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Be Positive Be
Happy 🌻

I have fought a thousand
battles, but I'm still standing.
I have cried a thousand tears,
but I'm still smiling.
I have been abandoned
and rejected, but I'm still
walking proud. I smile,
I laugh, I love hard. I am
humble. I am me.

Tuesday, August 12

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, Italian blend, au gratin, peaches, biscuit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship Committee Meeting, 5:15 p.m.; Church Council, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, August 13

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice with black beans, Mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Groton Area Staff Development Day

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sunday School Teachers Meeting, 6 p.m.

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

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

Thursday, August 14

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

Friday, August 15

Senior Menu: Baked fish, au gratin, California blend, strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

Boys soccer at Custer, 5 p.m.

Saturday,, August 16

Boys Soccer at Hot Springs, 11 a.m.

Girls Soccer at Sioux Falls Christian, Noon

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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.

DC National Guard

President Donald Trump declared a public safety emergency in Washington, DC, yesterday, activating 800 DC National Guard members over concerns of violent crime. He also invoked the 1973 Home Rule Act to take control of the city's police department for a maximum of 30 days. Over 100 FBI agents will be temporarily reassigned to nighttime patrol duties.

Federal data found crime in the district is at a 30-year low. Trump has cast doubt on the findings, pointing to a police commander who was recently suspended for allegedly falsifying crime data. He also highlighted recent violent incidents in DC, including a former DOGE employee who was attacked in a carjacking and an intern for Rep. Ron Estes (R, KS-4) killed last month.

Attorney General Pam Bondi will oversee federal control of DC's police, with DEA Administrator Terry Cole serving as interim federal commissioner. Trump hopes the federal takeover will model crime reduction tactics for other cities.

Steel Plant Explosion

Explosions at a US Steel plant near Pittsburgh yesterday left at least two people dead and 10 injured. The cause of the explosions is under investigation as of this writing.

The blast occurred after a fire broke out at the US Steel Clairton Coke Works site in Clairton, Pennsylvania, roughly 20 miles south of Pittsburgh. The facility is the largest in North America for producing coke, a carbon-rich, porous material for steelmaking. In the process, coal is heated to as high as 1,125 degrees Fahrenheit without oxygen, which removes impurities and yields coke through a sequence of softening, liquefying, and resolidifying. The facility produces more than 4 million tons of coke annually.

Residents within 1 mile of the plant were advised to stay indoors and set home cooling units to recirculation out of caution; air quality monitors have not detected toxin levels above federal standards.

AI Chip Exports Deal

Nvidia and Advanced Micro Devices will pay the US government 15% of revenues from AI chips sold to China in exchange for export licenses—an arrangement legal experts say may violate the Constitution's ban on taxing exports.

The deal, confirmed yesterday and expected to generate more than \$2B in federal funds, comes amid concerns that access to American chips could help Beijing leapfrog the US in AI development. The Commerce Department began issuing licenses for Nvidia's H20 Friday and AMD's MI308 over the weekend, following last month's export ban reversal. Only these less advanced chips, which were developed in response to Biden-era export controls, are approved for sale under the agreement. They can't train new large language models quickly, but can power pretrained models.

Separately, last week, Trump announced companies would face 100% tariffs on AI chips and other semiconductors made abroad unless they invest in US manufacturing.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Paramount purchases UFC streaming rights for all US fights in seven-year, \$7.7B deal that begins in 2026. Netflix extends creative partnership with Archewell Productions, the media company owned by Meghan Markle and Prince Harry.

Texas tops preseason college football AP Poll for first time; Penn State and Ohio State round out the top three.

ESPN and Fox to bundle their upcoming streaming services at \$39.99/month.

Science & Technology

Amazon launches 24 Kuiper satellites, bringing the total in its space-based internet network to more than 100; satellites were deployed via competitor SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, company's Starlink has more than 8,000 in orbit.

Ford unveils "universal" electric vehicle manufacturing platform, aiming to streamline production across different model types; company to release a four-door electric pickup for \$30K in 2027.

Study suggests oxytocin, also referred to as the "love hormone," plays a role in the selectivity of social connections; oxytocin-deficient rodents took up to a week to form bonds, compared to 24 hours for control group.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow -0.5%, Nasdaq -0.3%) as investors await key inflation reports this week; consumer price index due today and producer price index expected Thursday.

President Donald Trump signs executive order extending the US tariff truce with China for another 90 days.

Trump administration cancels tariff talks with Brazil as nation faces 50% levies.

Trump to nominate EJ Antoni, chief economist at the Heritage Foundation, to lead Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Lithium stocks surge amid concerns over tightening supply after top EV battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology announces suspension of major Chinese mine; company cites expiring permit, says it's working to renew.

Politics & World Affairs

Israeli airstrike kills five Al Jazeera journalists and cameramen in Gaza Sunday, including prominent correspondent Anas al-Sharif; Israel says al-Sharif led a Hamas cell, has not publicly provided evidence as of this writing.

Federal judge denies Justice Department's request to unseal grand jury materials in the case of convicted sex offender Ghislaine Maxwell; cites "rule of secrecy" in grand juries and says information contained is largely public knowledge.

Colombian senator and presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay dies two months after being shot at a political rally.



The Life of Linda Lee (Ott) Fischer

Linda Lee Ott Fischer, 81, of Harrison, Arkansas, passed away Monday, June 2, 2025 at the Springs of Mt Vista in Harrison.

She was born October 27, 1943, in Aberdeen, South Dakota, to Clifford George and Mary Louise (Samuel) Ott. Linda was raised on the family farm near Verdon, South Dakota and was baptized and confirmed in her faith at West Hanson Lutheran Church near Stratford, SD. She proudly carried her rural upbringing throughout her life and often shared fond memories of driving grain trucks and working in the fields.

Linda attended grade school in Verdon and graduated from Conde High School in 1961. She earned her bachelor's degree from Northern State University in 1965 and later earned her master's degree from the University of Arkansas. She began her professional career teaching business classes at Watertown Vocation/Technical College in South Dakota. After marrying Gerald Eugene "Gerry" Fischer in 1967, the couple moved south, teaching in Iowa, and later working in Kansas City, before settling in Harrison. In Harrison, Linda continued her teaching career by instructing business classes at the Vo-Tech, which later became North Arkansas College. She also worked at Duncan Parking Meter Company until her retirement.

Linda loved spending time with her children and grandchildren. Though she made her home in Arkansas, her heart remained tied to South Dakota, and she rarely missed a family get-together. She was also a devoted member of her church, First Lutheran Church, until she was no longer physically able to attend. She was preceded in death by her parents; her brother, Loel Ott; a grandson, Joey Franklin McCutcheon; and the father of her children, Gerald Eugene Fischer.

She is survived by her children, Chloette McCutcheon and husband, Joey, of Mt Judea; Gerald Eugene "Gef" Fischer and wife Jennifer, of Ralph; Loel Fischer of Sedalia, Missouri; 12 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; her brother, Lari Ott and wife, Linda, of Pierre, South Dakota; her sister, Cheryl Hilgemann and husband, Jeff, of Nevis, Minnesota; and a host of nieces, nephew, and cousins.

A memorial service was held June 21, 2025 at First Luther Church of Harrison, Arkansas with Pastor Bob Herring officiating.

A service of internment will be held at the Groton Union Cemetery at 11am on August 15, 2025. There will be a lunch following the service at St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton, SD. Friends and family are invited to attend.

Memorial contributions may be made to the BrightFocus Foundation (Alzheimer Disease Research) 22512 Gateway Center Drive, Clarksburg, MD 20871 or to a charity of your choice.

School board sets priorities on facilities, outreach and staff development

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area School District board formalized its goals for the upcoming school year during Monday's board meeting.

The goals call for improving outreach to rural areas, completing a formal evaluation of the middle/high school building to document major structural and functional issues, setting priorities for capital projects and enhancing staff training by creating a professional development advisory group.

According to the written guide, the board will implement a targeted community outreach initiative to strengthen engagement with families in the district's rural areas. The initiative includes at least four in-person outreach events, including regular board meetings held in district communities outside of Groton and offering community education events. The outreach plan will launch by October 1, with all events listed being completed by May 31, 2026.

The second goal listed has the board establishing a facilities review committee to evaluate the condition, safety and educational inadequacy of the aging middle/high school building. The committee will conduct an assessment, gather stakeholder input, establish cost estimates and produce a written report with findings and recommendations.

The assessment process will begin by September 15, with board discussion planned for November, February and May.

The school board also wants to increase staff buy-in for professional development through a redesigned professional development plan with input from district-wide staff. The goal is to boost participation, morale and the effectiveness of professional learning. The process must be completed by May 31, 2026.

While those three goals have a school-year end date, one goal has a quicker turnaround.

The board will develop and adopt a ranked capital improvement plan, with the district evaluating each potential project based on safety, educational impact, cost and urgency to ensure a clear prioritization. The deadline for this plan is January 16, 2026.

Work has already begun on this goal as district staff has met with representatives of Co-Op Architecture, looking at the current middle/high school facility. The company will send the district some barebones request for proposal documents to help the district narrow in on what services it is looking for the help with the evaluation process.

Other board action

- School lunch prices are on the rise slightly. The board approved increasing breakfast and lunch rates by 25 cents each. That brings rates to

- o \$2.85 for K-5 breakfast
- o \$3.35 for 6-12 breakfast
- o \$3.75 for adult breakfast
- o \$3.60 for K-5 lunch
- o \$4.10 for 6-12 lunch
- o \$5.25 for adult lunch

Rates for K-12 second lunch (\$2.00) and K-12 second milk (\$0.50) remain the same.

- Enrollment rates remained steady at the middle/high school, with 303 students as of Monday, said Middle/High School Principal Shelby Edwards. However, the number of elementary students has dropped, reported Elementary School Principal Brett Schwan. There are about 270 elementary students, with first grade and junior kindergarten class numbers down substantially. As of Monday, tentative enrollment numbers are nine junior kindergarten students, 45 kindergarten students, 32 first grade students, 54 second grade students, 42 third grade students, 48 fourth grade students and 41 fifth grade students, he said. However, those numbers may shift slightly as the school year approaches.

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- School begins Tuesday, August 19. Open house at the middle school and elementary school takes place Monday, August 18.
- The board approved five volunteer coaches for fall 2025. Kelsie Roberts will serve as volunteer assistant boys soccer coach. Jenna Strom and Carla Tracy will assist with volleyball coaching. Dalton Locke and Quintin Biermann will assist with football coaching.
- The board accepted the resignation of Lois Krueger, part-time maintenance team member, effective August 18. Right after that, the board approved a work agreement for Anje Hinkelman, who will be the newest part-time food service team member/part-time maintenance team member.
- The district has purchased a 2014 Chevy 8-passenger van from the SD Federal Property Agency, said Business Manager Becky Hubsch. The district's new bus is still in Tulsa, but should be released soon and will be available within the next month.
- Incumbent board members Tigh Fliehs and TJ Harder were installed as board members, officially assuming their continued roles after an uncontested election in the spring.

Highway Patrol Makes Record Meth Seizure

Non-Citizen Offender Shows Urgent Need for Operation: Prairie Thunder

STURGIS, S.D. – Yesterday, Governor Larry Rhoden announced a record drug seizure by the South Dakota Highway Patrol, showing the urgent need for Operation: Prairie Thunder.

The Highway Patrol apprehended a 42-year-old male who was stopped while driving and found to be transporting approximately 207 pounds of crystal methamphetamine with a street value of \$12 million. This is the largest meth seizure in Highway Patrol history. The driver was found to be a non-citizen and is now in immigration proceedings. A photo of the meth seizure can be found here.



The South Dakota Highway Patrol seized these 207 pounds of methamphetamine during a traffic stop, the most ever captured by the agency, according to a news release on Aug. 11, 2025. (Courtesy of Governor's Office)

"We are taking action to protect the people of South Dakota from criminals and drug traffickers. Our Highway Patrol showed incredible professionalism in achieving this record drug bust," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "I promised that my administration would keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free – and we will continue to deliver on that promise through Operation: Prairie Thunder."

This is the eighth non-citizen stopped by the Highway Patrol since its 287(g) agreement was signed with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In these instances, the Highway Patrol works closely with ICE to coordinate transfer to federal custody, which is a key, ongoing component of Operation: Prairie Thunder.

The driver was a 42-year-old male initially stopped for speeding on Interstate 90 in Sturgis by a Highway Patrol trooper. The driver exhibited behaviors consistent with criminal activity. During the stop, a police service dog alerted the trooper to the presence of an odor it is trained to detect. A search of the vehicle then yielded 207.24 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, valued at approximately \$12 million. The vehicle was seized as part of the investigation.

The driver is charged with:

Felony Distribution/Manufacturing of a Controlled Substance II;
Felony Possession of a Controlled Drug/Substance Schedule II; and
Misdemeanor Possession or use of Drug Paraphernalia.

The driver is presumed innocent on all charges under the U.S. Constitution.

Assisting agencies include the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation, Meade County Sheriff's Office, and Rapid City Police Department.

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

Deer Camp Available for First Time Youth Deer Hunters

PIERRE, S.D. – Four first-time deer hunters will have the opportunity to participate in a managed youth deer hunt and camp on Dec. 19-21 at Brown's Lodge and Hunting Ranch in Gettysburg, S.D.

Missouri River Corridor Youth Hunt, in partnership with the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP), are hosting a free event that is open to first-time youth deer hunters between the ages of 10 and 15. Participants must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Participants will learn how to select the best ammunition and firearm for deer hunting, improve shooting and firearm safety, sight in a firearm, field dress and properly care for meat. The youth hunters will be provided three meals, snacks, lodging, deer licenses, guns, ammunition, safety equipment, transportation to and from hunting, binoculars, and assistance with field processing.

"This youth hunt was created for kids who don't have the opportunity to hunt," said Potter County Conservation Officer Kendyll DeRouchey. "We want to teach the kids about firearm safety and ethical hunting while giving them the opportunity to harvest their first deer. It'll be a unique experience they'll remember forever."

Each hunter will be paired with a knowledgeable and experienced guide. Participation is limited to four hunters. Applicants will be selected based on application responses. Successful applicants are required to attend a pre-hunt orientation meeting on the morning of Dec. 19. Hunting will take place on Gettysburg-area land on Dec. 19-21.

For more information and to apply for this opportunity, contact Kendyll DeRouchey at 605.730.1568 or MRCYouthHunt@outlook.com. Application deadline is Aug. 15.

Professionals band together to strengthen arts education

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

One of the most vital elements in protecting South Dakota's cultural heritage, promoting our creative industry and providing an enriching environment for all generations is the strengthening of vibrant arts education throughout the state. To enhance and grow South Dakota's arts education experiences, representatives from the state's leading professional arts education organizations have initiated ArtsEd Alliance SD.

Composed of ten educator groups ranging from the South Dakota Bandmasters to the Speech Communication and the College Art Associations, ArtsEd Alliance acts as a unified voice to advance experiences in arts education for all South Dakota students through professional collaboration, advocacy and resource development. Mary Cogswell, Band Method co-editor and retired band educator from Brookings, serves as chair of the new organization.

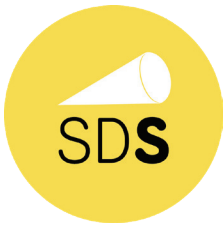
The ArtsEd Alliance meeting in July established a set of immediate priorities for the organization, which included becoming a strong voice for arts advocacy in South Dakota. As a partner with Arts South Dakota, the Alliance can speak to the needs of our state's student population in all age groups, using compelling real world examples of the power of the arts to motivate, educate and inspire.

Growing the organization to include all statewide arts education groups to enhance professional collaboration and encourage mentorship is another goal for the ArtsEd Alliance, as is participation in the development and revision of Department of Education standards and providing curriculum resources through an effective and dynamic resource web page.

We're excited about having arts educators as active partners in advocating for the arts in South Dakota and sharing the message that the arts are essential to achieving a quality education for all our students. We congratulate our state's education professionals for their dedication to the arts and to the future enrichment of all learners.

To learn more about arts education across the state and the resources available to grow arts education, please visit www.ArtsSouthDakota.org.





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Public welcome to speak at property tax task force meeting in Aberdeen

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 11, 2025 11:58 AM

A legislative task force aiming to reduce property taxes for South Dakota homeowners will meet in Aberdeen this week with opportunities for public input.

The Comprehensive Property Tax Task Force will meet at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday at the Kessler's Champions Club on the Northern State University campus, and 9 a.m. on Wednesday in the same location.

The Tuesday evening meeting is dedicated solely to public comment, and the group is also scheduled to take public comment at 9 a.m. during the Wednesday meeting. Wednesday's agenda also includes breakout discussions among task force members focusing on the intersection of property taxes with school, state government and local government funding.

The task force is exploring government spending reductions as a potential way to cut property tax burdens. The group is also discussing an optional county-level sales tax of a half-percent to offset participating counties' property taxes on owner-occupied homes, and a new state sales tax of 1% dedicated to education funding. The 1% tax would apply to most of the products and services that are currently exempted from sales taxes, and would stack on top of the existing state sales tax rate of 4.2% for other transactions.

Members of Abolish Property Taxes South Dakota pitched a transaction tax to the group at its Rapid City meeting last month. The proposal would aim to replace property taxes by adding a flat \$1.50 tax on transactions of \$15 or greater, and a tax of 10% on smaller transactions.

Earlier this year, lawmakers adopted Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden's proposal to slow property tax increases with multifaceted reforms including a five-year, countywide 3% cap on growth in owner-occupied home assessments. That new law took effect July 1.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Microschools are growing in popularity, but state regulations haven't caught up

States may define microschools as homeschools, private schools or something else

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA - AUGUST 11, 2025 7:09 AM

When Siri Fiske founded the Mysa Microschool in Washington, D.C., in 2016, there wasn't a widely accepted term for her small, one-room schoolhouse model.

Now, the school is referred to on its website as one of the first microschools in the nation, and Fiske has seen a growing microschool movement since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the five years since remote schooling amid pandemic-era lockdowns, microschools and homeschooling have emerged as increasingly popular alternatives to traditional public and private models. Smaller class sizes, individualized classrooms and lack of standardization are an appeal to parents, Fiske said.

"There's this idea that people who open microschools are doing it for cultish or religious reasons, and

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there's a misconception that all are like that," Fiske said. "I've seen my students graduate into top colleges. There's many ways to achieve academic success."

Some education experts, however, have expressed concern about the growing movement. They question whether microschools are properly regulated and being held accountable, and whether they'll pull dollars out of the public education system.

There is no federal definition of a microschool, and with the Trump administration's plans to shutter the U.S. Department of Education, the onus is on states to figure them out.

In some states, microschools face a bind: If they operate as private schools, they're required to meet facility, staffing and curricular standards that are often cost-prohibitive for schools their size. If they operate under homeschool laws, they face oversight, assessment mandates and reporting requirements that aren't designed for multifamily or educator-led models.

Some states, including Georgia, Tennessee and Texas, have passed "Learning Rights Protection Acts" to codify microschools' right to operate.

In Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts and Oregon, learning pods and microschools often face child care or private school licensing requirements if they involve multiple families, hire instructors or provide compensation for child care.

"Schools calling themselves microschools today are not what I would've called one back then. But I think that's OK. It's evolving," Fiske said.

She pointed to the national school choice movement — and states such as West Virginia — for helping the microschool movement flourish.

In 2022, West Virginia became one of the few states to define a microschool, distinctly separating it from a private school, homeschool or learning pod.

Those classifications, and how these schools are funded and regulated, affect everything from whether a school must hire certified teachers to how it ensures student safety or civil rights protections. And with more public dollars flowing to private or hybrid learning options through vouchers and education savings accounts — to the detriment of public school funding, some argue — states will need to define these schools and their place in the ecosystem.

States will have to fill the gaps, said Weadé James, senior director of K-12 education policy with the Center for American Progress, a left-leaning policy think tank.

"Accountability can vary wildly. Some microschools aren't required to have certified teachers, conduct annual assessments, or even guarantee civil rights protections," said James. "If public voucher dollars are going to a microschool, there has to be some level of oversight and accountability."

Many microschools aren't accredited

Microschools defy easy classification, and many advocates argue that's by design. Don Soifer, CEO of the National Microschooling Center, an industry group, cautions lawmakers against rushing to impose fixed legal definitions.

"Innovation is happening too fast. The moment you define it in law, it becomes obsolete," Soifer said.

A 2024 sector analysis by the National Microschooling Center — one of the only sources of national data on the topic — found that many schools are operating outside traditional education principles.

In a survey of 400 microschools across 41 states, more than 60% of founders reported they were not currently licensed educators. Eighty-four percent reported their schools were not accredited. Among prospective founders, 48% are licensed educators (though only 14% currently work in public schools), 32% come from non-education fields, and 23% are parents building schools for their own children.

Most microschools (55%) operate under homeschool laws, while others function as private schools (37%), charters (6%) or fall into unique state categories (3%), according to the analysis.

"So, you can be a private or homeschool microschool program, where you aren't required to provide students with certified teachers, or you aren't required to conduct annual assessments," James said.

Often described as "homeschool hybrids" or "small-scale learning communities," microschools often

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serve around 16 students or fewer, and tend to cater to families with average or above-average incomes in their area. In some states, microschools have been authorized to receive public funds through voucher programs.

Some critics note that, like private schools, microschools may charge tuition, potentially excluding lower-income families and contributing to educational disparities.

These schools often operate in commercial spaces (41%), private residences (28%) or houses of worship (25%), according to the National Microschooling Center. The center also found the movement is diversifying: 37% of prospective founders are people of color, compared with 27% of current operators.

Because building and zoning codes vary from state to state and locality to locality, many operators may be unaware of the extra costs to meet school codes standards. Fiske recalls difficulties in expanding from Washington, D.C., to Vermont, which has stricter laws on water fountain requirements.

"Most people in the U.S. starting a microschool are doing it under the radar because the regulations to open a licensed school are so intense," Fiske said. For the new school, she recalled, "it took us forever, and we had to install ADA-compliant toilets and water fountains for just 10 kids in Vermont."

'Microschooling is not one thing'

Microschools also operate in a legal gray zone, often outside the traditional K-12 system and subject to a patchwork of state and local policies that can either support or constrain their growth.

Growth has accelerated in conservative-leaning states with robust school choice programs, such as Arizona and Florida. Other states, such as Maryland, New York and North Dakota, have more restrictive homeschool or private school laws.

"Microschooling is not one thing. These schools look different in every state, and the policy frameworks around them vary wildly," said Soifer, of the National Microschooling Center.

What is classified as a microschool can vary from "10 kids in a basement in Kentucky" to a 200-kid schoolhouse elsewhere.

Fiske said states need to create a way for operators and parents to know what to expect in a certain state, and help willing operators get the education and business acumen they need to run the schools successfully.

"But if you look at who is starting microschools in the U.S., it's a lot of millennial parents who may not have any teacher training but wanted to create a learning environment for their children and others in the local community," said Fiske. "And without efforts by the state to provide some incentives to earn accreditation and information as both a school and a small business, a few of these will find themselves going under."

Seeking choices

After two decades working in conventional schools in the United States and around the world — including in Brazil, Egypt and Qatar — Justine Wilson turned down a high-paying leadership role at a prestigious private school. Instead, in 2023 she opened Curious and Kind Education, a two-day-a-week microschool in Sarasota, Florida, built around trust, nature-based learning and self-directed play.

Enrollment at Curious and Kind is mostly driven by word of mouth, she said. The program now has a waitlist. And Wilson has seen her enrollment grow from 18 students in her first year to roughly 100 students for the upcoming school year.

"The number of 5-year-olds on my waitlist is shocking," she said, "and then I realized they're COVID babies and their parents have really been driving this search for alternative schooling since the pandemic."

James, of the Center for American Progress, questions whether microschools generally match the quality of traditional public schools, which still educate more than 80% of schoolchildren. She says families may be under the assumption that school choice options equate to better quality.

"We have created an illusion of choice to be quality, and I think a lot of families are seeking various choice options because they associate that with quality. But that doesn't necessarily mean that where

those students are going is any better than where they left," she said.

"We need to take a closer look at what we are presenting to families," James said. "It's not just about having options and having a choice. It's about having quality choice options."

That quality, Soifer said, is what microschools are trying to achieve.

"Microschools do very well on the left, on the right ... at the top end of the economy and at the fragile end of the income spectrum," he said. "It's really a matter of the new economy and a new way of thinking about education."

Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

Trump mobilizes D.C. National Guard, pledges similar crackdown in Democratic cities

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA AND JACOB FISCHLER - AUGUST 11, 2025 2:50 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump asserted control Monday of the District of Columbia police force and mobilized 800 National Guard troops in the nation's capital under what he declared a "crime emergency."

Trump took the step despite a three-decade low in violent crime in Washington, D.C., while warning he may pursue similar action in other Democratic-led cities that he sees as having "totally out of control" crime.

Trump at a press conference said that he hopes other Democratic-led cities are watching because Monday's actions in the district are just the beginning.

"We're starting very strongly with D.C.," Trump said.

The president placed the Metropolitan Police Department of roughly 3,400 officers under federal control, citing the district's Home Rule Act that allows for the federal takeover until an emergency is declared over, or 30 days after the declaration. Congress can also authorize the extension.

"We're going to take our capital back," Trump said.

The mayor of the district, Muriel Bowser, called Monday's action "unsettling and unprecedented." She added that she was not informed by the president that the district's police force would be taken over.

DOGE staffer hurt

The escalation of federal control came after a former U.S. Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, official was injured in an attempted carjacking incident around 3 a.m. Eastern near the district neighborhood of Logan Circle. Two Maryland teenagers were arrested on charges of unarmed carjacking in connection with the incident.

The president said he is prepared to send in more National Guard "if needed," and that he will handle the city the same way he has handled immigration at the southern border. The Trump administration has been carrying out a campaign of mass deportations.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said during the press conference that members of the National Guard will be "flowing into" the district sometime this week.

Local officials in the district protested Trump's move. D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb, an elected official, wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that the Trump administration's "actions are unprecedented, unnecessary, and unlawful."

"There is no crime emergency in the District of Columbia. Violent crime in DC reached historic 30-year lows last year, and is down another 26% so far this year," Schwalb said.

"We are considering all of our options and will do what is necessary to protect the rights and safety of District residents," he continued.

Trump at the press conference said that he's also directed officials to clear out encampments of homeless people in the district, but did not detail where those people would be moved.

Hundreds of federal law enforcement officers, representing agencies from the Drug Enforcement Agency

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to the Interior Department, were deployed across the city Saturday and Sunday.

Los Angeles and beyond

The president's crackdown in the district occurred after a federal appeals court this summer temporarily approved Trump's move to take control of the California National Guard from Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom for the purpose of quelling protests over the administration's aggressive immigration raids.

The president Monday slammed several major Democratic cities – Baltimore, Chicago, New York City and Oakland – and inaccurately claimed they had the highest murder rates.

Trump said that he hopes other cities are "watching us today."

"Maybe they'll self clean up and maybe they'll self do this and get rid of the cashless bail thing and all of the things that caused the problem," the president said.

Trump pointed at Chicago, criticizing Mayor Brandon Johnson and Illinois Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker.

"I understand he wants to be president," Trump said of Pritzker, before taking a shot at the governor's personal appearance. "I noticed he lost a little weight so maybe he has a chance."

Pritzker is hosting Texas Democrats who left the state to prevent the state legislature from having a quorum after Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott called a special session in order to redistrict the state to give more seats to Republicans in Congress.

GOP applauds

The top Republican on the U.S. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which has jurisdiction over the district, praised Trump's decision to deploy the National Guard and take over the police department.

"President Trump is rightly using executive power to take bold and necessary action to crack down on crime and restore law and order in Washington, D.C.," Rep. James Comer, Republican of Kentucky, said in a statement.

Comer added that the committee next month will hold a hearing with Schwalb, D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson and Mayor Muriel Bowser.

While state governors have control over their National Guards, the president has control over the National Guard members in the district. The National Guard does not have arresting authority, under the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which generally bars the use of the military for domestic law enforcement purposes.

During Trump's first term, he deployed roughly 5,000 National Guard on Black Lives Matter protesters in the district after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020.

And despite requests from congressional leaders, Trump notably delayed activating National Guard members during the 2021 insurrection on the U.S. Capitol, when the president's supporters tried to subvert the certification of the 2020 presidential election.

In one of Trump's first actions on his inauguration day in January, he pardoned hundreds of Jan. 6 rioters who were charged by the Department of Justice for their involvement in the insurrection.

Putin meeting

In a question-and-answer session after announcing the National Guard deployment, Trump told reporters he hoped his meeting this week with Russian President Vladimir Putin would help put that country on a path to peace with Ukraine, which he said would involve each country ceding some territory to the other.

Trump described the Friday summit in Alaska — Putin's first visit to the U.S. in a decade — as a "feel-out meeting."

Asked if Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was invited to the summit, Trump said he was "not part of it." Any framework for peace discussed between Trump and Putin would be relayed to Zelenskyy, he said.

An end to the war would have to come from direct talks between Putin and Zelenskyy, which may or may not ultimately involve the U.S., he said.

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"I'm going to put the two of them in a room, and I'll be there or I won't be there, and I think it'll get solved," he said of Putin and Zelenskyy.

Trump said he was "a little disappointed" that Zelenskyy did not immediately agree to cede territory to Russia, which invaded his country in February 2022. Zelenskyy has repeatedly said giving land to Russia was a nonstarter, including after Trump suggested it over the weekend.

"Ukrainians will not gift their land to the occupier," Zelenskyy said in a video address Saturday, according to The New York Times.

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

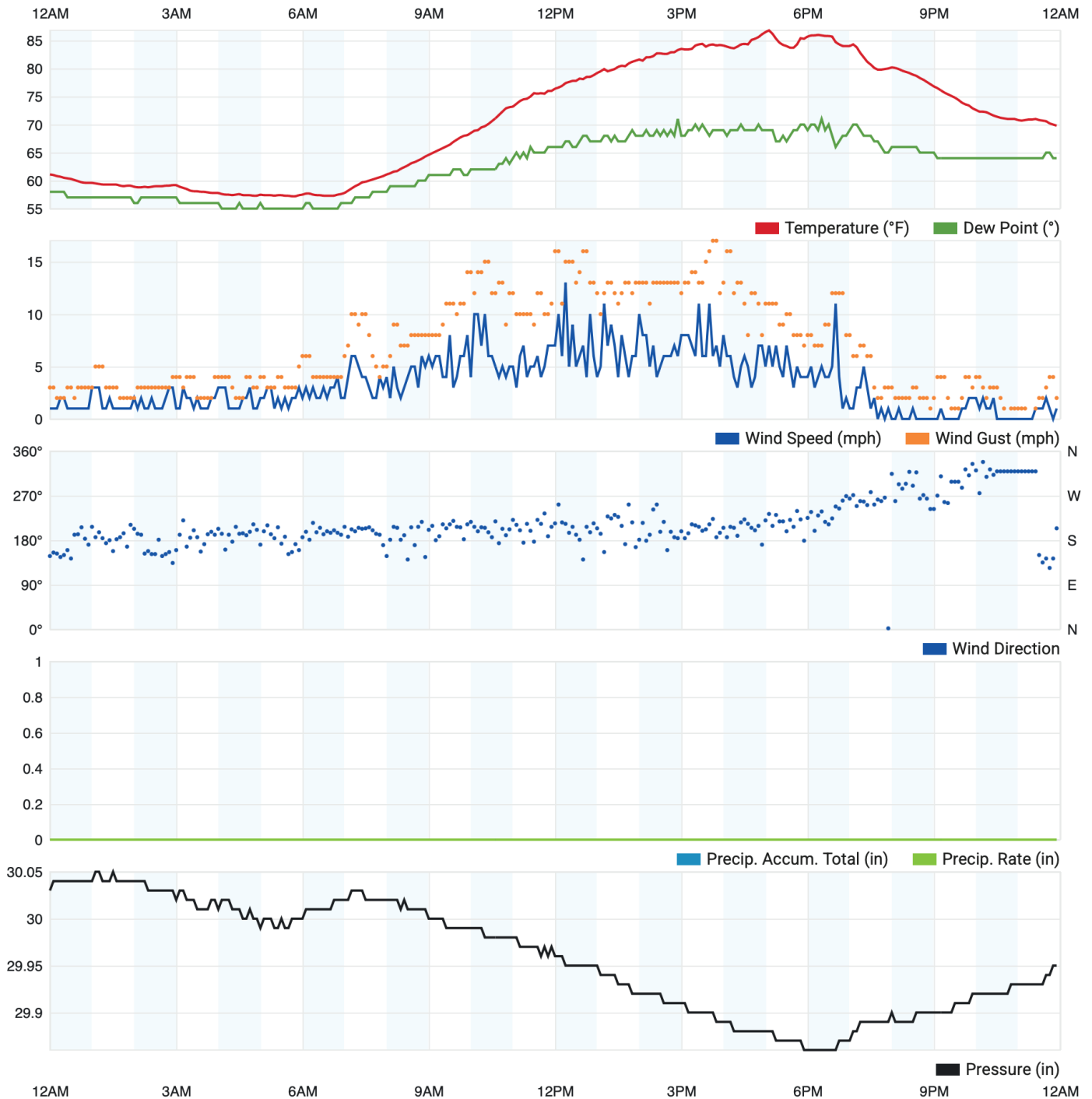
Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 11, 2025



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Today



High: 78 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 56 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 82 °F

Sunny then
Slight Chance
T-storms

Wednesday
Night



Low: 63 °F

Chance
T-storms

Thursday



High: 86 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Sunny

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated To Widely Scattered
Severe Storms Possible

**Wednesday Afternoon
and Evening**

PRIMARY THREATS

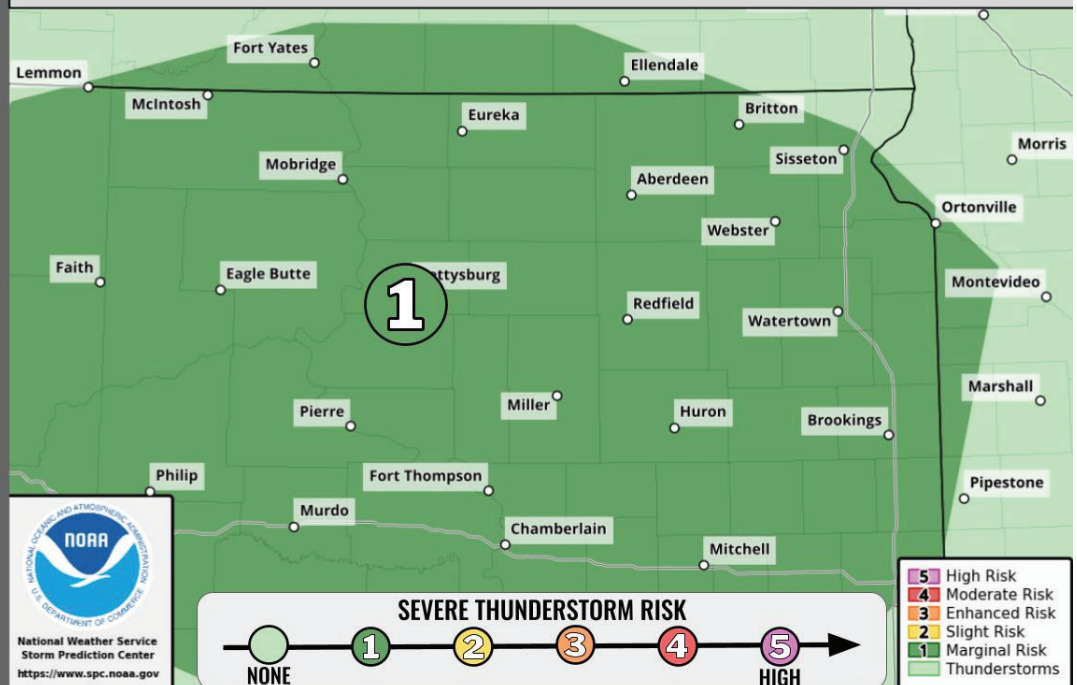


DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS IN
EXCESS OF 60+
MPH



LARGE HAIL

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Wednesday



A Marginal Risk, level 1 of 5, is in effect across the region on Wednesday. Large hail of 1" in diameter or larger and wind gusts of 60 mph or greater will be the main threats. Storms are expected to impact the highlighted area from late Wednesday afternoon through late Wednesday evening.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated to scattered
severe storms *possible*

TIMING

Early Evening into Early
Overnight

PRIMARY THREATS

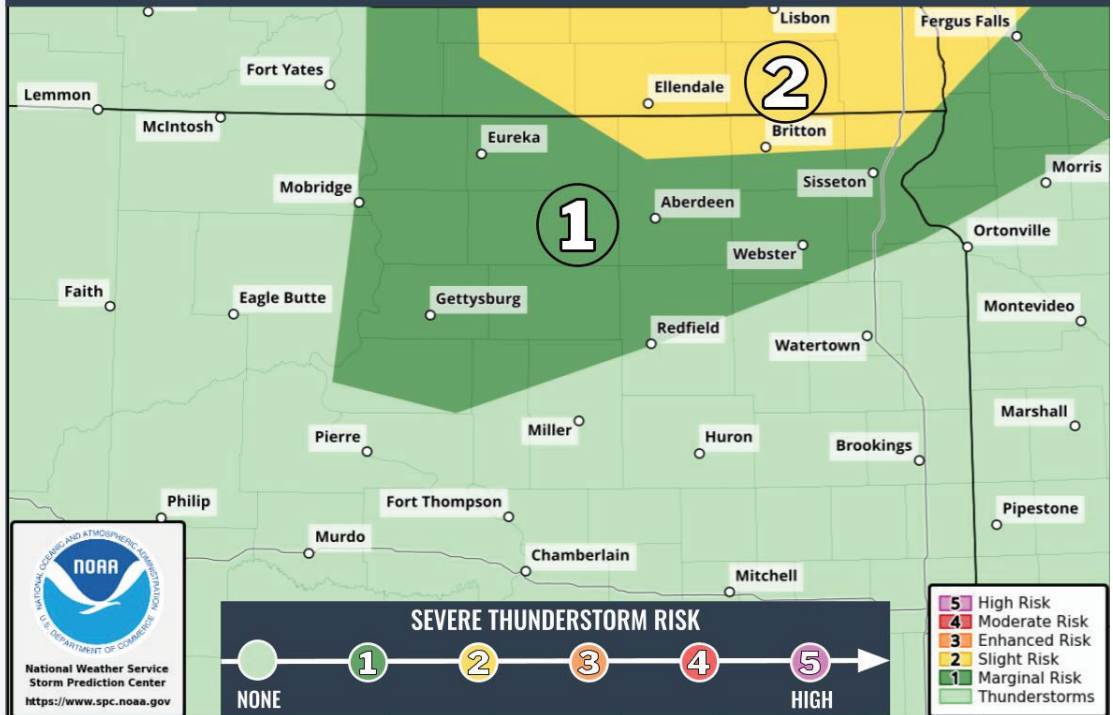
DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS

LARGE HAIL

SECONDARY THREATS

HEAVY
RAINFALL

SEVERE STORMS POSSIBLE THURSDAY



There is a Slight Risk, level 2 of 5, and a Marginal Risk, level 1 of 5, for isolated to scattered severe storms from early Thursday evening into the early overnight hours Thursday night. Damaging wind gusts in excess of 60 mph and large hail over an inch in diameter are the primary threats, along with heavy rainfall potential.

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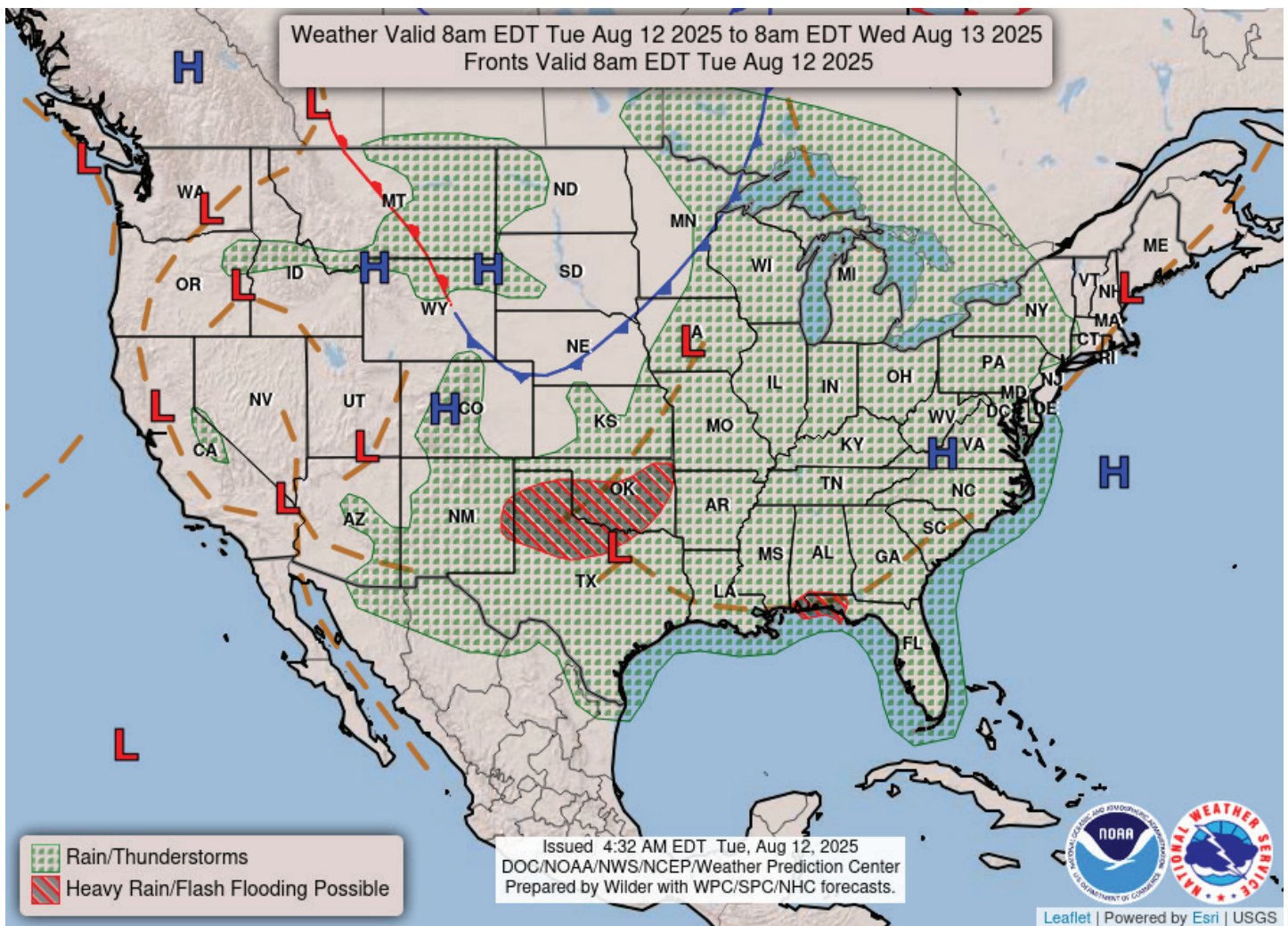
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 5:06 PM
Heat Index: 93 °F at 5:15 PM
Low Temp: 57 °F at 5:36 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 3:44 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 17 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1933
Record Low: 40 in 1898
Average High: 84
Average Low: 58
Average Precip in August.: 0.87
Precip to date in August: 1.43
Average Precip to date: 14.97
Precip Year to Date: 16.49
Sunset Tonight: 8:45:59 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:29:56 am



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Today in Weather History

August 12, 1986: Thunderstorms produced 2.53 inches of rain in twenty minutes in downtown Rapid City. The heavy rain caused street and basement flooding. Golf ball size hail fell in Zeona, in Perkins County, which covered the ground.

1752 - The following is from the Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane, published in 1849. "In the evening there was dismal thunder and lightning, and abundance of rain, and such a hurricane as was never the like in these parts of the world." This hurricane struck Portland, Maine.

1778 - A Rhode Island hurricane prevented an impending British-French sea battle, and caused extensive damage over southeast New England. (David Ludlum)

1933 - The temperature at Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, CA, hit 127 degrees to establish a U.S. record for the month of August. (The Weather Channel)

1936 - The temperature at Seymour, TX, hit 120 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1955 - During the second week of August hurricanes Connie and Diane produced as much as 19 inches of rain in the northeastern U.S. forcing rivers from Virginia to Massachusetts into a high flood. Westfield MA was deluged with 18.15 inches of rain in 24 hours, and at Woonsocket RI the Blackstone River swelled from seventy feet in width to a mile and a half. Connecticut and the Delaware Valley were hardest hit. Total damage in New England was 800 million dollars, and flooding claimed 187 lives. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Early afternoon thunderstorms in Arizona produced 3.90 inches of rain in ninety minutes at Walnut National Monument (located east of Flagstaff), along with three inches of pea size hail, which had to be plowed off the roads. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Fifteen cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Youngstown OH reported twenty-six days of 90 degree weather for the year, a total equal to that for the entire decade of the 1970s. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms were scattered across nearly every state in the Union by late in the day. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Fergus Falls MN, and golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 60 mph at Black Creek WI. In the Chicago area, seven persons at a forest preserve in North Riverside were injured by lightning. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004: Hurricane Charley was the third named storm and the second hurricane of the 2004 Atlantic hurricane season. Charley lasted from August 9 to August 15, and at its peak intensity, it attained 150 mph winds, making it a strong Category 4 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. It made landfall in southwestern Florida at maximum strength, making it the most powerful hurricane to hit the United States since Hurricane Andrew struck Florida in 1992.

2005 - A tornado strikes Wright, Wyoming, a coal-mining community, killing two and destroying 91 homes and damaging about 30 more in around the town.



GOD'S CURE FOR SLEEPLESSNESS

Charles Dickens is considered to be one of the world's greatest novelists and storytellers. One of His most interesting, compelling, and heart-touching stories is: "A Christmas Carol." It is considered to be a "classic."

However, there is an interesting story about him that that few people know. Whenever he left his home to travel and spend the night with his friends, he would take his faithful and dependable compass with him. After looking at his compass and before he retired for the night, he would always turn the head of his bed to the north. He believed that he would sleep deeply and more comfortably with his bed in that position.

David had his own "routine" for falling asleep. He said, "I will lie down in peace and sleep, for you, O Lord, will keep me safe!" The important word in this verse of Scripture is peace. David did not say that he would lie down and sleep in peace. Rather, he believed that the peace that he experienced in his heart is what enabled him to lie down and sleep.

But where does this peace come from? For David, it came from the Lord. David said that God gave him a greater joy than those who had experienced "abundant harvests." The joy and gladness that David experienced and brought peace to his heart came from his relationship with God.

We never find joy, gladness, or peace if we seek them for selfish reasons. But they fill the life of a Christian when we meet Him in prayer, seek Him in His Word, and worship Him faithfully.

Prayer: Father, give us confidence in the promises of Your Word so that we may rest in your love and enjoy Your enduring peace through Christ our Lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I will lie down in peace and sleep, for you, O Lord, will keep me safe. Psalm 4:8

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.08.25

2 6 8 14 49 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$182,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 29 Mins 43
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.11.25

1 9 23 25 42 3

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,100,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 44 Mins
DRAW: 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.11.25

18 22 26 40 46 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 59 Mins 44
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.09.25

12 16 18 30 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$88,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins
DRAW: 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.11.25

9 10 17 29 65 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 28 Mins
DRAW: 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.11.25

6 16 33 40 62 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$526,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 28 Mins
DRAW: 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

08/09/2025 Groton Legion 30th Anniversary Celebration
08/07/2025 Groton Firemen Summer Splash in the GHS Parking Lot 7:30-8:30pm
08/11/2025 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 3:30-6pm
08/23/2025 Glacial Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/06-07/25 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/07/2025 Couples Sunflower Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
09/07/2025 9th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2025 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/15/2025 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving 11:30am-1:30pm Community Center (Thanksgiving)
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

Water supplies not meeting demand in South Dakota's Black Hills region, study says

By BART PFANKUCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

PACTOLA RESERVOIR, S.D. (AP) — Water levels in this major source of drinking water for Rapid City were so low this spring that city leaders implemented water-use restrictions weeks earlier than normal and the state delayed installation of public boat docks.

Lingering drought conditions and low levels of inflow from sources that feed the Pennington County reservoir were the main culprits for the water shortage.

While heavy and consistent rains in July and August have bolstered water levels in Pactola, the spring shortage was a cautionary sign for officials who monitor water availability and for city residents who rely on the water.

Now, in another concerning development, a new in-depth federal hydrology study of the entire Black Hills region indicates that some of the aquifers that supply water to this growing region of western South Dakota are not keeping up with demand.

The study of water availability in six bedrock aquifers in the Black Hills was completed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and published on July 30. The report showed that water use within some of the six "sub-aquifers" in the Black Hills is outpacing the rate at which the aquifers are refilling.

James Jones, a senior project manager with AE2S, an engineering firm that works on water issues in South Dakota, said the portions of the Madison and Minnelusa aquifers that showed water deficiencies were in the most populated and highest growth areas of the Black Hills. Those areas, Jones said, stretched roughly from Box Elder on the east through Rapid City and Summerset to Sturgis on the west.

"We're going to have a much higher population and higher draw on those resources, so we have some concerns because we're already exceeding the recharge rate in those areas," Jones said. "We don't feel that this level of growth and use of the Madison (aquifer) is sustainable."

Report bolsters argument for Missouri pipeline

The new USGS report adds further fuel to ongoing efforts to build a \$2 billion pipeline from the Missouri River to numerous destinations in western South Dakota.

Discussions have taken place for several years on the idea of building a pipeline to bring water to the fast-growing region of western South Dakota anchored by Rapid City and the Black Hills.

The concept picked up steam in late 2019 when the Western Dakota Water Development District received results of a study it commissioned by the South Dakota School of Mines.

The report showed that water availability in the Black Hills region would not meet current demand during a drought and eventually will not need demand in an average rainfall year. The study also concluded that a pipeline from the Missouri River was a valid option.

"Based on current use and water demand projections, the region's ability to provide water during drought conditions without utilizing surface water and groundwater storage is limited and will worsen as population increases," the study concluded. "While expensive and challenging, it is feasible to transport Missouri River water to the Rapid City region."

In response to the findings, the nonprofit Western Dakota Regional Water System (WDRWS) was formed in September 2021 to actively pursue the data, political support and funding to make the pipeline project a reality.

In the spring of 2022, the WDRWS received a big boost in its efforts when the South Dakota Legislature approved \$8 million in grant funding from the American Rescue Plan Act enacted by the Biden administration to develop engineering and feasibility reports.

In each of the following years, championed by state Sen. Helene Duhamel of Rapid City, the system has received another \$1 million to further pursue studies needed to support the project. Last fall, the South

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Dakota congressional delegation proposed measures seeking \$10 million in matching funds to help pay for a full federal feasibility study required by the federal Bureau of Reclamation to get the project started.

Pipeline would serve much of western SD

Kristin Conzet, a former lawmaker from Rapid City who is now director of the WDRWS, said the current proposal is to build a 161-mile, 72-inch diameter pipeline from the Missouri River with a 2,000 foot elevation lift along the way.

In all, 47 municipalities or water systems from Winner to Fort Pierre to Rapid City have signed on as partners in the project and could receive water from the system once operational, she said.

In addition, the nonprofit group is also looking at potential avenues to capture and redistribute groundwater or surface water in the northern and western Black Hills areas that tend to have surplus supplies.

"This is just about proving clean, reliable water in the future" and could take two decades or more of hard work and funding, Conzet told News Watch.

"We're trying to replicate what seven water systems in eastern South Dakota are already doing," she said of the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System that launched in 1990 and will pipe Missouri River water to about 350,000 people in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa.

"If this project was laid out A to Z, under each letter is 100 things that must be done," she said. "I wish we could have a big shiny thing to show people right now. But in order to turn the first shovel of dirt, all these things must get done, in order and correctly."

This story was originally published by South Dakota News Watch and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

Sudan's Rapid Support Forces kill 40 people in North Darfur displacement camp attack

By FATMA KHALED Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces launched attacks Monday in a famine-stricken displacement camp outside of el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur province, killing 40 people, local rights groups said.

The Emergency Response Rooms group working at the Abu Shouk displacement camp said in a statement on Facebook that the RSF — which is at war with the Sudanese military — raided parts of the camp targeting citizens inside their homes. The community activist group, which provides assistance across Sudan, said at least 19 people were also injured.

The Abu Shouk displacement camp outside of el-Fasher, which houses around 450,000 displaced people, has been repeatedly attacked over the course of the war. The Sudanese military has control over el-Fasher despite frequent strikes by the RSF.

Meanwhile, the Resistance Committees in el-Fasher confirmed the attacks, saying on Facebook that the scene "reflected the extent of the horrific violations committed against innocent, defenseless people." The Resistance Committees are a group of local citizens from the community that includes human rights activists.

The Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale University posted satellite imagery showing 40 vehicles present at the Abu Shouk Camp on Monday. In an effort to corroborate reports of the RSF attack, the lab said the vehicles were in the northwest neighborhoods of the camp.

In its report, Yale HRL said it gathered and analyzed photos and footage allegedly "showing RSF shooting at people crawling away from them and berating and using ethnic slurs."

Other satellite imagery gathered Saturday by the group apparently showed the RSF blocking routes that people use to escape el-Fasher by controlling points across the el-Fasher to Kutum road north of the city and an opening in the direction of Mellit, North Darfur.

The civil war in Sudan erupted in April 2023 in the capital Khartoum before spreading across the country following simmering tensions between the RSF and the army. The fighting has killed over 40,000 people,

displaced as many as 12 million and pushed many to the brink of famine. The Abu Shouk camp is one of two camps with strong famine conditions, according to humanitarians.

The Sudanese army said it clashed with RSF fighters on Monday in el-Fasher beginning at around 6 a.m. and ending in the afternoon. It claimed it defeated the paramilitary group, according to its posts on social media.

"Our forces repelled a large-scale attack from several axes by the terrorist militia and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in lives and equipment, as more than 16 combat vehicles were destroyed and burned and 34 vehicles, including armored cars, were captured," the army claimed in a statement.

The RSF said on its Telegram channel late Monday that it made advances in el-Fasher and seized military equipment, without providing further details.

Darfur Gov. Mini Arko Minawi said on Facebook that el-Fasher "triumphed over those who betrayed their land" in an apparent reference to the RSF in Monday's fight.

Meanwhile, in North Kordofan province the RSF has been accused of displacing over 3,000 families from 66 villages due to fighting since early August, according to the Sudan Doctors Network. The group also said the RSF looted the properties of those people and stole their money and livestock. Those displaced ended up arriving at Khartoum and White Nile provinces last week. The recent attacks on the villages in the province killed 18 civilians and injured dozens, according to the latest update by the United Nations.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric warned Monday of the "extreme dire situation" in Sudan, while Edem Wosornum, the operations and advocacy director at the U.N.'s humanitarian affairs agency, sounded the alarm over the situation in el-Fasher, saying over 60 people died from malnutrition in only one week, mostly women and children.

EU leaders appeal to Trump to defend Europe's security interests at his war summit with Putin

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union leaders appealed on Tuesday to U.S. President Donald Trump to defend their security interests at a key summit with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin later this week over the war in Ukraine.

The Europeans are desperate to exert some influence over a Friday meeting that they have been sidelined from. It remains unclear whether even Ukraine will take part. Trump has said that he wants to see whether Putin is serious about ending the war, now in its fourth year.

But Trump has disappointed U.S. allies in Europe by saying that Ukraine will have to give up some Russian-held territory. He also said that Russia must accept land swaps, although it remains unclear what Putin might be expected to surrender.

The Europeans and Ukraine are wary that Putin, who has waged the biggest land war in Europe since 1945 and used Russia's energy might to try to cow the EU, might secure favorable concessions and set the outlines of a peace deal without them.

The overarching fear for European countries is that Putin will set his sights on one of them next if he wins in Ukraine.

In a statement early on Tuesday, the leaders said that they "welcome the efforts of President Trump towards ending Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine." But, they underlined, "the path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine."

"A just and lasting peace that brings stability and security must respect international law, including the principles of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and that international borders must not be changed by force," they said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has rejected the idea that Ukraine must commit to give up land to secure a ceasefire. Russia holds shaky control over four of the country's regions, two in the country's east and two in the south.

In Ukraine, a Russian missile attack on a Ukrainian military training facility left one soldier dead and 11

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others wounded, the Ukrainian Ground Forces posted on Telegram. Soldiers rushing to shelters were hit with cluster munitions, according to the Ukrainian Ground Forces.

Meanwhile, Russia appeared to be on the verge of taking an important city in the Donetsk region, as its forces were reported to be rapidly infiltrating positions north of Pokrovsk.

Military analysts using open source information to monitor the battles say the next 24-48 hours could be critical. Losing Pokrovsk would hand Russia an important battlefield victory ahead of the summit. It would also complicate Ukrainian supply lines to the Donetsk region, where the Kremlin has focused the bulk of its military efforts.

"A lot will depend on availability, quantity and quality of Ukrainian reserves," Pasi Paroinen, an analyst with the Finland-based Black Bird Group, wrote in a post on X late Monday.

On Monday, Trump repeated that "there'll be some land swapping going on." He said that this would involve "some bad stuff for both" Ukraine and Russia. His public rehabilitation of Putin — a pariah in most of Europe — has unnerved Ukraine's backers.

Trump was also critical of Zelenskyy, noting that Ukraine's leader had been in power for the duration of the war and said "nothing happened" during that time. He contrasted that with Putin, who has wielded power unchallenged in Russia for decades.

It's unclear whether the Europeans were unsettled by Trump's assertion that he would be traveling to Russia on Friday to meet Putin. The summit is taking place in the U.S. state of Alaska, which was colonized by Russia in the 18th century until Czar Alexander II sold it to the U.S. in a land deal in 1867.

The Europeans will make a fresh attempt to rally Trump to Ukraine's cause on Wednesday at virtual meetings convened by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Trump did not confirm whether he would take part, but he did say: "I'm going to get everybody's ideas" before meeting with Putin.

Tuesday's statement was also meant to be a demonstration of European unity. But Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is Putin's closest ally in Europe and has tried to block EU support for Ukraine, did not endorse it. He was the only one of the bloc's 27 leaders who refused to do so.

Asian shares advance on relief that Trump is delaying higher China tariffs

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares mostly advanced Tuesday after President Donald Trump delayed raising tariffs on China for another 90 days.

Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 jumped 2.2% to 42,718.17, topping its past all-time record. Toyota Motor Corp.'s shares surged nearly 3% and other heavyweight shares also saw big gains after the U.S. confirmed that tariffs on imports from Japan would be taxed at 15% and not subject to "stacking" the rate on top of already existing duties.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.3% to 24,979.55, while the Shanghai Composite climbed 0.5% to 3,665.92.

Trump signed an executive order Monday putting on hold a possible showdown between the world's two major economies to allow time for more talks on a broad trade agreement. Without an extension, taxes on Chinese imports might have jumped from an already high 30%.

Beijing could have responded by raising retaliatory levies on U.S. exports to China but it issued a similar statement about the extension of the tariff pause.

The reprieve makes room for a possible deal with Trump, but it also prolongs the uncertainty that has bedeviled companies since the president began escalating his trade war.

"The extension isn't about goodwill; it's about keeping oxygen in the room for deals that matter," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

Elsewhere in Asia, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.3% to 8,880.80. South Korea's Kospi lost 0.5% to 3,189.91.

On Monday, U.S. stocks edged back from their record highs ahead of an update on U.S. inflation. The S&P 500 dipped 0.3% to 6,373.45 after flirting with its all-time high, which was set two weeks ago.

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The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.5% to 43,975.09, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.3% to 21,385.40.

On Tuesday, the government will report how bad inflation was across the country in July. Economists expect it to show U.S. consumers had to pay prices for groceries, gasoline and other costs of living that were 2.8% higher than a year earlier, a slight acceleration from June's 2.7% inflation.

Inflation has remained above 2%, even if it has improved substantially from its peak above 9% three years ago. And the worry is that President Donald Trump's tariffs could push prices still higher.

That in turn is raising fears about a potential, worst-case scenario called "stagflation" where the economy stagnates but inflation remains high. The Federal Reserve has no good tool to fix both at once, and it would need to concentrate on either the job market or inflation first. But helping one of those areas by moving interest rates would likely hurt the other.

A top Fed official, Michelle Bowman, said on Saturday that she believes the job market is the bigger concern. She is still backing three cuts to interest rates by the Fed this year following this month's stunning, weaker-than-expected report on the U.S. job market. Trump has also been angrily calling for cuts to interest rates to support the economy.

Other Fed officials, led by Chair Jerome Powell, have been more hesitant. Powell has said he wants to wait for more data about how Trump's tariffs are affecting inflation before the Fed makes its next move, and Tuesday's update on the consumer price index may offer a big clue about that.

The price of gold eased after Trump said he would not place tariffs on the metal. That followed a brouhaha Friday in the gold market after the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol seemed to rule that some kinds of gold bars coming from Switzerland would face a tariff. That caused a disconnect between the prices of gold trading in New York versus in London, but the market has since calmed.

Gold for December delivery settled at \$3,404.70 per ounce in New York, down 2.5%. Early Tuesday, it was down 0.3% at \$3,394.00.

In other dealings early Tuesday, benchmark U.S. crude rose 12 cents to \$64.08 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added 19 cents to \$66.82 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 148.33 Japanese yen from 148.15 yen. The euro cost \$1.1614, down from \$1.1618.

Taylor Swift announces 12th studio album, 'The Life of a Showgirl'

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Look what you made her do — Taylor Swift has announced her 12th studio album, "The Life of a Showgirl."

Swift announced the album on her website shortly after a countdown timer expired at 12:12 a.m. Tuesday. No release date was announced, but her site said vinyl editions of the album would ship before Oct. 13.

Fans have long theorized that Swift's 12th album would soon arrive. On Monday, Taylor Nation — an official branch of the pop superstar's marketing team — posted a TikTok slide show of 12 images with the caption "Thinking about when she said 'See you next era...'" Swift is seen wearing orange in every image.

A special limited vinyl edition of the album will be released in "Portofino orange glitter," according to a pre-order page on her site. A special cassette edition is also available for pre-order.

Sensing a pattern, eagle-eyed fans noticed that 12 minutes earlier, the popular "New Heights" podcast posted a tease for Wednesday. The show, hosted by Swift's boyfriend and Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce alongside his brother, former Eagles center Jason Kelce, posted an orange image on social media with a mysterious silhouette, many believing to be Swift.

The podcast announced early Tuesday that Swift would appear on "New Heights" and a teaser video posted about her appearance showed her pulling the album from a briefcase. The actual album artwork, just as it is on her website, is blurred.

"The Life of a Showgirl" follows last year's "The Tortured Poets Department," announced during the 2024 Grammys and released during her record-breaking tour, which raked in over \$2.2 billion across two years

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and five continents, making it the highest-grossing tour of all time.

The album is also her first release since Swift regained control over her entire body of work. In May, that pop star said she purchased her catalog of recordings — originally released through Big Machine Records — from their most recent owner, the private equity firm Shamrock Capital. She did not disclose the amount.

In recent years, Swift has been rerecording and releasing her first six albums in an attempt to regain control of her music. The project was instigated by Hybe America CEO Scooter Braun's purchase and sale of her early catalog and represents Swift's effort to control her own songs and how they're used. Previous "Taylor's Version" releases have been more than conventional re-recordings, arriving with new "from the vault" music, Easter eggs and visuals that deepen understanding of her work.

So far, there have been four rerecorded albums, beginning with "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" and "Red (Taylor's Version)" in 2021. All four have been massive commercial and cultural successes, each one debuting at No. 1 on the Billboard 200.

Swift's last rerecording, "1989 (Taylor's Version)," arrived in October 2023, just four months after the release of "Speak Now (Taylor's Version)." That was the same year Swift claimed the record for the woman with the most No. 1 albums in history.

US and China extend trade truce another 90 days, easing tension between world's largest economies

By PAUL WISEMAN and DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump extended a trade truce with China for another 90 days Monday, at least delaying once again a dangerous showdown between the world's two biggest economies.

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that he signed the executive order for the extension, and that "all other elements of the Agreement will remain the same." Beijing at the same time also announced the extension of the tariff pause, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The previous deadline was set to expire at 12:01 a.m. Tuesday. Had that happened the U.S. could have ratcheted up taxes on Chinese imports from an already high 30%, and Beijing could have responded by raising retaliatory levies on U.S. exports to China.

The pause buys time for the two countries to work out some of their differences, perhaps clearing the way for a summit later this year between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, and it has been welcomed by the U.S. companies doing business with China.

Sean Stein, president of the U.S.-China Business Council, said the extension is "critical" to give the two governments time to negotiate a trade agreement that U.S. businesses hope would improve their market access in China and provide the certainty needed for companies to make medium- and long-term plans.

"Securing an agreement on fentanyl that leads to a reduction in U.S. tariffs and a rollback of China's retaliatory measures is acutely needed to restart U.S. agriculture and energy exports," Stein said.

China said Tuesday it would extend relief to American companies who were placed on an export control list and an unreliable entities list. After Trump initially announced tariffs in April, China restricted exports of dual-use goods to some American companies, while banning others from trading or investing in China. The Ministry of Commerce said it would stop those restrictions for some companies, while giving others another 90-day extension.

Reaching a pact with China remains unfinished business for Trump, who has already upended the global trading system by slapping double-digit taxes — tariffs — on almost every country on earth.

The European Union, Japan and other trading partners agreed to lopsided trade deals with Trump, accepting once unthinkable U.S. high tariffs (15% on Japanese and EU imports, for instance) to ward off something worse.

Trump's trade policies have turned the United States from one of the most open economies in the world into a protectionist fortress. The average U.S. tariff has gone from around 2.5% at the start of the year to 18.6%, highest since 1933, according to the Budget Lab at Yale University.

But China tested the limits of a U.S. trade policy built around using tariffs as a cudgel to beat concessions

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out of trading partners. Beijing had a cudgel of its own: cutting off or slowing access to its rare earths minerals and magnets – used in everything from electric vehicles to jet engines.

In June, the two countries reached an agreement to ease tensions. The United States said it would pull back export restrictions on computer chip technology and ethane, a feedstock in petrochemical production. And China agreed to make it easier for U.S. firms to get access to rare earths.

“The U.S. has realized it does not have the upper hand,” said Claire Reade, senior counsel at Arnold & Porter and former assistant U.S. trade representative for China affairs.

In May, the U.S. and China had averted an economic catastrophe by reducing massive tariffs they’d slapped on each other’s products, which had reached as high as 145% against China and 125% against the U.S.

Those triple-digit tariffs threatened to effectively end trade between the United States and China and caused a frightening sell-off in financial markets. In a May meeting in Geneva they agreed to back off and keep talking: America’s tariffs went back down to a still-high 30% and China’s to 10%.

Having demonstrated their ability to hurt each other, they’ve been talking ever since.

“By overestimating the ability of steep tariffs to induce economic concessions from China, the Trump administration has not only underscored the limits of unilateral U.S. leverage, but also given Beijing grounds for believing that it can indefinitely enjoy the upper hand in subsequent talks with Washington by threatening to curtail rare earth exports,” said Ali Wyne, a specialist in U.S.-China relations at the International Crisis Group. “The administration’s desire for a trade détente stems from the self-inflicted consequences of its earlier hubris.”

It’s unclear whether Washington and Beijing can reach a grand bargain over America’s biggest grievances. Among these are lax Chinese protection of intellectual property rights and Beijing’s subsidies and other industrial policies that, the Americans say, give Chinese firms an unfair advantage in world markets and have contributed to a massive U.S. trade deficit with China of \$262 billion last year.

Reade doesn’t expect much beyond limited agreements such as the Chinese saying they will buy more American soybeans and promising to do more to stop the flow of chemicals used to make fentanyl and to allow the continued flow of rare-earth magnets.

But the tougher issues will likely linger, and “the trade war will continue grinding ahead for years into the future,” said Jeff Moon, a former U.S. diplomat and trade official who now runs the China Moon Strategies consultancy.

Trump’s Washington police takeover echoes history of racist narratives about urban crime

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has taken control of the District of Columbia’s law enforcement and ordered National Guard troops to deploy onto the streets of the nation’s capital, arguing the extraordinary moves are in response to an urgent public safety crisis.

Even as district officials questioned the claims underlying his emergency declaration, the president promised a “historic action to rescue our nation’s capital from crime, bloodshed, bedlam and squalor and worse.” His rhetoric echoed that used by conservative politicians going back decades who have denounced American cities, especially those with majority non-white populations or led by progressive politicians, as lawless or crime-ridden and in need of outside intervention.

“This is liberation day in D.C., and we’re going to take our capital back,” Trump promised Monday.

Trump’s action echoes uncomfortable historical chapters

But for many residents, the prospect of federal troops surging into the district’s neighborhoods represents an alarming violation of local agency. To some, it echoes uncomfortable historical chapters when politicians used language to paint historically or predominantly Black cities and neighborhoods with racist narratives to shape public opinion and justify aggressive police action.

April Goggans, a longtime Washington resident and grassroots organizer, said she was not surprised by Trump’s actions. Communities had been preparing for a potential federal crackdown in the district since

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the summer of 2020, when Trump deployed National Guard troops during racial justice protests after the murder of George Floyd.

"We have to be vigilant," said Goggans, who has coordinated protests and local civil liberties educational campaigns for nearly a decade. She worries about what a surge in law enforcement could mean for residents' freedoms.

"Regardless of where you fall on the political scale, understand that this could be you, your children, your grandmother, your co-worker who are brutalized or have certain rights violated," she said.

Uncertainty about what's a safe environment raises alarms

According to White House officials, National Guard troops will be deployed to protect federal assets in the district and facilitate a safe environment for law enforcement to make arrests. The administration believes the highly visible presence of law enforcement will deter violent crime.

It is unclear how the administration defines providing a safe environment for law enforcement to conduct arrests, raising alarm bells for some local advocates.

"The president foreshadowed that if these heavy-handed tactics take root here, they will be rolled out to other majority-Black and Brown cities, like Chicago, Oakland and Baltimore, across the country," said Monica Hopkins, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union's D.C. chapter.

"We've seen before how federal control of the D.C. National Guard and police can lead to abuse, intimidation and civil rights violations — from military helicopters swooping over peaceful racial justice protesters in 2020 to the unchecked conduct of federal officers who remain shielded from full accountability," Hopkins said.

A history of denigrating language

Conservative lawmakers have for generations used denigrating language to describe the condition of major American cities and called for greater law enforcement, often in response to changing demographics in those cities driven by nonwhite populations relocating in search of work or safety from racial discrimination and state violence. Republicans have called for greater police crackdowns in cities since at least the 1965 Watts Riots in Los Angeles.

President Richard Nixon won the White House in 1968 after campaigning on a "law and order" agenda to appeal to white voters in northern cities alongside overtures to white Southerners as part of his "Southern Strategy." Ronald Reagan similarly won both his presidential elections after campaigning heavily on law and order politics. Politicians ranging from former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani to former President Bill Clinton have cited the need to tamp down crime as a reason to seize power from cities like Washington for decades.

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser called Trump's takeover of the local police force "unsettling" but not without precedent. The mayor kept a mostly measured tone during a Monday news conference following Trump's announcement but decried the president's reasoning as a "so-called emergency" and said the district's residents "know that access to our democracy is tenuous."

Trump threatened to "take over" and "beautify" the nation's capital on the campaign trail and claimed the district was "a nightmare of murder and crime." He also argued the city was "horribly run" and said his team intended "to take it away from the mayor." The president repeated comments he'd previously made about some of the nation's largest cities during his news conference, including Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, California, and his hometown of New York City. All are currently run by Black mayors.

"You look at Chicago, how bad it is. You look at Los Angeles, how bad it is. We have other cities in a very bad, New York is a problem. And then you have, of course, Baltimore and Oakland. We don't even mention that anymore. They're so far gone. We're not going to let it happen," he said.

Civil rights advocates see the president's rhetoric as part of a broader political strategy.

"It's a playbook he's used in the past," said Maya Wiley, CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

The president's rhetoric "paints a picture that crime is out of control, even when it is not true, then blames the policies of Democratic lawmakers that are reform- and public safety-minded, and then claims that you have to step in and violate people's rights or demand that reforms be reversed," Wiley said.

She added that the playbook has special potency in the capital because the district's local law enforcement can be directly placed under federal control, a power Trump invoked in his announcement.

Civil rights leaders denounce DC order as unjustified distraction

Trump's actions in Washington and comments about other major American cities sent shock waves across the country, as other cities prepare to respond to potential federal action.

Democratic Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said Trump's plan "lacks seriousness and is deeply dangerous" in a statement and pointed to a 30-year-low crime rate in Baltimore as a reason the administration should consult local leaders rather than antagonize them. In Oakland, Mayor Barbara Lee called Trump's characterization of the city "fearmongering."

The administration already faced a major flashpoint between local control and federal power earlier in the summer, when Trump deployed National Guard troops to quell protests and support immigration enforcement operations in Los Angeles despite opposition from California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass.

Civil rights leaders have denounced Trump's action in Washington as an unjustified distraction.

"This president campaigned on 'law and order,' but he is the president of chaos and corruption," said NAACP President Derrick Johnson. "There's no emergency in D.C., so why would he deploy the National Guard? To distract us from his alleged inclusion in the Epstein files? To rid the city of unhoused people? D.C. has the right to govern itself. It doesn't need this federal coup."

Federal becomes local: The nation's capital finds itself at the center of a Donald Trump maelstrom

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The questions came fast to the mayor of the nation's capital, many of them designed to get her to say something harsh about Donald Trump — in particular, the president's freshly announced plan to take over the Metropolitan Police Department and call in the National Guard.

But on Monday afternoon, for the most part, third-term Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser didn't take the bait. She calmly laid out the city's case that crime has been dropping steadily and said Trump's perceived state of emergency simply doesn't match the numbers.

She also flatly stated that the capital city's hands are tied and that her administration has little choice but to comply. "We could contest that," she said of Trump's definition of a crime emergency, "but his authority is pretty broad."

Her comments came hours after Trump, flanked by the people who oversee the military and the Justice Department, said he would be taking over Washington's police department and activating 800 members of the National Guard in the hopes of reducing crime — the same crime that city officials stress is already falling noticeably.

Toward the end, the mayoral composure slipped a bit when Bowser made a reference to Trump's "so-called emergency" and concluded, "I'm going to work every day to make sure it's not a complete disaster."

The city and Trump have had a bumpy relationship

While Trump invokes his plan by saying that "we're going to take our capital back," Bowser and the MPD maintain that violent crime overall in Washington has decreased to a 30-year low after a sharp rise in 2023. Carjackings, for example, dropped about 50% in 2024, and are down again this year. More than half of those arrested, however, are juveniles, and the extent of those punishments is a point of contention for the Trump administration.

Bowser spent much of the Trump's first term in office openly sparring with the president. She fended off his initial plans for a military parade through the streets and stood in public opposition when he called in a multi-agency flood of federal law enforcement to confront anti-police brutality protesters in summer 2020. She later had the words "Black Lives Matter" painted in giant yellow letters on the street about a block from the White House.

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In Trump's second term, backed by Republican control of both houses of Congress, Bowser has walked a public tightrope for months, emphasizing common ground with the Trump administration on issues such as the successful effort to bring the NFL's Washington Commanders back to the District of Columbia.

She watched with open concern for the city streets as Trump finally got his military parade this summer. Her decision to dismantle Black Lives Matter Plaza earlier this year served as a neat metaphor for just how much the power dynamics between the two executives had evolved.

Now that fraught relationship enters uncharted territory as Trump has followed through on months of what many D.C. officials had quietly hoped were empty threats. The new standoff has cast Bowser in a sympathetic light, even among her longtime critics.

"It's a power play and we're an easy target," said Clinique Chapman, CEO of the D.C. Justice Lab. A frequent critic of Bowser, whom she accuses of "over policing our youth" with the recent expansions of Washington's youth curfew, Chapman said Trump's latest move "is not about creating a safer D.C. It's just about power."

Where the power actually lies

Bowser contends that all of the power resides with Trump, and her administration can do little other than comply and make the best of it. The native Washingtonian spent much of Monday's press conference tying Trump's takeover to the larger issue of statehood for the District of Columbia. As long as Washington D.C., remains a federal enclave with limited autonomy under the 1973 Home Rule Act, she said it will remain vulnerable to such takeovers.

"We know that access to our democracy is tenuous," Bowser said. "That is why you have heard me, and many many Washingtonians before me, advocate for full statehood for the District of Columbia."

Section 740 of the Home Rule Act allows the president to take over Washington's police for 48 hours, with possible extensions to 30 days, during times of emergencies. No president has done so before, said Monica Hopkins, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union's D.C. chapter.

"That should alarm everyone," she said, "not just in Washington."

For Trump, the effort to take over public safety in Washington reflects an escalation of his aggressive approach to law enforcement. The District of Columbia's status as a congressionally established federal district gives him a unique opportunity to push his tough-on-crime agenda, though he has not proposed solutions to the root causes of homelessness or crime.

"Let me be crystal clear," Attorney General Pam Bondi said during Trump's announcement news conference. "Crime in D.C.," she asserted, "is ending and ending today."

The action fits a presidential pattern

Trump's declaration of a state of emergency fits the general pattern of his second term in office: He has declared states of emergency on issues ranging from border protection to economic tariffs, enabling him to essentially rule via executive order. In many cases, he has moved forward while the courts sorted them out.

Bowser's claims about successfully driving down violent crime rates received backing earlier this year from an unlikely source. Ed Martin, Trump's original choice for U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, issued a press release in April hailing a 25% drop in violent crime rates from the previous year.

"Thanks to the leadership of President Trump and the efforts of our 'Make D.C. Safe Again' initiative, the District has seen a significant decline in violent crime," Martin said. "We are proving that strong enforcement, and smart policies can make our communities safer."

In May, Trump abandoned his efforts to get Martin confirmed for the post in the face of opposition in Congress. His replacement candidate, former judge and former Fox News host Jeanine Pirro, was recently confirmed. On Monday, Pirro — standing next to Trump — called his takeover "the step that we need right now to make criminals understand that they are not going to get away with it anymore."

Explosion at US Steel plant in Pennsylvania leaves 2 dead, 10 injured

By MARC LEVY, GENE PUSKAR, MICHAEL CASEY and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

CLAIRTON, Pa. (AP) — An explosion at a U.S. Steel plant near Pittsburgh left two dead and sent at least 10 to hospitals Monday and heavily damaged the sprawling facility, officials said.

One worker was found alive in the wreckage hours after the explosion sent black smoke spiraling into the midday sky in the Mon Valley, a region of the state synonymous with steel for more than a century. Allegheny County Emergency Services said a fire at the plant started around 10:51 a.m.

The explosion, followed by several smaller blasts, could be felt in the nearby community and prompted county officials to warn residents to stay away from the scene so emergency workers could respond.

"It felt like thunder," Zachary Buday, a construction worker near the scene, told WTAE-TV. "Shook the scaffold, shook my chest, and shook the building, and then when we saw the dark smoke coming up from the steel mill and put two and two together, and it's like something bad happened."

Cause under investigation

At a news conference, Scott Buckiso, U.S. Steel's chief manufacturing officer, did not give details about the damage or casualties, and said they were still trying to determine what happened. U.S. Steel employees "did a great job" of going in and rescuing workers, shutting down gases and making sure the site was stable.

Buckiso said the company, now a subsidiary of Japan-based Nippon Steel Corp., is working with authorities U.S. Steel CEO David B. Burritt said the company would thoroughly investigate the cause.

"I end every meeting and every message with the words, 'Let's get back to work safely.' That commitment has never been more important, and we will honor it," he said in a statement.

Allegheny Health Network said it treated seven patients from the plant, and discharged five within a few hours. University of Pittsburgh Medical Center said it is treating three patients at UPMC Mercy, the region's only level one trauma and burn center.

Clairton resident Amy Sowers was sitting on her porch, located less than a mile from the plant, and felt her house shake from the blast.

"I could see smoke from my driveway," she said. "We heard ambulances and fire trucks from every direction."

Sowers, 49, decided to leave the area after she said she smelled a faint smell in the air. Sowers, who grew up in Clairton, has seen several incidents at the plant over the years. Despite health concerns, Sowers said many residents cannot afford to leave.

A maintenance worker was killed in an explosion at the plant in September 2009. In July 2010, another explosion injured 14 employees and six contractors. According to online OSHA records of workplace fatalities, the last death at the plant was in 2014, when a worker was burned and died after falling into a trench.

After the 2010 explosion, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined U.S. Steel and a subcontractor \$175,000 for safety violations. U.S. Steel appealed its citations and \$143,500 in fines, which were later reduced under a settlement agreement.

"Lives were lost again," Sowers said. "How many more lives are going to have to be lost until something happens?"

The Clairton coking plant continued to operate after the explosion, although two batteries that were the site of the explosion were shut down, officials said.

Air quality concerns and health warnings

The plant, a massive industrial facility along the Monongahela River south of Pittsburgh, is considered the largest coking operation in North America and is one of four major U.S. Steel plants in Pennsylvania.

The plant converts coal to coke, a key component in the steel-making process. To make coke, coal is baked in special ovens for hours at high temperatures to remove impurities that could otherwise weaken steel. The process creates what's known as coke gas — made up of a lethal mix of methane, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide.

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Clairton Mayor Richard Lattanzi said his heart goes out to the victims of Monday's explosion.

"The mill is such a big part of Clairton," he said. "It's just a sad day for Clairton."

The Allegheny County Health Department said it lifted an advisory it issued earlier in the day telling residents within 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) of the plant to remain indoors and close all windows and doors. It said its monitors have not detected levels of soot or sulfur dioxide above federal standards.

According to the company, the plant has approximately 1,400 workers.

The plant has a long history of pollution concerns

In recent years, the Clairton plant has been dogged by concerns about pollution.

In 2019, it agreed to settle an air pollution lawsuit for \$8.5 million. Five years later, the company agreed to spend \$19.5 million in equipment upgrades and \$5 million on local clean air efforts and programs as part of settling a federal lawsuit filed by Clean Air Council and PennEnvironment and the Allegheny County Health Department.

The lawsuit stemmed from a Christmas Eve fire in 2018 that caused \$40 million in damage. The fire damaged pollution control equipment and led to repeated releases of sulfur dioxide, according to a lawsuit. In the wake of the fire, Allegheny County warned residents to limit outdoor activities, with residents saying for weeks afterward that the air felt acidic, smelled like rotten eggs and was hard to breathe.

Dr. Deborah Gentile, the medical director of Community Partners in Asthma Care, studied asthma levels after the fire and found twice as many patients sought medical treatment. One of her colleagues found patients living near the plant had increased symptoms of asthma, including coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath.

News of the latest explosion had Gentile questioning how well the facility was being maintained.

"I'm very concerned that they aren't keeping their equipment up to date and in shape," she said.

In February, a problem with a battery at the plant led to a "buildup of combustible material" that ignited, causing an audible "boom," officials said. Two workers received first aid treatment at a local hospital but were not seriously injured.

Environmental group calls for an investigation

David Masur, executive director of PennEnvironment, an environmental group that has sued U.S. Steel over pollution, said there needed to be "a full, independent investigation into the causes of this latest catastrophe and a re-evaluation as to whether the Clairton plant is fit to keep operating."

In June, U.S. Steel and Nippon Steel announced they had finalized a "historic partnership," a deal that gives the U.S. government a say in some matters and comes a year and a half after the Japanese company first proposed its nearly \$15 billion buyout of the iconic American steelmaker.

The pursuit by Nippon Steel for the Pittsburgh-based company was buffeted by national security concerns and presidential politics in a premier battleground state, dragging out the transaction for more than a year after U.S. Steel shareholders approved it.

Shooter kills 3 in a Target parking lot in Austin, Texas, before being captured, police say

By NADIA LATHAN Associated Press/Report for America

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A gunman opened fire Monday in the parking lot of a Target store in Texas' capital, killing two adults and a child before stealing two cars during a getaway that ended with police using a Taser to detain him on the other side of the city, authorities said.

Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis said the suspect is a man in his 30s with "a mental health history." Police said they were still working to determine a motive.

The suspect fled the scene in a stolen car, wrecked that car and then stole another from a dealership, Davis said. He was captured about 20 miles (32 kilometers) away, in south Austin, where he was taken into custody, she said during a news conference.

Davis said officers responding to a call at about 2:15 p.m. found three people shot in the Target parking lot. Davis said they believe one of the people who was shot was the owner of the car stolen from the

store's parking lot.

An adult and child were pronounced dead at the scene, while another adult died after being taken to the hospital, according to Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services. EMS officials said a fourth person was treated for a minor medical complaint not related to traumatic injuries.

"This is a very sad day for Austin. It's a very sad day for us all and my condolences go out to the families," Davis said. She said she had no information to release about the victims.

Lonnie Lee, 22, said she had visited the Target with her sister just a couple of hours earlier before they left to get lunch with their grandparents. When they returned to the area to continue shopping, she said they were shocked to see the parking lot was cordoned off and filled with police.

"We got really, really lucky," Lee said. "And some people didn't."

The shooting came amid back-to-school shopping ahead of the upcoming academic year.

Target said in a statement that they were "devastated" by what happened, and that they would be providing grief counseling to their team.

"Our hearts are with the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives, our team in Austin and all those impacted by this tragedy," the statement said.

Austin Mayor Kirk Watson said in a message on X that his "heart is with the victims and their families" and that "while this remains an active and ongoing investigation, what I'll say is that this was a sickening, cowardly act of gun violence."

At a Jiffy Lube that shares its parking lot with the Target, employees hunkered down and locked the store doors as soon as they became aware a shooting was taking place. Paul Smith, an employee at the auto store, said he saw people running from their cars in the parking lot in a panic.

"I had just gotten back from the Target like a minute before," Smith said.

The Target shooting comes just over two weeks after an attack at a Walmart store in Michigan. A man accused of stabbing 11 people at the Traverse City store on July 26 has been charged with terrorism and multiple counts of attempted murder.

Israeli strikes kill journalists and aid-seekers as Australia backs Palestinian statehood

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAM METZ and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli forces killed at least 55 people across the Gaza Strip overnight and into Monday, including a well-known journalist Israel said was a militant as well as people seeking humanitarian aid, according to local health officials.

Hospital officials reported at least 34 people were killed on Monday, not including journalists who were slain in a tent shortly before midnight.

More than 15 people were killed while waiting for aid at the Zikim crossing in northern Gaza, said Fares Awad, head of the ambulance services in northern Gaza.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to questions about the deaths. Earlier on Monday, it said air and artillery units were operating in northern Gaza and in Khan Younis, where resident Noha Abu Shamala told The Associated Press that two drone strikes killed a family of seven in their apartment.

A dozen more people killed seeking aid

Among the dead were at least 12 aid seekers killed by Israeli gunfire while trying to reach distribution points, or awaiting aid convoys, according to officials at two hospitals and witnesses.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society said its Saraya Field Hospital received about 30 injured from the Zikim area. Al-Shifa hospital received five bodies and over 70 wounded, said Mohamed Abu Selmiya, the hospital's director.

Relatives said casualties included children and an infant. Witnesses to gunfire near the Morag corridor said they saw barrages of bullets and later dead bodies, describing the grim scene as a near-daily occurrence.

The AP spoke to five witnesses who were among the crowds in central Gaza, the Teina area and the

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Morag corridor. All said that Israeli forces had fired toward the crowds.

"The occupation (forces) targeted us, as they do every day," said Hussain Matter, a displaced father of two who was in the Morag corridor. "Out of nowhere, you find bullets from everywhere."

Ahmed Atta said he helped carry a wounded man from the Teina area who had been shot in his shoulder and was bleeding. "It's a pattern," Atta said of the Israeli gunfire toward aid seekers.

Aid seekers were killed from 3 kilometers (nearly 2 miles) to just hundreds of meters (yards) from sites operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, according to Nasser and Awda hospitals.

The United States and Israel support the American contractor as an alternative to the United Nations, which they say allows Hamas to siphon off aid. The U.N., which has delivered aid throughout Gaza for decades when conditions allow, denies the allegations.

The latest deaths raise the toll to more than 1,700 people killed while seeking food since the new aid distribution system began in May, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

U.N. agencies generally do not accept Israeli military escorts for aid trucks, citing concerns over neutrality, and its convoys have come under fire amid severe food shortages.

The deaths came hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called reports about conditions in Gaza a "global campaign of lies," and announced plans to move deeper into the territory and push to dismantle Hamas.

Five more Palestinians, including a child, died of malnutrition-related causes in Gaza in the past 24 hours, the health ministry said.

Israel increased the flow of supplies two weeks ago amid such concerns.

Israeli strike targets and kills Al Jazeera journalists

Israel's military targeted an Al Jazeera correspondent with an airstrike Sunday, killing him. The strike killed a total of eight people, including six journalists and two other civilians, according to Shifa Hospital. Press advocates described the attack as a brazen assault on those documenting the war.

The network said that along with its correspondent, four others of the slain journalists also worked for Al Jazeera.

The Israeli military claimed responsibility for the strike. It came less than a year after Israeli army officials first accused correspondent Anas al-Sharif and other Al Jazeera journalists of being members of the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, an allegation that Al Jazeera and al-Sharif have previously dismissed as baseless.

Al Jazeera called the strike a "targeted assassination" while press freedom groups denounced the rising death toll facing Palestinian journalists working in Gaza. Mourners laid the journalists to rest in Gaza City.

Hamas-led militants abducted 251 people and killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefires or other deals but 50 remain inside Gaza. Israel believes around 20 are still alive.

Israel's air and ground offensive has since displaced most of the population, destroyed vast areas and pushed the territory toward famine. It has killed more than 61,400 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were fighters or civilians but says around half were women and children.

Besides those killed, 121 adults and 101 children have died of malnutrition-related causes, including five in the past 24 hours, the ministry said. One was a child.

The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The U.N. and independent experts consider it the most reliable source on war casualties. Israel disputes its figures but has not provided its own.

International reaction

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Monday added his country to a list moving toward recognition of a state of Palestine, along with France, Britain and Canada. He said his government's decision aimed to build momentum toward a two-state solution, which he called the best path to ending violence and bringing leadership other than Hamas to Gaza.

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"The situation in Gaza has gone beyond the world's worst fears," he said. "The Israeli government continues to defy international law and deny sufficient aid, food and water to desperate people, including children."

Also on Monday Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni announced new aid to Gaza in a phone conversation with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. She stressed the need to bring hostilities with Israel to an immediate halt and "shared her deep concern about recent Israeli decisions that appear to be leading to further military escalation," her office said in a statement.

Meloni reiterated that "the humanitarian situation in Gaza is unjustifiable and unacceptable."

Italy's Defense Minister Guido Crosetto also told the Italian daily La Stampa Monday that Israel's government has "lost reason and humanity" over Gaza and raised the possibility of imposing sanctions.

Egypt seeking talks

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty confirmed Monday that Egypt is pushing for negotiations to reach a deal that would end the war in Gaza, release Israeli hostages, guarantee aid entry and ultimately agree on a political road map that would lead to establishing a Palestinian state.

Deploying international forces to support establishing a Palestinian state was previously proposed throughout the war, but Israel has opposed the idea.

Abdelatty's comments in a news conference in Cairo came as mediators from Egypt and Qatar were working on a new framework that would include the release of all hostages — dead and alive — in one go, in return for an end of the war in Gaza and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the strip, according to two Arab officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the issue.

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff met with the Qatari prime minister in Spain on Saturday to discuss new efforts.

Trump suggests he'll know if Putin wants a peace deal with Ukraine soon into their meeting

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday that he expected to determine mere moments into his meeting with Russian leader Vladimir Putin this week whether it would be possible to work out a deal to halt the war in Ukraine.

"At the end of that meeting, probably the first two minutes, I'll know exactly whether or not a deal can be made," Trump said at a White House press conference that he called to announce plans for a federal takeover of Washington's police force to help combat crime.

He said he thought Friday's sitdown with Putin in Alaska would be "really a feel-out meeting." Trump added that "it'll be good, but it might be bad" and predicted he may say, "lots of luck, keep fighting. Or I may say, we can make a deal."

Putin wants to lock in Russia's gains since invading Ukraine in February 2022 as Trump presses for a ceasefire that has remained out of reach. Trump's eagerness to reach a deal has raised fears in Ukraine and Europe about such an agreement favoring Russia, without sufficient input from Ukraine. Trump has alternately harshly criticized both leaders after promising — and so far failing — to swiftly end the conflict.

The Trump-Putin meeting so far isn't going to include Zelenskyy

Trump on Monday ducked repeated chances to say that he would push for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to take part in his discussions with Putin, and was especially dismissive of Zelenskyy and his need to be part of an effort to seek peace.

He said the Ukrainian president had been to "a lot of meetings" without managing to halt a war that Russia started. Trump also noted that Zelenskyy had been in power for the duration of the war and said "nothing happened" during that time. He contrasted that with Putin, who has wielded power in Russia for decades.

Trump said that, after his meeting with Putin, "The next meeting will be with Zelenskyy and Putin" but it could also be a meeting with "Putin and Zelenskyy and me."

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European allies have pushed for Ukraine's involvement, fearful that discussions could otherwise favor Moscow.

To that point, Trump said he would call Zelenskyy and European leaders after his discussion with Putin to "tell them what kind of a deal — I'm not going to make a deal. It's not up to me to make a deal."

Trump spent the early part of his administration decrying Zelenskyy, even suggesting he was a dictator because his country has not held elections during the war. Zelenskyy was hounded out of the Oval Office in February after Trump and Vice President JD Vance suggested he hadn't been grateful enough for U.S. support.

Trump's up and down relations with Putin

More recently, Trump has expressed frustration with Putin that Russia hasn't appeared to take a push for a ceasefire more seriously, and softened his tone toward Zelenskyy. His comments Monday suggested he might have had another change of heart.

"President Putin invited me to get involved," Trump said. He noted that he thought it was "very respectful" that Putin is coming to the U.S. for Friday's meeting, instead of insisting that Trump go to Russia.

"I'd like to see a ceasefire. I'd like to see the best deal that can be made for both parties," Trump said.

The president repeated that any major agreement could involve land swaps, without elaborating. He had threatened Moscow with more economic sanctions if more isn't done to work toward a ceasefire, but suggested Monday that, should Friday's meeting be successful, he could see a day when the U.S. and Russia normalize trade relations.

Putin is expected to be unwavering in his demands to keep all the territory his forces now occupy and to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, with the long-term aim of returning it to Moscow's sphere of influence.

Zelenskyy insists he will never consent to any formal Russian annexation of Ukrainian territory or give up a bid for NATO membership.

Putin believes he has the advantage on the ground as Ukrainian forces struggle to hold back Russian advances along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front. On the front lines, few Ukrainian soldiers believe there's an end in sight to the war.

Europeans will prepare with a virtual meeting on Ukraine this week

With the Europeans and Ukrainians so far not invited to the summit, Germany sought to prepare by inviting Trump, Zelenskyy, the NATO chief and several other European leaders for a virtual meeting on Wednesday.

The German chancellery said the talks would seek additional ways to pressure Russia and prepare for peace negotiations and "related issues of territorial claims and security."

Steffen Meyer, spokesperson for German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, said the German government "has always emphasized that borders must not be shifted by force" and that Ukraine should decide its own fate "independently and autonomously."

Earlier, a Ukrainian drone attack killed one person and wounded two others in a region some 260 miles (418 kilometers) east of Moscow.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defenses intercepted and destroyed a total of 39 Ukrainian drones overnight and Monday morning over several Russian regions as well as over the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014.

Republicans, Democrats alike exhort Trump: Keep security pact with Australia and UK alive

By ALBEE ZHANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. lawmakers from both parties are urging the Trump administration to maintain a three-way security partnership designed to supply Australia with nuclear-powered submarines — a plea that comes as the Pentagon reviews the agreement and considers the questions it has raised about the American industrial infrastructure's shipbuilding capabilities.

Two weeks ago, the Defense Department announced it would review AUKUS, the 4-year-old pact signed

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by the Biden administration with Australia and the United Kingdom. The announcement means the Republican administration is looking closely at a partnership that many believe is critical to the U.S. strategy to push back China's influence in the Indo-Pacific. The review is expected to be completed in the fall.

"AUKUS is essential to strengthening deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and advancing the undersea capabilities that will be central to ensuring peace and stability," Republican Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan and Democratic Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois wrote in a July 22 letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. Moolenaar chairs the House panel on China and Krishnamoorthi is its top Democrat.

The review comes as the Trump administration works to rebalance its global security concerns while struggling with a hollowed-out industrial base that has hamstrung U.S. capabilities to build enough warships. The review is being led by Elbridge Colby, the No. 3 Pentagon official, who has expressed skepticism about the partnership.

"If we can produce the attack submarines in sufficient number and sufficient speed, then great. But if we can't, that becomes a very difficult problem," Colby said during his confirmation hearing in March. "This is getting back to restoring our defense industrial capacity so that we don't have to face these awful choices but rather can be in a position where we can produce not only for ourselves, but for our allies."

US cannot build enough ships

As part of the \$269 billion AUKUS partnership, the United States will sell three to five Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines to Australia, with the first delivery scheduled as soon as 2032. The U.S. and the U.K. would help Australia design and build another three to five attack submarines to form an eight-boat force for Australia.

A March report by the Congressional Research Service warned that the lack of U.S. shipbuilding capacities, including workforce shortage and insufficient supply chains, is jeopardizing the much-celebrated partnership. If the U.S. should sell the vessels to Australia, the U.S. Navy would have a shortage of attack submarines for two decades, the report said.

The Navy has been ordering two boats per year in the last decade, but U.S. shipyards have been only producing 1.2 Virginia-class subs a year since 2022, the report said.

"The delivery pace is not where it needs to be" to make good on the first pillar of AUKUS, Admiral Daryl Caudle, nominee for the Chief of Naval Operations, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last month.

Australia has invested \$1 billion in the U.S. submarine industrial base, with another \$1 billion to be paid before the end of this year. It has agreed to contribute a total of \$3 billion to uplift the U.S. submarine base, and it has sent both industry personnel to train at U.S. shipyards and naval personnel for submarine training in the United States.

"Australia was clear that we would make a proportionate contribution to the United States industrial base," an Australian defense spokesperson said in July. "Australia's contribution is about accelerating U.S. production rates and maintenance to enable the delivery of Australia's future Virginia-class submarines."

The three nations have also jointly tested communication capabilities with underwater autonomous systems, Australia's defense ministry said on July 23. Per the partnership, the countries will co-develop other advanced technologies, from undersea to hypersonic capabilities.

At the recent Aspen Security Forum, Kevin Rudd, the Australian ambassador to the United States, said his country is committed to increasing defense spending to support its first nuclear-powered sub program, which would also provide "massively expensive full maintenance repair facilities" for the U.S. Indo-Pacific fleet based in Western Australia.

Rudd expressed confidence that the two governments "will work our way through this stuff."

AUKUS called 'crucial to American deterrence'

Bruce Jones, senior fellow with the Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy and Technology, told The Associated Press that the partnership, by positioning subs in Western Australia, is helping arm the undersea space that is "really crucial to American deterrence and defense options in the Western Pacific."

"The right answer is not to be content with the current pace of submarine building. It's to increase the pace," Jones said.

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Jennifer Parker, who has served more than 20 years with the Royal Australian Navy and founded Barrier Strategic Advisory, said it should not be a zero-sum game. "You might sell one submarine to Australia, so you have one less submarine on paper. But in terms of the access, you have the theater of choice from operating from Australia, from being able to maintain your submarines from Australia," Parker said. "This is not a deal that just benefits Australia."

Defense policy is one of the few areas where Republican lawmakers have pushed back against the Trump administration, but their resolve is being tested with the Pentagon's review of AUKUS. So far, they have joined their Democratic colleagues in voicing support for the partnership.

They said the U.S. submarine industry is rebounding with congressional appropriations totaling \$10 billion since 2018 to ensure the U.S. will have enough ships to allow for sales to Australia.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., told the AP that support for AUKUS is strong and bipartisan, "certainly on the Armed Services Committee."

"There is a little bit of mystification about the analysis done at the Pentagon," Kaine said, adding that "maybe (what) the analysis will say is: We believe this is a good thing."

A US senator from Colombia emerges as a Trump link for Latin America's conservatives

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — When Republican Sen. Bernie Moreno visits Colombia this week as part of a three-nation tour of Latin America, it will be something of a homecoming.

Ohio's first Latino senator, who defeated an incumbent last year with the help of Donald Trump's endorsement, was born in the Colombian capital of Bogota, and even as he was chasing the American dream, he kept close tabs on the country through older brothers who are heavyweights in politics and business there.

Moreno, 58, has emerged as an interlocutor for conservatives in Latin America seeking to connect with the Trump administration.

In an interview with The Associated Press ahead of the trip, he expressed deep concern about Colombia's direction under left-wing President Gustavo Petro and suggested that U.S. sanctions, higher tariffs or other retaliatory action might be needed to steer it straight.

The recent criminal conviction of former President Alvaro Uribe, a conservative icon, was an attempt to "silence" the man who saved Colombia from guerrilla violence, Moreno said. Meanwhile, record cocaine production has left the United States less secure — and Colombia vulnerable to being decertified by the White House for failing to cooperate in the war on drugs.

"The purpose of the trip is to understand all the dynamics before any decision is made," said Moreno, who will meet with both Petro and Uribe, as well as business leaders and local officials. "But there's nothing that's taken off the table at this point and there's nothing that's directly being contemplated."

Elected with Trump's support

Moreno, a luxury car dealer from Cleveland, defeated incumbent Democrat Sherrod Brown last year with the help of \$441 million in political ad spending — the most in U.S. Senate race history. He became Ohio's senior senator on practically his first day in office after his close friend JD Vance resigned the Senate to become vice president.

In Congress, Moreno has mimicked Trump's rhetoric to attack top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer as a "miserable old man out of a Dickens novel," called on the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates and threatened to subpoena California officials over their response to anti-ICE protests in Los Angeles.

On Latin America, he's been similarly outspoken, slamming Petro on social media as a "socialist dictator" and accusing Mexico of being on the path to becoming a "narco state."

He also surprised many hardliners in the GOP early on by suggesting in January that Trump should engage with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro despite his re-election in what the U.S., European Union and other governments condemned as a rigged vote. While referring to Maduro as a "gang leader" and "terrorist," Moreno nonetheless expressed support for the Trump administration's decision last month to

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allow energy giant Chevron to resume drilling in Venezuela following a deal with Maduro to free 10 jailed Americans held there.

"What people wanted to hear in January is that we're going to fly F-16s into Caracas and wage war against the country and that just wasn't going to happen," said Moreno in the interview. "If we take actions that are too much in that direction, we end up turning Venezuela over to China."

Such comments barely register in blue-collar Ohio, but they've garnered attention in Latin America. That despite the fact Moreno hasn't lived in the region for decades and doesn't sit on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"He's somebody to watch," said Michael Shifter, the former president of the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington. "He's one of the most loyal Trump supporters in the Senate, and, given his background in Latin America, he could be influential on policy."

Moreno starts his first congressional delegation to Latin America on Monday for two days of meetings in Mexico City with officials including President Claudia Sheinbaum.

Seeking cooperation with Mexico on fentanyl

Moreno, in the pre-trip interview, said that Sheinbaum has done more to combat the flow of fentanyl into the U.S. than her predecessor and mentor Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who he described as a "total disaster." But he said more cooperation is needed, and he'd like to see Mexico allow the DEA to participate in judicial wiretaps like it has for decades in Colombia and allow it to bring back a plane used in bilateral investigations that López Obrador grounded.

"The corruption becomes so pervasive, that if it's left unchecked, it's kind of like treating cancer," said Moreno. "Mexico has to just come to the realization that it does not have the resources to completely wipe out the drug cartels. And it's only going to be by asking the U.S. for help that we can actually accomplish that."

Plans to tour the Panama Canal

From Mexico, Moreno heads to Panama, where he'll tour the Panama Canal with Trump's new ambassador to the country, Kevin Marino Cabrera.

In March, a Hong Kong-based conglomerate struck a deal that would have handed control of two ports on either end of the U.S.-built canal to American investment firm BlackRock Inc. The deal was heralded by Trump, who had threatened to take back the canal to curb Chinese influence.

However, the deal has since drawn scrutiny from antitrust authorities in Beijing and last month the seller said it was seeking to add a strategic partner from mainland China — reportedly state-owned shipping company Cosco — to the deal.

"Cosco, you might as well say, is the actual communist party," said Moreno. "There's no scenario in which Cosco can be part of the Panamanian ports."

'We want Colombia to be strong'

On the final leg of the tour in Colombia, Moreno will be joined by another Colombian American senator: Ruben Gallego, Democrat of Arizona. In contrast to Moreno, who was born into privilege and counts among his siblings a former ambassador to the U.S., Gallego and his three sisters were raised by an immigrant single mother on a secretary's paycheck.

Despite their different upbringings, the two have made common cause in seeking to uphold the tradition of bilateral U.S. support for Colombia, for decades Washington's staunchest ally in the region. It's a task made harder by deepening polarization in both countries.

The recent sentencing of Uribe to 12 years of house arrest in a long-running witness tampering case has jolted the nation's politics with nine months to go before decisive presidential elections. The former president is barred from running but remains a powerful leader, and Moreno said his absence from the campaign trail could alter the playing field.

He also worries that surging cocaine production could once again lead to a "narcotization" of a bilateral relationship that should be about trade, investment and mutual prosperity.

"We want Colombia to be strong, we want Colombia to be healthy, we want Colombia to be prosperous and secure, and I think the people of Colombia want the exact same thing," he added. "So, the question is, how do we get there?"

Man fired 180 shots, breaking 150 windows, in CDC attack

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The man who attacked the CDC headquarters in Atlanta on Friday fired more than 180 shots into the campus and broke about 150 windows, with bullets piercing “blast-resistant” windows and spattering glass shards into numerous rooms, according to information circulated internally at the agency.

It may take weeks or even months to replace windows and clean up the damage, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention personnel said.

A Georgia man who had blamed the COVID-19 vaccine for making him depressed and suicidal opened fire late Friday, killing a police officer. No one at CDC was injured.

The shooter was stopped by CDC security guards before driving to a nearby pharmacy and opening fire late Friday afternoon, a law enforcement official has told the AP. The official wasn’t authorized to publicly discuss the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity. The 30-year-old man, Patrick Joseph White, later died, but authorities haven’t said whether he was killed by police or killed himself.

U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. toured the CDC campus on Monday. CDC security pointed out broken windows across multiple buildings, including the main guard booth, according to a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services statement.

HHS Deputy Secretary Jim O’Neill and CDC Director Susan Monarez accompanied him, according to the statement.

Kennedy also visited the DeKalb County Police Department, where he met with the police chief. Later. He also met privately with the widow of the fallen officer, David Rose.

Monarez posted a statement on social media Friday night that said at least four CDC buildings were hit in the attack.

The extent of the damage became more clear during a weekend CDC leadership meeting. Two CDC employees who were told about what was discussed at the meeting described details to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to reveal the information. Details also were also in an agency memo seen by an AP reporter.

Building 21, which houses Monarez’s office, was hit by the largest number of bullets. CDC officials did not say if her office was hit.

CDC employees were advised to work from home this week.

Kennedy issued a statement Saturday that said “no one should face violence while working to protect the health of others,” and that top federal health officials were “actively supporting CDC staff.”

He did not speak to the media during his visit Monday.

In a call with the media on Monday night, some unionized CDC employees said they are calling for more heavily armed guards, bulletproof glass, a better alert system, and more extensive evacuation planning for disabled employees and other vulnerable staff.

A retired CDC official, Stephan Monroe, said he worried about the long-term impact the attack would have on young scientists’ willingness to go to work for the government.

“I’m concerned that this is this is going to be a generational hit,” said Monroe, speaking to a reporter near the corner where a poster had been set up in honor of Rose.

Kennedy was a leader in a national anti-vaccine movement before President Donald Trump selected him to oversee federal health agencies, and has made false and misleading statements about the safety and effectiveness of about COVID-19 shots and other vaccines.

Years of false rhetoric about vaccines and public health was bound to “take a toll on people’s mental health,” and “leads to violence,” said Tim Young, a CDC employee who retired in April.

Dr. Jerome Adams, the U.S. surgeon general during President Donald Trump’s first administration, said Sunday that health leaders should appreciate the weight of their words.

“We have to understand people are listening,” Adams told “Face the Nation” on CBS. “When you make claims that have been proven false time and time again about safety and efficacy of vaccines, that can cause unintended consequences.”

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CDC employees are now taking steps to become less visible, including not wearing their public health service uniform to work, said Yolanda Jacobs, president of Local 2883 of the American Federation of Government Employees.

She recalled when CDC employees were happy to be approached by neighbors or others with public health questions. "Now it's at the point we're afraid to have those types of conversations with anybody, because we don't know who they are and we don't know what rhetoric they've ingested," she said.

Texas is No. 1 in preseason AP Top 25 for first time, edging Penn St, Ohio St; 10 SEC teams ranked

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

For the first time, Texas will open a college football season ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25.

The Longhorns hardly have a mandate in the poll released Monday: They edged out Penn State by just five points in the closest preseason vote since 1998.

Texas received 25 first-place votes and 1,552 points to give the Southeastern Conference the preseason No. 1 team for a record fifth straight year. The Nittany Lions got 23 first-place votes and 1,547 points for their highest preseason ranking since they were No. 1 to open the 1997 season.

The Longhorns face a major test right away. Their Aug. 30 opener at defending champion and third-ranked Ohio State is a rematch of last season's College Football Playoff semifinal, a 28-14 Buckeyes win in the Cotton Bowl.

The Buckeyes received 11 first-place votes from the panel of 65 media members who cover college football. No. 4 Clemson got four first-place votes and No. 5 Georgia got one.

Notre Dame, Oregon (which got the final first-place vote), Alabama, LSU and Miami round out the top 10.

The SEC leads all conferences with 10 teams in the preseason Top 25, most ever by a conference and one more than a year ago. The SEC has four teams in the top 10 for the second straight year.

The Big Ten, which has won the last two national championships, has two of the top three teams in the poll for the third straight year and six in the Top 25 for the third year in a row.

Four Big 12 teams are ranked, with defending conference champion Arizona State the highest at No. 11. The Atlantic Coast Conference has three, led by Clemson.

Top-ranked Texas

"Arch Mania" is at a fever pitch in Texas with Arch Manning now the undisputed starting quarterback.

The Longhorns have been on an upward trajectory since they were 5-7 in 2021, Steve Sarkisian's first season. They have won 25 of their last 30 games and reached two straight CFP semifinals. Last year, they were ranked No. 1 four of five weeks from mid-September to mid-October, and they reached the SEC championship game in their first season in the conference.

"But this is a new year, new faces, new team, and obviously expectations are high for our program," Sarkisian said at SEC media days. "I'm not naive to that. I don't put my head in the sand, and expectations are very high. But I also say we're the University of Texas, and the standard is the standard here, and that's competing for championships year in and year out."

Twelve Texas players were taken in the NFL draft, including three-first-round picks, but elite recruiting and additions from the transfer portal should alleviate concerns about losses on the offensive line and at receiver. The defense brings back plenty of talent.

Still, Texas received just 38.5% of the first-place votes (25 of 65), the smallest share for a No. 1 team in the preseason poll since Georgia got 33.9% (22 of 65) in 2008.

The Longhorns have ended a season No. 1 in the AP poll three times (1963, 1969, 2005) but until now had never started a season higher than No. 2 (1962, 1965, 1970, 2005, 2009).

Big Ten lurking

The second-ranked Nittany Lions are not only six points from being No. 1, they are 75 points ahead of the Buckeyes in what might be considered a slight to the national champs.

Penn State will have Drew Allar back under center for what many consider a light schedule ahead of a

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late September visit from Oregon before a Nov. 1 showdown at Ohio State.

The Buckeyes, in the preseason top five for the ninth straight year and 12th of the last 13, will have a new look with only five starters back on offense and three on defense.

"This team has its own identity," coach Ryan Day said. "It wants to have its own identity, but it also wants to be the first Ohio State team to win back-to-back national championships."

The opener against Texas will give the Buckeyes a good measure of themselves. Julian Sayin or Lincoln Kienholz will be the third new starting quarterback in three years. Whoever gets the job will throw to one of the nation's top players in Jeremiah Smith.

Day will also have another chance to figure out archrival and preseason No. 14 Michigan, which has beaten the Buckeyes four straight years.

Poll nuggets

— Texas will try to become the 12th team to start and finish No. 1 since the AP preseason poll debuted in 1950. The last team to do it was Alabama in 2017.

— Notre Dame is in the preseason top 10 for the third time in four years. The Fighting Irish will have a new quarterback, CJ Carr or Kenny Minchey. The two played a combined eight snaps last season as Notre Dame went all the way to the CFP title game won by Ohio State.

— With Boise State at No. 25, all 12 teams in the 2024 College Football Playoff are ranked in the preseason. The Mountain West's Broncos are the first team from a Group of Five conference to crack the preseason Top 25 since Tulane was No. 24 in 2023.

— No. 16 SMU, which returns quarterback Kevin Jennings from its CFP team, is in the preseason Top 25 for the first time in 40 years. The 1985 team was No. 3 and finished 6-5 and unranked.

Trump says he's placing Washington police under federal control and activating the National Guard

By JOSH BOAK and DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday he's taking over Washington's police department and activating 800 members of the National Guard in the hopes of reducing crime, even as city officials stressed crime is already falling in the nation's capital.

The president, flanked by his attorney general, his defense secretary and the FBI director, said he was declaring a public safety emergency and his administration would be removing homeless encampments.

"We're going to take our capital back," Trump declared, adding he'd also be "getting rid of the slums."

For Trump, the effort to take over public safety in Washington reflects an escalation of his aggressive approach to law enforcement. The District of Columbia's status as a congressionally established federal district gives him a unique opportunity to push his tough-on-crime agenda, though he has not proposed solutions to the root causes of homelessness or crime.

Attorney General Pam Bondi will assume responsibility for Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, Trump said, as he also railed against potholes and graffiti in the city and called them "embarrassing." The president did not provide a timeline for the control of the police department, but he's limited to 30 days under statute unless he gets approval from Congress.

As Trump spoke, demonstrators gathered outside the White House to protest his moves. And local officials rejected the Republican president's depiction of the district as crime-ridden and called his actions illegal.

"The administration's actions are unprecedented, unnecessary, and unlawful," District of Columbia Attorney General Brian Schwab said. "There is no crime emergency in the District of Columbia."

Schwab, a Democrat, said violent crime in the district reached historic 30-year lows last year and is down an additional 26% this year.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said she would follow the law regarding the "so-called emergency" even as she indicated that Trump's actions were a reason why the District of Columbia should be a state with legal protections from such actions.

"While this action today is unsettling and unprecedented, I can't say that given some of the rhetoric of

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the past, that we're totally surprised," Bowser said.

Combating crime

The president dismissed the idea Washington needed to enlarge its 3,500-officer police force, even as he seeks to have more armed personnel going through the city with the goal of reducing crime.

"What you need is rules and regulations, and you need the right people to implement them," he said.

Trump invoked Section 740 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act in an executive order to declare a "crime emergency" so his administration could take over the city's police force. He signed a directive for Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to activate the National Guard.

While Trump has portrayed himself as a friend to law enforcement and enjoyed the political backing from many of their groups, he pardoned or commuted the sentences of the 1,500-plus people charged with crimes in the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot, including people convicted of assaulting police officers.

About 500 federal law enforcement officers are being tasked with deploying throughout the nation's capital as part of Trump's effort to combat crime, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

More than 100 FBI agents and about 40 agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are among federal personnel being assigned to patrols in Washington, the person briefed on the plans said. The Drug Enforcement Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Marshals Service are contributing officers.

The person was not authorized to publicly discuss personnel matters and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity. The Justice Department didn't immediately have a comment Monday morning.

The National Guard

Bowser, a Democrat, has previously questioned the effectiveness of using the National Guard to enforce city laws and said the federal government could be far more helpful by funding more prosecutors or filling the 15 vacancies on the D.C. Superior Court, some of which have been open for years.

Bowser cannot activate the National Guard herself, but she can submit a request to the Pentagon.

"I just think that's not the most efficient use of our Guard," she said Sunday on MSNBC's "The Weekend," acknowledging it is "the president's call about how to deploy the Guard."

Bowser noted that violent crime in Washington has decreased since a rise in 2023. She stressed during a Monday news conference that she believed Trump's views of the city were shaped by the "challenging times" of the coronavirus pandemic, when he faced protests and crime spiked as the country began to recover from the outbreak.

Focusing on homelessness

Trump has emphasized the removal of Washington's homeless population, though it was unclear where the thousands of people would go, and he did not give details at his news conference Monday.

"The Homeless have to move out, IMMEDIATELY," Trump wrote Sunday in a social media post. "We will give you places to stay, but FAR from the Capital. The Criminals, you don't have to move out. We're going to put you in jail where you belong."

Jesse Rabinowitz, a advocate for homeless people, called Trump's plan "fascist" and a "waste" of resources. He said the move wasn't about safety.

"It is about power, and it is about fascism and authoritarianism," said Rabinowitz, the campaign and communication director for the National Homelessness Law Center. "If Donald Trump wanted to keep D.C. safe, he would fund housing and support. Instead, the Republicans just gutted health care, and they're passing through a budget that will make homelessness worse. They do not care about helping people."

Crime statistics

Police statistics show homicides, robberies and burglaries are down this year when compared with this time in 2024. Overall, violent crime is down 26% compared with this time a year ago.

The president has criticized the district as full of "tents, squalor, filth, and Crime," and he seems to have been set off by the attack on Edward Coristine, among the most visible figures of the bureaucracy-cutting effort known as the Department of Government Efficiency. Police arrested two 15-year-olds in the attempted carjacking and said they were looking for others.

"This has to be the best run place in the country, not the worst run place in the country," Trump said

Wednesday.

He called Bowser "a good person who has tried, but she has been given many chances."

Trump has repeatedly suggested the rule of Washington could be returned to federal authorities. Doing so would require a repeal of the Home Rule Act of 1973 in Congress, a step Trump said lawyers are examining.

Bowser acknowledged the law allows the president to take more control over the city's police, but only if certain conditions are met.

"None of those conditions exist in our city right now," she said. "We are not experiencing a spike in crime. In fact, we're watching our crime numbers go down."

Judge won't release grand jury transcripts in Jeffrey Epstein ex-girlfriend's Ghislaine Maxwell case

By LARRY NEUMEISTER, MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Transcripts of grand jury testimony that led to sex trafficking charges against Jeffrey Epstein's longtime confidante Ghislaine Maxwell shouldn't be released, a judge ruled Monday in a stinging decision suggesting the Trump administration's real motive for wanting them unsealed was to fool the public with an "illusion" of transparency.

U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer said in a written decision that federal law almost never allows for the release of grand jury materials and that making the documents public casually was a bad idea.

The judge also belittled the Justice Department's argument that releasing grand jury materials might reveal new information about Epstein's and Maxwell's crimes, calling that premise "demonstrably false."

The decision was a blow to President Donald Trump, who had called for the release of transcripts as he seeks to dispel rumors and quell criticism about his long ago involvement with Epstein, who killed himself in jail in 2019. Trump campaigned on a promise to release files related to Epstein, but was met with criticism — including from many of his own supporters — when the small number of records released by his Justice Department lacked any real bombshells.

Transcripts reveal 'next to nothing new,' judge says

In his ruling, Engelmayer wrote that after privately reviewing the grand jury transcripts, anyone familiar with the evidence from Maxwell's 2021 sex trafficking trial would "learn next to nothing new" and "would come away feeling disappointed and misled."

"The materials do not identify any person other than Epstein and Maxwell as having had sexual contact with a minor. They do not discuss or identify any client of Epstein's or Maxwell's. They do not reveal any heretofore unknown means or methods of Epstein's or Maxwell's crimes," Engelmayer said.

He said the materials also don't reveal new locations where crimes occurred, new sources of Maxwell and Epstein's wealth, the circumstances of Epstein's death or the path of the government investigation.

The best argument to release the transcripts might be that "doing so would expose as disingenuous the Government's public explanations for moving to unseal," Engelmayer wrote.

"A member of the public, appreciating that the Maxwell grand jury materials do not contribute anything to public knowledge, might conclude that the Government's motion for their unsealing was aimed not at 'transparency' but at diversion — aimed not at full disclosure but at the illusion of such," he said.

Another federal judge is weighing whether to release transcripts from the separate grand jury proceeding that led to Epstein's indictment.

Florida lawyer Brad Edwards, who has represented nearly two dozen Epstein accusers, said he didn't disagree with the ruling and most wanted to protect victims. "The grand jury materials contain very little in the way of evidentiary value anyway," he said.

Maxwell, Epstein's ex-girlfriend, is serving a 20-year prison sentence for helping Epstein sexually abuse several underage girls. Her lawyer, Bobbi Sternheim, declined comment. The Justice Department did not respond to requests for comment.

Decision comes amid a renewed fervor over Epstein case

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The Epstein saga has again become a national flashpoint years after Epstein served jail time and registered as a sex offender after pleading guilty to Florida prostitution offenses in a 2008 deal that let him avoid federal charges then.

President Donald Trump raised questions about Epstein's death, and Trump allies stoked conspiracy theories that dark secrets were covered up to protect powerful people. Some of those allies got powerful positions in Trump's Justice Department and promised to pull back the curtain on the Epstein investigation — but then announced this summer nothing more would be released and a long-rumored Epstein "client list" doesn't exist.

The about-face amplified the clamor for transparency. After trying unsuccessfully to change the subject and denigrating his own supporters for not moving on, Trump told Attorney General Pam Bondi to ask courts to unseal the grand jury transcripts.

With pressure mounting in recent weeks, the Justice Department's second-in-command, Todd Blanche, recently interviewed Maxwell over two days in an effort to show that the Trump administration was serious about looking for any additional evidence of misconduct.

Maxwell was moved from a federal prison in Florida to a prison camp in Texas after speaking with Blanche.

The Republican-led House Oversight Committee subpoenaed the Justice Department for Epstein-related files and has moved to interview former President Bill Clinton, who was among a number of luminaries once acquainted with Epstein.

The decision about the grand jury transcripts in Maxwell's case doesn't affect thousands of other pages the government possesses but has declined to release. The Justice Department has said much of the material was court-sealed to protect victims and little of it would've come out if Epstein had gone to trial.

A federal judge in Florida declined to release grand jury documents from an investigation there in 2005 and 2007.

Maxwell, who's appealing her conviction, opposed unsealing the documents.

Paramount will become the new home to all UFC events in the US under 7-year deal with TKO Group

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Paramount will become the new home to Ultimate Fighting Championship events across the U.S. next year, through a seven-year agreement announced with TKO Group on Monday.

The news comes just days after Skydance and Paramount officially closed their \$8 billion merger — kicking off the reign of a new entertainment giant after a contentious endeavor to get the transaction over the finish line.

Under the deal with UFC, Paramount will exclusively distribute UFC's full lineup of its 13 marquee numbered events and 30 "Fight Nights" on its streaming platform Paramount+ — with select numbered events also set to simulcast on CBS — starting in 2026.

It's a shift away from the UFC's existing pay-per-view model, which Paramount and TKO say will allow the mixed martial arts programming to reach more consumers nationwide.

"Paramount's advantage lies in the expansive reach of our linear and streaming platforms," David Ellison, chairman and CEO of Paramount, said in a statement. "Live sports continue to be a cornerstone of our broader strategy — driving engagement, subscriber growth, and long-term loyalty, and the addition of UFC's year-round must-watch events to our platforms is a major win."

Mark Shapiro, president and COO of TKO, added that the deal will mean "deeper engagement for UFC's passionate fan base" and that its athletes "will love this new stage."

UFC events currently air on ESPN — which has offered tiered pricing for fans to view content across the sports network's TV offerings and streaming platform ESPN+ since 2019. UFC's partnership with Disney-owned ESPN runs through the end of 2025.

The seven-year deal between Paramount and TKO has an average annual value of \$1.1 billion, the companies said Monday — marking a notable jump from the roughly \$550 million that ESPN reportedly

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pays each year for UFC coverage today. But UFC's new home on Paramount will simplify offerings for fans — with all content set to be available on Paramount+ (which currently costs between \$7.99 and \$12.99 a month), rather than various pay-per-view fees.

Paramount also said it intends to explore UFC rights outside the U.S. "as they become available in the future."

While now a done deal, the path towards approval for the Paramount and Skydance merger was far from smooth sailing. Months of scrutiny and turmoil surrounded the transaction — particularly amid President Donald Trump's legal battle with "60 Minutes," the crown jewel of Paramount-owned broadcast network CBS. With the specter of the Trump administration potentially blocking the hard-fought deal with Skydance, Paramount agreed to pay a \$16 million settlement to the president in early July. The deal later received regulatory approval from the Trump administration.

Trump has long been friends with UFC CEO Dana White and routinely attends UFC events. Last month Trump said that he's thinking of staging a UFC match on the White House grounds with upwards of 20,000 spectators to celebrate 250 years of American independence.

Trump announced his plan in Iowa during the kickoff for a year's worth of festivities to celebrate America's 250th birthday on July 4, 2026.

White said in a post on social media platform X that the deal with Paramount will make it more affordable and accessible for U.S. consumers to watch UFC events.

"This deal puts UFC amongst the biggest sports in the world," he wrote. "The exposure provided by the Paramount and CBS networks under this new structure is a huge win for our athletes and anyone who watches and loves this sport."

Aside from the UFC, TKO also houses the WWE and has been actively working out deals for the sports entertainment company. Last week Disney announced an agreement with WWE that will see its premium live events, like WrestleMania, streamed by ESPN.

Disney subsidiary ESPN struck a rights agreement with TKO Group's WWE to become the exclusive U.S. domestic streamer of the sports entertainment company's premium live events starting next year. Aside from gaining access to WrestleMania, ESPN will also air marquee events such as the Royal Rumble, SummerSlam and Survivor Series.

The wrestling events will be available on ESPN's new streaming service, which is set to launch next month, with select ESPN cable channels also airing them.

Financial terms of the agreement were not disclosed, but The Wall Street Journal said that it's a five-year deal worth more than \$1.6 billion.

Shares of TKO jumped over 7% in midday trading on Monday.

Israel plans to widen coming offensive beyond Gaza City into last areas not under its control

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel plans to widen its coming offensive beyond Gaza City to the last areas not yet under Israeli control, and where most of Gaza's 2 million residents have sought shelter as the territory slides toward famine.

The mobilization of forces is expected to take weeks, and Israel may be using the threat of a wider offensive to try to pressure Hamas into releasing more hostages or surrendering after 22 months of war sparked by its Oct. 7, 2023, attack into Israel.

Any expansion of Israeli operations is likely to bring even more death and destruction to the war-ravaged territory, around 75% of which is already largely destroyed and controlled by Israel. A wider offensive would also force more people to flee and further disrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid during a severe hunger crisis.

The plans have also sparked controversy in Israel. Families of the remaining hostages fear another military escalation could doom their loved ones, while former senior security officials have said there is little

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to be gained militarily.

Netanyahu says Israel will go into the central camps

Israel announced last week its plans to take over Gaza City, where it has already carried out major raids and heavy bombardment throughout the war. On Sunday, Netanyahu told a news conference that operations would be expanded into the "central camps" and beyond.

He appeared to be referring to the built-up Nuseirat and Bureij camps in central Gaza that date back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Israel has carried out near-daily airstrikes in the camps since the start of the war but no major ground operations.

Netanyahu referred to Gaza City, the central camps and Muwasi — a vast cluster of displacement camps along the coast — as Hamas strongholds. These areas, along with the central city of Deir al-Balah, are the only parts of Gaza that have not been almost completely destroyed in previous Israeli operations. They are also areas where Hamas may be holding hostages in tunnels or other secret locations.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss aspects of the plans that have not been made public, said the operation will not begin immediately and will take a significant amount of time to scale up. One indication will be the potential mobilization of thousands of reservists.

The official said the announced plans were partly aimed at putting pressure on various parties.

Few places left to flee

Netanyahu said Israel will allow civilians to flee to "designated safe zones," where "they will be given ample food, water and medical care, as we have done before." He did not say where they would go.

Israel designated Muwasi as a humanitarian zone earlier in the war. The barren stretch of sandy coastline was soon filled with tents housing hundreds of thousands of people with little in the way of food, running water, toilets or trash collection. Israel has regularly carried out airstrikes against what it said were militants hiding out there, often killing women and children.

Last month, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz reportedly floated the idea of transferring Gaza's population to a so-called "humanitarian city" that the military would build on the ruins of the southernmost city of Rafah — now a largely uninhabited Israeli military zone — on the border with Egypt.

Netanyahu has vowed to eventually relocate much of Gaza's population to other countries through what he refers to as voluntary emigration. The Palestinians and much of the international community see it as forcible expulsion because Israel's offensive has made much of Gaza uninhabitable.

They fear that concentrating people in the south would be a step toward implementing such plans.

A possible negotiating tactic

Netanyahu has said he will end the war if Hamas gives up power, lays down its arms and releases the remaining 50 hostages — around 20 of whom are believed by Israel to be alive.

Israel would still maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and facilitate the departure of those who wish to leave, according to Netanyahu. He has said Arab forces friendly to Israel would administer the territory, but none are known to have volunteered, aside from an Israeli-backed armed group known for looting aid.

Hamas has said, in line with international demands, that it would release the remaining hostages in return for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The militant group says it is willing to hand over power to other Palestinians but will not give up its weapons as long as Israel occupies lands the Palestinians want for a future state.

Israel may hope that ratcheting up pressure will yield further concessions from Hamas in U.S.- and Arab-mediated talks that appear to have broken down last month.

But the hostages are Hamas' only remaining bargaining chip, and it is unlikely to give them up if it believes that Israel will then resume the war, attempt to eradicate the group and carry out plans to depopulate Gaza.

Israel ended a previous ceasefire in March that had facilitated the release of 25 hostages and the remains of eight others. Since then, it has imposed a 2 1/2 month blockade that pushed the territory toward famine, launched daily airstrikes across Gaza, expanded its buffer zone and ordered mass evacuations.

Hamas has only released one hostage during that time, as a gesture to the United States.

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Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 others in the 2023 attack. More than half of the hostages have been released in ceasefires or other deals. Israel's offensive has killed around 61,500 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and run by medical professionals, does not say how many of those killed were civilians or combatants, but it says women and children make up around half of the fatalities. The agency's numbers are considered a reliable estimate by the U.N. and independent experts. Israel disputes them but has not offered its own figures.

What to know about the Putin-Trump summit in Alaska

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

The U.S.-Russia summit in Alaska is happening at a site where East meets West — quite literally — in a place familiar to both countries as a Cold War front line of missile defense, radar outposts and intelligence gathering.

Whether it can lead to a deal to produce peace in Ukraine more than 3 1/2 years after Moscow's invasion remains to be seen.

Here's what to know about the meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump, the first summit in four years:

When and where is it taking place?

The summit will take place Friday in Alaska, although where in the state is still unknown.

It will be Putin's first trip to the United States since 2015, for the U.N. General Assembly in New York. Since the U.S. is not a member of the International Criminal Court, which in 2023 issued a warrant for Putin on war crimes accusations, it is under no obligation to arrest him.

Is Zelenskyy going?

Both countries confirmed a meeting between only Putin and Trump, even though there were initial suggestions that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy might be part of it. But the Kremlin has long pushed back against Putin meeting Zelenskyy — at least until a peace deal is reached by Russia and Ukraine and was ready to be signed.

Putin said last week he wasn't against meeting Zelenskyy "but certain conditions need to be created" for it to happen and were "still a long way off."

That raised fears about excluding Ukraine from negotiations. Ukrainian officials last week talked with European allies, who stressed that peace cannot be achieved without Kyiv's involvement.

What's Alaska's role in Russian history?

It will be the first visit by a Russian leader to Alaska, even though it was part of the czarist empire until 1867, the state news agency Tass said.

Alaska was colonized by Russia starting from the 18th century until Czar Alexander II sold it to the United States in 1867 for \$7.2 million. When it was found to contain vast resources, it was seen as a naïve deal that generated remorse and self-reproach.

After the USSR's collapse, Alaska was a subject of nostalgia and jokes for Russians. One popular song in the 1990s went: "Don't play the fool, America ... give back our dear Alaska land."

Sam Greene of King's College London said on X the symbolism of Alaska as the site of a summit about Ukraine was "horrendous — as though designed to demonstrate that borders can change, land can be bought and sold."

What's the agenda?

Trump has appeared increasingly exasperated with Putin over Russia's refusal to halt the bombardment of Ukrainian cities. Kyiv has agreed to a ceasefire, insisting on a truce as a first step toward peace.

Moscow presented ceasefire conditions that are nonstarters for Zelenskyy, such as withdrawing troops from the four regions Russia illegally annexed in 2022, halting mobilization efforts, or freezing Western arms deliveries. For a broader peace, Putin demands Kyiv cede the annexed regions, even though Russia doesn't fully control them, and Crimea, renounce a bid to join NATO, limit the size of its armed forces and

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recognize Russian as an official language along with Ukrainian.

Zelenskyy insists any peace deals must include robust security guarantees for Ukraine to protect it from future Russian aggression.

Putin has warned Ukraine it will face tougher conditions for peace as Russian troops forge into other regions to build what he described as a "buffer zone." Some observers suggested Russia could trade those recent gains for territory still under Ukrainian control in the four annexed regions annexed by Moscow.

Zelenskyy said Saturday that "Ukrainians will not give their land to the occupier."

But Trump said Monday: "There'll be some land swapping going on. I know that through Russia and through conversations with everybody. To the good, for the good of Ukraine. Good stuff, not bad stuff. Also, some bad stuff for both."

What are expectations?

Putin sees a meeting with Trump as a chance to cement Russia's territorial gains, keep Ukraine out of NATO and prevent it from hosting any Western troops so Moscow can gradually pull the country back into its orbit.

He believes time is on his side as Ukrainian forces are struggling to stem Russian advances along the front line amid swarms of Moscow's missiles and drones battering the country.

The meeting is a diplomatic coup for Putin, isolated since the invasion. The Kremlin sought to portray renewed U.S. contacts as two superpowers looking to resolve various global problems, with Ukraine being just one.

Ukraine and its European allies are concerned a summit without Kyiv could allow Putin to get Trump on his side and force Ukraine into concessions.

"Any decisions that are without Ukraine are at the same time decisions against peace," Zelenskyy said. "They will not bring anything. These are dead decisions. They will never work."

European officials echoed that.

"As we work towards a sustainable and just peace, international law is clear: All temporarily occupied territories belong to Ukraine," European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. "A sustainable peace also means that aggression cannot be rewarded."

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said Sunday he believed Trump was "making sure that Putin is serious, and if he is not, then it will stop there."

"If he is serious, then from Friday onwards, the process will continue. Ukraine getting involved, the Europeans being involved," Rutte added.

Since last week, Putin spoke to Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, as well as the leaders of South Africa, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, the Kremlin said.

That suggested Putin perhaps wanted to brief Russia's most important allies about a potential settlement, said pro-Kremlin analyst Sergei Markov.

Bugs are popular pets in nature-loving Japan, buzzing with lessons about ecology and species

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The pet of choice in Japan, as much as cuddly kitties and playful puppies, is the humble bug.

The bug has been a key part of Japanese culture from the Heian era classic "The Tale of Genji" to popular modern-day manga and animation like "Mushishi," featuring insect-like supernatural creatures.

Japanese people appreciate the glitter of fireflies let loose in the garden or the gentle chirping of crickets kept in a little cage. You can feed the bug pets watermelon, but special jelly pet food for bugs is also available at stores. Naturally, bugs are on sale as well, with the more esoteric ones selling for 20,000 yen (\$133).

Here, crawl and buzzing critters are not just relegated to the scientific realm of the entomologist work-

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ing on a taxidermy of pinned butterflies. Celebrities boast about their fascination with bug-hunting as their hobbies just like a Western movie star might talk about his yacht or golf score.

The bug as companion is an essential part of what's observed, enjoyed and cared for in everyday life, reflecting a deeply rooted celebration of humankind's oneness with nature.

"They are so tiny. If you catch and study them, you're sure to discover something new," says Munetoshi Maruyama, professor of bioenvironmental sciences at Kyushu University, whose fascination with bugs began as a child, like many Japanese.

"They are so beautiful in shape and form."

One thrill that comes from studying insects is discovering a new species, simply because there are more than 1.2 million known kinds of insects, far more than mammals, which translates to a lot of undiscovered ones, said Maruyama, who has discovered 250 new insect species himself and shrugs that off as a relatively small number.

Japan differs from much of the West in encouraging interaction with bugs from childhood, with lots of books written for children, as well as classes and tours.

"In Japan, kids love bugs. You can even buy a net at a convenience store," he said. "It's fantastic that bugs can serve as a doorway to science."

The fact some insects go through metamorphoses, transforming from a larva to a butterfly, for instance, adds to the excitement, allowing kids to observe the stages of a life span, Maruyama said.

Tracing the movement of bugs can be a way to study global warming, too, while so-called "social insects," like bees and ants show intelligence in how they communicate, remember routes to find their way back to their nests or burrow elaborate underground paths as colonies.

Because bugs carry out important functions in the ecosystem, such as pollinating crops and becoming food for birds and other wildlife, human life isn't ultimately sustainable if all bugs were to disappear from earth.

The love affair with bugs was clear at an exhibit in Tokyo, aptly called "The Great Insect Exhibition," running through the end of this month at the Sky Tree Tower, where crowds of children gathered around trees inside indoor cages so they could observe and touch the various beetles.

One kind of rhinoceros beetle known as Hercules, which originated in the Caribbean but is now also found in Japan, is reputed to be the biggest beetle on record, although it's just several inches in length. Its back coat is a shiny khaki color, though such shades change depending on the season. The other parts, like its horn and delicate but spiky legs, are dark.

"We want the kids to feel the emotions and joy of actually touching the insects here. That's really positive for the workings of a child's brain," said Toyoji Suzuki, one of the event's organizers, who insisted everyone, including adults, touch the bottom of the beetles' horns and wings to feel how surprisingly soft and fluffy they are.

Four-year-old Asahi Yamauchi, who was at the exhibit with his grandmother and getting his photo taken inside a special installation that made it look like he was inside a beetle, loves bugs as much as he loves dinosaurs and has what he called a cute beetle as a pet at home.

"My friend had one so I wanted one," he said.

Europe and Ukraine leaders seek talks with Trump to defend their interests ahead of US-Russia summit

By LORNE COOK and KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Ukraine and its European backers on Monday sought talks with U.S. President Donald Trump in an effort to protect their security interests ahead of his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin later this week.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has so far been excluded from the U.S.-Russia summit in Alaska on Friday, and the Europeans are unlikely to be invited. All are wary that Putin and Trump might agree, without Ukraine's participation, to land swaps of Ukraine's territory or other terms that might favor Russia.

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German Chancellor Friedrich Merz organized a series of meetings for Wednesday. He invited Trump, U.S. Vice President JD Vance, Zelenskyy, NATO's chief and several European leaders to attend. The chancellery said the talks would focus on "further options for action to put pressure on Russia" as well as "preparations for possible peace negotiations and related issues of territorial claims and security."

The European Commission confirmed that President Ursula von der Leyen will take part "in the calls organized by Chancellor Merz." The leaders of Britain, Finland, France, Italy and Poland are also set to join the "various discussion groups," the chancellery said.

Ukraine and its backers in Europe insist that Trump and Putin cannot decide on land swaps behind their backs at the summit, but the Europeans concede that Moscow is unlikely to give up control of Ukrainian land it holds.

"There'll be some land swapping going on. I know that through Russia and through conversations with everybody. To the good, for the good of Ukraine. Good stuff, not bad stuff. Also, some bad stuff for both," Trump told reporters on Monday.

He did not confirm whether he would take part in the talks convened by Merz, but said: "I'm going to get everybody's ideas" before meeting with Putin.

Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine

Concerns have mounted in Europe that Kyiv may be pressed to give up land or accept other curbs on its sovereignty. Ukraine and its European allies reject the notion that Putin should lay claim to any territory even before agreeing to a ceasefire. They want a ceasefire first.

In Europe, a "coalition of the willing" has been formed by countries ready to deploy troops to Ukraine to police any future peace agreement with Russia. French President Emmanuel Macron, U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Merz are organizing a coalition meeting, also on Wednesday, to coordinate.

Poland is also part of that coalition. Prime Minister Donald Tusk said "it must be obvious to Poland and our European partners — and I hope to all of NATO — that state borders cannot be changed by force." Any land swaps or peace terms "must be agreed upon with Ukraine's participation," he said, according to Polish news agency PAP.

Still, it's hard to ignore the reality on the ground.

Russia in 2022 illegally annexed the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine's east, and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south, even though it doesn't fully control them. It also occupies the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized in 2014.

On the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, Russia's bigger army has made slow but costly progress with its summer offensive. The relentless pounding of urban areas has killed more than 12,000 Ukrainian civilians, according to U.N. estimates.

Acknowledging battlefield realities

"In the end, the issue of the fact that the Russians are controlling at this moment, factually, a part of Ukraine has to be on the table" in any peace talks after the Alaska summit, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said on CBS on Sunday.

Rutte said Ukraine's Western backers "can never accept that in a legal sense," but he suggested that they might tacitly acknowledge Russian control.

He compared it to the way that the U.S. hosted the diplomatic missions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from 1940 to 1991, "acknowledging that the Soviet Union was controlling those territories, but never accepting (it) in a legal sense."

Giving up any territory, especially without a ceasefire agreement first, would be almost impossible for Zelenskyy to sell at home after thousands of troops have died defending their land.

Ultimately, Putin is seen by some analysts as being not so much interested in land itself, but rather in a more "Russia-friendly" Ukraine with a malleable government unlikely to try to join NATO, just as pro-Russian breakaway regions in Georgia have complicated that country's quest to become a member.

The way ahead

Zelenskyy insists that a halt to fighting on the front line should be the starting point for negotiations, and the Europeans back him. They say that any future land swaps should be for Ukraine to decide and

not be a precondition for a ceasefire.

Claims on land could also be part of negotiations on the kind of security guarantees that Ukraine might receive to ensure another war does not break out.

The Europeans believe Kyiv's best defense is strong armed forces to deter Russia from striking again. They insist there should be no restrictions on the size of Ukraine's army and the equipment, arms and ammunition it can possess or sell.

Beyond that, they say Ukraine should not be constrained in its choice of joining the EU or being forced to become a neutral country.

The Trump administration has already taken Ukraine's membership of NATO off the table for the foreseeable future.

For the Europeans, maintaining unity is also key. After chairing a meeting of foreign ministers on Monday, EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said they had agreed to "work on more sanctions against Russia, more military support for Ukraine and more support for Ukraine's budgetary needs."

"Transatlantic unity, support to Ukraine and pressure on Russia is how we will end this war and prevent future Russian aggression in Europe," Kallas posted on social media.

A heat wave scorches parts of Europe and fans wildfire threat in France

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A heat wave gripping parts of Europe sent temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius (109.4 Fahrenheit) in southern France and the Western Balkans on Monday, fueling wildfires, triggering top-level weather alerts and forcing evacuations in several countries across what scientists warn is the world's fastest-warming continent.

Fires burned in France's Aude wine region, along Bulgaria's southern borders, near Montenegro's capital and coast, and in Turkey's northwest — and Hungary recorded record-breaking weekend temperatures.

2025 is predicted to be the second- or third-warmest year on record, according to the U.K.-based Carbon Brief. The extreme heat in Europe fits that global pattern — but the continent is heating far faster than the rest of the world.

Land temperatures have risen about 2.3 C above pre-industrial levels, nearly twice the global average, intensifying heat waves and driving record fire seasons.

With major outbreaks in Spain, Portugal and deadly blazes in Greece since late June, the burned area is already far above the seasonal norm.

France on high alert

On Monday, the French national weather authority, Météo-France, placed 12 departments on red alert, the country's highest heat warning, anticipating exceptional heat stretching from the Atlantic coast to the Mediterranean plains. Forty-one other departments were under lower-level orange alerts, as was the neighboring microstate of Andorra, between France and Spain.

"Don't be fooled — this isn't 'normal, it's summer.' It's not normal, it's a nightmare," agricultural climatologist Serge Zaka told broadcaster BFMTV from Montauban in France's Tarn-et-Garonne department, where the blistering heat pressed relentlessly throughout the day.

Social media images showed shuttered streets in Valence, residents shielding windows with foil to reflect the light, and tourists huddling under umbrellas along the Garonne in Toulouse. Across the south, café terraces stood empty as people sought cooler corners indoors.

In France's Aude department, a patchwork of vineyards and Mediterranean scrubland, hundreds of firefighters remained in the rolling wine country guarding the edges of a massive, deadly blaze that scorched 16,000 hectares (40,000 acres) last week. Officials say the fire is under control but warn it will not be fully extinguished for weeks, with hot spots still smoldering and at risk of reigniting.

The red alert in France has been issued only eight times since it was created in 2004 after a deadly sum-

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mer the year before. It is reserved for extreme, prolonged heat with major health risks and the potential to disrupt daily life. The designation gives local officials powers to cancel outdoor events, close public venues and alter school or summer camp schedules.

The heat wave, France's second of the summer, began Friday and is expected to last all week, carrying into the Aug. 15 holiday weekend. It is already pushing northward, with 38 C (100.4 F) forecast in the Centre-Val de Loire region and up to 34 C (93.2 F) in Paris.

Across the English Channel, the U.K.'s Met Office expects the country's fourth heat wave of the summer to peak around 33 C (90 F) in London on Tuesday. The U.K. Health Security Agency issued a yellow health alert for older adults and those with medical conditions.

Western Balkans

Montenegro reported wildfires near the capital Podgorica and along the Adriatic coast, prompting urgent appeals for help from neighboring countries. Families were evacuated from an area north of the capital as army units worked to protect the ruins of the ancient city of Duklja.

Senior emergency official Nikola Bojanovic described the situation as "catastrophic," with strong winds driving the flames. Authorities urged residents to conserve drinking water to avoid restrictions.

Fires also burned above Canj, a popular coastal resort.

Bosnia's southern city of Mostar reached 43 C (109 F), while Croatia's Dubrovnik hit 34 C (93 F) in the morning.

"It's too hot, this is not normal," said Fatima Safro, a resident of Mostar. "It's very hot even during the night."

In Serbia, farmers on Suva Planina mountain renewed appeals for emergency water supplies for livestock after streams and ponds dried up.

Maximum fire danger alerts in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, temperatures were expected to exceed 40 C (104 F) Monday at the day's peak, with maximum fire danger alerts in place.

Nearly 200 fires have been reported; most have been brought under control, localized and extinguished, but the situation remains "very challenging," said Alexander Dzhartov, head of the national fire safety unit. Three major blazes continue along the borders with Greece and Turkey, including one near Strumyani that reignited after three weeks.

More than 100 firefighters and emergency personnel are battling flames in rugged terrain unreachable by vehicles, supported by army helicopters and two Swedish aircraft.

Evacuations in Turkey

In Turkey, a wildfire fueled by high temperatures and strong winds forced authorities to evacuate holiday homes and a university campus and to suspend maritime traffic in the country's northwest.

The fire broke out in an agricultural field in the province of Canakkale and spread into surrounding forestland, just two days after firefighting teams had contained a similar blaze in the area. Canakkale Gov. Omer Toraman said the Dardanelles Strait — the narrow waterway linking the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara — was closed to allow water-dropping planes and helicopters to operate safely.

Hungary records record-breaking heat

Sunday brought a new national high of 39.9 C (104 F) on Sunday in the southeast, breaking a record set in 1948. Budapest also recorded a city record at 38.7 C (101.6 F).

Authorities imposed a nationwide fire ban amid extreme heat and drought.

Australia will recognize a Palestinian state, Prime Minister Albanese says

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Australia will recognize a Palestinian state, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Monday, joining the leaders of France, Britain and Canada in signaling they would do so.

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His remarks followed weeks of urging from within his Cabinet and from many in Australia to recognize a Palestinian state and amid growing criticism from officials in his government over suffering in Gaza, which Albanese on Monday referred to as a "humanitarian catastrophe."

Australia's government has also criticized plans announced in recent days by Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu for a sweeping new military offensive in Gaza.

Albanese says conditions must be met for Palestine recognition

Albanese told reporters after a Cabinet meeting Monday that Australia's decision to recognize a Palestinian state will be formalized at the United Nations General Assembly in September. The acknowledgement was "predicated on commitments Australia has received from the Palestinian Authority," Albanese said.

Those commitments included no role for Hamas in a Palestinian government, demilitarization of Gaza and the holding of elections, he said.

"A two-state solution is humanity's best hope to break the cycle of violence in the Middle East and to bring an end to the conflict, suffering and starvation in Gaza," Albanese said.

"The situation in Gaza has gone beyond the world's worst fears," he said. "The Israeli government continues to defy international law and deny sufficient aid, food and water to desperate people, including children."

Netanyahu rebuked Australia before the announcement

Ahead of Albanese's announcement, Netanyahu on Sunday criticized Australia and other European countries that have moved to recognize a Palestinian state.

"To have European countries and Australia march into that rabbit hole ... this canard, is disappointing and I think it's actually shameful," the Israeli leader said.

Australia has designated Hamas a terrorist entity and Albanese repeated Monday his government's calls for the group to return Israeli hostages held since Oct. 7, 2023.

The Australian leader last week spoke to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose authority administers parts of the occupied West Bank, supports a two-state solution and cooperates with Israel on security matters. Abbas has agreed to conditions with Western leaders, including Albanese, as they prepared to recognize a Palestinian state.

"This is an opportunity to deliver self-determination for the people of Palestine in a way that isolates Hamas, disarms it and drives it out of the region once and for all," Albanese said. He added that Hamas did not support a two-state solution.

Recognition is growing, but is largely symbolic without the U.S.

Nearly 150 of the 193 members of the United Nations have already recognized Palestinian statehood, most of them decades ago. The United States and other Western powers have held off, saying Palestinian statehood should be part of a final agreement resolving the decades-old Middle East conflict.

Recognition announcements are largely symbolic and are rejected by Israel, and by the United States — the only country with any real leverage over Netanyahu. Israel's leader said this month that he would not accept Palestinian Authority involvement in a government for Palestine.

A two-state solution would see a state of Palestine created alongside Israel in most or all of the occupied West Bank, the war-ravaged Gaza Strip and annexed east Jerusalem, territories Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast war that the Palestinians want for their state.

Albanese dismissed suggestions Monday that the move was solely symbolic.

"This is a practical contribution towards building momentum," he said. "This is not Australia acting alone."

Albanese had discussed Australia's decision with the leaders of Britain, France, New Zealand and Japan, he said. He also had a "long discussion" with Netanyahu this month, he added.

In neighboring New Zealand, Foreign Minister Winston Peters said Monday his government "will carefully weigh up its position" on recognizing a Palestinian state before making a formal decision in September.

"New Zealand has been clear for some time that our recognition of a Palestinian state is a matter of when, not if," Peters said in a statement.

Australian Jewish and Palestinian groups criticized the move

After Albanese's announcement Monday, Israel's envoy to Australia said the move undermined Israel's

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security.

"By recognising a Palestinian state now, Australia elevates the position of Hamas, a group it acknowledges as a terrorist organisation," Amir Maimon posted to X.

"This commitment removes any incentive or diplomatic pressure for the Palestinians to do the things that have always stood in the way of ending the conflict," spokesperson for the Executive Council of the Australian Jewry Alex Ryvchin said in a statement.

Meanwhile, President of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network Nasser Mashni decried Albanese's recognition as too late and "completely meaningless" while the country continues to trade with Israel.

He told reporters in Melbourne on Monday that the move would do nothing to end the "ongoing genocide in Gaza which has been live streamed for the entire world for two years."

Today in History: August 12, Charlottesville car attack

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 12, the 224th day of 2025. There are 141 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 12, 2017, a driver sped into a crowd of people peacefully protesting a white nationalist rally in the Virginia college town of Charlottesville, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring more than a dozen others. (The attacker, James Alex Fields, was sentenced to life in prison on 29 federal hate crime charges, and life plus 419 years on state charges.)

Also on this date:

In 1867, President Andrew Johnson sparked a move to impeach him as he defied Congress by suspending Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, with whom he had clashed over Reconstruction policies. (Johnson was acquitted by the Senate.)

In 1898, fighting in the Spanish-American War came to an end.

In 1909, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, home to the Indianapolis 500, first opened.

In 1944, during World War II, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., eldest son of Joseph and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, was killed with his co-pilot when their explosives-laden Navy plane blew up over England.

In 1953, the Soviet Union conducted a secret test of its first hydrogen bomb.

In 1960, the first balloon communications satellite — the Echo 1 — was launched by the United States from Cape Canaveral.

In 1981, IBM introduced its first personal computer, the model 5150, at a press conference in New York.

In 1985, the world's worst single-aircraft disaster occurred as a crippled Japan Airlines Boeing 747 on a domestic flight crashed into a mountain, killing 520 people. Four passengers survived.

In 1990, fossil collector Sue Hendrickson found one of the largest and best preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex skeletons ever discovered; nicknamed "Sue" after Hendrickson, the skeleton is now on display at Chicago's Field Museum.

In 1994, in baseball's eighth work stoppage since 1972, players went on strike rather than allow team owners to limit their salaries.

In 2000, the Russian nuclear submarine Kursk and its 118-man crew were lost during naval exercises in the Barents Sea.

In 2013, James "Whitey" Bulger, the feared Boston mob boss who became one of the nation's most-wanted fugitives, was convicted in a string of 11 killings and dozens of other gangland crimes, many of them committed while he was said to be an FBI informant. (Bulger was sentenced to life; he was fatally beaten at a West Virginia prison in 2018, hours after being transferred from a facility in Florida.)

In 2022, Salman Rushdie, the author whose writing led to death threats from Iran in the 1980s, was attacked and stabbed in the neck by a man who rushed the stage as he was about to give a lecture in western New York.

Today's Birthdays: Investor and philanthropist George Soros is 95. Actor George Hamilton is 86. Singer-musician Mark Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 76. Singer Kid Creole (Kid Creole and the Coconuts) is 75. Film

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director Chen Kaige is 73. Jazz guitarist Pat Metheny is 71. Actor Bruce Greenwood is 69. Basketball Hall of Famer Lynette Woodard is 66. Rapper Sir Mix-A-Lot is 62. Actor Peter Krause (KROW'-zuh) is 60. Tennis Hall of Famer Pete Sampras is 54. Actor-comedian Michael Ian Black is 54. Actor Yvette Nicole Brown is 54. Actor Casey Affleck is 50. Boxer Tyson Fury is 37. Actor Lakeith Stanfield is 34. NBA All-Star Khris Middleton is 34. Actor Cara Delevingne (DEHL'-eh-veen) is 33. Tennis player Stefanos Tsitsipas is 27.