

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 1 of 76

[1- Upcoming Events](#)  
[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)  
[4- Adult Mosquito Control Last Night](#)  
[5- WELCA Ad](#)  
[6- City Council Meeting](#)  
[7- Groton Senior Citizens](#)  
[8- Jr. Legion/Legion beat Sisseton](#)  
[9- Jr. Legion Box Scores](#)  
[10- Groton Legion Post 39 Looks To Continue Strong Play Against Lisbon Post 7](#)  
[10- Custer County Fatal Crash](#)  
[11- Groton to host 12U state baseball tournament this weekend](#)  
[14- SD SearchLight: Prison task force picks Sioux Falls, caps price at \\$650 million for 1,500 beds](#)  
[17- SD SearchLight: USDA chief outlines plan to block China from U.S. farmland ownership](#)  
[19- SD SearchLight: Assessment shows potential for gold mine near Lead, company says](#)  
[19- SD SearchLight: States scramble to shield hospitals from GOP Medicaid cuts](#)  
[22- Weather Pages](#)  
[27- Daily Devotional](#)  
[28- Subscription Form](#)  
[29- Lottery Numbers](#)  
[30- Upcoming Groton Events](#)  
[31- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Wednesday, July 9

Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, creamy noodles, peas and carrots, pineapple.

Legion hosts Lisbon, 6 p.m.

Softball: U8B at Redfield, 5:30 p.m.; U8G at Warner, 5:30 p.m.; U10B at Redfield, 5:30 p.m.; U10G at Warner, 5:30 p.m.; U12 at Redfield 6:30 p.m. (DH)

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

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

Legion Auxiliary Salad Buffet and Dessert Bar, 11 a.m.

## Wednesday Blessings

**"He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."**

**Good Morning** Psalm 91:4



**Have a wonderful day under God's protective care.**

God's Spoken Word Ministries

## Thursday, July 10

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Legion at Clark Tourney

Jr. Teeners hosts Watertown 13U, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Softball: U8G hosts Mellette, 6 p.m. (DH)

T-Ball G&B Scrimmage, 6 p.m.

Groton Lions Club Meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main

## Friday, July 11

Senior Menu: Chicken strips au gratin, mixed vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Legion at Clark Tourney

VFW Class B U12 State Baseball Tourney in Groton

## Saturday, July 12

Legion at Clark Tourney

VFW Class B U12 State Baseball Tourney n Groton

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 2 of 76

# 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.**

## Infant Malaria Drug

A malaria treatment for newborns has received approval from Switzerland's medical regulator, marking the world's first specifically for infants battling the deadly mosquito-borne illness. Named Coartem Baby, the drug combines artemether and lumefantrine—the same ingredients used for older children and adults—and is authorized for infants weighing between 4.4 and 11 pounds.

Developed by Swiss drugmaker Novartis and the Medicines for Malaria Venture, the dissolvable, cherry-flavored medication can be mixed with breast milk to make it easier to administer. Eight African countries participated in clinical trials and are expected to approve the treatment within weeks. Novartis has said it will distribute the drug on a not-for-profit basis in malaria-risk regions.

In 2023, an estimated 597,000 people died from malaria worldwide, with 95% occurring in sub-Saharan Africa—and roughly three-quarters of those among children under age 5. About 30 million babies are born each year in high-risk regions, and infection rates in infants under 6 months can range from 3.4% to 18.4%. Malaria vaccines are typically administered starting around 5 months of age.

## You Can Keep Your Shoes On

The Transportation Security Administration has begun to unwind its decadeslong policy of requiring passengers to take off their shoes at airport security lines. The update has been rolled out at several major US airports, including in Maryland, Florida, and Oregon, with plans for expansion over the coming days.

The TSA policy has been in place since 2006. Its origins trace back to December 2001, when al-Qaida-trained British citizen Richard Reid smuggled 10 ounces of nonmetallic explosives in his shoes on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami. Reid failed to ignite the bomb, but the incident ultimately prompted the TSA to update its security protocols given the limitations of X-rays. Very few countries have adopted the US approach.

The agency cites technological improvements in making the change but has not pointed to specific advancements. The decision is expected to devalue TSA's PreCheck program, which had allowed passengers to pay to skip the shoe removal requirement, among other perks.

## AI Training for Teachers

The nation's second-largest teachers' union announced yesterday that it's creating an AI training hub for K-12 educators with \$23M from three leading AI developers: Microsoft, OpenAI, and Anthropic.

The American Federation of Teachers will open its National Academy for AI Instruction this fall in downtown Manhattan. The academy aims to offer hands-on workshops to 400,000 teachers—about 10% of the US teaching workforce—by 2030. All 1.8 million union members will also have access to free online training. A portion of Microsoft's five-year, \$12.5M commitment and OpenAI's five-year, \$10M pledge will fund the creation of additional hubs nationwide. Anthropic is contributing \$500K to support the academy's first year.

The initiative follows an executive order issued by the White House in April encouraging private sector investment in K-12 AI education. And while many teachers worry about students using AI, a recent survey found that 60% of teachers polled use it themselves. Those who reported using AI weekly estimated saving as much as six weeks' worth of time each year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 3 of 76

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Former world boxing champ Julio César Chávez Jr. misses court date for 2024 gun charges, lawyer is unaware of his whereabouts; Chávez was detained by ICE last week and was due to be deported to Mexico.

NHL regular season to expand from 82 to 84 games beginning with 2026-27 season as part of new collective bargaining agreement between the league and the players association.

Sean "Diddy" Combs to be sentenced Oct. 3; Combs will remain in jail as he awaits sentencing for prostitution charges.

Former "Tiger King" star Bhagavan "Doc" Antle sentenced to a year in prison for trafficking in exotic animals.

## Science & Technology

Meta poaches Apple's top AI executive, Ruoming Pang, with a compensation package reportedly worth tens of millions of dollars annually; hire follows Meta's recent hiring surge to fill its new Superintelligence Lab.

NASA's Parker Solar Probe measures first direct evidence of the sun's "helicity barrier;" phenomenon is linked to the superheating of the solar atmosphere and creating supersonic solar wind.

Engineers build and test largest-ever steel-framed building built on top of an earthquake simulator; platform may lead to new methods to safely make taller buildings in quake-prone regions (More, w/video)

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq +0.0%) as President Donald Trump's trade policies keep investors on edge.

Trump says he will impose a 50% tariff on copper imports, with details on timing unclear; also threatens up to 200% tariff on pharmaceutical imports.

SpaceX reportedly in talks to raise new funding at \$400B valuation.

Meta invests \$3.5B in world's largest eyewear maker, EssilorLuxottica SA, amid push toward AI-powered wearable devices.

WeightWatchers emerges from Chapter 11 bankruptcy after completing financial reorganization; names new medical chief, plans to offer menopause therapy.

## Politics & World Affairs

US Supreme Court lifts a lower court ruling, clearing the way for the Trump administration to fire tens of thousands of federal workers.

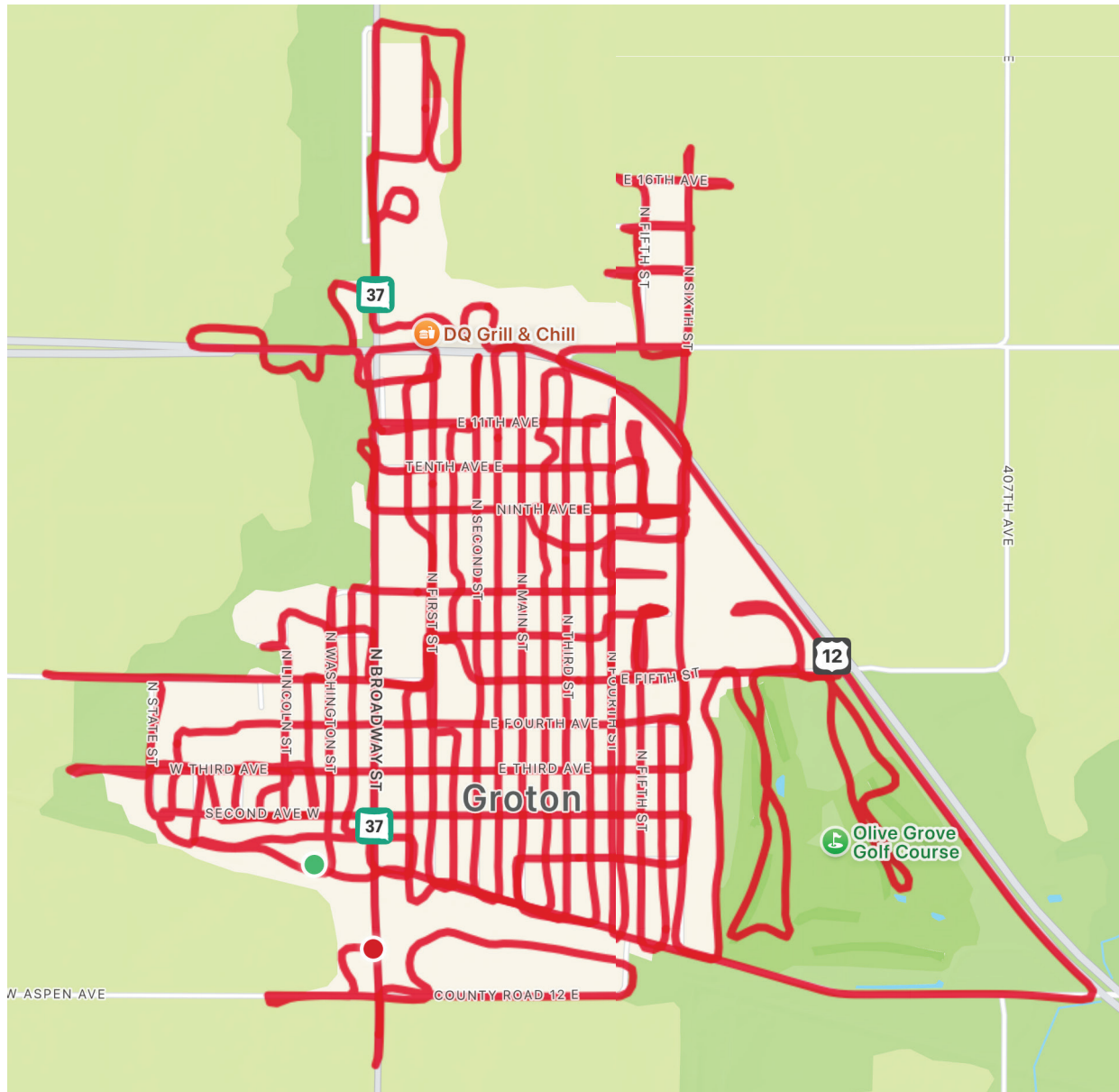
State Department warns US diplomats about an impostor using AI to impersonate Secretary of State Marco Rubio in calls to high-level officials, including at least three foreign ministers.

Justice Department charges 10 people with attempted murder in failed effort to storm an ICE center in Texas.

At least 161 people known to be missing from flooding, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) says; death toll rises to at least 109.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 4 of 76**



## Adult Mosquito Control

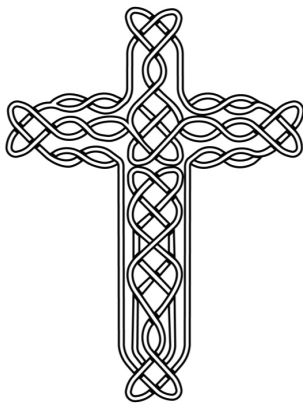
The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control last night. The temperature was 66-73 degrees with the wind out of the east at 5 mph. 10.8 gallons of Perm-X UL 4-4 was used. Travel time was 2 hours and 42 minutes with a distance of 35.79 miles. During my travels I saw 12 rabbits, 2 cats and 1 dog. Total cost of the application was around \$529.



## Golden Threads

“Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels.

Proverbs 8:10-11



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### Ladies Luncheon

Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

By Bethesda Women of the ELCA

Silent Auction opens at 10:30

Guest Speaker: Melinda Eikamp,  
“Weaving Threads of our Heritage”

Luncheon at Noon

Tickets: \$15.00

**Deadline to purchase tickets is Friday, July 11**

Kay Espeland 605-492-3507

Jane Goehring 605-290-1420

Or contact any WELCA member



## Electric meters, senior meals, code enforcement continue as discussion items at Groton City Council

By Elizabeth Varin

Utilities, special event planning and providing meals for seniors were some of the few topics discussed during Tuesday's City Council meeting.

Among decisions made the meeting, the council authorized city staff to request sealed bids for the replacement of the city's aging electric metering system. It comes after nearly two years of discussion on what direction to go when replacing the city's electric meter system.

"You three (City Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich, Electric Utility Supervisor Todd Gay and Technology Specialist Paul Kosel) get some bids," said Mayor Scott Hanlon. "We've discussed this so much, we need to just get it done." Bids are scheduled to be opened at the council's August 19 meeting.

The council also reviewed special event liquor license. Licenses for Groton Amateur Baseball Games on July 15 and 20 were approved with little discussion. Beer can be brought to the baseball complex, but will not be allowed if Little League or softball games are going on.

More discussion took place about a special event license to sell malt beverages and beer during an event at the City Park. Council members and organizers of the Celebration in the Park discussed how many licensed law enforcement officers would need to be there while beer is served.

The council issued a tentative approval for the special event licenses for the August 2 event. However, the number of licenses officers will depend on what the police chief recommends.

### Senior Citizen meal program seeks city support

During Tuesday's meeting, Marla Kiesz with the nonprofit Area for Senior Nutrition provided an update on the state of the senior citizen meal program in the community.

Currently, the program is run through the Red Horse Inn, which has continued to provide meals for senior citizens since being purchased earlier this year. The meals, available to individuals aged 60 and older, are offered at a suggested donation of \$5 per meal. However, the program only receives an average of \$1 per meal from participants, creating a significant gap between donations and the cost of providing the meals.

Kiesz asked the council to consider getting more involved in supporting the program, as the city currently does not financially contribute to its operation.

"I'm here asking for the city's support to help the program stay strong and buoyant," she said.

She hopes that by involving the city in a more substantial way, the community can increase the donations collected per meal and ensure the program's sustainability.

Kiesz requested a \$1,500 donation for the 2026 fiscal year, which she emphasized would help cover just a couple of months of groceries needed to prepare the meals.

Council members discussed various ways the city and local organizations could collaborate to support the meal program.

Councilman Brian Bahr suggested utilizing Groton Transit during slower periods to help with meal deliveries.

Kiesz confirmed that other communities have successfully used transit services for their senior meals program, including bringing seniors to the meal site to eat together.

Councilman Mike Shilhanek emphasized the potential for further collaboration between community resources to ensure the program's success.

Mayor Scott Hanlon assured Kiesz and the council that they would work together to find a solution.

"I'm sure we'll need to give you guys some money," he said. "We needed to hear from you because I'm sure a lot of us didn't know what was going on."

"...We're going to do some talking, and we'll get you guys some assistance," he added.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 7 of 76

## Code violations continue to be addressed

Code Enforcement Officer Dennis "Mike" Olson updated the council on properties in town with code violations, as well as asking the council whether he should begin abating some of the issues himself.

If residents aren't complying with warnings given to them, Olson said he would typically go on the property, abate the issue and charge the landowner for the cost of abating the issue. That could be as simple as removing vehicles or junk, or it could be more complicated if building maintenance needs to be addressed.

Olson discussed a few specific issues at properties around town and asked if the council wanted him to proceed with sending a final warning and scheduling abatement work to be done to remove some junk vehicles from a property. It's likely that the final warning letter will get the property owners attention, and that owner will likely call to discuss the issue with him, Olson said.

"It usually does, and I usually get a call," he said.

- The council declared a 2017 Ford Interceptor SUV previously used by the Groton Police Department as surplus. Bids to purchase the vehicle are due by 5 p.m. August 5 and will be opened the same evening during the city council meeting.
- The council declared a 1982 International S1900 dump truck as surplus. Bids to purchase the vehicle are due by 5 p.m. August 5 and will be opened the same evening during the council meeting.
- The city will continue having accounts at Dacotah Bank and the South Dakota Public Funds Investment Trust after the council appointed the two as banks for the city. The council also appointed its legal newspaper as The Groton Independent.
- The council tabled any decision about transferring the property south of the Groton Community Center to the Groton Development Corporation. The corporation wants to put up a youth facility at that location. Councilman Mike Shilhanek made the request. Since he was planning to abstain from voting, there was no quorum to make a decision as only Shilhanek, Brian Bahr, Karyn Babcock and Jason Wambach (via phone) were present and the mayor does not court towards the quorum.

## Groton Senior Citizens

June 9th Groton Seniors met for a meeting and cards. Ten members were present. President Ruby Donovan opened the meeting with allegiance to the flag. Secretary gave her report. It was expected. Get Well cards were sent to Shirley Larson and Art Gengerke. All members signed the cards. Treasurer will read her report at the next meeting. Meeting was adjourned. Cards were played, the winners of each game. Pinochle- Ruby Donovan, Whist- Tony Goldade, Canosta- Bev Sombke. Door prizes Dick Donovan, Tony Goldade, Elda Stange. Lunch was served by Tony Goldade.

June 16

Groton Seniors met to play cards. Eleven members were present. President had the flag pledge. Treasurer gave her report. Cards were played. The winners of each game. Pinochle-John Aldrich, Whist- Darlene Fischer, Canosta- Pat Larson. Door prizes DICK Donovan, Ruby Donovan, Pat Larson. Lunch was served by Ruby Donovan.

June 23-25

Groton Seniors met for their pot luck dinner. Eleven members were present. President had the flag pledge and table prayer. After dinner bingo was played. Bev Sombke won black out. Cards were played after bingo. Door prizes. Pat Larson, Dick Donovan, Euncie McColister. Leftover dessert and ice cream before going home.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 8 of 76

## Ryder Schelle Throws Shutout As Groton Jr. Legion Defeat Sisseton

By GameChanger Media

Ryder Schelle shut down Sisseton, throwing a complete game shutout and leading Groton Jr. Legion to a 7-0 victory on Tuesday.

Groton Jr. Legion won thanks in part to four runs in the third inning. Ethan Kroll doubled, scoring two runs, Jordan Schwan singled, scoring one run, and Kason Oswald was struck by a pitch, driving in a run.

Groton Jr. Legion got on the board in the second inning after Oswald singled, scoring one run.

Bryson Hanson took the loss for Sisseton. The hurler went two and one-third innings, giving up five runs on two hits, striking out none and walking four.

Kroll provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Groton Jr. Legion with three runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-2 on the day. Oswald, Schwan, Tristin McGannon, and Kroll each collected one hit for Groton Jr. Legion. Groton Jr. Legion had patience at the plate, tallying nine walks for the game. Braeden Fliehs and McGannon led the team with two bases on balls each. Fliehs, T.C Schuster, Nick Groeblichhoff, and Kroll each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr. Legion. Groton Jr. Legion ran wild on the base paths, piling up 12 stolen bases for the game.

Hanson and Karter Deutch each collected one hit for Sisseton.

## Walk-Off Seals The Deal In Groton Legion Victory Over Sisseton

By GameChanger Media

Groton Legion Post 39 took Tuesday's game in dramatic fashion, with a 6-5 walk-off victory over Sisseton. Groton Legion Post 39 was down 5-4 in the bottom of the sixth inning when Brevin Fliehs singled, scoring two runs.

A ground out by Braxton Imrie put Groton Legion Post 39 on the board in the bottom of the second.

Groton Legion Post 39 committed an error, which helped Sisseton tie the game at one in the top of the third.

Sisseton took the lead in the top of the fourth. Rory Current singled, scoring one run, to give Sisseton the upper hand, 2-1.

Groton Legion Post 39 tied the game in the bottom of the fifth thanks to a triple by Korbin Kucker, and a single by Fliehs.

In the top of the sixth, Sisseton broke up the tie when an error scored one run. Then a single by Luke Nielsen followed to extend the lead to 5-3.

Groton Legion Post 39 took the lead, 6-5, in the bottom of the sixth thanks to singles by Teylor Diegel, and Fliehs.

Alex Abeln earned the win for Groton Legion Post 39. The reliever gave up four hits and two runs (zero earned) over one and two-thirds innings, striking out four and walking none. LJ Crooks took the loss for Sisseton. The hurler went five and two-thirds innings, allowing six runs (four earned) on seven hits, striking out three and walking two. Diegel led things off on the hill for Groton Legion Post 39. The starter surrendered three hits and three runs (two earned) over four and one-third innings, striking out three and walking four.

Fliehs drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Legion Post 39 with three runs batted in. The infielder went 2-for-3 on the day. Diegel stole two bases. Groton Legion Post 39 stole five bases in the game.

Max Dahlen and Nielsen were tough to handle back-to-back in the lineup, as each drove in one run for Sisseton. Sisseton turned one double play in the game.

Next up for Groton Legion Post 39 is a game against Lisbon on Wednesday.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 9 of 76

## Sisseton 0 - 7 Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion

📍 Home 📅 Tuesday July 08, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
SSST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
GRTN	0	1	4	1	1	0	X	7	4	1

### BATTING

Sisseton	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Nelson #12 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	0
L Neils... #22 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Hamm #5 (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
M Dahlen #3 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
R Current #4 (P)	1	0	0	0	0	0
R Anderson #10 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	0
K Siriban #42	1	0	0	0	0	0
B Hanson #11 (P)	3	0	1	0	0	0
J Muehler #21 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
K Deutch #18 (LF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
C Opsal #24 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
R White #20 (1B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

**TB:** B Hanson, K Deutch, **LOB:** 2

### PITCHING

Sisseton	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Hanson #11	2.1	2	5	5	4	0	0
<b>M Dahlen #3</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
R Current #4	3.0	0	2	1	5	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

**L:** B Hanson, **P-S:** B Hanson 49-22, R Current 60-27, M Dahlen 13-8, **HBP:** B Hanson 2, M Dahlen, **BF:** B Hanson 15, R Current 14, M Dahlen 4

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (C)	4	0	0	0	0	0
A Abeln #5 (3B)	3	0	0	0	1	0
N Groebl... #13 (1B)	2	2	0	0	1	0
T Schuster #3 (SS)	2	1	0	0	1	1
E Kroll #14 (2B)	2	2	1	3	1	0
J Bisbee #15 (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
B Fliehs #19 (DH)	1	1	0	0	2	0
I Scep... #20 (DH)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	2	1	1	1	1	0
K Oswald #12 (RF)	2	0	1	1	0	1
T McGan... #22 (LF)	1	0	1	0	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>

**2B:** E Kroll, **TB:** K Oswald, T McGannon, J Schwan, E Kroll 2, **HBP:** T Schuster, K Oswald, N Groebelinghoff, **SB:** T Schuster 2, K Oswald, N Groebelinghoff 3, T McGannon, J Schwan, B Fliehs 2, E Kroll 2, **LOB:** 8

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
R Schelle #8	7.0	2	0	0	0	6	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** R Schelle, **P-S:** R Schelle 68-48, **BF:** R Schelle 23

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 10 of 76

## Groton Legion Post 39 Looks To Continue Strong Play Against Lisbon Post 7

Groton Legion Post 39 have been playing well lately, going 8-2 in their last 10 games. They'll put that strong play to the test when they take on Lisbon Post 7 on Wednesday at Groton at 6 p.m.

### Last Time Out:

Groton Legion Post 39 defeated Sisseton Post 50 18U in a 6-5 walkoff thanks to a single by Brevin Fliehs with two outs in the sixth inning.

### Player Highlight:

Nick Morris hits and pitches for Groton Legion Post 39. Morris primarily plays third base on the field. Morris is on a 2-game hitting streak. The infielder has hit 0.500 during the streak. Morris has an on-base percentage of 0.455 this season thanks in part to a 0.370 average and nine walks. Morris gets ahead in the count fast on the mound. Morris has thrown first pitch strikes to 77 of the 118 batters they've faced this season.

### About Groton Legion Post 39:

Groton Legion Post 39 has played well lately, going 8-2 in their last 10 games. They have an 18-5 record overall. Fliehs's 1.278 OPS leads Groton Legion Post 39. The infielder has a 0.516 OBP and a 0.762 slugging percentage this season. Morris leads Groton Legion Post 39 with 28 and two-thirds innings pitched. The starting pitcher has a 1.47 ERA this season. Karsten Fliehs leads Groton Legion Post 39 with 151 total fielding chances this season. Fliehs's primary position is catcher.

### About Lisbon Post 7:

Lisbon Post 7 has played well lately, going 8-2 in their last 10 games. They have a 13-4 record overall. Blaze Reinke's 1.341 OPS leads Lisbon Post 7. The right-handed hitter has a 0.569 OBP and a 0.773 slugging percentage this season. Cameron Cordero leads Lisbon Post 7 with 26 and one-third innings pitched. The righty has a 3.19 ERA this season. Eli Lyons leads Lisbon Post 7 with 90 total fielding chances this season. Lyons's primary position is catcher.

## Custer County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 36, mile marker 39, six miles west of Hermosa, SD

When: 3:21 p.m., Monday, July 7, 2025

Driver 1: 77-year-old male from Hamilton, IL, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2020 Harley Davidson CVO

Helmet Used: No

Custer County, S.D.- A Hamilton, IL man died in a single vehicle motorcycle crash Monday afternoon, six miles west of Hermosa, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2020 Harley Davidson CVO was traveling westbound on SD Highway 36 near mile marker 39. The driver failed to negotiate a curve and entered the north ditch, struck a driveway approach, and rolled. The driver became separated from his motorcycle and sustained fatal injuries.

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

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

## Groton to host 12U state baseball tournament this weekend

By Elizabeth Varin

Youth baseball teams from across South Dakota will head to Groton this weekend for the 12U VFW Class B State Tournament, an event tournament organizers say will showcase not only the region's facilities but also the passion and pride of local communities.

The three-day tournament kicks off Friday with an opening ceremony at Groton's baseball complex. All 15 teams will gather on the central field for a presentation of the colors and the national anthem. Games will be held on two fields in Groton and one field at the Columbia baseball park.

Groton hasn't hosted a youth tournament like this before, said tournament director Jason Hill.

The baseball/softball foundation hosted the junior legion championship last year, but not a tournament like this for the younger players.

"It gives us an opportunity to share our ballpark and, you know, we feel really good about what we have here," he said. "The city should feel good. It's a great complex, spread out with plenty of room for everybody, and then having our friends up in Columbia, it's another great opportunity to showcase what's up here in Northeast South Dakota."

Teams traveling in for the tournament include squads from Wagner, Winner, Webster, Britton, Clark, Baltic and others. Hill said he hopes Groton residents will come out to support the home team and enjoy the competition. Admission fees collected by the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation will go back into local improvements, such as a new concession stand and bathrooms, scoreboard replacement, and overall facility upgrades.

It's not just about showing off the facilities, Hill said. It's about giving these kids a state tournament experience in their own backyard.

In the past, the team has had to stay in Sioux Falls and travel to fields in Salem or Parker, he said. This time, they get to play on their own turf.

The tournament is also a collaboration between Groton and nearby Columbia, whose field will host several of the weekend's games. For players like Easton Larson, who lives in Columbia, that means even more.

"I'm looking forward to playing at home — definitely in Groton and then Columbia since it's my home field," said Larson. "...Baseball is an amazing sport, and I've been playing since I was two.

Larson said he loves hitting the ball and "just being with your friends and having fun through the sum-



**Back row left to right: Rylan Blackwood, Hank Fliehs, Easton Larson, Owen Tewksbury, Hank Hill Middle row: Bentley Ehresmann, Grayden Rowen, Carter Boerger, Knox Mulder, Haden Harder, Graham Rose Front row: Brody Zimmerman, Mason Locke, Blake Malsom, Jack Schuelke, Adam Fliehs, Hayden Hubbard.** (Photo courtesy J.Simon Photography)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 12 of 76

mer when you don't see them as much. That's always good."

Teammates Hank Hill and Mason Locke echoed his excitement.

"I'm most excited that all of our friends get to be here — and they get to watch us," said Hill.

Locke added, "It's going to be a lot more energetic than all the other state tournaments. When we go to Sioux Falls, it's dead out there. No energy. But it's going to be a lot of energy here."

Hill credited the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation, community members, and especially his wife, Tara Hill, for helping bring the event to life.

"She has been putting up with me with all the planning, organizing, talking through a lot of the logistics," he said with a smile.

Games will run throughout the weekend, and the public is encouraged to attend. Whether cheering on the Groton team or just enjoying summer baseball at its finest, fans are sure to experience a tournament to remember.

Friday, July 11, 2025

Game	Time	Location	Team 1	Score	Team 2
P1	11:00 AM	Columbia	Winner Rattlers 12U		Britton Jr Jacks 12U
P2	11:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Corsica/Stickney Jaguars 12U		Clark Area 12U
P3	11:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Hamlin/LN 12U		Parkston 12U Leischner
P4	1:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Groton 12U		Salem Cubs 12U
P5	1:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Webster 12U		Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 12U
P6	1:00 PM	Columbia	Emery 12U		KWL WiLdKats 12U
P7	3:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Canova Gang 12U		Winner Rattlers 12U
P8	3:00 PM	Columbia	Britton Jr Jacks 12U		Clark Area 12U
P9	3:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Wagner 12U		Hamlin/LN 12U
P10	5:00 PM	Columbia	Parkston 12U Leischner		Salem Cubs 12U
P11	5:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Baltic Bulldogs 12U		Webster 12U
P12	5:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 12U		KWL WiLdKats 12U
P13	7:00 PM	Columbia	Corsica/Stickney Jaguars 12U		Canova Gang 12U
P15	7:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Groton 12U		Wagner 12U
P17	7:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Emery 12U		Baltic Bulldogs 12U



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 13 of 76

Saturday, July 12, 2025

Game	Time	Location	Team 1	Score	Team 2
P14	9:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Clark Area 12U		Winner Rattlers 12U
P16	9:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Salem Cubs 12U		Hamlin/LN 12U
P18	9:00 AM	Columbia	KWL WiLdKats 12U		Webster 12U
P19	11:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Canova Gang 12U		Clark Area 12U
P20	11:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Corsica/Stickney Jaguars 12U		Britton Jr Jacks 12U
P24	11:00 AM	Columbia	Emery 12U		Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 12U
P21	1:00 PM	Columbia	Wagner 12U		Salem Cubs 12U
P22	1:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Groton 12U		Parkston 12U Leischner
P23	1:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Baltic Bulldogs 12U		KWL WiLdKats 12U
P25	3:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Britton Jr Jacks 12U		Canova Gang 12U
P26	3:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Winner Rattlers 12U		Corsica/Stickney Jaguars 12U
P29	3:00 PM	Columbia	Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 12U		Baltic Bulldogs 12U
P27	5:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Parkston 12U Leischner		Wagner 12U
P28	5:00 PM	Columbia	Hamlin/LN 12U		Groton 12U
P30	5:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Webster 12U		Emery 12U

Sunday, July 13, 2025

Game	Time	Location	Team 1	Score	Team 2
B31	8:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Seed 1		Seed 8
B34	8:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Seed 7		Seed 2
B32	11:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Seed 5		Seed 4
B33	11:00 AM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Seed 3		Seed 6
B39	11:00 AM	Columbia	Seed 9		Seed 10
B35	1:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Bracket Winner B31		Bracket Winner B32
B36	1:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Bracket Winner B33		Bracket Winner B34
B40	1:00 PM	Columbia	Seed 11		Seed 12
B37	3:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Falk	Bracket Winner B35		Bracket Winner B36
B38	3:00 PM	Groton Baseball - Nelson	Bracket Loser B35		Bracket Loser B36



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Prison task force picks Sioux Falls, caps price at \$650 million for 1,500 beds

**Designers caution that 'arbitrary' price cap could force them to cut corners**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 8, 2025 9:48 PM**

SIoux FALLS — South Dakota can't build the prison it needs at the price it wants without sacrificing quality and longevity.

That was the message delivered Tuesday to the Project Prison Reset task force by the state's construction manager, the state engineer and the consultant hired earlier this year to evaluate the options for addressing prison overcrowding.

The message didn't take.

Citing the political realities of a skeptical Legislature, the task force voted unanimously to recommend that lawmakers support a men's prison at a price point of \$650 million during a special session whose date has yet to be set.

That's \$50 million higher than the limit the group set last month. It's also \$75 million less than the experts said the group's preferred project would cost hours before the vote.

Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen, who leads the task force, said the figure is a compromise that moves the state toward a replacement for the 144-year-old penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

"There is no appetite, none, for going above \$650 million," Venhuizen said.

House Speaker Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, said securing a two-thirds majority in both chambers — required for spending bills — will mean convincing lawmakers that the job can be done without cost overruns and supplemental budget requests.

"We're going to need to know that we can actually do it for \$650 million," Hansen said.

#### Sioux Falls selected

The group also endorsed two vacant plots of industrial land in northeastern Sioux Falls just off Interstate 229, near Gage Brothers, a precast concrete company. The choice of which was left to legislators.

The task force voted to shoot down options in Mitchell or Worthing early on during its final meeting Tuesday, which took place at the Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls. Other site options were ruled out during earlier meetings, and some communities, including Box Elder, removed themselves from consideration after submitting proposals.

Unlike the residents of Mitchell and Worthing, Joe Bunker of Gage Brothers told the group his company had no qualms with having a prison as a neighbor.

"I just want you to know that we're not opposed to it," Bunkers said.

The buildings on the recommended prison campus should be designed to last 100 years, the task force decided, with 1,200 beds for higher security inmates and another 300 for lower-security inmates.

That configuration was one of 14 options presented Tuesday morning from Arrington Watkins, the consulting firm hired to assess the prison system's space needs.

The price estimate for the northeastern Sioux Falls prison complex is \$725 million. That's \$100 million less than a 1,500-bed men's prison proposed for Lincoln County, whose failure to earn the support of the Legislature back in February spurred the creation of the task force.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 15 of 76

## Multiple sites shot down

Mike Quinn of Arrington Watkins ran the task force through the options Tuesday morning. None came in below \$600 million, the price cap the task force adopted previously.

In addition to brushing off Mitchell and Worthing as site options, the group's final recommendations eliminated options that would have placed buildings in multiple locations. Those included a small prison just north of the penitentiary across a Big Sioux River diversion channel and an additional dormitory-style building in Springfield, current site of Mike Durfee State Prison.

Those options were an outgrowth of questions from task force members about the need for a single high-security facility.

Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead, a task force member, asked Quinn if any of the multi-building setups would be "the best option for the taxpayer."

The answer was no. Each prison site, regardless of size, Quinn said, would need to have recreation areas, kitchens and mess halls and other support areas.

"When you build three facilities, you're building those buildings three times," Quinn said, adding "it's never more economical to split it up into smaller units."

## Lieutenant governor suggests cheaper facility in Nebraska is 'sub-par'

Hansen was one of several task force members to ask about a 1,512-bed Nebraska prison priced at \$313 million for inmates at a variety of security levels.

South Dakota State Engineer Stacy Watters said the state of Nebraska has refused to release specifications for that facility, and denied a records request from South Dakota for more details, citing nondisclosure agreements with its contractors.

What the state did learn, Watters said, was that the \$313 million price only includes construction, not site preparation or design, and that it doesn't include the intake area or medical facilities that South Dakota's proposal does. Nebraska has already spent \$130 million on buildings with those services over the past seven years, she said, and plans to use cheaper piping for its plumbing in the new prison project.

The design and materials being used in Nebraska are unclear, but "we had to assume that at that price, there was a reduced level of construction," said Vance McMillan of JE Dunn, the state's construction manager at-risk.

Hansen questioned why Nebraska would hold back on sharing its design features for a public project. Venhuizen suggested that Nebraska is building a "sub-par" facility, and "that's not something they're really looking to admit."

## Other sites create doubt

McMillan told the group it had done all the due diligence necessary to keep its estimates low, bidding out every piece of the project. A cheaper price would mean building a prison that would need replacing sooner.

Comparisons to Nebraska or other states weren't "apples to apples," he said.

But House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, said lower reported price points in other states have created enough doubt to put a new South Dakota prison in political jeopardy at the prices offered Tuesday.

"I'm sitting here as majority leader trying to figure out how I can sell this to a two-thirds majority of the Legislature not knowing all the answers," Odenbach said.

The state has \$566 million set aside in an incarceration construction fund, a balance built by infusions of COVID-19 relief money and earning interest. About \$50 million of that is earmarked for a women's prison in Rapid City, which is currently under construction.

The fund will grow by \$23 million of interest in August, Corrections Department spokesman Michael Winder said Tuesday.

That the state has the money set aside makes the project more palatable, but Rep. Greg Jamison, R-Sioux Falls, said worries about ongoing operational costs and concerns that the state might not be getting

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 16 of 76

the best deal have left some lawmakers unwilling to trust the experts.

"Other states are doing it for less. There's a shadow of doubt, and we need to rebuild that trust," Jamison said, to get legislative approval.

Jamison suggested that the group vote for 1,500 beds, cap the price at \$600 million, and recommend looking for a new construction manager at-risk, as JE Dunn and Henry Carlson's single proposal was the only one the state fielded back in 2023.

McMillan, as well as some task force members, bristled at the idea of dispensing with JE Dunn and starting from scratch. McMillan told the task force that every month wasted carries the potential for greater costs.

He urged them to make a decision, and insisted that the team that's worked on prisons for the state for the past two years could meet whatever design specifications that lawmakers want.

"We would be happy to build you a steel structure that would last you 50 years. That's a decision that you guys have to make," McMillan said.

McMillan said it would be "a tall order" to build a 100-year facility for \$650 million.

## **Decision: 100-year prison for \$650 million**

Judge Jane Wipf Pfeifle, a task force member, said switching gears on a construction manager would ultimately cost taxpayers. She also questioned the wisdom of setting an "arbitrary" cap on costs that could hamstring a new prison's ability to meet the state's needs.

Two consultants' reports since 2022 have pointed to inmate population growth that will outpace the state's ability to house prisoners without major policy shifts or new construction. The experts, she said, have shown their work to explain their prices and how their designs can address the problem.

"They're not saying 'Gosh, I read in the newspaper that it's cheaper in Arkansas or Nebraska,'" Wipf Pfeifle said.

Sen. Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, was among the task force members to worry aloud about what the state would lose — including space for things like rehabilitation programming — by placing a cap of \$650 million on the project.

Smith said he had little choice but to support the lower-cost compromise figure, but that "there are going to be corners that will have to be cut in order to get to that number, based on everything that you've seen today."

Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, expressed similar concerns. Based on a question from Mehlhaff, Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko told the group that after closing up the penitentiary, she could likely fill 1,500 beds with the state's current prison population.

"We might build a facility that is overcrowded the day we move in," Mehlhaff said, adding that spending \$600 million of saved-up money without solving the problem would be "a poor stewardship of taxpayer money."

Even so, Mehlhaff said, he recognizes that his fellow lawmakers need to be willing to move forward. Mehlhaff moved that the task force recommend the Legislature to direct the Department of Corrections to "come up with a plan" to build 1,500 beds "in the most efficient way possible," with 300 beds for lower-security inmates.

Attorney General and task force member Marty Jackley suggested a \$650 million price cap as an amendment.

That addition was "not necessarily friendly," the Mehlhaff said, "but if we could move the ball forward, I could accept that."

Before the final vote, both Venhuizen and Hansen, a 2026 gubernatorial candidate, lauded the result as a win. Venhuizen said the task force had produced a workable compromise. Hansen said the group was able to find a location that, unlike the original Lincoln County proposal, is palatable to neighbors.

When asked if the lower price might force the Legislature to build a facility meant to last less than 100 years, Venhuizen said "I would rather build it smaller" than cheaper.

Compromises will need to be made, he said, but those decisions will need to come from the Legislature.



Hansen said he also wants to see a durable facility. He couldn't speculate on what kinds of compromises might be necessary, but said there's no question that a higher price tag is off the table.

"We'll have to see what these guys bring to the Legislature," Hansen said of the design team.

*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.*

## USDA chief outlines plan to block China from U.S. farmland ownership

**South Dakota governor signs letter in support of plan**

**BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JULY 8, 2025 5:23 PM**

President Donald Trump's administration will pursue a ban on Chinese ownership of U.S. farmland as part of an effort to strengthen farm security, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said Tuesday.

Appearing alongside other Cabinet officials, Republican governors and members of Congress at an event outside the U.S. Department of Agriculture headquarters in Washington, D.C., Rollins announced a department initiative to block "foreign countries of concern" from owning U.S. agriculture lands.

Rollins said officials will even try to revoke lands already owned by China-backed entities.

The administration will "take swift legislative and executive action to ban the purchase of American farmland by Chinese nationals and other foreign adversaries," she said.

The executive branch will also work with state and local officials "to do everything within our ability, including presidential authorities, to claw back what has already been purchased by China and other foreign adversaries."

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the nation's food supply was a national security issue on par with energy and water supplies.

### Plan details

The seven-part initiative, titled the National Farm Security Action Plan, is based on the idea that "farm security is national security," according to a preamble to USDA's written plan.

U.S. farmers dominate the global industry, the preamble said.

"Because that dominance is earned and not assured, it is critical we continuously adapt our approach to American agriculture security and elevate it to the top echelon of national security priorities," the document read.

To protect U.S. farmland, the USDA, with help from the Justice Department, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security and cooperative state and local governments, will seek to block investment by foreign adversaries and launch an online tool to help farmers report on potential unknown foreign ownership.

The administration will look for vulnerabilities in the agricultural supply chain and attempt to ensure crop and nutrition programs are not being used to fund terrorist or criminal activity, while cutting down on fraud and abuse. The plan instructs the administration to strengthen biosecurity measures.

The initiative also calls for making sure foreign governments cannot access USDA research grants or other department funding programs.

The USDA will continue to work with the national security establishment and law enforcement to protect the agriculture sector's critical infrastructure, according to the plan.

After Republican Sens. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama and Roger Marshall of Kansas at the event criticized the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an executive branch agency, for not having a spot for the Agriculture secretary, Rollins said she would be joining the panel as of Tuesday afternoon.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 18 of 76

## Farmland security

At the Tuesday event, speakers offered few specifics about the initiative but praised the administration for elevating the issue of foreign investment in farmland.

"A country has to be able to feed itself, fuel itself, and fight for itself to truly be free," Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders said. "We now have a president who understands it and is willing to do everything within his power to make sure the United States continues to be the greatest country on the face of the planet."

"Our farmland is not just dirt, it is our national security, it is our economic future, it is our children's heritage," Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said. "And it is under threat, and the leaders here recognize that."

Speakers emphasized what they called the threat of Chinese ownership of U.S. farmland.

"Today, we tell China to get the hell out of American agriculture," Marshall said.

Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen said his state had moved to ban Chinese equipment from telecommunications infrastructure and has worked to deny Chinese companies from owning farmland. He related a story of stonewalling Chinese-owned Syngenta, which sought a meeting with the governor.

"I said, 'I have no interest in having a meeting,'" he said. "'Have no interest in you being in Nebraska. My suggestion would be to leave. My suggestion would be to get a different job.'"

The company later sold their assets in Nebraska, Pillen said.

## Alabama and China

Tuberville, who is running in the state's gubernatorial race next year, appeared to say China owned 2.2 million acres of farmland in his state alone – a number that actually describes the acres of land owned by all foreign entities in the state. Chinese entities own no acres in Alabama, according to USDA data.

"China is a threat," he said. "They're not a threat. They are dominating us in almost everything that they do because we've sat back and the politicians have been counting their money instead of doing what's right and helping this country stay in the front. We've got to be number one. We can't be number two. We've got to fight back."

"They are coming into our country and buying our farmland. In my state of Alabama alone, they own 2.2 million acres of farmland. That's right in Alabama. Foreign adversaries."

Asked about the comment, Tuberville spokesperson Mallory Jaspers said he was referring not only to Chinese ownership but all foreign adversaries and indicated that he opposed any foreign ownership of U.S. farmland.

"Sen. Tuberville believes American farmland should be owned by Americans," she wrote in an email.

The most recent year-end USDA report on foreign investment, in 2023, showed Chinese-linked investors held about 276,000 acres of U.S. farmland nationwide.

An analysis from the American Farm Bureau, an advocacy group, estimated Chinese investors accounted for only about .02% of all foreign owned U.S. agricultural land.

## GOP governors back plan

In addition to Lee, Huckabee Sanders and Pillen, who spoke outside of USDA, the Republican governors of Indiana, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota and Oklahoma signed a Tuesday letter to Rollins in support of the plan.

"As America First Governors, we firmly stand together in our unwavering support of President Donald J. Trump and his administration's National Farm Security Action Plan," they wrote. "This plan is a critical and decisive response to the invasion of our land, food system, and sovereignty by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)."

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 19 of 76

## Assessment shows potential for gold mine near Lead, company says

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 8, 2025 2:42 PM

A mining company released an initial assessment this week that outlines the potential for an open-pit gold mine northwest of Lead in South Dakota's northern Black Hills.

According to Dakota Gold's new report, its Richmond Hill project could produce between 2.6 million and 3.9 million ounces of gold over 17 to 28 years, based on an analysis of historic data from the previously mined area and 146 exploratory holes drilled in the past three years.

The nearby Wharf Mine, operated by a different company, has produced about 3 million ounces of gold since 1982. The Homestake Mine, also nearby, produced more than 40 million ounces before it closed more than two decades ago.

Not accounting for taxes and production costs, Dakota Gold estimates the Richmond Hill mine could generate \$6.1 billion to \$8.7 billion worth of gold at current prices. Developing the mine would require an estimated initial investment of \$384 million.

The company expects to advance into production as soon as 2029, "firmly placing Dakota Gold as having one of the largest development gold assets in the U.S.," said CEO Robert Quartermain in a news release.

The company will need a large-scale mine permit from the state of South Dakota, and has already taken steps toward producing a socioeconomic study, an initial part of the permitting process. The Richmond Hill deposit sits mostly on previously mined, privately owned land, which Dakota Gold believes could streamline permitting.

The company estimates the mine could generate \$400 million to \$600 million in state severance taxes over its 17- to 28-year lifespan, and hundreds of jobs.

The project would be half a mile north of the Wharf Mine, which is the only operational, large-scale gold mine in the state, operated by Chicago-based Coeur Mining. The Wharf Mine is visible from the Terry Peak Ski Area.

Dakota Gold has offices in Lead and Canada. Richmond Hill is one of the company's multiple exploratory projects in the Homestake mine region.

*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.*

## States scramble to shield hospitals from GOP Medicaid cuts

Hospitals stand to lose hundreds of millions of dollars under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS, STATELINE - JULY 8, 2025 7:00 AM

The giant tax and spending bill President Donald Trump signed into law over the weekend includes the biggest health care spending cuts in U.S. history. In response, states are scrambling to shield their hospitals from the looming loss of hundreds of millions in federal funding.

In Georgia, a key state panel late last month took steps to send more state Medicaid money to hospitals, hoping to maximize federal matching dollars before the cuts take effect. Other states are considering new grant programs that would funnel additional money to rural hospitals. Some state legislatures likely will reconvene to discuss how to fill holes in their Medicaid budgets.

The tax and spending bill cuts more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid, the public health insurance program for people with low incomes that's jointly funded by states and the federal government. Under the measure, payments to hospitals or nursing facilities would probably decrease in at least 29 states, according to an analysis by KFF, a nonprofit health policy group.

Facing such budget shortfalls, states may have to stop offering optional Medicaid benefits such as vision

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 20 of 76

and dental, reduce the rates they pay providers — which could shrink access for Medicaid enrollees — and change eligibility requirements so that fewer people qualify for coverage.

State policymakers and health experts worry the loss of funding also will endanger hospitals, particularly those in rural areas, driving up uncompensated care and forcing them to cut services or close entirely.

“Ultimately, when these hospitals close, what happens? People have to now travel longer for care. They might not even make it,” Dr. Anahita Dua, a vascular surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital and Southern New Hampshire Medical Center, told reporters last week during a news conference hosted by Defend America Action, a group launched to oppose Trump administration policies.

“This is ultimately not only going to affect the lives of the people that are not going to get the care, but also the majority of the hospitals that provide this care, and the people that are employed by those locations,” she said.

Earlier this month, an analysis by the State Health and Value Strategies program at Princeton University estimated that hospitals would lose 18% of their Medicaid funding, nearly \$665 billion over the next 10 years.

Republicans have hailed the megabill — officially titled the One Big Beautiful Bill Act — as one that will cut waste, fraud and abuse in federal programs, secure the U.S. border and spur economic growth. The measure will add at least \$3 trillion to the national debt over the next decade, according to the Congressional Budget Office, and has been scored by some independent economists as likely having little impact on growth. Dollars diverted from Medicaid will go toward the tax cuts prioritized by Trump, along with new spending on immigration control and defense projects.

## Reconvening legislatures

Health policy experts anticipate at least some states will have to pull their legislatures back into session to address gaping budget holes due to the Medicaid cuts.

States can expect to lose 3%-18% of their federal Medicaid funding over 10 years under the law, according to the State Health and Value Strategies program report. Arizona, Kentucky and Virginia would see the largest shares of their Medicaid dollars evaporate.

Colorado Democratic Gov. Jared Polis has said he’s likely to reconvene the legislature.

“Almost certainly if some of these big cuts to Medicaid go through ... we would likely need to reconvene, depending on what Congress does,” Polis said at a news conference in May.

Policymakers in some states have tried to get ahead of expected shortfalls.

In late June, the Georgia Department of Community Health’s advisory board held an emergency meeting. In a unanimous vote, the board approved several measures aimed at increasing the state’s federal Medicaid reimbursement rate.

For example, the state wants to significantly increase Medicaid payments to hospitals that achieve certain goals, such as training Georgia doctors and delivering babies. The move would draw down an additional \$2.1 billion per year in federal money.

“We’re doing our best to be responsive to the Medicaid conversations in Washington,” department Commissioner Russel Carlson told the board at the meeting. “Not overreacting in this 24/7 news cycle, but gathering the best information we can, reading the political environment the best we can, and acting responsibly.”

Other states have filed similar requests with the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and received approval in recent months.

“Of all the Medicaid discussions happening in Washington,” Carlson said, “one of the policy decisions that could potentially, depending on how it ultimately lands, impact Georgians the most is the discussion surrounding directed payment programs.”



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 21 of 76

## Grants for hospitals

Some of the biggest federal savings in the new law come from limiting states' use of a financing tool, known as a provider tax, that enables them to draw down more federal dollars. States use the extra money to boost reimbursement rates for hospitals and to expand coverage.

Some congressional Republicans have decried the maneuver as a "money laundering scheme," but lowering provider taxes will likely punch big holes in state Medicaid budgets.

Meanwhile, some state legislatures are looking at alternate ways to shore up funding for hospitals. A bipartisan bill still under consideration in Pennsylvania would create a rural health care grant program to help pay off student loans for rural doctors, nurses and dentists. Indiana and Oklahoma also considered bills this session to create grant programs for rural hospitals.

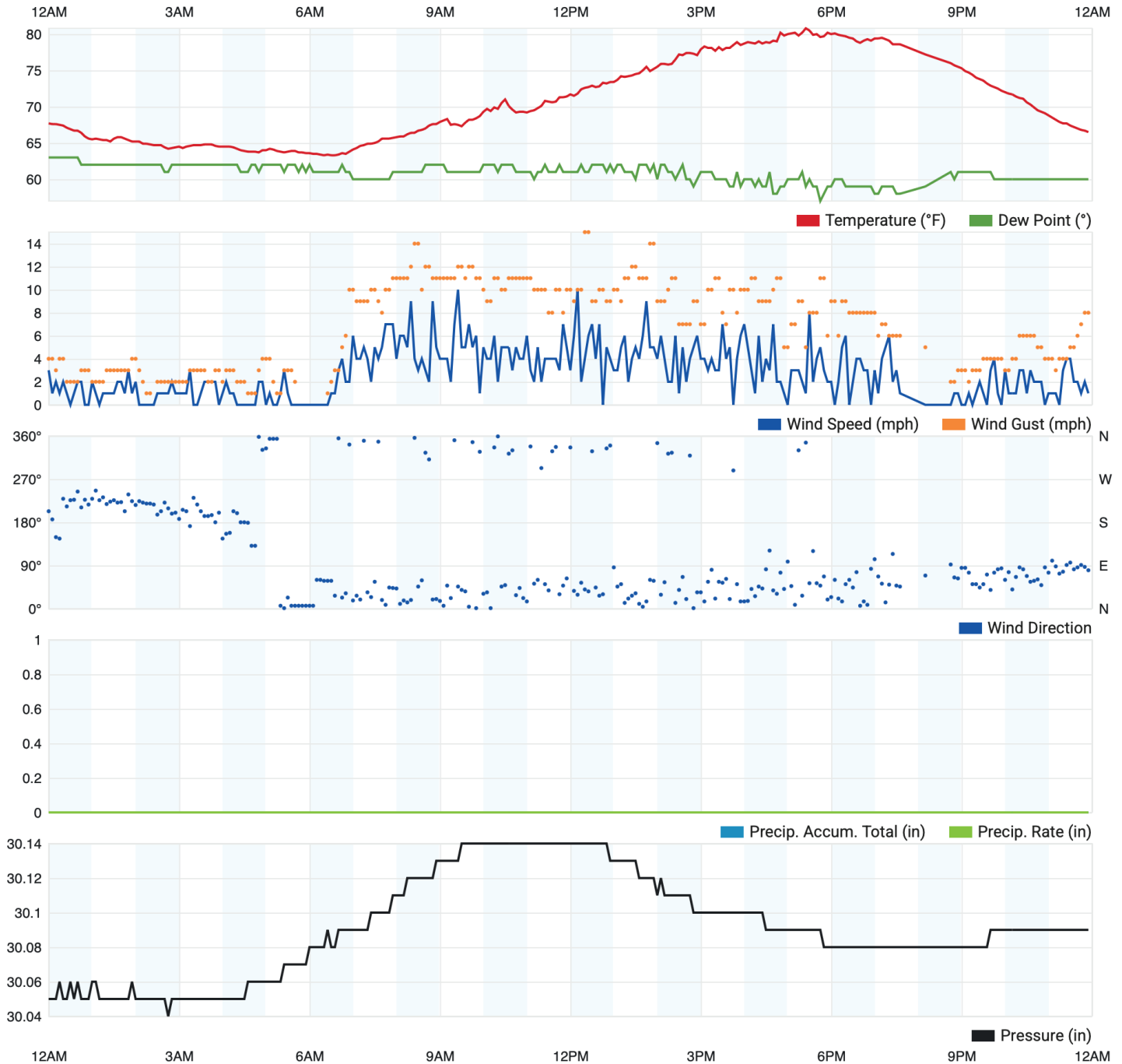
In April, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott announced the state would release more than \$6 million in grants to support struggling rural hospitals.

*Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 22 of 76

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 23 of 76

Today



High: 91 °F

Hot

Tonight



50%

Low: 66 °F

Chance  
T-storms

Thursday



High: 91 °F

Hot

Thursday  
Night



70%

Low: 64 °F

T-storms  
Likely

Friday



30 % 30 %

High: 78 °F

Chance  
T-storms then  
Chance  
Showers

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

### HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

WHAT THIS MEANS:  
Isolated to Scattered Severe  
Storms Possible

### TIMING

**Early this evening into  
late tonight**

### PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL



DAMAGING  
WIND

### SECONDARY THREATS

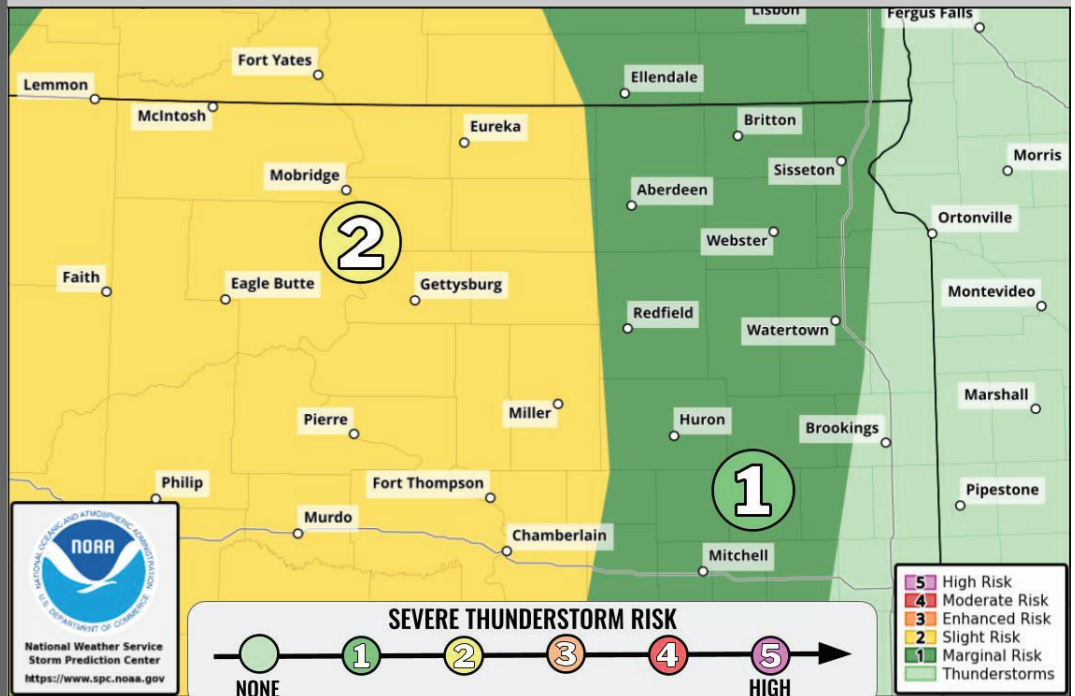


HEAVY  
RAINFALL



ISOLATED TORNADO(ES)  
POSSIBLE

## Slight Risk For Severe Storms Early This Evening into Tonight



There is a Slight risk (level 2 of 5) for isolated to scattered severe storms west of the James River and a Marginal risk (level 1 of 5) east of the James River early this evening into tonight. The main threat will be large hail of an inch to 2 inches and strong wind gusts of 60 to over 75 mph, with secondary threats of an isolated tornado or two as well as heavy rainfall.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 24 of 76

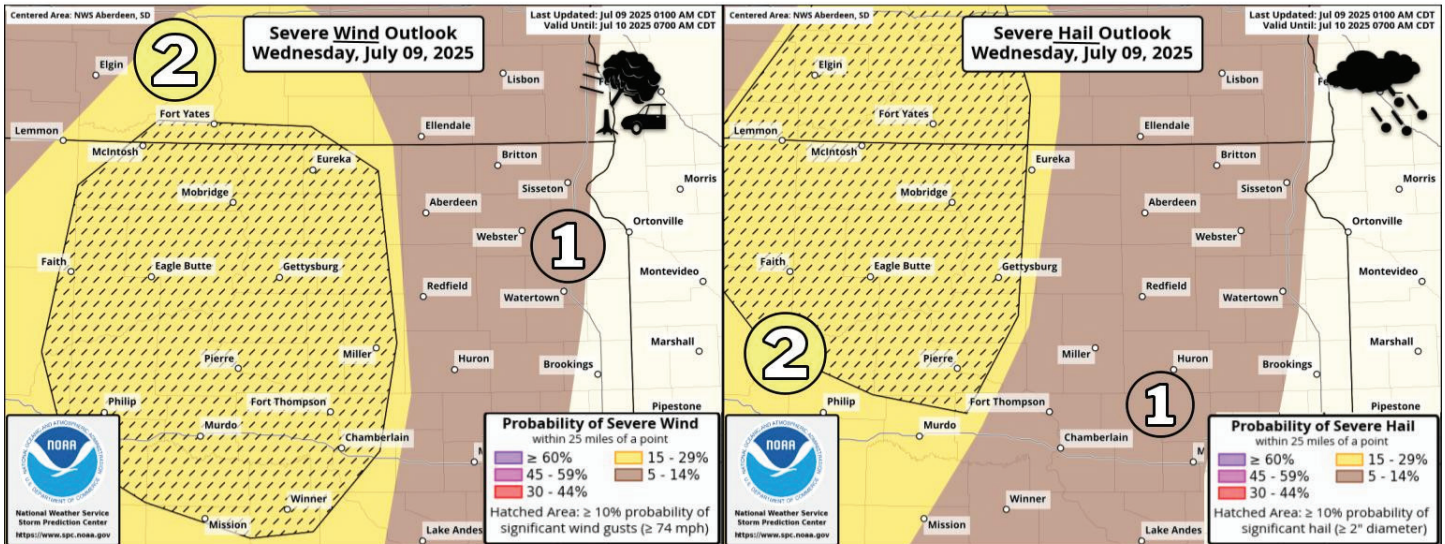


## Specific Hazards This Evening into Tonight

July 9, 2025  
3:10 AM

Wind and hail will be the primary threats.

- **Strong to Severe winds** (60-75+ mph) across areas west of the James River expected early this evening and late tonight.
- **Large Hail** (diameter of 1-2+" ) is also possible across central SD.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The primary severe threats that are possible from isolated to scattered storms will be strong thunderstorm wind gusts of 60 to over 75 mph as well as large hail of an inch to over 2 inches in diameter. The black hatched areas in the image are the areas with the highest chances to see the strongest winds and largest hail.



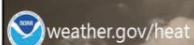
## Heat Index Forecast Today & Thursday

July 9, 2025  
3:10 AM

- Highest heat indices near or above 100°F will be from north central through south central South Dakota
- Cooldown on Friday with highs in the 70s to the lower 80s.
- Heat returns Sunday and Monday with highs in 90s west of the James River

### Staying Safe in the Heat

- ☀ Limit Outdoor Activities
- ☀ Drink Plenty of Water
- ☀ Avoid Alcohol
- ☀ Wear Light Clothing
- ☀ Wear Sunscreen
- ☀ Work Outdoors Early or Very Late in the Day



### Maximum Heat Index Forecast (°F)

	7/9 Wed					7/10 Thu				
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	79	94	97	96	86	73	69	70	85	93
Britton	78	89	92	91	78	72	69	72	84	90
Chamberlain	88	97	99	97	88	76	71	71	87	94
Clark	76	87	90	90	78	72	69	69	76	85
Eagle Butte	83	95	97	94	77	70	66	67	78	88
Eureka	79	92	95	94	77	71	67	67	82	91
Gettysburg	79	94	96	96	78	70	65	67	79	90
McIntosh	83	95	96	92	77	69	65	67	79	90
Milbank	74	83	87	87	76	72	68	69	78	87
Miller	83	95	98	96	83	73	69	69	79	92
Mobridge	85	94	98	97	82	71	68	69	83	91
Murdo	83	95	99	96	82	71	66	67	79	89
Pierre	88	101	103	102	85	74	68	69	85	94
Redfield	79	94	97	96	86	73	69	69	83	91
Sisseton	74	83	86	86	78	73	70	71	79	88
Watertown	75	87	90	90	78	73	68	69	77	85
Webster	75	85	88	88	78	72	70	69	77	86
Wheaton	74	81	84	83	75	72	69	69	77	86



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 25 of 76

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 81 °F at 5:26 PM**

**High Heat Index: 81 °F at 5:00 PM**

**Low Temp: 63 °F at 6:36 AM**

**Wind: 15 mph at 12:18 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 31 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 115 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 1981

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.05

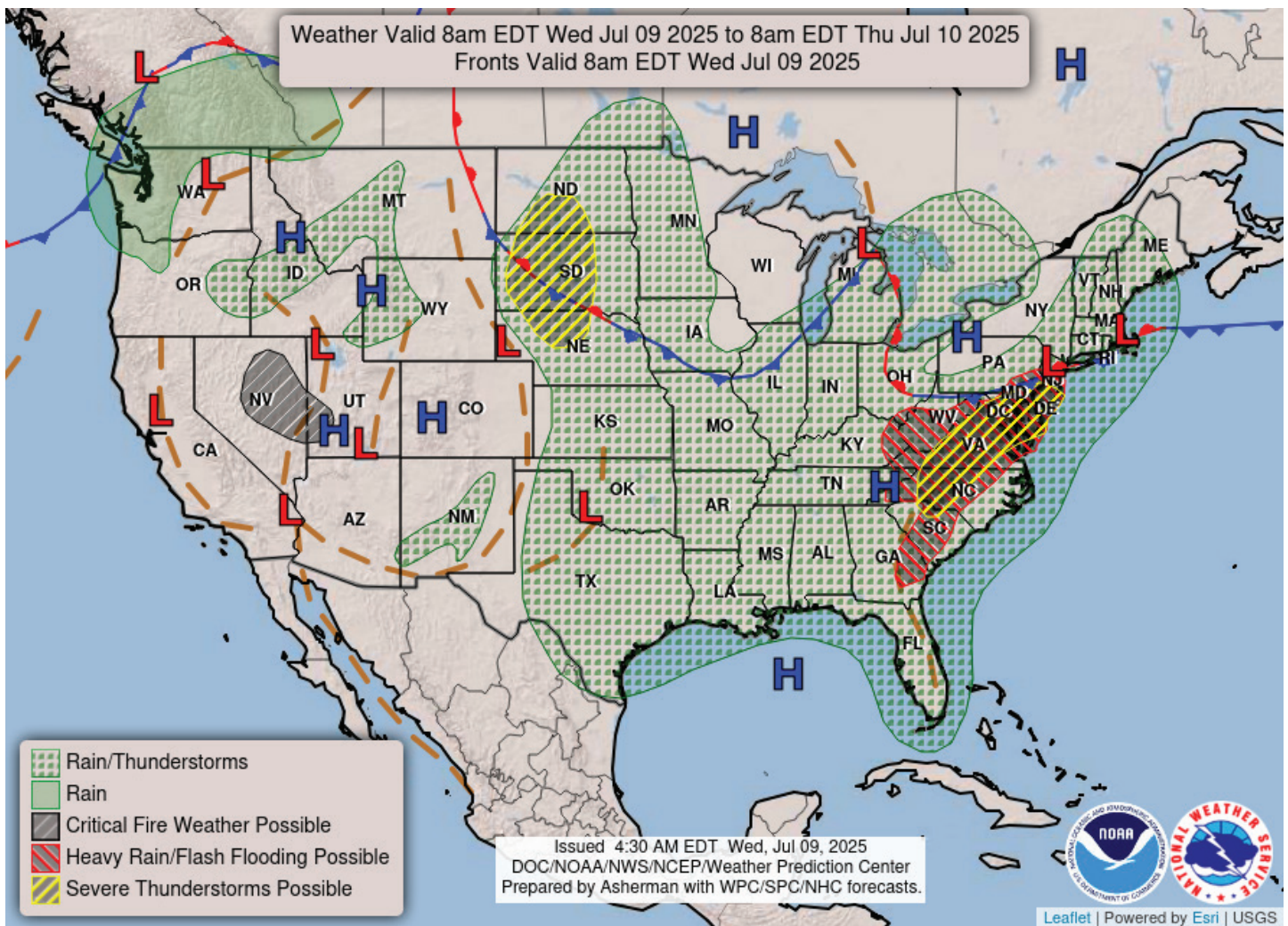
Precip to date in July: 1.71

Average Precip to date: 12.06

Precip Year to Date: 11.83

Sunset Tonight: 9:23:26 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:52:52 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 26 of 76

## Today in Weather History

July 9, 1938: A deadly, estimated F4 tornado moved ESE across the eastern edge of Andover to the north of Bristol. Seventeen buildings were destroyed at Andover, and at least one home was completely swept away. Seven homes and a church also suffered damage. One person was killed at the western edge of Andover, and a couple died in a house at the southern side of town. About two hours later, another estimated F4 tornado moved ENE from 2 miles northeast of White, South Dakota in Brookings County to Hendricks, Minnesota. Only one person was injured from this storm.

July 9, 1972: Wind gusts up to 89 mph caused considerable damage in the Pierre and Oahe Dam area. A drive-in movie screen was destroyed. A camper trailer was turned over pinning seven members of a family inside. Five of them were hospitalized. Numerous trees were uprooted at the Oahe Dam campground. A tourist information building was caved in. Hail broke out car windows on ten vehicles.

July 9, 2009: Severe storms developed over Fall River County and moved eastward across southwestern and south central South Dakota. The thunderstorms produced large hail and strong wind gusts. Two tornadoes were observed in Todd County, and two tornadoes touched down in southern Tripp County. A small EF-1 tornado tracked across Dog Ear Township from 311th Avenue to near the intersection of 289th Street and 312th Avenue, on a little over a one-mile track. The storm blew down large cottonwood trees.

July 9, 2013: A pair of severe storms moved across northeastern South Dakota during the evening hours of the 9th. These storms caused extensive damage to crops, mainly west of Frederick in Brown County where beans and corn fields were destroyed. As the storms moved from Barnard, through Columbia, and into the Groton area, the hail increased to baseball size. There was also some structural damage to siding along with broken windows.

1860 - A hot blast of air in the middle of a sweltering summer pushed the mercury up to 115 degrees at Fort Scott and Lawrence, KS. (David Ludlum)

1882 - Ice formed on the streets of Cheyenne, WY, during a rare summer freeze. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature hit an all-time record high of 106 degrees at the Central Park Observatory in New York City, a record which lasted until LaGuardia Airport hit 107 degrees on July 3rd in 1966. (The Weather Channel)

1968 - Columbus, MS received 15.68 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1979: Hurricane Bob was born in the Gulf of America, becoming the first Atlantic Hurricane to be given a male name.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Michigan. A tornado near Munising, MI, destroyed part of a commercial dog kennel, and one of the missing dogs was later found unharmed in a tree top half a mile away. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Alpena, MI, and Buffalo, NY, suffered through their sixth straight day of record heat. The percentage of total area in the country in the grips of severe to extreme drought reached 43 percent, the fourth highest total of record. The record of 61 percent occurred during the summer of 1934. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms produced very heavy rain in southern Lower Michigan and northern Indiana. Up to 5.6 inches of rain was reported in Berrien County, MI. Sioux Falls SD reported a record high of 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1997: Torrential rains in the Carpathian Mountains caused severe flooding in the Czech Republic, Poland, and German. In all, 104 people died as a result of the deluge. In the aftermath, authorities from each country blamed the others for the extent of the disaster.

2007: The Argentine capital experiences its first major snowfall since June 22, 1918, as wet snow spreads a thin white mantle over the area. The storm hits on Argentina's Independence Day holiday thus adding to a festive air. Thousands of Argentines cheer the event, throwing snowballs in the streets. Local radio stations dust off an old tango song inspired by the 1918 snowfall: What a night!



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 27 of 76



"Yes, we do look forward to the day when we will meet in the sweet by and by," said the aging evangelist with the volume of his voice rising, "but right now we live in the nasty now and now!"

I wonder what he would say today - some fifty years later.

Wherever we look today nasty seems to be more and more predominate and the sweet by and by more enticing. Evil and wickedness, immorality and indecency confront us constantly.

What once made most people blush and gasp rarely causes them to turn their eyes from lewd scenes or pictures. Advertisements and marketing strategies are now designed to exploit what was once pure and sacred, beautiful and honorable.

What once was unimaginable is now commonplace and common. But God's laws have not changed.

"In the way of righteousness there is life, along that path is immortality," wrote Solomon. He was not writing of heaven as we now understand it from the New Testament. It was a "hint" of things to be revealed as God unfolded His message through the risen Christ.

There is no doubt about the fact that "the way" of the righteous points to the "path of immortality." Clearly it looks beyond this world and into the next.

It reflects the insight of David when he wrote, "And I - in righteousness will see your face, when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness."

We also have the words of Job: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth (and) in my flesh I will see God; with my own eyes - I and not another. My heart yearns..."

Heaven awaits those who accept Christ!

Today's Prayer: How blest we are, Father, to know that "the way" is Your way and will lead us into Your presence. We are so blest to have eternal life through You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "In the way of righteousness there is life, along that path is immortality." Proverbs 12:28

*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*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 28 of 76

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 29 of 76



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.08.25

4 6 38 44 62 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$80,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 54 Mins 38 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.07.25

8 18 27 31 41 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,650,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 9 Mins 38 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.08.25

16 26 27 34 43 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 24 Mins 38 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.05.25

1 2 14 19 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$48,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 24 Mins 38 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.07.25

14 17 49 52 68 7

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 53 Mins 37 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.07.25

33 35 58 61 69 25

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$216,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 53 Mins 37 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 30 of 76

## 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

### **Philadelphia workers and city reach a deal to end strike that halted residential trash pickup**

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A union representing thousands of city workers in Philadelphia and the city have reached a deal to end a more than weeklong strike that halted residential curbside trash pickup and affected other services, officials said Wednesday.

Nearly 10,000 blue-collar employees from District Council 33 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees had walked off the job July 1, seeking better pay and benefits after failing to agree with the city on a new contract.

The tentative agreement was announced on what would have been the ninth day of the strike. That period, which included the Fourth of July holiday weekend, created a backlog of trash. Some drop-off centers were overflowing.

Mayor Cherelle Parker announced the end of the strike and the agreement with the union on social media. "The work stoppage involving the District Council 33 and the City of Philadelphia is OVER," she posted.

"We have reached a tentative agreement with District Council 33, which must be ratified by its membership on a new three-year contract that, coupled with the one-year contract extension we agreed to last fall, will increase DC 33 members' pay by 14 percent over my four years in office."

Parker said, "we'll have much more to say about this historic deal" at City Hall.

District Council 33 is the largest of four major unions representing city workers. Its membership includes 911 dispatchers, trash collectors, water department workers and many others. Police and firefighters weren't part of the strike.

"The strike is over! Details forthcoming," the union posted on Facebook Wednesday morning.

Union President Greg Boulware briefly spoke with reporters after the deal was reached. "We did the best we could with the circumstances we had in front of us," he said.

The city had designated about 60 sites as drop-off centers for residential trash, but some were overflowing, while striking workers on hand asked residents not to cross the picket line. Most libraries across the city are were closed, with support workers and security guards off the job.

### **40 Palestinians killed in Gaza as Netanyahu and Trump meet over a ceasefire**

By WAFAA SHURAF, KAREEM CHEHAYEB, and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — At least 40 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, hospital officials said Wednesday, as international mediators raced to complete a ceasefire deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had a second meeting in two days with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House on Tuesday evening. Trump has been pushing for a ceasefire that might lead to an end to the 21-month war in Gaza. Israel and Hamas are considering a new U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal that would pause the war, free Israeli hostages and send much-needed aid into Gaza.

Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis said the dead included 17 women and 10 children. It said one strike killed 10 people from the same family, including three children.

The Israeli military did not comment on specific strikes, but said it had struck more than 100 targets across Gaza over the past day, including militants, booby-trapped structures, weapons storage facilities, missile launchers and tunnels. Israel accuses Hamas of hiding weapons and fighters among civilians.

Struggle to secure food and water

Many Palestinians are watching the ceasefire negotiations with trepidation, desperate for an end to the war.

In the sprawling coastal Muwasi area, where many live in ad-hoc tents after being displaced from their

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 32 of 76

homes, Abeer al-Najjar said she had struggled during the constant bombardments to secure sufficient food and water for her family. "I pray to God that there would be a pause, and not just a pause where they would lie to us with a month or two, then start doing what they're doing to us again. We want a full ceasefire."

Her husband, Ali al-Najjar, said life has been especially tough in the summer, with no access to drinking water in a crowded tent in the Middle Eastern heat. "We hope this would be the end of our suffering and we can rebuild our country again," he said, before running through a crowd with two buckets to fill them from a water truck.

People chased the vehicle as it drove away to another location.

Amani Abu-Omar said the water truck comes every four days, not enough for her dehydrated children. She complained of skin rashes in the summer heat. She said she was desperate for a ceasefire but fears she would be let down again. "We had expected ceasefires on many occasions, but it was for nothing," she said.

The war started after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Most of the hostages have been released in earlier ceasefires. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed more than 57,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, which is under Gaza's Hamas-run government, doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants. The U.N. and other international organizations see its figures as the most reliable statistics on war casualties.

Netanyahu and Trump meet again

Netanyahu told reporters in the Capitol on Tuesday that he and Trump see "eye to eye" on the need to destroy Hamas. He added that the cooperation and coordination between Israel and the U.S. is currently the best it has ever been during Israel's 77-year-history.

Later this week, Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to head to the Qatari capital of Doha to continue indirect negotiations with Hamas on the ceasefire proposal.

Witkoff said late Tuesday that three key areas of disagreement had been resolved, but that one key issue still remained. He did not elaborate.

After the second meeting, Netanyahu said he and Trump also discussed the "great victory" over Iran from Israeli and American strikes during the 12-day war that ended two weeks ago.

"Opportunities have been opened here for expanding the circle of peace, for expanding the Abraham Accords," said Netanyahu, referring to normalization agreements between Israel and multiple Arab nations that were brokered by Trump in his first term. Washington has been pushing for normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

## Russia launches another record drone attack on Ukraine, Ukrainian officials say

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired a record 728 Shahed and decoy drones at Ukraine overnight, as well as 13 cruise and ballistic missiles, the Ukrainian air force said Wednesday, in the latest escalation after weeks of mounting Russian aerial and ground attacks in the more than three-year war.

The city of Lutsk, which lies in Ukraine's northwest along the border with Poland and Belarus, was the hardest hit, though 10 other regions were also struck, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Lutsk is home to airfields used by the Ukrainian army. Cargo planes and fighter jets routinely fly over the city. Western regions of Ukraine are a crucial logistical backbone in the war, as airfields and depots there receive vital foreign military aid before forwarding it to other parts of the country. Russian long-range attacks have increasingly sought to disrupt those supply corridors.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that its forces took aim at Ukrainian air bases and that "all the designated targets have been hit."



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 33 of 76**

Russia has recently tried to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses by launching massive aerial assaults, including adding more decoy drones to its attacks. Russia launched its previous largest aerial assault late in the night of July 4 into the following day, with the biggest prior to that occurring less than a week earlier.

Russia's bigger army has also launched a new drive to punch through parts of the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where short-handed Ukrainian forces are under heavy strain.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he's "not happy" with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who hasn't budged from his ceasefire and peace demands since Trump took office in January and began to push for a settlement.

Trump said Monday that the U.S. would have to send more weapons to Ukraine, just days after Washington paused critical weapons deliveries to Kyiv amid uncertainty over the U.S. administration's commitment to Ukraine's defense.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Trump "has quite a tough style in terms of the phrasing he uses," adding that Moscow hopes to "continue our dialogue with Washington and our course aimed at repairing the badly damaged bilateral ties."

Zelenskyy said that the Kremlin was "making a point" with the overnight attack on western parts of Ukraine, as U.S.-led peace efforts flounder. He urged Ukraine's partners to impose stricter sanctions on Russian oil and those who help finance the Kremlin's war by buying it.

"Everyone who wants peace must act," Zelenskyy said. The Ukrainian leader was due to meet Pope Leo XIV on Wednesday during a visit to Italy.

Two people were wounded in the Kyiv region during the overnight barrage, officials said, as emergency crews continued to assess the damage.

Poland scrambled its fighter jets and put its armed forces on the highest level of alert in response to Russia's attack, the Polish Armed Forces Operational Command wrote in an X post.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen warned Tuesday that Russia could pose a credible security threat to the European Union by the end of the decade. She called for defense industries in Europe and Ukraine to be ramped up within five years.

Ukraine's air defenses shot down 296 drones and seven missiles during the overnight attack, while 415 more drones were lost from radars or jammed, an air force statement said.

Ukrainian interceptor drones, developed to counter Russia's Shahed drones, are increasingly effective, Zelenskyy said, noting that many targets were intercepted and that domestic production of anti-aircraft drones is being scaled up in partnership with some Western countries.

Western military analysts say Russia is boosting its drone manufacturing and could soon be capable of launching 1,000 drones a night at Ukraine.

"Russia continues to expand its domestic drone production capacity amid the ever-growing role of tactical drones in front-line combat operations and Russia's increasingly large nightly long-range strike packages against Ukraine," the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said late Tuesday.

Ukraine has also built up its own offensive drone threat, reaching deep into Russia with some spectacular long-range strikes.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Wednesday that air defenses downed 86 Ukrainian drones over six Russian regions overnight, including the Moscow region.

Flights were temporarily suspended at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport and the international airport of Kaluga, south of Moscow.

The governor of Russia's Kursk border region, Alexander Khinshtein, said that a Ukrainian drone attack on the region's capital city just before midnight killed three people and wounded seven others, including a 5-year-old boy.

## Indian workers go on a daylong nationwide strike against Modi's economic reforms

By RAJESH ROY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of workers across India went on a nationwide strike on Wednesday in opposition to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to privatize state-run companies and other economic reforms, partially disrupting public services and manufacturing.

A coalition of 10 major trade unions that represent laborers and several other groups that speak for farmers and rural workers called for the one-day industrial action, dubbing it Bharat Bandh, "Hindi for 'Shut Down India.'"

The strikes pose fresh challenges for Modi's efforts to attract foreign companies by easing labor laws to streamline business operations and boost productivity.

Unions that helped organize the strikes say that coal mining operations were halted in several states while some trains came to a grinding halt as protestors blocked the network, and that banks, insurance companies and supermarkets were disrupted.

An Associated Press photographer in the eastern city of Kolkata saw protestors walking in a rally at a local railway station, some shouting slogans against the government and burning an effigy of Modi. Another, in the financial capital Mumbai, witnessed bank employees shouting slogans against the privatization of state-run banks.

The Press Trust of India reported traffic in eastern India's Odisha state was halted in some areas, while in the southern state of Kerala, shops, offices and schools remained closed, with roads looking deserted.

The government hasn't formally commented on the workers' strike. It usually dismisses assertions made by these unions.

The workers' demands include higher wages, halting privatization of state-run companies, withdrawal of new labor laws and filling vacancies in the government sector. The farmers' groups also want the government to increase the minimum purchase price for crops such as wheat and rice.

Modi's government has opened some sectors of the Indian economy to foreign direct investments and offered billions of dollars in financial incentives to attract local manufacturing. It has also aimed to bridge the budget deficit with a drive to privatize loss-making state-run companies and unveiled new labor laws that promise workers higher statutory minimum wages, social security and healthcare.

However, the trade unions aren't convinced and want the new laws to be scrapped.

"The government intends to suppress workers in the name of ease of doing business through labor reforms," said Amarjeet Kaur, general secretary of All India Trade Union Congress, a prominent union taking part in the strike.

Tapan Sen, general secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, or CITU, which is aligned with a communist party and a key trade union that is part of the group that called for the strike, said he got reports of protesting workers blocking several national highways and rail routes.

"Coal mining operations in most states have come to a halt. Services in banking, insurance, manufacturing and petroleum refineries are impacted too," said Sen.

A. Soundararajan, a prominent trade union leader in the southern state of Tamil Nadu said the police detained around 30,000 protesting workers on Wednesday. Manufacturing activities at several companies have also been hit, he said.

### Dozens of earthquakes and aftershocks cause two deaths in Guatemala

Two people died when huge rocks fell on their vehicle in Guatemala, after dozens of earthquakes were recorded in a matter of hours, authorities said.

The two men killed were traveling in a pickup truck on a local road in the department of Escuintla Tuesday when the rocks fell from a hillside onto the vehicle, firefighters said.

More than 37 earthquakes and aftershocks with magnitudes ranging from 3.0 to 5.6 were reported in Guatemala Tuesday afternoon, said Edwin Rodas, director of the National Institute for Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology.

The tremors were felt as far away as El Salvador and resulted in the evacuation of buildings, landslides, and minor property damage, authorities said.

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo said at a press conference Tuesday that the main epicenter of the quakes was in the department of Sacatepéquez, with aftershocks in the regions of Escuintla and Guatemala department.

At least five people were buried by landslides and two of them had already been rescued, he added.

The National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction declared an orange alert, the second highest on the emergency scale.

The US Geological Survey reported a 4.8 magnitude earthquake at 3:11 p.m. local time, 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) southwest of the town of Amatitlán, south of Guatemala City, with a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles). It then reported another 5.7 magnitude quake 3 kilometers (2 miles) northwest of San Vicente Pacaya, a municipality in Escuintla, in the south-central region of the country. Another 4.8 magnitude quake was reported 6 kilometers (4 miles) northwest of Palín, also in Escuintla.

## Rescuers search for survivors after Houthi attack on cargo ship in the Red Sea

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Rescuers launched a search Wednesday for survivors of a Liberian-flagged cargo ship that came under attack from Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Red Sea, authorities said. At least three mariners were killed and two were wounded.

The attack on the Greek-owned Eternity C follows the Iranian-backed Houthis attacking another vessel, the bulk carrier Magic Seas, on Sunday in the Red Sea, which they subsequently sank. The assaults are the first Houthi attacks on shipping since late 2024 in the waterway that had begun to see more ships pass through in recent weeks.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center, run by the British military, said in an advisory that "search and rescue operations commenced overnight" for those who had been aboard the Eternity C. Five crew members so far had been rescued, the UKMTO said.

The ship's status could not be immediately confirmed, though it had sustained "significant damage" and had lost all propulsion.

The bulk carrier had been heading north toward the Suez Canal when it came under fire by men in small boats and bomb-carrying drones Monday night. The security guards on board fired their weapons. The European Union's Operation Aspides and the private security firm Ambrey both reported those details.

While the Houthis haven't claimed the attack — they can take days to do so— Yemen's exiled government and the EU force blamed the rebels, as did the U.S. State Department.

"These attacks demonstrate the ongoing threat that Iran-backed Houthi rebels pose to freedom of navigation and to regional economic and maritime security," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said. "The United States has been clear: We will continue to take necessary action to protect freedom of navigation and commercial shipping from Houthi terrorist attacks."

The EU force offered the casualty information, saying one of the wounded crew lost his leg. The crew remains stuck on board the vessel, which is now drifting in the Red Sea.

## Searchers in helicopters and on horseback scour Texas flood debris for the missing

By NADIA LATHAN and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

HUNT, Texas (AP) — As the search in Texas continued Wednesday for more than 160 people believed to be missing days after a destructive wall of water killed over 100 people, the full extent of the catastrophe had yet to be revealed as officials warned that unaccounted victims could still be found amid the massive piles of debris that stretch for miles.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 36 of 76**

"Know this: We will not stop until every missing person is accounted for. Know this also: There very likely could be more added to that list," Gov. Greg Abbott said during a news conference Tuesday.

Abbott said officials have been seeking more information about those who were in the state's Hill Country during the Fourth of July holiday but did not register at a camp or a hotel and may have been in the area without many people knowing.

The lowlands of Kerr County along the Guadalupe River, where most of the victims of the flash flooding have been recovered so far, are filled with youth camps and campgrounds, including Camp Mystic, the century-old all-girls Christian summer camp where at least 27 campers and counselors died. Officials said Tuesday that five campers and one counselor have still not been found.

Crews in airboats, helicopters and on horseback along with hundreds of volunteers are part of one of the largest search operations in Texas history.

The flash flood is the deadliest from inland flooding in the U.S. since Colorado's Big Thompson Canyon flood on July 31, 1976, killed 144 people, said Bob Henson, a meteorologist with Yale Climate Connections. That flood surged through a narrow canyon packed with people on a holiday weekend, Colorado's centennial celebration.

Public officials in charge of locating the victims are facing intensifying questions about who was in charge of monitoring the weather and warning that floodwaters were barreling toward camps and homes.

Abbott promised that the search for victims will not stop until everyone is found. He also said President Donald Trump has pledged to provide whatever relief Texas needs to recover. Trump plans to visit the state Friday.

Scenes of devastation at Camp Mystic

Outside the cabins at Camp Mystic where the girls had slept, mud-splattered blankets and pillows were scattered on a grassy hill that slopes toward the river. Also in the debris were pink, purple and blue luggage decorated with stickers.

Among those who died at the camp were a second grader who loved pink sparkles and bows, a 19-year-old counselor who enjoyed mentoring young girls and the camp's 75-year-old director.

The flash floods erupted before daybreak Friday after massive rains sent water speeding down hills into the Guadalupe River, causing it to rise 26 feet (8 meters) in less than an hour. Some campers had to swim out of cabin windows to safety while others held onto a rope as they made their way to higher ground.

Just two days before the flooding, Texas inspectors had signed off on the camp's emergency planning. But five years of inspection reports released to The Associated Press don't provide any details about how the camp would instruct campers about evacuating and specific duties each staff member and counselor would be assigned.

Although it's difficult to attribute a single weather event to climate change, experts say a warming atmosphere and oceans make catastrophic storms more likely.

Where were the warnings?

Questions mounted about what, if any, actions local officials took to warn campers and residents who were in the scenic area long known to locals as "flash flood alley."

Leaders in Kerr county, where searchers have found about 90 bodies, said their first priority is recovering victims, not reviewing what happened in the moments before the flash floods.

Kerr County Judge Rob Kelly, the county's chief elected official, said the county does not have a warning system.

Generations of families in the Hill Country have known the dangers. A 1987 flood forced the evacuation of a youth camp in the town of Comfort and swamped buses and vans. Ten teenagers were killed.

Local leaders have talked for years about the need for a warning system. Kerr County sought a nearly \$1 million grant eight years ago for such a system, but the request was turned down by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Local residents balked at footing the bill themselves, Kelly said.

Recovery and cleanup goes on

The bodies of 30 children were among those that have been recovered in the county, which is home to Camp Mystic and several other summer camps, the sheriff said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 37 of 76

The devastation spread across several hundred miles in central Texas all the way to just outside the capital of Austin.

Aidan Duncan escaped just in time after hearing the muffled blare of a megaphone urging residents to evacuate Riverside RV Park in the Hill Country town of Ingram.

All his belongings — a mattress, sports cards, his pet parakeet's bird cage — now sit caked in mud in front of his home.

"What's going on right now, it hurts," the 17-year-old said. "I literally cried so hard."

## What Trump's big tax law could mean for the youngest Americans

By MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The impact of the massive spending bill that President Donald Trump signed into law on Independence Day is expected to filter down to infants and toddlers — a segment of the population that is particularly vulnerable to cuts to the federal social safety net.

Many middle-class and wealthy families will see benefits from the new legislation, but programs that help low-income families keep babies healthy have been cut back. While state money funds public schools and preschool in some cases, programs supporting the youngest children are largely backed by the federal government.

The law extends tax cuts that Trump passed during his first term in office and pours billions more into border security as the president seeks to broaden his crackdown on immigration. To pay for these initiatives, the law cuts Medicaid and food stamps — programs relied upon by poor households with children — by more than \$1 trillion.

The legislation Republicans called Trump's "big beautiful bill" is set to deliver some gains for families with children. It increases tax credits, including one that now allows parents to deduct up to \$2,200 per child from their tax bills. And it introduces investment accounts for newborns dubbed "Trump Accounts," each seeded with \$1,000 from the government.

Still, advocates say they do not make up for what children are likely to lose under the new law. And they fear what comes next, as the next Trump budget proposes more cuts to programs that help parents and babies.

Medicaid cuts could add to strains on families

Over 10 million Americans rely on Medicaid for health care. About 40% of births are covered by Medicaid. Newborns, too, qualify for it when their mothers have it.

The new law doesn't take little kids or their parents off Medicaid. It institutes Medicaid work requirements for childless adults and adults with children over the age of 13. But pediatricians warn the cuts will be felt broadly, even by those who do not use Medicaid.

The Medicaid cuts are expected to put a financial strain on health care providers, forcing them to cut their least profitable services. That's often pediatrics, where young patients are more likely to use Medicaid, said Lisa Costello, a West Virginia pediatrician who chairs the federal policy committee for the American Association of Pediatrics.

The ripple effects could exacerbate an existing shortage of pediatricians and hospital beds for children.

"Any cuts to that program are going to trickle down and impact children, whether that's pediatric practices who depend on Medicaid to be able to stay open or children's hospitals," Costello said.

States also use Medicaid to pay for programs that go beyond conventional medical care, including therapies for young children with disabilities. Under the new law, states will foot a greater portion of the bill for Medicaid, meaning optional programs are at risk of getting cut.

Advocates worry that if an adult loses Medicaid coverage, it could ratchet up household stress and make it more difficult for parents to make ends meet, both of which can negatively impact youngsters. And parents who lose their health insurance are less likely to take their children to the doctor.

"When parents lose their health insurance, they often think that their children also are no longer eligible, even if that's not the case," said Cynthia Osborne, a professor of early education and the executive direc-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 38 of 76

tor of the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center at Vanderbilt University.

The law increases tax credits for parents who qualify

The law increases the child tax credit to \$2,200 per child, up from \$2,000. But parents who don't earn enough to pay income tax will still not see the benefit, and many will only see a partial benefit.

The measure also contains two provisions intended to help families pay for child care, which in many places costs more than a mortgage. First, it boosts the tax credit parents receive for spending money on child care. The bill also expands a program that gives companies tax credits for providing child care for their employees.

Both measures have faced criticism for generally benefiting larger companies and wealthier households.

"It's a corporate business tax break," said Bruce Lesley, president of the advocacy group First Focus on Children. "It makes their child care dependent upon working for an employer who has the credit."

'Trump Accounts' will be opened with \$1,000 for newborns

The law launches a program that creates investment accounts for newborn children. The "Trump Accounts" are to be seeded with \$1,000 from the government, and children will be able to use the money when they become adults to start a new business, put the money toward a house or go to school.

Unlike other baby bond programs, which generally target disadvantaged groups, the federal program will be available to families of all incomes.

The program's backers have pitched the accounts as a way to give young people a boost as they reach adulthood and teach them about the benefits of investing. Critics have argued that families in poverty have more immediate needs and that their children should receive a larger endowment if the goal is to help level the playing field.

A food assistance program faces cuts

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) faces the largest cut in its history under the law. It will, for the first time, require parents to work to qualify for the benefit if their children are 14 or older. But even households with younger children could feel the impact.

The law kicks some immigrants — including those with legal status — off food assistance. It makes it more difficult for individuals to qualify by changing how it considers their utility bills.

SNAP has historically been funded by the federal government, but under the new law, states will have to shoulder some of the financial burden. Cash-strapped governments could decide to implement new requirements that would make it more difficult for people to qualify, said Katie Bergh, a senior policy analyst with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Some states may decide to exit the program altogether.

"When young children lose access to that healthy nutrition, it impacts them for the rest of their lives," Bergh said. "This bill fundamentally walks away from a long-standing nationwide commitment to making sure that low-income children in every state can receive the food assistance that they need."

## Convicted murderer Derrick Groves eludes law enforcement as last New Orleans jail escapee on the run

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Nearly two months after 10 inmates escaped from a New Orleans jail by crawling through a hole behind a toilet, authorities have recaptured all but the man with the most violent rap sheet: Derrick Groves.

Following the May 16 jailbreak, law enforcement tracked down three escapees within 24 hours and most of the others within the next few weeks. While some of the fugitives roamed through nightlife hotspots and another made Instagram posts, Groves has so far kept a low profile.

The 28-year-old New Orleans native has the most at stake, authorities say. Last year, a jury convicted Groves of killing two people after he opened fire on a family block party with an assault rifle in what prosecutors said was a feud with rival drug dealers.

Groves faces life imprisonment without parole, but administrative delays have kept him in jail for years rather than a more secure prison facility.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 39 of 76

"He's got nothing to lose," said Forrest Ladd, an Orleans Parish assistant district attorney who prosecuted Groves. "That's a dangerous thing from anybody, much less somebody capable of causing mass harm."

How likely is it Groves will be recaptured?

More than 90% of people who escape from U.S. correctional facilities are recaptured within a year, said Bryce Peterson, adjunct professor of criminal justice at John Jay College.

"The longer you are out there, the more likely you are to stay out," said Peterson, though he believes Groves will be caught eventually due to the high level of media attention.

Most escapes occur when low-level offenders seize spontaneous opportunities, Peterson said. The New Orleans jailbreak stands out because of its level of "sophistication and pre-planning" and the alleged roles current and former jail employees played in the escape, he added.

How has Groves avoided law enforcement for so long?

Multiple defense attorneys who have worked with Groves described him as intelligent and polite. Prosecutors in his cases say he is violent, manipulative and remorseless.

"He's the worst human being I've ever come across in my life," said Ladd, the Orleans Parish assistant district attorney. "But he is a very charismatic, and I think that allows him the ability to kind of control people."

A former jail employee who became Groves' girlfriend during his incarceration is accused of helping him coordinate the escape in advance by arranging phone calls that avoided the jail's monitoring system. She is one of at least 16 people — many family members of the escapees — facing charges for providing transport, food, shelter and cash to the fugitives, most of whom stayed within New Orleans.

Several days after the escape, authorities received information that Groves was hiding in the city's Lower Ninth Ward, the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged neighborhood where he grew up, according to court documents.

State and federal authorities declined to provide details on Groves' suspected whereabouts. Louisiana State Police Superintendent Col. Robert Hodges indicated he believes Groves is receiving assistance from friends or family.

"Sometimes we think we are incredibly close," Hodges said during a June 27 news conference, adding that authorities would arrive at a location to find a fugitive "just moved because they have help."

There is a \$50,000 reward for tips leading to Groves' recapture.

Mistrust in the criminal justice system

Likely impeding the search for Groves is widespread skepticism toward law enforcement from city residents following decades of abuse, often against the Black community. In 1994, a corrupt police officer ordered the killing of Groves' grandmother, Kim Groves, after she reported him for beating up a teenager. Her three children settled a federal civil rights lawsuit with the city for \$1.5 million in 2018.

"For my family, it's been like reliving a constant nightmare," Groves' aunt, Jasmine Groves, told WDSU, saying the family has been interrogated and remains under law enforcement surveillance. She has urged her nephew to turn himself in.

Groves' mother and aunt did not respond to The Associated Press' requests for comment for this story.

In 2014, at the age of 17, Groves was arrested and incarcerated for nearly two years on a charge of attempted second-degree murder for which he was later acquitted by a jury, though his own father had testified against him, according to court records and a prosecutor in the case, Mike Trummel.

Tom Shlosman, Groves' defense attorney in that case, said that Groves' prolonged incarceration as a teenager and his grandmother's murder likely undermined his faith in the criminal justice system. Shlosman remembered Groves as "young and scared."

"None of that's going to affect a kid in any positive way," Shlosman said. "And it's certainly not going to instill trust in law enforcement."

A series of killings

Groves, who goes by "Woo," dropped out of school in ninth grade and sold heroin in the Lower Ninth Ward for years, according to court records. The FBI began monitoring his social media while he was still a teenager, and Groves pleaded guilty to federal drug trafficking charges in 2019.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 40 of 76

Groves has been in jail since at least 2019, after his involvement in four killings during an 18-month period. In October 2024, a jury convicted Groves of second-degree murder for using an assault rifle to spray dozens of bullets into a family block party on Mardi Gras, killing 21-year-old Byron Jackson and 26-year-old Jamar Robinson and wounding several others.

Groves later pleaded guilty to manslaughter charges in two separate shootings, according to the Orleans Parish District Attorney's office.

Eyewitnesses in cases involving Groves have been threatened and physically attacked by him, and others were so intimidated they refused to testify against him, according to three current and former prosecutors and court records.

In court, Robinson's aunt, Janis Robinson, said she had cried every night since her nephew died: "I don't know how we are going to get through it."

In response, records show, Groves swore repeatedly at her in court.

## Texas inspectors approved Camp Mystic's disaster plan 2 days before deadly flood, records show

By JIM MUSTIAN, CHRISTOPHER L. KELLER, SEAN MURPHY and RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press  
HUNT, Texas (AP) — Texas inspectors signed off on Camp Mystic's emergency planning just two days before catastrophic flooding killed more than two dozen people at the all-girls Christian summer camp, most of them children.

The Department of State Health Services released records Tuesday showing the camp complied with a host of state regulations regarding "procedures to be implemented in case of a disaster." Among them: instructing campers what to do if they need to evacuate and assigning specific duties to each staff member and counselor.

Five years of inspection reports released to The Associated Press do not offer any details of those plans at Mystic, raising new questions about the camp's preparedness ahead of the torrential July 4 rainfall in flood-prone Texas Hill Country.

The National Weather Service had issued a flood watch for the area July 3 at 1:18 p.m. That danger prompted at least one of the roughly 18 camps along the Guadalupe River to move dozens of campers to higher ground.

The uncertainty about what happened at Mystic comes as local officials have repeatedly dodged questions about who was monitoring the weather and what measures were taken ahead of the flooding.

Tragedy falls on the historic camp

Camp Mystic, established in 1926, did not evacuate and was especially hit hard when the river rose from 14 feet (4.2 meters) to 29.5 feet (9 meters) within 60 minutes in the early morning hours. Flooding on that stretch of the Guadalupe starts at about 10 feet (3 meters).

A wall of water overwhelmed people in cabins, tents and trailers along the river's edge. Some survivors were found clinging to trees.

At least 27 campers and counselors died during the floods, and officials said Tuesday that five campers and one counselor have still not been found. Among the dead was Richard "Dick" Eastland, the camp's beloved director described by campers as a father figure.

Charlotte Lauten, 19, spent nine summers at Camp Mystic, mostly recently in 2023. She said she didn't recall ever receiving instructions as a camper on what to do in the case of a weather emergency.

"I do know that the counselors go through orientation training for a week before camp starts," she said. "They do brief them on all those types of things."

One thing that likely hindered the girls' ability to escape was how dark it would have been, Lauten said. Campers don't have access to their phones while at camp, she said, adding they wouldn't have cell service anyway because of the remote location.

"This is the middle of nowhere and they didn't have power," she said. "It would have been pitch black, like could not see 5 feet in front of you type of darkness. I've never seen stars like there because there's



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 41 of 76

just no light.”

Inspections found no issues

The state inspected Camp Mystic on July 2, the same day the Texas Division of Emergency Management activated emergency response resources ahead of the anticipated flooding.

The inspection found no deficiencies or violations at the camp in a long list of health and safety criteria. The camp had 557 campers and more than 100 staffers at the time between its Guadalupe and Cypress Lake locations.

The disaster plans are required to be posted in all camp buildings but aren’t filed with the state, said Lara Anton, a spokesperson for the Texas Department of State Health Services.

“We do not have them,” Anton said in an email. “You’d have to get it from the camp.”

Camp Mystic did not respond to requests for comment on its emergency plan. In a statement on its website, the camp said it has been “in communication with local and state authorities who are tirelessly deploying extensive resources to search for our missing girls.”

Camps are responsible for developing their own emergency plan. Inspectors evaluate the plans to ensure they meet several state requirements, including procedures for evacuation.

“The inspector checked that they had plans posted for those elements in every building,” Anton said, “and that they had trained staff and volunteers on what to do.”

Camp Mystic is licensed by the state and a member of the Camping Association for Mutual Progress, which says its goal is to “raise health and safety standards” for summer camps. Leaders of that association didn’t return messages.

The American Camp Association said Tuesday that Camp Mystic is not accredited with that organization, whose standards focus on safety and risk management. Spokesperson Lauren McMillin declined to say whether the camp previously had been accredited with the association, which describes itself as “the only nationwide accrediting organization for all year-round and summer camps.”

Authorities review rain and river gauges

One rain gauge about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from Camp Mystic recorded 9.5 inches (24 centimeters) of precipitation July 4, according to Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority data. Another of the agency’s gauges — further south and to the west — recorded 12.2 inches (31 centimeters) of precipitation. The authority told the AP that a review of its equipment found both were functioning during the flood event.

However, at least four United States Geological Survey gauges along the Guadalupe River experienced some level of failure July 4.

The gauges, located near Hunt and Kerrville, stopped collecting both river levels and the flow rate of water in the early morning hours of July 4.

One gauge, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) northeast of Camp Mystic, recorded a level of 29.5 feet (9 meters) at 4:35 a.m., according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data. It was the last recorded river level from the instrumentation until a USGS hydrologist installed a temporary gauge. At the time, the hydrologist measured the high water mark at 37.52 feet (11.44 meters).

At that location, a river level of 32 feet (9.75 meters) could lead to “disastrous life-threatening flooding,” which could cover the roads of the lowest camps and resorts, according to NOAA.

## Timeline raises questions over how Texas officials handled warnings before the deadly July 4 flood

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

Officials in Texas are facing mounting questions about whether they did enough to get people out of harm’s way before a flash flood swept down the Guadalupe River and killed more than 100 people, including 27 children and counselors at an all-girls Christian camp.

More than 160 people are still believed to be missing in Texas days after flash floods killed over 100 people during the July Fourth weekend, the state’s governor said Tuesday. In the days since the devastation,

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 42 of 76**

state, federal and Kerr County officials have deflected pointed questions about preparations and warnings.

The Associated Press has assembled an approximate timeline of the 48 hours before, during and after the deadly flash flood, beginning with the activation of the state's emergency response resources on July 2 — the same day Texas signed off on the camp's emergency plan for disasters.

By daybreak on July Fourth, it was clear that some children from Camp Mystic were swept away by floodwaters even as others were able to escape to safety in their pajamas.

Wednesday, July 2:

The Texas Division of Emergency Management activated state emergency response resources anticipating the threat of flooding in parts of West and Central Texas.

On the same day, Texas inspectors signed off on Camp Mystic's emergency planning, records obtained by the AP show.

Thursday, July 3:

10:00 a.m.: Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said Friday that county judges and city mayors were invited to be on a daily call Thursday to discuss weather forecasts. Patrick also said a regional coordinator personally reached out to officials in the area.

"The message was sent," Patrick said. "It is up to the local counties and mayors under the law to evacuate if they feel the need."

1:18 p.m.: The National Weather Service's Austin/San Antonio office issued a flood watch estimating rainfall amounts of one to three inches, with isolated amounts of five to seven inches for parts of south central Texas, including Kerr County. "Excessive runoff may result in flooding of rivers," the alert read.

Friday, July 4:

1:14 a.m.: Citing radar, the National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for central Kerr County until 4:15 a.m., warning that it was life threatening.

Around 3:00 a.m.: Kerrville City Manager Dalton Rice said he was running on the river trail around 3 or 3:30 a.m. Friday and "everything was fine."

"Four o'clock when I left, there was no signs of it rising at that point," Rice said during a news conference later. "This happened very quickly over a very short amount of time."

Rice said the isolated location and the heavy rain in a short period of time made a dangerous event that was not predictable, even with radar and National Weather Service warnings.

"This is not like a tornado where you can have a siren. This is not like a hurricane where you're planning weeks in advance," Rice said. "It hit. It hit hard."

Between 3 and 5 a.m.: Floodwaters begin to inundate Camp Mystic. Young campers, counselors and staff are roused from sleep and begin a desperate rush to higher ground, according to social media accounts. The accounts detail how some young girls had to climb through cabin windows. One staffer said she was on the roof with water rising toward her at 4:00 a.m.

3:30 a.m.: Erin Burgess woke up to thunder at around 3:30 a.m. Friday in her home in Bumble Bee Hills, a housing development about halfway between Hunt and Ingram. Within a half hour or so, she told the AP that the water was rushing into her house. Burgess and her 19-year-old son clung onto a tree outside for an hour before the water receded.

3:35 a.m.: The National Weather Service extended its flash flood warning for central Kerr County until 7 a.m. based on radar and automated gauges.

3:35 a.m.: A U.S. Geological Survey gauge along the Guadalupe River about five miles north of Camp Mystic and about a mile east of Hunt shows the river had reached nearly 16 feet. The river at that location is subject to minor flooding at 10 feet.

Between 4 and 5 a.m.: Kerr County Sheriff Larry Leitha said he was first notified about the situation from one of his sergeants.

4:03 a.m.: The National Weather Service named a flash flood emergency for south-central Kerr County, saying in all caps that it was a "particularly dangerous situation. Seek higher ground now!" Citing radar and automated rain gauges, the bulletin said low water crossings and the Guadalupe River at Hunt were

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 43 of 76

flooding.

4:35 a.m.: A U.S. Geological Survey gauge along the Guadalupe River about five miles north of Camp Mystic and about a mile east of Hunt stops sending data. The last recorded river level from the instrumentation was 29.5 feet.

5:30 a.m.: Police knocked on Matthew Stone's door in a Kerrville riverfront neighborhood, urging residents to evacuate. Stone said he had received no emergency warning on his phone. "We got no emergency alert. There was nothing," Stone said. Then: "a pitch black wall of death."

5:34 a.m.: The National Weather Service bulletin reported a flash flood emergency from Hunt through Kerrville and Center Point, saying "automated rain gauges indicate a large and deadly flood wave is moving down the Guadalupe River."

5:38 a.m.: In a comment on a Facebook post from the Kerr County Sheriff's Office, one woman begged for someone to help her mother-in-law who was trapped in a trailer between Hunt and Ingram.

5:52 a.m.: Minutes later, another woman commented on the same Facebook post that Bumble Bee Hills was flooded and needed help.

6:06 a.m.: The National Weather Service extended the flash flood warning until 10:00 a.m. The bulletin also said local law enforcement reported "major flooding" and water rescues along the Guadalupe River.

6:19 a.m.: Another Facebook commenter on the Kerr County Sheriff's page said a "friend and her family are on their rooftop in Hunt, waiting for rescue."

6:45 a.m.: A U.S. Geological Survey gauge in Kerrville shows the Guadalupe River peaks at 34.29 feet, a figure that is preliminary and subject to change. It is the third-highest river level at that location, according to the data. The record of 39 feet was set on July 2, 1932,

6:59 a.m.: Erin Burgess was surveying damage in her flooded home after the river water receded. The line of muck reached halfway up her kitchen cabinets.

7:24 a.m.: The National Weather Service advises that the flash flood emergency extends to Sisterdale.

11:29 a.m.: Camp Mystic parents receive an email noting the grounds have "sustained catastrophic level floods" and that they are without power, water and internet. Parents with a daughter not accounted for were directly contacted, the camp said.

11:30 a.m.: Local officials held the first press conference to describe the situation and response. Asked what kind of warning system went out to make sure county residents got out safely, Judge Rob Kelly, the county's chief elected official said: "We do not have a warning system."

When a reporter followed up to ask why camps weren't evacuated when the camps were in harm's way, Kelly said they didn't know "this flood" was coming.

"We had no reason to believe that this was going to be any, anything like what's happened here," Kelly said. "None whatsoever."

3:30 p.m.: Two news conferences on Friday afternoon were the first to offer an initial death toll. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said six to 10 bodies had been found so far. Around the same time, Kerr County Sheriff Larry Leitha reported that 13 people had died in the flooding. Patrick also announced that the whereabouts of about 23 girls attending Camp Mystic were not known.

7:11 p.m.: A state agency responsible for search and rescue operations, the Texas Game Wardens, post on Facebook that they made entry into Camp Mystic and "are evacuating the campers to safety." Roughly two dozen campers were still missing.

9 p.m.: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed a disaster declaration at a news conference. Leitha reported about 24 fatalities.

## More than 160 people are still missing after deadly Texas floods, governor says

By NADIA LATHAN and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

HUNT, Texas (AP) — More than 160 people are still believed to be missing in Texas days after flash floods

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 44 of 76**

killed over 100 people during the July Fourth weekend, the state's governor said Tuesday.

The huge jump in the number unaccounted for — roughly three times higher than previously said — came after authorities set up a hotline for families to call.

Those reported missing are in Kerr County, where most of the victims have been recovered so far, Gov. Greg Abbott said. Many were likely visiting or staying in the state's Hill Country during the holiday but did not register at a camp or hotel, he said during a news conference.

The county's lowlands along the Guadalupe River are filled with youth camps and campgrounds, including Camp Mystic, the century-old all-girls Christian summer camp where at least 27 campers and counselors died. Officials said Tuesday that five campers and one counselor have still not been found.

Search-and-rescue teams are using heavy equipment to untangle and peel away layers of trees, unearth large rocks in riverbanks and move massive piles of debris that stretch for miles in the search for the missing people. Crews in airboats, helicopters and on horseback along with hundreds of volunteers are part of one of the largest search operations in Texas history.

The flash flood is the deadliest from inland flooding in the U.S. since Colorado's Big Thompson Canyon flood on July 31, 1976, killed 144 people, said Bob Henson, a meteorologist with Yale Climate Connections. That flood surged through a narrow canyon packed with people on a holiday weekend, Colorado's centennial celebration.

Public officials in charge of locating the victims are facing intensifying questions about who was in charge of monitoring the weather and warning that floodwaters were barreling toward camps and homes.

The Republican governor, who took a helicopter tour of the disaster zone, dismissed a question about who was to blame for the deaths, saying, "That's the word choice of losers."

"Every football team makes mistakes," he said. "The losing teams are the ones that try to point out who's to blame. The championship teams are the ones who say, 'Don't worry about it, man, we got this. We're going to make sure that we go score again and we're going to win this game.' The way winners talk is not to point fingers."

Abbott promised that the search for victims will not stop until everyone is found. He also said President Donald Trump has pledged to provide whatever relief Texas needs to recover. Trump plans to visit the state Friday.

Scenes of devastation at Camp Mystic

Outside the cabins at Camp Mystic where the girls had slept, mud-splattered blankets and pillows were scattered on a grassy hill that slopes toward the river. Also in the debris were pink, purple and blue luggage decorated with stickers.

Among those who died at the camp were a second grader who loved pink sparkles and bows, a 19-year-old counselor who enjoyed mentoring young girls and the camp's 75-year-old director.

The flash floods erupted before daybreak Friday after massive rains sent water speeding down hills into the Guadalupe River, causing it to rise 26 feet (8 meters) in less than an hour. The wall of water overwhelmed people in cabins, tents and trailers along the river's edge. Some survivors were found clinging to trees.

Some campers had to swim out of cabin windows to safety while others held onto a rope as they made their way to higher ground. Time-lapse videos showed how floodwaters covered roads in a matter of minutes.

Although it's difficult to attribute a single weather event to climate change, experts say a warming atmosphere and oceans make catastrophic storms more likely.

Where were the warnings?

Questions mounted about what, if any, actions local officials took to warn campers and residents who were spending the July Fourth weekend in the scenic area long known to locals as "flash flood alley."

Leaders in Kerr county, where searchers have found about 90 bodies, said their first priority is recovering victims, not reviewing what happened in the hours before the flash floods.

"Right now, this team up here is focused on bringing people home," Lt. Col. Ben Baker of the Texas Game Wardens, said during a sometimes tense news conference.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 45 of 76

Kerr County Judge Rob Kelly, the county's chief elected official, said in the hours after the devastation that the county does not have a warning system.

Generations of families in the Hill Country have known the dangers. A 1987 flood forced the evacuation of a youth camp in the town of Comfort and swamped buses and vans. Ten teenagers were killed.

Local leaders have talked for years about the need for a warning system. Kerr County sought a nearly \$1 million grant eight years ago for such a system, but the request was turned down by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Local residents balked at footing the bill themselves, Kelly said.

Recovery and cleanup goes on

Four days have passed since anyone was found alive in the aftermath of the floods in Kerr County, officials said Tuesday.

The bodies of 30 children were among those that have been recovered in the county, which is home to Camp Mystic and several other summer camps, the sheriff said.

The devastation spread across several hundred miles in central Texas all the way to just outside the capital of Austin.

Aidan Duncan escaped just in time after hearing the muffled blare of a megaphone urging residents to evacuate Riverside RV Park in the Hill Country town of Ingram.

All his belongings — a mattress, sports cards, his pet parakeet's bird cage — now sit caked in mud in front of his home.

"What's going on right now, it hurts," the 17-year-old said. "I literally cried so hard."

Along the banks of the Guadalupe, 91-year-old Charles Hanson, a resident at a senior living center, was sweeping up wood and piling pieces of concrete and stone, remnants from a playground structure.

He wanted to help clean up on behalf of his neighbors who can't get out. "We'll make do with the best we got," he said.

## Newly elected Seventh-day Adventist Church leader reflects on challenges and faith's healthy living

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

Erton Köhler, a Brazil-born pastor known for his innovative approach to evangelism, is the newly elected president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference — and the first to hail from South America.

Köhler will serve as the spiritual and administrative leader for the global movement, which claims 23 million members. He was voted into the position during a recent gathering of the General Conference, the denomination's top governing body, in St. Louis.

The church's sprawling geographic reach poses just one of the hurdles ahead in his duties as president, especially with today's political polarization and national allegiances, Köhler said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"If I can choose one word that represents the challenge of this moment, the word is 'unity,'" he said. "It's not easy to keep that unity because our members, they're citizens, they're living in the local society, they're influenced by that."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant denomination that views the Bible as the inspired word of God and the primary authority for Adventists. They are known for their beliefs that Christ's second coming is near, and observing the Sabbath on Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

Just days into his new role, Köhler shared his hopes for the future, including his plans to use technology and social media to reach young people. He also reflected on how the faith's spiritual focus on healthy living resonates with many today and other issues facing the church.

What is the role of the president?

Köhler explained his job like holding a puzzle together and compared it to that of another recently elected church leader with South American ties, Pope Leo XIV, the Catholic Church's first U.S.-born pontiff who has dual Peruvian citizenship.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 46 of 76**

"I'm not the pope of the church. I'm a pastor. We don't have a leadership that's vertical, that we can decide something and impose that for everyone," Köhler said, noting the denomination's various levels of authority.

"We respect those voices. We receive suggestions from other levels, we discuss it; we discuss how to implement it together. My role is to try to keep all this puzzle together in a positive way."

What are his priorities as the new leader?

Köhler wants to see more young people involved in the church, more women involved in leadership and more investment in communication and technology to advance its mission.

He also wants to focus on continuing to spread the reach of the church, which is especially growing in parts of Africa and Latin America.

"No. 1, I'd like to see more young people involved in the church activities, sometimes in leadership, sometimes sharing their opinions, their ideas, sometimes in the local community," said Köhler.

In addition to the church's emphasis on the Sabbath, Köhler also thinks Adventists' long-standing focus on healthy living can appeal to younger generations.

Many church members are vegetarians and abstain from alcohol and tobacco as part of their spiritual discipline. Adventists also run a large network of hospitals and health clinics worldwide, and many church members go into the medical field.

"The new generation is looking for health, beauty. They're taking care of their bodies," Köhler said. "We have a message to show to them that we're not only an institutionalized religion, we're a body of believers that trust in the Bible with a message that can make our lives better."

For women in leadership, Köhler said he's not opening discussion of women's ordination, an issue that in 2015 then-Republican presidential candidate and Adventist Ben Carson said he supported.

"It's not the moment to do that," Köhler said. But he acknowledged that Adventist women "deserve more presence in leadership," and "their voice needs to be heard."

The faith was influenced by the visions of Ellen White, who is considered a prophet. Her extensive religious writings, while deeply influential in shaping the church, are not given the same weight as Scripture. Today, the denomination says women's leadership is present at high levels of the church — in health care, education and administration — and also includes community service and the leadership of women's ministries.

On technology and communication, Köhler said he is a strong defender of both because he sees them as ways to reach people wherever they are.

"If our call is to ministry to the people, we need to be where they are, especially the new generations. And the new generation now are in social media," he said.

What are some of the religious freedom concerns facing the church?

Formed in 1863 in Battle Creek, Michigan, the Seventh-day Adventist Church prioritizes protecting religious freedom for all.

"The biggest challenge for us now is freedom of expression. ... We'd like to be protected in our right to express what we believe," Köhler said.

"The society today, and sometimes the media, is supporting too much one side of some topics, and the religious leaders, the religious organizations, they have no voice to express what they think in a kind way, in a respectful way."

Köhler attributes this partly to some Christian denominations that are "being very strong and aggressive in some matters." Adventists, he said, must continue to fight to protect the right to express their opinions and beliefs in a positive way.

What is his message to those unfamiliar with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

"Sometimes people present our denomination based on some elements that are strange for others, and they think that we're people from another planet," Köhler said. "We're human beings. We're here to serve, we're here to love, we're here to make a difference."

He invites people to come meet members and experience the church themselves.

"Come to talk with us, come to visit us, interact with us," he said. "They'll know who we are, and they can see how we can make a difference in a positive way for their present life and for their future life."

## Residents still shaken a day after federal authorities march through Los Angeles' MacArthur Park

By JAIMIE DING and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hector Velasquez was playing cards with friends at MacArthur Park in Los Angeles early Monday when a young man with a megaphone walked through announcing federal agents were on their way. Another man drove past in a car, shouting out the window, "Immigration is coming!"

The people in Velasquez's group who did not have legal status scattered. Others with U.S. citizenship — like Velasquez — lingered to see what would happen.

Two hours later, federal authorities and National Guard troops arrived, with guns and horses. By then, the park that is normally bustling with vendors was mostly empty. Activists had also spread word about the raid on social media.

After sweeping through the park, the convoy that included armored vehicles left as suddenly as it had arrived, Velasquez said.

He described the scene Tuesday as he once again sat in the park playing cards — this time only with those who were citizens.

"I thought this was like a war," said Velasquez, who was reminded of his native country of El Salvador. "Only in war do you see the tanks."

The Department of Homeland Security wouldn't say what the purpose of the operation was, why it ended abruptly, or whether anyone had been arrested. The agency said in an email that it would not comment on "ongoing enforcement operations."

But local officials said it seemed designed to sow fear. Mayor Karen Bass announced at a Tuesday afternoon news conference that Los Angeles was joining a lawsuit to challenge what they say are unlawful tactics used by the Trump administration in immigration enforcement.

"They are essentially pressing the envelope to see how far the American public will tolerate the federal seizure of power," Bass said. "This random thing is just a way of creating a sense of terror and fear in our community."

Park is a center of immigrant life

Immigrants across the Los Angeles area have been on edge for weeks since the Trump administration stepped up arrests at car washes, Home Depot parking lots, immigration courts and a range of businesses. Rumors of an upcoming raid at MacArthur Park had been swirling. The park is in an area home to many Mexican, Central American and other immigrant populations that has been dubbed by local officials as the "Ellis Island of the West Coast."

Just two miles west of downtown, MacArthur Park has a lake ringed by palm trees, an amphitheater that hosts summer concerts and sports fields where immigrant families line up to play soccer in the evenings and on weekends. A thoroughfare on the east side is often crammed with food stands selling tacos and other delicacies, along with vendors speaking multiple languages and hawking T-shirts, toys, knickknacks and household items.

The area had already been quieter than usual due to the city putting up fencing at the start of the year after a shooting, preventing many vendors from selling there.

Fernando Rodriguez closed down his variety store near the park on Monday after seeing flyers in the Westlake neighborhood warning of immigration enforcement happening that day.

"You look Latino, they take you. Even if you show papers, they say they're fake," he said. "What they're doing is evil."

He was open again Tuesday but said nearby businesses including Peruvian and Thai restaurants have been quiet in the weeks since the federal crackdown began.

"There's no people anymore," he said, gesturing to the street he said would usually be packed with pedestrians on a sunny morning.

Group warned of enforcement action

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 48 of 76

Jorge-Mario Cabrera, a spokesperson for the Coalition of Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles, said there had been rumors that there could be an enforcement action around MacArthur Park, and the LA Rapid Response Network had volunteers monitor the area starting at 6 a.m. Monday.

The network sends out observers who communicate via the messaging app Signal. Cabrera said the group does not post content to the public at large or run its own website.

He said Tuesday that the streets surrounding the park have been unusually empty in recent weeks as many vendors have not been out. He wasn't sure if they left the area because of concerns about stepped-up immigration raids.

"This was a reality show to intimidate Los Angeles," Cabrera said. "This was an attempt to show the administration's military might, cause as much chaos as possible, remind Angelenos that the president is in charge and that he can cause terror at any moment's notice."

More than 4,000 California National Guard and hundreds of U.S. Marines have been deployed in Los Angeles since June — against the wishes of California Gov. Gavin Newsom. Last week, the military announced about 200 of those troops would be returned to their units to fight wildfires.

Trump has pledged to deport millions of immigrants in the United States illegally and shown a willingness to use the nation's military might in ways other U.S. presidents have typically avoided.

Melisa Doag, an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala who sells jewelry from a stand near the park, said she doesn't plan to stay in the U.S. for much longer given the political climate. She would rather leave on her own terms than be deported, she said.

"I've only been here two years, and they already want to send me back," Doag said. "I don't want to be treated as a criminal."

## Trump caught off guard by Pentagon's abrupt move to pause Ukraine weapons deliveries, AP sources say

By AAMER MADHANI, SEUNG MIN KIM and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's decision to send more defensive weapons to Ukraine came after he privately expressed frustration with Pentagon officials for announcing a pause in some deliveries last week — a move that he felt wasn't properly coordinated with the White House, according to three people familiar with the matter.

The Pentagon, which announced last week that it would hold back some air defense missiles, precision-guided artillery and other weapons pledged to Ukraine because of what U.S. officials said were concerns that American stockpiles were in short supply. Trump said Monday that the U.S. will have to send more weapons to Ukraine, effectively reversing the move.

Two of the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity about the sensitive internal discussions, said there was some internal opposition among Pentagon brass to the pause — coordinated by Pentagon policy chief Elbridge Colby — before it was announced.

One of the people described Trump as being caught "flat footed" by the announcement. The White House did not respond to queries about whether Trump was surprised by the Pentagon pause.

Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson denied that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had acted without consulting the president.

"It is the job of the Secretary of Defense to make military recommendations to the commander-in-chief. Secretary Hegseth provided a framework for the President to evaluate military aid shipments and assess existing stockpiles. This effort was coordinated across government. The Department will continue to give the President robust options regarding military aid to Ukraine, consistent with his goal of bringing this tragic war to an end and putting America first," Wilson said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The pause in critical weapons deliveries had come at a difficult moment for Ukraine, which has faced increasing — and more complex — air barrages from Russia during the more than three-year-old war. Trump acknowledged that in announcing the reversal on Monday night, saying, "They have to be able to defend themselves. They're getting hit very hard now."



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 49 of 76**

Asked by a reporter Tuesday who approved the pause, Trump bristled at the question while he was gathered with his Cabinet. "I don't know. Why don't you tell me?"

Trump's change in tone on Putin

The president also laid into Russian President Vladimir Putin, suggesting he was unnecessarily prolonging the war that Trump has said he's determined to quickly conclude. Trump has struggled to find a resolution, with talks between the sides stalled.

The Republican leader has sounded increasingly exasperated with Putin in recent days. The two spoke by phone last week.

"We get a lot of bull---- thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth," Trump said during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting. "He's very nice all the time, but it turns out to be meaningless."

He has threatened, but held off on, imposing new sanctions against Russia's oil industry to try to prod Putin into peace talks.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said last week that Trump has given him the go-ahead to push forward with a bill he's co-sponsoring that calls, in part, for a 500% tariff on goods imported from countries that continue to buy Russian oil. The move would have huge ramifications for China and India, two economic behemoths that buy Russian oil.

Trump said Tuesday that he's "looking at it very strongly."

Pentagon says it's going to resume shipments to Ukraine

The weapons pause announced last week impacted shipments of Patriot missiles, precision-guided GMLRS, Hellfire missiles and Howitzer rounds and more, taking not only Ukrainian officials and other allies by surprise but also U.S. lawmakers and other parts of the Trump administration, including the State Department.

The Pentagon said late Monday that at Trump's direction, it would resume weapons shipments to Ukraine "to ensure the Ukrainians can defend themselves while we work to secure a lasting peace and ensure the killing stops." Still, spokesman Sean Parnell added that its review for Trump to evaluate military shipments worldwide continues as part of "America First" defense priorities.

It's also unclear which weaponry would now be sent, though Trump said that the U.S. will primarily be assisting Ukraine with defensive weapons.

Counting the weapons

On Tuesday, each of the services and the combatant commands — the multiservice organizations that spearhead U.S. military operations around the world — were still sending up information on their stockpiles of specific munitions to Pentagon leadership, a U.S. official said.

"They are literally still doing the math," the official said.

The information was being presented on a stoplight chart — where munitions were either in a red, yellow or green status, similar to slides that had been created the week before, the official said. That earlier study had concluded that some munitions were OK to keep sending to Ukraine — but others were reaching concerning levels.

Getting a full visibility on the numbers of actual munitions on hand takes time, the official said, because while Patriot missiles, for example, initially belong to the Army, once they are requested and sent to a combatant command, such as U.S. Central Command, the service loses visibility on those numbers in inventory.

The vast majority of the munitions and weapons the U.S. has shipped to Ukraine have been pulled from the Army, which has monitored levels closely in recent years, particularly for high-demand items like 155mm artillery shells and Patriot missiles for air defenses.

It's been harder for the Army to ramp up production on those items than had been planned: It was trying to hit a goal of producing 100,000 155mm shells a month by the end of 2025 but won't meet that goal now until 2026, Army spokesman Steve Warren said.

Ramping up Patriot missile production also has been challenging, Warren said.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said in a statement Tuesday that he was glad Trump was resuming deliveries to Ukraine.

"This time, the President will need to reject calls from the isolationists and restrainers within his Administration to limit these deliveries to defensive weapons," McConnell said. "And he should disregard those at DoD who invoke munitions shortages to block aid while refusing to invest seriously in expanding munitions production."

## **Trump's previous tariff push terrified the world economy. He's betting this time is different**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump last rolled out tariffs this high, financial markets quaked, consumer confidence crashed and his popularity plunged.

Only three months later, he's betting this time is different.

In his new round of tariffs being announced this week, Trump is essentially tethering the entire world economy to his instinctual belief that import taxes will deliver factory jobs and stronger growth in the U.S., rather than the inflation and slowdown predicted by many economists.

On Tuesday, he told his Cabinet that past presidents who hadn't aggressively deployed tariffs were "stupid." Ever the salesman, Trump added that it was "too time-consuming" to try to negotiate trade deals with the rest of the world, so it was just easier to send them letters, as he's doing this week, that list the tariff rates on their goods.

The letters marked a change from his self-proclaimed April 2 "Liberation Day" event at the White House, where he had posterboards with the rates displayed, a choice that led to a brief market meltdown and the 90-day negotiating period with baseline 10% tariffs that will end Wednesday. Trump, instead, chose to send form letters with random capitalizations and punctuation and other formatting issues.

"It's a better way," Trump said of his letters. "It's a more powerful way. And we send them a letter. You read the letter. I think it was well crafted. And, mostly it's just a little number in there: You'll pay 25%, 35%. We have some of at 60, 70."

When Trump said those words, he had yet to issue a letter with a tariff rate higher than 40%, which he levied Monday on Laos and Myanmar. He plans to put 25% tariffs on Japan and South Korea, two major trading partners and allies deemed crucial for curbing China's economic influence. Leaders of the 14 countries tariffed so far hope to negotiate over the next three weeks before the higher rates are charged on imports.

"I would say that every case I'm treating them better than they treated us over the years," Trump said.

The president said Tuesday evening on Truth Social that he would be releasing letters to "a minimum of 7 Countries" on Wednesday morning, with additional letters coming out in the afternoon.

Three possible outcomes

His approach is at odds with how major trade agreements have been produced over the last half-century, detailed sessions that could sometimes take years to solve complex differences between nations.

There are three possible outcomes to this political and economic wager, each of which could drastically reshape international affairs and Trump's legacy.

Trump could prove most economic experts wrong and the tariffs could deliver growth as promised. Or he could retreat again on tariffs before their Aug. 1 start in a repeat of the "Trump Always Chickens Out" phenomenon, also known as TACO. Or he could damage the economy in ways that could boomerang against the communities that helped return him to the White House last year, as well as hurt countries that are put at a financial disadvantage by the tariffs.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said Trump's letters had "extended his tariff purgatory for another month," essentially freezing in place the U.S. economy as CEOs, foreign leaders and consumers are unclear of Trump's actual strategy on foreign trade.

"The TACO negotiating tactic pioneered by Trump is making his threats less and less credible and reducing our trading partners' willingness to even meet us halfway," Wyden said. "There's no sign that he's any

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 51 of 76

closer to striking durable trade deals that would actually help American workers and businesses.”

So far, the stock and bond markets are relatively calm, with the S&P 500 stock index essentially flat Tuesday after a Monday decline. Trump is coming off a legislative win with his multitrillion-dollar income tax cuts. And he’s confidently levying tariffs at levels that previously rocked global markets, buoyed by the fact that inflation has eased so far instead of accelerating as many economists and Democratic rivals had warned.

“By floating tariffs as high as 40% to even 100%, the administration has ‘normalized’ the 25% tariff hikes — yet this is still one of the most aggressive and disruptive tariff moves in modern history,” said Wendong Zhang, an economist at Cornell University. “This gradual unveiling, paradoxically, risks normalizing what would otherwise be considered exceptionally large tariff hikes.”

Others simply see Trump as a source of nonstop chaos, with the letters and their somewhat random tariff rates showing the absence of a genuine policy process inside his administration.

“It’s really just a validation that this policy is all over the place, that they’re running this by the seat of their pants, that there is no real strategy,” said Desmond Lachman, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a right-leaning think tank.

Questions about how much money tariffs will generate

With Trump’s 90-day tariff negotiation period ending, he as of Monday had sent letters to 14 countries that place taxes on imported goods ranging from 25% to 40%. He said Tuesday he would sign an order to place 50% tariffs on copper and added that at some point pharmaceutical drugs could face tariffs of as much as 200%. All of that is on top of his existing 50% tariffs on steel and aluminum, 25% tariffs on autos and his separate import taxes on Canada, Mexico and China.

“The obvious inference is that markets for now are somewhat skeptical that Trump will go through with it, or alternatively they think compromises will be reached,” said Ben May, a director of global economic research at the consultancy Oxford Economics. “That’s probably the key element.”

May said the tariffs are likely to reduce the growth in U.S. household incomes, but not cause those incomes to shrink outright.

Trump has said his tariffs would close U.S. trade imbalances, though it’s unclear why he would target nations such as Tunisia that do relatively little trade with America. Administration officials say trillions of dollars in tariff revenues over the next decade would help offset the revenue losses from the continuation and expansion of his 2017 tax cuts that were signed into law Friday.

The federal government has collected \$98.2 billion in tariff revenues so far this year, more than double what it collected last year, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center.

At Tuesday’s Cabinet meeting, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the tariff revenues could be “well over \$300 billion by the end of the year.” Bessent added that “we don’t agree” with the Congressional Budget Office estimate that tariffs would bring in \$2.8 trillion over 10 years, “which we think is probably low.”

The governments of Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and South Africa have each said they hope for further negotiations on tariffs with Trump, though it’s unclear how that’s possible as Trump has said it would be too “complicated” to hold all those meetings.

Instead on Tuesday, Trump posted on social media that the tariffs would be charged as scheduled starting Aug. 1.

“There has been no change to this date, and there will be no change,” Trump said on Truth Social. “No extensions will be granted.”

## Travelers no longer have to remove their shoes during security screenings at US airports

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Travelers racing to catch a flight at U.S. airports no longer are required to remove their shoes during security screenings, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Tuesday.

Noem said the end of the ritual put in place almost 20 years ago was immediately effective nationwide.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 52 of 76

She said a pilot program showed the Transportation Security Administration had the equipment needed to keep airports and aircraft safe while allowing people to keep their shoes on.

"I think most Americans will be very excited to see they will be able to keep their shoes on, and it will be a much more streamlined process," Noem said.

While shoe removal no longer is standard procedure at airport security checkpoints, some travelers still may be asked to take off their footwear "if we think additional layers of screening are necessary," she added.

The travel newsletter Gate Access first reported that the TSA planned to make the security screening change soon.

Security screening sans shoes became a requirement in 2006, several years after "shoe bomber" Richard Reid's failed attempt to take down a flight from Paris to Miami in late 2001.

All passengers between the ages of 12 and 75 were required to remove their shoes, which were scanned along with carry-on bags and other separated items such as outerwear.

Travelers previously were able to skirt the requirement if they participated in the TSA PreCheck program, which costs around \$80 for five years. The program allows airline passengers to get through the screening process without taking off their shoes, belts or light jackets, and without having to take their laptops and bagged toiletries out.

PreCheck will remain the easier option for the time being since people going through regular screening stations still will have to put items besides shoes on a conveyor belt for scanning, Noem said.

TSA plans to review other rules and procedures to see how airport screenings can be simplified and expedited, she said. The agency is testing separate lanes for military personnel and families with young children, and expects to pilot other changes in the next six to eight months, Noem said.

In recent years, federal authorities have explored facial recognition technology and implemented Real ID requirements as a way to verify the identities of passengers.

The Transportation Security Administration began in 2001 when President George W. Bush signed legislation for its creation two months after the 9/11 attacks. TSA hired federal employees as agents to replace the workers for private companies that airlines had used to handle security.

Although regular air travelers are familiar with the intricacies of going through airport security, long lines during busy times and bags getting pulled aside for infractions such as forgotten water bottles can make the process fraught.

President Donald Trump's transportation secretary, Sean Duffy, asked the public in an April social media post what would make travel more seamless. The following day, Duffy posted on X that, "It's clear that TSA is the #1 travel complaint. That falls under the Department of Homeland Security. I'll discuss this with @Sec\_Noem."

Trump fired TSA Administrator David Pekoske in January in the middle of a second five-year term. Trump had appointed Pekoske during his first term in the White House, and President Joe Biden reappointed him.

No reason was given for Pekoske's departure. The administrator position remains vacant, according to the TSA website.

## Faith-based camps like those hit by Texas floods are rite of passage for many. They're now grieving

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO and MARIAM FAM Associated Press

Texas' catastrophic flooding hit faith-based summer camps especially hard, and the heartbreak is sweeping across the country where similar camps mark a rite of passage and a crucial faith experience for millions of children and teens.

"Camp is such a unique experience that you just instantly empathize," said Rachael Botting of the tragedy that struck Camp Mystic, the century-old all-girls Christian summer camp where at least 27 people were killed. A search was underway for more than 160 missing people in the area filled with youth camps as the overall death toll passed 100 on Tuesday.

Botting, a former Christian camp counselor, is a Wheaton College expert on the role camp plays in young



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 53 of 76**

people's faith formation. "I do plan to send my boys to Christian summer camps. It is a nonnegotiable for us," added the mother of three children under 4.

Generations of parents and children have felt the same about the approximately 3,000 faith-based summer camps across the country.

That is because for many campers, and young camp counselors, they are crucial independence milestones — the first time away from family or with a job away from home, said Robert Lubeznik-Warner, a University of Utah youth development researcher.

Experts say camps offer the opportunity to try skills and social situations for the first time while developing a stronger sense of self — and to do so in the safety of communities sharing the same values.

Camp rules: Do good and keep the faith

After the floodwaters rampaged through Camp Mystic, authorities and families have been combing through the wreckage strewn between the cabins and the riverbank.

On Sunday, a man there carried a wood sign similar to those seen hanging outside the door of several buildings. It read: "Do Good. Do No Harm. Keep Falling In Love With Jesus."

For generations, these Texas campers have been challenged to master quintessential summer activities from crafts to swimming while also growing in spiritual practices. Campers and counselors shared devotionals after breakfast, before bed and on Sunday mornings along the banks of the Guadalupe River, according to Camp Mystic's brochure and website. They sang songs, listened to Scripture and attended Bible studies, too.

How big of a role faith has in the camp experience varies, Botting said. There are Christian camps where even canoeing outings are discussed as metaphors for spiritual journeys, others that aim to insert more religious activities like reading the Bible into children's routines, and some that simply seek to give people a chance to encounter Jesus.

The religious emphasis also varies at Jewish camps, which span traditions from Orthodox to Reform. Activities range from daily Torah readings to yoga, said Jamie Simon, who leads the Foundation for Jewish Camp. The group supports 300 camps across North America, with about 200,000 young people involved this summer alone.

What they all have in common is a focus on building self-esteem as well as positive Jewish communities and identities — all particularly important as many struggle with antisemitism as well as the loneliness and mental health barriers common across all youth, Simon said.

At Seneca Hills Bible Camp and Retreat Center in Pennsylvania, there is archery, basketball and volleyball for summer campers, but also daily chapel, listening to missionaries and taking part in Bible study or hearing a Bible story depending on their age, which ranges from 5 to 18-year-olds.

"There's a whole host of activities, but really the focus for camp is building relationships with one another and encouraging the kids' relationships with God," said camp executive director Lindon Fowler.

For many, participating in the same summer camp is also a generational tradition. Children are sent to the same place as their parents and grandparents to be around people who share the same value system in ways they can't often experience in their local communities.

A taste of faith, wilderness and independence for more than two centuries

Because of their emphasis on independence and spending time away from family, summer camps in general have been especially popular in North America, Lubeznik-Warner said.

In the United States, faith-based summer camps date back to two parallel movements in the 19th century — the revivalist religious gatherings in tents and the "fresh-air movement" after the industrial revolution — and boomed after World War II, Botting said.

Particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, as questions about children's dependence on technology have surged, interest has grown in summer camps as "places where kids can really unplug, where kids can be kids," Botting said.

Many parents like that camp can disconnect their children from their devices.

"We're interested in campers hearing similar messages that they're going to get at home or in their church or their faith communities," Fowler said. He added: "I think they can hear ... the meaning of things

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 54 of 76

more clearly while they're at camp" and away from distractions.

For Rob Ribbe, who teaches outdoors leadership at Wheaton College's divinity school, all the elements of camp have biblical resonance.

"God uses times away, in community, often in creation ... as a way to shape and form us, and help us to know him," Ribbe said.

Summer camp challenges: Safety protocols and determination

There are faith-related challenges, too. As children explore their identities and establish bonds outside their families, many programs have been wrestling with how to strike a balance between holding on to their denominations' teachings while remaining welcoming, especially on issues of gender and sexuality, Botting said.

Rising costs are also a pressing issue. Historically, camps have been particularly popular among middle to upper-income families who can afford fees in the thousands of dollars for residential camps.

And then there is safety — whether in terms of potential abuse, with many church denominations marred by recent scandals, or the inherent risks of the outdoors. In Texas' case, controversy is mounting over preparedness and official alerts for the natural disaster.

Every summer, hundreds of thousands of parents trust Brad Barnett and his team to keep their children safe — physically and spiritually — at the dozens of summer camps run by Lifeway Christian Resources.

Barnett, director of camp ministry, said already his staff has shared personal connections to Camp Mystic: One staff member's daughter was an alum; another's went to the same day camp with a girl who died in the flood; and a former staff member taught at the high school of a counselor who died.

But the tragedy is also informing their work as they provide yet another week of Christian summer camp experiences for children across the country.

"That's the punch in the gut for us," he said. "We know that there's an implicit promise that we're going to keep your kid safe, and so to not be able to deliver on that and the loss of life, it's just so tragic and felt by so many."

Experts say camp staff are likely to double down on best practices to respond to emergencies and keep their campers safe in the aftermath of the Texas floods.

"It's, truly, truly heartbreaking for the whole community of Christian camping," said Gregg Hunter, president of Christian Camp and Conference Association, which serves about 850 member camps catering to about 7 million campers a year.

But the positive and often lifelong impacts on children's confidence and faith identity are so powerful that many leaders expressed hope the tragedy wouldn't discourage children from trying it.

"It's where my life took a dramatic turn from being a young, obnoxious, rebellious teenager," Hunter said. "My camp experience introduced me to so many things, including to my faith, an opportunity, an option to enter into a relationship with God."

Simon, a former camper and camp leader, said she is happy her son is currently at camp — even though there is a river by it.

"I wouldn't want him to be anywhere else," she said.

## Movie Review: A weird 'Superman' is better than a boring one

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a ... a purple and orange shape-shifting chemical compound?

Writer-director James Gunn's "Superman" was always going to be a strange chemistry of filmmaker and material. Gunn, the mind behind "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "The Suicide Squad," has reliably drifted toward a B-movie superhero realm populated (usually over-populated) with the lesser-known freaks, oddities and grotesquerie of back-issue comics.

But you don't get more mainstream than Superman. And let's face it, unless Christopher Reeve is in the suit, the rock-jawed Man of Steel can be a bit of a bore. Much of the fun and frustration of Gunn's movie is seeing how he stretches and strains to make Superman, you know, interesting.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 55 of 76

In the latest revamp for the archetypal superhero, Gunn does a lot to give Superman (played with an easy charm by David Corenswet) a lift. He scraps the origin story. He gives Superman a dog. And he ropes in not just expected regulars like Lois Lane (Rachel Brosnahan) and Lex Luthor (Nicholas Hoult) but some less conventional choices — none more so than that colorful jumble of elements, Metamorpho (Anthony Carrigan).

Metamorpho, a melancholy, mutilated man whose powers were born out of tragedy, is just one of many side shows in "Superman." But he's the most representative of what Gunn is going for. Gunn might favor a traditional-looking hero at the center, like Chris Pratt's Star-Lord in "Guardians of the Galaxy." And Corenswet, complete with hair curl, looks the part, too. But Gunn's heart is with the weirdos who soldier on.

The heavy lift of "Superman" is making the case that the perfect superhuman being with "S" on his chest is strange, too. He's a do-gooder at a time when no one does good anymore.

Not everything works in "Superman." For those who like their Superman classically drawn, Gunn's film will probably seem too irreverent and messy. But for anyone who found Zack Snyder's previous administration painfully ponderous, this "Superman," at least, has a pulse.

It would be hard to find a more drastic 180 in franchise stewardship. Where Snyder's films were super-serious mythical clashes of colossuses, Gunn's "Superman" is lightly earthbound, quirky and sentimental. When this Superman flies, he even keeps his arms back, like an Olympic skeleton rider.

We begin not on Krypton or Kansas but in Antarctica, near the Fortress of Solitude. The opening titles set-up the medias res beginning. Three centuries ago, metahumans first appeared on Earth. Three minutes ago, Superman lost a battle for the first time. Lying bloodied in the snow, he whistles and his faithful super dog, Krypto, comes running.

Like some of Gunn's other novelty gags (I'm looking at you Groot), Krypto is both a highlight and over-used gag throughout. Superman is in the midst of a battle by proxy with Luthor. From atop his Luthor Corp. skyscraper headquarters, Luthor gives instructions to a team sitting before computer screens while, on a headset, barking out coded battle directions to drone-assisted henchmen. "13-B!" he shouts, like a Bingo caller.

Whether this is an ideal localizing of main characters in conflict is a debate that recedes a bit when, back in Metropolis, Clark Kent returns to the Daily Planet. There's Wendell Pierce as the editor-in-chief, Perry White, and Skyler Gisondo as Jimmy Olsen. But the character of real interest here is, of course, Lois.

She and Kent are already an item in "Superman." When alone, Lois chides him over the journalistic ethics of interviewing himself after some derring-do, and questions his flying into countries without their leaders' approval. Brosnahan slides so comfortably into the role that I wonder if "Superman" ought to have been "Lois," instead. Her scenes with Corenswet are the best in the film, and the movie loses its snap when she's not around.

That's unfortunately for a substantial amount of time. Luthor traps Superman in a pocket universe (enter Metamorpho, among others) and the eccentric members of the Justice Gang — Nathan Fillion's Green Lantern, Edi Gathegi's Mister Terrific and Isabela Merced's Hawkgirl — are called upon to lend a hand. They come begrudgingly. But if there's anyone else that comes close to stealing the movie, it's Gathegi, who meets increasingly absurd cataclysm with wry deadpan.

The fate of the world, naturally, again turns iffy. There's a rift in the universe, not to mention some vaguely defined trouble in Boravia and Jarhanpur. In such scenes, Gunn's juggling act is especially uneasy and you can feel the movie lurching from one thing to another. Usually, that's Krypto's cue to fly back into the movie and run amok.

Gunn, who now presides over DC Studios with producer Peter Safran, is better with internal strife than he is international politics. Superman is often called "the Kryptonian" or "the alien" by humans, and Gunn leans into his outsider status. Not for the first time, Superman's opponents try to paint him as an untrustworthy foreigner. With a modicum of timeliness, "Superman" is an immigrant story.

Mileage will inevitably vary when it comes to Gunn's idiosyncratic touch. He can be outlandish and sweet, often at once. In a conversation between metahumans, he will insert a donut into the scene for no real

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 56 of 76

reason, and cut from a body falling through the air to an Alka-Seltzer tablet dropping into a glass. Some might call such moments glib, a not-unfair label for Gunn. But I'd say they make this pleasantly imperfect "Superman" something quite rare in the assembly line-style of superhero moviemaking today: human.

"Superman," a Warner Bros. release is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for violence, action and language. Running time: 129 minutes. Three stars out of four.

## What to know about the flash floods in Texas that killed over 100 people

KERRVILLE, Texas (AP) — Flash floods in Texas killed more than 100 people over the Fourth of July holiday weekend and left scores still missing, including girls attending a summer camp. The devastation along the Guadalupe River, outside of San Antonio, has drawn a massive search effort as officials face questions over their preparedness and the speed of their initial actions.

Here's what to know about the deadly flooding, the colossal weather system that drove it in and around Kerr County and efforts to identify victims:

Massive rain hit at just the wrong time, in a flood-prone place

The floods grew to their worst when many people were asleep.

The Texas Hill Country in the central part of the state is naturally prone to flash flooding due to the dry dirt-packed areas where the soil lets rain skid along the surface of the landscape instead of soaking it up. Friday's flash floods started with a particularly bad storm that dropped most of its 12 inches (30 centimeters) of rain in the dark early morning hours.

After a flood watch notice midday Thursday, the National Weather Service office issued an urgent warning around 4 a.m. that raised the potential of catastrophic damage and a severe threat to human life. By at least 5:20 a.m., some in the Kerrville area say water levels were getting alarmingly high. The massive rain flowing down hills sent rushing water into the Guadalupe River, causing it to rise 26 feet (8 meters) in just 45 minutes.

The death toll is expected to rise and the number of missing has jumped

In Kerr County, home to youth camps in the Texas Hill Country, searchers have found the bodies of 87 people, including 30 children, Sheriff Larry Leitha said Tuesday. Fatalities in nearby counties brought the total number of deaths so far to at least 107.

More than 160 people were believed to be missing, Gov. Greg Abbott said. He said many of those people were staying in the Texas Hill Country but did not register at a camp or hotel. The number of missing jumped after authorities set up a missing person hotline.

Search crews will not stop working until everyone is found, authorities said.

Five girls and one counselor were still unaccounted for at Camp Mystic, a Christian summer camp along the river.

For past campers, the tragedy turned happy memories into grief.

Workers search large piles of debris

Lt. Col. Ben Baker of the Texas Game Wardens said Tuesday that there had been more than 440 rescues of flood victims, though officials said the last live rescue was Friday. Baker said authorities had searched 26 miles (42 kilometers) of river.

Authorities were using dogs to help search through large piles of flood debris to find bodies.

"Specialized teams have to go in there layer by layer," Baker said. "It's extremely treacherous, time consuming. It's dirty work. The water is still there."

AP photographers have captured the scale of the destruction and one of Texas' largest rescue and recovery efforts.

President Donald Trump said he plans to visit the flood zone Friday.

Officials face scrutiny over flash flood warnings

Survivors have described the floods as a "pitch black wall of death" and said they received no emergency warnings.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 57 of 76

Kerr County Judge Rob Kelly, who lives along the Guadalupe River, said Saturday that "nobody saw this coming." Officials have referred to it as a "100-year-flood," meaning that the water levels were highly unlikely based on the historical record.

Local officials have known for decades, however, that flooding posed serious a risk in the region, and a county government report last year warned the threat was worsening.

Officials also determined that another flood was likely in the next year and that "future worst-case flood events" could be more severe than those of the past, according to the report.

Questions about warning campers sooner

Officials have come under scrutiny about why residents and youth summer camps along the river were not alerted sooner than 4 a.m. or told to evacuate.

Leitha said Tuesday that he wasn't notified of the flash flooding until between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. Friday. During a news conference, reporters pressed him about who was directing emergency operations before then, and he said he hadn't put together a timeline.

"That is not my priority," he said. "There's three priorities: that's locating the people out there, identifying and notifying the next of kin."

Kerrville City Manager Dalton Rice said Monday that spotty cell service in some of the more isolated areas of Kerr County and cell towers that might have gone out of service during the weather could have hindered communication between authorities and the camps.

Kerr County officials said they had presented a proposal for a more robust flood warning system, similar to a tornado warning system, but that members of the public reeled at the cost.

## Wall Street ends mixed amid Trump's new tariff deadlines

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

A choppy day in the markets left major U.S. stock indexes little changed Tuesday as the Trump administration pressed its campaign to win more favorable trade deals with nations around the globe by leaning into tariffs on goods coming into the U.S.

The S&P 500 slipped 0.1% a day after posting its biggest loss since mid-June. The benchmark index remains near its all-time high set last week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gave back 0.4%. The Nasdaq composite eked out a gain of less than 0.1%, staying near its own record high.

The sluggish trading came as the market was coming off a broad sell-off following the Trump administration's decision to impose new import tariffs set to go into effect next month on more than a dozen nations.

Still, the modest pullback in the markets is a sign that Wall Street may be betting that the U.S. and its trading partners may eventually negotiate deals that will reduce or eliminate the need for punishing tariffs, said Ross Mayfield, investment strategist at Baird.

"I think today you're basically seeing a market that doesn't quite believe the worst of this is going to come to bear and is just kind of waiting for any sort of clarity because we seem back in that in that kind of phase where things change every couple of hours," Mayfield said.

On Monday, President Donald Trump set a 25% tax on goods imported from Japan and South Korea and new tariff rates on a dozen other nations scheduled to go into effect on Aug. 1.

Trump provided notice by posting letters on Truth Social that were addressed to the leaders of the various countries. The letters warned them to not retaliate by increasing their own import taxes, or else the Trump administration would further increase tariffs.

Just before hefty U.S. tariffs on goods imported from nearly every country around the globe were to take effect in April, Trump postponed the levies for 90 days in hopes that foreign governments would be more willing to strike new trade deals. That 90-day negotiating period was set to expire before Wednesday.

With the tariffs set to kick in now on Aug. 1, the latest move by the White House amounts to essentially a four-week extension of its previous 90-day pause, wrote Tobin Marcus, an analyst at Wolfe Research.

"At a very basic level, nothing actually happened based on Trump sending these letters, so there's no

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 58 of 76

reason to panic over headlines," he wrote. "But we think these moves do contain some signal about where the trade war is heading, and that signal is mostly hawkish."

During a cabinet meeting Tuesday, Trump said he would be announcing tariffs on pharmaceutical drugs at a "very, very high rate, like 200%." He also said he would sign an executive order placing a 50% tariff on copper imports, matching the rates charged on steel and aluminum.

Shares in mining company Freeport-McMoRan rose 2.5% following Trump's remarks. The price of copper for September delivery jumped 13.1% to \$5.69 per pound.

This latest phase in the trade war heightens the threat of potentially more severe tariffs that's been hanging over the global economy. Higher taxes on imported goods could hinder economic growth, if not increase recession risks.

Gains in technology, energy and health care stocks helped outweigh a pullback in banks and other sectors.

Intel jumped 7.2%, Exxon Mobil rose 2.8% and AbbVie rose 1.1%. JPMorgan and Bank of America each fell 3.1%.

Amazon shares fell 1.8% as the online retail giant kicked off Prime Day, which, beginning this year, lasts four days. Amazon launched the membership sales event in 2015 and expanded it to two days in 2019.

Elsewhere in the market, First Solar slid 6.5% after Trump issued an executive order ending subsidies for foreign-controlled energy companies.

Hershey Co. lost 3.2% after the chocolate maker announced that Wendy's CEO Kirk Tanner will succeed current CEO Michele Buck, who is retiring.

Shares in WeightWatchers parent WW International gave up an early gain and dropped 1.1% after the company announced that it has completed its reorganization and relisting on Nasdaq. The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in May to eliminate \$1.15 billion in debt and focus on its transition into a telehealth services provider.

Bond yields mostly rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury edged up to 4.40% from 4.39% late Monday.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 4.46 points to 6,225.52. The Dow lost 165.60 points to 44,240.76, and the Nasdaq added 5.95 points to 20,418.46.

The market's downbeat start to the week follows a strong run for stocks, which pushed further into record heights last week after a better-than-expected U.S. jobs report.

In stock markets overseas, indexes rose across much of Europe and Asia. In two of the bigger moves, South Korea's Kospi surged 1.8%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index climbed 1.1%.

The National Federation of Independent Business reported Tuesday that its small business optimism index fell slightly last month, in line with analysts' expectations. The index tracks how small firms view the U.S. economy and their business prospects.

On Wednesday the Federal Reserve will release minutes from its policymaking committee's meeting last month. The Fed's chair, Jerome Powell, has said the central bank wants to wait and see how Trump's tariffs affect the economy and inflation before making its next move on interest rates.

## Impostor uses AI to impersonate Rubio and contact foreign and US officials

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department is warning U.S. diplomats of attempts to impersonate Secretary of State Marco Rubio and possibly other officials using technology driven by artificial intelligence, according to two senior officials and a cable sent last week to all embassies and consulates.

The warning came after the department discovered that an impostor posing as Rubio had attempted to reach out to at least three foreign ministers, a U.S. senator and a governor, according to the July 3 cable, which was first reported by The Washington Post.

The recipients of the scam messages, which were sent by text, Signal and voice mail, were not identified in the cable, a copy of which was shared with The Associated Press.

"The State Department is aware of this incident and is currently monitoring and addressing the matter,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 59 of 76

department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce told reporters. "The department takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard its information and continuously take steps to improve the department's cybersecurity posture to prevent future incidents."

She declined to comment further due to "security reasons" and the ongoing investigation.

It's the latest instance of a high-level Trump administration figure targeted by an impersonator, with a similar incident revealed in May involving President Donald Trump's chief of staff, Susie Wiles. The misuse of AI to deceive people is likely to grow as the technology improves and becomes more widely available, and the FBI warned this past spring about "malicious actors" impersonating senior U.S. government officials in a text and voice messaging campaign.

The hoaxes involving Rubio had been unsuccessful and "not very sophisticated," one of the officials said. Nonetheless, the second official said the department deemed it "prudent" to advise all employees and foreign governments, particularly as efforts by foreign actors to compromise information security increase.

The officials were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"There is no direct cyber threat to the department from this campaign, but information shared with a third party could be exposed if targeted individuals are compromised," the cable said.

The FBI has warned in a public service announcement about a "malicious" campaign relying on text messages and AI-generated voice messages that purport to come from a senior U.S. official and that aim to dupe other government officials as well as the victim's associates and contacts.

This is not the first time that Rubio has been impersonated in a deepfake. This spring, someone created a bogus video of him saying he wanted to cut off Ukraine's access to Elon Musk's Starlink internet service. Ukraine's government later rebutted the false claim.

Several potential solutions have been put forward in recent years to the growing misuse of AI for deception, including criminal penalties and improved media literacy. Concerns about deepfakes have also led to a flood of new apps and AI systems designed to spot phonies that could easily fool a human.

The tech companies working on these systems are now in competition against those who would use AI to deceive, according to Siwei Lyu, a professor and computer scientist at the University at Buffalo. He said he's seen an increase in the number of deepfakes portraying celebrities, politicians and business leaders as the technology improves.

Just a few years ago, fakes contained easy-to-spot flaws — inhuman voices or mistakes like extra fingers — but now the AI is so good, it's much harder for a human to spot, giving deepfake makers an advantage.

"The level of realism and quality is increasing," Lyu said. "It's an arms race, and right now the generators are getting the upper hand."

The Rubio hoax comes after text messages and phone calls went to elected officials, business executives and other prominent figures from someone who seemed to have gained access to the contacts in Wiles' personal cellphone, The Wall Street Journal reported in May.

Some of those who received calls heard a voice that sounded like Wiles, which may have been generated by AI, according to the newspaper. The messages and calls were not coming from Wiles' number, the report said. The government was investigating.

## Amazon extends Prime Day discounts to 4 days as retailers weigh tariffs and price increases

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon is extending its annual Prime Day sales and offering new membership perks to Gen Z shoppers amid tariff-related price worries and possibly some consumer boredom with an event marking its 11th year.

For the first time, Seattle-based Amazon is holding the now-misnamed Prime Day over four days. The e-commerce giant's promised blitz of summer deals for Prime members started at 3:01 a.m. Eastern time on Tuesday and ends early Friday.

Amazon launched Prime Day in 2015 and expanded it to two days in 2019. The company said this year's

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 60 of 76**

longer version would have deals dropping as often as every 5 minutes during certain periods.

Prime members ages 18-24, who pay \$7.49 per month instead of the \$14.99 that older customers not eligible for discounted rates pay for free shipping and other benefits, will receive 5% cash back on their purchases for a limited time.

Amazon executives declined to comment on the potential impact of tariffs on Prime Day deals. The event is taking place two and a half months after an online news report sparked speculation that Amazon planned to display added tariff costs next to product prices on its website.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt denounced the purported change as a "hostile and political act" before Amazon clarified the idea had been floated for its low-cost Haul storefront but never approved.

Amazon's past success with using Prime Day to drive sales and attract new members spurred other major retail chains to schedule competing sales in July. Best Buy, Target and Walmart are repeating the practice this year.

Like Amazon, Walmart is adding two more days to its promotional period, which starts Tuesday and runs through July 13. The nation's largest retailer is making its summer deals available in stores as well as online for the first time.

Here's what to expect:

More days might not mean more spending

Amazon expanded Prime Day this year because shoppers "wanted more time to shop and save," Amazon Prime Vice President Jamil Ghani recently told The Associated Press.

Analysts are unsure the extra days will translate into more purchases given that renewed inflation worries and potential price increases from tariffs may make consumers less willing to spend. Amazon doesn't disclose Prime Day sales figures but said last year that the event achieved record global sales.

Adobe Digital Insights predicts that the sales event will drive \$23.8 billion in overall online spending from July 8 to July 11, 28.4% more than the similar period last year. In 2024 and 2023, online sales increased 11% and 6.1% during the comparable four days of July.

Vivek Pandya, lead analyst at Adobe Digital Insights, noted that Amazon's move to stretch the sales event to four days is a big opportunity to "really amplify and accelerate the spending velocity."

Caila Schwartz, director of consumer insights and strategy at software company Salesforce, noted that July sales in general have lost some momentum in recent years. Amazon is not a Salesforce Commerce Cloud customer, so the business software company doesn't have access to the online giant's e-commerce sales and so is not privy to Prime Day figures.

"What we saw last year was that (shoppers) bought and then they were done," Schwartz said. "We know that the consumer is still really cautious. So it's likely we could see a similar pattern where they come out early, they're ready to buy and then they take a step back."

Tariffs don't seem to be impacting costs much (so far)

Amazon executives reported in May that the company and many of its third-party sellers tried to beat big import tax bills by stocking up on foreign goods before President Donald Trump's tariffs took effect. And because of that move, a fair number of third-party sellers hadn't changed their pricing at that time, Amazon said.

Adobe Digital Insights' Pandya expects discounts to remain on par with last year and for other U.S. retail companies to mark 10% to 24% off the manufacturers' suggested retail price between Tuesday and Friday.

Salesforce's Schwartz said she's noticed retailers becoming more precise with their discounts, such as offering promotion codes that apply to selected products instead of their entire websites.

Shoppers might focus on necessities

Amazon Prime and other July sales have historically helped jump-start back-to-school spending and encouraged advance planners to buy other seasonal merchandise earlier. Analysts said they expected U.S. consumers to make purchases this week out of fear that tariffs will make items more expensive later.

Brett Rose, CEO of United National Consumer Supplies, a wholesale distributor of overstocked goods like toys and beauty products, thinks shoppers will go for items like beauty essentials.

"They're going to buy more everyday items," he said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 61 of 76

A look at the discounts

As in past years, Amazon offered early deals leading up to Prime Day. For the big event, Amazon said it would have special discounts on Alexa-enabled products like Echo, Fire TV and Fire tablets.

Walmart said its July sale would include a 32-inch Samsung smart monitor priced at \$199 instead of \$299.99; and \$50 off a 50-Inch Vizio Smart TV with a standard retail price of \$298.00. Target said it was maintaining its 2024 prices on key back-to-school items, including a \$5 backpack and a selection of 20 school supplies totaling less than \$20.

Some third-party sellers will sit out Prime Day

Independent businesses that sell goods through Amazon account for more than 60% of the company's retail sales. Some third-party sellers are expected to sit out Prime Day and not offer discounts to preserve their profit margins during the ongoing tariff uncertainty, analysts said.

Rose, of United National Consumer Supplies, said he spoke with third-party sellers who said they would rather take a sales hit this week than use up a lot of their pre-tariffs inventory now and risk seeing their profit margins suffer later.

However, some independent businesses that market their products on Amazon are looking to Prime Day to make a dent in the inventory they built up earlier in the year to avoid tariffs.

Home fragrance company Outdoor Fellow, which makes about 30% of its sales through Amazon's marketplace, gets most of its candle lids, labels, jars, reed diffusers and other items from China, founder Patrick Jones said. Fearing high costs from tariffs, Jones stocked up at the beginning of the year, roughly doubling his inventory.

For Prime Day, he plans to offer bigger discounts, such as 32% off the price of a candle normally priced at \$34, Jones said.

"All the product that we have on Amazon right now is still from the inventory that we got before the tariffs went into effect," he said. "So we're still able to offer the discount that we're planning on doing."

Jones said he was waiting to find out if the order he placed in June will incur large customs duties when the goods arrive from China in a few weeks.

## Trump says he's 'not happy' with Putin and blames him for 'killing a lot of people' in Ukraine

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he's "not happy" with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, saying Moscow's ongoing war in Ukraine is "killing a lot of people" on both sides.

"I'm not happy with him, I can tell you that much right now. This is killing a lot of people," Trump said of Putin during a meeting with his Cabinet.

The president also acknowledged that his previous suggestions that he might be able to cajole Russia's president into bringing the fighting to a close and quickly ending the war in Ukraine has "turned out to be tougher."

It was notable for a president who has all but aligned himself with Putin at moments in the past and has praised the Russian leader effusively at times — though less so in recent months.

The Cabinet meeting comments came a day after Trump said the United States will now send more weapons to Ukraine — dramatically reversing a previous announcement of a pause in critical, previously approved firepower deliveries to Kyiv in the midst of concerns that America's own military stockpiles have declined too much.

"We wanted (to) put defensive weapons (in). Putin is not, he's not treating human beings right," Trump said during the Cabinet meeting, explaining the pause's reversal. "It's killing too many people. So we're sending some defensive weapons to Ukraine and I've approved that."

Trump's decision to remove the pause follows his privately having expressed frustration with Pentagon officials for announcing a halt in some deliveries last week — an action he felt wasn't properly coordinated with the White House, according to three people familiar with the matter.

But the president refused to provide more details on that matter Tuesday.

"I don't know," he said sarcastically to a reporter who pressed him on the weapons pause's original approval. "Why don't you tell me?"

Still, his expressing open displeasure with Putin — especially after approving a resumption of U.S. weapons to Ukraine — underscores how much Trump's thinking on Russia and Ukraine policy has shifted since he returned to the White House in January. It also lays bare how tricky navigating the ongoing conflict has proved to be.

Trump suggested during last year's campaign that he could quickly end the Russia-Ukraine war. But by April, he was using his Truth Social account to exhort Putin to end military strikes on the Ukrainian capital.

"Vladimir, STOP!" he wrote. But large-scale Russian attacks on Ukraine have continued since then and Trump's public pronouncements on Putin have continued to sour.

Trump said after a call last week with Putin that he was unhappy with Russia's president and "I don't think he's looking to stop" the war. Then, speaking at the start of a dinner he hosted for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Monday night, Trump said, "I'm not happy with President Putin at all."

Asked during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting what his growing displeasure with Putin might mean for U.S. foreign policy, Trump declined to discuss specifics.

"I will say, the Ukrainians were brave. But we gave them the best equipment ever made," Trump said. He also said that without U.S. weapons and military support, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 might have otherwise sparked what "probably would have been a very quick war."

"It would have been a war that lasted three or four days," he said, "but they had the benefit of unbelievable equipment."

## **Sean 'Diddy' Combs' sentencing set for Oct. 3 after split verdict in federal sex crimes case**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sean "Diddy" Combs will be sentenced in his federal criminal case on Oct. 3, a judge said Tuesday after probation officials rejected the defense and prosecution's plan to move the date up by about two weeks.

Combs, who remains jailed after a split verdict last week, spoke briefly to his lawyer Marc Agnifilo during a virtual hearing on the scheduling issue that lasted all of two minutes. At one point he asked the lawyer to turn on his camera so they could see each other's faces.

The hip-hop mogul's lawyers had been urging Judge Arun Subramanian to sentence him as soon as possible after jurors acquitted him last week on racketeering and sex trafficking but convicted him on two prostitution-related charges.

Combs, 55, faces up to a decade in prison for each of two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution for flying people around the country, including his girlfriends and male sex workers, for sexual encounters. A conviction on racketeering conspiracy or sex trafficking could have put him in prison for life.

Prior to Tuesday's hearing, Combs' lawyers and prosecutors filed a joint letter proposing a Sept. 22 sentencing date, subject to the consent of the U.S. Probation Office. A short time later, they filed a second letter stating that all parties — including the probation office — were on board with the Oct. 3 date Subramanian originally proposed.

Combs got a standing ovation from fellow inmates when he returned to jail after the verdict last week, Agnifilo said. The Bad Boy Records founder will remain at the federal lockup in Brooklyn where he's been held since his arrest last September after Subramanian last week rejected his request for bail.

The judge, citing a now-infamous video of Combs beating a former girlfriend and photographs showing injuries to another ex-girlfriend, made clear that he plans to hold Combs accountable for the years of violence and bullying behavior that were exposed at his eight-week trial.

Combs' lawyers want less than the 21 to 27 months in prison that they believe the sentencing guidelines recommend. Prosecutors contend that the guidelines, when properly calculated to include Combs' crimes and violent history, call for at least four to five years in prison.

Combs' punishment is Subramanian's decision alone, and the judge will have wide latitude in determining a sentence. While judges often adhere to the federal judiciary's formulaic guidelines meant to prevent disparity in sentences for the same crimes, they are not mandatory.

As part of the sentencing process, Combs must give an interview to probation officers for a pre-sentence investigation report that will aid the judge in determining the proper punishment.

## **Sabalenka gets past Siegemund and faces Anisimova in the Wimbledon semifinals. Fritz vs. Alcaraz**

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — Aryna Sabalenka was having a hard time dealing with her Wimbledon quarterfinal opponent's unusual game style. The mistakes were mounting Tuesday. The stress was rising. The deficit was troubling.

As things went awry, Sabalenka would look at her box with a quizzical expression and raise her hands. After missing one forehand off a short ball, she knelt on the grass near the net, the very picture of exasperation. A month after her loss to Coco Gauff in the French Open final, Sabalenka knew she needed to keep her emotions in check and straighten out her strokes.

Did just that, right on time. Sabalenka trailed by a set, then twice was down a break in the third, before grabbing the last three games to return to the semifinals at the All England Club by overcoming 104th-ranked Laura Siegemund 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 at Centre Court.

"She pushed me so much," said Sabalenka, No. 1 since last October. "After the first set, I was just looking at my box, thinking, 'Guys, I mean, book the tickets. I think we're about to leave this beautiful city, country, place.'"

Wimbledon is the only Grand Slam tournament where Sabalenka never has been to a title match. She can change that this week if she beats No. 13 Amanda Anisimova of the United States on Thursday. Anisimova reached her first major semifinal since the 2019 French Open, when she was just 17, by getting past Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 7-6 (9).

The first men's semifinal was established Tuesday, too: No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz, the two-time defending champion, against No. 5 Taylor Fritz.

Sabalenka won the Australian Open twice and the U.S. Open once, and was the runner-up at this year's Australian Open (losing to Madison Keys) and French Open (losing to Gauff).

The 27-year-old Belarusian lost in the semifinals at Wimbledon in 2021 and 2023.

Sabalenka hadn't dropped a set during this year's trip to the grass-court major until Tuesday — but she also hadn't faced an opponent quite like the 37-year-old Siegemund. The German, who eliminated No. 6 Keys last week, was the oldest and by far the lowest-ranked of any woman in the quarterfinals, as well as the one with the fewest career titles (two).

She arrived at Wimbledon with a career record there of 2-5 and with a 4-9 mark on tour in 2025.

But her ability to change the depth, speed, angles and spins of her shots over and over can frustrate any opponent and dull the type of power that Sabalenka brings. And, make no mistake: Sabalenka was frustrated, especially in the final set.

"It's not like it's an annoying game. It's a smart game. She's really making everyone work against her," Sabalenka said. "You know you have to work for every point. It doesn't matter if you're a big server, if you're a big hitter. You have to work. You have to run. And you have to earn the win."

Trailing 4-3 in the last set, Sabalenka broke to open her match-ending run. In the next game, she delivered her lone two aces, at 103 mph and 116 mph.

When Sabalenka produced a volley winner to break again and end things after nearly three hours, she

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 64 of 76

shut her eyes, spread her arms wide and let out a big scream.

What else happened in the Wimbledon quarterfinals on Tuesday?

Alcaraz was a 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 winner against unseeded Cam Norrie, the last British player in either singles bracket, and 2024 U.S. Open runner-up Fritz recovered from a mid-match lull to reach the semifinals at the All England Club for the first time with a 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4) victory over Karen Khachanov.

Who will play in Wednesday's quarterfinals at the All England Club?

The last two women's quarterfinals are No. 7 Mirra Andrejeva vs. Belinda Bencic, and No. 8 Iga Swiatek vs. No. 19 Liudmila Samsonova. The men's matchups are No. 1 Jannik Sinner vs. No. 10 Ben Shelton, and 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic vs. No. 22 Flavio Cobolli.

## **Netanyahu says he nominated Trump for a Nobel Peace Prize. From there, it's a secretive process**

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. President Donald Trump has been nominated again for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Trump on Monday that he recommended him for the prestigious award, handing the American leader the letter he said he sent the Nobel committee.

Trump has been nominated several times by people within the U.S. as well as politicians abroad — but that's only one small step in the secretive process.

Trump's previous nominations

Trump's nominators have included a group of U.S. House Republicans and two Norwegian lawmakers. The groups separately nominated him in 2018 for his work to ease nuclear tensions with North Korea. One of the Norwegians nominated him again for the 2021 prize for his efforts in the Middle East, as did a Swedish lawmaker.

Not all of the nominations have been valid: The Norwegian Nobel Committee, which selects the prize winners, said in 2018 that someone using a stolen identity had nominated Trump at least twice.

Nominations can be made by a select group of people and organizations, including heads of state or politicians serving at a national level, university professors, directors of foreign policy institutes, past Nobel Prize recipients and members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee itself.

Secret process

Once all nominations have come in, the committee — made up of five members appointed by the Norwegian parliament — sifts through them and ensures they were made by an eligible nominator.

A person cannot nominate themselves, according to the committee.

The nominations aren't announced by the committee, and the Nobel statutes prohibit the judges from discussing their deliberations for 50 years. But those doing the nominating may choose to make their recommendations public.

Nominations must be submitted before Feb. 1 each year — meaning any recent Netanyahu nomination would be for the 2026 prize. The winners are announced every October, with award ceremonies taking place on Dec. 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death.

The prizes in medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and peace were established by the will of Alfred Nobel, a wealthy Swedish industrialist and the inventor of dynamite. An economics prize was later established by Sweden's central bank and is presented at the same time.

How to win the peace prize

According to Nobel's wishes, the peace prize should go to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

The peace prize committee is the only one that regularly rewards achievements made in the previous year — and the prize is the only one awarded in Oslo, Norway. For the science-related prizes, scientists often have to wait decades to have their work recognized by the Nobel judges, who want to make sure that any breakthrough stands the test of time, in Stockholm.



Former U.S. President Barack Obama won the peace prize in 2009, barely nine months into his first term. It was met with fierce criticism in the U.S., where many argued Obama had not been in office long enough to have an impact worthy of the Nobel.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002 for work he did after leaving the White House.

## Militants kill 5 Israeli soldiers in Gaza and Israeli strikes kill 51 Palestinians

By TIA GOLDENBERG, FATMA KHALED and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Five Israeli soldiers were killed in an attack in the northern Gaza Strip, Israel's military said Tuesday, while health officials in the Palestinian territory said that 51 people were killed in Israeli strikes.

The bloodshed came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was visiting the White House for talks with U.S. President Donald Trump about a ceasefire plan to pause the Gaza fighting. While there was no announcement of a breakthrough, there were signs of progress toward a deal.

The soldiers' deaths could add to pressure on Netanyahu to strike a deal, as polls in Israel have shown widespread support for ending the 21-month war.

A senior Israeli official said that 80-90% of the details had been ironed out and a final agreement could be days away. The official spoke on condition of anonymity, because they weren't authorized to discuss the sensitive negotiations with the media.

In a separate development, Israel said that it targeted a senior Hamas militant with a rare airstrike in northern Lebanon that killed three people and wounded 13 others, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Soldiers attacked with explosive devices

The soldiers were killed roughly two weeks after Israel reported one of its deadliest days in months in Gaza, when seven soldiers were killed after a Palestinian attached a bomb to their armored vehicle.

An Israeli security official said that explosive devices were detonated against the five soldiers during an operation in the Beit Hanoun area in northern Gaza, an area where Israel has repeatedly fought regrouping militants.

Militants also opened fire on the forces who were evacuating the wounded soldiers, the official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the attack with the media.

The military said 14 soldiers were wounded in the attack, two of them seriously. It brings the toll of soldiers killed to 888 since Hamas-led militants launched an attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which ignited the war.

In a statement, Netanyahu sent condolences, saying the soldiers fell "in a campaign to defeat Hamas and to free all of our hostages."

Children among the dead in Israeli strikes

Health officials at Nasser Hospital, where victims of the Israeli strikes were taken, said one strike targeted tents sheltering displaced people in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, killing four people. A separate strike in Khan Younis killed four people, including a mother, father and their two children, officials said.

"He sleeps in the tent with his two children, Awda and Misk," said Nisma al-Baiouk, the sister of one man killed. "My nephew Awda has no face, his face is gone."

Nasser Hospital records showed a total of 41 people killed on Tuesday.

In central Gaza, Israeli strikes killed another 10 people and wounded 72, according to Awda Hospital in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp.

Israel's military had no immediate comment on the strikes, but it blames Hamas for any harm to civilians because the militants operate in populated areas.

The fighting has pushed the health care system in Gaza close to collapse. On Tuesday, the Palestine Red

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 66 of 76

Crescent said the Al-Zaytoun Medical Clinic in Gaza City ceased operations after shelling in the surrounding area. It said the closure would force thousands of civilians to walk long distances to get medical care or obtain vaccinations for children.

Seeking a 60-day pause in fighting

Trump has made clear that following last month's 12-day war between Israel and Iran, he would like to see the war in Gaza end soon.

White House officials are urging both sides to quickly seal an agreement that would bring about a 60-day pause in the fighting, send aid flooding into Gaza and free at least some of the remaining 50 hostages held in the territory. Netanyahu has said 20 are alive.

A sticking point has been whether the ceasefire will end the war altogether. Hamas has said that it's willing to free all the hostages in exchange for an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Netanyahu says the war will end once Hamas surrenders, disarms and goes into exile — something it refuses to do.

The initial Hamas attack in 2023 killed around 1,200 people and took 251 others hostage. Most have been released in earlier ceasefires. Israel responded with an offensive that has killed more than 57,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, which is under Gaza's Hamas-run government, doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants. The U.N. and other international organizations see its figures as the most reliable statistics on war casualties.

Rare Israeli airstrike in northern Lebanon

The Israeli airstrike hit a car in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli. The Israeli military said that it killed Mehran Mustafa Bajur, who it described as a key Hamas commander in Lebanon who had been involved in rocket attacks on Israel. There was no immediate comment from Hamas.

Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, an ally of Hamas, fought a bruising war last year that nominally ended with a U.S.-brokered ceasefire in November.

Since then, Israel has continued to carry out near-daily airstrikes in Lebanon targeting what it says are officials and facilities of Hezbollah and other militant groups. Most of the strikes have been in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah had a major military presence.

Around 250 people have been killed in strikes in Lebanon since the ceasefire, according to the Health Ministry.

Hezbollah, which suffered heavy losses in the war, has been under increasing international and domestic pressure to give up its remaining arsenal, but has refused to do so before Israel withdraws from five key border points it's occupying in southern Lebanon and stops its airstrikes.

## **Intense downpours like those in Texas are more frequent, but there's no telling where they'll happen**

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

It's not just Texas and North Carolina. Intense rain is falling more frequently in many areas of the U.S. — though where it occurs and whether it causes catastrophic flooding is largely a matter of chance, according to experts.

More than 100 people died in Texas Hill Country over the weekend after 12 inches (30 centimeters) of rain fell in just hours. The deluge was driven by warm, moist air left over from Tropical Storm Barry and Hurricane Flossie that created conditions for repeated thunderstorms in the same location, said Texas Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon.

Last year, Hurricane Helene dumped more than 30 inches (76 centimeters) of rain on western North Carolina, triggering catastrophic flooding that washed away roads and homes, killing more than 100 people in that state alone. This week, flooding from the remnants of Tropical Storm Chantal prompted dozens of water rescues in other parts of North Carolina. And this spring, record rainfall in Kentucky caused severe and deadly flooding.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 67 of 76

Although it can be difficult to attribute a single weather event to climate change — and hilly or mountainous terrain worsen flooding — experts say a warming atmosphere and oceans due to the burning of fossil fuels make catastrophic storms more likely.

That's because the atmosphere can hold 7% more water for every degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit), creating a giant sponge of sorts that sucks up moisture from bodies of water and vegetation. The moisture later falls back to earth in increasingly intense, unpredictable and destructive downpours.

"It's just loading the dice toward heavy rainfall when the situation is right," said Kenneth Kunkel, a climate scientist at North Carolina State University.

## Intensifying rain storms

Going back through U.S. weather station records dating to 1955, Kunkel found that rain over the past 20 years has become more intense in the eastern two-thirds of the country, including the southern Great Plains, where Texas is located. Intensities have remained the same or declined in the West and southwest.

At the 700 stations that began collecting data in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the highest proportion of two-day rainfall records have been set in just the past 10 years, Kunkel said, though that doesn't fully reflect most Western stations, which were established later.

Nielsen-Gammon said the overall intensity of extreme rainfall in Texas has increased by 15% over the past 40-50 years.

Still, it's almost impossible to predict where the most catastrophic rain will fall in any given year, Kunkel said.

"This month was the Texas Hill Country's turn to get hit. Last fall ... in western North Carolina, it was our turn," Kunkel said, adding that just because an area was spared over the past 20 or 30 years, it "doesn't mean that they aren't vulnerable. ... They got lucky."

## A 'perfect storm' in Texas

The worst flooding and greatest loss of life in Texas occurred in Kerr County, in an area known as "flash flood alley" because of its steep terrain that funnels water to the Guadalupe River, a popular recreational area.

Though the county did not get the most rain from the storms, the "distribution of rainfall was one of the worst possible patterns" because the most intense downpours were over the headwaters of the south fork of the Guadalupe River, causing water to rush into areas where hundreds of people, including children, were camping, said Nielsen-Gammon.

If the epicenter had been 10 miles (16 kilometers) north or south, the rain would have been divided among different river basins, he said. If it had been farther downstream, larger floodplains would have absorbed and slowed much of the water.

Years of drought also likely exacerbated the flooding.

Kerr County, for example, had been in extreme or exceptional drought for more than three years, aside from one four-week period last fall. That likely left the soil compacted, which caused water to run off instead of soaking into the ground, said Brad Rippey, a U.S. Department of Agriculture meteorologist.

Then, air from the warmer-than-normal Gulf of Mexico — a reflection of global warming — blew into the state with a higher water content than it would have had decades ago.

It all added up to "just a perfect storm of events" that caused a catastrophe, said Rippey. "There are things that had to come together to make this happen."

## 'Lord of the Rings' director backs long shot de-extinction plan, starring New Zealand's lost moa

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Filmmaker Peter Jackson owns one of the largest private collections of bones of an extinct New Zealand bird called the moa. His fascination with the flightless ostrich-like bird has led to an unusual partnership with a biotech company known for its grand and controversial plans to bring back lost species.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 68 of 76**

On Tuesday, Colossal Biosciences announced an effort to genetically engineer living birds to resemble the extinct South Island giant moa – which once stood 12 feet (3.6 meters) tall – with \$15 million in funding from Jackson and his partner Fran Walsh. The collaboration also includes the New Zealand-based Ngāi Tahu Research Centre.

“The movies are my day job, and the moa are my fun thing I do,” said Jackson. “Every New Zealand schoolchild has a fascination with the moa.”

Outside scientists say the idea of bringing back extinct species onto the modern landscape is likely impossible, although it may be feasible to tweak the genes of living animals to have similar physical traits. Scientists have mixed feelings on whether that will be helpful, and some worry that focusing on lost creatures could distract from protecting species that still exist.

The moa had roamed New Zealand for 4,000 years until they became extinct around 600 years ago, mainly because of overhunting. A large skeleton brought to England in the 19th century, now on display at the Yorkshire Museum, prompted international interest in the long-necked bird.

Unlike Colossal’s work with dire wolves, the moa project is in very early stages. It started with a phone call about two years ago after Jackson heard about the company’s efforts to “de-extinct” – or create genetically similar animals to – species like the woolly mammoth and the dire wolf.

Then Jackson put Colossal in touch with experts he’d met through his own moa bone-collecting. At that point, he’d amassed between 300 and 400 bones, he said.

In New Zealand, it’s legal to buy and sell moa bones found on private lands, but not on public conservation areas – nor to export them.

The first stage of the moa project will be to identify well-preserved bones from which it may be possible to extract DNA, said Colossal’s chief scientist Beth Shapiro.

Those DNA sequences will be compared to genomes of living bird species, including the ground-dwelling tinamou and emu, “to figure out what it is that made the moa unique compared to other birds,” she said.

Colossal used a similar process of comparing ancient DNA of extinct dire wolves to determine the genetic differences with gray wolves. Then scientists took blood cells from a living gray wolf and used CRISPR to genetically modify them in 20 different sites. Pups with long white hair and muscular jaws were born late last year.

Working with birds presents different challenges, said Shapiro.

Unlike mammals, bird embryos develop inside eggs, so the process of transferring an embryo to a surrogate will not look like mammalian IVF.

“There’s lots of different scientific hurdles that need to be overcome with any species that we pick as a candidate for de-extinction,” said Shapiro. “We are in the very early stages.”

If the Colossal team succeeds in creating a tall bird with huge feet and thick pointed claws resembling the moa, there’s also the pressing question of where to put it, said Duke University ecologist Stuart Pimm, who is not involved in the project.

“Can you put a species back into the wild once you’ve exterminated it there?” he said. “I think it’s exceedingly unlikely that they could do this in any meaningful way.”

“This will be an extremely dangerous animal,” Pimm added.

The direction of the project will be shaped by Māori scholars at the University of Canterbury’s Ngāi Tahu Research Centre. Ngāi Tahu archaeologist Kyle Davis, an expert in moa bones, said the work has “really reinvigorated the interest in examining our own traditions and mythology.”

At one of the archaeological sites that Jackson and Davis visited to study moa remains, called Pyramid Valley, there are also antique rock art done by Māori people – some depicting moa before their extinction.

Paul Scofield, a project adviser and senior curator of natural history at the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, New Zealand, said he first met the “Lord of the Rings” director when he went to his house to help him identify which of the nine known species of moa the various bones represented.

“He doesn’t just collect some moa bones – he has a comprehensive collection,” said Scofield.



## Trump and Netanyahu take a victory lap to mark strikes on Iran nuclear facilities

By AAMER MADHANI, TIA GOLDENBERG and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told President Donald Trump he was nominating the U.S. leader for a Nobel Peace Prize as the two took a victory lap Monday to hail their recent joint strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities as an unmitigated success.

The two leaders sat down with their top aides for a dinner in the White House Blue Room to mark the Iran operation and discuss efforts to push forward with a 60-day ceasefire proposal to pause the 21-month conflict in Gaza.

"He's forging peace as we speak, one country and one region after the other," Netanyahu said as he presented Trump with a nominating letter he said he sent the Nobel committee.

The call for the peace prize comes after the Israeli leader for years had pressed Trump and his predecessors to take military action against Iran's nuclear program. Trump ordered U.S. forces to drop "bunker-buster" bombs and fire a barrage of Tomahawk missiles on three key Iranian nuclear sites.

It also allowed Netanyahu to further ingratiate himself with Trump, who for years has made little secret of the fact that he covets a Nobel Peace Prize and sees himself as a capable peacemaker. He's trumpeted recent truces that his administration facilitated between India and Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, and Israel and Iran.

"Coming from you in particular, this is very meaningful," Trump told Netanyahu as the prime minister handed him the nomination letter.

Netanyahu's outwardly triumphant visit to the White House, his third this year, was dogged by Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza and questions over how hard Trump will push for an end to the conflict.

But in an exchange before reporters before the dinner got underway, both leaders expressed optimism that their success in Iran would mark a new era in the Middle East.

"I think things are going to be really settled down a lot in the Middle East," Trump said. "And, they respect us and they respect Israel."

Trump says Iran wants to restart talks, but Iran hasn't confirmed that

Trump indicated anew that Iranian officials have reached out to the U.S. to schedule talks about Iran's nuclear program. Negotiations had started in April but were scuttled after Israel began its operations last month.

"We have scheduled Iran talks, and they want to," Trump told reporters. "They want to talk." He said last week that the talks would restart soon.

Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, sitting at the table with Trump, said the meeting would be soon, perhaps in a week.

Tehran has yet to confirm that it has agreed to restart talks with the U.S.

But Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian in an interview published Monday said the U.S. airstrikes so badly damaged his country's nuclear facilities that Iranian authorities still have not been able to access them to survey the destruction.

Pezeshkian added in the interview with conservative American broadcaster Tucker Carlson that Iran would be willing to resume cooperation with the U.N. nuclear watchdog but cannot yet commit to allowing its inspectors unfettered access to monitor the sites.

"We stand ready to have such supervision," Pezeshkian said. "Unfortunately, as a result of the United States' unlawful attacks against our nuclear centers and installations, many of the pieces of equipment and the facilities there have been severely damaged."

Pushing for a new ceasefire proposal in Gaza

Trump has made clear that following last month's 12-day war between Israel and Iran he would like to see the Gaza conflict end soon. The meeting between Trump and Netanyahu may give new urgency to a U.S. ceasefire proposal being discussed by Israel and Hamas.

White House officials are urging Israel and Hamas to quickly seal a new ceasefire agreement that would

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 70 of 76

bring about a 60-day pause in the fighting, send aid flooding into Gaza and free at least some of the remaining 50 hostages held in the territory, 20 of whom are believed to be living.

Leavitt announced Monday that Witkoff will travel later this week to Doha, Qatar, for ceasefire and hostage talks.

But a sticking point is whether the ceasefire will end the war altogether. Hamas has said it is willing to free all the hostages in exchange for an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Netanyahu says the war will end once Hamas surrenders, disarms and goes into exile — something it refuses to do.

"We'll work out a peace with our Palestinian neighbors, those that don't want to destroy us," Netanyahu said. "We'll work out a peace in which our security, the sovereign power of security, always remains in our hands."

Trump has been pressuring Israel and Hamas to wrap up the conflict, which has killed more than 57,000 Palestinians, ravaged Gaza, deepened Israel's international isolation and made any resolution to the broader conflict between Israel and the Palestinians more distant than ever.

But the precise details of the deal are still in flux. In the days before Netanyahu's visit, Trump seemed to downplay the chances for a breakthrough.

Asked Friday how confident he was a ceasefire deal would come together, Trump told reporters, "I'm very optimistic — but you know, look, it changes from day to day."

Trump and Netanyahu are more in sync than ever

After Trump's decision to get involved in Israel's war in Iran, the two leaders are more in sync than ever. But that's not always been the case.

As recently as Netanyahu's last visit to Washington in April, the tone was markedly different.

Trump used the photo op with Netanyahu to announce that the U.S. was entering into negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program — appearing to catch the Israeli leader off guard and, at the time, slamming the brakes on any Israeli military plan.

Trump, whose policies have largely aligned with Israel's own priorities, pledged last week to be "very firm" with Netanyahu on ending the war, without saying what that would entail. Pressure by Trump has worked on Netanyahu in the past, with a ceasefire deal having been reached right as the president was taking office again.

Netanyahu has to balance the demands of his American ally with the far-right parties in his governing coalition, which hold the key to his political survival and oppose ending the war.

But given the strong U.S. support in Israel's war against Iran, highlighted by joint airstrikes on a fortified underground Iranian nuclear site, Netanyahu may have a tough time saying no.

Trump also may be expecting something in return for his recent calls for Netanyahu's corruption trial to be canceled — a significant interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state.

"Trump thinks that Netanyahu owes him," said Eytan Gilboa, an expert on U.S.-Israel affairs at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv. "And if Trump thinks that he needs to end the war in Gaza, then that is what he will need to do."

## US adults want the government to focus on child care costs, not birth rates, AP-NORC poll finds

By TIFFANY STANLEY and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

While the Trump administration explores ways to encourage Americans to have more babies and reverse the United States' falling birth rate, a new poll finds that relatively few U.S. adults see this as a priority or share the White House's concerns.

Instead, Americans are more likely to want the government to focus on the high cost of child care and improving health outcomes for pregnant women, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Pronatalism, or the promotion of childbearing, has gained traction as a movement within the tech world

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 71 of 76**

and among some religious conservatives. Prominent figures on the right like Elon Musk and Vice President JD Vance have espoused pronatalist beliefs, arguing more children are good for society.

The survey finds that only about 3 in 10 Americans say declining birth rates are a "major problem" in the U.S., and just 12% say that encouraging families to have more children should be "a high priority" for the federal government.

Republicans also see affordable child care and health outcomes for pregnant women as higher government priorities than promoting more births, indicating that even as conservatives push pronatalist policies, they're not getting much buy-in from the GOP base.

"In this day and age, it's not dire," said Misty Conklin, a supporter of President Donald Trump, of the declining birth rate.

Conklin, 50, lives in Indiana and thinks the government should prioritize making it more affordable to raise children, including supporting the social services her disabled granddaughter needs.

"It's hard to live as just a couple, let alone with children," Conklin said. "It's getting worse and worse."

Child care costs are a much bigger concern

Americans are more concerned about the cost of raising and caring for a child than the number of babies being born, the survey found.

About three-quarters of U.S. adults say the cost of child care is a "major problem." That includes about 8 in 10 Democrats and women, as well as roughly 7 in 10 Republicans and men.

Policies like free or low-cost daycare for children who are too young to attend public school and paid family leave are also popular with about two-thirds of Americans.

For Maria Appelbe, a Trump voter in Arizona, child care costs factored into her decision to quit her job to care for her daughter when she was younger. The 49-year-old said, "I was lucky enough that back in those days without inflation, we were able to make it work."

Not many US adults are worried too few children being born

Americans seem to have few opinions about the number of children families should have. Demographic projections have indicated the country's replacement rate is 2.1 children per woman, which would keep the population from shrinking over the long term. However, in the survey, there aren't strong opinions about whether it's "mostly a good thing" or "mostly a bad thing" for families to have fewer than two children or more than two.

Appelbe, who has one teenager, thinks financially it makes sense to have small families. "I'm so glad that I was able to give her everything that I could, but I definitely think if I had more children, I wouldn't have been able to," she said.

While few Americans say the federal government should make it a "high priority" to encourage families to have more children, a majority, 55%, do want the government to focus on improving health outcomes for women. Black adults are especially likely to say this, as are women. Black women have the highest maternal mortality rate in the United States, which lags behind other wealthy nations in maternal health.

Pronatalism ideas register more with conservatives, but most aren't thinking about it

There are small signs that some pronatalist policies are registering more with conservative Republicans than liberal Democrats, even though the poll indicates most aren't thinking about this issue.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say it's "mostly bad" for the future of the U.S. if families have two or fewer children, although relatively few Republicans — about 2 in 10 — hold this view.

A social conservative and fiscal liberal, Dmitriy Samusenko, 28, does not identify with either major U.S. political party. The California resident does think the declining U.S. birth rate is a major problem that will determine if the nation "will continue to exist in the long run."

Samusenko said he supports "using the government as a resource to enable families to grow and develop."

Pronatalist advocates have pitched the White House on the idea of a \$5,000 "baby bonus" to mothers after a new baby is born. Trump has said it "sounds like a good idea," but about half of conservative Republicans oppose the \$5,000 baby bonus, and about one-quarter support it. Americans overall are more split: about one-third are in favor, about 4 in 10 are opposed, and about 3 in 10 are neutral.

Many see the cost of fertility treatments as a major problem

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 72 of 76

On the campaign trail, Trump promised to be the "fertilization president." In February, he signed an executive order supporting expanded access to in vitro fertilization.

IVF is popular among Americans but controversial among parts of Trump's religious base, notably Catholics and some evangelicals.

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults consider "the cost of fertility treatments" to be a major problem in the United States. Nearly half of U.S. adults "strongly" or "somewhat" favor requiring insurance companies to cover fertility treatments.

Bill Taylor, 72, of Washington state, watched his adult daughter face health challenges and expensive fertility treatments to have a child. He strongly favors the government requiring insurance companies to cover fertility treatments.

Taylor, a Democrat, also said the declining birth rate is a problem, though a minor one.

"Bigger families mean a greater need for government health care and government social programs," Taylor said. "Conservatives don't want to do that. They just want to grow the family."

## **Kremlin calls transportation minister's death 'tragic' but gives no clues about his apparent suicide**

MOSCOW (AP) — The apparent suicide of Russia's transportation minister brought expressions of shock and sorrow Tuesday from the Kremlin but no new clues as to why Roman Starovoit might have taken his own life amid media speculation that he potentially was facing corruption charges.

Starovoit, who served in his post for little over a year, was found dead from a gunshot wound -- news that broke hours after a decree was issued Monday by President Vladimir Putin that dismissed the 53-year-old Cabinet member.

Starovoit's body was found in the Odintsovo district just west of the capital that is home to many members of Russia's elite, according to the Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal investigation agency. It said that a criminal probe was launched into his death and investigators saw suicide as the most likely cause.

The agency said Starovoit's body was found in his car, but Russian media that carried images from the scene later reported that he was found dead in a small park next to a parking lot where he left his Tesla and a pistol presented to him as an official gift was at his side.

The reports said Starovoit's personal assistant was asked to identify his body and she was seen weeping afterward.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the circumstances of Starovoit's death, saying that investigators will have to determine the details.

"Such information is always tragic and sad," Peskov said, noting that Putin was immediately informed about it. "Naturally, we were shocked by it."

Russian media reported that Starovoit's dismissal and his death could have been linked to an investigation into the embezzlement of state funds allocated for building fortifications in the Kursk region, where he was governor for five years before becoming transportation minister.

Starovoit's successor as governor, Alexei Smirnov, stepped down in December and was arrested on embezzlement charges in April. Some Russian media have claimed that Smirnov had told investigators about Starovoit's alleged involvement in the corruption scheme and his arrest appeared inevitable.

Some commentators even alleged that Starovoit's associates in higher echelons could have ordered his killing to avoid exposure.

The alleged embezzlement has been cited as one reason behind the Russian military's failure to stem a surprise August 2024 incursion in the region by Ukrainian troops that quickly overwhelmed lightly armed Russian border guards and inexperienced army conscripts. The incursion humiliated the Kremlin — the first time the country's territory was occupied by an invader since World War II.

The Russian military announced in April that its troops had fully reclaimed the border territory nearly nine months after losing chunks of the region. Ukraine had disputed that assertion.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 73 of 76

On July 1, former Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov was convicted on charges of embezzlement and money laundering and sentenced to 13 years in prison in a high-profile case that exposed rampant military corruption widely blamed for Moscow's military setbacks in Ukraine.

Ivanov was the most visible figure in a far-ranging probe into alleged military graft that also targeted several other top officials who were close to former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Shoigu, a veteran official who had personal ties to Putin, survived the purge of his inner circle and was given a high-profile post of secretary of Russia's Security Council.

Ivanov, 49, was named deputy defense minister in 2016 and oversaw military construction projects, as well as property management, housing and medical support for the troops. He was known for his lavish lifestyle that outraged many in Moscow just as the fighting in Ukraine exposed glaring deficiencies in Russian military organization and supplies that resulted in battlefield setbacks.

Putin named Andrei Nikitin, who served as deputy transport minister, to replace Starovoit. Lawmakers in the lower house of Russian parliament quickly endorsed his appointment on Tuesday.

Starovoit, who was divorced, is survived by two teenage daughters.

## Trump sets 25% tariffs on Japan and South Korea, and new import taxes on 12 other nations

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday set a 25% tax on goods imported from Japan and South Korea, as well as new tariff rates on a dozen other nations that would go into effect on Aug. 1.

Trump provided notice by posting letters on Truth Social that were addressed to the leaders of the various countries. The letters warned them to not retaliate by increasing their own import taxes, or else the Trump administration would further increase tariffs.

"If for any reason you decide to raise your Tariffs, then, whatever the number you choose to raise them by, will be added onto the 25% that we charge," Trump wrote in the letters to Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung.

The letters were not the final word from Trump on tariffs, so much as another episode in a global economic drama in which he has placed himself at the center. His moves have raised fears that economic growth would slow to a trickle, if not make the U.S. and other nations more vulnerable to a recession. But Trump is confident that tariffs are necessary to bring back domestic manufacturing and fund the tax cuts he signed into law last Friday.

He mixed his sense of aggression with a willingness to still negotiate, signaling the likelihood that the drama and uncertainty would continue and that few things are ever final with Trump.

"It's all done," Trump told reporters Monday. "I told you we'll make some deals, but for the most part we're going to send a letter."

South Korea's Trade Ministry said early Tuesday that it will accelerate negotiations with the United States to achieve a mutually beneficial deal before the 25% tax on its exports goes into effect.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Tuesday called Trump's decision "extremely regrettable." But Ishiba said the announced tariff rate was lower than what Trump previously had threatened and would make further negotiation possible before the Aug. 1 deadline.

Imports from Myanmar and Laos would be taxed at 40%, Cambodia and Thailand at 36%, Serbia and Bangladesh at 35%, Indonesia at 32%, South Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina at 30% and Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia at 25%.

Trump placed the word "only" before revealing the rate in his letters to the foreign leaders, implying that he was being generous with his tariffs. But the letters generally followed a standard format, so much so that the one to Bosnia and Herzegovina initially addressed its woman leader, Željka Cvijanović, as "Mr. President." Trump later posted a corrected letter.

Trade talks have yet to deliver several deals

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump, by setting the rates himself, was creating

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 74 of 76**

"tailor-made trade plans for each and every country on this planet and that's what this administration continues to be focused on."

Following a now well-worn pattern, Trump plans to continue sharing the letters sent to his counterparts on social media and then mailing them the documents, a stark departure from the more formal practices of all his predecessors when negotiating trade agreements.

The letters are not agreed-to settlements but Trump's own choice on rates, a sign that the closed-door talks with foreign delegations failed to produce satisfactory results for either side.

Wendy Cutler, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute who formerly worked in the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, said the tariff hikes on Japan and South Korea were "unfortunate."

"Both have been close partners on economic security matters and have a lot to offer the United States on priority matters like shipbuilding, semiconductors, critical minerals and energy cooperation," Cutler said.

Trump still has outstanding differences on trade with the European Union and India, among other trading partners. Tougher talks with China are on a longer time horizon in which imports from that nation are being taxed at 55%.

The office of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said the tariff rates announced by Trump mischaracterized the trade relationship with the U.S., but it would "continue with its diplomatic efforts towards a more balanced and mutually beneficial trade relationship with the United States" after having proposed a trade framework on May 20.

Higher tariffs prompt market worries, more uncertainty ahead

The S&P 500 stock index was down 0.8% in Monday trading, while the interest charged on 10-year U.S. Treasury notes increased to nearly 4.39%, a figure that could translate into elevated rates for mortgages and auto loans.

Trump has declared an economic emergency to unilaterally impose the taxes, suggesting they are remedies for past trade deficits even though many U.S. consumers have come to value autos, electronics and other goods from Japan and South Korea. The constitution grants Congress the power to levy tariffs under normal circumstances, though tariffs can also result from executive branch investigations regarding national security risks.

Trump's ability to impose tariffs through an economic emergency is under legal challenge, with the administration appealing a May ruling by the U.S. Court of International Trade that said the president exceeded his authority.

It's unclear what he gains strategically against China — another stated reason for the tariffs — by challenging two crucial partners in Asia, Japan and South Korea, that could counter China's economic heft.

"These tariffs may be modified, upward or downward, depending on our relationship with your Country," Trump wrote in both letters.

Because the new tariff rates go into effect in roughly three weeks, Trump is setting up a period of possibly tempestuous talks among the U.S. and its trade partners to reach new frameworks.

"I don't see a huge escalation or a walk back — it's just more of the same," said Scott Lincicome, a vice president at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

Trump initially roiled the financial markets by announcing tariff rates on dozens of countries, including 24% on Japan and 25% on South Korea. In order to calm the markets, Trump unveiled a 90-day negotiating period during which goods from most countries were taxed at a baseline 10%. So far, the rates in the letters sent by Trump either match his April 2 tariffs or are generally close to them.

The 90-day negotiating period technically ends Wednesday, even as multiple administration officials suggested the three-week period before implementation is akin to overtime for additional talks that could change the rates. Trump signed an executive order Monday to delay the official tariff increases until Aug. 1.

Congressionally approved trade agreements historically have sometimes taken years to negotiate because of the complexity.

Administration officials have said Trump is relying on tariff revenues to help offset the tax cuts he signed into law on July 4, a move that could shift a greater share of the federal tax burden onto the middle class and poor as importers would likely pass along much of the cost of the tariffs. Trump has warned major

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 75 of 76

retailers such as Walmart to simply “eat” the higher costs, instead of increasing prices in ways that could intensify inflation.

Josh Lipsky, chair of international economics at The Atlantic Council, said a three-week delay in imposing the tariffs was unlikely sufficient for meaningful talks to take place.

“I take it as a signal that he is serious about most of these tariffs and it’s not all a negotiating posture,” Lipsky said.

Trade gaps persist, more tariff hikes are possible

Trump’s team promised 90 deals in 90 days, but his negotiations so far have produced only two trade frameworks.

His outline of a deal with Vietnam was clearly designed to box out China from routing its America-bound goods through that country, by doubling the 20% tariff charged on Vietnamese imports on anything traded transnationally.

The quotas in the signed United Kingdom framework would spare that nation from the higher tariff rates being charged on steel, aluminum and autos, though British goods would generally face a 10% tariff.

The United States ran a \$69.4 billion trade imbalance in goods with Japan in 2024 and a \$66 billion imbalance with South Korea, according to the Census Bureau. The trade deficits are the differences between what the U.S. exports to a country relative to what it imports.

According to Trump’s letters, autos would be tariffed separately at the standard 25% worldwide, while steel and aluminum imports would be taxed on 50%.

This is not the first time Trump has tangled with Japan and South Korea on trade — and the new tariffs suggest his past deals made during his first term failed to deliver on his administration’s own hype.

In 2018, during Trump’s first term, his administration celebrated a revamped trade agreement with South Korea as a major win. And in 2019, Trump signed a limited agreement with Japan on agricultural products and digital trade that at the time he called a “huge victory for America’s farmers, ranchers and growers.”

Trump has also said on social media that countries aligned with the policy goals of BRICS, an organization composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, would face additional tariffs of 10%.

## Today in History: July 9, 14th Amendment ratified

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 9, the 190th day of 2025. There are 175 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 9, 1868, the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified, granting citizenship and “equal protection under the laws” to anyone “born or naturalized in the United States,” including formerly enslaved people.

Also on this date:

In 1850, President Zachary Taylor died of gastrointestinal illness after consuming a large amount of cherries and iced milk on a hot day five days earlier; Vice President Millard Fillmore was sworn in as president the following day.

In 1896, William Jennings Bryant delivered his famous “Cross of Gold” speech at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

In 1918, 101 people were killed in a train collision in Nashville, Tennessee in the deadliest US rail disaster in history.

In 1937, a fire at 20th Century Fox’s storage facility in Little Ferry, New Jersey, destroyed most of the studio’s silent films.

In 1943, during World War II, the Allies launched Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily.

In 1944, during World War II, American forces secured Saipan as the last Japanese defenses fell.

In 1947, the engagement of Britain’s Princess Elizabeth to Lt. Philip Mountbatten was announced.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 379 ~ 76 of 76**

In 1965, the Sonny & Cher single "I Got You Babe" was released by ATCO Records.

In 1982, Pan Am Flight 759, a Boeing 727, crashed in Kenner, Louisiana, shortly after takeoff from New Orleans International Airport, killing all 145 people aboard and eight people on the ground.

In 2004, a Senate Intelligence Committee report concluded the CIA had provided unfounded assessments of the threat posed by Iraq that the Bush administration had relied on to justify going to war.

In 2010, the largest U.S.-Russia spy swap since the Cold War was completed on a remote stretch of Vienna airport tarmac as planes from New York and Moscow arrived within minutes of each other with 10 Russian sleeper agents and four prisoners accused by Russia of spying for the West.

In 2011, South Sudan officially became an independent nation.

In 2018, President Donald Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh to fill the seat left vacant by the retirement of Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Today's Birthdays: Artist David Hockney is 88. Author Dean Koontz is 80. Actor Chris Cooper is 74. Musician and TV personality John Tesh is 73. Country singer David Ball is 72. Business executive/TV personality Kevin O'Leary (TV: "Shark Tank") is 71. Singer Debbie Sledge (Sister Sledge) is 71. Actor Jimmy Smits is 70. US Senator Lindsey Graham is 70. Actor Tom Hanks is 69. Singer Marc Almond is 68. Actor Kelly McGillis is 68. Rock singer Jim Kerr (Simple Minds) is 66. Actor-rock singer Courtney Love is 61. Actor Pamela Adlon is 59. Actor Scott Grimes is 54. Actor Enrique Murciano (TV: "Without a Trace") is 52. Musician/producer Jack White is 50. Rock singer-musician Isaac Brock (Modest Mouse) is 50. Actor-director Fred Savage is 49. Actor Linda Park (TV: "Star Trek: Enterprise") is 47. Actor Megan Parlen is 45. Animator/writer/producer Rebecca Sugar is 38. Actor Mitchel Musso is 34. Actor Georgie Henley (Film: "The Chronicles of Narnia") is 30.