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Saturday, July 12

Legion at Clark Tourney

VFW Class B U12 State Baseball Tourney n Groton

Sunday, July 13

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

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

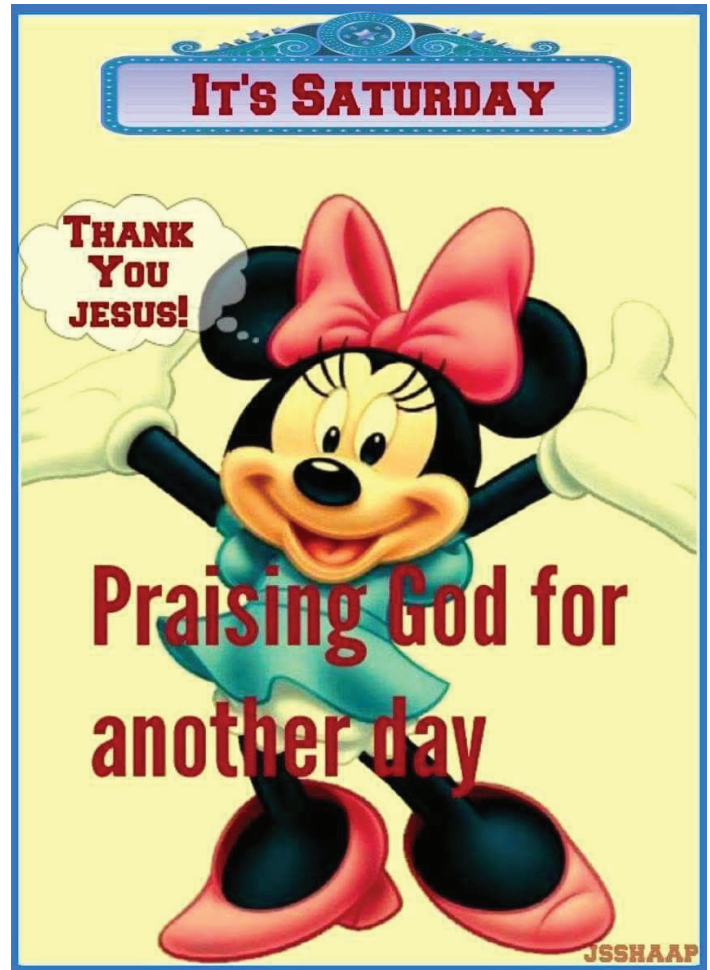
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

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

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



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

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

Amateurs at Clark, 4 p.m.

VFW Class B U12 State Baseball Tourney n Groton Summer Fest/Car Show, 9 a.m., City Park

Monday, July 14

School Board Meeting 7 p.m.

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, blushing pears, whole wheat bread.

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

Jr. Teeners hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Softball: U8B at Britton, 6 p.m.; U8G at Britton, 6 p.m.; U10B&G at Aberdeen (NSU), 5:30 p.m.; U12 vs. Aberdeen at NSU, 6:45 p.m.; U14 vs. Aberdeen (NSU), 8 p.m.

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

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1440

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

Wimbledon Finals Underway

The world's oldest tennis tournament concludes this weekend in London, with Amanda Anisimova and Iga Świątek in the women's singles final today at 11 am ET and Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz in the men's final tomorrow.

Anisimova, an American, reached her first Grand Slam final by upsetting favorite Aryna Sabalenka Thursday. She is Wimbledon's first US finalist since Serena Williams in 2019. Anisimova's challenger, Poland's Świątek, dominated her semifinal match to secure her finals spot. Saturday marks both players' Wimbledon women's final debut.

In the men's face-off, Italy's Sinner and Spain's Alcaraz will rematch their French Open showdown last month, which Alcaraz won. Sinner defeated seven-time Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic in yesterday's semifinal match, ending Djokovic's streak of finals appearances. Both men played through injuries. Alcaraz is vying for his third consecutive Wimbledon title, after beating Djokovic in 2023 and 2024.

In other tennis news, Venus Williams accepted a wild-card entry to play singles at this month's DC Open. It will be her first tournament in over a year.

The US State Department begins layoffs.

Over 1,300 domestic State Department employees were laid off yesterday as part of the Trump administration's plans to downsize and reorganize the department. The firings come days after the Supreme Court cleared the way for the administration to undertake massive reductions to the federal workforce. A letter sent to Congress in May stated that the administration sought to cut the department's domestic employees by almost 3,400 via layoffs and voluntary departures.

Trump announces 35% tariffs on Canadian imports.

The rate is set to go into effect Aug. 1 and exceeds the 25% tariffs imposed on Canadian goods in February. President Donald Trump cited Canada's retaliatory tariffs and failure to control fentanyl smuggling to the US as the reason for the increase, though federal data shows relatively little of the drug enters via the northern border. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Canada would continue trade negotiations while defending its national interest.

Son of 'El Chapo' pleads guilty in US drug trafficking case.

Ovidio Guzmán López, son of Mexican drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, pleaded guilty in a Chicago federal court Friday to drug trafficking, money laundering, and firearms charges related to leading a Sinaloa cartel faction that smuggled large amounts of fentanyl and other drugs into the US. As part of his plea, Guzmán López admitted to overseeing the production and distribution of narcotics that fueled the ongoing opioid crisis, though terms of his sentencing have not been disclosed. He is the first of the drug lord's sons to enter a plea deal.

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Goldman Sachs to pilot an AI software engineer.

The global investment bank announced this week it will begin testing an autonomous software engineer created by Cognition, a \$4B AI startup backed by venture capitalists Peter Thiel and Joe Lonsdale. The program, called Devin, will work alongside the firm's 12,000 human developers to write code. Goldman's technology chief anticipates Devin, which will initially be supervised by humans, could boost worker productivity fourfold compared to previous AI tools. Goldman is the first major bank to deploy the technology.

Justin Bieber surprises fans with new album.

Canadian singer Justin Bieber released his seventh studio album, "Swag," at midnight yesterday, hours after teasing it on social media and billboards. The album marks the 31-year-old's first in four years. Bieber, who has taken several breaks from music to focus on his health, cut his last tour short in 2022 due to a battle with Ramsay Hunt syndrome. The new album cover appears to show him holding his son, Jack Blues, whom he welcomed last year with his wife, Hailey Rhode Bieber.

Dinosaur fossils found in Denver museum's parking lot.

The Denver Museum of Nature and Science, known for its dinosaur exhibits, announced this week the discovery of a dinosaur fossil beneath its parking lot. The bone was unearthed 763 feet below the surface during a construction project in January and is estimated to be nearly 70 million years old, making it the deepest and oldest dinosaur fossil ever discovered within Denver's city limits. It is currently on display in the museum's "Discovering Teen Rex" exhibit.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Debra H. in Fayetteville, NC.

"My family was attending my great nephew's wedding. I am 69 years old and we were walking through a path into a wooded lane to the chapel. My nephew Nicholas was picking up the sticks on the pathway to make sure the ladies didn't trip. I thought that was the most thoughtful gesture of caring about us he could show. It touched my heart."

RUMMAGE SALE

3 FAMILY RUMMAGE SALE, Sunday, July 13, 8 am-2:30 pm, At OLDE BANK, 101 N. Main, Groton, (Summer Fest/Car Show/Vendors/Church at Groton City Park 9-3).

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Upcoming Regions

There are some modifications to American Legion baseball regions. The senior Region 6B Tournament scheduled for Groton July 22-24 is no more. There was a realignment in the regions and Groton is now in Region 1B with Sisseton, Webster and Big Stone City. Region 1B will be played July 22-24 in Sisseton.. It is a double elimination tournament.

The Junior Legion Region will be played July 28-29 in Groton. That will be a round-robin tournament with Sisseton, Clark, Redfield and Groton.

State U12 Tourney

The U12 Baseball Tournament is being played in Groton and Columbia with four teams remaining undefeated. It is pool play for the first two days before the final bracket it made as there are 15 teams in the tournament.

In the Uniform Pool, Winner and Clark are both 2-0, in the Yankee Pool, Groton is 2-0, and in the Zulu Pool, Emery is 2-0.

First round game scores:

Winner Rattlers 26, Britton Jr. Jacks 1

Clark Area 11, Corsica/Stickney Jaguars 1

Parkson Leischner 15, Hamlin/Lake Norden 14

Emery 4, Kimball/White Lake WildKats 3

Webster 5, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 0

Groton 11, Salem Cubs 2

Clark Area 15, Britton Jr. Jacks 5

Wagner 9, Hamlin/Lake Norden 2

Winner Rattlers 2, Canova Gang 1

Salem Cubs 11, Parkson Leischner 4

Baltic Bulldogs 1, Webster 0

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 8, Kimball/White Lake 8 (games are played for 5 innings or 1 hour and 45 minutes. At the end of either one, the game ends)

Corsica/Stickney 17, Canova Gang 0

Groton 6, Wagner 4

Emery 6, Baltic 2

The games begin at 9 a.m. on Saturday with the following schedule:

9:00: Kimball/White Lake vs. Webster (Columbia), Clark vs. Winner (Falk), Salem vs. Hamlin/Lake Norden (Nelson)

11:00: Emery vs. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket (Columbia), Canova vs Clark (Falk), Corsica/Stickney vs. Britton (Nelson)

1:00: Wagner vs. Salem (Columbia), Groton vs. Parkston (Falk), Baltic vs. Kimball/White Lake (Nelson)

3:00: Sanborn Central/Woonsocket vs. Baltic (Columbia), Britton vs. Canova (Falk), Winner vs. Corsica/Stickney (Nelson)

5:00: Hamlin vs. Groton (Columbia), Parkston vs. Wagner (Falk), Webster vs. Emery (Nelson)

The tournament concludes on Sunday with games starting at 8 a.m.

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State U12 Pool Standings

UNIFORM

Team	W	L	T	RD	RA
Winner Rattlers 12U	2	0	0	11	2
Clark Area 12U	2	0	0	20	6
Corsica/Stickney Jaguars 12U	1	1	0	0	11
Canova Gang 12U	0	2	0	-11	19
Britton Jr Jacks 12U	0	2	0	-20	41

YANKEE

Team	W	L	T	RD	RA
Groton 12U	2	0	0	11	6
Wagner 12U	1	1	0	5	8
Salem Cubs 12U	1	1	0	-2	15
Parkston 12U Leischner	1	1	0	-6	25
Hamlin/LN 12U	0	2	0	-8	24

ZULU

Team	W	L	T	RD	RA
Emery 12U	2	0	0	5	5
Baltic Bulldogs 12U	1	1	0	-3	6
Webster 12U	1	1	0	4	1
KWL WiLdKats 12U	0	1	1	-1	12
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket Hawks 12U	0	1	1	-5	13

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State U12 Opening Ceremony
Groton Legion Post 39 and Stratford Post 207 present the colors at the opening ceremony Friday at the U-12 State VFW Baseball Tournament. L-R Vern Prickett, Dave Bourassa, and Steve Dresbach. (Photos by Bruce Babcock)



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GFP Commission Holds July Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their July meeting at the NFAA Easton Archery Center in Yankton, July 10-11.

WILDLIFE PROPOSALS

Aquatic Invasive Species

The Commission proposed to add Prussian Carp to the Aquatic Invasive Species list.

The Commission also proposed to create an exemption so that live Red Swamp Crayfish can be possessed in certain instances for human consumption. Live Red Swamp Crayfish could not be at a location that sells bait.

The Commission also proposed to modify the European Rudd and Snakehead species listings to align with common name changes.

Mountain Lion Season

The Commission proposed to expand the season dates for hunting intervals allowing the use of dogs and increase the unit size where hunting with dogs is allowed in the Black Hills Fire Protection District. The proposal would eliminate the requirement for access permits to hunt mountain lions in Custer State Park without the use of dogs.

Hunting mountain lions in the designated area with the use of dogs will be allowed for a total of fifteen individuals with access permits, provided the harvest limits have not been met. Three access permits will be issued in each of the five 21 day intervals, starting Dec. 26.

WILDLIFE FINALIZATIONS

Custer State Park Antelope Season

The Commission voted to have an antelope hunting season in Custer State Park for 2025. Five buck antelope licenses will be available to residents. The season will run from Oct. 4-19.

Shooting Sports Complex Fee Schedule

The Commission established fees for the Pete Lien and Sons Shooting Sports Complex in Rapid City. Specifically, these fees would be:

- Individual day permit, twenty dollars;
- Individual annual permit, one hundred dollars;
- Family annual permit, one hundred and fifty dollars;
- Annual club permit, five hundred dollars;
- Competitive event permit, twenty dollars per competitor; and
- Non-competitive events cost five hundred dollars per-shooting bay for two days and two hundred dollars for each additional day.

The Pete Lien and Sons Shooting Sports Complex will always be available to the public throughout normal range hours, and there will always be free opportunities to shoot at the complex. There will be no charge to use the 50, 100, 300 yard bays and archery range on the south end of the complex. Overall, 140 of the 160 total pistol and rifle shooting positions, as well as the archery range, will be free on the south range.

The shotgun areas, long range, and north end of the range will feature more limited access. These modest fees for those areas will generate revenue that can be used to leverage federal funding to use for maintenance and operation of the complex. Revenue generated will help offset the costs for materials such as clay targets that will be offered at the complex.

The Department is committed to providing a shooting sports opportunity in western South Dakota, while responsibly managing the facility and the associated fees and licenses from hunters, trappers, anglers, and other recreational shooters.

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ACTION PLANS

The Commission voted to adopt the Department's Black Hills Beaver and State Wildlife Action Plans.

Public Comments Being Accepted

To hear the discussion on these proposals, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these proposals in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CDT on Aug. 31.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held at Rapid City's the Outdoor Campus West, Sept. 4-5.

Boys Golf Schedule

Mon., Aug. 18	Sioux Valley, 10:00
Thurs., Aug. 21	Milbank, 10:00
Tues., Aug. 26	NEC at Lee Park, Aberdeen 10:00
Tues., Sept. 2	Lee Park, Aberdeen, 10:00
Thurs. Sept. 11	Groton, 10:00
Tues., Sept. 16	Redfield, 10:00
Thurs., Sept. 25	Sisseton, 10:00
Mon., Sept. 29	Region 1A at Madison, 10:00
Oct. 6-7	State at Vermillion

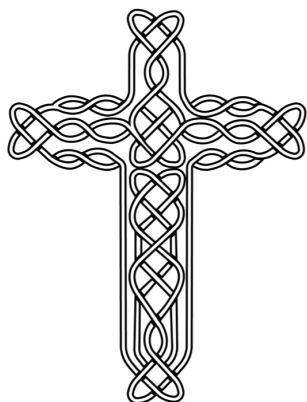
Cross Country Schedule

Thurs., Sept. 4	Redfield, 10:00
Tues., Sept. 9	Britton, 4:00
Mon., Sept. 15	Webster, 2:00
Thurs., Sept. 18	Lee Park, 4:00
Mon., Sept. 22	Clear Lake, 4:00
Mon., Sept. 29	Groton, 4:00
Thurs., Oct. 2	Sisseton, 4:00
Thurs., Oct. 9	NEC at Webster, 1:00
Wed., Oct. 15	Region 1A at Webster, 11 a.m.
Sat., Oct. 25	State at Huron

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



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Groton Legion Post 39 Looks To Continue Strong Play Against Rattlers 2025 Legion

by Game Changer Media

Groton Legion Post 39 have been playing well lately, going 7-3 in their last 10 games. They'll put that strong play to the test when they take on Rattlers 2025 Legion on Saturday at Clark at 9 a.m.

Last Time Out:

Rattlers 2025 Legion fell to C/WL Legion 6-1.

Player Highlight:

Korbin Kucker hits and pitches for Groton Legion Post 39. Kucker primarily plays second base on the field. Kucker has hit for power this season with one home run, six triples, and 13 doubles among Kucker's 32 hits. Kucker consistently throws strikes, with 219 strikes in 398 pitches.

About Groton Legion Post 39:

Groton Legion Post 39 has played well lately, going 7-3 in their last 10 games. They have a 19-7 record overall. Brevin Fliehs's 1.310 OPS leads Groton Legion Post 39. The shortstop has a 0.524 OBP and a 0.787 slugging percentage this season. Nick Morris leads Groton Legion Post 39 with 33 and two-thirds innings pitched. The starting pitcher has a 2.29 ERA this season. Karsten Fliehs leads Groton Legion Post 39 with 169 total fielding chances this season. Fliehs's primary position is catcher.

About Rattlers 2025 Legion:

Rattlers 2025 Legion will look to break their 5-game losing streak. They are 7-16-1 overall this season. Justin Bosch's 1.166 OPS leads Rattlers 2025 Legion. The catcher has a 0.560 OBP and a 0.607 slugging percentage this season. Cole Nitschke leads Rattlers 2025 Legion with 31 innings pitched. The right-handed pitcher has a 4.52 ERA this season. Caleb Kosiak leads Rattlers 2025 Legion with 108 total fielding chances this season. Kosiak's primary position is catcher.

Name Released in 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: Harvey D. Gipe Jr., 77-year-old male from Hamilton, IL, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2020 Harley Davidson CVO

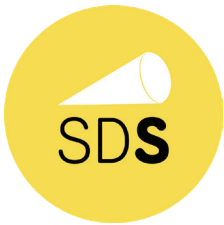
Helmet Used: No

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

Preliminary crash information indicates Harvey D. Gipe Jr., 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. Mr. Gipe 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.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Smoke, steam and flooded toilets: Just another day at the state penitentiary

Media walk-through designed to highlight deficiencies, make case for new prison

BY: JOHN HULT - FRIDAY JULY 11, 2025 4:42 PM

SIOUX FALLS — The scene was surreal from the jump.

There we were, a gang of eight reporters scrunched together in the claustrophobic lobby of the state penitentiary, waiting for a sales pitch on a product sold the day before to customers who were never us anyway.

The state's Project Prison Reset task force had already voted to build a new prison on the eastern edge of the city that's played host to "The Hill" since before statehood.

That group's membership had toured the labyrinthine quartzite monolith that houses around 800 prisoners months ago.

We already knew the forthcoming message: This hill is no shining city. It's a terrible, awful, no good, very bad place, unsafe for inmates and correctional officers alike.

Old hat, new cattle

Aside from an exclusive tour offered to KELO-TV earlier this year, the Department of Corrections has kept reporters out of the pen for the three-year duration of the new prison debate.

That's partly why I showed up Wednesday with a unique perspective among our gang of eight. I was the only one who'd toured the building before. I'd been there plenty as an Argus Leader reporter. It used to be normal to visit the warden in their office, inmates in the visit room, or staff in their work environment, be that out on the floor or inside the prison industries building. I also witnessed an execution back in 2012.

I had at least some idea of what we were in for.

On Wednesday morning, though, spokesman Michael Winder assured me I'd see more than I ever had before, and much of what had changed in the decade since I'd last darkened the pen's reinforced doors.

This tour, he explained, would be the first to take us onto the catwalks where inmates live. We'd also see the communal shower downstairs, where 60 men bathe at once as another 60 wait outside on benches, and walk through the underground tunnel that leads to the indoor recreation area.

That expanded access was among the reasons we weren't allowed to bring cameras. Inmates have the right not to be photographed, Winder said — they don't like to feel like animals in a zoo — and it would be impractical for him to police eight shutterbugs simultaneously.

He'd take pictures for us, we were assured. The reason for saying no to audio recording or the use of our own notebooks never was fully explained.

Briefing: There will be catcalling

Some changes were apparent right away. We'd all need to pass through a metal detector, shoehorned into place in 2022 to create the pre-tour waiting zone's aforementioned cramped conditions.

First, we were taken upstairs for a security briefing and introductions with the eight people who'd accompany us. We'd need to stick together and keep moving, Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko told us. The men would stand at the front and back of our single-file line, Wasko explained, because inmates are less likely to catcall if a man stands between them and their target.

There would be catcalling, she promised.

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We could see in through the barred second door of our first doubled-doored security checkpoint as we huddled and handed our driver's licenses to Maj. Cody Hanson in exchange for visitor's badges.

That's when I noticed the next new thing: A COVID-era poster asking inmates to queue 3 feet apart in the pickup line for commissary, otherwise known as the prison store.

Some things hadn't changed. The first five inmate faces I saw belonged to black and Native American men, a reminder that South Dakota, like the U.S. as a whole, locks up people of color at higher rates than white folks.

First impressions: Pooled water and cusses

Between inmate drug overdoses, gang fights and security lockdowns, things have been pretty messy in state prisons lately. Wasko has come under no small amount of scrutiny as a result. It was no surprise to hear Winder tell us that two inmates had scuffled in the chow hall shortly before our tour (neither was seriously injured, he'd tell me the next day).

Once inside, we saw a less metaphorical mess. A pool of water spread across the floor from a cell in federal hall, the 170-bed midsection between East Hall and West Hall, the prison's two linear, five-floor wings.

"We had a backup," said a smiling Amber Pirraglia, the director of prisons.

Our group had to step around the toilet water puddle on its way to East Hall, a dance soundtracked by profane chants leveled by inmates at Wasko.

"This is just normal," when she shows up, Wasko said, but "they're pretty fired up."

We hurried to one side of the hall, walking by rows of barred cells. Each floor of the five in East Hall has 20 cells on either side, each a home for two inmates in a space designed to hold one back in 1881.

Wasko doesn't like bars, she said. Inmates can spit through bars. They can throw urine. She prefers solid doors with windows and closable food ports.

She also doesn't like the size of the cells. Modern standards expect each inmate to have 35 square feet of "unencumbered space," she told us. Inmates on the Hill split 56 total. That's four less than my master bathroom at home, minus our closet space. I can barely squeeze by the bathtub to get to that closet when my 7-year-old's brushing her teeth.

In the cells that weren't blocked by hung T-shirts, I saw flip-flops tied to walls, paper trash bags stuffed between bars up top, and books and bags of chips and toiletries stuffed into every corner.

'They're too fired up'

It was hot. The air conditioning is wildly inefficient. It felt like 80 degrees.

"What air conditioning?" the Department of Correction's inspector general said.

If you're wondering what 400 people stuffed in a hot box with 200 toilets smell like at 80 feels-like degrees, you've wondered enough to know why the smoke we saw as we climbed the steps to the catwalk was an alarming sign but a welcome aroma.

"Something is on fire," I wrote in my penitentiary-issue pocket notebook. "Can see the smoke."

Inmates can start blazes by shoving toilet paper into electrical outlets, we were told.

Wasko wanted us on the narrow metal staircases so we could know what it's like for the officers as they deliver food, mail and medicine, respond to fights on the catwalks or haul empty stretchers up and stretchers with injured inmates on them down.

On the way up, we walked past two "fishing lines," one of which had something tied to the end. They appeared to be fashioned out of T-shirts or bits of bed sheet. That's how inmates deliver small bits of contraband from one tier to the next, Wasko told us.

At the top of the stairs, Wasko decided we weren't going to walk across the fifth floor tier after all.

"They're too fired up."

Showers: Stabbings and steamed cameras

Next, we visited the showers below East Hall — and revisited that toilet backup.

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One officer has to supervise the showers downstairs while another monitors a video feed. Every few feet in the entryway to the giant communal shower stall, we saw large tile columns — “prime locations” for injuries, Wasko said, as inmates can stay out of an officer’s sight line and strike or stab their targets.

Steam clouds the cameras on the opposite wall pretty quickly during shower time, Maj. Hanson said.

Modern prisons have showers in every “pod,” the circular cell configuration used in newer facilities, Wasko said. It’s typically one for every 12 inmates, she said, meaning fewer people for officers to watch and fewer opportunities for assaults or contraband passage.

“They can shower whenever they want to,” she said of inmates in modern facilities, with curtains covering men at the midsection, and women at the chest and midsection.

As Wasko spoke, water from the still-pooling toilet backup in the federal hall cell splashed from above to the floor below the stairway.

Pirraglia mopped it up.

Another waterfall fell in a sheet about a minute later. Pirraglia laughed. She left the mop against the wall.

50-cent video visits

From the showers, we walked through the white-walled underground tunnel that leads to the indoor recreation area.

A tour guide pointed to the hallway’s wall phones. That’s where inmates call out from when they can’t call from their prison-issue electronic tablets.

We also saw a video visit kiosk in that same hallway, the first in a set of what will be 17. The others, located in a separate room, are set to go live on Monday.

The operational kiosk’s screen already had a spiderweb crack.

The kiosks are part of a video-only visit setup launched recently in response to the alleged passage of contraband during in-person visits. Some family members of inmates have complained on social media and to people like me about this.

The price paid by inmates for the video calls that replace the free in-person visits is 50 cents a minute.

Pheasantland: Like Amazon, sort of

From there, it was Pheasantland Industries. One building houses the license plate, print and carpentry shops, as well as the space rented by Hope Haven Ministries, a nonprofit that distributes wheelchairs to the needy with the aid of inmate labor.

On the days they work, anyway. No one was working when we showed up.

The shops looked much the same as before, with one major difference: There are now locked toolboxes with designated spots for every tool, installed as a preventative measure against the theft of potentially lethal weapons.

Wasko seemed especially proud to show off the big metal warehouse now home to the commissary program and its inventory.

Inmates fluttered about between rows of shelving stacked with boxes of nacho chips, sodas, cookies and various other off-brand versions of consumer goods. Inmates order from their tablet, workers print out the orders from a computer, fill plastic bags with goods and sort them into wheeled carts for delivery. Orders meant for prisons in Springfield, Rapid City, Yankton or Pierre get boxed up to be shipped out.

“It’s like Amazon, right?” Maj. Hanson said.

Kind of. I’ve toured that Sioux Falls distribution center. There were a lot more robots than zero. Also, I didn’t see seven pallets of ramen noodles — far and away the most popular item in the commissary catalog — but I’m sure the folks at Amazon have a few pallets stashed somewhere.

Tour takeaways

Media tours of state facilities should be normal, not news.

That it’s been so hard to get inside the pen as the state debates the most expensive taxpayer-funded

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project in its history — which is what a new prison will be if it ever gets built — is and has been disturbing. It's a fact made more disturbing as we continue to hear about fights, unrest, drug deals, gang wars, assaults on officers and overdose deaths.

That's what I was thinking during the sales job.

I wasn't blown away by what a dump the place is. It was a lot louder and messier than I remember, but the cells are still tiny and it's still hot as blazes.

There are countless ways a new building, properly managed and maintained, would be safer and saner for all involved. Even those who call the place functional and reckon we can't afford a new one wouldn't argue otherwise.

That was also true 40 years ago. We've made do for a long time.

What's true today is that the debate of this moment, while the state is flush with squirreled-away prison construction cash thanks in part to federal COVID relief awards, had been a closed off, take-it-or-leave-it affair until this year.

Before Gov. Larry Rhoden appointed the task force and set it to work in a series of public meetings, there were no public forums. The Lincoln County farm ground set to host the initially planned \$825 million prison? That site was selected, not debated. Lawmakers got to visit the prison if they complained loudly enough, but reporters were forbidden.

The person to blame for all that might be on Fox News right now, talking about Texas floods or immigration raids.

"The old administration went to another job," Wasko said when I asked her about the sudden shift in transparency, a reference to former governor and now Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. "We have a new administration that has different philosophies and different outlooks on our ability to talk about things."

Under Rhoden thus far, she said, "I have been allowed to be responsive."

Noem didn't so much discourage transparency, Wasko said. It was more that when a question came in, there would be "a conversation that was had," during which the department might be told "you know what, right now is probably not the best time" to answer.

Which sounds a lot like discouragement to me.

Let's hope we've left that behind us.

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.

Wyoming financial planner 'pausing' TikTok deal he says would benefit South Dakota

Reid Rasner says China's maneuvering and a Wyoming state senator's social media comment are working against him

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 11, 2025 1:22 PM

Reid Rasner says he's paused his efforts to purchase TikTok for \$47.45 billion and possibly place some of its operations in South Dakota.

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden had thrown his support behind the bid from Rasner, a financial planner and failed 2024 U.S. Senate candidate.

Rasner Media's website posted a press release Thursday saying the bid's on pause "unless China makes substantial changes and demonstrates a genuine commitment to a transparent and lawful divestiture."

The bid to buy TikTok "remains fully funded," it said.

The press release blamed China for the pause. It said ByteDance, TikTok's parent company, "is attempting to spin off a diluted U.S. version of TikTok" that would keep the app's core algorithm under Chinese control.

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That “likely obfuscates what they have been doing to manipulate and spy on Americans,” Rasner said in the press release.

Rasner sues state lawmaker over social media slights

He’s also blamed a Wyoming state lawmaker for the TikTok deal’s troubles. Rasner filed a defamation lawsuit this week in Laramie County, Wyoming, against former state Sen. Anthony Bouchard for his alleged efforts to “jeopardize a major business acquisition” through disparaging social media posts.

Rasner told the Cowboy State Daily that the language in the lawsuit is a reference to the TikTok bid.

In May 2024, Bouchard took to Facebook to call Rasner a “phony” and accuse him of misconduct during his college days, according to the lawsuit and screenshots provided in a press release from Rasner on the case.

Rasner “has suffered irreparable damage to his personal and professional reputation, which has now been forever diminished and tarnished,” the lawsuit said.

Bouchard declined to comment Friday.

Rasner Media born in February

In 2024, President Biden signed a bill into law that would either force the sale of TikTok to a U.S. owner or ban the app in the U.S. The Supreme Court found the law constitutional in January. President Trump has now twice extended the deadline for its sale, which is set for Sept. 17.

Rasner launched Rasner Media a month after the Supreme Court ruling. He’s since made the rounds in interviews on the app, calling his bid the “most Trumpian” and pledging to pay content creators dividends on the occasion of a TikTok sale if they invest in it through Rasner’s FoundersTok website.

Rasner also drew the support of Gov. Rhoden after offering to locate some of TikTok’s operations in South Dakota, calling the state the leading contender for a headquarters. The governor appeared alongside Rasner for a press conference in May at Dakota State University, a school that trains students in cybersecurity and data science.

Shortly after that visit, Rasner told a group of Wyoming business leaders that he’s always wanted Wyoming to host the company.

Financial questions

Like several of the content creators who’ve interviewed Rasner on the short-form video platform, the press release for Rasner’s South Dakota visit referred to him as a “Wyoming billionaire.”

A South Dakota Searchlight investigation called that claim into question. Rasner would not answer the question directly when asked.

The Cowboy State Daily asked Rasner about the article. He told the outlet he has “considerable wealth.”

“I’ve had very, very good success in business since high school, and I’ve built a really great life for myself,” he told the outlet.

Rasner’s financial disclosures to the Federal Election Commission for his unsuccessful campaign to unseat U.S. Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyoming, showed that he’d earned a little more than \$100,000 the year before that 2024 contest as a financial planner.

He’d also earned more than \$60,000 selling goods on eBay, owned a few pieces of property in Natrona County that brought him less than \$50,000 of rental income, and had taken out a loan of more than \$1 million from a family trust.

He raised less than \$35,000 in donations for his Senate campaign, excluding the money he loaned himself.

Rasner has yet to file the required paperwork to show that his campaign paid back the \$1.2 million loan he made to his 2024 campaign.

Rasner now has another U.S. Senate campaign committee — Wyoming’s junior U.S. senator is up for reelection in 2026 — that’s raised \$105 in donations and lists \$188,500 in loans Rasner’s made to his own campaign.

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Rhoden response

Rasner has not disclosed the names of any financial backers to the TikTok bid. In a response to questions sent prior to the publication of Searchlight's investigation, Rasner accused the outlet of liberal activism and bias.

Prior to the publication of Searchlight's story on Rasner's finances, Rhoden told the Scouting Report podcast that Rasner was "ready to go" to buy TikTok.

When asked last month after a tour of a Baltic-area dairy if he still has that level of confidence in Rasner's bid, Rhoden told South Dakota Searchlight that he's "yet to have anybody tell me that there's anything illegitimate about what he's told me."

"We haven't offered him anything, and he hasn't offered us anything," the governor said, save the opportunity to talk about the possibility of locating the headquarters in the state.

"I'd certainly hope for that," Rhoden said. "That's a no-lose for South Dakota."

Rasner did not immediately respond to a South Dakota Searchlight request Friday for comment on the pause of his TikTok bid.

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.

Measles reaches highest US level in 33 years; SD cases rise to 12

BY: TIM HENDERSON, STATELINE - JULY 11, 2025 7:00 AM

Measles cases have surpassed a recent 2019 record to reach the highest level since 1992, with at least 1,289 cases reported in 39 states.

South Dakota has reported 12 cases since May — eight in Lincoln County, and two apiece in Meade and Pennington counties. The state has also reported one hospitalization and zero deaths. Ten of the cases are in unvaccinated people, and the vaccination status is unknown in the other two cases. Seven of the cases are children and five are adults.

The milestone comes as health officials are increasingly alarmed by vaccine skepticism gaining a voice in the Trump Administration's Health and Human Services Administration under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Pediatricians and public health associations filed a federal lawsuit this week challenging a May directive by Kennedy, claiming it "creates barriers" to vaccination for pregnant women and young children.

"Because of his name and profile, Mr. Kennedy has been instrumental in increasing the levels of vaccine hesitancy and skepticism in this country," the lawsuit states. "The Secretary's dismantling of the vaccine infrastructure must end."

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Wednesday that there were 1,288 cases in 38 states, surpassing the 2019 level of 1,274. South Carolina later reported its own first case of the year, an unvaccinated international traveler in the northwestern Upstate area of the state.

Wyoming reported its first measles case since 2010 on July 1, an unvaccinated child in Natrona County.

Other states recently joining the list: North Carolina reported its first case of the year June 24, in a child visiting Forsyth and Guilford counties from another country. And Oregon reported a case the same day for a person identified only as an unvaccinated international traveler sickened in June after returning to the Portland area.

"We're here to tell you that measles is now in Oregon, and if you're not vaccinated, you are susceptible," said Dr. Paul R. Cieslak, medical director for communicable diseases and immunizations at the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division, in a statement.

Measles is one of the most contagious diseases and can spread rapidly among unvaccinated people.

Utah reported its first case June 20, an unvaccinated person with no recent travel out of state. The state now has nine cases, mostly in Utah County, where Provo is located.

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Confirmed cases this year were also reported in these other states: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.

Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and The Journal News in suburban New York. Henderson became fascinated with census data in the early 1990s, when AOL offered the first computerized reports. Since then he has broken stories about population trends in South Florida, including a housing affordability analysis included in the 2007 Pulitzer-winning series "House of Lies" for the Miami Herald, and a prize-winning analysis of public pension irregularities for The Journal News. He has been a member and trainer for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting since its inception 20 years ago, specializing in online data access and visualization along with demographics.

New national school voucher program included in 'big, beautiful' law, with no cap on cost

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JULY 11, 2025 11:35 AM

WASHINGTON — A national private school voucher program is now law, though the school choice initiative comes with a huge caveat. States also choose — whether or not to participate.

It's a setback for advocates who hoped to see the program — baked into the mega tax and spending cut bill President Donald Trump signed into law on July Fourth — mandated in all 50 states.

The permanent program, which starts in 2027, saw several versions between the House and Senate before getting to Trump's desk as part of congressional Republicans' massive reconciliation package.

Robert Enlow, president and CEO of EdChoice, touted aspects of the program, but said his organization would have preferred to see a 50-state program, rather than allowing states to opt in or decline.

"I think I'm really worried about that because this is seen as a sort of more partisan issue and as a result, what would make a governor in a blue state say, 'Let me bring in school choice'?" said Enlow, whose nonprofit focuses on advancing school choice options.

Still, Enlow described the program as "just another step along the way of giving parents more choices."

Who will join?

It remains to be seen which states will participate, including those with their own voucher programs already underway.

Jon Valant, a senior fellow at the nonpartisan Brookings Institution, said he's "not clear on how states will shake out on the question of whether or not to participate."

"I'm sure the vast majority of, really, all red states will participate in this thing, but I don't know what's going to happen in blue and purple states," said Valant, who also serves as director of the think tank's Brown Center on Education Policy.

Despite that unknown, Valant said that states "do have some incentive to participate because if they don't, then they're potentially losing access to some funds that they wouldn't otherwise get."

How the program works

The program allocates up to \$1,700 in federal tax credits for individuals who donate to organizations that provide private and religious school scholarships.

There is also no cap to the cost of the program, unlike earlier versions seen in both chambers of Congress.

The scholarship funds would be available to families whose household incomes do not exceed 300 percent of their area's median gross income.

More than 138 million people could be eligible to make use of the tax credit in 2027, according to an analysis from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

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However, Carl Davis, research director of the left-leaning think tank, notes in the analysis that “most of those people will not contribute” given the necessary paperwork and vouchers’ unpopularity with the public.

A state’s program participation will be decided by its governor or “by such other individual, agency, or entity as is designated under State law to make such elections on behalf of the State with respect to Federal tax benefits,” according to the final bill text.

The GOP’s school choice push

The umbrella term “school choice” centers on alternative programs to one’s assigned public school.

The effort has sparked controversy, as opponents say these programs drain critical funds and resources from school districts, while school choice advocates describe the initiatives as necessary for parents dissatisfied with their local public schools.

Trump and congressional Republicans have made school choice a major part of their education agenda.

The program also reflects a sweeping bill that GOP Reps. Adrian Smith of Nebraska and Burgess Owens of Utah and Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana reintroduced in their respective chambers earlier this year.

‘Very little quality control’

Valant, of the Brookings Institution, expressed several concerns about the program, saying “there’s very little quality control, transparency or accountability for outcomes in this program, and it’s potentially a major use of public taxpayer funds.”

He said he doesn’t see anything in the program’s text that “protects against widespread waste, fraud and abuse and from programs and schools that aren’t providing much value at all to students from continuing to get a large amount of funding.”

The program also came as Trump and his administration continue to dramatically redefine the federal role in education.

Trump’s fiscal 2026 budget request calls for \$12 billion in spending cuts to the Education Department. A summary from the department said this cut “reflects an agency that is responsibly winding down.”

Billions on hold

The administration has also taken heat for its recent decision to put on hold \$6.8 billion in federal funds for K-12 schools.

Sasha Pudelski, director of advocacy at AASA, The School Superintendents Association, said that a time when the administration is withholding billions of dollars in these funds for public schools, “the idea that we’re going to spend an unlimited amount of tax dollars to support private and religious schools is unthinkable, unimaginable — it’s horrific.”

“This is yet another handout to wealthy Americans who can already afford to send their children to private religious schools and at a cost that comes from tax dollars being deferred away from public education that serve the poorest and neediest students in America,” added Pudelski, whose organization helps to ensure every child has access to a high quality public education.

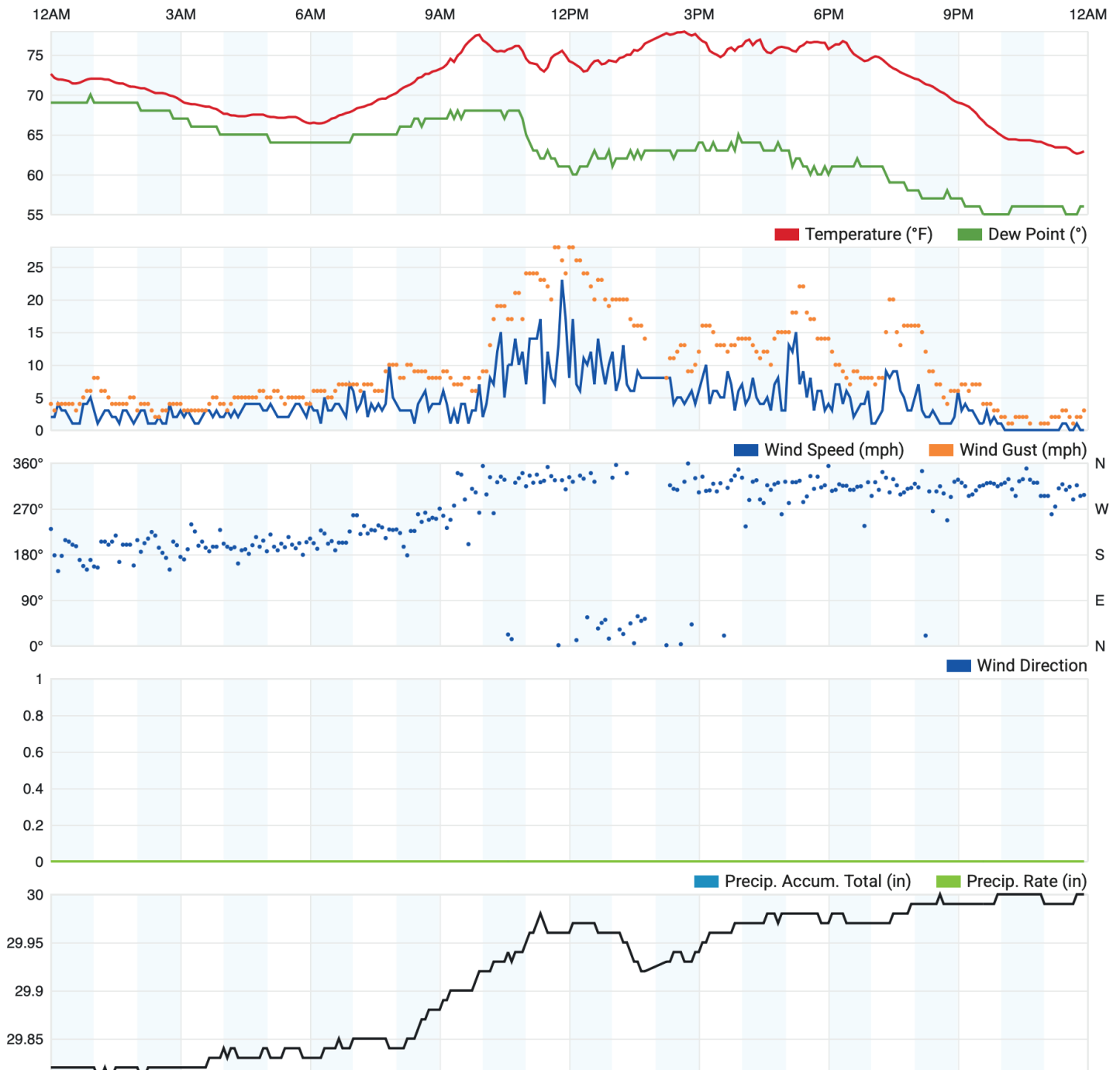
Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom’s Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

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Today



High: 80 °F

Smoke

Tonight



Low: 59 °F

Partly Cloudy
then Patchy
Smoke

Sunday



High: 89 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 91 °F

Hot

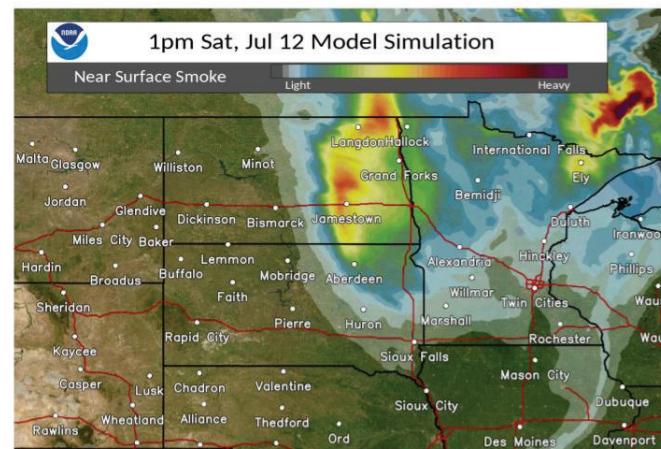
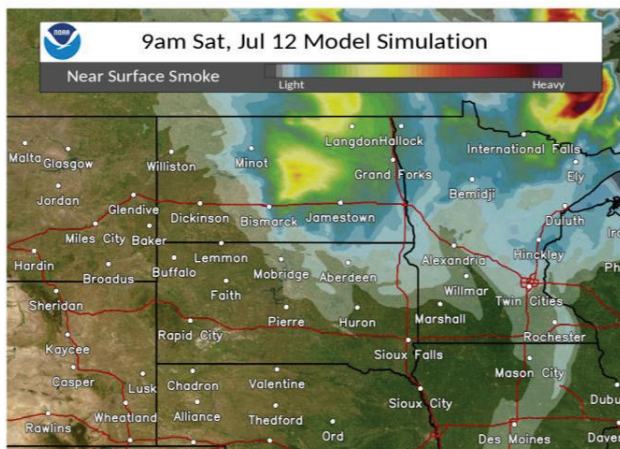


Smoky Conditions Today

July 12, 2025
3:26 AM

Smoke both near the surface and aloft

- Visibility during the morning hours may be reduced as near surface smoke reaches the northern portions of South Dakota.
- Smoke will continue over northeastern and eastern portions of South Dakota into MN through the afternoon and evening, continuing to reduce visibilities at times.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Canadian wildfire smoke, both at the surface and aloft, will reach the northern part of South Dakota this morning and track over portions of northeastern and eastern South Dakota through the afternoon and evening. Visibilities may be reduced at times. Sensitive groups, such as people with lung disease (including asthma), heart disease, and children and older adults should limit time outdoors.

Understanding the **AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)**

Good

No health impacts expected.
AQI 0-50

Moderate

Very sensitive people may wish to limit outdoor exertion.
AQI 51-100

**Unhealthy
for Sensitive Groups**

Sensitive people should limit outdoor exertion.
AQI 101-150

Unhealthy

Everyone should limit exertion outdoors.
AQI 151-200

Very Unhealthy

Sensitive people should avoid all outdoor activity.
AQI 201-300

Hazardous

Everyone should avoid all outdoor activity.
AQI 301-500

weather.gov



Visit <https://www.airnow.gov> for the current air quality index for your location.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 78 °F at 2:37 PM

High Heat Index: 80 °F at 10:00 AM

Low Temp: 63 °F at 11:16 PM

Wind: 28 mph at 11:58 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 27 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 107 in 1936

Record Low: 40 in 1941

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.37

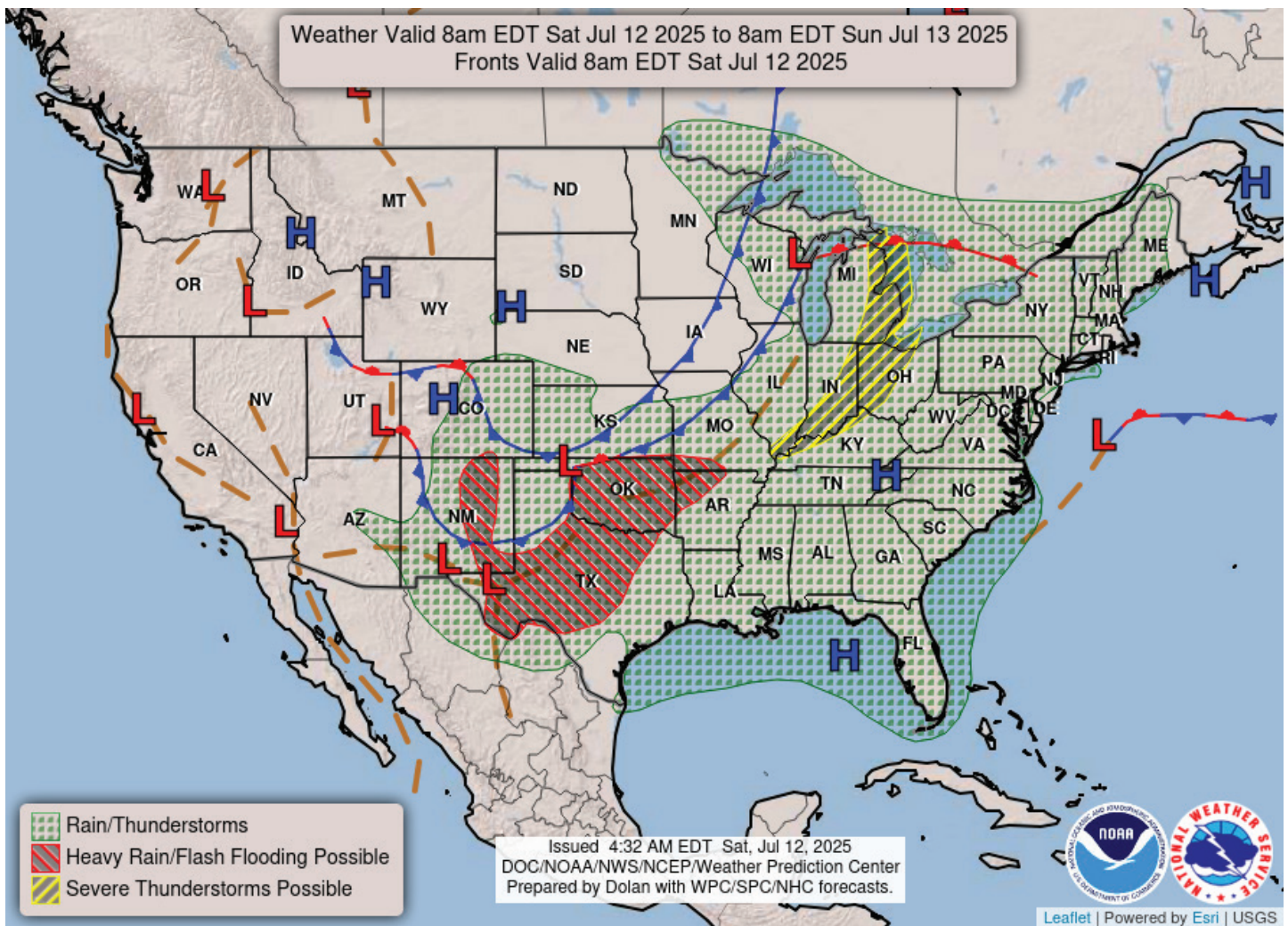
Precip to date in July: 1.87

Average Precip to date: 12.38

Precip Year to Date: 11.99

Sunset Tonight: 9:21:41 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:55:29 am



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Today in Weather History

July 12, 1993: A thunderstorm dumped up to four inches of rain in 30 minutes, 25 miles west of Pierre. This storm washed hay into big blocks up to five feet high. The heavy rains also caused water to spill over an irrigation dam. Another severe thunderstorm occurred over Dewey County and produced strong winds, damaging hail, and flooding rains which destroyed crops and hay fields. The storm knocked out windows and screens in the Lantry area. Runoff from the storm rushed through the streets of Eagle Butte causing water damage to homes and businesses. Water was reported flowing four to five feet deep through a cafe. High winds also tipped over a house trailer.

July 12, 2004: Hail up to the size of softballs fell in and around Onaka, in Faulk County, damaging vehicles, farm equipment, and homes. Lightning struck a house in Britton starting a fire in the attic, which resulted in significant damage to the home. High winds along with hail up to the size of baseballs caused some structural, vehicle, crop, and tree damage in and around Astoria and Toronto in Deuel County.

1951 - The Kaw River flood occurred. The month of June that year was the wettest of record for the state of Kansas, and during the four days preceding the flood much of eastern Kansas and western Missouri received more than ten inches of rain. Flooding in the Midwest claimed 41 lives, left 200 thousand persons homeless, and caused a billion dollars property damage. Kansas City was hardest hit. The central industrial district sustained 870 million dollars property damage. (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1980 - Lightning struck a large broiler house in Branford, FL, and the ensuing fire broiled 11,000 nearly ready broilers. Firemen were able to save a few thousand chickens, however. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Cool air invaded the High Plains Region. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Sheridan, WY, with a reading of 37 degrees. Thunderstorms developing along the cold front in the central U.S. produced 6.5 inches of rain at Fort Dodge, IA, and 2.5 inches in one hour at St. Joseph MO. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Dakotas, including baseball size hail at Aberdeen, SD, and softball size hail near Fullerton, ND. Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in Arkansas and northeastern Texas, with 6.59 inches reported at Mesquite, TX, in just an hour and fifteen minutes. Garland, TX, reported water up to the tops of cars following a torrential downpour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early morning thunderstorms over eastern Kansas deluged McFarland with more than six inches of rain. Afternoon thunderstorms in Wyoming produced up to eighteen inches of dime size hail near Rock Springs, along with torrential rains, and a three foot high wall of mud and water swept into the town causing more than 1.5 million dollars damage. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma and Arkansas, deluging Dardanelle, AR, with 3.50 inches of rain in less than twenty minutes. About seventy cows were killed when lightning struck a tree in Jones County, TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: An intense heat wave affected much of the Midwest for a 4-day period beginning on this day. The worst effects of the heat were noted in the Chicago metropolitan area, where 583 people died from the heat. Temperatures across the region reached as high as 104 degrees, overnight lows on falling to the upper 70s to low 80s. Dew point temperatures in the upper 70s to low 80s created heat indexes peaking at 125 degrees. Electricity and water usage reached record levels, causing periodic outages.

1996: Hurricane Bertha makes landfall near Wrightsville Beach, NC with maximum winds of 105 mph, but the storm surge dealt the most devastation. The U.S. Virgin Islands, along with North Carolina, were declared federal disaster areas. Surveys indicate that Bertha damaged almost 2,500 homes on St. Thomas and St. John. For many, it was the second hit in the ten months since Hurricane Marilyn devastated the same area. The primary effects in North Carolina were to the coastal counties and included storm surge flooding and beach erosion, roof damage, piers washed away, fallen trees and damage to crops. Over 5,000 homes were damaged, mostly from storm surge. Storm total rainfall amounts ranged from 5 to 8 inches along a coastal strip from South Carolina to Maine. Overall, as many as 12 deaths resulted with 8 in the U.S. and territories. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Morehead, North Carolina.

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WATCHING...WAITING...WONDERING

It was an unusually nasty night. The wind was howling fiercely as the rain pounded the roof relentlessly. The temperature was well below freezing. It was 3:30 a.m. and "Lady" had to "go" outside. With great hesitation, I opened the door and discovered a small Shih Tzu gazing upward into my eyes. She appeared frightened as she cowered at my feet.

Her markings were stunning: grey, tan, white - even brown stripes on her ears. She "bumped" my ankle purposely with her nose and began wagging her tail as she gazed steadfastly into my eyes. Then, unexpectedly she laid at my feet as if pleading for her life.

After carefully examining her, we realized that she had been abused and abandoned. Covered with dirt, fleas, and ticks, she needed care. However, Mary and I had agreed that as long as Lady lived, there would not be another dog allowed. Without saying a word, she used her pleading eyes and wagging tail to "force" her way into our hearts and home.

After a few weeks, she became very attached to me. Constantly resting at my feet, standing patiently at the door not allowing me to leave without her, quietly waiting for me to make a move so she could join me seemed to be a statement that she could not live without me now.

Listen carefully as wisdom speaks: "Blessed is the man and woman who listens to me, watching daily at my door, waiting at my doorway."

Bella is a constant reminder of those three very important words: listening, watching and waiting. How different life would be if our relationship with God centered around those three words.

Prayer: Father, May we learn to depend completely on You as the way, the truth and the source of light for our lives. May we look to You and wait on You for our needs. In Jesus's Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Blessed is the man and woman who listens to me, watching daily at my door, waiting at my doorway. Proverbs 8:34

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

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Winning Numbers

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.11.25

12 23 24 31 56 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$90,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.09.25

2 10 27 30 50 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,700,000

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 56 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.11.25

1 6 8 18 47 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 11 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.09.25

13 24 26 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$52,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 11 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.09.25

24 40 51 52 61 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 40 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.09.25

5 9 25 28 69 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$234,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 40 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Fuel to Air India plane was cut off moments before crash, investigation report says

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Fuel control switches for the engines of an Air India flight that crashed last month were moved from the “run” to the “cutoff” position moments before impact, starving both engines of fuel, a preliminary investigation report said early Saturday.

The report, issued by India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau, also indicated that both pilots were confused over the change to the switch setting, which caused a loss of engine thrust shortly after takeoff.

The Air India flight — a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner — crashed on June 12 and killed at least 260 people, including 19 on the ground, in the northwestern city of Ahmedabad. Only one passenger survived the crash, which is one of India’s worst aviation disasters.

The plane was carrying 230 passengers — 169 Indians, 53 British, seven Portuguese and a Canadian — along with 12 crew members.

According to the report, the flight lasted around 30 seconds between takeoff and crash. It said that once the aircraft achieved its top recorded speed, “the Engine 1 and Engine 2 fuel cutoff switches transitioned from RUN to CUTOFF position one after another” within a second. The report did not say how the switches could have flipped to the cutoff position during the flight.

The movement of the fuel control switches allows and cuts fuel flow to the plane’s engines.

The switches were flipped back into the run position, the report said, but the plane could not gain power quickly enough to stop its descent after the aircraft had begun to lose altitude.

The report stated: “One of the pilots transmitted ‘MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY.’”

“The switch is designed to shut fuel off to the engines. And so, if you operate it, that’s what it will do. It is also part of a design to reset,” Terry Tozer, aviation expert and former airline pilot, told Sky News.

Tozer said in case of an engine failure “one of the actions in the non-normal checklist would be to recycle these switches from on to off and back to on again, which would initiate a restart, which is exactly what happened as designed.”

“Unfortunately, the altitude was so low that the engines were only beginning to recover and they didn’t have enough time,” Tozer said, adding that the engine cutoff switches being switched to off “only seconds after liftoff, is absolutely bizarre.”

The report also indicated confusion in the cockpit moments before the crash.

In the flight’s final moment, one pilot was heard on the cockpit voice recorder asking the other why he cut off the fuel. “The other pilot responded that he did not do so,” the report said.

The preliminary report did not recommend any actions for Boeing, which said in a statement that it “stands ready to support the investigation led by India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau.”

“Our deepest condolences go out to the loved ones of the passengers and crew on board Air India Flight 171, as well as everyone affected in Ahmedabad,” the statement added.

India’s civil aviation minister, Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, said the report’s findings were preliminary and one should not “jump into any conclusions on this.”

“Let us wait for the final report,” Naidu told reporters.

Air India, in a statement, said it is fully cooperating with authorities investigating the crash.

“Air India is working closely with stakeholders, including regulators. We continue to fully cooperate with the AAIB and other authorities as their investigation progresses,” it said.

The plane’s black boxes — combined cockpit voice recorders and flight data recorders — were recovered in the days following the crash and later downloaded in India.

Indian authorities had also ordered deeper checks of Air India’s entire Boeing 787 Dreamliner fleet to prevent future incidents. Air India has 33 Dreamliners in its fleet.

28 Palestinians including children killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli airstrikes killed at least 28 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including four children, hospital officials said Saturday.

The children and two women were among at least 13 people who were killed in Deir al-Balah, in central Gaza, after Israeli airstrikes pounded the area starting late Friday, officials in Al-Aqsa Martyr's Hospital said. Another four people were killed in strikes near a fuel station, and 15 others died in Israeli airstrikes in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, according to Nasser Hospital.

The Israeli military said in a statement that over the past 48 hours, troops struck approximately 250 targets in the Gaza Strip, including militants, booby-trapped structures, weapons storage facilities, anti-tank missile launch posts, sniper posts, tunnels and additional Hamas infrastructure sites. The military did not immediately respond to The Associated Press' request for comment on the civilian deaths.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people in their Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and abducted 251. They still hold 50 hostages, less than half of them believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's offensive has killed over 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 in its count. The U.N. and other international organizations see its figures as the most reliable statistics on war casualties.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he is closing in on another ceasefire agreement that would see more hostages released and potentially wind down the war. But after two days of talks this week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu there were no signs of a breakthrough.

FEMA removed dozens of Camp Mystic buildings from 100-year flood map before expansion, records show

By RYAN J. FOLEY, CHRISTOPHER L. KELLER, and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

Federal regulators repeatedly granted appeals to remove Camp Mystic's buildings from their 100-year flood map, loosening oversight as the camp operated and expanded in a dangerous flood plain in the years before rushing waters swept away children and counselors, a review by The Associated Press found.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency included the prestigious girls' summer camp in a "Special Flood Hazard Area" in its National Flood Insurance map for Kerr County in 2011, which means it was required to have flood insurance and faced tighter regulation on any future construction projects.

That designation means an area is likely to be inundated during a 100-year flood — one severe enough that it only has a 1% chance of happening in any given year.

Located in a low-lying area along the Guadalupe River in a region known as flash flood alley, Camp Mystic lost at least 27 campers and counselors and longtime owner Dick Eastland when historic floodwaters tore through its property before dawn on July 4.

The flood was far more severe than the 100-year event envisioned by FEMA, experts said, and moved so quickly in the middle of the night that it caught many off guard in a county that lacked a warning system.

But Syracuse University associate professor Sarah Pralle, who has extensively studied FEMA's flood map determinations, said it was "particularly disturbing" that a camp in charge of the safety of so many young people would receive exemptions from basic flood regulation.

"It's a mystery to me why they weren't taking proactive steps to move structures away from the risk, let alone challenging what seems like a very reasonable map that shows these structures were in the 100-year flood zone," she said.

Camp Mystic didn't respond to emails seeking comment and calls to it rang unanswered. The camp has called the flood an "unimaginable tragedy" and added in a statement Thursday that it had restored power

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for the purpose of communicating with its supporters.

FEMA exempted buildings at old and new sites

In response to an appeal, FEMA in 2013 amended the county's flood map to remove 15 of the camp's buildings from the hazard area. Records show that those buildings were part of the 99-year-old Camp Mystic Guadalupe, which was devastated by last week's flood.

After further appeals, FEMA removed 15 more Camp Mystic structures in 2019 and 2020 from the designation. Those buildings were located on nearby Camp Mystic Cypress Lake, a sister site that opened to campers in 2020 as part of a major expansion and suffered less damage in the flood.

Campers have said the cabins at Cypress Lake withstood significant damage, but those nicknamed "the flats" at the Guadalupe River camp were inundated.

Experts say Camp Mystic's requests to amend the FEMA map could have been an attempt to avoid the requirement to carry flood insurance, to lower the camp's insurance premiums or to pave the way for renovating or adding new structures under less costly regulations.

Pralle said the appeals were not surprising because communities and property owners have used them successfully to shield specific properties from regulation.

Analysis shows flood risks at both camp sites

Regardless of FEMA's determinations, the risk was obvious.

At least 12 structures at Camp Mystic Guadalupe were fully within FEMA's 100-year flood plain, and a few more were partially in that zone, according to an AP analysis of data provided by First Street, a data science company that specializes in modeling climate risk.

Jeremy Porter, the head of climate implications at First Street, said FEMA's flood insurance map underestimates flood risks. That's because it fails to take into account the effects of heavy precipitation on smaller waterways such as streams and creeks. First Street's model puts nearly all of Camp Mystic Guadalupe at risk during a 100-year flood.

The buildings at the newer Cypress Lake site are farther from the south fork of the flood-prone river but adjacent to Cypress Creek. FEMA's flood plain doesn't consider the small waterway a risk.

However, First Street's model, which takes into account heavy rain and runoff reaching the creek, shows that the majority of the Cypress Lake site lies within an area that has a 1% chance of flooding in any given year.

In a statement, FEMA downplayed the significance of the flood map amendments.

"Flood maps are snapshots in time designed to show minimum standards for floodplain management and the highest risk areas for flood insurance," the agency wrote. "They are not predictions of where it will flood, and they don't show where it has flooded before."

An 'arduous' appeal process can help property owners

Property owners challenging FEMA's map designations hire engineers to conduct detailed studies to show where they believe the 100-year flood plain should actually be drawn. That is a "pretty arduous process" that can lead to more accurate maps while making it easier for future construction, said Chris Steubing, executive director of the Texas Floodplain Management Association, an industry group that represents floodplain managers.

Pralle, who reviewed the amendments for AP, noted that some of the exempted properties were within 2 feet (0.6 meters) of FEMA's flood plain by the camp's revised calculations, which she said left almost no margin for error. She said her research shows that FEMA approves about 90% of map amendment requests, and the process may favor the wealthy and well-connected.

A study she published in 2021 with researcher Devin Lea analyzed more than 20,000 buildings that had been removed from FEMA flood maps. It found that the amendments occurred more often in places where property values were higher, more white people lived and buildings were newer.

Camp expanded after 'tremendous success'

FEMA had cautioned in its amendments that other parts of Camp Mystic remained on the flood map, and that "any future construction or substantial improvement" would be subject to flood plain manage-

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ment regulations.

County officials not only allowed the camp to keep operating, but to dramatically expand.

Considered Texas royalty after decades of taking care of the daughters of elite families, Camp Mystic owners Dick and Tweety Eastland cited the "tremendous success" of their original camp in explaining the need for a second site nearby.

The expansion included new cabins and a dining hall, chapel, archery range and more. The camp had 557 campers and more than 100 staffers between its two locations when a state licensing agency conducted an inspection on July 2, two days before the tragedy, records show.

FEMA referred questions about the expansion to local officials, who didn't reply to messages seeking comment.

Steubing, a longtime municipal engineer in Texas, said the rain and flooding that hit Kerr County in a matter of hours were so much more intense than anything in its history that it's hard to call the flood plain management a failure.

Local officials likely believed they were following existing regulations when they allowed the camp to keep growing, but "then Mother Nature set a new standard," he said.

"You could have built things 2 feet (0.6 meters) higher, 3 feet (0.9 meters) higher, and they still might have gotten taken down," he said.

Russia warns US, South Korea and Japan against forming security alliance targeting North Korea

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Russia's foreign minister on Saturday warned the U.S., South Korea and Japan against forming a security partnership targeting North Korea as he visited his country's ally for talks on further solidifying their booming military and other cooperation.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov flew to North Korea's eastern Wonsan city on Friday for a meeting with his North Korean counterpart Choe Son Hui.

Relations between Russia and North Korea have been flourishing in recent years, with North Korea supplying troops and ammunitions to support Russia's war against Ukraine in return for military and economic assistance. That has raised concerns among South Korea, the U.S. and others that Russia might also transfer to North Korea sensitive technologies that can increase the danger of its nuclear and missile programs.

After a meeting with Choe on Saturday, Lavrov accused the U.S., South Korea and Japan of what he called their military buildups around North Korea.

"We warn against exploiting these ties to build alliances directed against anyone, including North Korea and, of course, Russia," he told reporters, according to Russia's state Tass news agency.

The U.S., South Korea and Japan have been expanding or restoring their trilateral military exercises in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program. On Friday, the three countries held a joint air drill involving U.S. nuclear-capable bombers near the Korean Peninsula, as their top military officers met in Seoul and urged North Korea to cease all unlawful activities that threaten regional security.

North Korea views major U.S.-led military drills as invasion rehearsals. It has long argued that it's forced to develop nuclear weapons to defend itself from U.S. military threats.

Lavrov said Russia understands North Korea's decision to seek nuclear weapons.

"The technologies used by North Korea are the result of the work of its own scientists. We respect North Korea's aspirations and understand the reasons why it is pursuing a nuclear development," Lavrov said.

During their meeting, Choe reiterated that North Korea "unconditionally" supports Russia's fight against Ukraine. She described ties between North Korea and Russia as "the invincible alliance."

Lavrov said he repeated Russia's gratitude for the contribution that North Korean troops made in efforts to repel a Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Kursk border region.

Wonsan city, the meeting venue, is where North Korea recently opened a mammoth beach resort that

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it says can accommodate nearly 20,000 people.

In his comments at the start of his meeting with Choe, Lavrov said that "I am sure that Russian tourists will be increasingly eager to come here. We will do everything we can to facilitate this, creating conditions for this, including air travel," according to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The Wonsan-Kalma tourist zone is at the center of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's push to boost tourism as a way to improve his country's troubled economy. But prospects for the biggest tourist complex in North Korea aren't clear, as the country appears unlikely to fully reopen its borders and embrace Western tourists anytime soon.

Turkish president hails the start of disarmament by militant Kurdish separatists

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday hailed start of a disarmament process by militant Kurdish separatists as the end of a "painful chapter" in Turkey's troubled history.

Erdogan told a meeting of his ruling AKP party in Ankara that the more than 40-year-old "scourge of terrorism" for which the Kurdistan Workers' Party - or PKK - was responsible is on its way to ending.

Erdogan's remarks came a day after male and female members of the PKK in northern Iraq cast rifles and machine guns into a large cauldron where they were set on fire. The symbolic move was seen as the first step toward a promised disarmament as part of a peace process aimed at ending four decades of hostilities.

The move came after PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who has been imprisoned on an island near Istanbul since 1999, urged his group in February to convene a congress and formally disband and disarm. In May the PKK announced that it would do so.

The PKK had waged an armed insurgency against Turkey since 1984, initially with the aim of establishing a Kurdish state in the southeast of the country. Over time, the objective evolved into a campaign for autonomy and rights for Kurds within Turkey.

The conflict, which spread beyond Turkey's borders into Iraq and Syria, killed tens of thousands of people. The PKK is considered to be a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

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

"Today the doors of a great Turkey, a strong Turkey, a Turkish century have been opened wide," Erdogan said.

In a statement issued on Friday, the PKK said the fighters who were laying down their weapons, saying that they had disarmed "as a gesture of goodwill and a commitment to the practical success" of the peace process.

"We will henceforth continue our struggle for freedom, democracy, and socialism through democratic politics and legal means," the statement said.

But Erdogan insisted that there had been no bargaining with the PKK. "The terror-free Turkey project is not the result of negotiations, bargaining or transactions." Turkish officials have not disclosed if any concessions have been given to the PKK in exchange for laying down their arms.

The Turkish president also said that a parliamentary commission would be established to oversee the peace process.

Russian drone and cruise missile attacks kill at least 2 in Ukraine

At least four people were killed overnight and on Saturday morning as Russia continued to pound Ukraine with hundreds of drones and cruise missiles as part of a stepped-up bombing campaign that has further dampened hopes for a breakthrough in efforts to end the more than three-year-old war.

Two people died and 14 were wounded when Russian forces overnight attacked the Bukovina area in the Chernivtsi region of southwestern Ukraine with four drones and a missile, regional Gov. Ruslan Zharanivuk

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said Saturday. He said that the two people died due to falling debris from a drone.

A drone attack in Ukraine's western Lviv region wounded nine people, regional Gov. Maksym Kozytskyi said.

Three people were wounded in Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine when the city was hit by eight drones and two missiles, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said.

Russia fired 597 drones and decoys, along with 26 cruise missiles, into Ukraine overnight into Saturday, Ukraine's air force said. Of these, 319 drones and 25 cruise missiles were shot down and 258 decoy drones were lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

Following the overnight attacks, two people were killed Saturday morning in a missile strike in the Dnipropetrovsk region, according to regional Gov. Serhii Lysak.

Russia has been stepping up its long-range attacks on Ukrainian cities. Earlier this week, Russia fired more than 700 attack and decoy drones at Ukraine overnight, topping previous nightly barrages for the third time in two weeks and targeting Lutsk near the border with Poland in western Ukraine, a region that is a crucial hub for receiving foreign military aid.

Poland's air force scrambled fighter jets in areas bordering Ukraine in response to the overnight attacks, Polish officials said.

Russia's intensifying long-range attacks have coincided with a concerted Russian effort to break through parts of the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where Ukrainian troops are under severe pressure.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it shot down 33 Ukrainian drones overnight into Saturday.

The Alcaraz-Sinner final at Wimbledon is the first French Open rematch since Federer-Nadal in 2008

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — It's fitting that the Wimbledon final between Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner on Sunday represents the first time the same two men meet for that title right after playing for the French Open trophy since a couple of guys named Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal did so every year from 2006-2008.

That's because the only real competition the No. 1-ranked Sinner and the No. 2-ranked Alcaraz face at the moment comes from each other — not anyone else currently on the men's tennis tour — and the only comparisons that feel somewhat appropriate come by measuring them against the greatness of the Big Three.

Let's be clear: It's too early to put Alcaraz or Sinner in a class with Federer and Nadal — each retired with at least 20 Grand Slam titles — or Novak Djokovic, who is still going at age 38 with 24 majors. But as Djokovic himself put it: "We know they're the dominant force right now."

Sinner and Alcaraz have combined to win the past 6 major titles

They have combined to win the last six majors, a streak that will grow to seven on Sunday. Go further back, and it'll be nine of the past 12 Slams (the others in that span went to Djokovic). Alcaraz, a 22-year-old from Spain, already owns five such trophies; Sinner, a 23-year-old from Italy, has three.

Their combined age is the lowest for Wimbledon men's finalists since Federer, just shy of 25, faced Nadal, 20, in 2006.

"We are still really young. So I just hope ... (we) keep doing the right things for, I don't know, the next, I don't know, five, 10 years," Alcaraz said, "just to (put) our rivalry (on) the same table as those players."

Alcaraz is on a 24-match winning streak and eyes a 3rd Wimbledon trophy

He is on a 24-match unbeaten run currently, plus has won 20 in a row at Wimbledon as he pursues a third consecutive title.

Sinner is participating in his fourth consecutive major final, including victories at the U.S. Open and the Australian Open.

"The anticipation for this final is big, is amazing," Djokovic said.

Alcaraz vs. Sinner demands attention.

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When Alcaraz fought back from a two-set deficit and erased three championship points to defeat Sinner in five sets spread across 5 hours, 29 minutes at Roland-Garros last month, there were immediate comparisons to what many consider the greatest men's tennis match ever: Nadal's win over Federer in five sets at the All England Club in 2008.

Sinner says his rivalry with Alcaraz is good for tennis

"It's good for the sport," said Sinner, who said his right elbow that was hurt in a fall in the fourth round and was covered by tape and an arm sleeve in his semifinal victory over Djokovic won't be an issue Sunday. "The more rivalries we have from now on, the better it is, because people want to see young players going against each other."

Like Federer and Nadal, these two go about winning differently.

Sinner boasts metronomic precision with his pure and powerful groundstrokes generated by his long limbs, force-blunting returns and a serve that might be the most dangerous on tour. Alcaraz is a master of creativity and versatility with speed to spare, able to hammer shots from the baseline or charge the net or end a point with a well-disguised drop shot.

"They bring out the best in each other. It's going to come down to just the big moments. It's so tough to call it," said Taylor Fritz, the runner-up to Sinner at Flushing Meadows and beaten by Alcaraz on Friday. "They both generate a lot of just raw power. But I think for me, it's a little more uncomfortable to play Carlos, just because of the unpredictability of what he's going to do."

Will the French Open final matter when Alcaraz plays Sinner at Wimbledon?

How will what happened in Paris just five weeks ago affect things?

Will Alcaraz carry extra confidence from his fifth straight win over Sinner? Will Sinner bear a mental burden from the way he let one get away or figure out what went wrong and correct it?

Alcaraz doesn't think that loss will affect Sinner this time.

Sinner said he rested and relaxed for a couple of days following that setback, eating barbecued food with family and playing ping-pong with friends, before getting back to business. If he truly were devastated, he argued, he wouldn't have reached his first Wimbledon final so soon after.

"Let's hope it's another beautiful match played at a very high level," Sinner said, "and may the best man win."

Judge orders Trump administration to halt indiscriminate immigration stops, arrests in California

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A federal judge on Friday ordered the Trump administration to halt indiscriminate immigration stops and arrests in seven California counties, including Los Angeles.

Immigrant advocacy groups filed the lawsuit last week accusing President Donald Trump's administration of systematically targeting brown-skinned people in Southern California during its ongoing immigration crackdown. The plaintiffs include three detained immigrants and two U.S. citizens, one of whom was held despite showing agents his identification.

The filing in U.S. District Court asked a judge to block the administration from using what they call unconstitutional tactics in immigration raids. Immigrant advocates accuse immigration officials of detaining someone based on their race, carrying out warrantless arrests, and denying detainees access to legal counsel at a holding facility in downtown LA.

Judge Maame E. Frimpong also issued a separate order barring the federal government from restricting attorney access at a Los Angeles immigration detention facility.

Frimpong issued the emergency orders, which are a temporary measure while the lawsuit proceeds, the day after a hearing during which advocacy groups argued that the government was violating the Fourth and Fifth amendments of the Constitution.

She wrote in the order there was a "mountain of evidence" presented in the case that the federal gov-

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ernment was committing the violations they were being accused of.

The White House responded quickly to the ruling late Friday.

"No federal judge has the authority to dictate immigration policy — that authority rests with Congress and the President," spokesperson Abigail Jackson said. "Enforcement operations require careful planning and execution; skills far beyond the purview (or) jurisdiction of any judge. We expect this gross overstep of judicial authority to be corrected on appeal."

Communities on edge as administration steps up arrests

Immigrants and Latino communities across Southern California 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. Tens of thousands of people have participated in rallies in the region over the raids and the subsequent deployment of the National Guard and Marines.

The order also applies to Ventura County, where busloads of workers were detained Thursday while the court hearing was underway after federal agents descended on a cannabis farm, leading to clashes with protesters and multiple injuries.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the recent wave of immigration enforcement has been driven by an "arbitrary arrest quota" and based on "broad stereotypes based on race or ethnicity."

When detaining the three day laborers who are plaintiffs in the lawsuit, all immigration agents knew about them is that they were Latino and were dressed in construction work clothes, the filing in the lawsuit said. It goes on to describe raids at swap meets and Home Depots where witnesses say federal agents grabbed anyone who "looked Hispanic."

Tricia McLaughlin, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said in an email that "any claims that individuals have been 'targeted' by law enforcement because of their skin color are disgusting and categorically FALSE."

McLaughlin said "enforcement operations are highly targeted, and officers do their due diligence" before making arrests.

After the ruling, she said "a district judge is undermining the will of the American people."

ACLU attorney Mohammad Tajsar said Brian Gavidia, one of the U.S. citizens who was detained, was "physically assaulted ... for no other reason than he was Latino and working at a tow yard in a predominantly Latin American neighborhood."

Tajsar asked why immigration agents detained everyone at a car wash except two white workers, according to a declaration by a car wash worker, if race wasn't involved.

Representing the government, attorney Sean Skedzielewski said there was no evidence that federal immigration agents considered race in their arrests, and that they only considered appearance as part of the "totality of the circumstances", including prior surveillance and interactions with people in the field.

In some cases, they also operated off "targeted, individualized packages," he said.

"The Department of Homeland Security has policy and training to ensure compliance with the Fourth Amendment," Skedzielewski said.

Order opens facility to lawyer visits

Lawyers from Immigrant Defenders Law Center and other groups say they also have been denied access to a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in downtown LA known as "B-18" on several occasions since June, according to court documents.

Lawyer Mark Rosenbaum said in one incident on June 7 attorneys "attempted to shout out basic rights" at a bus of people detained by immigration agents in downtown LA when the government drivers honked their horns to drown them out and chemical munitions akin to tear gas were deployed.

Skedzielewski said access was only restricted to "protect the employees and the detainees" during violent protests and it has since been restored.

Rosenbaum said lawyers were denied access even on days without any demonstrations nearby, and that the people detained are also not given sufficient access to phones or informed that lawyers were available to them.

He said the facility lacks adequate food and beds, which he called "coercive" to getting people to sign

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papers to agree to leave the country before consulting an attorney.

Friday's order will prevent the government from solely using apparent race or ethnicity, speaking Spanish or English with an accent, presence at a location such as a tow yard or car wash, or someone's occupation as the basis for reasonable suspicion to stop someone. It will also require officials to open B-18 to visitation by attorneys seven days a week and provide detainees access to confidential phone calls with attorneys.

Attorneys general for 18 Democratic states also filed briefs in support of the orders.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents were already barred from making warrantless arrests in a large swath of eastern California after a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction in April.

What the 'black box' can tell us about plane crashes

Associated Press undefined

NEW DELHI (AP) — A preliminary finding into last month's Air India plane crash has suggested the aircraft's fuel control switches were turned off, starving the engines of fuel and causing a loss of engine thrust shortly after takeoff.

The report, issued by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau on Saturday, also found that one pilot was heard on the cockpit voice recorder asking the other why he cut off the fuel in the flight's final moment. The other pilot replied he did not do so.

The Air India flight — a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner — crashed on June 12 and killed at least 260 people, including 19 on the ground, in the northwestern city of Ahmedabad. Only one passenger survived the crash, which is one of India's worst aviation disasters.

The report based its finding on the data recovered from the plane's black boxes — combined cockpit voice recorders and flight data recorders.

Here is an explanation of what black boxes are and what they can do:

What are black boxes?

The cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder are tools that help investigators reconstruct the events that lead up to a plane crash.

They're orange in color to make them easier to find in wreckage, sometimes at great ocean depths. They're usually installed in a plane's tail section, which is considered the most survivable part of the aircraft, according to the National Transportation Safety Board's website.

What does the cockpit voice recorder do?

The cockpit voice recorder collects radio transmissions and sounds such as the pilot's voices and engine noises, according to the NTSB's website.

Depending on what happened, investigators may pay close attention to the engine noise, stall warnings and other clicks and pops, the NTSB said. And from those sounds, investigators can often determine engine speed and the failure of some systems.

Investigators can also listen to conversations between the pilots and crew and communications with air traffic control. Experts make a meticulous transcript of the voice recording, which can take up to a week.

What does the flight data recorder do?

The flight data recorder monitors a plane's altitude, airspeed and heading, according to the NTSB. Those factors are among at least 88 parameters that newly built planes must monitor.

Some can collect the status of more than 1,000 other characteristics, from a wing's flap position to the smoke alarms. The NTSB said it can generate a computer animated video reconstruction of the flight from the information collected.

What are the origins of the black box?

At least two people have been credited with creating devices that record what happens on an airplane.

One is French aviation engineer François Hussenot. In the 1930s, he found a way to record a plane's speed, altitude and other parameters onto photographic film, according to the website for European plane-maker Airbus.

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In the 1950s, Australian scientist David Warren came up with the idea for the cockpit voice recorder, according to his 2010 AP obituary.

Warren had been investigating the crash of the world's first commercial jet airliner, the Comet, in 1953, and thought it would be helpful for airline accident investigators to have a recording of voices in the cockpit, the Australian Department of Defence said in a statement after his death.

Warren designed and constructed a prototype in 1956. But it took several years before officials understood just how valuable the device could be and began installing them in commercial airlines worldwide.

Why the name "black box"?

Some have suggested that it stems from Hussenot's device because it used film and "ran continuously in a light-tight box, hence the name 'black box,'" according to Airbus, which noted that orange was the box's chosen color from the beginning to make it easy to find.

Other theories include the boxes turning black when they get charred in a crash, the Smithsonian Magazine wrote in 2019.

The media continues to use the term, the magazine wrote, "because of the sense of mystery it conveys in the aftermath of an air disaster."

Wyoming's first new coal mine in decades to extract rare earths

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — The developer of what would be the first new coal mine in Wyoming in decades is launching a potentially half-billion-dollar effort to extract rare earth metals from the fossil fuel that are crucial for tech products and military hardware.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright, Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon, and Wyoming's congressional delegation took part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday for Ramaco Resources, Inc.'s Brook Mine outside Ranchester in northeastern Wyoming.

"Not only do we get coal here, we are going to get those rare earth elements that are going to break our dependence on China," Wright told Fox News from the mine site Friday.

Wright's involvement underscores President Donald Trump's determination to advance fossil fuel projects and mining and reverse former President Joe Biden's moves to support for renewable energy.

Administration officials on Monday moved toward selling federal coal leases in the top U.S. coal-producing region in northeastern Wyoming and southeastern Montana. On Thursday, officials announced a proposal in Utah that they said would be the first coal exploration project on U.S. Bureau of Land Management property since 2019.

Those moves came on the heels of legislation signed last week that lowered royalty payments for companies mining coal on public lands and mandated officials make available for potential mining an area greater in size than Connecticut.

Meanwhile, local officials in Utah hope the administration will support plans to build a railroad spur to boost oil drilling. A coalition of eastern Utah counties wants Trump's Transportation Department to approve \$2.4 billion in bonds for the 88-mile (140-kilometer) spur to export oil from the Uinta Basin, a project that may proceed after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

On Friday, the minerals capturing the administration's attention were not just coal but rare earths — a family of 17 metallic elements with unusual properties that make them useful in modern technology, from electric car batteries and wind turbines to military targeting devices.

The only operating U.S. rare earths mine is at Mountain Pass in California. Nearly all of the nation's supply comes from China, the source of nearly 90% of the world's supply.

Rare earths aren't especially rare but so scattered they are difficult to bring together in useful quantities.

Concern about continued access to them has been a focus of recent negotiations between China and the U.S., and led the Trump administration to try to encourage more production domestically.

"We would intend to mine it here in Wyoming, process it here in Wyoming and sell it to domestic customers including the government," Ramaco CEO Randall Atkins said Thursday.

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Former West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, an independent who left office in January after not seeking reelection, joined the Ramaco board in April.

The new Brook Mine, though relatively small, offers a glimmer of optimism for Wyoming's coal industry as potentially the state's first new coal mine in 50 years. Massive, open-pit mines east of the Brook Mine supply around 40% of the nation's coal but Wyoming coal mining has shrunk substantially since its peak over a decade ago, as utilities switch to renewable energy and power plants fueled by cheaper natural gas.

"Wyoming is moving to meet growing energy demands here at home and internationally — with the recognition that coal — Wyoming coal — is essential to healthy energy portfolios," Gordon, a Republican, said in a statement after the Brook Mine event.

The Brook Mine has been in the works for over a decade, stalled in part by landowners worried about groundwater depletion. Atkins originally envisioned it as a source of subbituminous power plant fuel like the state's other coal mines.

A public company with metallurgical coal mines in Appalachia, Ramaco in recent years received Department of Energy grants to develop coal into carbon-based products such as carbon fiber. This year, it got a \$6.1 million grant from Wyoming to build a rare earth and critical minerals processing plant.

A consultant report released this week found that fully developing the mine and processing plant to extract rare earths would cost \$533 million, a sum that could be recovered in five years if the elements in the coal prove profitable. Ramaco also would sell the processed coal as fuel, Atkins said.

Analysis by U.S. national laboratories show the Brook Mine coal contains valuable quantities of the rare earths neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium and terbium, as well as the critical minerals gallium, scandium and germanium, according to a Ramaco letter to shareholders on July 1.

Neodymium and dysprosium are used in the permanent magnets of wind turbines, lanthanum in electric and hybrid car batteries. Yttrium and terbium have critical military uses, including in targeting devices.

US sanctions Cuban President Díaz-Canel and other officials for human rights violations

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — The United States government announced Friday it was sanctioning Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and other top officials for human rights violations and restricting access to visas on the anniversary of the biggest protests on the island in recent decades.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on social media platform X that the State Department also would impose visa restrictions on Cuban judicial and prison officials "responsible for, or complicit in, the unjust detention and torture of the July 2021 protesters."

The protests, which were not led by an opposition group, developed July 11 and 12, 2021, drawing attention to the depths of Cuba's economic crisis.

"The U.S. will continue to stand for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cuba, and make clear no illegitimate, dictatorial regimes are welcome in our hemisphere," Rubio said in the statement.

The Trump administration has taken a harder line against Cuba's government than the Biden administration.

In addition to Díaz-Canel, the U.S. sanctioned Cuban Defense Minister Álvaro López Miera and Interior Minister Lázaro Álvarez Casas.

Shortly after the announcement, Johana Tablada, deputy director of the U.S. department in the Cuban Foreign Ministry, lashed out at Rubio, calling him a "defender of genocide, prisons and mass deportations."

The rare protests in 2021 came about after repeated blackouts in Havana and other cities. One man died and some marches ended in vandalism.

Groups supporting the government responded along with authorities to repress the protests. Human rights groups estimated there were more than 1,000 arrests but the government gave no official figures.

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At the time, the Cuban government said it was the result of a U.S. media campaign and decades of U.S. sanctions.

In 2022, Cuban prosecutors said some 790 people were investigated for acts related to the protests ranging from disorder to sabotage and vandalism.

The advocacy group 11J, whose name alludes to the protests, said late last year there were 554 people serving sentences related to the protests, but some were given conditional release in January after an appeal from Pope Francis.

DOGE sprouts in red states, as governors embrace the cost-cutter brand and make it their own

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The brash and chaotic first days of President Donald Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, once led by the world's richest man Elon Musk, spawned state-level DOGE mimicry as Republican governors and lawmakers aim to show they are in step with their party's leader.

Governors have always made political hay out of slashing waste or taming bureaucracy, but DOGE has, in some ways, raised the stakes for them to show that they are zealously committed to cutting costs. Many drive home the point that they have always been focused on cutting government, even if they're not conducting mass layoffs.

"I like to say we were doing DOGE before DOGE was a thing," Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said in announcing her own task force in January.

Critics agree that some of these initiatives are nothing new and suggest they are wasteful, essentially duplicating built-in processes that are normally the domain of legislative committees or independent state auditors.

At the same time, some governors are using their DOGE vehicles to take aim at GOP targets of the moment, such as welfare programs or diversity, equity and inclusion programs. And some governors who might be eyeing a White House run in 2028 are rebranding their cost-cutting initiatives as DOGE, perhaps eager to claim the mantle of the most DOGE of them all.

No chainsaws in the states

At least 26 states have initiated DOGE-style efforts of varying kinds, according to the Economic Policy Institute based in Washington, D.C.

Most DOGE efforts were carried out through a governor's order — including by governors in Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, New Hampshire and Oklahoma — or by lawmakers introducing legislation or creating a legislative committee.

The state initiatives have a markedly different character than Trump's slash-and-burn approach, symbolized by Musk's chainsaw-brandishing appearance at a Conservative Political Action Committee appearance in February.

Governors are tending to entrust their DOGE bureaus to loyalists, rather than independent auditors, and are often employing what could be yearslong processes to consolidate procurement, modernize information technology systems, introduce AI tools, repeal regulations or reduce car fleets, office leases or worker headcounts through attrition.

Steve Slivinski, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute who researches state government regulatory structures, said that a lot of what he has seen from state-level DOGE initiatives are the "same stuff you do on a pretty regular basis anyway" in state governments.

States typically have routine auditing procedures and the ways states have of saving money are "relatively unsexy," Slivinski said.

And while the state-level DOGE vehicles might be useful over time in finding marginal improvements, "branding it DOGE is more of a press op rather than anything new or substantially different than what they usually do," Slivinski said.

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Analysts at the pro-labor Economic Policy Institute say that governors and lawmakers, primarily in the South and Midwest, are using DOGE to breathe new life into long-term agendas to consolidate power away from state agencies and civil servants, dismantle public services and benefit insiders and privatization advocates.

"It's not actually about cutting costs because of some fiscal responsibility," EPI analyst Nina Mast said.

Governors promoting spending cuts

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry rebranded his "Fiscal Responsibility Program" as Louisiana DOGE, and promoted it as the first to team up with the federal government to scrub illegitimate enrollees from welfare programs. It has already netted \$70 million in savings in the Medicaid program in an "unprecedented" coordination, Landry said in June.

In Oklahoma, Gov. Kevin Stitt — who says in a blurb on the Oklahoma DOGE website that "I've been DOGE-ing in Oklahoma since before it was cool" — made a DOGE splash with the first report by his Division of Government Efficiency by declaring that the state would refuse some \$157 million in federal public health grants.

The biggest chunk of that was \$132 million intended to support epidemiology and laboratory capacity to control infectious disease outbreaks.

The Stitt administration said that funding — about one-third of the total over an eight-year period — exceeded the amount needed.

The left-leaning Oklahoma Policy Institute questioned the wisdom of that, pointing to rising numbers of measles and whooping cough cases and the rocky transition under Stitt of the state's public health lab from Oklahoma City to Stillwater.

Oklahoma Democrats issued rebukes, citing Oklahoma's lousy public health rankings.

"This isn't leadership," state Sen. Carri Hicks said. "It's negligence."

Stitt's Oklahoma DOGE has otherwise recommended changes in federal law to save money, opened up the suggestion box to state employees and members of the general public and posted a spreadsheet online with cost savings initiatives in his administration.

Those include things as mundane as agencies going paperless, refinancing bonds, buying automated lawn mowers for the Capitol grounds or eliminating a fax machine line in the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed an executive order in February creating a task force of DOGE teams in each state agency.

In the order, DeSantis recited 10 points on what he described as his and Florida's "history of prudent fiscal management" even before DOGE.

Among other things, DeSantis vowed to scrutinize spending by state universities and municipal and county governments — including on DEI initiatives — at a time when DeSantis is pushing to abolish the property taxes that predominantly fund local governments.

His administration has since issued letters to universities and governments requesting reams of information and received a blessing from lawmakers, who passed legislation authorizing the inquiry and imposing fines for entities that don't respond.

After the June 30 signing ceremony, DeSantis declared on social media: "We now have full authority to DOGE local governments."

In Arkansas, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders launched her cost-cutting Arkansas Forward last year, before DOGE, and later said the state had done the "same thing" as DOGE.

Her administration spent much of 2024 compiling a 97-page report that listed hundreds of ways to possibly save \$300 million inside a \$6.5 billion budget.

Achieving that savings — largely by standardizing information technology and purchasing — would sometimes require up-front spending and take years to realize savings.

Colorado dentist accused of poisoning his wife's protein shakes going on trial for murder

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Just days before she died after suffering symptoms that mystified her doctors, Angela Craig confronted her husband, James, in their suburban Denver kitchen over his lack of support.

In that 2023 argument captured on home surveillance video, she accused him of suggesting to hospital staff that she was suicidal, court documents show.

Prosecutors say James Craig caused the ailments that ultimately killed his wife by poisoning her protein shakes and trying to make it look as if she killed herself. His trial on murder and other charges is set to begin Monday with the questioning of potential jurors.

Angela Craig, 43, died in March 2023 during her third trip to the hospital that month. Toxicology tests later determined she died of poisoning from cyanide and tetrahydrozoline, an ingredient that is found in over-the-counter eye drops.

The couple were married 23 years and had six children.

Craig has pleaded not guilty to charges including first-degree murder, solicitation to commit murder and solicitation to commit perjury.

Police say Craig tried to fabricate evidence to make it appear his wife killed herself

The 47-year-old dentist allegedly bought arsenic online around the time his wife began to experience symptoms like dizziness and headaches for which doctors could find no cause, prosecutors say.

At the time of his arrest, police said Craig was trying to start a new life amid financial troubles and appeared to be having an affair with a fellow dentist. Prosecutors said he had affairs with two other women, but they have not detailed a motive in his wife's death.

Craig's attorneys have argued police were biased against him and claimed testing of his wife's shake containers did not turn up signs of poison. They've questioned the reliability of a jail inmate who said Craig offered him \$20,000 to kill the case's lead investigator, an alleged plot for which Craig is also on trial.

To avoid being held accountable, prosecutors said, Craig tried to fabricate evidence to make it appear his wife killed herself.

He tried to get another fellow inmate to plant fraudulent letters at Craig's home to make it look like his wife was suicidal, prosecutors said. Then, in the weeks before Craig had been set to stand trial in November, prosecutors said he also sent letters to the ex-wife of the inmate he allegedly tried to get to kill the investigator, offering her \$20,000 for each person she could find to falsely testify that his wife planned to die by suicide, they said.

Previous Craig attorneys withdraw from case

As jury selection was about to begin, his lawyer at the time, Harvey Steinberg, asked to withdraw, citing a rule allowing lawyers to step down if a client persists in actions considered criminal or that they disagree with.

Another attorney for Craig, Robert Werking, later argued that investigators did not look into whether Craig wrote the letters or check them against his handwriting. Werking also said that the inmate and his ex-wife were prosecuted for forgery for their roles in an alleged fraud ring in 2005, suggesting they could not be trusted.

Werking withdrew from the case himself this month after being charged with arson of his own home, leaving his wife and law partner, Lisa Fine Moses, to defend Craig. Werking's attorney, David Beller, said he was getting mental health treatment and asked the public to show him grace.

Moses did not immediately return telephone and email messages seeking comment.

Prosecutors plan to show video of couple's argument

Over the objections of the defense, prosecutors plan to show the video of the argument in the kitchen to jurors.

"It's your fault they treated me like I was a suicide risk, like I did it to myself, and like nothing I said

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could be believed," Angela Craig told her husband after her first trip to the hospital.

Prosecutors convinced the judge jurors should see the video because they said it disproves potential claims that Angela Craig poisoned herself — possibly while trying to dissuade him from divorcing her — or to frame him and gain an advantage over him if they did divorce.

"Her mental state is anger and frustration, not suicidality or desperation to keep the defendant in the marriage," Senior Chief Deputy District Attorney Michael Mauro wrote in a recent court filing.

One of Angela Craig's siblings, Mark Pray, said last year that James Craig not only orchestrated the "torment and demise" of his sister but had shown disregard for others, including their children.

An online search

Prosecutors say James Craig searched online for answers to questions such as "how to make murder look like a heart attack" and "is arsenic detectable in an autopsy?"

After Craig's initial attempts to kill his wife failed, prosecutors allege, he ordered a rush shipment of potassium cyanide, supposedly for surgery. The shipment was accidentally discovered by an employee at his dental practice in the Denver suburb of Aurora on March 13, 2023. The employee reported it to the office manager two days later when Angela Craig returned to the hospital for a third and final time.

Craig's business partner, Ryan Redfearn, told a nurse treating Angela Craig that he was concerned she could have been poisoned with the cyanide. The nurse reported that to police, who began their investigation the same day.

Angela Craig died days later.

Flash floods once again hit Vermont, damaging homes and roads

By AMANDA SWINHART and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

SUTTON, Vt. (AP) — Communities in rural parts of Vermont on Friday woke up once again to damaged homes and washed-out roads due to heavy rainfall and flash flooding, making it the third consecutive summer that severe floods have inundated parts of the state.

Up to 5 inches (13 centimeters) of rain fell in just a few hours on Thursday, prompting rapid flooding as local waterways began to swell, said Robert Haynes, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Burlington office.

Nearly 20 homes were cut off in the small town of Sutton as a local brook quickly rose from its banks and surrounded buildings, Fire Chief Kyle Seymour said. His crews were called out to help rescue people from two homes, which required help from swift-water rescue teams called in from neighboring communities.

"This was an incredibly strong, quick-moving localized heavy water," Seymour said. "It overwhelmed all of our road culverts, all of our streams, all of our rivers. But the actual weather event lasted three hours, with the bulk of the rain concentrated within one hour."

Though the severity of the storms wasn't as widespread compared to the past two years, local officials were still surveying the extent of the damage Friday morning and shaking their heads that they were dealing with flood recovery for three years in a row.

"When I started seeing the reporters saying it wasn't going to be that bad, I didn't believe it," Seymour said, adding that at least one member of his crew has contemplated retiring after experiencing such repeated flood emergencies.

Michelle Tanner stood Friday on what used to be her driveway, dismayed that for the third time her property was washed out by flooding. She and her family have lived in Sutton for 25 years and want to continue doing so, but fear what another flood might do.

"We don't know if the house will make it again," Tanner said. "We'll see what happens. We don't want to start all over, though I guess we are."

Tanner's daughter, Tanika Allard, said taking in the flood damage once again made her tear up.

"This year by far did the worst amount of damage with the least amount of rain, which didn't make a whole lot of sense," she said.

According to the National Weather Service, Vermont's experience with floods can be traced to both

ongoing climate change and the state's mountainous geography. Greater rainfall and increased moisture availability have made the state's steep terrain more susceptible to flooding.

Elsewhere in Vermont, heavy winds blew off a significant portion of a high school's roof in Addison County.

Meanwhile, flash flooding also occurred in Massachusetts on Thursday after rains dumped more than 7 inches (18 centimeters) of rain in some areas. Some businesses were flooded in the town of Weymouth, which saw the bulk of the rain and flooding while commuters faced delays as highways and streets south of Boston flooded.

State Department lays off over 1,300 employees under Trump administration plan

By MATTHEW LEE, FARNOUSH AMIRI and MANUEL BALCE CENETA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. State Department fired more than 1,300 employees Friday in line with a dramatic reorganization plan from the Trump administration that critics say will damage America's global leadership and efforts to counter threats abroad.

The department sent layoff notices to 1,107 civil servants and 246 foreign service officers with assignments in the United States, according to a senior department official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters.

Notices said positions were being "abolished" and the employees would lose access to State Department headquarters in Washington and their email and shared drives by 5 p.m., according to a copy obtained by The Associated Press.

As fired employees packed their belongings, dozens of former colleagues, ambassadors, members of Congress and others spent a warm, humid day protesting outside. Holding signs saying, "Thank you to America's diplomats" and "We all deserve better," they mourned the institutional loss from the cuts and highlighted the personal sacrifice of serving in the foreign service.

"We talk about people in uniform serving. But foreign service officers take an oath of office, just like military officers," said Anne Bodine, who retired from the State Department in 2011 after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. "This is not the way to treat people who served their country and who believe in 'America First.'"

While lauded by President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and their Republican allies as overdue and necessary to make the department leaner and more efficient, the cuts have been roundly criticized by current and former diplomats who say they will weaken U.S. influence and the ability to counter existing and emerging threats abroad.

Antony Blinken, who served as President Joe Biden's secretary of state, posted on X late Friday: "Thinking today of the men and women of the State Department — Foreign Service and Civil Service. Their dedication to serving the national interest and the American people is second to none."

The layoffs are part of big changes to State Department work

The Trump administration has pushed to reshape American diplomacy and worked aggressively to shrink the size of the federal government, including mass dismissals driven by the Department of Government Efficiency and moves to dismantle whole departments like the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Education Department.

USAID, the six-decade-old foreign assistance agency, was absorbed into the State Department last week after the administration dramatically slashed foreign aid funding.

Late Friday, the U.S. Institute of Peace's 300 employees began receiving notices that they were being let go, marking the second time they have been terminated. USIP is an independent, nonprofit think tank funded by Congress.

A recent ruling by the Supreme Court cleared the way for the layoffs to start, while lawsuits challenging the legality of the cuts continue to play out. The department had advised staffers Thursday that it would be sending layoff notices to some of them soon.

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In a May letter notifying Congress about the reorganization, the department said it had just over 18,700 U.S.-based employees and was looking to reduce the workforce by 18% through layoffs and voluntary departures, including deferred resignation programs.

"It's not a consequence of trying to get rid of people. But if you close the bureau, you don't need those positions," Rubio told reporters Thursday during a visit to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. "Understand that some of these are positions that are being eliminated, not people."

Foreign service officers affected will be placed immediately on administrative leave for 120 days, after which they will formally lose their jobs, according to an internal notice obtained by the AP. For most civil servants, the separation period is 60 days, it said.

Protesters gather to criticize the job cuts

Inside and just outside the State Department, employees spent over an hour applauding their departing colleagues, who got more support -- and sometimes hugs -- from protesters and others gathered across the street.

As speakers took to a bullhorn, people behind them held signs in the shape of gravestones that said "democracy," "human rights" and "diplomacy."

"It's just heartbreaking to stand outside these doors right now and see people coming out in tears, because all they wanted to do was serve this country," said Sen. Andy Kim, a New Jersey Democrat who worked as a civilian adviser for the State Department in Afghanistan during the Obama administration.

Robert Blake, who served as a U.S. ambassador under the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, said he came to support his peers at a very "unjust time."

"I have a lot of friends who served very loyally and with distinction and who are being fired for nothing to do with their performance," Blake said.

Gordon Duguid, a 31-year veteran of the foreign service, said of the Trump administration: "They're not looking for people who have the expertise ... they just want people who say, 'OK, how high'" to jump.

"That's a recipe for disaster," he added.

The American Foreign Service Association, the union that represents U.S. diplomats, said it opposed the job cuts during "a moment of great global instability."

"Losing more diplomatic expertise at this critical global moment is a catastrophic blow to our national interests," the AFSA said in a statement. "These layoffs are untethered from merit or mission."

As the layoffs began, paper signs started going up around the State Department. "Colleagues, if you remain: resist fascism," said one.

An employee who was among those laid off said she printed them about a week ago, when the Supreme Court cleared way for the reductions. The employee spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation.

She worked with about a dozen colleagues to put up the signs. They focused on bathrooms, where there are no security cameras, although others went in more public spaces.

"Nobody wants to feel like these guys can just get away with this," she said.

The State Department is undergoing a big reorganization

The State Department is planning to eliminate some divisions tasked with oversight of America's two-decade involvement in Afghanistan, including an office focused on resettling Afghan nationals who worked alongside the U.S. military.

Jessica Bradley Rushing, who worked at the Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts, known as CARE, said she was shocked when she received another dismissal notice Friday after she had already been put on administrative leave in March.

"I spent the entire morning getting updates from my former colleagues at CARE, who were watching this carnage take place within the office," she said, adding that every person on her team received a notice. "I never even anticipated that I could be at risk for that because I'm already on administrative leave."

The State Department said the reorganization will affect more than 300 bureaus and offices, as it eliminates divisions it describes as doing unclear or overlapping work. It says Rubio believes "effective modern

diplomacy requires streamlining this bloated bureaucracy.”

The letter to Congress was clear that the reorganization is also intended to eliminate programs — particularly those related to refugees and immigration, as well as human rights and democracy promotion — that the Trump administration believes have become ideologically driven in a way that is incompatible with its priorities and policies.

Trump tours Texas flood sites and defends officials as questions mount about response

By SEAN MURPHY and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

KERRVILLE, Texas (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday toured the devastation from catastrophic flooding in Texas and lauded state and local officials, even amid mounting criticism that they may have failed to warn residents quickly enough that a deadly wall of water was coming their way.

Trump has repeatedly promised to do away with the Federal Emergency Management Agency as part of his larger pledges to dramatically shrink the size of government, and he’s fond of decrying officials in Democrat-run states hit by past natural disasters and tragedy.

But the president struck a far more somber and sympathetic tone while visiting America’s most populous Republican state — highlighting the heartbreak of what happened while effusively praising elected officials and first responders alike.

“The search for the missing continues. The people that are doing it are unbelievable,” Trump, seated with officials around a table with emblazoned with a black-and-white “Texas Strong” banner, said at a makeshift emergency operations center inside an expo hall in Kerrville.

He later added, “You couldn’t get better people, and they’re doing the job like I don’t think anybody else could, frankly.”

Since the July 4 disaster, which killed at least 129 people and left more than 170 missing, the president has been conspicuously silent on his past promises to shutter FEMA and return disaster response to the states. Instead, he’s focused on the once-in-a-lifetime nature of what occurred in central Texas’ Hill Country and its human toll.

“We just visited with incredible families. They’ve been devastated,” the president said of a closed-door meeting he and first lady Melania Trump had with the relatives of some of those killed or missing.

Honoring the victims

Trump’s shift in focus underscores how tragedy can complicate political calculations, even though he has made slashing the federal workforce a centerpiece of his administration’s opening months. He spent a lot of time Friday discussing the victims from Camp Mystic, the century-old all-girls Christian summer camp where at least 27 people were killed.

“They were there because they loved God. And, as we grieve this unthinkable tragedy, we take comfort in the knowledge that God has welcomed those little beautiful girls into his comforting arms in heaven,” Trump said.

The first lady described meeting “beautiful young ladies” from the area who she said gave her a “special bracelet from the camp in honor of all the little girls that lost their lives.” She promised to return to support the camp in the future.

Trump approved Texas’ request to extend the major disaster declaration beyond Kerr County to eight additional counties, making them eligible for direct financial assistance to recover and rebuild.

“All across the country Americans’ hearts are shattered,” he said. “I had to be here as president.”

Despite saying that he didn’t want to talk politics, Trump couldn’t help himself. During the roundtable, he bragged briefly about his administration reducing the cost of eggs around the country and, in a response to a question about Democratic criticisms of the flood response, said, “All they want to do is criticize.”

“They’re getting just absolutely clobbered ‘cause everyone sees what an incredible job the governor did,” Trump said of Democrats. “Everybody in this room, everybody at this table in particular.”

In praise of FEMA

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He also still insisted "we've got some good people" running FEMA. That is nonetheless a far cry from his call mere weeks ago to begin "phasing out" FEMA.

At the White House, Russell Vought, director of the Office of Management and Budget, similarly dodged questions Friday about FEMA's future. He said that the agency has billions of dollars in reserves "to continue to pay for necessary expenses."

"We also want FEMA to be reformed," Vought said. "The president is going to continue to be asking tough questions of all of us agencies, no different than any other opportunity to have better government."

On the ground in devastated communities, meanwhile, some state and local officials have faced questions about how well they were prepared and how quickly they acted — including if warning systems might have given more people time to evacuate.

Asked about such concerns during his appearance at the operations center in Kerrville, Trump called a reporter "evil" and said he thought "everyone did an incredible job under the circumstances."

"I admire you, and I consider you heroes," Trump said of the officials around him.

He also praised a long list of Texas Republicans and had especially kind words for Rep. Chip Roy, who represents some of the hardest-hit areas. A staunch conservative, Roy initially opposed Trump's sweeping tax-cut and spending package but ultimately supported it.

"He's not easy, but he's good," Trump said of Roy. The congressman, for his part, bristled at questions about authorities' flood response, calling the queries about inadequate flood warnings "ridiculous."

Seeing the damage close-up

Prior to the roundtable, Air Force One landed in San Antonio and Trump deplaned in a suit while the first lady wore more casual clothing — though both wore ball caps against the heat. The Trumps then boarded a helicopter to Kerrville and saw the flooding aftermath from the air. They later walked close to the Guadalupe River to receive a briefing from officials near an overturned tractor trailer, numerous downed trees and other debris.

Roads in the center of town were shut down, and people lined the streets, some wearing Trump hats and T-shirts and waving American flags. Green ribbons recognizing the lives lost at Camp Mystic were tied around trees, poles and along bridges, and marquees featured slogans such as "Hill Country Strong" and "Thank you first responders."

Harris Currie, a rancher from Utopia, Texas, near Kerrville, said the flood devastation can be fully understood only by seeing it firsthand.

"Pictures do not do it justice," Currie said.

Asked what officials on the ground needed most urgently from federal sources, Kerr County Commissioner Jeff Holt, who also is a volunteer firefighter, stressed the need for repairs to nonworking phone towers and "maybe a little better early warning system."

Trump himself has suggested that a major warning system should be established, though few details have been offered on what that might eventually entail.

Friday's visit was far different from the other times the first couple visited natural disaster sites, during Trump's first weekend back in the White House in January. They toured North Carolina to scope out damage from Hurricane Helene and saw the aftermath of wildfires in Los Angeles, and the president sharply criticized the administration of his predecessor, President Joe Biden, and officials from deep-blue California.

"The state of Texas, No. 1 they do it right and they've done it right for a long time," Trump said. "And it's a very special place to me."

Furor over Epstein files sparks clash between Bondi and Bongino at the Justice Department

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department and FBI are struggling to contain the fallout and appease the demands of far-right conservative personalities and influential members of President Donald Trump's base after the administration's decision this week to withhold records from the Jeffrey Epstein

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sex trafficking investigation.

The move, which included the acknowledgment that one particular sought-after document never existed in the first place, sparked a contentious conversation between Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino at the White House earlier this week that threatened to permanently shatter relations between the two officials and centered in part on a news story that described divisions between the FBI and the Justice Department.

The cascade of disappointment and disbelief arising from the refusal to disclose additional, much-hyped records from the Epstein investigation underscores the struggles of FBI and Justice Department leaders to resolve the conspiracy theories and amped-up expectations that they themselves had stoked with claims of a cover-up and hidden evidence. Infuriated by the failure of officials to unlock, as promised, the secrets of the so-called "deep state," Trump supporters on the far right have grown restless and even demanded change at the top.

Tensions that simmered for months boiled over on Monday when the Justice Department and FBI issued a two-page statement saying that they had concluded that Epstein did not possess a "client list," even though Bondi had intimated in February that such a document was sitting on her desk, and had decided against releasing any additional records from the investigation.

The department did disclose a video meant to prove that Epstein killed himself in jail, but even that raised the eyebrows of conspiracy theorists because of a missing minute in the recording.

It was hardly the first time that Trump administration officials have failed to fulfill their pledge to deliver the evidence that supporters had come to expect.

In February, conservative influencers were invited to the White House and provided with binders marked "The Epstein Files: Phase 1" and "Declassified." But the binders contained information that had largely already been in the public domain.

Afterward, Bondi said an FBI "source" informed her of the existence of thousands of pages of previously undisclosed documents and ordered the bureau to provide the "full and complete Epstein files." She later said officials were poring over a "truckload" of previously withheld evidence she said had been handed over by the FBI.

But after a months-long review of evidence in the government's possession, the Justice Department determined in the memo Monday that no "further disclosure would be appropriate or warranted." The department noted that much of the material was placed under seal by a court to protect victims, and "only a fraction" of it "would have been aired publicly had Epstein gone to trial."

The Trump administration had hoped that that statement would be the final word on the saga, with Trump chiding a reporter who asked Bondi about the Epstein case at a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

But Bondi and Bongino had a tense exchange the following day at the White House, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a private conversation.

Part of the clash centered on a story from the news organization NewsNation that cited a "source close to the White House" as saying the FBI would have released the Epstein files months ago if it could have done so on its own. The story included statements from Bondi, Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche and FBI Director Kash Patel refuting the premise, but not Bongino.

The news publication Axios was first to describe the conversation.

Blanche sought to stem the fallout Friday with a social media post in which he said he had worked closely with Patel and Bongino on the Epstein matter and the joint memo.

"All of us signed off on the contents of the memo and the conclusions stated in the memo. The suggestion by anyone that there was any daylight between the FBI and DOJ leadership on this memo's composition and release is patently false," he wrote on X.

Also Friday, far-right activist Laura Loomer, who is close to Trump, posted on X that she was told that Bongino was "seriously thinking about resigning" and had taken the day off to contemplate his future. Bongino is normally an active presence on social media but has been silent since Wednesday.

The FBI did not respond to a request seeking comment, and the White House sought in a statement to

minimize any tensions.

"President Trump has assembled a highly qualified and experienced law and order team dedicated to protecting Americans, holding criminals accountable, and delivering justice to victims," said spokesman Harrison Fields. "This work is being carried out seamlessly and with unity. Any attempt to sow division within this team is baseless and distracts from the real progress being made in restoring public safety and pursuing justice for all."

US is selling weapons to NATO allies to give to Ukraine, Trump says

By MATTHEW LEE, AAMER MADHANI, ILLIA NOVIKOV and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is selling weapons to its NATO allies in Europe so they can provide them to Ukraine as it struggles to fend off a recent escalation in Russia's drone and missile attacks, President Donald Trump and his chief diplomat said.

"We're sending weapons to NATO, and NATO is paying for those weapons, 100%," Trump said in an interview with NBC News late Thursday. "So what we're doing is, the weapons that are going out are going to NATO, and then NATO is going to be giving those weapons (to Ukraine), and NATO is paying for those weapons."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that some of the U.S.-made weapons that Ukraine is seeking are deployed with NATO allies in Europe. Those weapons could be transferred to Ukraine, with European countries buying replacements from the U.S., he said.

"It's a lot faster to move something, for example, from Germany to Ukraine than it is to order it from a (U.S.) factory and get it there," Rubio told reporters during a visit to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Ukraine badly needs more U.S.-made Patriot air defense systems to stop Russian ballistic and cruise missiles. The Trump administration has gone back and forth about providing more vital military aid to Ukraine more than three years into Russia's invasion.

After a brief pause in some weapons shipments, Trump said he would keep sending defensive weapons to Ukraine. U.S. officials said this week that some were on their way.

Details still are being worked out on Trump's plan

NATO itself doesn't send weapons to Ukraine or otherwise own or handle arms — that is done by its 32 member nations — but it does coordinate the deliveries of weapons to a logistics hub in Poland, bordering Ukraine. The alliance itself ships items like medical supplies and fuel.

"Allies continue to work to ensure that Ukraine has the support they need to defend themselves against Russia's aggression," NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said. "This includes urgent efforts to procure key supplies from the United States, including air defense and ammunition."

Germany, Spain and other European countries possess Patriot missile systems, and some have placed orders for more, Rubio said.

The U.S. is encouraging its NATO allies to provide "the defensive systems that Ukraine seeks ... since they have them in their stocks, and then we can enter into financial agreements with them, with us, where they can purchase the replacements," Rubio said.

A senior NATO military official said Trump spoke to NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte about the plan but noted that the details were "still being worked out."

U.S. weapons already in Europe could be transferred to Ukraine under Trump's proposal, as could American-made weapons previously purchased by allies.

"NATO has effective mechanisms in place to make something like this possible," the official said.

A senior European defense official said it was their understanding that European nations would purchase U.S. weapons for Ukraine under the plan.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Ukraine is seeking more coveted Patriot air defense systems

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Russia has recently sought to overwhelm Ukraine's air defenses by launching major aerial attacks. This week, Russia fired more than 700 attack and decoy drones at Ukraine, topping previous barrages for the third time in two weeks.

Ukraine has asked other countries to supply it with an additional 10 Patriot systems and missiles, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday. Germany is ready to provide two systems, and Norway has agreed to supply one, he said.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Thursday that officials "stand ready to acquire additional Patriot systems from the U.S. and make them available to Ukraine."

Asked how many Patriot systems Germany is interested in buying, Merz didn't give a number. But he said he spoke to Trump a week ago "and asked him to deliver these systems."

In addition to the Patriots, the weaponry that could be sold to NATO members includes advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles, shorter-range missiles and Howitzer rounds, according to a person familiar with the internal White House debate. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private discussions.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment seeking more details.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who has been in touch with Trump in recent days, said it's in U.S. national security interests to sell weapons to Ukraine, and "Europe can pay for them."

"We have the best weapons. They sure as hell know how to use them," Graham said in an AP interview in Rome while attending a meeting on the sidelines of a Ukraine recovery conference.

Allies purchasing U.S. weapons for Ukraine would get around a possible stalemate in funding for Kyiv once an aid package approved last year runs out. Even with broad support in Congress for backing Ukraine, it's unclear if more funding would be approved.

Trump's evolving stance on Putin

Trump's efforts to facilitate Ukraine's weapon supply come as he has signaled his displeasure with Russian President Vladimir Putin. At a Cabinet meeting this week, he said he was "not happy" with Putin over a conflict that was "killing a lot of people" on both sides.

Russia's bigger army is pressing hard on parts of the 620-mile (1,000-kilometer) front line, where thousands of soldiers on both sides have died since the Kremlin ordered the invasion in February 2022.

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

In the NBC News interview, Trump teased that he will make a major announcement on Russia next week.

The U.S. president also has had a tumultuous relationship with Zelenskyy, which reached a low point during an Oval Office blowup in February when Trump berated him for being "disrespectful." The relationship has since shown signs of rebounding.

The two leaders spoke by phone last week about Ukraine's air defenses. Zelenskyy said Thursday that talks with Trump have been "very constructive."

Impact of the latest Russian attacks

In the latest attacks, a Russian drone barrage targeted the center of Kharkiv just before dawn Friday, injuring nine people and damaging a maternity hospital in Ukraine's second-largest city, officials said.

"There is no silence in Ukraine," Zelenskyy said. A daytime drone attack on the southern city of Odesa also injured nine.

Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, has endured repeated and intensifying drone attacks in recent weeks, as have many other regions of the country, mostly at night.

Zelenskyy urged Ukraine's Western partners to quickly follow through on pledges they made at the international meeting in Rome on Thursday. Ukraine needs more interceptor drones to bring down Russian-made Shahed drones, he said.

Authorities said Friday that they're establishing a comprehensive drone interception system under a project called Clear Sky. It includes a \$6.2 million investment in interceptor drones, operator training and new mobile response units, the Kyiv Military Administration said.

"We found a solution. ... That's the key," Zelenskyy said. "We need financing. And then, we will intercept."

Boeing settles with a man whose family died in a 737 Max crash in Ethiopia

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Boeing reached a settlement Friday with a Canadian man whose wife and three children were killed in a deadly 2019 crash in Ethiopia, averting the first trial connected to a devastating event that led to a worldwide grounding of Max jets.

The jury trial at Chicago's federal court had been set to start Monday to determine damages for Paul Njoroge of Canada. His family was heading to their native Kenya in March 2019 aboard Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 when it malfunctioned and plummeted to the ground. The wreck killed all 157 people on board.

Njoroge, 41, had planned to testify about how the crash affected his life. He has been unable to return to his family home in Toronto because the memories are too painful. He hasn't been able to find a job. And he has weathered criticism from relatives for not traveling alongside his wife and children.

"He's got complicated grief and sorrow and his own emotional stress," said Njoroge's attorney, Robert Clifford. "He's haunted by nightmares and the loss of his wife and children."

Terms of the deal were not disclosed publicly.

Clifford said his client intended to seek "millions" in damages on behalf of his wife and children, but declined to publicly specify an amount ahead of the trial.

"The aviation team at Clifford Law Offices has been working round-the-clock in preparation for trial, but the mediator was able to help the parties come to an agreement," Clifford said in a statement Friday.

A Boeing spokesperson said via email Friday that the company had no comment.

The proceedings were not expected to delve into technicalities involving the Max version of Boeing's bestselling 737 airplane, which has been the source of persistent troubles for the company since the Ethiopia crash and one the year before in Indonesia. A combined 346 people, including passengers and crew members, died in those crashes.

In 2021, Chicago-based Boeing accepted responsibility for the Ethiopia crash in a deal with the victims' families that allowed them to pursue individual claims in U.S. courts instead of their home countries. Citizens of 35 countries were killed. Several families of victims have already settled. Terms of those agreements also were not made public.

The jetliner heading to Nairobi lost control shortly after takeoff from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport and nose-dived into a barren patch of land.

Investigators determined the Ethiopia and Indonesia crashes were caused by a system that relied on a sensor that provided faulty readings and pushed the plane noses down, leaving pilots unable to regain control. After the Ethiopia crash, Max jets were grounded worldwide until the company redesigned the system.

This year, Boeing reached a deal with the U.S. Justice Department to avoid criminal prosecutions in both crashes.

Among those killed were Njoroge's wife, Carolyn, and three small children, Ryan, age 6, Kellie, 4, and Rubi, 9 months old, the youngest to die on the plane. Njoroge also lost his mother-in-law, whose family has a separate case.

Njoroge, who met his wife in college in Nairobi, was living in Canada at the time of the crash. He had planned to join his family in Kenya later.

He testified before Congress in 2019 about repeatedly imagining how his family suffered during the flight, which lasted only six minutes. He has pictured his wife struggling to hold their infant in her lap with two other children seated nearby.

"I stay up nights thinking of the horror that they must have endured," Njoroge said. "The six minutes will forever be embedded in my mind. I was not there to help them. I couldn't save them."

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S&P 500 and Nasdaq composite pull back from their all-time highs

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

A modest pullback for U.S. stocks Friday eased the market from all-time highs and left major stock indexes on Wall Street in the red for the week.

The S&P 500 closed 0.3% lower a day after setting a record high. The benchmark index's loss for the week followed two straight weekly gains.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite gave up 0.2% after drifting between small gains and losses much of the day. The tech-heavy index was coming off its own all-time high on Thursday.

The selling capped an uneven week in the market as Wall Street kept an eye on the Trump administration's rollout of new tariff threats against trading partners like Canada and looked ahead to the upcoming corporate earnings reporting season.

President Donald Trump said in a letter Thursday that he will raise taxes on many imported goods from Canada to 35%, deepening the rift between the longtime North American allies. The letter to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is an aggressive increase to the top 25% tariff rates that Trump first imposed in March.

The move was the latest bid by the White House to use threats of higher tariffs on goods imported into the U.S. in hopes of securing new trade agreements with countries around the globe, even historically close trading partners like Canada.

The administration had initially set Wednesday as a deadline for countries to make deals with the U.S. or face heavy increases in tariffs. But with just two trade deals announced since April, one with the United Kingdom and one with Vietnam, the window for negotiations has been extended to Aug. 1.

Trump also floated this week that he would impose tariffs of as much as 200% on pharmaceutical drugs and place a 50% tariff on copper imports, matching the rates charged on steel and aluminum.

The initial rollout of Trump's tariff policies in the spring roiled financial markets. But Wall Street has been relatively stable in recent weeks, with stocks steadily rising to record levels. That suggests the market has mostly adjusted to the unpredictability of Trump's rapidly shifting tariffs. Some market watchers, however, aren't so sure.

The market's response to Trump's tariff escalation this week "has been surprisingly muted. Markets appear to believe that Trump will again back down," Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics, wrote Friday. "We are not so sure."

Despite the uncertainty around tariffs, Wall Street has already come to accept a "base case" of 10% tariffs across the board, said Eric Teal, chief investment officer at Comerica Wealth Management.

"To the extent that this gets extended, I think the market has priced a lot of that in," he said.

Trade policy aside, the market is now set to shift at least some of its focus on companies due to report quarterly earnings over the next few weeks.

On Friday, Levi Strauss jumped 11.3% after the jeans maker easily beat Wall Street's sales and profit targets and raised its full-year forecast, despite expecting higher costs from tariffs.

PriceSmart climbed 5.3% a day after the warehouse club operator delivered solid third-quarter results and said it's looking into expanding into Chile.

Earnings season shifts into high gear next week with JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo and Citigroup among the big banks due to report their results on Tuesday.

Shares in financial and health care sector companies were the biggest weights on the market Friday.

Visa fell 2.2% and Gilead Sciences dropped 4.3%.

Several airline stocks lost ground a day after encouraging quarterly results from Delta Air Lines set off a rally in the sector. Delta slipped 0.2%, United fell 4.3% and American gave up 5.6%.

Elsewhere in the market, shares of T-Mobile closed 0.2% lower after the Justice Department announced Thursday that it would not prevent the company from closing on its proposed \$4.4 billion acquisition of

U.S. Cellular. That deal, announced more than a year ago, had come under antitrust scrutiny from the Justice Department under President Joe Biden's administration.

U.S. Cellular shares rose 3.6%.

Shares in aviation company Red Cat Holdings jumped 26.4% after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued orders aimed at ramping up production and deployment of drones.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 20.71 points to 6,259.75. The Dow dropped 279.13 points to 44,371.51, and the Nasdaq slipped 45.14 points to 20,585.53.

Bond yields rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.42%, from 4.34% late Thursday.

European stock indexes closed broadly lower following a mostly lower finish in Asian markets.

Meanwhile, bitcoin climbed to another all-time high Friday, briefly eclipsing \$118,000 before easing back to around \$117,901, according to Coindesk.

Bitcoin's price jump came amid bullish momentum across risk assets and coincides with Nvidia's surge to a \$4 trillion valuation. It also comes days before the U.S. Congress' Crypto Week on July 14, where lawmakers will debate a series of bills that could define the regulatory framework for the industry.

Musk's latest Grok chatbot searches for billionaire mogul's views before answering questions

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

The latest version of Elon Musk's artificial intelligence chatbot Grok is echoing the views of its billionaire creator, so much so that it will sometimes search online for Musk's stance on an issue before offering up an opinion.

The unusual behavior of Grok 4, the AI model that Musk's company xAI released late Wednesday, has surprised some experts.

Built using huge amounts of computing power at a Tennessee data center, Grok is Musk's attempt to outdo rivals such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini in building an AI assistant that shows its reasoning before answering a question.

Musk's deliberate efforts to mold Grok into a challenger of what he considers the tech industry's "woke" orthodoxy on race, gender and politics has repeatedly got the chatbot into trouble, most recently when it spouted antisemitic tropes, praised Adolf Hitler and made other hateful commentary to users of Musk's X social media platform just days before Grok 4's launch.

But its tendency to consult with Musk's opinions appears to be a different problem.

"It's extraordinary," said Simon Willison, an independent AI researcher who's been testing the tool. "You can ask it a sort of pointed question that is around controversial topics. And then you can watch it literally do a search on X for what Elon Musk said about this, as part of its research into how it should reply."

One example widely shared on social media — and which Willison duplicated — asked Grok to comment on the conflict in the Middle East. The prompted question made no mention of Musk, but the chatbot looked for his guidance anyway.

As a so-called reasoning model, much like those made by rivals OpenAI or Anthropic, Grok 4 shows its "thinking" as it goes through the steps of processing a question and coming up with an answer. Part of that thinking this week involved searching X, the former Twitter that's now merged into xAI, for anything Musk said about Israel, Palestine, Gaza or Hamas.

"Elon Musk's stance could provide context, given his influence," the chatbot told Willison, according to a video of the interaction. "Currently looking at his views to see if they guide the answer."

Musk and his xAI co-founders introduced the new chatbot in a livestreamed event Wednesday night but haven't published a technical explanation of its workings — known as a system card — that companies in the AI industry typically provide when introducing a new model.

The company also didn't respond to an emailed request for comment Friday.

"In the past, strange behavior like this was due to system prompt changes," which is when engineers

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program specific instructions to guide a chatbot's response, said Tim Kellogg, principal AI architect at software company Icertis.

"But this one seems baked into the core of Grok and it's not clear to me how that happens," Kellogg said. "It seems that Musk's effort to create a maximally truthful AI has somehow led to it believing its own values must align with Musk's own values."

The lack of transparency is troubling for computer scientist Talia Ringer, a professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign who earlier in the week criticized the company's handling of the technology's antisemitic outbursts.

Ringer said the most plausible explanation for Grok's search for Musk's guidance is assuming the person is asking for the opinions of xAI or Musk.

"I think people are expecting opinions out of a reasoning model that cannot respond with opinions," Ringer said. "So, for example, it interprets 'Who do you support, Israel or Palestine?' as 'Who does xAI leadership support?'"

Willison also said he finds Grok 4's capabilities impressive but said people buying software "don't want surprises like it turning into 'mechaHitler' or deciding to search for what Musk thinks about issues."

"Grok 4 looks like it's a very strong model. It's doing great in all of the benchmarks," Willison said. "But if I'm going to build software on top of it, I need transparency."

Appeals court throws out plea deal for alleged mastermind of Sept. 11 attacks

By MARK SHERMAN and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided federal appeals court on Friday threw out an agreement that would have allowed accused Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to plead guilty in a deal sparing him the risk of execution for al-Qaida's 2001 attacks.

The decision by a panel of the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., undoes an attempt to wrap up more than two decades of military prosecution beset by legal and logistical troubles. It signals there will be no quick end to the long struggle by the U.S. military and successive administrations to bring to justice the man charged with planning one of the deadliest attacks ever on the United States.

The deal, negotiated over two years and approved by military prosecutors and the Pentagon's senior official for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a year ago, stipulated life sentences without parole for Mohammed and two co-defendants.

Mohammed is accused of developing and directing the plot to crash hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Another of the hijacked planes flew into a field in Pennsylvania.

Relatives of the Sept. 11 victims were split on the plea deal. Some objected to it, saying a trial was the best path to justice and to gaining more information about the attacks, while others saw it as the best hope for bringing the painful case to a conclusion and getting some answers from the defendants.

The plea deal would have obligated the men to answer any lingering questions that families of the victims have about the attacks.

But then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin repudiated the deal, saying a decision on the death penalty in an attack as grave as Sept. 11 should only be made by the defense secretary.

Attorneys for the defendants had argued that the agreement was already legally in effect and that Austin, who served under President Joe Biden, acted too late to try to throw it out. A military judge at Guantanamo and a military appeals panel agreed with the defense lawyers.

But, by a 2-1 vote, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit found Austin acted within his authority and faulted the military judge's ruling.

The panel had previously put the agreement on hold while it considered the appeal, first filed by the Biden administration and then continued under President Donald Trump.

"Having properly assumed the convening authority, the Secretary determined that the 'families and the American public deserve the opportunity to see military commission trials carried out.' The Secretary acted

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within the bounds of his legal authority, and we decline to second-guess his judgment," judges Patricia Millett and Neomi Rao wrote.

Millett was an appointee of President Barack Obama while Rao was appointed by Trump.

In a dissent, Judge Robert Wilkins, an Obama appointee, wrote, "The government has not come within a country mile of proving clearly and indisputably that the Military Judge erred."

Brett Eagleson, who was among the family members who objected to the deal, called Friday's appellate ruling "a good win, for now."

"A plea deal allows this to be tucked away into a nice, pretty package, wrapped into a bow and put on a shelf and forgotten about," said Eagleson, who was 15 when his father, shopping center executive John Bruce Eagleson, was killed in the attacks.

Brett Eagleson was unmoved by the deal's provisions for the defendants to answer Sept. 11 families' questions; he wonders how truthful the men would be. In his view, "the only valid way to get answers and seek the truth is through a trial" and pretrial fact-finding.

Elizabeth Miller, who was 6 when the attacks killed her father, firefighter Douglas Miller, was among those who supported the deal.

"Of course, growing up, a trial would have been great initially," she said. But "we're in 2025, and we're still at the pretrial stage."

"I just really don't think a trial is possible," said Miller, who also favored the deal because of her opposition to the death penalty in general.

Trump administration has floated deporting third-party nationals to Africa. Here's what we know

By MONIKA PRONCZUK Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — South Sudan has accepted eight third-country deportees from the U.S. and Rwanda says it's in talk with the administration of President Donald Trump on a similar deal, while Nigeria says it's rejecting pressure to do the same.

Although few details are known, these initiatives in Africa mark an expansion in U.S. efforts to deport people to countries other than their own. The United States has sent hundreds of Venezuelans and others to Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panama but has yet to announce any major deals with governments in Africa, Asia or Europe.

While proponents see such programs as a way of deterring what they describe as unmanageable levels of migration, human rights advocates have raised concerns over sending migrants to countries where they have no ties or that may have a history of rights violations.

Last year, U.K. Supreme Court ruled that a similar plan to deport rejected asylum-seekers to Rwanda was illegal.

Trump meets with West African leaders

Earlier this week, Trump held a summit with five West African leaders in the White House, which highlighted the new transactional U.S. policy towards the continent.

Trump discussed migration with the leaders of Liberia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Gabon, including the need for countries to accept the return of their nationals who do not have the right to stay in the U.S., as well as the possibility of accepting deported nationals of third countries.

U.S. border tsar Tom Homan told the media Friday that the Trump administration hopes to forge deals with "many countries" to accept deported migrants.

"If there is a significant public threat or national security threat — there's one thing for sure — they're not walking the streets of this country. We'll find a third, safe nation to send them to, and we're doing it," he said.

What African leaders are saying

Liberian President Joseph Boakai told media in Liberia on Friday that third-country nationals were dis-

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cussed but that Trump had not directly asked Liberia to accept such deportees.

"They're not forcing anybody, but they want us to know that this is the concern they have, and they are asking how can we contribute, how can we help?" he said.

President Umaro Sissoco Embaló of Guinea Bissau said Trump discussed the topic during the summit, but did not specifically ask for the African nations to agree to accept deportees. Other West African governments did not reply to a request for comment.

Nigeria's Foreign Minister Yussuf Tuggar, meanwhile, said such conversations were being held between U.S. representatives and several African countries, though he declined provide details.

He said late Thursday that Nigeria would not bow to what he described as pressure to accept third-country deportees, saying the country had enough problems of its own.

What's in it for African countries

Experts say some African countries may seek to facilitate U.S. deportation programs in order to earn good will in negotiations over tariffs, cuts in U.S. aid or visa restrictions that have hit several African countries in recent months.

Beverly Ochieng, an analyst at the security consulting firm Control Risks, said countries may want to reach a migrant deal to avoid a situation "where they lose access to the U.S. economy or economic initiatives and bilateral relations."

Those factors are especially important, "in light of the withdrawal of developmental aid," Ochieng told The Associated Press.

What has been done so far

So far, the only African country to accept third-country deportees from the U.S. has been South Sudan, which accepted eight deportees with criminal convictions, only one of whom was from South Sudan.

It is unclear what deal may have been struck between the two countries. The South Sudanese Foreign Ministry has declined to answer questions.

Alan Boswell, the Horn of Africa program director at the International Crisis Group think tank, said the South Sudan would have "a number of reasons to want to placate a Trump administration, be that avoiding visa bans, warding off more sanctions against its elite, or generally trying to curry favor."

The decision has drawn criticism from South Sudanese civil society and some members of government. "South Sudan is not a dumping ground for criminals," said Edmund Yakani, a prominent civil society leader in the country.

Homan, the U.S. border tsar, said Friday he was unsure of the situation of the eight men, saying they were no longer in U.S. custody.

Lawyers and advocates are concerned about that kind of uncertainty over the legal status and safety of such migrants, said Michelle Mittelstadt, a spokesperson for Migration Policy Institute.

"There's a lot of confusion and lack of clarity over who actually has control of these individuals when they're deported to a third country," Mittelstadt said.

Rwanda's foreign minister told the AP last month that talks were under way with the U.S. about a potential agreement to host deported migrants, without providing details. The U.S. State Department declined to comment on a potential deal. Rights groups have long criticized Rwanda for their human rights record, especially the deaths in Rwandan custody of some perceived government critics.

The U.K. struck a deal with Rwanda in 2022 to send migrants who arrive in the U.K. as stowaways or in boats to the East African country, where their asylum claims would be processed and, if successful, they would stay. But the plan was stalled by legal challenges and criticized by human rights groups.

Adult son convicted, sentenced to life for shooting and beheading father in Pennsylvania

By MARK SCOLFORO and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

A Pennsylvania man who posted a video of his father's severed head on YouTube was convicted of mur-

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der Friday and sentenced to life without parole.

Bucks County Judge Stephen A. Corr found Justin D. Mohn, 33, guilty in the January 2024 shooting death of his father at their home in the Philadelphia suburb of Levittown.

After the sentencing, Bucks County District Attorney Jennifer Schorn told reporters Mohn had exhibited a "complete and utter lack of remorse," calling it an "unimaginable, unfathomable crime."

"We are satisfied that this was the right outcome to guarantee that the community at large is safe from Justin Mohn," Schorn said.

His defense attorney called it an "undoubtedly difficult case to preside over."

"Cases involving the loss of life are always the most difficult, and that difficulty is compounded when the prosecution seeks the death penalty. The commonwealth originally sought the death penalty in this case, and based on the defense that was presented on behalf of Mr. Mohn, my client will not face that penalty," said Mohn's lawyer, Steven M. Jones, in an email. He declined to comment on whether Mohn will appeal.

Prosecutors said Mohn shot his father, Michael F. Mohn, 68, with a newly purchased pistol, then decapitated him with a kitchen knife and machete. The 14-minute YouTube video he posted was live for several hours before it was removed.

Mohn testified during the trial that he shot his father while trying to arrest him on what he said were false statements and treason but his father resisted, so he fired at him. He said he severed his head to send a message to federal workers to meet his demands, which included their resignation among other things.

In victim impact statements read in court Friday, family members and others recalled Michael Mohn as a loving husband and father, a man of humility and humor who enjoyed reading, exercising and playing the guitar.

Justin Mohn was arrested later on the day of the murder after scaling a fence at Fort Indiantown Gap, the state's National Guard headquarters. Prosecutors said he called for others to join him in attempting to overthrow the U.S. government.

Mohn had a USB device containing photos of federal buildings and apparent instructions for making explosives when he was arrested, authorities said.

He also expressed violent anti-government rhetoric in writings he published online, going back several years. During the trial, the judge heard from Justin Mohn's mother, who said police came to the house he shared with his parents and warned him about his online postings before the killing.

Denice Mohn testified that she and her husband had been offering financial support and guidance as Justin Mohn looked for a job.

"It's unimaginable what the defendant did to his father and to his family," Schorn said. "I know this verdict does provide some level of justice, but it will never heal their wounds."

He was also convicted of possession of an instrument of crime, gun charges, criminal use of a communication facility, terroristic threats, defiant trespassing, and abuse of a corpse.

Prosecutors described the homicide as "something straight out of a horror film." They said Justin Mohn killed his father — who had been an engineer with the geoenvironmental section of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Philadelphia District — to intimidate federal workers, calling it a "cold, calculated, organized plan."

The YouTube video included rants about the government, immigration and the border, fiscal policy, urban crime and the war in Ukraine.

In the video posted on YouTube, Justin Mohn described his father as a 20-year federal employee and called him a traitor.

During a competency hearing last year, a defense expert said Mohn wrote a letter to Russia's ambassador to the United States seeking to strike a deal to give Mohn refuge and apologizing to President Vladimir Putin for claiming to be the czar of Russia. The judge ruled Mohn was competent to stand trial.

Evidence presented at the trial included graphic photos and the video posted to YouTube. The judge warned members of the public at the trial about the images and said they could leave before the photos were shown. The proceedings are known as a bench trial, with only a judge, not a jury.

Kurdish separatist fighters in Iraq begin laying down weapons as part of peace process with Turkey

By STELLA MARTANY and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

SULAYMANIYAH, Iraq (AP) — Fighters with a Kurdish separatist militant group that has waged a decades-long insurgency in Turkey began laying down their weapons in a symbolic ceremony on Friday in northern Iraq, the first concrete step toward a promised disarmament as part of a peace process.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, announced in May that it would disband and renounce armed conflict, ending four decades of hostilities. The move came after PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who has been imprisoned on an island near Istanbul since 1999, urged his group in February to convene a congress and formally disband and disarm.

Öcalan renewed his call in a video message broadcast on Wednesday, saying, "I believe in the power of politics and social peace, not weapons."

Fighters toss weapons into cauldron

Most journalists weren't allowed at the site of Friday's ceremony, in the mountains of Sulaymaniyah province in northern Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region.

Footage from the event showed fighters — both men and women — casting rifles and machine guns into a large cauldron, where they were then set ablaze.

The PKK issued a statement from the fighters who were laying down their weapons, saying that they had disarmed "as a gesture of goodwill and a commitment to the practical success" of the peace process.

"We will henceforth continue our struggle for freedom, democracy, and socialism through democratic politics and legal means," the statement said.

The state-run Iraqi News Agency reported that 30 fighters had disarmed "symbolically" on Friday, and that the continuing disarmament process "will take place in stages." The process is expected to be completed by September, the agency reported.

An Iraqi Kurdish political official said representatives of the Turkish intelligence service and of the Kurdish regional government, Iraq's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party and the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party, a pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, were present. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

Turkish parliamentary Speaker Numan Kurtulmus said the initial disarmament step had proceeded "as planned," but cautioned that the process was far from complete.

"There's still a long way to go in collecting many more weapons," Kurtulmus said. "What matters is ending the armed era in a way that ensures weapons are never taken up again."

He said the Turkish parliament was close to setting up a commission to oversee the peace process.

Turkey welcomes the move

Devlet Bahceli, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's nationalist ally who initiated the peace process, welcomed the ceremony, saying in a written statement that it marks "historic developments that signal the end of a dark era."

Bahceli, who has traditionally maintained a hard-line stance against the PKK, surprised everyone in October when he suggested in parliament that Öcalan could be granted parole if he renounced violence and disbanded the PKK.

Erdogan, in an X post, called Friday's ceremony an "important step toward our goal of a terrorism-free Turkey."

The PKK has waged an armed insurgency against Turkey since 1984, initially with the aim of establishing a Kurdish state in the southeast of the country. Over time, the objective evolved into a campaign for autonomy and rights for Kurds within Turkey.

The conflict between militants and state forces, which has spread beyond Turkey's borders into Iraq and Syria, has killed tens of thousands of people. The PKK is considered to be a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

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

The PKK has long maintained bases in the mountains of northern Iraq, where Turkish forces have launched offensives and airstrikes and have set up bases in the area. Last year, Iraq's government announced an official ban on the separatist group, which long has been prohibited in Turkey.

Scores of villages have emptied as a result of the violence. Displaced Kurdish Iraqis have voiced hopes that the peace process will finally allow them to go home.

Officials have spoken of a five-part peace process with the PKK, with the first phase being the political initiative launched by Bahceli, followed by Öcalan's message in February urging the PKK to abandon the armed struggle.

The next two steps would focus on legal reintegration of the PKK fighters and long-term healing and reconciliation efforts.

Kurds have mixed feelings

Kurds in Iraq said that they were optimistic, although some expressed fears that the deal would collapse.

"This will benefit both sides," said Abdulrahman Abbas, a resident of the town of Dukan, near where the ceremony took place. "Why should this bloodshed continue for nothing?"

A Kurdish political activist from Sulaymaniyah, Mohammed Alaa, called the move a "positive step" that will "bring security stability in northeastern Syria and Iraq."

"But the goal is for these steps to continue, and for Turkey to take the initiative to release Kurdish prisoners," he said.

PKK officials previously said that in order to continue disarming, they want to see Turkey take steps to end "the regime of isolation" imposed on Öcalan in prison and to allow integration of former militants into the political system.

Bewar Amin Tahir, a spokesperson at Makhmour, a camp in Iraq for Kurdish refugees who were displaced from their villages in Turkey in the 1990s during fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK, said he hopes the peace process would "open the door for a return to our villages and end three decades of suffering and hardship."

But he said the "Turkish state must also adhere to this initiative. ... So far, this process seems to be proceeding from one side only." He called for Turkey to "begin amending its constitution so that the Kurds have their rightful place."

Even if that happens, he acknowledged that many camp residents are not likely to return to Turkey. "Most of their homes are destroyed and burned," Tahir said, and the refugees' children, born in the camp, do not know another home.

Questions remain about the future of Kurdish fighters in Syria. Turkey considers the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF — a U.S.-allied, Kurdish-led force controlling much of northeastern Syria — to be a terrorist group because of its affiliation with the PKK.

The SDF and authorities in Damascus agreed in March to merge the Kurdish forces into the national army — a move supported by Ankara — but the two sides have remained at an impasse over how to implement the deal.

Son of 'El Chapo' pleads guilty in US drug case, promising cooperation for lighter sentence

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A son of notorious Mexican drug kingpin "El Chapo" pleaded guilty Friday to U.S. drug trafficking charges, becoming the first of the drug lord's sons to enter a plea deal.

Prosecutors allege Ovidio Guzman Lopez and his brother, Joaquin Guzman Lopez, ran a faction of the Sinaloa cartel. They became known locally as the "Chapitos," or "little Chapos," and federal authorities in 2023 described the operation as a massive effort to send "staggering" quantities of fentanyl into the U.S.

As part of a plea agreement, Ovidio Guzman Lopez admitted to helping oversee the production and

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smuggling of large quantities of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana and fentanyl into the United States, fueling a crisis that has contributed to tens of thousands of overdose deaths annually.

Guzman Lopez pleaded guilty to drug trafficking, money laundering and firearms charges tied to his leadership role in the cartel. Terms of the deal, including sentencing recommendations or cooperation agreements, were not immediately disclosed.

Speculation about a deal had percolated for months, as behind-the-scenes negotiations quietly progressed.

Jeffrey Lichtman, an attorney for the two brothers, said Friday he would wait until Ovidio Guzman Lopez was sentenced before discussing whether the agreement was a good deal.

Guzman Lopez's sentencing was postponed while he cooperates with U.S. authorities, as he agreed to do so on Friday. Whether he avoids a life in prison sentence depends on whether authorities say he has held up his end of the agreement.

Lichtman said he didn't know whether the case against Joaquin Guzman Lopez could be resolved with a plea deal, noting that it is "completely different."

"Remember, Joaquin was arrested in America well after Ovidio was, so it takes time," he said.

Laurie Levenson, a law professor at Loyola Law School and former assistant U.S. attorney in Los Angeles, said that Guzman Lopez, by pleading guilty, may have "saved other family members."

"In this way, he has some control over who he's cooperating against and what the world will know about that cooperation."

Levenson called the plea change a "big step" for the U.S. government and said Guzman Lopez could provide "a roadmap of how to identify members of the cartel."

"This is big," she said. "The best way for them to take out the cartel is to find out about its operations from an insider, and that's what they get from his cooperation."

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on Friday criticized the "lack of coherence" in American policy toward Mexican cartels, highlighting the disparity between the U.S. government declaring cartels foreign terrorist organizations, but also striking plea deals with their leaders.

Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman is serving a life sentence after being convicted in 2019 for his role as the former leader of the Sinaloa cartel, having smuggled mountains of cocaine and other drugs into the United States over 25 years. The brothers allegedly assumed their father's former role as leaders of the cartel.

Ovidio Guzman Lopez was arrested in Mexico in 2023 and extradited to the United States. He initially pleaded not guilty but had signaled in recent months his intent to change his plea.

Joaquin Guzman Lopez and another longtime Sinaloa leader, Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, were arrested in July 2024 in Texas after they landed in the U.S. on a private plane. Both men have pleaded not guilty to multiple charges. Their dramatic capture prompted a surge in violence in Mexico's northern state of Sinaloa as two factions of the Sinaloa cartel clashed.

How US views of immigration have changed since Trump took office, according to Gallup polling

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just months after President Donald Trump returned to office amid a wave of anti-immigration sentiment, the share of U.S. adults saying immigration is a "good thing" for the country has jumped substantially — including among Republicans, according to new Gallup polling.

About 8 in 10 Americans, 79%, say immigration is "a good thing" for the country today, an increase from 64% a year ago and a high point in the nearly 25-year trend. Only about 2 in 10 U.S. adults say immigration is a bad thing right now, down from 32% last year.

During Democratic President Joe Biden's term in office, negative views of immigration had increased markedly, reaching a high point in the months before Trump, a Republican, took office. The new Gallup data suggests U.S. adults are returning to more pro-immigrant views that could complicate Trump's push for sweeping deportations and other anti-immigration policies. The poll shows decreasing support for the

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type of mass deportations Trump has championed since before he was elected.

Since taking office, Trump has called on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to do all in its power to deliver “the single largest Mass Deportation Program in History.” His administration has also pushed to limit access to federal benefits for immigrants who lack legal status, sought to revoke the citizenship of immigrants who commit crimes and is working to end birthright citizenship for children born to those without legal status or who are in the country temporarily.

In general, Americans’ views of immigration policies have shifted dramatically in the last year, the Gallup polling shows — including among Republicans, who have become much more content with immigration levels since Trump took office but who have also grown more supportive of pathways to citizenship for people in the country illegally.

The broader trend also shows that public opinion is generally much more favorable to immigrants than it was decades ago.

The vast majority of U.S. adults say immigration is good

Americans’ more positive view on immigration is driven primarily by a shift among Republicans and independents.

About two-thirds of Republicans now say immigrants are “a good thing” for the country, up from 39% last year. And independents moved from about two-thirds last year to 80% this year.

Democrats have maintained their overwhelmingly positive view of immigration in the last few years.

The share of Americans who want immigration decreased has dropped significantly

In the time since Trump took office, Republicans have become more satisfied with the level of immigration in the country.

The share of Americans who want immigration “decreased” in the United States dropped from 55% to 30%. While fewer Americans now want to decrease the number of people who come to the U.S. from other countries, more want immigration levels kept the same than want higher immigration levels. About 4 in 10 say immigration should be kept at its current level, and only 26% say immigration should be increased.

The poll suggests Republicans’ sharp anti-immigrant views highlighted before November’s election — which helped return Trump to the White House — have largely faded. The share of Republicans saying immigration should be decreased dropped from a high of 88% to 48% in the last year. Close to 4 in 10 Republicans now say immigration levels should remain the same, and only about 1 in 10 would like an increase.

Much of that Republican movement likely comes from support for the Trump administration’s stringent immigration enforcement, but there are also signs in the Gallup polling that Republicans have become more supportive of pathways to citizenship for immigrants in the country illegally and more likely to see benefits from immigration that could be at odds with the Trump administration’s priorities.

More Americans back a pathway to citizenship

Most Americans favor allowing immigrants living in the U.S. illegally the chance to become U.S. citizens if they meet certain requirements over a period of time, the poll shows.

Almost 9 in 10 U.S. adults, 85%, favor a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children, and nearly as many say they favor a path to citizenship for all immigrants in the country illegally as long as they meet certain requirements.

That increased support for pathways to citizenship largely comes from Republicans, about 6 in 10 of whom now support that, up from 46% last year. Support was already very high among independents and Democrats.

Support for deporting immigrants in the country illegally has also decreased across the board, but less significantly. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults now favor deporting immigrants who are in the country illegally, down from about half a year ago.

Europe unveils a deal for more food and fuel for Gaza.

Israeli strike kills 14 outside a clinic

By WAFAA SHURAF, SARAH EL DEEB, MELANIE LIDMAN and SAM MCNEIL Associated Press
DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — European officials reached a new deal with Israel to allow desperately needed food and fuel into Gaza, the European Union's foreign policy chief said Thursday, hours after an Israeli airstrike killed 14 people, including 9 children, waiting for help outside a medical clinic.

The children's deaths drew outrage from humanitarian groups even as Israel allowed the first delivery of fuel to Gaza in more than four months, though still less than a day's supply, according to the United Nations.

"The killing of families trying to access life-saving aid is unconscionable," UNICEF's chief, Catherine Russell, said. "These were mothers seeking a lifeline for their children after months of hunger and desperation."

The Israeli military said it was targeting a militant when it struck near the clinic.

Security camera footage outside the clinic in the central Gaza city of Deir al Balah showed about a dozen people squatting in front of the clinic when a projectile explodes a few meters (yards) away, leaving bodies scattered.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepared to leave Washington after meetings with President Donald Trump, apparently without finalizing a temporary ceasefire advocated by the White House.

A deal to increase aid

The deal announced by European officials could result in "more crossings open, aid and food trucks entering Gaza, repair of vital infrastructure and protection of aid workers," said Kaja Kallas, the 27-member EU's top diplomat.

"We count on Israel to implement every measure agreed," she said in a post on social media.

Aid groups say Israeli military restrictions and recurring violence have made it difficult to deliver assistance in Gaza even after Israel eased its 2 1/2 month total blockade in May. Experts have warned the strip is at risk of famine, 21 months into the Israel-Hamas war.

Kallas said the deal would reactivate aid corridors from Jordan and Egypt and reopen community bakeries and kitchens across Gaza.

She said measures would be taken to prevent the militant Hamas group from diverting aid. Israel has long accused Hamas of stealing aid and selling it to finance militant activities. The U.N. says there is no evidence for widespread diversion.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar acknowledged the deal while at a conference in Vienna, saying it followed "our dialogue with the EU" and that it includes "more trucks, more crossings and more routes for the humanitarian efforts."

Neither Saar nor Kallas said whether the aid would go through the U.N.-run system or an alternative, U.S.- and Israeli-backed mechanism that has been marred by violence and controversy.

The U.N. said Israel had permitted a team to bring 75,000 liters of fuel into Gaza, the first delivery allowed in 130 days. U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric warned it wasn't enough to cover a single day's energy needs in the territory and that services would shut down without more shipments.

Israeli strikes kill at least 36

Israeli strikes pounded the Gaza Strip overnight and early Thursday, killing at least 36 Palestinians, local hospitals and aid workers said. The Israeli military said one soldier was killed in Gaza.

Those killed outside the clinic were waiting for nutritional supplements, according to Project Hope, an aid group that runs the facility.

"No child waiting for food and medicine should face the risk of being bombed," said Dr. Mithqal Abutaha, the group's project manager.

The aid group had initially said 15 people were killed, including 10 children. But Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies, later said that 14 people were killed, including nine children and three women.

At the morgue of Al-Aqsa Hospital, families prayed over the bodies of their loved ones, laid across the

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floor.

Omar Meshmesh held the body of his 3-year-old niece Aya Meshmesh. "What did she ever do? Did she throw a rocket at them or throw something at them? ... she's an innocent child."

Israel's military said it struck near the clinic while targeting a militant it said had entered Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. It said it was investigating.

Gaza's Nasser Hospital reported a total of 21 deaths in airstrikes in the southern town of Khan Younis and the nearby coastal area of Muwasi. It said three children and their mother, as well as two other women, were among the dead.

Netanyahu leaves Washington

Readying to leave Washington, Netanyahu said Israel continues to pursue a deal for a 60-day pause in the fighting and the release of half of the 50 hostages remaining in Gaza, many of them believed dead.

Once that deal is in place, Israel is prepared to negotiate a permanent end to the war, Netanyahu said — but only on condition that Hamas disarms and gives up its governing and military capabilities in Gaza.

If this "is not achieved through negotiations in 60 days, we will achieve it in other ways; by using force, the force of our heroic army," Netanyahu said in a video statement.

Still, U.S. officials held out hope that restarting high-level negotiations — mediated by Egypt and Qatar and including White House envoy Steve Witkoff — could bring progress.

"We're closer than we've been in quite a while and we're hopeful, but we also recognize there's still some challenges in the way," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters during a stop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

West Bank violence, another Israeli soldier killed

The Israeli military said a soldier was killed in Khan Younis the day before, after militants burst out of an underground tunnel and tried to abduct him. The soldier was shot and killed, while troops in the area shot the militants, hitting several of them, it said.

Eighteen soldiers have been killed in the past three weeks, one of the deadliest periods for the Israeli army in months, putting additional public pressure on Netanyahu to end the war.

Meanwhile, two Palestinian attackers killed a 22-year-old Israeli man at a supermarket in a settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Thursday afternoon, according to Israel's Magen David Adom emergency services.

Israeli police said two people in a stolen vehicle attacked a security guard at the supermarket. Paramedics said people on site shot and killed the two attackers. There was no information about the attackers but Israeli troops were setting up roadblocks around the Palestinian town of Halhul, around 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the supermarket.

Earlier Thursday, a 55-year-old Palestinian man was killed in the West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. The Israeli military said the man was shot after stabbing a soldier in the village of Rumana. The soldier suffered moderate wounds.

The war in Gaza has sparked a surge of violence in the West Bank, with the Israeli military targeting militants in large-scale operations that have killed hundreds of Palestinians and displaced tens of thousands.

That has coincided with a rise in settler violence and Palestinian attacks on Israelis. Palestinian militants from the West Bank have also attacked and killed Israelis in Israel and the West Bank.

The war began after Hamas attacked Israel in 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 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.

Cuban women embrace extravagant nail art despite economic hardships

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuban women are embracing extravagant nail art with many willing to spend the money to have extremely long and intricate nails despite the economic obstacles.

While over-the-top nail designs have long been common elsewhere, in Cuba they stand out because most Cubans have little disposable income and procuring the embellishments isn't easy.

A deepening economic crisis makes almost every aspect of life in Cuba challenging for the population; long lines for buses, power outages and shortages are part of everyday life on the island.

For those who have mastered the work, whether from online video tutorials or visiting manicurists from other countries, extravagant nails have become an important source of income in Cuba's limited private economy.

Recently, Cuban manicurist Marisel Darias Valdés spent nearly six hours applying and decorating the acrylic extensions for a client.

She set up a nail salon at her home in Havana, where she displays the specialized, imported products that are expensive and very difficult to obtain in the city.

The nails that Darias decorated for her client, Mariam Camila Sosa, were at least an inch (2.5 centimeters) long. Sosa chose the cartoon character Sponge Bob because it is her daughter's favorite. The designs of the paintings and nail decorations are varied and all handmade.

With this level of detail, Darias said she could not handle more than two clients per day.

"Before it was a half-hour service," she said. "They were table manicures, natural paint and that's it; now it's all become art, it's not just fix them and you're done."

"Cuban women are very vain. They may lack food, but their nails, hair, eyelashes, and feet always have to be well-groomed," Darias said.

There is no official figure on the number of these specialized businesses, but since the pandemic, the small private spaces have flourished, and some have turned it into an art form.

Manicurists have also learned to become content creators with sophisticated social media accounts to promote and sell their services, taking advantage of Cuba's not-always-reliable connection to the internet.

Manicurist Dayana Roche showcases some of her numerous social media postings.

"It is the fundamental tool to attract the public, the clients. And you have to create a lot of content (on social media) networks because that's where everyone sees your work," said Roche.

It's a way of earning a living. Some are university graduates, but this job offers a good alternative to low wages in a tough economic scenario.

Each client agrees with their manicurist on the cost of the service, which can range from \$10 to \$40. That's a lot of money in a country where a monthly state salary is around 5,000 Cuban pesos (about \$13), although many families rely on remittances from relatives abroad and state subsidies.

The materials are brought into Cuba from the United States or Panama by the manicurists themselves or relatives, or they are bought from resellers in Cuba. A small bottle of professional nail polish alone can cost \$15.

Miralys Maura Cruz and her sister go about their daily domestic chores with surprising agility despite their crystal-adorned 2-inch nails.

"Without my nails, I'm nobody, I know they are not cheap, and nails are a luxury, it's my luxury," said Cruz.

Texas floodwaters damaged crops and endangered livestock. Now farmers and ranchers are cleaning up

By MELINA WALLING and JOSHUA A. BICKEL Associated Press

BEND, Texas (AP) — Across a wide swath of Texas, the inundated rivers that ravaged communities also

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tore through farms and ranches.

In the town of Bend, about two hours north of Austin, Boyd Clark waded into rising waters to help one of his stranded ostrich hens. Matthew Ketterman spent several agonizing hours trapped on top of his truck amid coursing rapids after driving out to check the fences on his exotic game ranch outside Burnet, about an hour south of Bend. And the overflowing San Gabriel River knocked Christmas trees sideways and staff had to get petting zoo animals into a temporary pen at Sweet Eats Adventure Farm in Georgetown, about 65 miles east of Ketterman's ranch.

As authorities work to understand the extent of the loss of human life—as of Friday at least 120 people were killed more than 160 missing —farmers and ranchers are working to assess damage to their properties, crops and animals. Many are facing the task of caring for livestock while salvaging what crops they can and cleaning up the wreckage.

While many farmers lean on a relentless optimism to get through the uncertainty of relying on the weather for a living, extreme weather disasters like catastrophic floods, droughts and wildfires can take a toll. The weather events also pose unique challenges to those who rely on seasonal tourist rushes or who might not have crop insurance.

It's a double-edged sword: as some farmers turn to agritourism or niche crops to weather unpredictable markets, climate change is also intensifying many of the natural disasters that can make it more difficult for those experiments to succeed. Even the larger operations are not immune; farmers who produce all kinds of crops must plan for emergencies.

"We expect it to happen again. It's never a question of if, but when," said Jon Meredith, co-owner of Sweet Eats, an agritourism outfit that mainly grows Christmas trees. "And so we just continue to try to mitigate our losses and reduce our risk around events like this."

Still surveying the damage, starting repairs

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said there has been so much rain so quickly that some farmers are seeing complete loss or severe damage to their crops and infrastructure, in several counties and beyond the banks of overflowing rivers.

"We've had farm equipment washed down the river. We've had tractors underwater, so they're totaled, won't be able to use those. Irrigation equipment wadded up like a bowl of spaghetti," Miller told The Associated Press. "We're finding cattle dead on top of trees downriver. So it's pretty devastating."

Miller said there are resources available for farmers. Those include the State of Texas Agriculture Relief Fund, which helps farmers access disaster funding, the Hay and Feed Hotline, which donates animal feed and the AgriStress Helpline that provides 24/7 mental health support.

Now comes the task of cleanup: repair miles of destroyed fence line, tally lost livestock and move debris from foliage and mud to piled-up picnic tables.

After a harrowing night waiting for hours to be rescued, Ketterman, who had gotten stuck on his vehicle, felt lucky to be alive. But he and his team were also grieving the loss of a member who died in the flooding on his way to work. They lost some animals to the churning water, as well.

"We're in the hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage, but you know, at the end of the day that's just monetary and we'll recover from that," he said.

Disasters like floods can be tough for specialty farmers

Small farms that offer experiences to visitors, don't sell to wholesalers or don't have crop insurance are especially vulnerable, said Hannah Burrack, professor and chair of the entomology department at Michigan State University, who has worked with fruit farmers in the aftermath of floods.

Clark said ostrich growers can access some U.S. Department of Agriculture programs that cover the loss of grass that birds graze on, but otherwise there isn't much assistance. Ostriches also get too cold in heavy rain. And it cuts down egg production; the hens almost stop laying eggs and mud and water can ruin what few they do.

"It does definitely affect our production this year and our profitability," Clark said.

Burrack said that other crops for consumption like fruits and vegetables get submerged, they can no longer be sold. Unharvested plants in fields can build up, causing pest issues or creating an unpleasant

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experience for visitors. And once submerged, "long-term echoes of these short-term stressors" can make trees more vulnerable to disease.

Meredith said Sweet Eats was lucky the Christmas season is still months away; they still had a chance to put the trees back up. They would've had a harder time if they were still doing peach trees like they used to. "Because so much of our stuff is pick-your-own, so if we can't be open for customers, then it magnifies the challenges that we face because of cash flow issues," he said.

All farms need to plan for emergencies, climate change

It's not just floods: farms across the country have taken hits due to extreme weather in recent years. Wildfires have damped farm-based businesses in California including pick-your-own apple orchards in the southern part of the state and wineries in the north. An unusually warm winter had Midwestern maple syrup producers scrambling in 2024, while pinching drought has hit pumpkins, along with many other crops, across the West.

It's good business sense to observe how climate change might affect your operation and make adjustments accordingly, said Rob Leeds, an extension educator at Ohio State University who works with farmers, especially those interested in agritourism. He described how after watching a barrage of tornadoes and high winds in recent years, some cattle producers in Ohio have been building tougher barns that more typically would be seen in windswept areas of the West. Some fall-themed agritourism operators have started installing fans and misters, anticipating more hot days later into the fall.

It will take a while for Texas farmers to fully recover, but some are already building back stronger. Kerterman said he thinks they're going to put up sturdier fence posts in the coming weeks as they secure the fence line.

They'll lean on each other, too. Many farmers described the tight-knit sense of community as they weathered the storm.

"We all started calling each other, to make sure we could get our animals out and anything else that we needed to save," said John Meredith, owner of Sweet Eats. "Just because this is a fact of life. When you live on a river, it's beautiful and enjoyable, but there are occasionally times where things can go south very quickly."

Today in History: July 12, Disco Demolition Night

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 12, the 193rd day of 2025. There are 172 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 12, as an angry reaction to the popularity of disco music, the Chicago White Sox held the "Disco Demolition Night" promotion, in which a crate of disco records was blown up on the field between games of a double-header; the ensuing riot and damage to the field caused the White Sox to forfeit the second game.

Also on this date:

In 1543, England's King Henry VIII married his sixth and final wife, Catherine Parr.

In 1812, United States forces led by Gen. William Hull entered Canada during the War of 1812 against Britain. (However, Hull retreated shortly thereafter to Detroit.)

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill authorizing the Army Medal of Honor.

In 1909, the House of Representatives joined the Senate in passing the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, allowing for a federal income tax, and submitted it to the states. (It was declared ratified in February 1913.)

In 1962, the Rolling Stones played their first show, at the Marquee Club in London.

In 1967, rioting erupted in Newark, New Jersey, over the police beating of a Black taxi driver; 26 people were killed in the five days of violence that followed.

In 1984, Democratic presidential candidate Walter F. Mondale announced his choice of U.S. Rep. GERAL-

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dine A. Ferraro of New York to be his running mate; Ferraro was the first woman to run for vice president on a major-party ticket.

In 1991, Japanese professor Hitoshi Igarashi, who had translated Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses," was found stabbed to death, nine days after the novel's Italian translator was attacked in Milan.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton, visiting Germany, went to the eastern sector of Berlin, the first U.S. president to do so since Harry Truman.

In 2003, the USS Ronald Reagan, the first carrier named for a living president, was commissioned in Norfolk, Virginia.

In 2012, a scathing report by former FBI Director Louis Freeh said the late Joe Paterno and other top Penn State officials had buried child sexual abuse allegations against Jerry Sandusky more than a decade earlier to avoid bad publicity.

In 2022, Twitter sued Elon Musk to force him to complete the \$44 billion acquisition of the social media company after Musk said he was backing off his agreement to buy the company. (He would eventually become Twitter's owner three months later.)

Today's Birthdays: Writer Delia Ephron is 81. Singer Walter Egan is 77. Writer-producer Brian Grazer is 74. Actor Cheryl Ladd is 74. Gospel singer Ricky McKinnie (The Blind Boys of Alabama) is 73. Gospel singer Sandi Patty is 69. Actor Mel Harris is 69. Boxing champion Julio Cesar Chavez is 63. Rock singer Robin Wilson (Gin Blossoms) is 60. Actor Lisa Nicole Carson is 56. Olympic gold medal figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi is 54. Actor Anna Friel is 49. R&B singer Tracie Spencer is 49. Actor Topher Grace is 47. Actor Michelle Rodriguez is 47. Country singer-musician Kimberly Perry (The Band Perry) is 42. Actor Natalie Martinez is 41. Actor Ta'Rhonda Jones is 37. Actor Rachel Brosnahan is 35. Olympic gold medal gymnast Jordyn Wieber is 30. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai is 28. NBA guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander is 27.