no useful purpose in jailing her.

Last month, a jury acquitted Nicola Packer on a charge of unlawfully self-administering poison or a noxious thing with intent to procure a miscarriage. Packer, who took abortion medicine when she was about 26 weeks pregnant, testified that she did not know she had been pregnant more than 10 weeks.

Supporters of the bill said it was a landmark reform that would keep women from going to prison for ending their pregnancy.

"At a time when we're seeing rollbacks on reproductive rights, most notably in the United States, this crucial milestone in the fight for reproductive rights sends a powerful message that our lawmakers are standing up for women," said Louise McCudden of MSI Reproductive Choices.

A second amendment that would have gone even further than Antoniazzi's proposal, barring the prosecution of medical professionals and others who help women abort their fetuses, did not get to a vote.

A competing Conservative measure that would have required an in-person appointment for a pregnant woman to get abortion pills was defeated.

A judge could advance Purdue Pharma's \$7B opioid settlement after all 50 states back it

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

All 50 U.S. states have agreed to the OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma's latest plan to settle thousands of lawsuits over the toll of opioids.

A judge on Wednesday is being asked to clear the way for local governments and individual victims to vote on it.

Government entities, emergency room doctors, insurers, families of children born into withdrawal from the powerful prescription painkiller, individual victims and their families and others would have until Sept.

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30 to vote on whether to accept the deal, which calls for members of the Sackler family who own the company to pay up to \$7 billion over 15 years.

If approved, the settlement would be among the largest in a wave of lawsuits over the past decade as governments and others sought to hold drugmakers, wholesalers and pharmacies accountable for the opioid epidemic that started rising in the years after OxyContin hit the market in 1996. The other settlements together are worth about \$50 billion, and most of the money is to be used to combat the crisis.

In the early 2000s, most opioid deaths were linked to prescription drugs, including OxyContin. Since then, heroin and then illicitly produced fentanyl became the biggest killers. In some years, the class of drugs was linked to more than 80,000 deaths, but that number dropped sharply last year.

The request of U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Sean Lane comes about a year after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a previous version of Purdue's proposed settlement. The court found it was improper that the earlier iteration would have protected members of the Sackler family from lawsuits over opioids, even though they themselves were not filing for bankruptcy protection.

Under the reworked plan hammered out with lawyers for state and local governments and others, groups that don't opt in to the settlement would still have the right to sue members of the wealthy family whose name once adorned museum galleries around the world and programs at several prestigious U.S. universities.

Under the plan, the Sackler family members would give up ownership of Purdue. They resigned from the company's board and stopped receiving distributions from its funds before the company's initial bankruptcy filing in 2019. The remaining entity would get a new name and its profits would be dedicated to battling the epidemic.

Most of the money would go to state and local governments to address the nation's addiction and overdose crisis, but potentially more than \$850 million would go directly to individual victims. That makes it different from the other major settlements.

The payouts would not begin until after a hearing scheduled for Nov. 10, during which Lane is to be asked to approve the entire plan if enough of the affected parties agree.

G7 leaders fail to reach ambitious joint agreements on key issues after Trump's exit

By ROB GILLIES, JILL LAWLESS and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

KANANASKIS, Alberta (AP) — Six of the Group of Seven leaders discussed Russia's war in Ukraine and the Israel-Iran conflict but failed to reach major agreements on those and many other top issues — closing a summit that was forced to try and show how the wealthy nations' club might still shape global policy despite the early departure of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and his counterparts from the U.K., France, Germany, Italy and Japan were joined during Tuesday's final sessions by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO chief Mark Rutte.

"We need support from allies and I'm here," Zelenskyy said, before adding, "We are ready for the peace negotiations, unconditional ceasefire. I think it's very important. But for this, we need pressure."

The remaining leaders agreed to jointly attempt to combat what they called non-market policies that could jeopardize global access to critical minerals. They also pledged to limit the downsides of artificial intelligence on jobs and the environment, while still embracing the potential of the "technological revolution."

There was consensus on other issues, but though the summit was meant to showcase unity on top global concerns, no joint statement on the conflict in Ukraine was released.

Zelenskyy had been set to meet with Trump while world leaders were gathering in the Canadian Rocky Mountain resort of Kananaskis, but that was scrapped. The U.S. also previously signed an agreement granting American access to Ukraine's vast mineral resources.

A senior Canadian official who briefed reporters at the summit said the U.S. opposed a joint statement

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on Ukraine amid its efforts to promote negotiations with Russia. The official said it only became clear during the summit's first day on Monday that there wouldn't be a joint statement — though other attendees suggested no consensus agreement was seriously on the table. Emily Williams, a spokeswoman for the prime minister, later retracted the briefing statement and said "no proposed statement regarding Ukraine was distributed to other leaders."

In Trump's absence, the remaining six leaders held an extensive session on Ukraine. Lacking unanimity, individual leaders also met with Zelenskyy to reassure him of their support.

The summit also was largely overshadowed by a showdown over Iran's nuclear program that could escalate. Israel launched an aerial bombardment campaign against Iran, and Iran has hit back with missiles and drones.

French President Emmanuel Macron warned against the U.S. and other powers pushing for regime change in Iran, suggesting it could destabilize the greater Middle East.

"I believe the greatest mistake today would be to pursue regime change in Iran through military means, as that would lead to chaos," Macron said.

Before leaving, Trump joined the other leaders in issuing a statement saying Iran "can never have a nuclear weapon" and calling for a "de-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, including a ceasefire in Gaza." Getting unanimity — even on a short and broadly worded statement — was a modest measure of success.

Macron said Carney fulfilled his mission as G7 host by preserving the unity of the multilateral organization. "We shouldn't ask the Canadian presidency to resolve every issue on earth today. That would be unfair," said Macron, who will host the G7 next year.

Carney said in his final remarks Tuesday evening that Trump's early exit was about the "extraordinary" situation in the Middle East, not anything that occurred during the summit.

"There was no problem," Canada's prime minister said. "Mr. Trump felt it was better to be in Washington, and I can understand that."

Carney said Canada would impose new economic sanctions against Russia and was releasing its own statement offering "unwavering support for a secure and sovereign Ukraine." Asked if the U.S. pushed to soften any possible joint statement from the gathered leaders on Ukraine, Carney said he consulted with Trump while preparing the language his own country used.

Still, Trump's departure only served to heighten the drama of a world on the verge of several firestorms — and of a summit deprived early of its most-watched world leader.

"We did everything I had to do at the G7," Trump said while flying back to Washington. But things were getting awkward even before he left.

After the famous photo from the G7 in 2018 featured Trump and then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel displaying less-than-friendly body language, this year's edition included a dramatic eye-roll by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni as French President Emmanuel Macron whispered something in her ear during a Monday roundtable.

That, and concerns about the Russia-Ukraine war, little progress on the conflict in Gaza and now the situation in Iran have made things all the more tense — especially after Trump imposed severe tariffs on multiple nations that risk a global economic slowdown.

Members of Trump's trade team remained in Canada to continue discussing tariffs, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who sat at the table as world leaders met with Zelenskyy.

Trump's stance on Ukraine also put him fundamentally at odds with the other G7 leaders, who are clear that Russia is the aggressor in the war. The U.S. declined to join new sanctions against Russia, with Trump saying, "When I sanction a country, that costs the U.S. a lot of money, a tremendous amount of money."

Trump also said at the summit that there would have been no war in Ukraine if G7 members hadn't expelled Putin from the organization in 2014 for annexing Crimea. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the G7 now looks "very pale and quite useless" compared to "for example, such formats as the G20."

Additionally, the U.S. president has placed greater priority on addressing his grievances with other nations' trade policies than on collaboration with G7 allies.

He has imposed 50% tariffs on steel and aluminum, as well as 25% tariffs on autos. Trump is also charging a 10% tax on imports from most countries, though he could raise rates on July 9, after the 90-day negotiating period set by him would expire.

One bright spot for Trump during the summit came when he and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer signed a trade framework that was previously announced in May. Trump said British trade was "very well protected" because "I like them, that's why. That's their ultimate protection."

But, while announcing that agreement, Trump brandished pages spelling out the deal and dropped them. Starmer stooped to pick them up, later explaining that he was compelled to ditch diplomatic decorum because anyone else trying to help risked spooking the president's security team.

"There were quite strict rules about who can get close to the president," Starmer said, adding that he was "just deeply conscious that in a situation like that it would not have been good for anybody else to have stepped forward."

Intense Israeli strikes hit Tehran after Trump demands 'unconditional surrender'

By JOSEPH KRAUSS, JON GAMBRELL and NATALIE MELZER Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Intense Israeli airstrikes targeted Iran's capital early Wednesday a day after U.S. President Donald Trump demanded "unconditional surrender."

As the U.S. sent warplanes to the Middle East, Trump made a series of statements about the conflict, including warning Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that the U.S. knows where he is hiding but that there were no plans to kill him "at least not for now."

His statements fueled confusion about the U.S.'s role in the conflict as Tehran residents flee their homes on the sixth day of Israel's air campaign aimed at Iran's military and nuclear program.

Israel asserts its sweeping assault is necessary to prevent Iran from getting any closer to building an atomic weapon. The strikes have killed at least 224 people in Iran.

Iran has retaliated by launching some 400 missiles and hundreds of drones at Israel. So far, 24 people have been killed in Israel.

The conflict erupted as Israel continues to fight in the Gaza Strip, where there have been near-daily shootings since last week near hubs where desperate Palestinians are being directed to collect food.

Israel hammers Tehran

A major explosion could be heard around 5 a.m. in Tehran Wednesday morning, following other explosions that boomed earlier in the predawn darkness.

Authorities in Iran offered no acknowledgement of the attacks, which has become increasingly common as the Israeli airstrike campaign has intensified since they began on Friday.

At least one strike appeared to target Tehran's eastern neighborhood of Hakimiyeh, where the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has an academy.

The Israelis earlier warned they could strike a neighborhood south of Mehrabad International Airport, which includes residential neighborhoods, military installations, pharmaceutical companies and industrial firms.

Israel also claimed that it had killed Iran's Gen. Ali Shadmani, whom Israel described as the country's most senior remaining military commander, in Tehran.

Shadmani was little known in the country before being appointed last week to a chief-of-staff-like role as head of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters following the killing of his predecessor, Gen. Gholam Ali Rashid, in an Israeli strike.

Trump demands Iranian surrender

Trump left the Group of Seven summit in Canada a day early to deal with the conflict between Israel and Iran, telling reporters: "I'm not looking at a ceasefire. We're looking at better than a ceasefire."

When asked to explain, he said the U.S. wanted to see "a real end" to the conflict that could involve Iran "giving up entirely." He added: "I'm not too much in the mood to negotiate."

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But he also indicated that diplomatic talks remained an option, and said he could send Vice President JD Vance and special envoy Steve Witkoff to meet with the Iranians.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is shifting military aircraft and warships into and around the Middle East to protect Israel from Iranian attacks and respond to Iran's threats to target U.S. military installations.

Satellite images analyzed Wednesday by The Associated Press appeared to show no vessels anchored off the headquarters of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet in Bahrain. Dispersing ships is a common safety technique employed by navies around the world in times of trouble.

Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke about the evolving situation over the phone on Tuesday, according to a White House official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Iran vows further attacks

Iran offered no immediate response to the president's posts, but the country's military leaders vowed that Israel would soon see more attacks.

"The operations carried out so far have been solely for the purpose of warning and deterrence," Gen. Abdul Rahim Mousavi, the commander in chief of Iran's army, said in a video. "The punishment operation will be carried out soon."

Israel's military warned the population to stay close to shelters as Iran fired new salvos of missiles Wednesday, but officials said most were intercepted and Israel's rescue services had no immediate reports of injuries. Sirens blared in southern Israel, including in the desert town of Dimona, the heart of Israel's never-acknowledged nuclear arms program.

The U.S. State Department announced that the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem will remain closed through Friday.

Iran has fired fewer missiles in each of its barrages, with a just handful launched into Wednesday. It has not explained the drop in missiles fired, but the decline comes after Israel targeted many Iranian launchers.

Shops closed, lines for gas in Iran's capital

Trump warned on social media that "everyone should immediately evacuate Tehran," echoing an earlier Israeli military call for some 330,000 residents of a downtown neighborhood there to evacuate.

Tehran is one of the largest cities in the Middle East, with around 10 million people, roughly equivalent to Israel's entire population. People have been fleeing since hostilities began.

Asked why he had urged the evacuation, Trump said: "I just want people to be safe."

Downtown Tehran emptied out early Tuesday, with many shops shuttered, as well as the ancient Grand Bazaar, which has closed only in times of crisis, such as during the 2022 anti-government protests and the coronavirus pandemic.

On the roads out of Tehran to the west, traffic stood bumper to bumper.

Signs that Iran is restricting access to outside world

Iranian authorities appeared to be curbing the public's access to the outside world. Phone and internet service was disrupted, with landline phones unable to receive or dial international calls. NetBlocks, an internet monitoring group, reported that it had detected a significant drop in internet traffic from the country.

Iran's Cyber Security Command acknowledged the internet restrictions and in a statement carried by Iranian state television said the move was meant to stop enemies from "continuing to exploit infrastructure to carry out cyber and military operations."

Iran has restricted important communications tools in past nationwide protests and during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war.

International websites appeared to be blocked, but local websites were functioning, likely signaling that Iran had turned on the so-called "halal net," its locally controlled version of the internet aimed at limiting what the public can see.

Iran's state TV on Tuesday urged the public to remove the messaging app WhatsApp from their cell-phones, alleging without evidence that the app gathered user information to send to Israel.

In a statement, WhatsApp said it was concerned that "these false reports will be an excuse for our

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services to be blocked at a time when people need them the most."

Nuclear agency reports more damage to enrichment site

The International Atomic Energy Agency said it believed that Israel's first aerial attacks on Iran's Natanz enrichment site had directly affected the facility's underground centrifuge facility.

Satellite imagery collected after Friday's attacks showed "additional elements that indicate direct impacts on the underground enrichment halls," the watchdog said.

The IAEA earlier reported that Israeli strikes had destroyed an above-ground enrichment hall at Natanz and knocked out electrical equipment that powered the facility, which is 220 kilometers (135 miles) south-east of Tehran.

Most of Iran's enrichment takes place underground to protect from airstrikes.

Israel has struck Natanz repeatedly and claims to have hurt its underground facilities, which experts assess contain 10,000 centrifuges that enrich uranium up to 60%.

Iran maintains its nuclear program is peaceful, and the U.S. and others have assessed that Tehran has not had an organized effort to pursue a nuclear weapon since 2003. But the IAEA has repeatedly warned that the country has enough enriched uranium to make several nuclear bombs should it choose to do so.

While Netanyahu claimed Monday that Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear sites have set the country's nuclear program back a "very, very long time," Israel has not been able to reach Iran's Fordo uranium enrichment facility, which is built deep into a mountainside.

Hitting Fordo would likely require the U.S.'s own B-2 stealth bombers to drop bunker-busting bombs. The 30,000-pound (14,000-kilogram) GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator uses its weight and sheer kinetic force to reach deeply buried targets.

Argentine ex-President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner allowed to serve corruption sentence at home

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — A federal court on Tuesday granted a request by former Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner to serve a six-year prison sentence for corruption at her home in Buenos Aires.

Judges ruled that Fernández, 72, can serve time in the apartment where she lives with her daughter and her granddaughter, citing her age and security reasons. Fernández was the victim of an attempted assassination three years ago.

In the ruling, obtained by The Associated Press, the court said Fernández "must remain at the registered address, an obligation that she may not break except in exceptional situations."

The court also ordered Fernández be placed under the watch of an electronic surveillance device to monitor her movements.

Last week, Argentina's highest court upheld Fernández's sentence in a ruling that permanently banned her from public office over the corruption conviction that found she had directed state contracts to a friend while she was the first lady and president.

The ruling against Fernández, Argentina's charismatic yet deeply divisive ex-leader, sent her supporters pouring into the streets of Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital, and blocking major highways in protest.

The ruling barred Fernández from running in this fall's Buenos Aires legislative election just days after she launched her campaign.

On Tuesday, the court dismissed prosecutors' request that Fernández serve time behind bars. Judges said that the physical integrity of the political leader "would become complex in a situation of prison confinement in coexistence with any type of prison population."

Seeking to serve the sentence at home, the former president had argued that she is more than 70 years old — an extenuating circumstance taken into account by the justice system to grant the privilege.

Fernández dominated Argentine politics for two decades and forged the country's main left-wing populist movement known as Kirchnerism — after her and her husband, former President Néstor Kirchner. She rejects the charges as politically motivated.

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During Fernández's eight years in office from 2007–2015, Argentina expanded cash payments to the poor and pioneered major social assistance programs. Her governments funded unbridled state spending by printing money, bringing Argentina notoriety for major budget deficits and sky-high inflation.

Critics blamed Argentina's years of economic volatility on Fernández's policies, and outrage over successive economic crises and the country's bloated bureaucracy helped vault radical libertarian President Javier Milei to the presidency in late 2023.

Fernández was embroiled in multiple corruption scandals during her tenure. She was convicted in 2022 of corruption in a case that centered on 51 public contracts for public works awarded to companies linked to Lázaro Báez, a convicted construction magnate and friend of the presidential couple, at prices 20% above the standard rate in a project that cost the state tens of millions of dollars.

Fernández has questioned the impartiality of the judges. She claimed that her defense didn't have access to much of the evidence and that it was gathered without regard to legal deadlines.

Fernández faces a series of other upcoming trials on corruption charges.

At least 51 Palestinians killed while waiting for aid trucks in Gaza, health officials say

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH, SAMY MAGDY and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — At least 51 Palestinians were killed and more than 200 wounded in the Gaza Strip while waiting for U.N. and commercial trucks to enter the territory with desperately needed food, according to Gaza's Health Ministry and a local hospital.

Palestinian witnesses told The Associated Press that Israeli forces carried out an airstrike on a nearby home before opening fire toward the crowd in the southern city of Khan Younis.

The Israeli military said soldiers had spotted a gathering near an aid truck that was stuck in Khan Younis, near where Israeli forces were operating. It acknowledged "several casualties" as Israelis opened fire on the approaching crowd and said authorities would investigate what happened.

The shooting did not appear to be related to a new Israeli- and U.S.-supported aid delivery network that rolled out last month and has been marred by controversy and violence.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs, or OCHA, said the people killed were waiting for food rations arriving in U.N. convoys.

Also on Tuesday, the main Palestinian telecoms regulatory agency based in the West Bank city of Ramallah reported that Israeli strikes had cut off fixed-line phone service and internet access in central and southern Gaza.

'Aren't we human beings?'

Yousef Nofal, an eyewitness, said he saw many people motionless and bleeding on the ground after Israeli forces opened fire. "It was a massacre," he said, adding that the soldiers continued firing on people as they fled from the area.

Mohammed Abu Qeshfa reported hearing a loud explosion followed by heavy gunfire and tank shelling. "I survived by a miracle," he said.

The dead and wounded were taken to the city's Nasser Hospital, which confirmed 51 people had been killed. Later Tuesday, medical charity MSF raised the death toll to 59, saying that another 200 had been wounded while trying to receive flour rations in Khan Younis.

Samaher Meqdad was at the hospital looking for her two brothers and a nephew who had been in the crowd.

"We don't want flour. We don't want food. We don't want anything," she said. "Why did they fire at the young people? Why? Aren't we human beings?"

Palestinians say Israeli forces have repeatedly opened fire on crowds trying to reach food distribution points run by a separate U.S. and Israeli-backed aid group since the centers opened last month. Local health officials say scores have been killed and hundreds wounded.

In those instances, the Israeli military has acknowledged firing warning shots at people it said had ap-

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proached its forces in a suspicious manner.

Deadly Israeli airstrikes continued elsewhere in the enclave on Tuesday. Al-Awda Hospital, a major medical center in northern Gaza, reported that it has received the bodies of eight Palestinians killed in an Israeli strike on a house in the central Bureij refugee camp.

Desperation grows as rival aid systems can't meet needs

Israel says the new system operated by a private contractor, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, is designed to prevent Hamas from siphoning off aid to fund its militant activities.

U.N. agencies and major aid groups deny there is any major diversion of aid and have rejected the new system, saying it can't meet the mounting needs in Gaza and that it violates humanitarian principles by allowing Israel to control who has access to aid.

Experts have warned of famine in the territory that is home to some 2 million Palestinians.

The U.N.-run network has delivered aid across Gaza throughout the 20-month Israel-Hamas war, but has faced major obstacles since Israel loosened a total blockade it had imposed from early March until mid-May.

U.N. officials say Israeli military restrictions, a breakdown of law and order, and widespread looting make it difficult to deliver the aid that Israel has allowed in.

Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for OCHA, said on Tuesday that the aid Israeli authorities have allowed into Gaza since late May has been "woefully insufficient."

Fuel has not entered Gaza for over 100 days, she said. "The only way to address it is by sufficient volumes and over sustained periods of time. A trickle of aid here, a trickle of aid there is not going to make a difference."

Israel's military campaign since October 2023 has killed over 55,300 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Its count doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Israel launched its campaign aiming to destroy Hamas after the group's Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, in which militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking another 251 hostage.

The militants still hold 53 hostages, fewer than half of them alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Iran asks its people to delete WhatsApp from their devices

By KELVIN CHAN and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

Iranian state television on Tuesday afternoon urged people to remove WhatsApp from their smartphones, alleging without specific evidence that the messaging app gathered user information to send to Israel.

In a statement, WhatsApp said it was "concerned these false reports will be an excuse for our services to be blocked at a time when people need them the most." WhatsApp uses end-to-end encryption, meaning a service provider in the middle can't read a message.

"We do not track your precise location, we don't keep logs of who everyone is messaging and we do not track the personal messages people are sending one another," it added. "We do not provide bulk information to any government."

End-to-end encryption means that messages are scrambled so that only the sender and recipient can see them. If anyone else intercepts the message, all they will see is a garble that can't be unscrambled without the key.

Gregory Falco, an assistant professor of engineering at Cornell University and cybersecurity expert, said it's been demonstrated that it's possible to understand metadata about WhatsApp that does not get encrypted.

"So you can understand things about how people are using the app and that's been a consistent issue where people have not been interested in engaging with WhatsApp for that (reason)," he said.

Another issue is data sovereignty, Falco added, where data centers hosting WhatsApp data from a certain country are not necessarily located in that country. It's more than feasible, for instance, that WhatsApp's data from Iran is not hosted in Iran.

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"Countries need to house their data in-country and process the data in-country with their own algorithms. Because it's really hard increasingly to trust the global network of data infrastructure," he said.

WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram.

Iran has blocked access to various social media platforms over the years but many people in the country use proxies and virtual private networks, or VPNs, to access them. It banned WhatsApp and Google Play in 2022 during mass protests against the government over the death of a woman held by the country's morality police. That ban was lifted late last year.

WhatsApp had been one of Iran's most popular messaging apps besides Instagram and Telegram.

NYC mayoral candidate Brad Lander arrested at immigration court

By CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City Comptroller and Democratic mayoral candidate Brad Lander was arrested by federal agents at an immigration court Tuesday after he linked arms with a person authorities were attempting to detain.

A reporter with The Associated Press and other journalists witnessed Lander's arrest at a federal building in Manhattan, the latest confrontation between U.S. agents and a Democratic politician objecting to the Trump administration's mass detention and deportation programs.

Lander was released from custody after a few hours. The U.S. attorney's office said it was investigating his actions and would decide later whether to charge him with a crime. The immigrant Lander escorted out of the courtroom was also arrested.

Lander had spent the morning observing immigration court hearings and told an AP reporter he was there to "accompany" some immigrants out of the building.

His confrontation with agents unfolded quickly. As a group of agents moved in to detain a man who had exited a courtroom, Lander locked arms with the immigrant and demanded to see a judicial warrant. For more than 40 seconds, agents tried to physically separate the two, pulling both men down the hall in a chaotic scrum as photographers snapped photos.

Eventually, the agents wrested the two apart, then grabbed Lander's arms and put them behind his back.

"You're obstructing," an agent told Lander.

"I'm not obstructing. I'm standing right here in the hallway," Lander said as he was being handcuffed.

In a statement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said Lander "was arrested for assaulting law enforcement and impeding a federal officer."

After his release, Lander exited the building holding hands with his wife and accompanied by New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, to the cheers of a gathered crowd. He told reporters all he was trying to do was hold the arm of the man being detained and "certainly did not" assault an officer.

"I am happy to report that I am just fine. I lost a button," Lander said, adding that he planned to return to the immigration court again as a form of nonviolent way of standing up to Trump's immigration policies.

"I believe it is important to show up and bear witness and accompany people," he said.

He added that the man "ripped" from his arms "doesn't have a lawyer" and will likely sleep in an immigration detention center.

The episode occurred as federal immigration officials are conducting large-scale arrests outside immigration courtrooms across the country. In many cases, immigrants are arrested after a judge grants a government request to dismiss their case, making them eligible for expedited removal.

"They remove any opportunity for due process," Lander had told reporters earlier in the day.

Lander's arrest comes a little more than a month after Newark, New Jersey, Mayor Ras Baraka was arrested on a trespassing charge outside a federal immigration detention center in his city, though the charge was later dropped. Baraka's fellow Democrat, Rep. LaMonica McIver, was charged with assaulting and impeding federal agents stemming from her role at the same visit as the mayor. She's denied the charges.

Last week, Democratic U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla was forcibly removed from a news conference in Los Angeles for Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem as he tried to speak about immigration raids. On Tuesday,

he encouraged more Americans to speak out.

Lander is a candidate in the city's Democratic mayoral primary. Early voting in the contest is underway and the election is next week. Other candidates in the race quickly weighed in to criticize the arrest.

"This is the latest example of the extreme thuggery of Trump's ICE out of control — one can only imagine the fear families across our country feel when confronted with ICE," said former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who is running in the primary.

Zohran Mamdani, the most left-leaning candidate, rushed to the federal building to offer support to Lander, as did Hochul, who condemned the arrest in a post on X by likening it to excrement.

A spokesperson for U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton said in a brief statement that the office would prosecute any violation of federal law.

"The safety and security of official proceedings, government officials, law enforcement officers, and all members of the public who participate in them is a core focus of our Office," said the spokesperson, Nicholas Biase.

Trump will sign an order extending deadline for TikTok's Chinese owner to sell app

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will sign an executive order this week to extend a deadline for TikTok's Chinese owner to divest the popular video sharing app, the White House announced Tuesday.

Trump had signed an order in early April to keep TikTok running for an additional 75 days after a potential deal to sell the app to American owners was put on ice.

"As he has said many times, President Trump does not want TikTok to go dark," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. "This extension will last 90 days, which the Administration will spend working to ensure this deal is closed so that the American people can continue to use TikTok with the assurance that their data is safe and secure."

Trump had told reporters aboard Air Force One as he flew back to Washington early Tuesday from the Group of Seven summit in Canada that he "probably" would extend the deadline again.

Trump also said he thinks Chinese President Xi Jinping will "ultimately approve" a deal to divest TikTok's business in the United States.

It will be the third time Trump has extended the deadline.

The first one was through an executive order on Jan. 20, his first day in office, after the platform went dark briefly when the ban approved by Congress — and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court — took effect.

The second was in April, when White House officials believed they were nearing a deal to spin off TikTok into a new company with U.S. ownership that fell apart after China backed out following Trump's tariff announcement.

It is not clear how many times Trump can — or will — keep extending the ban as the government continues to try to negotiate a deal for TikTok, which is owned by China's ByteDance. Trump has amassed more than 15 million followers on TikTok since he joined last year, and he has credited the trendsetting platform with helping him gain traction among young voters. He said in January that he has a "warm spot for TikTok."

Jury finds leading proponent of 'The Big Lie' defamed former voting equipment employee

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A jury found Monday that MyPillow founder Mike Lindell defamed a former employee of a prominent voting equipment company by calling him a traitor, telling Lindell and his online media platform to pay \$2.3 million in damages. The decision came after a two-week trial involving one of the biggest proponents of the myth that the 2020 election was stolen, a lie that still dominates national politics.

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Other such cases have ended in settlements before they could go before a jury.

What happened?

The jury found that Lindell made two defamatory statements about Eric Coomer, the former product strategy and security director for Denver-based Dominion Voting Systems. On May 9, 2021, Lindell attacked voting machine companies and then said Coomer was a traitor.

That statement came a day after Newsmax apologized to Coomer for airing false allegations against him. Lindell testified that he was upset because he thought Coomer had made a deal to prevent him from appearing on Newsmax to talk about voting machines. However, ahead of the trial, lawyers for both sides agreed that the settlement agreement between Coomer and Newsmax did not mention Lindell.

The other statement came on April 6, 2022, a day after Lindell was served with Coomer's lawsuit as he was about to appear at an event at the Colorado state Capitol. Lindell accused Coomer of being "part of the biggest crime this world has ever seen."

The jury also found Lindell's online media platform, Frankspeech, had defamed Coomer because of comments made by someone appearing at an election fraud symposium streamed on Frankspeech in 2021.

The jury cleared Lindell of defaming Coomer eight other times for statements made by both himself and others who appeared on Frankspeech.

What has been the reaction?

In an appearance on his new online media platform, Lindell TV, on a show hosted by former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani right after the verdict, Lindell stressed that MyPillow, which promoted the 2021 symposium, was not found liable for any of the defamatory statements. Later Lindell told reporters that he would continue to speak out about voting machines.

On Tuesday, Lindell's legal defense told supporters in an email that he had stood up for the First Amendment — echoing his defense team's approach — and was "largely victorious" in the case.

"Mike Lindell stood alone — refusing to pay hush money and refusing to apologize for voicing concerns shared by millions of Americans," it said.

One of Coomer's attorneys, David Beller, said Lindell hurt not only Coomer but the democratic process. He thinks the jury's decision will help repair that damage.

"This verdict allows the county to heal, though undoubtedly with scars money cannot hide," he said.

What is defamation?

Defamatory statements are comments that harm someone's reputation. Because Lindell's statements involved a matter of public concern — elections — jurors had to find that Lindell knew they were false or didn't bother to check out whether they were true or not. A 1964 ruling known as *New York Times v. Sullivan* and related cases set that higher legal bar for things said about public figures or matters.

Truth is a defense against defamation. Lindell could have offered proof of his claims in order to defend himself at the trial but didn't.

"We met the highest constitutional standard under the First Amendment and that occurred in large part because Mr. Lindell claimed he had evidence of voter fraud by Dr. Coomer when he had none," said Charles Cain, another lawyer who represented Coomer.

Other cases and an apology

Coomer has another lawsuit pending in Colorado involving a podcaster who said he had heard Coomer promise to rig the 2020 election in an alleged antifa conference call, an account that was also later shared at Lindell's symposium. He also is suing former Overstock CEO Patrick Byrne in Florida.

Salem Media Group, a Christian and conservative media company whose hosts had interviewed the podcaster about his account, said in statement on its website that it apologizes for the harm caused to Coomer and his family and that all statements about the allegations have been removed from its website. The company did not immediately respond to questions about when the apology was posted and why.

'The Big Lie' has taken hold of a chunk of the country

Lindell has become one of the most enthusiastic proponents of what has been dubbed "The Big Lie"—the idea that fraud cost Trump the 2020 election.

The reason this has taken hold of a significant chunk of the country, despite being repeatedly disproved,

is that its main proponent is the president himself. Trump has continued to insist that a murky conspiracy deprived him of a victory in 2020, even after he won an election with the same procedures this past November.

There is no evidence of anything amiss with the 2020 election. Trump's then- attorney general said there was no indication of wide-scale fraud. That is the same conclusion of numerous recounts, audits and investigations — including multiple ones run by Republicans. Trump and his allies lost more than 50 court cases trying to overturn the election.

Still, Trump famously never likes to admit he lost even when he did. In 2016, Trump claimed that fraud was why he lost the Iowa caucuses. Despite winning the 2016 presidential election in the Electoral College, Trump claimed fraud cost him the popular vote in that election.

And he has embraced those who helped spread his lies about 2020 — Trump pardoned more than 1,000 people convicted of their role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol to keep Trump in office. He has met with Lindell in the Oval Office.

Threats to lawmakers are on the rise, security officials tell senators after Minnesota shootings

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Threats to members of Congress are on the rise, security officials told senators on Tuesday at an emergency briefing in the wake of the killing of a Minnesota state lawmaker in her home over the weekend.

U.S. Capitol Police leaders and Senate security officials said that threats against elected officials, including federal lawmakers, have "dramatically increased," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said after the briefing, "and that means we need more protection."

The suspect in the Minnesota attack had dozens of Democratic members of Congress listed in his writings, in addition to the state lawmakers and others he's accused of targeting. The man is accused of shooting and killing former Democratic House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, in their home early Saturday in the northern Minneapolis suburbs and wounding another lawmaker and his wife at their home.

The shooting renewed fears — and stoked existing partisan tensions — over the security of federal lawmakers when they are in Washington and especially when they are at home. Credible threats to members of Congress have more than doubled in the last decade.

Still, it is unclear what more can be done amid yearslong disagreements over how much money should be spent to protect lawmakers. GOP Texas Sen. John Cornyn said after the briefing that they were told that threats against public officials are going up, but "it's always a resource issue, and it's trying to make sure that it's proportional to the threat and not an overreaction."

The U.S. Capitol Police's threat assessment section investigated 9,474 "concerning statements and direct threats" against members of Congress last year, the highest number since 2021, the year that the Capitol was attacked by Trump's supporters after he tried to overturn his 2020 presidential election defeat to Democrat Joe Biden. Those numbers ticked down in 2022, but have risen again in the last two years, according to an annual threat assessment the department released earlier this year.

In 2017, there were 3,939 investigated threats, the Capitol Police said.

The numbers are a troubling tally of an era that has been marked by a string of violent attacks against lawmakers and their families.

In 2011, Democratic Rep. Gabby Giffords was shot and wounded at an event in her Arizona district. In 2017, GOP Rep. Steve Scalise and three others were shot and wounded as they practiced for a congressional baseball game with other GOP lawmakers near Washington. In 2022, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, Paul, was attacked by a man who broke into their San Francisco home. And in 2024, two men separately tried to assassinate Donald Trump during his Republican presidential campaign.

All four survived, some with serious injuries. But those attacks, among others and many close calls for members of both major political parties, have rattled lawmakers and raised recurring questions about

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whether they have enough security — and whether they can ever be truly safe in their jobs.

"I just see so clearly that this current state of play is not sustainable," said Minnesota Democratic Sen. Tina Smith, a friend of Hortman's who paid tribute to her on the Senate floor Tuesday along with the state's other Democratic senator, Amy Klobuchar.

Smith, who received increased security after the shootings, said after the briefing that it was "productive," and Capitol Police are "doing what they can do."

Connecticut Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy said Monday that lawmakers are "clearly at the point where we have to adjust the options available to us."

As threats have increased, members of Congress have had access to new funding to add security at their personal homes. But it is unclear how many have used it and whether there is enough money to keep lawmakers truly safe.

"Resources should not be the reason that a U.S. senator or congressman gets killed," Murphy said.

In the House, Democrats had their own security briefing on Tuesday, held virtually because the House is on recess. Lawmakers on the call shared their concerns and personal stories with Capitol Police and other security officials who reviewed the resources available to them, according to a person familiar with the briefing who requested anonymity because of its sensitive nature. The House is expected to have an in person briefing for all members when they return to Washington next week, the person said.

Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and New York Rep. Joe Morelle, top Democrat on the House Administration Committee, wrote Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., on Monday demanding better protections for members.

"The responsibility starts with you," Jeffries and Morelle wrote to Johnson.

Instead of bringing lawmakers together, the Minnesota shootings have created some new internal tensions.

In the Senate, Smith confronted one of her fellow senators, Utah Republican Mike Lee, for a series of posts on X over the weekend. One mocked Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat who ran for vice president last year. Another post said of the killings, "This is what happens when Marxists don't get their way."

Friends and former colleagues interviewed by The Associated Press described Vance Luther Boelter, the man accused of killing Hortman and her husband, as a devout Christian who attended an evangelical church and went to campaign rallies for Trump. Records show Boelter registered to vote as a Republican while living in Oklahoma in 2004 before moving to Minnesota, where voters don't list party affiliation. His attorney has declined to comment.

Smith talked to Lee outside a GOP conference meeting as soon as she arrived in Washington on Monday. "I would say he seemed surprised to be confronted," she told reporters afterward.

Lee later took down some of his posts. His office declined to comment, but Lee said in a brief hallway interview on Tuesday that he had a "quick conversation" with Minnesota's other Democratic senator, Amy Klobuchar.

Separately, Trump said he had no plans to call Walz, describing the Democratic leader as "so whacked out."

"The guy doesn't have a clue. He's a mess," Trump said. "So, you know, I could be nice and call him, but why waste time?"

Lawmakers were already on edge before the shootings, which came less than two days after Democratic Sen. Alex Padilla was forcibly removed from a press conference with Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem in California. Officers restrained Padilla and put him on the ground, infuriating Senate Democrats who said it was part of a gradual assault on democracy by the Trump administration.

After the briefing on Tuesday, some senators said they are even more concerned about the threat of violence against them.

"I think it's safe to say that members realize there's a lot more going on than they knew," said U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash. "We can't just let it go unanswered."

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said senators needed to be protected more thoroughly without interfering in their work.

"There needs to be more resources and investigations of these threats in real time. And right now, very often, they are discounted as a prank or a joke," Blumenthal said. "Political violence is spreading like a virus and it needs to be countered more effectively."

Some senators appeared less concerned.

"You've got to press on," said GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. He said he's open to security upgrades, "but you've just got to focus on doing your job."

Sean 'Diddy' Combs is unlikely to testify as judge says jury could get case next week

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The possibility that music mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs might testify at his federal sex trafficking trial all but vanished Tuesday after his lawyer predicted a defense presentation lasting as little as two days and the judge said jurors could be deliberating next week.

Attorney Marc Agnifilo told Judge Arun Subramanian that the defense presentation could last less than two days and not more than five, an estimate that would likely not apply if Combs testified. Testimony by two of his former girlfriends consumed two of the trial's six weeks.

Combs, 55, has pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy charges. He has been jailed at a federal lockup in Brooklyn since his September arrest at a Manhattan hotel.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Maurene Comey said prosecutors expected to rest Friday.

Earlier in the trial, Combs' ex-girlfriends Casandra "Cassie" Ventura and a woman who testified under the pseudonym "Jane" told jurors that Combs used threats and monetary incentives to coerce them into frequent multi-day sex marathons where Combs watched, directed and sometimes filmed them engaging with male sex workers. Both women said they just wanted to be with Combs.

On Tuesday, the jury was shown nearly 20 minutes of explicit video recordings of those "freak-off" encounters from 2012 and 2014 as a defense lawyer cross examined a law enforcement agent about the tapes. Ventura's relationship with Combs lasted from 2007 to 2018 while Jane dated him from 2021 until his arrest last fall.

As the recordings were played, one juror seemed to turn away from his video screen for most of the time although he kept on earphones carrying the sound to jurors. Spectators were blocked from seeing or hearing the graphic evidence. Other jurors sat back in their seats as the recordings played on the screens in front of them.

A day earlier, prosecutors had shown jurors about two minutes of snippets of the recordings.

In her opening statement on May 12, defense lawyer Teny Geragos called the videos "powerful evidence that the sexual conduct in this case was consensual and not based on coercion."

"Some of you may find them hard to watch. Not because they are violent, not because they are non-consensual, but because they were never meant to be seen by people outside of that room. They are in one word — intimate. And they were always meant to remain that way," she said.

She added: "These videos will feel invasive, but the government has charged him with sex trafficking, and the evidence of the alleged sex trafficking is on these videos. This is why you will have to see them."

In her opening statement, Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Johnson said Combs "used lies, drugs, threats, and violence to force and coerce, first, Cassie, and later Jane, to have sex with him in front of male escorts. The defendant insisted that the sex occur in a very specific, highly orchestrated way."

Earlier Tuesday, the irate judge scolded prosecutors and defense lawyers, saying information about a closed court proceeding involving a juror last Friday had leaked to a media outlet because "one or more people in this courtroom clearly violated the court's order."

In the future, Subramanian said, he would hold Comey and Agnifilo responsible for any slipups, and any violations of his orders could result in criminal contempt penalties "at the most extreme level."

"This is the only warning I will give," he said.

Stocks slump and oil prices jump as Trump urges Iran's unconditional surrender

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks slumped on Tuesday under the weight of another jump for the price of oil. It was a return to form for financial markets after Wall Street's worries about Israel's fighting with Iran had seemed to calm a bit on Monday.

The S&P 500 fell 0.8% following signals that the Israel-Iran conflict may be worsening and that one of the U.S. economy's main engines is weakening. The swing sent Wall Street's main measure of health nearly back to where it started the week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 299 points, or 0.7%, and the Nasdaq composite fell 0.9%.

Stocks sank under increasing pressure from crude oil prices, which climbed in their latest see-saw move. A barrel of benchmark U.S. crude jumped 4.3% to \$74.84. Brent crude, the international standard, added 4.4% to \$76.45 per barrel.

Their gains accelerated after President Donald Trump raised the temperature on Israel's fight with Iran by calling for "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER!" on his social media platform and saying, "We are not going to" kill Iran's leader, "at least for now."

Before that, Trump had left a Group of Seven summit early and warned that people in Iran's capital should evacuate immediately. It took only about eight hours for Trump to go from suggesting a nuclear deal with Iran remained "achievable" to urging Tehran's 9.5 million residents to flee for their lives.

The fighting has the potential to drive up prices for crude oil and gasoline because Iran is a major producer of oil, and it sits on the narrow Strait of Hormuz, through which much of the world's crude passes. Past conflicts in the area have caused spikes in oil prices, though they've historically proven to be only temporary after showing that they did not disrupt the flow of oil.

Often, higher oil prices can help stocks of companies in the solar industry because they increase the incentive to switch to alternative energy sources. But solar stocks tumbled Tuesday because of the possibility that Congress may phase out tax credits for solar, wind and other energy sources that produce fewer emissions that change the Earth's climate.

Enphase Energy dropped 24%, and First Solar fell 17.9%.

Treasury yields also fell in the bond market after a report said shoppers spent less last month at U.S. retailers than the month before and than economists expected. Solid such spending has been one of the linchpins keeping the economy out of a recession, but part of May's drop may have simply been a return to more normal trends.

In April, some shoppers had rushed to buy automobiles to get ahead of Trump's tariffs.

"Today's data suggests consumers are downshifting, but they haven't yet slammed the brakes," according to Ellen Zentner, chief economic strategist for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management

On the winning side of Wall Street was Jabil, which jumped 8.9% after reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. CEO Mike Dastoor credited strength from accelerated demand related to artificial-intelligence technology, among other things.

Verve Therapeutics soared 81.5% after Eli Lilly said it would buy the company developing genetic medicines for cardiovascular disease in a \$1 billion deal that could be worth up to \$1.3 billion if certain conditions are met. Lilly's stock fell 2%.

All told, the S&P 500 lost 50.39 points to 5,982.72. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 299.29 to 42,215.80, and the Nasdaq composite sank 180.12 to 19,521.09.

All the action took place as the Federal Reserve began a two-day meeting on interest rates. The nearly unanimous expectation among traders and economists is that the Fed will make no move.

The Fed has been hesitant to lower interest rates, and it's been on hold this year after cutting at the end of last year, because it's waiting to see how much Trump's tariffs will hurt the economy and raise inflation. Inflation has remained relatively tame recently, and it's near the Fed's target of 2%.

More important for financial markets on Wednesday will likely be the latest set of forecasts that Fed of-

ficials will publish for where they see the economy and interest rates heading in upcoming years.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.38% from 4.46% late Monday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell across much of Europe after finishing mixed in Asia.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index rose 0.6% after the Bank of Japan opted to keep its key interest rate unchanged. It's been gradually raising its rate from near zero and cutting back on its purchases of Japanese government bonds to help counter inflation.

Alex Jones accused of trying to shield assets as Sandy Hook families seek payment on \$1B judgment

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

The trustee overseeing Infowars host Alex Jones' personal bankruptcy case is accusing the far-right conspiracy theorist of trying to shield more than \$5 million from creditors, including relatives of victims of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut.

Three new lawsuits filed by the trustee on Friday alleging fraudulent asset transfers are the latest developments in Jones' long-running bankruptcy case, which has been pending in federal court in Houston for more than two years. In financial statements filed in bankruptcy court last year, Jones listed his net worth at \$8.4 million.

The Sandy Hook families won nearly \$1.5 billion in judgments in 2022 in lawsuits filed in Connecticut and Texas accusing Jones of defamation and emotional distress for saying the school shooting that killed 20 first graders and six educators was a hoax. Victims' relatives testified in court about being terrorized by Jones' supporters.

Attempts to liquidate Jones' Infowars broadcasting and product-selling platforms and give the proceeds to the families and other creditors have been hindered by a failed auction and legal wrangling. Jones, meanwhile, continues to appeal the Sandy Hook judgments.

Here's what to know about the status of Jones' bankruptcy case:

Trustee sues Jones alleging improper money and property transfers

The trustee, Christopher Murray, alleges that Jones tried to shield the money through a complex series of money and property transfers among family members, various trusts and limited liability companies. Other named defendants include Jones' wife, Erika; his father, David Jones; and companies and trusts.

Murray alleges that a trust run by Jones and his father fraudulently transferred nearly \$1.5 million to various other Jones-associated entities in the months leading up to the bankruptcy. Jones is also accused of fraudulently transferring \$1.5 million to his wife, more than \$800,000 in cash and property to his father and trying to hide ownership of two condominiums in Austin, Texas, with a combined value of more than \$1.5 million.

Murray is trying to recoup that money and property for creditors.

Jones' bankruptcy lawyers did not return email messages seeking comment.

In an email to The Associated Press, Erika Wulff Jones called the lawsuits "pure harassment." She said he had already sat for a deposition and turned over all of her bank statements as part of her husband's bankruptcy case.

A lawyer for David Jones did not immediately return an email seeking comment.

Jones railed against the new allegations on his show on Saturday. He has repeatedly said Democratic activists and the U.S. Justice Department are behind the Sandy Hook defamation lawsuits and bankruptcy proceedings, and claimed they were now "trying to get" to him by suing his father, who he says is seriously ill.

The fraud allegations are similar to those in a lawsuit in a Texas state court filed by Sandy Hook families. Jones also denied those claims. That lawsuit was put on hold because of the bankruptcy.

Sandy Hook families still haven't received money from Jones

Jones says the fact that the Sandy Hook families haven't received any money from him yet should be expected because he is appealing the \$1.5 billion in judgments.

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Infowars' assets continue to be tied up in the legal processes. Those assets, and some of Jones' personal assets, are being held by Murray for eventual distribution to creditors.

An effort to sell Infowars' assets was derailed when U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Christopher Lopez rejected the results of a November auction in which The Onion satirical news outlet was named the winning bidder over only one other proposal by a company affiliated with Jones. The Onion had planned to turn the Infowars platforms into parody sites.

Lopez had several concerns about the auction, including a lack of transparency and murky details about the actual value of The Onion's bid and whether it was better than the other offer. The judge rejected holding another auction and said the families could pursue the liquidation of Jones' assets in the state courts where the defamation judgments were awarded.

In a financial statement last year, Infowars' parent company, Free Speech Systems, listed \$18 million in assets, including merchandise and studio equipment.

What's next

Lawyers for the Sandy Hook families said they will soon move their effort to sell Infowars' assets to a Texas state court in Austin, where they expect a receiver to be appointed to take possession of the platform's possessions and sell them to provide money to creditors. A court schedule has not been set.

"The families we represent are as determined as ever to enforce the jury's verdict, and he will never out-run it," Christopher Mattei, a lawyer for the Sandy Hook families in the Connecticut lawsuit, said Tuesday.

Jones' appeals, meanwhile, continue in the courts. He said he plans to appeal the Connecticut lawsuit judgment to the U.S. Supreme Court, after the Connecticut Supreme Court declined to hear his challenge. A lower state appeals court upheld all but \$150 million of the original \$1.4 billion judgment. The \$49 million judgment in the Texas lawsuit is before a state appeals court.

He said in 2022 that he believes the shootings were "100% real."

Because Infowars' assets are still tied up in the courts, Jones has been allowed to continue broadcasting his shows and hawking merchandise from Infowars' Austin studio.

Americans turn cautious and retail sales slide after a spring rush to beat tariffs

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Retail sales fell sharply in May as consumers pulled back from a spending surge early this year to get ahead of President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs on nearly all imports.

Sales at retail stores and restaurants dropped 0.9% in May, the Commerce Department said Tuesday, after a decline of 0.1% in April. Sales jumped 1.5% in March. The figure was pulled down by a steep drop in auto sales, after Americans ramped up their car-buying in March to get ahead of Trump's 25% duty on imported cars and car parts. Excluding autos, sales fell 0.3% in May.

The sales drop is hitting after sharp declines in consumer confidence this year. Still, inflation has cooled steadily and unemployment remains low, which could fuel steady spending in the coming months, as the economy has remained mostly solid.

A category of sales that excludes volatile sectors such as gas, cars, and restaurants rose last month by 0.4%, a sign that consumers are still spending on some discretionary items.

Overall, the report suggests consumers have pulled back a bit but not dramatically so. The retail sales report covers about one-third of consumer spending, with the other two-thirds consisting of spending on services. Economists expect overall consumer spending to grow in the April-June quarter.

"Today's data suggests consumers are downshifting, but they haven't yet slammed the brakes," Ellen Zentner, chief economic strategist for Morgan Stanley wealth management, said in an email. "Like the economy as a whole, consumer spending has been resilient in the face of tariff uncertainty."

Yet many categories saw sharp declines. Car sales plunged 3.5%, while sales at home and garden centers dropped 2.7%. They fell 0.6% at electronics and appliance stores and 0.7% at grocery stores. There were some bright spots: Sales rose 0.9% at online retailers, 0.8% at clothing stores, and 1.2% at

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furniture stores.

Gas station sales dropped sharply, by 2%, but that mostly reflects lower prices. The retail sales report isn't adjusted for inflation.

Sales at restaurants and bars, a closely watched indicator of discretionary spending, fell 0.9% in May, though that followed a solid gain of 0.8% in April.

Some consumer products companies say they are seeing the impact of tariffs on their own costs and sales.

Paul Cosaro, CEO of Picnic Time, Inc., which makes picnic accessories like baskets, coolers, and folding chairs, said that orders from retailers are down as much as 40% this summer compared with a year ago. His company sells to a variety of stores like Target and Williams-Sonoma.

Cosaro noted that some stores have been cautious because they're not sure how shoppers will react to higher prices. Some canceled orders because Cosaro couldn't tell them how much the new prices would be due to all the uncertainty. Roughly 80% of the company's goods are made in China, with the rest in India and Vietnam.

The company, founded roughly 40 years ago and based in Moorpark, California, was forced to raise prices on average from 11% to 14% for this summer selling season, Cosaro said.

A folding outdoor chair now costs \$137 this month, up from \$120 in late 2024, he added. The company's sales are still down this year, even though some shoppers accelerated their purchases out of concern that prices would rise.

"Shoppers are very price sensitive," Cosaro said.

The company has implemented a hiring freeze because of all the extra tariff costs, he added. So far this year the company, which employs from 70 to 100 people, has had to pay \$1 million in tariffs. A year ago at this time, the bill was a third of that amount.

Liza Gresko, a 42-year-old mother of three in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, said she has watched as prices for basics like toothpaste or shampoo begin to rise again, and has started to buy groceries in bulk to save money, as well as switching to generic brands.

"If I make these small changes, then we are sacrificing for the long term goal of saving more," Gresko said.

She has also begun shopping at thrift stores for children's clothes, rather than Macy's or H&M.

"Even with store sales and discounts, the rising costs make it unsustainable to continually purchase new clothing," she said.

The retail sales report comes as other evidence indicates shoppers have been pulling back more amid worries about higher prices from Trump's tariffs.

Naveen Jaggi, president of retail advisory services in the Americas for real-estate firm JLL, said that he's hearing from malls that sales are slowing down heading into the official summer months. Retailers are pushing up back-to-school promotions to this month from July, he said. They want to get shoppers in early for fear consumers may not want to spend in the later months when prices will likely go up, he said.

So far, Trump's tariffs haven't yet boosted inflation. Consumer prices rose just 2.4% in May compared with a year ago, the government said last week.

Many stores and brands, including Walmart, Lululemon, and J.M. Smucker Co., have said they plan to or have raised prices in response to tariffs.

Deckers Outdoor, which is behind such shoe labels as Hoka and Uggs, said late last month that it plans price increases, which will likely hurt sales.

"We expect to absorb a portion of the tariff impact," Chief Financial Officer Steven Fasching told analysts. "We also believe there is potential to see demand erosion associated with the combination of price increases and general softness in the consumer spending environment."

Disgraced former Sen. Bob Menendez arrives at prison to begin serving his 11-year bribery sentence

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez arrived at a federal prison on Tuesday to begin serving an 11-year sentence for accepting bribes of gold and cash and acting as an agent of Egypt. The New Jersey Democrat has been mocked for the crimes as “Gold Bar Bob,” according to his own lawyer.

The federal Bureau of Prisons confirmed that Menendez was in custody at the Federal Correctional Institution, Schuylkill in Minersville, Pennsylvania. The facility has a medium-security prison and a minimum-security prison camp. Given the white-collar nature of his crimes, it’s likely he’ll end up in the camp.

The prison is about 118 miles (190 kilometers) west of New York City. It’s home to about 1,200 inmates, including ex-New York City organized crime boss James Coonan and former gas station owner Gurmeet Singh Dhinsa, whom the New York Post dubbed “Gas-Station Gotti” for his ruthless, violent ways.

Menendez, 71, maintains his innocence. Last week, a federal appeals court rejected his last-ditch effort to remain free on bail while he fights to get his bribery conviction overturned. A three-judge panel on the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals denied his bail motion.

Pleading for leniency, Menendez told a judge at his sentencing in January: “I am far from a perfect man. I have made more than my share of mistakes and bad decisions. I’ve done far more good than bad.”

Menendez has also appeared to be angling for a pardon from President Donald Trump, aligning himself with the Republican’s criticisms of the judicial system, particularly in New York City.

“This process is political and it’s corrupted to the core. I hope President Trump cleans up the cesspool and restores the integrity to the system,” Menendez told reporters after his January sentencing.

In posts Tuesday on the social platform X that were later deleted, Menendez criticized prosecutors as politically motivated and opposed to his foreign policy views and praised Trump for “rising above the law fare.”

Menendez resigned last year after he was convicted of selling his clout for bribes. FBI agents found \$480,000 in cash in his home, some of it stuffed inside boots and jacket pockets, along with gold bars worth an estimated \$150,000 and a luxury convertible in the garage.

In exchange, prosecutors said, Menendez performed corrupt favors for New Jersey business owners, including protecting them from criminal investigations, helping in business deals with foreign powers and meeting with Egyptian intelligence officials before helping Egypt access \$300 million in U.S. military aid.

Menendez, who once chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, resigned a month after his conviction. He had been in the Senate since 2006.

Two business owners were also convicted last year along with Menendez.

His wife, Nadine Menendez, was convicted in April of teaming up with her husband to accept bribes from the business owners. Her sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 11.

At his sentencing, Menendez’s lawyers described how the son of Cuban immigrants emerged from poverty to become “the epitome of the American Dream” — rising from mayor of Union City, New Jersey, to decades in Congress — before his conviction “rendered him a national punchline.”

“Despite his decades of service, he is now known more widely as Gold Bar Bob,” defense lawyer Adam Fee told the judge.

Airports close across the Mideast as the Israel-Iran conflict shutter the region’s airspace

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — After Israeli strikes landed near the hotel where he was staying in the Iranian province of Qom, Aimal Hussein desperately wanted to return home. But the 55-year-old Afghan businessman couldn’t find a way, with Iranian airspace completely shut down.

He fled to Tehran after the strike Sunday, but no taxi would take him to the border as the conflict be-

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tween Iran and Israel intensified.

"Flights, markets, everything is closed, and I am living in the basement of a small hotel," Hussein told The Associated Press by cellphone on Monday. "I am trying to get to the border by taxi, but they are hard to find, and no one is taking us."

Israel launched a major attack Friday with strikes in the Iranian capital of Tehran and elsewhere, killing senior military officials, nuclear scientists, and destroying critical infrastructure. Among the targets was a nuclear enrichment facility about 18 miles from Qom. Iran has retaliated with hundreds of drones and missiles.

The dayslong attacks between the two bitter enemies have opened a new chapter in their turbulent recent history. Many in the region fear a wider conflict as they watch waves of attacks across their skies every night.

The conflict has forced most countries in the Middle East to close their airspace. Dozens of airports have stopped all flights or severely reduced operations, leaving tens of thousands of passengers stranded and others unable to flee the conflict or travel home.

Airport closures create 'massive' domino, tens of thousands stranded

"The domino effect here is massive," said retired pilot and aviation safety expert John Cox, who said the disruptions will have a huge price tag.

"You've got thousands of passengers suddenly that are not where they're supposed to be, crews that are not where they are supposed to be, airplanes that are not where they're supposed to be," he said.

Zvika Berg was on an El Al flight to Israel from New York when an unexpected message came from the pilot as they began their descent: "Sorry, we've been rerouted to Larnaca." The 50-year-old Berg saw other Israel-bound El Al flights from Berlin and elsewhere landing at the airport in Cyprus. Now he's waiting at a Larnaca hotel while speaking to his wife in Jerusalem. "I'm debating what to do," Berg said.

Israel has closed its main international Ben Gurion Airport "until further notice," leaving more than 50,000 Israeli travelers stranded abroad. The jets of the country's three airlines have been moved to Larnaca.

In Israel, Mahla Finkleman was stuck in a Tel Aviv hotel after her Air Canada flight was canceled, trying to reassure her worried family back home while she shelters in the hotel's underground bunker during waves of overnight Iranian attacks.

"We hear the booms. Sometimes there's shaking," she said. "The truth, I think it's even scarier ... to see from TV what happened above our heads while we were underneath in a bomb shelter."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office warned Israelis not to flee the country through any of the three crossings with Jordan and Egypt that are open to the Israeli public. Despite having diplomatic ties with Israel, the statement said those countries are considered a "high risk of threat" to Israeli travelers.

Iran on Friday suspended flights to and from the country's main Khomeini International Airport on the outskirts of Tehran. Israel said Saturday that it bombed Mehrabad Airport in an early attack, a facility in Tehran for Iran's air force and domestic commercial flights.

Many students unable to leave Iran, Iraq and elsewhere

Arsalan Ahmed is one of thousands of Indian university students stuck in Iran, with no way out. The medical student and other students in Tehran are not leaving the hostels where they live, horrified by the attacks with no idea of when they'll find safety.

"It is very scary what we watch on television," Ahmed said. "But scarier are some of the deafening explosions." Universities have helped relocate many students to safer places in Iran, but the Indian government has not yet issued an evacuation plan for them.

Though airspace is still partially open in Lebanon and Jordan, the situation is chaotic at airports, with many passengers stranded locally and abroad with delayed and canceled flights even as the busy summer tourism season begins. Many airlines have reduced flights or stopped them altogether, and authorities have closed airports overnight when attacks are at their most intense. Syria, under new leadership, had just renovated its battered airports and begun restoring diplomatic ties when the conflict began.

Neighboring Iraq's airports have all closed due to its close proximity to Iran. Israel reportedly used Iraqi

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airspace, in part, to launch its strikes on Iran, while Iranian drones and missiles flying the other way have been downed over Iraq. Baghdad has reached a deal with Turkey that would allow Iraqis abroad to travel to Turkey — if they can afford it — and return home overland through their shared border.

Some Iraqis stranded in Iran opted to leave by land. College student Yahia al-Suraifi was studying in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz, where Israel bombed the airport and an oil refinery over the weekend.

Al-Suraifi and dozens of other Iraqi students pooled together their money to pay taxi drivers to drive 200 miles (320 kilometers) overnight to the border with northern Iraq with drones and airstrikes around them.

"It looked like fireworks in the night sky," al-Suraifi said. "I was very scared."

By the time they reached the northern Iraqi city of Irbil, it was another 440 miles (710 kilometers) to get to his hometown of Nasiriyah in southern Iraq.

Back in Tehran, Hussein said the conflict brought back bitter memories of 20 years of war back home in Afghanistan.

"This is the second time I have been trapped in such a difficult war and situation," he said, "once in Kabul and now in Iran."

Baby delivered from brain-dead woman on life support in Georgia

ATLANTA (AP) — The baby of a woman in Georgia who was declared brain dead and has been on life support since February was delivered early Friday morning, her mother said.

April Newkirk told WXIA-TV that 31-year-old Adriana Smith's baby was born prematurely by an emergency cesarean section early Friday, the Atlanta station reported Monday night. She was about six months into her pregnancy. The baby, named Chance, weighs about 1 pound and 13 ounces and is in the neonatal intensive care unit.

"He's expected to be okay," Newkirk told the TV station. "He's just fighting. We just want prayers for him."

Newkirk said her daughter had intense headaches more than four months ago and went to Atlanta's Northside Hospital, where she received medication and was released. The next morning, her boyfriend woke to her gasping for air and called 911. Emory University Hospital determined she had blood clots in her brain and she was declared brain-dead. She was eight weeks pregnant, according to WXIA.

Newkirk said Smith would be taken off of life support Tuesday.

The Associated Press called and emailed Emory Tuesday for comment. It is unclear why Emory decided to deliver the baby. The Associated Press has also tried to contact Newkirk.

Smith's family said Emory doctors told them they were not allowed to remove the devices keeping her breathing because state law bans abortion after cardiac activity can be detected — generally around six weeks into pregnancy.

Georgia Republican Attorney General Chris Carr later issued a statement saying the law did not require medical professionals to keep a woman declared brain dead on life support.

"Removing life support is not an action 'with the purpose to terminate a pregnancy,'" Carr said.

Newkirk said Smith loved being a nurse at Emory. She also has a 7-year-old son. Her family celebrated her 31st birthday Sunday with several advocacy groups. Newkirk did not speak at the event.

"I'm her mother," Newkirk told WXIA. "I shouldn't be burying my daughter. My daughter should be burying me."

Overnight Russian attack on Ukraine kills 15 and injures 156

By SAMYA KULLAB and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — An overnight Russian missile and drone bombardment of Ukraine killed 15 people and injured 156, local officials said Tuesday, with the main barrage demolishing a nine-story Kyiv apartment building in the deadliest attack on the capital this year.

At least 14 people were killed as explosions echoed across the Ukrainian capital for almost nine hours, Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko said, destroying dozens of apartments.

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Russia fired more than 440 drones and 32 missiles, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, calling the Kyiv attack "one of the most terrifying strikes" on the capital.

"Our families had a very difficult night, one of the biggest attacks from the very beginning of this war," he said after arriving at the G7 summit in Canada.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry said 139 people were injured in Kyiv. Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said Wednesday would be an official day of mourning.

The attack came after two rounds of direct peace talks failed to make progress on ending the war, now in its fourth year.

Russia steps up aerial attacks

Russia has repeatedly hit civilian areas of Ukraine with missiles and drones. The attacks have killed more than 12,000 Ukrainian civilians, according to the United Nations. Russia says it strikes only military targets.

Russia has in recent months stepped up its aerial attacks. It launched almost 500 drones at Ukraine on June 10 in the biggest overnight drone bombardment of the war. Russia also pounded Kyiv on April 24, killing 12 people.

The intensified long-range strikes have coincided with a Russian summer offensive on eastern and northeastern sections of the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where Ukraine is short-handed and needs more military support from its Western partners.

Uncertainty about U.S. policy on the war has fueled doubts about how much help Kyiv can count on. Zelenskyy had been set to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump at the G7 summit Tuesday to press him for more help. But Trump returned early to Washington on Monday night because of tensions in the Middle East.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer denied that Trump's refusal to back new sanctions on Russia or provide U.S. security guarantees for Ukraine makes it all but impossible to compel the Kremlin to accept a ceasefire.

The U.K. announced new sanctions Tuesday on Russia's defense industry and its oil-carrying "shadow fleet" of about 500 ships of uncertain ownership that allowed Moscow to dodge sanctions. The announcement coincided with Zelenskyy's arrival as a guest at the G7 summit.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney also announced new sanctions on Russia's shadow fleet and energy revenues, as well as an additional \$2 billion Canadian (\$1.4 billion U.S.) in new funding for Kyiv for drones, ammunition, and armored vehicles. He called the latest attack "barbarism by Russia" that underscores the importance of standing in solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Ukraine tries to keep the world's attention

Zelenskyy is seeking to prevent Ukraine from being sidelined in international diplomacy. Trump said earlier this month it might be better to let Ukraine and Russia "fight for a while" before pulling them apart and pursuing peace, but European leaders have urged him to pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin into accepting a ceasefire.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday it is unclear when another round of talks might take place.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Russia's attacks during the G7 summit showed Putin's "total disrespect" for the U.S. and other countries.

"Russia not only rejects a ceasefire or a leaders' meeting to find solutions and end the war. It cynically strikes Ukraine's capital while pretending to seek diplomatic solutions," Sybiha wrote on social media.

Ukrainian forces have hit back against Russia with their own domestically produced long-range drones.

The Russian military said it downed 203 Ukrainian drones over 10 Russian regions between Monday evening and Tuesday morning.

Russian civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia reported briefly halting flights overnight in and out of all four Moscow airports, as well as those in the cities of Kaluga, Tambov and Nizhny Novgorod as a precaution.

Ukrainian shelling killed a 69-year-old man and a 57-year-old woman Tuesday in the border village of Zvannoye in Russia's Kursk region, Gov. Alexander Khinshtein said.

Overnight Russian drone strikes also struck the southern Ukrainian port city of Odesa, killing one person and injuring 17 others, according to Oleh Kiper, head of the regional administration.

Putin "is doing this simply because he can afford to continue the war. He wants the war to go on. It is

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troubling when the powerful of this world turn a blind eye to it," Zelenskyy said.

Russian attack demolishes apartment building

The Russian attack delivered "direct hits on residential buildings," the Kyiv City Military Administration said in a statement. "Rockets — from the upper floors to the basement," it said.

A U.S. citizen died in the attack after suffering shrapnel wounds, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko told reporters.

Thirty apartments were destroyed in a single residential block after it was struck by a ballistic missile, Klymenko said.

"We have 27 locations that were attacked by the enemy. We currently have over 2,000 people working there, rescuers, police, municipal services and doctors," he told reporters at the scene of one attack.

Olena Lapyshniak, 49, was shaken from the strike that nearly leveled her apartment building. She heard a whistling sound and then two explosions that blew out her windows and doors.

"It's horrible, it's scary, in one moment there is no life," she said. "There's no military infrastructure here, nothing here, nothing. It's horrible when people just die at night."

People were wounded in the city's Sviatoshynskyi and Solomianskyi districts. Fires broke out in two other city districts as a result of falling debris from drones shot down by Ukrainian air defenses, the mayor said.

Moscow escalated attacks after Ukraine's Security Service agency staged an audacious operation targeting warplanes in air bases deep inside Russian territory on June 1.

South Korea ratifies treaty aimed at safeguarding international adoptions

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — After years of delay, South Korea has ratified the Hague Adoption Convention, an international treaty meant to safeguard international adoptions, highlighting a significant policy shift decades after sending tens of thousands of children to the West through an aggressive but poorly regulated adoption system.

The government's announcement Tuesday came as it faces growing pressure to address widespread fraud and abuse that plagued its adoption program, particularly during a heyday in the 1970s and '80s when the country allowed thousands of children to be adopted every year.

Many adoptees have since discovered that their records were falsified to portray them as abandoned orphans, while others were carelessly removed — or even outright stolen — from their birth families.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry and Health and Welfare Ministry, which handles adoption policies, issued a joint statement saying the country submitted the necessary documents to ratify the Hague Adoption Convention to the Dutch Foreign Ministry, the treaty's depositary.

The treaty, which requires countries to strengthen state oversight and safeguards to ensure international adoptions are legal and ethical, will take effect in South Korea on Oct. 1.

South Korea signed the Hague convention in 2013, but ratification was delayed by more than a decade as the country struggled to bring adoptions under centralized government authority, as required by the treaty, after allowing private agencies to control international child placements for decades.

"Going forward, intercountry adoptions will be permitted only when no suitable family can be found in his or her state of origin, and only if deemed to serve the child's best interests through deliberation by the adoption policy committee under the Ministry of Health and Welfare," the ministries said.

The statement said the ratification was a significant step toward safeguarding children's rights and "establishing an advanced, internationally compliant intercountry adoption system in Korea, reinforcing the government's commitment to upholding state responsibility across the entire adoption process."

A 2023 law also mandates the transfer of all adoption records from private agencies to the National Center for the Rights of the Child by July, aiming to centralize processing family search requests from adoptees who have returned to South Korea as adults seeking their roots.

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International adoptions from South Korea have plummeted in recent years, with only 58 in 2024, according to government data.

During the 1980s, South Korea sent an average of more than 6,000 children abroad each year, under a previous military government that viewed adoption as a way to reduce mouths to feed and curry favor with Western nations.

Authorities specifically targeted children deemed socially undesirable, including those born to unwed mothers or impoverished families, and granted extensive powers to private adoption agencies to dictate child relinquishments and custody transfers, allowing them to send huge numbers of children abroad quickly.

Much of South Korea's recent reforms have focused on abuse prevention, including a 2011 law reinstating judicial oversight of foreign adoptions that led to a significant drop in international placements. But officials are at a loss over how to handle the huge numbers of inaccurate or falsified records accumulated over past decades, which have prevented many adoptees from reconnecting with their birth families or obtaining accurate information about their biological origins.

In a landmark report in March, South Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the government bears responsibility for facilitating a foreign adoption program rife with fraud and abuse, driven by efforts to reduce welfare costs and enabled by private agencies that often manipulated children's backgrounds and origins.

The commission's findings broadly aligned with a 2024 Associated Press investigation, in collaboration with Frontline (PBS), which detailed how South Korea's government, Western countries and adoption agencies worked in tandem to supply around 200,000 Korean children to parents overseas, despite years of evidence that many were being procured through questionable or outright unscrupulous means.

South Korea's government has never acknowledged direct responsibility for issues related to past adoptions and has so far ignored the commission's recommendation to issue an apology.

Some adoptees criticized the truth commission's cautiously worded report, arguing it should have more forcefully acknowledged the government's complicity and offered more concrete recommendations for reparations for illegal adoption victims.

The commission's investigation deadline expired in May, after it confirmed human rights violations in just 56 of the 367 complaints filed by adoptees since 2022. The fate of the remaining 311 cases, either deferred or incompletely reviewed, hinges on whether lawmakers will establish a new truth commission through legislation.

Today in History: June 18, War of 1812 begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, June 18, the 169th day of 2025. There are 196 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 18, 1812, the War of 1812 began as the United States Congress approved, and President James Madison signed, a declaration of war against Britain.

Also on this date:

In 1778, American forces entered Philadelphia as the British withdrew during the Revolutionary War.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated in the Battle of Waterloo as British and Prussian troops defeated the French Imperial Army in Belgium.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter and Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev signed the SALT II strategic arms limitation treaty in Vienna.

In 1983, astronaut Sally Ride became America's first woman in space as she and four other NASA astronauts blasted off aboard the space shuttle Challenger on a six-day mission.

In 1986, 25 people were killed when a twin-engine plane and helicopter carrying sightseers collided over the Grand Canyon.

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Georgia v. McCollum*, ruled that criminal defendants could not use race as a basis for excluding potential jurors from their trials.

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In 2018, President Donald Trump announced he was directing the Pentagon to create the Space Force as an independent branch of the United States armed forces.

In 2020, the Supreme Court, in the case of Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California, rejected by a 5-4 decision President Donald Trump's effort to end legal protections for more than 650,000 young immigrants.

In 2023, the submersible vessel Titan, on an expedition to view the wreckage of the Titanic in the North Atlantic Ocean, imploded, killing all five people aboard.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Paul McCartney is 83. Actor Carol Kane is 73. Actor Isabella Rossellini is 73. Singer Alison Moyet is 64. Football Hall of Famer Bruce Smith is 62. Hockey Hall of Famer Martin St. Louis is 50. Actor Alana de la Garza is 49. Country musician Blake Shelton is 49. Football Hall of Famer Antonio Gates is 45.