

Groton Daily Independent

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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

Sunday, August 17

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

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

Monday, Aug. 18

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, mixed fruit, whole wheat bread.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Senior Citizens meet at Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Groton Area Staff Development Day

Boys Golf at Meadow Creek Golf Course at Sioux Valley Invitational, 10 a.m.

Open House at Groton Area Elementary and MS/HS, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sixth Graders meet at 4:30 p.m. in the Gym.

Tuesday, Aug. 19

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Senior Menu: Tuna casserole with peas, Antigua blend, Mandarin oranges, breadstick.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Girls Soccer at Garretson, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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1440

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

Trump Meets Putin

President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin are set to meet at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, at 3:30 pm ET today to discuss the war in Ukraine. The talk—which will be conducted one-on-one with two translators present—will be followed by lunch with their delegations and a joint press conference.

While Putin and Trump have had several phone calls this year, this will be their first in-person meeting since 2018. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will not attend, though he did join Trump and other NATO leaders in a virtual meeting Wednesday. During that call, Trump affirmed his commitment to a ceasefire and agreed not to discuss peace deal parameters, including possible territorial divisions, without Ukraine present. Putin reportedly seeks to add US-Russia nuclear arms relations to today's agenda. Trump told reporters his aim is to secure a meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy.

Mind-Reader Study

Stanford University researchers have successfully translated patients' inner monologues with up to 74% accuracy, according to a study released yesterday.

Brain-computer interfaces have become increasingly adept at helping people with neurodegenerative diseases communicate. A team of researchers took this further by studying not just attempted speech but silent thoughts. They implanted microelectrodes in the brains of four participants with paralysis from either ALS or a brainstem stroke. They then instructed patients to speak or imagine a set of words. Both activated similar neural pathways in the brain's motor cortex region (responsible for speech), with imagined speech showing weaker activity. The team used AI to interpret inner thoughts from a vocabulary of up to 125,000 words.

To initiate interpretation, patients were given a password (instructed to think "chitty chitty bang bang") to prevent the computers from continually interpreting their thoughts. Researchers hope the study will help patients communicate more quickly.

'Baby Shark' Suit

South Korea's Supreme Court dismissed a US composer's \$21.6K lawsuit alleging the viral children's hit "Baby Shark" was plagiarized, ending a six-year legal battle. The court ruled Jonathan Wright, also known as Johnny Only, lacked the originality needed for copyright protection in his 2011 version, as both his and Pinkfong's 2015 adaptation were based on a traditional campfire song more than a century old. The ruling reaffirmed that the melody remains in the public domain.

"Baby Shark" became a global phenomenon after Pinkfong's YouTube video exploded, boasting roughly 16 billion views by 2025 and standing as the most watched YouTube video of all time. It reached No. 32 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2019 and was the first YouTube video to cross 10 billion views in 2022. The song sparked social media trends, like the #BabySharkChallenge.

"Baby Shark" remains a major revenue driver for Pinkfong, earning \$32.6M in the first half of 2025. The brand has grown into TV and Netflix series, films, apps, and even a collaboration with SeaWorld.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and Paralympics to sell naming rights to the competition venues, a first for the Olympic Games.

LL Cool J tapped to host 2025 MTV Video Music Awards (Sept. 7); will be simulcast on CBS, along with MTV and Paramount+, for first time.

The 2025-26 English Premier League season kicks off today; see predicted order of finish and previews for all 20 teams.

NBA approves sale of Boston Celtics to private equity mogul Bill Chisholm at a \$6.1B valuation, a record price for an American sports team.

Science & Technology

Leaked internal Meta document reveals the company's AI chatbots were allowed to engage in "sensual" or "romantic" conversations with minors; company says it has since struck the guideline; see investigative report.

AI drug discovery platform helps researchers sift through tens of millions of potential drug compounds to identify new classes of antibiotics; two candidates cleared drug-resistant gonorrhea and staph infections in mice.

Scientists create new stable carbon structure, the first such demonstration since "buckyballs"—ball-shaped arrangements of 60 carbon atoms—in 1990.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close near flatline (S&P 500 +0.0%, Dow -0.0%, Nasdaq -0.0%) as US producer price index—key inflation metric tracking wholesale product prices—shows 0.9% rise in July, the highest monthly gain in three years.

Average US 30-year fixed mortgage rate drops to 6.58%, the lowest level since October.

Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway reveals roughly \$1.6B stake in UnitedHealth.

Nearly 16% of venture-backed deals in 2025 so far have been down rounds, when a startup raises money at a lower valuation than in its previous funding round; figure marks a decade high, per new data.

Politics & World Affairs

California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) will call a special election Nov. 4 to vote on redrawn maps in an effort to secure five more Democratic House seats in midterms; follows Texas' plan to redistrict in favor of Republicans.

Florida announces new \$6M detention center, "Deportation Depot," opening in two weeks; will house over 1,300 people.

Supreme Court allows Mississippi law requiring social media to verify children's ages to stay in effect for now.

Tropical Storm Erin expected to reach hurricane strength later today, with winds of at least 74 mph—first hurricane of 2025 Atlantic season; see path.

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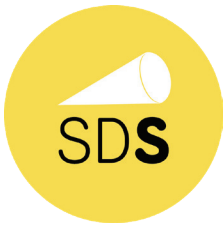
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Brown County 4-H Royalty:
King Hunter Kern
Queen Ashlynn Warrington
(Photo from Robyn Warrington's FB Page)



A cloud burst happened in Groton this morning with .39 falling in a matter of minutes and a wind gust of 38 mph was recorded.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota's only medical school will move from Vermillion to Sioux Falls

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

SIOUX FALLS — The University of South Dakota announced Thursday it plans to move the state's only medical school from Vermillion to Sioux Falls.

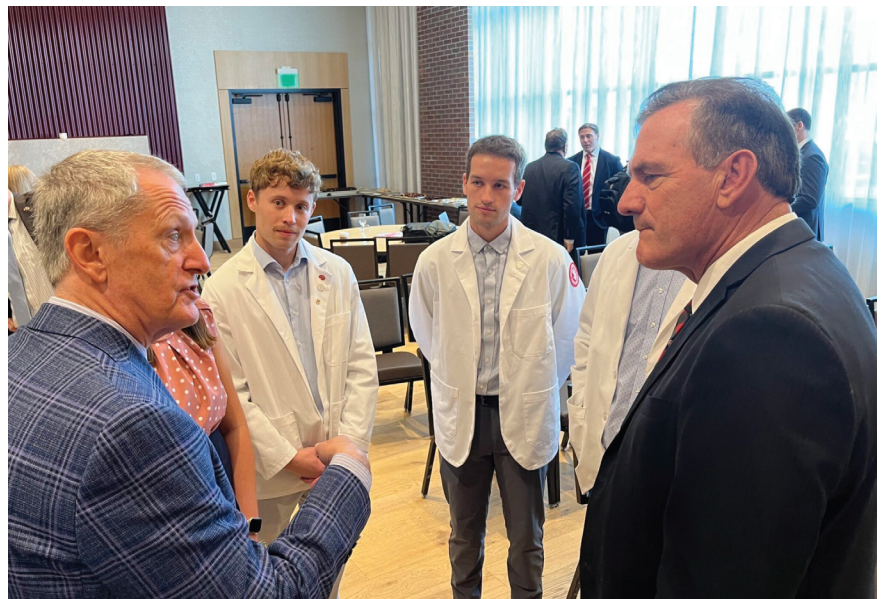
Starting in 2027, students will attend temporary locations provided by Sanford Health. USD President Sheila Gestring said the university plans to build a new Sioux Falls facility in seven to 10 years, costing about \$150 million. She hopes most of the funding will come from donors.

The medical school has been in Vermillion for 51 years.

The move will increase the school's competitiveness and improve clinic and research access for beginning medical students, Gestring said. Two of South Dakota's three major health systems — Sanford and Avera — are based in Sioux Falls, and there is also a Veterans Affairs hospital in the city.

Gov. Larry Rhoden said the move will benefit South Dakota.

"Students standing here with us will have more opportunities for clinical experiences, and they'll develop closer ties to our South Dakota health systems," Rhoden said, gesturing to dozens of USD medical students at the announcement. "When they graduate, we should expect to see more of them stay right here in South Dakota."



From left, Tim Ridgway, vice president of health affairs and Sanford School of Medicine dean, speaks with medical students including Tanner Smith and Tanner Berg, as well as South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden, at the Canopy by Hilton in downtown Sioux Falls on Aug. 14, 2025. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Vermillion leaders respond

Vermillion's population is just under 12,000, making it one of the smallest cities with a medical school in the nation.

There are 57 medical students living in Vermillion, while most other students already commute from Sioux Falls.

It'll also impact 24 faculty, 15 researchers and 29 staff within the medical school, Gestring told South Dakota Searchlight. About half of the 24 faculty members commute from Sioux Falls. The university will offer others based in Vermillion relocation packages or the opportunity to switch positions within the university.

Vermillion Mayor Jon Cole responded to Searchlight with a written statement.

"The most difficult part of this decision is its impact on the faculty and staff who have built their careers

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and lives here in Vermillion," he said. "We recognize the university's challenging position and understand the factors that led to this choice, but we also know that change is never easy."

The loss of dozens of students and families from Vermillion will hurt, said City Council President Rich Holland, but the move could open up some needed housing.

"I won't say I'm looking forward to it, but I understand it," Holland said in a phone interview. "It's a shift that needs to be done for the benefit of the students."

Republican South Dakota state Sen. Sydney Davis, whose district includes Vermillion, said she's heard some residents say they're worried the town is losing the university to Sioux Falls. But she said other programs at the Vermillion campus are growing, and the move will provide better efficiencies for the programs already existing on campus.

Gestring said the university doesn't have plans to wholly relocate any other programs to Sioux Falls. The university has expanded several programs to Sioux Falls to meet workforce needs, including education and nursing, and plans more expansion.

The move to Sioux Falls will open up part of the Lee Medicine Building on the Vermillion campus, which houses the medical school and the School of Health Sciences. University officials plan to move some programs housed in the Akeley-Lawrence Science Center into the vacated space due to structural problems in the center.

The move will allow those programs to grow in the larger space and could benefit the Vermillion community in the future, Gestring said.

"Be patient," Gestring said. "My hope is that we will replace those 57 students with a whole lot more than 57 students."

Students react

Some students attending the event were supportive of the move.

Fourth-year medical student Tanner Berg plans to go into anesthesiology and practice in South Dakota. He formerly lived in Vermillion and said it was difficult to find housing.

Vermillion is "isolated" from research and clinicians, he added, and moving to Sioux Falls will improve access and students' education.

Earlier access to research will improve education as well, said Tim Ridgway, vice president of health affairs and Sanford School of Medicine dean.

The move will allow students to learn from professionals, apply their experience right away and think more critically, he said, which will improve treatment for South Dakotans.

"That's when they retain the information," Ridgway said. "That's when they become true physicians."

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.

COMMENTARY

Solar energy can strengthen both South Dakota's economy and our independence

by Rick Bell

In South Dakota, independence isn't just a value — it's a way of life. We take pride in working hard, running our businesses, farms, and supporting our communities. We also enjoy being as independent as possible when it comes to how we chose to live.

Today, that way of life is being challenged by rising energy costs and increased pressure on our electric grid. One solution is the Solar for All program — a \$7 billion grant program through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with \$62.5 million earmarked for South Dakota via the Coalition for Green Capital, who applied to administer the program in the state. These grants were awarded last year and were designed to bring renewable and affordable energy to low- and moderate-income households here. However, the EPA confirmed last week that it has formally ended the Solar for All grant program.

Rescinding already obligated federal funds may violate existing contracts and statutory provisions, so it's possible that legal challenges may occur. If the decision is not reversed, it will be a big loss to growing our independence and the many new opportunities it would provide to communities all across the state.

South Dakota faces some of the highest per capita energy use in the country. Our cold winters and increasingly hot summers mean most homes rely heavily on electricity for heat, cooling, and daily essentials. That high demand drives up costs and puts pressure on a grid that wasn't built for today's energy needs. When the grid fails, a rural state like South Dakota is hit especially hard — losing heat, refrigeration, and even the ability to water livestock.

That's why local, reliable energy matters — and solar power is a smart solution. In 2023, Dakota Rural Action conducted a study to look at how solar power could benefit South Dakotans. The results were clear: distributed solar (which simply means solar panels on people's homes or businesses) reduces utility costs for all customers, even those who don't have solar panels, by easing strain on the grid and cutting down on expensive peak energy demand.

South Dakota is endowed with an abundant amount of solar radiation. Did you know that we used to be known as the "Sunshine State"? Yet less than 2% of electricity generated in South Dakota comes from solar. So we have an enormous untapped resource here that can be used to generate electrical power.

Another significant opportunity of solar is its economic impact. Developing more solar power means more local jobs right here in South Dakota. From installing panels to managing systems, repairing equipment, and overseeing projects, the solar industry creates good-paying, long-term careers right here at home. Solar for All funding would help expand job training programs, giving more South Dakotans the skills they need to enter this growing field and support their families without having to move away.

Beyond jobs, solar energy keeps more money circulating in local economies. We can generate more of our own electricity and keep those dollars in our local towns and counties. Solar systems can even be



A portion of the Wild Springs Solar project near New Underwood, just prior to going operational in March 2024. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

installed on farms and ranches, cutting costs and boosting producers' bottom lines.

And importantly, solar is a clean, domestic resource. South Dakota is already a leader in providing clean renewable energy to our state's energy mix through wind and hydropower. Solar power complements that strength, helping us stay on the leading edge of energy development while protecting the air, water and land our livelihoods depend on.

As South Dakotans, we know how to take care of our own and make the most of what we have. Investing in solar energy is one more way we can build a stronger, more independent future that supports our families, grows local jobs and keeps our communities thriving.

Solar for All would offer us a unique opportunity to bring the benefits of solar power home to all South Dakotans.

Richard Bell, professional engineer, lives in Rapid City and is president of Sustainable Environmental Energy Engineering. He's also on the board of directors of Dakota Rural Action.

Happy birthday, Social Security. Unless Congress acts, full benefits end in 7 years.

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed a proclamation celebrating the 90th anniversary of Social Security on Thursday, though he offered no plans for avoiding insolvency and a steep drop-off in benefits within the next decade.

Trump, who campaigned on "saving" the income stabilization program for America's seniors, said during an appearance in the Oval Office that Republicans would keep the program going.

But neither Trump, nor Republican leaders in Congress, have advanced legislation that would avoid a decrease in Social Security benefits in 2033, or begun to seriously address the issue.

"In the campaign I made a sacred pledge to our seniors that I would always protect Social Security and under this administration we're keeping that promise and strengthening Social Security for generations to come,"

Trump said. "You keep hearing stories that in six years, seven years, Social Security will be gone. And it will be if the Democrats ever get involved because they don't know what they're doing.

"But it's going to be around a long time with us. Very much, you'll be surprised to hear some of the numbers."



President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act on Aug. 14, 1935. (Photo by FPG/Archive Photos/Getty Images)

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'One big, beautiful' law speeds up fund depletion

The latest Social Security trustees report, released earlier this year, shows that without changes the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance trust fund will no longer be able to pay full benefits starting in 2033.

"At that time, the fund's reserves will become depleted and continuing program income will be sufficient to pay 77 percent of total scheduled benefits," the report states.

Republicans' "big, beautiful" law will, however, speed up that timeline.

Karen Glenn, chief actuary for the Social Security Administration, wrote in a letter released earlier this month that the lower tax rates in the GOP law will reduce the amount of revenue flowing into the trust fund.

When combined with "increased program cost" associated with the new law, Glenn wrote "the reserve depletion date for the OASI Trust Fund is accelerated from the first quarter of 2033 to the fourth quarter of 2032."

Bipartisanship needed

Republicans cannot restructure Social Security on their own and will need to negotiate with Democrats in the years to come if lawmakers want to avoid insolvency.

The budget reconciliation process, which GOP lawmakers used to pass their "big, beautiful bill," cannot be used to address Social Security, making bipartisanship the only path to avoiding a decline in benefits for America's retirees.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget wrote in a post published Thursday that "solutions are needed soon to prevent insolvency and the statutorily required benefit cut."

Without a new law to address the financial struggles facing the program, CRFB wrote, a "typical couple retiring just after insolvency will face an \$18,400 cut in annual benefits."

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the law enacting Social Security on Aug. 14, 1935.

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

New Miss South Dakota works to squeeze seven months of fundraising into three

BY: BENJAMIN CHASE

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article, which was intended to publish in a recent edition of the Huron Plainsman, is being published here at the request of the Plainsman's managing editor following the newspaper's sudden closure last week.

HURON — Before May 31, Huron native Jamee Kattner had a plan for how things were going to happen this year. She had recently graduated from South Dakota State University and had a teaching job lined up in the fall.

She had one more thing before her summer, and it altered her next year and her whole life.

She participated for the second time in the Miss South Dakota competition in Brookings on the final weekend of May, and the music education major focused her community service initiative and her talent around music. When the final winners were announced, Kattner received the crown from reigning Miss South Dakota Joelle Simpson.

A change this year in the Miss America program meant a big change for Kattner, though, as the national competition was moved from late December to early September in Orlando, Florida, with the final award show on Sept. 7.

That means squeezing approximately seven months of fundraising into just three months, so Kattner has been busy.

"A 'whirlwind' is the exact word I use all the time," she said. "One moment, you're competing, enjoying the experience. You hope you win, of course, but you enjoy making friends and the fun of the competition.

"Then you win. Now, you have deadlines and all of these other things you need to be doing."

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Jamie Kattner after being crowned Miss South Dakota on May 31, 2025. (Courtesy of Miss South Dakota scholarship competition)

Kattner is entering the home stretch of her fundraising events. She is doing a trunk show at the Huron Country Club on Aug. 23, beginning at 2:30 p.m. She will show off her wardrobe for the Miss America competition, and musical entertainment will be provided.

In the time between planned fundraisers, she will continue doing events around the state, hoping that those appearances also bring in funds toward her trip to Orlando. Her final event will be singing the national anthem for the Wednesday night bull riding event at the South Dakota State Fair before she leaves the next day for Orlando.

Through Aug. 3, Kattner had logged 4,160 miles for appearances as Miss South Dakota. She said her best experience was being at Mount Rushmore on Independence Day, where she had the opportunity to sing the national anthem.

"I was so excited to meet everyone, but then, they're all excited to meet me," Kattner recalled. "I think all of the people I met that night were from a different place."

Amid the crowds, though, there's also been a feeling of isolation.

"I'm the only person I know who is going through this, so others can't really relate at the same level," she said.

To that end, Kattner has leaned on the "Forever Miss South Dakotas," previous winners of the award who offer advice and any assistance they can in her fundraising and preparation for the September competition, not to mention a place to stay during her extensive travels. She specifically noted that Huron and the Huron area have an abundance of previous Miss South Dakota winners (Carrie Wintle, 2018, Iroquois; Miranda Mack, 2017, Redfield; Loren Vaillancourt, 2010, Huron; Callee Bauman, 2006, Huron; Sara Frankenstein, 1998, Tulare; Gwen Resick, 1973, Clark; Sandra Hart, 1952, Huron; and Myrna Clemenson, 1948, Conde).

Kattner is attempting to be the first Miss America from South Dakota. In 1950, Irene O'Connor of Burbank finished runner-up, and four other previous winners finished in the top 15, most recently Alexandra Hoffman of Eureka in 2008.

"When I called up the school where I had a job for this coming year and told them that I wouldn't be able to be there because I won, they said, 'This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,'" Kattner said. "That's exactly how I've felt throughout this experience. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I'm enjoying every minute of it."

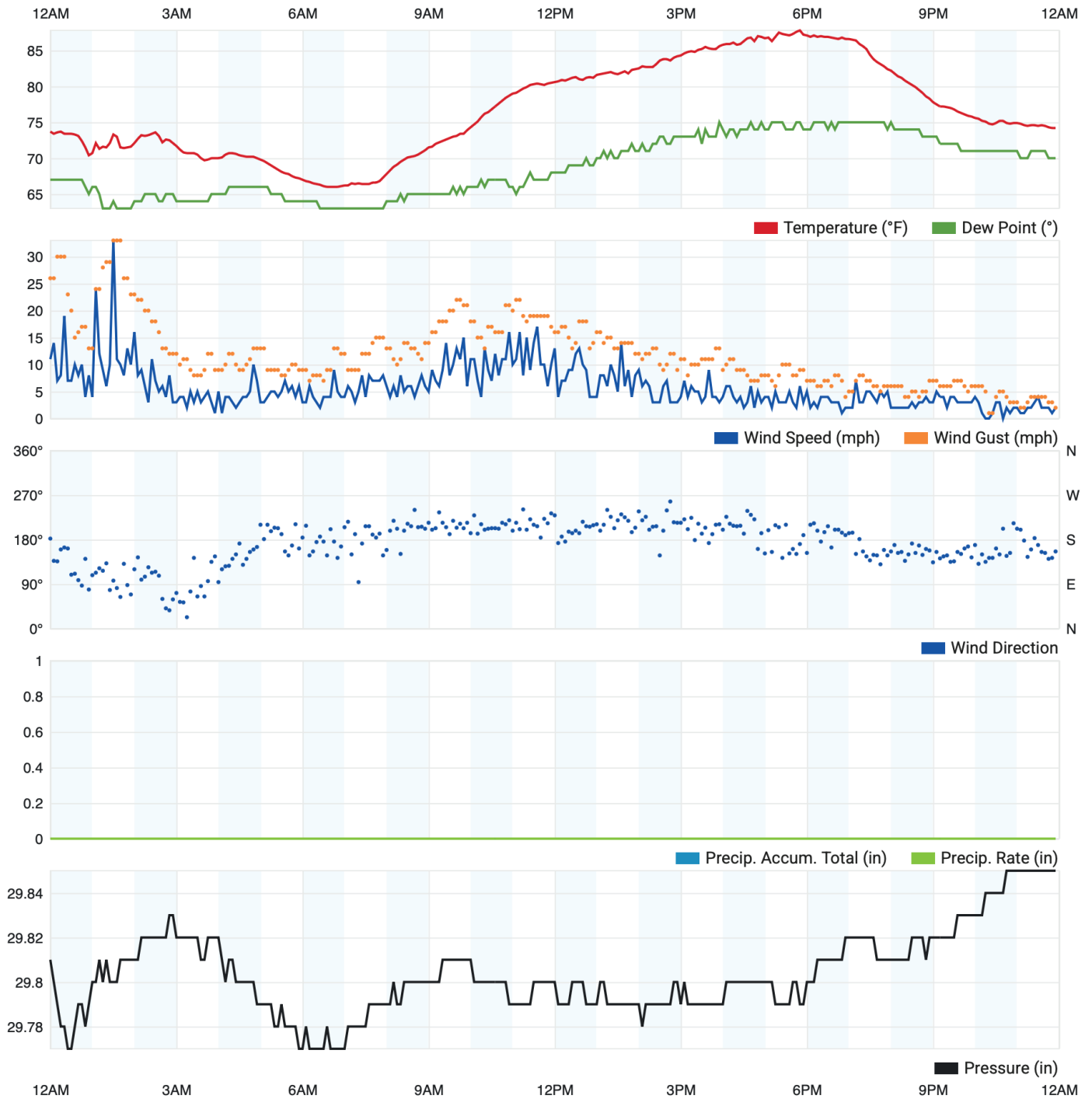
Benjamin Chase was the managing editor of the Huron Plainsman. He is also one of the co-directors of the Internet Baseball Writers Association of America. He lives in Huron with his wife, four kids and three dogs.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 14, 2025



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Today



High: 81 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

Tonight



Low: 64 °F

Chance
T-storms

Saturday



High: 78 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

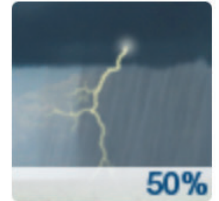
Saturday Night



Low: 65 °F

Chance
T-storms then
T-storms
Likely

Sunday



High: 79 °F

Chance
T-storms

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

TIMING

**This Evening Through
Overnight**

PRIMARY THREATS



DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS OF
60+ MPH



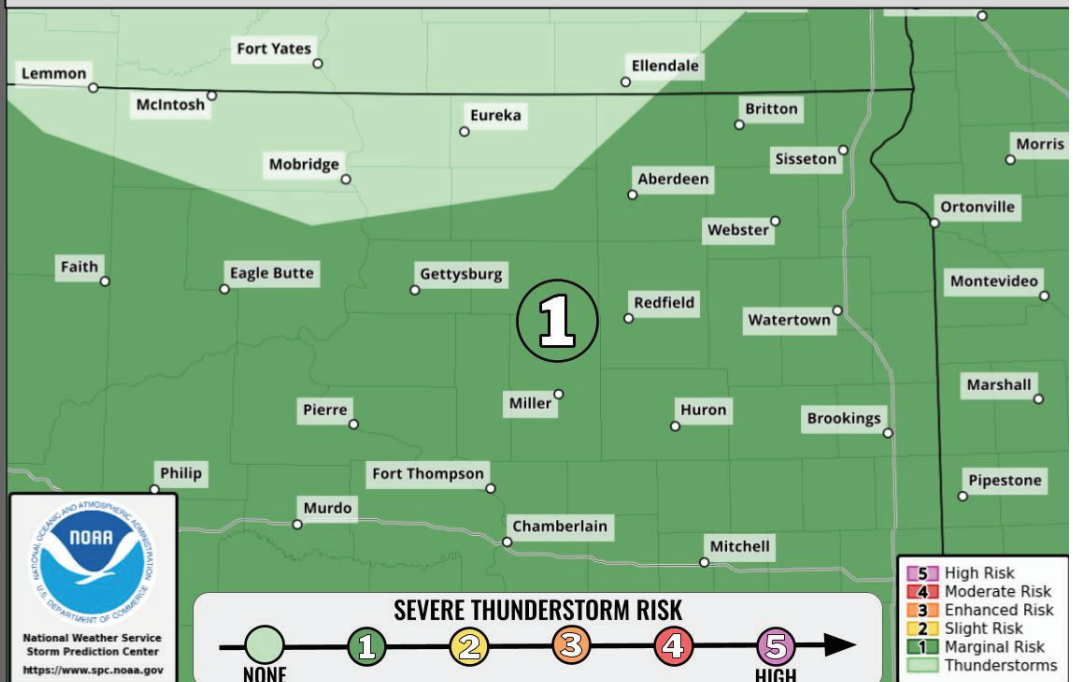
LARGE HAIL
(QUARTER SIZE)

SECONDARY THREATS



HEAVY
RAIN

Severe Storms Possible This Evening



There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for isolated severe storms Friday evening and overnight over central and eastern SD. Damaging wind gusts of 60 mph and large hail around an inch in diameter are the primary threats, along with heavy rainfall potential.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated severe storms
possible.

TIMING

Evening into Overnight

PRIMARY THREATS


DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS OF
60 MPH

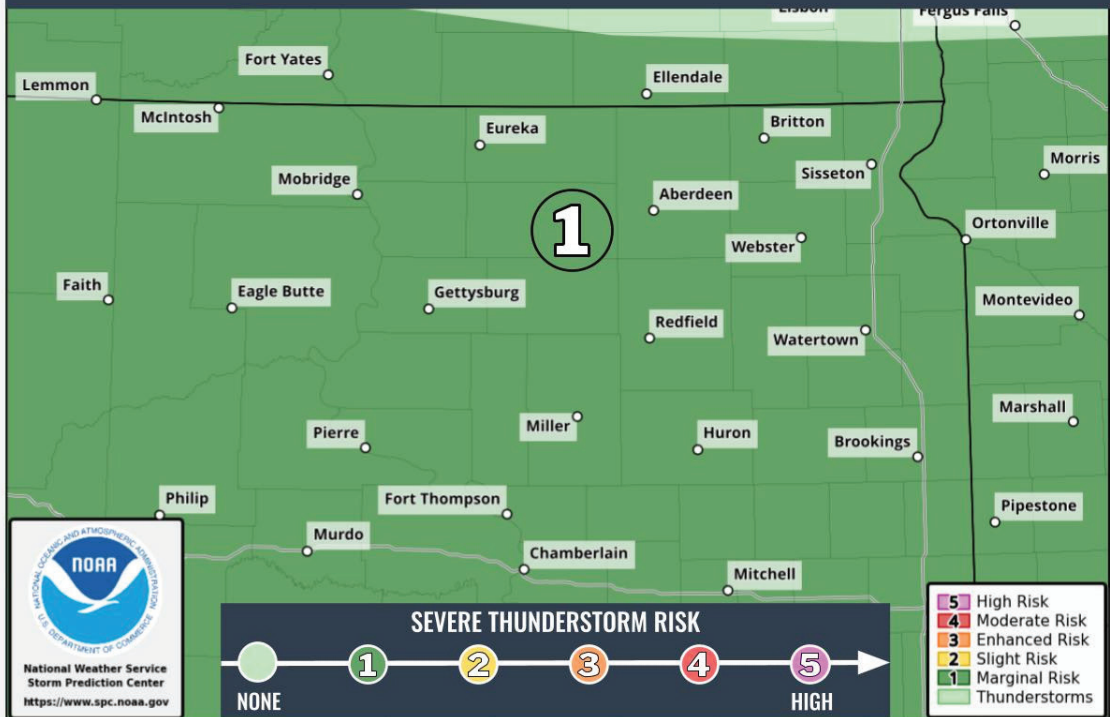

LARGE HAIL
(QUARTER SIZE)

SECONDARY THREATS


ISOLATED
TORNADO(ES)
POSSIBLE


HEAVY
RAINFALL

SEVERE STORMS POSSIBLE SATURDAY



There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for isolated severe storms Saturday evening and overnight over central and eastern SD. Damaging wind gusts of 60 mph and large hail around an inch in diameter are the primary threats. There is also the threat for heavy rainfall as well as for an isolated tornado or two to occur.

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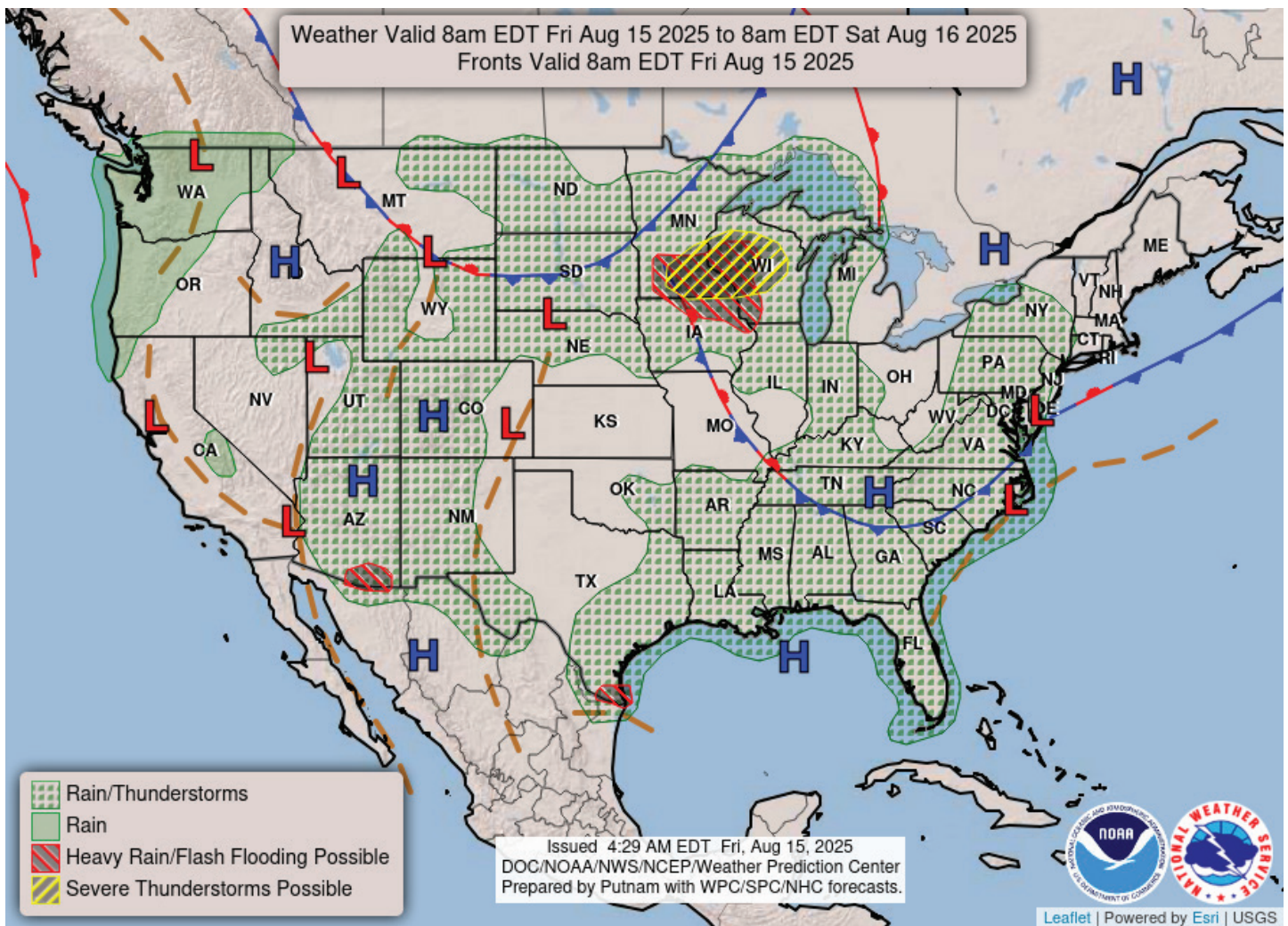
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 88 °F at 5:48 PM
Heat Index: 99 °F at 5:30 PM
Low Temp: 66 °F at 6:42 AM
Wind: 33 mph at 1:29 AM
Precip: : 0.31

Day length: 14 hours, 8 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1937
Record Low: 42 in 1895
Average High: 83
Average Low: 57
Average Precip in August.: 1.08
Precip to date in August: 1.74
Average Precip to date: 15.18
Precip Year to Date: 16.80
Sunset Tonight: 8:41:11 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:33:35 am



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Today in Weather History

August 15, 1886: A tornado moved northeast from 5 miles southwest of Newark in Marshall County, through town and into North Dakota. Only three buildings were reportedly undamaged at Newark, and a bartender at a saloon was killed. Three people died in two homes on adjoining farms 2 miles southwest of town. A saddle from a Newark stable was carried for a half mile. In North Dakota, houses and barns were damaged along the Wild River. This tornado was estimated as an F3.

August 15, 1987: On this day the largest hailstone was reported in Brown County. The size of the hailstone as 4.5 inches in diameter, and fell on the southwest corner of Warner. This storm also produced F1 tornado that touchdown about 2 miles southwest of Warner. An estimated wind gust of 60 mph was also reported about 2 miles NNW of Stratford.

August 15, 2011: Slow moving thunderstorms across parts of northern Roberts County produced anywhere from 4 to 8 inches of rainfall resulting in flash flooding. The town of New Effington was affected with many roads along with several homes flooded. Sandbagging took place to keep the water from the school. Highway 127 from New Effington to Hammer was flooded in several spots. The floodwaters remained for several days afterward with several roads flooded.

1787: Tornadoes were reported in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Wethersfield, Connecticut was hard hit by the tornado outbreak. There, a woman and her family were caught in the open. She and her son were killed. Clothes from the family farm were carried three miles away. This event is regarded to be the most significant tornado outbreak in early New England history.

1946 - Saint Louis, MO, was deluged with a record 8.78 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1967 - The sundance fire in northern Idaho was started by lightning. Winds of 50 mph carried firebrands as much as ten miles in advance to ignite new fires, and as a result, the forest fire spread twenty miles across the Selkirk Mountains in just twelve hours, burning 56,000 acres. The heat of the fire produced whirlwinds of flame with winds up to 300 mph which flung giant trees about like matchsticks. (David Ludlum)

1983 - Hurricane Alicia formed on this day and was the costliest tropical cyclone in the Atlantic since Hurricane Agnes in 1972. It struck Galveston and Houston, Texas directly, causing \$2.6 billion (1983 USD) in damage and killing 21 people. This storm was the worst Texas hurricane since Hurricane Carla in 1961. Also, Alicia was the first billion-dollar tropical cyclone in Texas history.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a sharp cold front produced severe weather in the Upper Midwest during the afternoon and evening hours, with Minnesota and eastern South Dakota hardest hit. A thunderstorm in west central Minnesota spawned a tornado at Eagle Lake which killed one person and injured eight others. A thunder- storm in eastern South Dakota produced softball size hail at Warner. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty five cities in twenty states in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lamoni IA and Baltimore MD, where the mercury hit 105 degrees. Temperatures 100 degrees or above were reported in twenty-two states. Pierre SD was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 114 degrees. Bluefield WV reported eight straight days of record heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in eastern New Mexico produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Clovis. Evening thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail around Hereford, Dimmitt, Ware and Dalhart. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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**WHATEVER WE DO AND
WHEREVER WE ARE IS AN
IMPORTANT PART OF THE PLAN
THAT GOD HAS PERSONALLY
DESIGNED FOR EACH OF US. WE
MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT
EVERYTHING IS UNDER GOD'S
CONTROL...**

Nearly everyone in our organization had a difficult time working with Gustav. He was born and educated in Germany and continually challenged everyone about any and everything. It was not so much that he thought he was smarter or superior to us, but he relentlessly made everyone think about what they were doing. For him, everything had to have a purpose.

"Why are you doing that?" he would ask. Or "What good will that do?" And, if those questions were not answered to his satisfaction he would ask the ultimate and most difficult question of all:

What's the purpose of what you are doing?

It was like working with small children who asked endless

questions because they did not understand what was going on.

Eventually, we came to respect "Gus." He forced us to be certain that everything we did had a purpose. If not, we were wasting time that would be lost forever.

"The Lord works out everything for His own purpose — even the wicked for a day of disaster," wrote Solomon. Whatever we do and wherever we are is an important part of the plan that God has personally designed for each of us. We must always remember that everything is under God's control.

Whatever is, is because God allowed it. Even evil things done by evil men fit into His plan and purpose. Their deeds are a result of their choices, and God will not allow them to escape His judgment or wrath. Wrong does not become right until God intervenes.

Paul explained it well: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever."

Ultimately, we will see His purpose in everything.

Today's Prayer: Lord, may we always be mindful that this is Your world, and we are Your creation. You indeed are the Creator/Redeemer and will make all things right. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "The Lord works out everything for His own purpose - even the wicked for a day of disaster." Proverbs 16:4

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: 08.12.25

1 8 31 56 67 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$198,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 21 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.13.25

17 23 27 45 52 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,150,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 36 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.14.25

3 10 17 25 37 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 51 Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.13.25

3 8 11 23 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$93,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 51 Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.13.25

29 33 41 50 54 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 20 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.13.25

4 11 40 44 50 4

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$565,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 20 Mins 57 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

Travel South Dakota Partners with Jeep® and Matador Network to Produce Digital Road Trip Series

TV host, biologist & adventurer Forrest Galante journeys around the state to unveil the "Unexpected South Dakota"

PIERRE, S.D., Aug. 14, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Travel South Dakota has partnered with Jeep®, Matador Network, and renowned adventurer and TV host Forrest Galante to launch "Unexpected South Dakota," a three-episode series highlighting the unexpected sights, sounds, and tastes of The Mount Rushmore State.

With emphasis on preserving heritage, history, and the delicate balance of natural spaces and species that define a place, each episode shows viewers how to experience South Dakota in new and meaningful ways.

The integrated multi-brand collaboration produced video content for social, digital, and broadcast streaming platforms, culminating in three eight-minute episodes displayed on a dedicated landing page on Matador Network and available now on Roku TV.

Estimated impressions for the effort exceed 52.6 million nationwide. To inspire audiences to create their own South Dakota road trip, weekly prize packages full of gear from South Dakota, Jeep®, and Matador Network, will be awarded throughout August.

Galante's perspective as a biologist with deep respect for the natural world challenges viewers to see adventure not just as exploration but as an act of understanding and stewardship. Each episode forges connection with a local South Dakotan, serving as a steppingstone in the exploration of what conservation truly means – from cultural preservation to sustainable food systems to protecting wild landscapes. Narratives of freedom, adventure and authenticity create unique brand alignment across partners, harmoniously resonating with the lifestyles of their demographics.

Galante is guided by curiosity and a cast of local South Dakota experts in each episode, which include:

Episode 1: Foraging the Past and Present

Food is the universal language—and in South Dakota, it speaks through the land. Galante visits Marcela Salas, owner of BibiSol in Sioux Falls and a James Beard-nominated culinary artist. Episode 2: Crafting Connections

Galante journeys into the heart of South Dakota's Black Hills for a fly-fishing and conservation journey. Accompanied by local guide Hans Stephenson of Dakota Angler & Outfitter, their mission into Spearfish Canyon extends beyond catching trout. Episode 3: Exploring Ancient Pathways

In the boundless grasslands of South Dakota, tradition, and connection to the land run deep. Galante joins Lakota horseman Cat Clifford and his family for a day of horseback riding, calf roping, and storytelling.

"This new series uncovers the deeper and unexpected stories that live within South Dakota's landscapes," said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. "From Spearfish Canyon to Sioux Falls, our partners and residents share powerful narratives about preserving our state's beauty and heritage for generations to come. Each story reflects the pride, freedom, and deep connection to the land that make South Dakota so special.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism comprises Travel South Dakota and the South Dakota Arts Council. The department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. For more information or to plan a trip, visit TravelSouthDakota.com.

Flash floods triggered by torrential rains kill at least 176 people in India and Pakistan

By CHANNI ANAND and RIAZ KHAN Associated Press

CHOSITI, India (AP) — Flash floods triggered by torrential rains have killed at least 176 people and left scores others missing in India and Pakistan over the past 24 hours, officials said Friday, as rescuers brought

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to safety some 1,600 people from two mountainous districts in the neighboring countries.

Sudden, intense downpours over small areas known as cloudbursts are increasingly common in India's Himalayan regions and Pakistan's northern areas, which are prone to flash floods and landslides. Cloudbursts have the potential to wreak havoc by causing intense flooding and landslides, impacting thousands of people in the mountainous regions.

Experts say cloudbursts have increased in recent years partly because of climate change, while damage from the storms also has increased because of unplanned development in mountain regions.

Dozens missing in remote Himalayan village

In India-controlled Kashmir, rescuers searched for missing people in the remote Himalayan village of Chositi on Friday after flash floods a day earlier left at least 60 people dead and at least 80 missing, officials said.

Officials halted rescue operations overnight but rescued at least 300 people Thursday after a powerful cloudburst triggered floods and landslides. Officials said many missing people were believed to have been washed away.

Harvinder Singh, a local resident, joined the rescue efforts immediately after the disaster and helped retrieving 33 bodies from under mud, he said.

At least 50 seriously injured people were treated in local hospitals, many of them rescued from a stream filled with mud and debris. Disaster management official Mohammed Irshad said the number of missing people could increase.

Weather officials forecast more heavy rains and floods in the area.

Chositi, in Kashmir's Kishtwar district, is the last village accessible to motor vehicles on the route of an ongoing annual Hindu pilgrimage to a mountainous shrine at an altitude of 3,000 meters (9,500 feet.)

Officials said the pilgrimage, which began July 25 and was scheduled to end on Sept. 5, was suspended.

The devastating floods swept away the main community kitchen set up for the pilgrims, as well as dozens of vehicles and motorbikes. More than 200 pilgrims were in the kitchen at the time of the flood, which also damaged or washed away many of the homes clustered together in the foothills, officials said.

Sneha, who gave only one name, said her husband and a daughter were swept away as floodwater gushed down the mountain. The two were having meals at the community kitchen while she and her son were nearby. The family had come for pilgrimage, she said.

Photos and videos on social media show extensive damage with household goods strewn next to damaged vehicles and homes in the village. Authorities made makeshift bridges Friday to help stranded pilgrims cross a muddy water channel and used dozens of earthmovers to shift boulders, uprooted trees and electricity poles and other debris.

Kishtwar district is home to multiple hydroelectric power projects, which experts have long warned pose a threat to the region's fragile ecosystem.

Hundreds of tourists trapped by floods in Pakistan

In northern and northwestern Pakistan, flash floods killed at least 116 people while rescuers evacuated 1,300 stranded tourists from a mountainous district hit by landslides. At least 35 people were reported missing in these areas, according to local officials.

Flash floods triggered by heavy rains and cloudbursts early Friday killed at least 56 people in Buner district in Pakistan's northwestern district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a government administrator said.

Dozens were injured as the deluge destroyed homes in villages in Buner. Rescuers backed by boats and helicopters worked to reach stranded residents. Dozens of villages were still missing and the death toll is likely to rise, Kashif Qayyum said.

Authorities declared a state of emergency Friday in flood-hit villages in Buner, where ambulances have transported 56 bodies to local hospitals, according to a government statement.

More than 415 people, mostly women and children, have died in rain-related incidents across the country since June 26.

Deaths were reported from different parts of Pakistan on Thursday. Bilal Faizi, a provincial emergency service spokesman in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said rescuers worked for hours to save 1,300 tourists after they were trapped by flash flooding and landslides in the Siran Valley in Mansehra district on Thursday.

The Gilgit-Baltistan region has been hit by multiple floods since July, triggering landslides along the Karakoram Highway, a key trade and travel route linking Pakistan and China that is used by tourists to travel to the scenic north. The region is home to scenic glaciers that provide 75% of Pakistan's stored water supply.

Pakistan's disaster management agency has issued fresh alerts for glacial lake outburst flooding in the north, warning travelers to avoid affected areas.

A study released this week by World Weather Attribution, a network of international scientists, found rainfall in Pakistan from June 24 to July 23 was 10% to 15% heavier because of global warming. In 2022, the country's worst monsoon season on record killed more than 1,700 people and caused an estimated \$40 billion in damage.

Scientists discover an ancient whale with a Pokémon face and a predator bite

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Long before whales were majestic, gentle giants, some of their prehistoric ancestors were tiny, weird and feral. A chance discovery of a 25 million-year-old fossil on an Australian beach has allowed paleontologists to identify a rare, entirely new species that could unlock mysteries of whale evolution.

Researchers this week officially named *Janjucetus dullardi*, a cartoonish creature with bulging eyes the size of tennis balls, in the *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*. Unlike today's whales, the juvenile specimen was small enough to fit in a single bed.

Boasting fiendish teeth and a shark-like snout, however, this oddball of the ocean was nasty, mean and built to hunt.

"It was, let's say, deceptively cute," said Erich Fitzgerald, senior curator of vertebrate paleontology at Museums Victoria Research Institute, and one of the paper's authors.

"It might have looked for all the world like some weird kind of mash-up between a whale, a seal and a Pokémon but they were very much their own thing."

Extinct species was an odd branch on the whale family tree

The rare discovery of the partial skull, including ear bones and teeth, was made in 2019 on a fossil-rich stretch of coast along Australia's Victoria state. Jan Juc Beach, a cradle for some of the weirdest whales in history, is becoming a hotspot for understanding early whale evolution, Fitzgerald said.

Few family trees seem stranger than that of *Janjucetus dullardi*, only the fourth species ever identified from a group known as mammalodontids, early whales that lived only during the Oligocene Epoch, about 34 to 23 million years ago. That marked the point about halfway through the known history of whales.

The tiny predators, thought to have grown to 3 meters (10 feet) in length, were an early branch on the line that led to today's great baleen whales, such as humpbacks, blues and minke. But the toothy ancestors with powerful jaws would have looked radically different to any modern species.

"They may have had tiny little nubbins of legs just projecting as stumps from the wall of the body," said Fitzgerald.

That mystery will remain tantalizingly unsolved unless a specimen is uncovered with more of its skeleton intact, which would be something of a miracle. Even the partial skull that allowed the initial identification this week was an astonishing discovery.

For an amateur paleontologist, a life-long obsession paid off

Janjucetus dullardi was named by researchers after an amateur fossil hunter who doesn't mind its looks in the slightest.

"It's literally been the greatest 24 hours of my life," said Ross Dullard, who discovered the skull while fossil hunting at Jan Juc Beach. After Wednesday's confirmation of the new species, the school principal walked like a rock star onto campus with "high fives coming left, right and center," he said.

His friends and family are probably just relieved it's over.

"That's all they've heard from me for about the last six years," he said.

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Dullard was on a regular low-tide hunt at Jan Juc the day he spotted something black protruding from a cliff. Poking it dislodged a tooth.

He knew enough to recognize it was unlikely to belong to a dog or a seal.

"I thought, geez, we've got something special here," he said. Dullard sent photos to Museums Victoria, where Fitzgerald saw them and immediately suspected a new species.

Ancient whale finds are rare but significant

Confirming the find was another matter. This was the first mammalodontid to be identified in Australia since 2006 and only the third on record in the country.

Fossils of sufficient quality, with enough of the right details preserved to confirm uniqueness, aren't common.

"Cetaceans represent a fairly miniscule population of all life," Fitzgerald said. Millions of years of erosion, scavengers and ocean currents take their toll on whale skeletons too.

"It's only the chosen few, the vast minority of all whales that have ever lived and died in the oceans over millions of years, that actually get preserved as fossils," he added.

Finds such as *Janjucetus dullardi* can unlock insights into how prehistoric whales ate, moved, behaved — and evolved. Researchers said the discoveries also helped to understand how ancient cetacean species adapted to warmer oceans, as they study how today's marine life might respond to climate change.

Meanwhile, Dullard planned to host a fossil party this weekend, featuring cetacean-themed games and whale-shaped treats in jello, to celebrate his nightmare Muppet find, finally confirmed.

"That's taken my concentration for six years," he said. "I've had sleepless nights. I've dreamt about this whale."

20 years after its landmark withdrawal from Gaza, Israel is mired there

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Twenty years ago, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, dismantling 21 Jewish settlements and pulling out its forces. The Friday anniversary of the start of the landmark disengagement comes as Israel is mired in a nearly two-year war with Hamas that has devastated the Palestinian territory and means it is likely to keep troops there long into the future.

Israel's disengagement, which also included removing four settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, was then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's controversial attempt to jump-start negotiations with the Palestinians. But it bitterly divided Israeli society and led to the empowerment of Hamas, with implications that continue to reverberate today.

The emotional images of Jews being ripped from their homes by Israeli soldiers galvanized Israel's far-right and settler movements. The anger helped them organize and increase their political influence, accounting in part for the rise of hard-line politicians like National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

On Thursday, Smotrich boasted of a settlement expansion plan east of Jerusalem that will "bury" the idea of a future Palestinian state.

For Palestinians, even if they welcomed the disengagement, it didn't end Israel's control over their lives.

Soon after, Hamas won elections in 2006, then drove out the Palestinian Authority in a violent takeover. Israel and Egypt imposed a closure on the territory, controlling entry and exit of goods and people. Though its intensity varied over the years, the closure helped impoverish the population and entrenched a painful separation from Palestinians in the West Bank.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians claim all three territories for a future independent state.

A unilateral withdrawal enhanced Hamas' stature

Israel couldn't justify the military or economic cost of maintaining the heavily fortified settlements in Gaza, explained Kobi Michael, a senior researcher at the Misgav Institute and the Institute for National Security

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Studies think tanks. There were around 8,000 Israeli settlers and 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza in 2005.

"There was no chance for these settlements to exist or flourish or become meaningful enough to be a strategic anchor," he said. By contrast, there are more than 500,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, most living in developed settlement blocs that have generally received more support from Israeli society, Michael said. Most of the world considers the settlements illegal under international law.

Because Israel withdrew unilaterally, without any coordination with the Palestinian Authority, it enhanced Hamas' stature among Palestinians in Gaza.

"This contributed to Hamas' win in the elections in 2006, because they leveraged it and introduced it as a very significant achievement," Michael said. "They saw it as an achievement of the resistance and a justification for the continuation of the armed resistance."

Footage of the violence between Israeli settlers and Israeli soldiers also created an "open wound" in Israeli society, Michael said.

"I don't think any government will be able to do something like that in the future," he said. That limits any flexibility over settlements in the West Bank if negotiations over a two-state solution with the Palestinians ever resume.

"Disengagement will never happen again, this is a price we're paying as a society, and a price we're paying politically," he said.

An early settler longs to return

Anita Tucker, now 79, was part of the first nine Jewish families that moved to the Gaza Strip in 1976. She and her husband and their three kids lived in an Israeli army outpost near what is today Deir al-Balah, while the settlement of Netzer Hazoni was constructed.

Originally from Brooklyn, she started a farm growing vegetables in the harsh, tall sand dunes. At first relations were good with their Palestinian neighbors, she said, and they worked hard to build their home and a "beautiful community." She had two more children, and three chose to stay and raise their families in Netzer Hazoni.

She can still recall the moment, 20 years ago, when 1,000 Israeli soldiers arrived at the gate to the settlement to remove the approximately 400 residents. Some of her neighbors lit their houses on fire in protest.

"Obviously it was a mistake to leave. The lives of the Arabs became much worse, and the lives of the Jews became much, much worse, with rockets and Oct. 7," she said, referring to the decades of rockets fired from Gaza into Israel and the date in 2023 of the Hamas attack that launched the ongoing war.

Despite the passage of time, her family still is "yearning and longing for their home," she said. Several of her 10 grandchildren, including some who spent their early childhood in the Gaza settlements, have served in the current war and were near her old house.

"It's hard to believe, because of all the terrible things that happened that we predicted, but we're willing to build there again," said Tucker.

Palestinians doubt Israel will ever fully withdraw from Gaza again

After Israel's withdrawal 20 years ago, many Palestinians described Gaza as an "open-air prison." They had control on the inside – under a Hamas government that some supported but some saw as heavy-handed and brutal. But ultimately, Israel had a grip around the territory.

Many Palestinians believe Sharon carried out the withdrawal so Israel could focus on cementing its control in the West Bank through settlement building.

Now some believe more direct Israeli occupation is returning to Gaza. After 22 months of war, Israeli troops control more than 75% of Gaza, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks of maintaining security control long term after the war.

"Over the past 20 years we were relieved of occupation, shelling and seeing the Jews. Now we hear that they want to occupy here again after two years of war," said Sabah Abu Audeh, a 67-year-old grandmother who was displaced to Gaza's Shati refugee camp.

Aouni Timras, 55, from the Nuseirat refugee camp said he felt optimistic when Israel pulled out, thinking things would get better.

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"We were hopeful but now the occupation returned for the second time," Timras said. "What can people do? This is what we live through. We hope that there will be a truce so that people can stand up again."

Amjad Shawa, the director of the Palestinian NGO Network, said he doesn't believe Netanyahu will repeat Sharon's full withdrawal. Instead, he expects the military to continue controlling large swaths of Gaza through "buffer zones."

The aim, he said, is to keep Gaza "unlivable in order to change the demographics," referring to Netanyahu's plans to encourage Palestinians to leave the territory.

Israel is "reoccupying the Gaza Strip" to prevent a Palestinian state, said Mostafa Ibrahim, an author based in Gaza City whose home was destroyed in the current war.

Missed opportunities

Israeli former Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, who was head of the country's Southern Command during the disengagement, remembers the toll of protecting a few thousand settlers.

There were an average of 10 attacks per day against Israeli settlers and soldiers, including rockets, roadside bombs big enough to destroy a tank, tunnels to attack Israeli soldiers and military positions, and frequent gunfire.

"Bringing a school bus of kids from one place to another required a military escort," said Harel. "There wasn't a future. People paint it as how wonderful it was there, but it wasn't wonderful."

Harel says the decision to evacuate Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip was the right one, but that Israel missed crucial opportunities.

Most egregious, he said, was a unilateral withdrawal without obtaining any concessions from the Palestinians in Gaza or the Palestinian Authority.

He also sharply criticized Israel's policy of containment toward Hamas after disengagement. There were short but destructive conflicts over the years between the two sides, but otherwise the policy gave Hamas "an opportunity to do whatever they wanted."

"We had such a blind spot with Hamas, we didn't see them morph from a terror organization into an organized military, with battalions and commanders and infrastructure," he said.

The Oct. 7 attack, Israel's largest military intelligence failure to date, was not a result of the disengagement, said Harel. "The main issue is what we did in the 18 years in between."

Plastic pollution treaty talks in Geneva end without an agreement

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Talks on a treaty to address the global crisis of plastic pollution in Geneva ended without an agreement Friday as the session was adjourned with plans to resume at a later date.

Nations were meeting for an 11th day at the United Nations office to try to complete a landmark treaty to end the plastic pollution crisis. They remain deadlocked over whether the treaty should reduce exponential growth of plastic production and put global, legally binding controls on toxic chemicals used to make plastics. Most plastic is made from fossil fuels.

Inger Andersen, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, said despite challenges, despite the disappointment, "we have to accept that significant progress was made."

This process won't stop, she said, but it's too soon to say how long it will take to get a treaty now.

The Youth Plastic Action Network was the only organization to speak at the closing meeting Friday. Comments from observers were cut off at the request of the U.S. and Kuwait after 24 hours of meetings and negotiating.

The negotiations at the U.N. hub were supposed to be the last round and produce the first legally binding treaty on plastic pollution, including in the oceans. But just like at the meeting in South Korea last year, they're leaving without a treaty.

Luis Vayas Valdivieso, the chair of the negotiating committee, wrote and presented two drafts of treaty text in Geneva based on the views expressed by the nations. The representatives from 184 countries did not agree to use either one as the basis for their negotiations.

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Valdivieso said Friday morning as the delegates reconvened in the assembly hall that no further action is being proposed at this stage on the latest draft.

After a three-hour meeting, he banged a gavel made of recycled plastic bottle tops from a Nairobi landfill. A 'deeply disappointing' outcome

Representatives of Norway, Australia, Tuvalu and others nations said they were deeply disappointed to be leaving Geneva without a treaty. Madagascar said the world is "expecting action, not reports from us."

European Commissioner Jessika Roswall said the European Union and its member states had higher expectations for this meeting and while the draft falls short on their demands, it's a good basis for another negotiating session.

"The Earth is not ours only. We are stewards for those who come after us. Let us fulfill that duty," she said.

China's delegation said the fight against plastic pollution is a long marathon and that this temporary setback is a new starting point to forge consensus. It urged nations to work together to offer future generations a blue planet without plastic pollution.

Lots of red lines

The biggest issue of the talks has been whether the treaty should impose caps on producing new plastic or focus instead on things like better design, recycling and reuse. Powerful oil- and gas-producing nations and the plastics industry oppose production limits. They want a treaty focused on better waste management and reuse.

Saudi Arabia said both drafts lacked balance, and Saudi and Kuwaiti negotiators said the latest proposal takes other states' views more into account. It addressed plastic production, which they consider outside the scope of the treaty.

That draft, released early Friday, did not include a limit on plastic production, but recognized that current levels of production and consumption are "unsustainable" and global action is needed. New language had been added to say these levels exceed current waste management capacities and are projected to increase further, "thereby necessitating a coordinated global response to halt and reverse such trends."

The objective of the treaty was revamped to state that the accord would be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics. It talked about reducing plastic products containing "a chemical or chemicals of concern to human health or the environment," as well as reducing of single-use or short-lived plastic products.

It was a much better, more ambitious text, though not perfect. But each country came to Geneva with a lot of "red lines," said Magnus Heunicke, the Danish environment minister. Denmark holds the rotating presidency of the Council of Europe.

"To be very clear, a compromise means that we have to bend our red lines," he said.

For its part, Iran said it's a disappointing moment and faulted "nontransparent and non-inclusive processes on unrealistic elements," particularly chemicals.

The plastics industry also urged compromise. The Global Partners for Plastics Circularity said in a statement that governments must move past entrenched positions to finalize an agreement reflecting their shared priorities.

No consensus

For any proposal to make it into the treaty, every nation must agree. India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Vietnam and others have said that consensus is vital to an effective treaty. Some countries want to change the process so decisions may be made by a vote if necessary.

Graham Forbes, head of the Greenpeace delegation in Geneva, urged delegates in that direction.

"We are going in circles. We cannot continue to do the same thing and expect a different result," he said as Friday's meeting was ending.

The International Pollutants Elimination Network said what happened in Geneva showed "consensus is dead" for the process to move forward.

Thursday was the last scheduled day of negotiations, but work on the revised draft continued into Friday.

Every year, the world makes more than 400 million tons of new plastic, and that could grow by about

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70% by 2040 without policy changes. About 100 countries want to limit production. Many have said it's also essential to address toxic chemicals used to make plastics.

Science shows what it will take to end pollution and protect human health, said Bethanie Carney Almroth, an ecotoxicology professor at Sweden's University of Gothenburg who coleads the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty. The science supports addressing the full lifecycle of plastics, beginning with extraction and production, and restricting some chemicals to ensure plastics are safer and more sustainable, she added.

"The science has not changed," she said. "It cannot be down negotiated."

Environmentalists, waste pickers and Indigenous leaders and many business executives traveled to the talks to make their voices heard. Some used creative tactics, but are leaving disappointed.

Indigenous leaders sought a treaty that recognizes their rights and knowledge. Frankie Orona, executive director of the Texas-based Society of Native Nations, said the best option now is to move forward with more negotiations to "fight for a treaty that truly safeguards people and the planet."

Rapper Sean Kingston to be sentenced for \$1 million fraud scheme in South Florida

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Rapper Sean Kingston is scheduled to be sentenced in South Florida on Friday after being convicted of a \$1 million fraud scheme.

Kingston, whose legal name is Kisean Paul Anderson, and his mother, Janice Eleanor Turner, were each convicted by a federal jury in March of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and four counts of wire fraud. U.S. Judge David Leibowitz sentenced Turner last month to five years in prison, but Kingston's sentencing was rescheduled.

Kingston, 35, and his mother were arrested in May 2024 after a SWAT team raided Kingston's rented mansion in suburban Fort Lauderdale. Turner was taken into custody during the raid, while Kingston was arrested at Fort Irwin, an Army training base in California's Mojave Desert, where he was performing.

According to court records, Kingston used social media from April 2023 to March 2024 to arrange purchases of high-end merchandise. After negotiating deals, Kingston would invite the sellers to one of his high-end Florida homes and promise to feature them and their products on social media.

Investigators said that when it came time to pay, Kingston or his mother would text the victims fake wire receipts for the luxury merchandise, which included a bulletproof Escalade, watches and a 19-foot (6-meter) LED TV, investigators said.

When the funds never cleared, victims often contacted Kingston and Turner repeatedly, but were either never paid or received money only after filing lawsuits or contacting law enforcement.

Kingston shot to fame at age 17 with the 2007 hit "Beautiful Girls," which laid his lyrics over Ben E. King's 1961 song "Stand By Me."

Japan marks 80th anniversary of WWII surrender as concern grows about fading memory

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan is paying tribute to more than 3 million war dead as the country marks its surrender 80 years ago, ending World War II, as concern grows about the rapidly fading memories of the tragedy of war and the bitter lessons from the era of Japanese militarism.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba expressed "remorse" over the war, which he called a mistake, restoring the word in a Japanese leader's Aug. 15 address for the first time since 2013, when former premier Shinzo Abe shunned it.

Ishiba, however, did not mention Japan's aggression across Asia or apologize.

Moment of silence, peace pledge and chrysanthemum flowers

"We will never repeat the tragedy of the war. We will never go the wrong way," Ishiba said. "Once again,

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we must deeply keep to our hearts the remorse and lesson from that war.”

He vowed to keep passing down the tragedy of war and peace pledge to next generations.

In a national ceremony Friday at Tokyo’s Budokan hall, about 4,500 officials and bereaved families and their descendants from around the country observed a moment of silence at noon, the time when the then-emperor’s surrender speech began on Aug. 15, 1945. Participants later offered chrysanthemum flowers for the war dead.

Yasukuni Shrine and lawmakers

Just a block away at the Yasukuni Shrine, dozens of Japanese rightwing politicians and their supporters came to pray.

The shrine honors Japan’s 2.5 million war dead, including convicted war criminals. Victims of Japanese aggression, especially China and the Koreans, see visits to the shrine as a lack of remorse about Japan’s wartime past.

Ishiba stayed away from Yasukuni and sent a religious ornament as a personal gesture instead of praying at the controversial shrine.

But Shinjiro Koizumi, the agriculture minister considered as a top candidate to replace the beleaguered prime minister, prayed at the shrine. Koizumi, the son of popular former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi whose Yasukuni visit as a serving leader in 2001 outraged China, is a regular at the shrine.

Back at his ministry, Koizumi told reporters that he made the no-war pledge to the spirits. “It is important to not forget those who sacrificed their lives for their country,” he said.

Rightwing lawmakers, including former economic security ministers Sanae Takaichi and Takayuki Kobayashi, as well as governing Liberal Democratic Party heavyweight Koichi Hagiuda, also visited the shrine Friday.

A non-partisan group of 87 parliamentarians led by Liberal Democrat Ichiro Aisawa also prayed at Yasukuni, pledging “to uphold peace” in Japan and in the Indo-Pacific region. Aisawa vowed to “pass down the historical facts of war to future generations.”

Separately, Sohei Kamiya, head of the populist far-right Sanseito, came with 17 parliamentarians and 70 local assembly members from his party and said he prayed for the war dead. He told reporters that the prime minister should visit Yasukuni.

Emperor shows ‘deep remorse’ and stresses importance to keep telling the war’s tragedy

Japanese emperors have stopped visiting the Yasukuni site since the enshrinement of top war criminals there in 1978.

Emperor Naruhito, in his address at the Budokan memorial Friday, expressed his hope that the ravages of war will never be repeated while “reflecting on our past and bearing in mind the feelings of deep remorse.”

Naruhito reiterated the importance of telling the war’s tragic history and the ordeals faced during and after the conflict to younger generations as “we continue to seek the peace and happiness of the people in the future.”

As part of the 80th anniversary, he has traveled to Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Hiroshima, and is expected to visit Nagasaki with his daughter, Princess Aiko, in September.

Passing on history to younger generations amid revisionism

Hajime Eda, whose father died on his way home from Korea when his ship was hit by a mine, said he will never forget his father and others who never made it home. In his speech representing the bereaved families, Eda said it is Japan’s responsibility to share the lesson — the emptiness of the conflict, the difficulty of reconstruction and the preciousness of peace.

There was some hope at the ceremony, with a number of teenagers participating after learning about their great-grandfathers who died in the battlefields.

Among them, Ami Tashiro, a 15-year-old high school student from Hiroshima, said she joined a memorial marking the end of the battle on Iwo Jima last year after reading a letter her great-grandfather sent from the island. She also hopes to join in the search for his remains.

As the population of wartime generations rapidly decline, Japan faces serious questions on how it should

pass on the wartime history to the next generation. The country already faced revisionist pushbacks since the 2010s under Abe, who said Japan should correct a “self-deprecating view” of its wartime history and regain national pride.

Since 2013, Japanese prime ministers stopped apologizing to Asian victims, under the precedent set by Abe.

Some lawmakers’ denial of Japan’s military role in massive civilian deaths on Okinawa or the Nanking Massacre have stirred controversy.

Naoya Endo, 64, came to Yasukuni in place of his late father who was among a few out of his unit’s 50 members who returned from Taiwan. He said he worries about the growing global tension and hopes there will be no war in his lifetime. He lamented that many Japanese have lost pride and a love of their homeland.

In an editorial Friday, the Mainichi newspaper noted that Japan’s pacifist principle was mostly about staying out of global conflict, rather than thinking how to make peace, and called the country to work together with Asian neighbors as equal partners.

“It’s time to show a vision toward ‘a world without war’ based on the lesson from its own history,” the Mainichi said.

Trump and Putin to meet in Alaska for high-stakes summit on Russia-Ukraine war

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump is meeting face-to-face with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday for a high-stakes summit that could determine not only the trajectory of the war in Ukraine but also the fate of European security.

The sit-down offers Trump a chance to prove to the world that he is both a master dealmaker and a global peacemaker. He and his allies have cast him as a heavyweight negotiator who can find a way to bring the slaughter to a close, something he used to boast he could do quickly.

For Putin, a summit with Trump offers a long-sought opportunity to try to negotiate a deal that would cement Russia’s gains, block Kyiv’s bid to join the NATO military alliance and eventually pull Ukraine back into Moscow’s orbit.

There are significant risks for Trump. By bringing Putin onto U.S. soil, the president is giving Russia’s leader the validation he desires after his ostracization following his invasion of Ukraine 3 1/2 years ago. The exclusion of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from the summit also deals a heavy blow to the West’s policy of “nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine” and invites the possibility that Trump could agree to a deal that Ukraine does not want.

Any success is far from assured, especially as Russia and Ukraine remain far apart in their demands for peace. Putin has long resisted any temporary ceasefire, linking it to a halt in Western arms supplies and a freeze on Ukraine’s mobilization efforts, which were conditions rejected by Kyiv and its Western allies.

Trump on Thursday said there was a 25% chance that the summit would fail, but also floated the idea that if the meeting succeeds he could bring Zelenskyy to Alaska for a subsequent, three-way meeting, a possibility that Russia hasn’t agreed to.

When asked in Anchorage about Trump’s estimate of a 25% chance of failure, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters that Russia “never plans ahead.”

“We know that we have arguments, a clear, understandable position. We will state it,” he said in footage posted to the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Telegram channel.

Trump said in a Fox News radio interview Thursday that he didn’t know if they would get “an immediate ceasefire” but he wanted a broad peace deal done quickly. That seemingly echoes Putin’s longtime argument that Russia favors a comprehensive deal to end the fighting, reflecting its demands, not a temporary halt to hostilities.

The Kremlin said Trump and Putin will first sit down for a one-on-one discussion, followed by the two delegations meeting and talks continuing over “a working breakfast.” They are then expected to hold a

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joint press conference.

Trump has offered shifting explanations for his meeting goals

In the days leading up to the summit, set for a military base near Anchorage, Trump described it as “really a feel-out meeting.” But he’s also warned of “very severe consequences” for Russia if Putin doesn’t agree to end the war and said that though Putin might bully other leaders, “He’s not going to mess around with me.”

Trump’s repeated suggestions that a deal would likely involve “some swapping of territories” — which disappointed Ukraine and European allies — along with his controversial history with Putin have some skeptical about what kind of agreement can be reached.

Ian Kelly, a retired career foreign service officer who served as the U.S. ambassador to Georgia during the Obama and first Trump administrations, said he sees “no upside for the U.S., only an upside for Putin.”

“The best that can happen is nothing, and the worst that can happen is that Putin entices Trump into putting more pressure on Zelenskyy,” Kelly said.

George Beebe, the former director of the CIA’s Russia analysis team who is now affiliated with the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, said there’s a serious risk of blown expectations or misunderstandings for a high-level summit pulled together so quickly.

“That said, I doubt President Trump would be going into a meeting like this unless there had been enough work done behind the scenes for him to feel that there is a decent chance that something concrete will come out of it,” Beebe said.

Zelenskyy has time and again cast doubts on Putin’s willingness to negotiate in good faith. His European allies, who’ve held increasingly urgent meetings with U.S. leaders over the past week, have stressed the need for Ukraine to be involved in any peace talks.

Political commentators in Moscow, meanwhile, have relished that the summit leaves Ukraine and its European allies on the sidelines.

Dmitry Suslov, a pro-Kremlin voice, expressed hope that the summit will “deepen a trans-Atlantic rift and weaken Europe’s position as the toughest enemy of Russia.”

The summit could have far-reaching implications

On his way to Anchorage Thursday, Putin arrived in Magadan in Russia’s Far East, according to Russian state news agency Interfax.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the visit would include meetings with the regional governor and stops at several key sites, including a stop to lay flowers at a WWII-era memorial honoring Soviet-American aviation cooperation.

Foreign governments will be watching closely to see how Trump reacts to Putin, likely gauging what the interaction might mean for their own dealings with the U.S. president, who has eschewed traditional diplomacy for his own transactional approach to relationships.

The meeting comes as the war has caused heavy losses on both sides and drained resources.

Ukraine has held on far longer than some initially expected since the February 2022 invasion, but it is straining to hold off Russia’s much larger army, grappling with bombardments of its cities and fighting for every inch on the over 600-mile (1,000-kilometer) front line.

Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a senior fellow and director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, said U.S. antagonists like China, Iran and North Korea will be paying attention to Trump’s posture to see “whether or not the threats that he continues to make against Putin are indeed credible.”

“Or, if has been the past track record, he continues to back down and look for ways to wiggle out of the kind of threats and pressure he has promised to apply,” said Kendall-Taylor, who is also a former senior intelligence officer.

While some have objected to the location of the summit, Trump has said he thought it was “very respectful” of Putin to come to the U.S. instead of a meeting in Russia.

Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin Moscow-based analyst, observed that the choice of Alaska as the summit’s

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venue "underlined the distancing from Europe and Ukraine."

Being on a military base allows the leaders to avoid protests and meet more securely, but the location carries its own significance because of its history and location.

Alaska, which the U.S. purchased from Russia in 1867, is separated from Russia at its closest point by just 3 miles (less than 5 kilometers) and the international date line.

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson was crucial to countering the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It continues to play a role today, as planes from the base still intercept Russian aircraft that regularly fly into U.S. airspace.

On India's Independence Day, Modi vows to punish Pakistan for future attacks

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned Pakistan that India will punish its neighbor if there are future attacks on India as he marked 78 years of independence from British colonial rule.

Modi's remarks Friday come three months after nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan engaged in four days of intense fighting, their worst clash in decades.

Modi addressed the country from New Delhi's 17th-century, Mughal-era Red Fort, saying India has established a "new normal" that does not differentiate between "terrorists" and those who support terrorism. He said he would not tolerate what he called Islamabad's "nuclear blackmail."

"India has decided that it will not tolerate nuclear threats. For a long time, nuclear blackmail had been going on but this blackmail will not be tolerated now," Modi said.

There was no immediate response from Pakistan to Modi's remarks. Pakistan previously has rejected India's statements about nuclear blackmail as provocative and inflammatory.

However, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday announced the creation of a new "Army Rocket Force Command" to bolster the country's defense capabilities. Sharif made this announcement during a speech marking Independence Day celebrations, but gave no further details.

India celebrates its Independence Day one day after Pakistan. The two states came into existence as a result of the bloody partition of British India in 1947. The process sparked some of the worst communal violence the world has seen and left hundreds of thousands dead. It triggered one of the largest human migrations in history and some 12 million people fled their homes.

India and Pakistan exchanged tit-for-tat military strikes in May that brought them to the brink of a war. The fighting between the two countries was sparked by an April massacre by gunmen in Indian-controlled Kashmir that killed 26 people, mostly Hindu tourists. India blamed the attack on Pakistan-backed militants. Islamabad denied responsibility while calling for a neutral investigation.

Days after the massacre, India launched strikes on Pakistan and said it had hit nine "terrorist infrastructure" sites.

"Terror infrastructure was turned to rubble," Modi said in his speech Friday.

Pakistan responded by sending waves of drones into India, as well as missile and artillery bombardments. Dozens of people were killed on both sides until a ceasefire was reached May 10 after U.S. mediation.

Pakistan immediately claimed it shot down six Indian aircraft during the clashes, including a French-made Rafale fighter. India acknowledged some losses but did not provide details.

Last week, India's air force chief said India shot down five Pakistani fighter jets and one other military aircraft during clashes in the first such public claim by India. Pakistan rejected it, saying both sides should open their aircraft inventories to independent verification.

During his Friday speech, Modi also hinted India would continue its unilateral suspension of the Indus Water Treaty. The treaty, which India suspended after the April massacre, allows sharing of the Indus River that runs about 2,897 kilometers (1,800 miles) through South Asia and is a lifeline for both countries.

"Rivers from India were irrigating the lands of enemies while my country's farmers and land faced a deficiency of water," Modi said. "India has now decided that blood and water will not flow together."

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Pakistan has said any effort by India to stop or divert the water from flowing into Pakistan would be considered an "act of war."

Modi did not directly mention U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs on India in his Independence Day speech but said he would not compromise on the agriculture sector, one of the main sticking points in trade negotiations with the U.S.

Earlier this month, Trump imposed a 25% penalty on India in addition to 25% tariffs for buying oil and weapons from Russia.

India has resisted U.S. pressure to open its markets to some farm products as Modi's government is unwilling to risk angering farmers, who are a powerful voting bloc.

"India will not compromise on interest of farmers," he said.

Modi claimed India's demography was being changed as part of a "conspiracy" through illegal migration and announced what he called a "high-powered demographic mission" to tackle the problem. He did not provide further details.

"No nation in the world can hand over itself to infiltrators," he said.

Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has repeatedly described influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh as a "national security crisis" and claimed that unchecked Muslim infiltration from the country is leading to a demographic shift in India.

In recent months, Indian officials have conducted what they call a verification drive, which they say is intended to identify immigrants lacking legal status. Many people, most of them Muslim, have been detained or expelled to neighboring Bangladesh.

Ukrainian defenses face a challenge as Russian troops make gains ahead of the Putin-Trump summit

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

DONETSK REGION, Ukraine (AP) — Days before the leaders of Russia and the U.S. hold a summit meeting in Alaska, Moscow's forces breached Ukrainian lines in a series of infiltrations in the country's industrial heartland of Donetsk.

This week's advances amount to only a limited success for Russia, analysts say, since it still needs to consolidate its gains before achieving a true breakthrough. Still, it's a potentially dangerous moment for Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will likely try to persuade U.S. President Donald Trump to pressure Ukraine by arguing the 3 1/2-year-old war is going badly for Kyiv, said Mykola Bieleskov, a senior analyst at CBA Initiatives Center.

"The key risk for Ukraine is that the Kremlin will try to turn certain local gains on the battlefield into strategic victories at the negotiating table," he said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw from the remaining 30% of the Donetsk region that Kyiv still controls as part of a ceasefire deal, a proposal the Ukrainian leader categorically rejected.

After years of fighting, Russia still does not fully control all of the Donetsk region, which it illegally annexed in 2022, along with the Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

Infiltration by small groups of Russian forces

Attention has been focused on Pokrovsk — a key highway and rail junction that once was home to about 60,000 and now is partially encircled — but Russian forces have been probing for weaknesses north of the city, according to battlefield analysis site DeepState. The forces found a gap east of the coal-mining town of Dobropillia, and advanced about 10 kilometers (6 miles).

Zelenskyy noted its clear significance to the summit: "To create a certain information backdrop ahead of Putin's meeting with Trump, especially in the American information space, suggesting that Russia is moving forward and Ukraine is losing ground."

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Small groups of Russian troops are slipping past the first defensive line, hiding and trying to build up their forces, said Dmytro Trehubov, spokesman for Ukraine's "Dnipro" operational-strategic group.

Ukraine's military has been repelling these attempts, he said, although DeepState said the situation has not been stabilized.

Analysts described the breach near Dobropillia as a localized crisis that could escalate if the Russians are not neutralized and their main forces can widen the gap.

Exploiting an absence of Ukrainian infantry

The breach of the defensive line has seemed inevitable for months, according to a drone pilot in the area, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk publicly. Moscow's forces have been exploiting the lack of Ukrainian infantry, a problem tied not only to the country's stalled mobilization but also to poor management, the pilot said.

"We pay with territory and lives to fix mistakes — and we can keep fixing mistakes only as long as we have even a scrap of land left," the pilot said.

Ukrainian forces have tried to plug the gaps by extensive use of first-person-view drones — remotely piloted devices loaded with explosives that allow operators to see targets before striking.

These FPVs have turned areas up to 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) from the front into deadly zones on both sides of the line. But because the Russians attack with small groups, it's hard to counter with drones alone.

"We can't launch 100 FPVs at once," the pilot said, noting the drone operators would interfere with each other.

With tactics and technology roughly equal on both sides, the Russians' superior manpower works to their advantage, said Bielieskov, the Kyiv-based analyst.

"They have no regard for human life. Very often, most of those they send are on a one-way mission," he said.

Stopping the infiltrations and assaults by armored vehicles requires different defenses and leadership structures — changes that have yet to appear on Ukraine's side, he said.

Ukraine's military said Thursday additional troops have been moved to affected areas, with battle-hardened forces like the Azov brigade being deployed to the sector. However, the Deepstate map doesn't show any changes in favor of the Ukrainian army.

Russia's focus on cutting supply routes

Michael Kofman, a military analyst for the Carnegie Endowment, said in a post on X that it was too early to assess if the front line was collapsing,

Russia is focused on expanding the breach of the front line into a corridor to support its ground forces, Bielekov said. The strategy avoids direct assaults on heavily fortified urban centers, instead pushing through open terrain where Ukraine's troop shortages and large settlements make defense harder.

If successful, such a move could bypass Russia's need to storm Kostiantynivka — once a city of over 67,000 people and now significantly ruined and on the verge of falling. That would complicate defending the region's last big cities of Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Druzhkivka, posing a serious challenge for Ukraine's military.

Cmdr. Serhii Filimonov of the "Da Vinci Wolves" battalion of the 59th brigade, warned that Kostiantynivka could fall without a fight if Russia severs supply routes.

With few major roads, maintaining logistics for the large number of Ukrainian forces in the area would become "extremely difficult," Filimonov said.

Turning to the summit, Filimonov decried what he described as ongoing Russian killings and atrocities. "And then the civilized world comes to them and says, 'Fine, let's make a deal.' That's not how it should be done," he said.

Torrential rains trigger flash floods in Kashmir, killing at least 56 and leaving scores missing

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Flash floods caused by torrential rains in a remote village in India-controlled Kashmir have left at least 56 people dead and scores missing, authorities said Thursday, as rescue teams scouring the devastated Himalayan village brought at least 300 people to safety.

Following a cloudburst in the region's Chositi village, which triggered floods and landslides, disaster management official Mohammed Irshad estimated that at least 80 people were still missing until late Thursday, with many believed to have been washed away.

Irshad said that the count of missing people could increase as authorities continue to tally the figures.

Officials halted rescue operations for the night, he said. Weather officials forecast more heavy rains and floods in the area.

India's deputy minister for science and technology, Jitendra Singh, warned that the disaster "could result in substantial" loss of life.

Susheel Kumar Sharma, a local official, said that at least 50 seriously injured people are being treated in local hospitals. Many were rescued from a stream filled with mud and debris.

Chositi is a remote Himalayan village in Kashmir's Kishtwar district and is the last village accessible to motor vehicles on the route of an ongoing annual Hindu pilgrimage to a mountainous shrine at an altitude of 3,000 meters (9,500 feet) and about an 8-kilometer (5-mile) trek from the village.

Multiple pilgrims were also feared to be affected by the disaster. Officials said that the pilgrimage had been suspended and more rescue teams were on the way to the area to strengthen rescue and relief operations. The pilgrimage began on July 25 and was scheduled to end on Sept. 5.

The first responders to the disaster were villagers and local officials who were later joined by police and disaster management officials, as well as personnel from India's military and paramilitary forces, Sharma said.

Abdul Majeed Bichoo, a local resident and a social activist from a neighboring village, said that he witnessed the bodies of eight people being pulled out from under the mud. Three horses, which were also completely buried alongside them under debris, were "miraculously recovered alive," he said.

The 75-year-old Bichoo said Chositi village had become a "sight of complete devastation from all sides" following the disaster.

"It was heartbreaking and an unbearable sight. I have not seen this kind of destruction of life and property in my life," he said.

The devastating floods swept away the main community kitchen set up for the pilgrims as well as dozens of vehicles and motorbikes, officials said. They added that more than 200 pilgrims were in the kitchen when the tragedy struck. The flash floods also damaged and washed away many homes, clustered together in the foothills.

Photos and videos circulating on social media showed extensive damage caused in the village with multiple vehicles and homes damaged.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that "the situation is being monitored closely" and offered his prayers to "all those affected by the cloudburst and flooding."

"Rescue and relief operations are underway. Every possible assistance will be provided to those in need," he said in a social media post.

Sudden, intense downpours over small areas known as cloudbursts are increasingly common in India's Himalayan regions, which are prone to flash floods and landslides. Cloudbursts have the potential to wreak havoc by causing intense flooding and landslides, impacting thousands of people in the mountainous regions.

Experts say cloudbursts have increased in recent years partly because of climate change, while damage from the storms also has increased because of unplanned development in mountain regions.

Kishtwar is home to multiple hydroelectric power projects, which experts have long warned pose a threat to the region's fragile ecosystem.

Bondi names DEA head as DC's 'emergency police commissioner,' but capital leaders push back

By ASHRAF KHALIL and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration, stepping up its crackdown on policing in the nation's capital, on Thursday named the head of the Drug Enforcement Administration to be Washington's "emergency police commissioner" with all the powers of the police chief — a significant move that increases national control over the city as part of the federal government's law-enforcement takeover.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a directive issued Thursday evening that DEA boss Terry Cole will assume "powers and duties vested in the District of Columbia Chief of Police." The Metropolitan Police Department "must receive approval from Commissioner Cole" before issuing any orders, Bondi said. It was not immediately clear where the move left Pamela Smith, the city's current police chief, who works for the mayor.

D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb responded late Thursday that Bondi's directive was "unlawful," arguing that it could not be followed by the city's police force. "Therefore, members of MPD must continue to follow your orders and not the orders of any official not appointed by the Mayor," Schwalb wrote in a memo to Smith, setting up a potential legal clash between the heavily Democratic district and the Republican administration.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser wrote on social media that "there is no statute that conveys the District's personnel authority to a federal official."

Bondi's directive came hours after Smith directed MPD officers to share information with immigration agencies regarding people not in custody — such as someone involved in a traffic stop or checkpoint. The Justice Department said Bondi disagreed with the police chief's directive because it allowed for continued enforcement of "sanctuary policies."

Bondi said she was rescinding that order as well as other MPD policies limiting inquiries into immigration status and preventing arrests based solely on federal immigration warrants. All new directives must now receive approval from Cole, the attorney general said.

Another expansion of federal authority

The police takeover is the latest move by President Donald Trump to test the limits of his legal authorities to carry out his agenda, relying on obscure statutes and a supposed state of emergency to bolster his tough-on-crime message and his plans to speed up the mass deportation of people in the U.S. illegally.

It also marks one of the most sweeping assertions of federal authority over a local government in modern times. While Washington has grappled with spikes in violence and visible homelessness, the city's homicide rate ranks below those of several other major U.S. cities and the capital is not in the throes of the public safety collapse the administration has portrayed.

The late-night announcement came after an eventful day in the ongoing federal operation. Smith's earlier directive effectively brought together Trump's moves on city law enforcement and his nationwide efforts to curb immigration, and Trump had praised it in the hours before Bondi's announcement.

"That's a very positive thing, I have heard that just happened," Trump said of Smith's order. "That's a great step. That's a great step if they're doing that."

A population already tense from days of ramp-up began seeing more significant shows of force across the city Thursday. National Guard troops watched over some of the world's most renowned landmarks and Humvees took position in front of the busy main train station. Volunteers helped homeless people leave long-standing encampments — to where, exactly, was often unclear.

Department of Homeland Security police stood outside Nationals Park during a game Thursday between the Washington Nationals and the Philadelphia Phillies. DEA agents patrolled The Wharf, a popular nightlife area, while Secret Service officers were seen in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood.

Bowser, walking a tightrope between the Republican White House and the constituency of her largely Democratic city, was out of town Thursday for a family commitment in Martha's Vineyard but would be

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back Friday, her office said.

A boost in police activity, federal and otherwise

For an already wary Washington, Thursday marked a notable — and highly visible — uptick in presence from the previous two days. The visibility of federal forces around the city, including in many high-traffic areas, was striking to residents going about their lives. Trump has the power to take over federal law enforcement for 30 days before his actions must be reviewed by Congress, though he has said he'll re-evaluate as that deadline approaches.

The response before Thursday had been gradual and, by all appearances, low key. But on Wednesday night, officers set up a checkpoint in one of D.C.'s popular nightlife areas, drawing protests. The White House said 45 arrests were made Wednesday night, with 29 people arrested for living in the country illegally; other arrests included for distribution or possession of drugs, carrying a concealed weapon and assaulting a federal officer.

Troops were stationed outside the Union Station transportation hub as the 800 Guard members who have been activated by Trump start in on missions that include monument security, community safety patrols and beautification efforts, the Pentagon said.

"They will remain until law and order has been restored in the District as determined by the president, standing as the gatekeepers of our great nation's capital," Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson said. "The National Guard is uniquely qualified for this mission as a community-based force with strong local ties and disciplined training."

Wilson said the troops won't be armed and declined to give more details on what the safety patrols or beautification efforts would entail or how many Guard members have already been sent out on the streets.

National Guard Major Micah Maxwell said troops will assist law enforcement in a variety of roles, including traffic control posts and crowd control. The Guard members have been trained in de-escalation tactics and crowd control equipment, Maxwell said.

The White House said Thursday that Guard members aren't making arrests but are "protecting federal assets, providing a safe environment for law enforcement officers to make arrests, and deterring violent crime with a visible law enforcement presence."

Although the current deployment is taking place under unprecedented circumstances, National Guard troops are a semi-regular presence in D.C., typically being used during mass public events like the annual July 4 celebration. They have regularly been used in the past for crowd control in and around Metro stations.

Trump on Thursday denied that the federal law enforcement officials he sent into Washington's streets to fight crime have been diverted from priority assignments like counterterrorism. Asked if he was concerned about that, Trump said he's using a "very small force" of soldiers and that city police are now allowed to do their job properly amidst his security lockdown.

For homeless residents, an uncertain time is at hand

Meanwhile, about a dozen homeless residents in Washington packed up their belongings with help from volunteers from charitable groups and staffers from some city agencies. Items largely were not forcibly thrown out by law enforcement, but a garbage truck idled nearby.

Several protesters held signs close by, some critical of the Trump administration. Once the residents had left, a construction vehicle from a city agency cleared through the remains of the tents.

The departures were voluntary, but they came in response to a clear threat from the Trump administration. Advocates expect law enforcement officers to fan out across D.C. in the coming days to forcibly take down any remaining homeless encampments. In Washington Circle, which still contains a few tents, city workers put up signs announcing "general cleanup of this public space" starting at 10 a.m. Monday.

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Trump's 'safe and beautiful' move against DC homeless camps looks like ugliness to those targeted

By JACQUELYN MARTIN, NATHAN ELLGREN, MEG KINNARD and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Ms. Jay didn't wait for the authorities to come before packing her tent and carrying what belongings she could across Pennsylvania Avenue on her way to whatever comes next.

She'd been living her "Girl Scout life," she said, saving money and looking for work while homeless. When she got word that the law was on its way, she found herself living the scouting motto: Be prepared.

"Last night was so scary," she said, recalling when federal law officers, in concert with local police, began fanning out across Washington to uproot homeless encampments. "I don't want to be the one to wait until the last moment and then have to rush out."

President Donald Trump's housecleaning started with official Washington and the denizens of its marbled buildings, back in the bureaucracy-scouring days of the Department of Government Efficiency. Now he is taking on the other side of Washington, having sent some 800 National Guard troops to help local police go after crime, grime and makeshift homeless encampments.

First came the spring cleaning

Back in early spring, Trump's efforts upended the U.S. Institute of Peace, among other institutions and departments. On Thursday, authorities brought in an earth mover to clear out an encampment within sight of that hollowed-out institute's handsome Constitution Avenue headquarters.

The mission to clean the capital of criminal elements and ragged edges comes under Trump's Making D.C. Safe and Beautiful Task Force. Some in D.C. believe a different kind of ugliness is playing out.

"From the White House, the president sees a lawless wasteland," said leaders of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. "We see fellow human beings — neighbors, workers, friends and family — each made in the image of God."

For Andrew S., 61, the ugliness came Wednesday when agents he identified as being with the federal government treated him like an eyesore. They asked him to move from his resting place along the route where Trump would be driven to the Kennedy Center.

"You have to move because you're in eyesight of the president," Andrew, originally from Baltimore, said he was told. He added, "I didn't really take it serious until today, but the president really doesn't want us here."

He, Ms. Jay and some others interviewed and photographed by The Associated Press declined to give their full names in the midst of the heavy law enforcement presence in Washington.

Saying goodbye to his belongings

At the encampment near the peace institute, a man named George, 67, walked away Thursday carrying an umbrella in one hand and a garbage bag with some of his belongings in the other. City workers put his mattress and other possessions in a garbage truck idling nearby. He waved goodbye to it.

It was that kind of day for others at the same site, too.

"I have known homelessness for so long that it is part of normal life at this point," Jesse Wall, 43, said as he cleared his belongings Thursday from the site near the peace institute. "What are you trying to prove here?" Wall asked, as if speaking with the law. "That you're a bully?"

David Beatty, 67, had been living at that encampment for several months. On Thursday, he watched as parts of it were roped off. Beatty and others were allowed to pack up what they could before the heavy machinery cleared remaining items from the area and dumped them into trucks and receptacles.

What about the Golden Rule?

He quoted a variation of the Bible's Golden Rule — "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" — and said, "The idea that he's targeting us and persecuting us feels wrong to me."

Much of the clearing out Thursday was at the hands of local police. D.C. officials knew federal authorities would be dismantling all homeless encampments if local police didn't. Wayne Turnage, a deputy mayor, said the district has a process to do it "the way it should be done."

The expectation was clear, if not overtly stated: Local police would go about the work in a more humane

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way than the feds.

Jesse Rabinowitz from the National Homelessness Law Center said that, according to the briefing he received on the operation, people would be given the choice to leave or be detained at eight federal and 54 local sites. The intent, Rabinowitz said he believed, was to trash tents in the daylight (because authorities want the public to see that) and do the bulk of arrests in darkness (because they don't want that widely seen).

Once penniless, he's now an advocate

Born and raised in Washington, Wesley Thomas spent nearly three decades on the streets, struggling with drug addiction, until other homeless people and charitable organizations helped him get clean through therapy and back on his feet.

Now he has had a place to live for eight years and works as an advocate for a nonprofit group that supported him, Miriam's Kitchen, where he's helped dozens find housing.

"The first day I was out there I was penniless, homeless, frightened, only the clothing on my back, didn't know where I was gonna sleep nor eat," he said. "Fortunately, there were some homeless people in the area, gave me blankets, showed me a safe place, St. John's Church, to rest my head for the night."

St. John's is across from Lafayette Park, which is across from the White House. It is known as the Church of the Presidents, because its sanctuary has seen all presidents since James Madison in the early 1800s.

Thomas wanted the public to know that most of the people being moved off are not "uneducated, dumb or stupid," even if they are down on their luck. "You got doctors, lawyers, businessmen, Navy SEALs, veterans, mailmen," he said.

"Poor people come in all races, ethnicities and colors."

California pushes left, Texas to the right, with US House control and Trump agenda in play

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD, TRẦN NGUYỄN and NADIA LATHAN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A political standoff in Texas over proposed House maps that could hand Republicans five new seats is poised to enter a new phase Friday, while heavily Democratic California plans to release its own new maps intended to erase all but a sprinkle of the state's GOP House districts in the fight over control of Congress.

The hectic maneuvering in the nation's two most populous states underscored the stakes for both parties in the narrowly divided House that could determine the fate of President Donald Trump's agenda in the second half of his term.

On Thursday, Texas Democrats moved closer to ending a nearly two-week walkout that has blocked the GOP's redrawing of U.S. House maps before the 2026 election. The Democrats announced they will return to the state provided that Texas Republicans end a special session and California releases its own redrawn map proposal, both of which were expected to happen Friday.

However, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott is expected to call another special session to push through new maps. Democratic lawmakers vowed to take the fight to the courts.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom said his state will hold a Nov. 4 special election to seek approval of redrawn districts intended to give Democrats five more U.S. House seats, in a counterpunch to undercut any gains in Texas.

"We can't stand back and watch this democracy disappear district by district all across the country," Newsom said at what amounted to a campaign kickoff rally for the as-yet unreleased maps that Democrats have been shaping behind closed doors. "We are not bystanders in this world. We can shape the future."

The two states have emerged as the center of a partisan turf war in the House that could spiral into other states — as well as the courts — in what amounts to a proxy war ahead of the 2026 elections.

Fight has gone national

Newsom's announcement Thursday marked the first time any state beyond Texas has officially waded into the mid-decade redistricting fight. The Texas plan was stalled when minority Democrats fled to Illinois,

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New York and Massachusetts on Aug. 3 to stop the Legislature from passing any bills.

Elsewhere, leaders from red Florida to blue New York are threatening to write new maps. In Missouri, a document obtained by The Associated Press shows the state Senate received a \$46,000 invoice to activate six redistricting software licenses and provide training for up to 10 staff members.

Newsom encouraged other Democratic-led states to get involved.

"We need to stand up — not just California. Other blue states need to stand up," Newsom said.

House control could come down to a few seats in 2026

Republicans hold a 219-212 majority in the House, with four vacancies. New maps are typically drawn once a decade after the census is conducted. Many states, including Texas, give legislators the power to draw maps. California is among states that rely on an independent commission that is supposed to be nonpartisan.

The California map would take effect only if a Republican state moves forward, and it would remain through the 2030 elections. After that, Democrats say they would return mapmaking power to the independent commission approved by voters more than a decade ago.

Newsom goes to LA to launch campaign for new districts

In Los Angeles, Newsom and other speakers veered from discussing the technical grist of reshaping districts — known as redistricting — and instead depicted the looming battle as a conflict with all things Trump, tying it explicitly to the fate of American democracy.

An overarching theme was the willingness to stand up to Trump, a cheer-inducing line for Democrats as the party looks to regroup from its 2024 losses.

"Donald Trump, you have poked the bear, and we will punch back," said Newsom, a possible 2028 presidential contender.

Opposition to California plan begins to take shape

Some people already have said they would sue to block the effort, and influential voices including former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger may campaign against it.

"Gavin Newsom's latest stunt has nothing to do with Californians and everything to do with consolidating radical Democrat power, silencing California voters, and propping up his pathetic 2028 presidential pipe dream," National Republican Congressional Committee spokesperson Christian Martinez said in a statement. "Newsom's made it clear: he'll shred California's Constitution and trample over democracy — running a cynical, self-serving playbook where Californians are an afterthought and power is the only priority."

California Democrats hold 43 of the state's 52 House seats, and the state has some of the most competitive House seats.

In California, lawmakers must officially declare the special election, which they plan to do next week after voting on the new maps. Democrats hold supermajorities in both chambers — enough to act without any Republican votes — and Newsom said he is not worried about winning the required support from two-thirds of lawmakers to advance the maps.

Judge strikes down Trump administration guidance against diversity programs at schools and colleges

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday struck down two Trump administration actions aimed at eliminating diversity, equity and inclusion programs at the nation's schools and universities.

In her ruling, U.S. District Judge Stephanie Gallagher in Maryland found that the Education Department violated the law when it threatened to cut federal funding from educational institutions that continued with DEI initiatives.

The guidance has been on hold since April when three federal judges blocked various portions of the Education Department's anti-DEI measures.

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The ruling Thursday followed a motion for summary judgment from the American Federation of Teachers and the American Sociological Association, which challenged the government's actions in a February lawsuit.

The case centers on two Education Department memos ordering schools and universities to end all "race-based decision-making" or face penalties up to a total loss of federal funding. It's part of a campaign to end practices the Trump administration frames as discrimination against white and Asian American students.

The new ruling orders the department to scrap the guidance because it runs afoul of procedural requirements, though Gallagher wrote that she took no view on whether the policies were "good or bad, prudent or foolish, fair or unfair."

Gallagher, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, rejected the government's argument that the memos simply served to remind schools that discrimination is illegal.

"It initiated a sea change in how the Department of Education regulates educational practices and classroom conduct, causing millions of educators to reasonably fear that their lawful, and even beneficial, speech might cause them or their schools to be punished," Gallagher wrote.

Democracy Forward, a legal advocacy firm representing the plaintiffs, called it an important victory over the administration's attack on DEI.

"Threatening teachers and sowing chaos in schools throughout America is part of the administration's war on education, and today the people won," said Skye Perryman, the group's president and CEO.

A statement from the Education Department on Thursday said it was disappointed in the ruling but that "judicial action enjoining or setting aside this guidance has not stopped our ability to enforce Title VI protections for students at an unprecedented level."

The conflict started with a Feb. 14 memo declaring that any consideration of race in admissions, financial aid, hiring or other aspects of academic and student life would be considered a violation of federal civil rights law.

The memo dramatically expanded the government's interpretation of a 2023 Supreme Court decision barring colleges from considering race in admissions decisions. The government argued the ruling applied not only to admissions but across all of education, forbidding "race-based preferences" of any kind.

"Educational institutions have toxically indoctrinated students with the false premise that the United States is built upon 'systemic and structural racism' and advanced discriminatory policies and practices," wrote Craig Trainor, the acting assistant secretary of the department's Office for Civil Rights.

A further memo in April asked state education agencies to certify they were not using "illegal DEI practices." Violators risked losing federal money and being prosecuted under the False Claims Act, it said.

In total, the guidance amounted to a full-scale reframing of the government's approach to civil rights in education. It took aim at policies that were created to address longstanding racial disparities, saying those practices were their own form of discrimination.

The memos drew a wave of backlash from states and education groups that called it illegal government censorship.

In its lawsuit, the American Federation of Teachers said the government was imposing "unclear and highly subjective" limits on schools across the country. It said teachers and professors had to "choose between chilling their constitutionally protected speech and association or risk losing federal funds and being subject to prosecution."

California pushes partisan plan for new Democratic districts to counter Texas in fight for US House

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and TRẦN NGUYỄN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom said Thursday his state will hold a Nov. 4 special election to seek approval of redrawn districts intended to give Democrats five more U.S. House seats in the fight for control of Congress.

The move is a direct response to a similar Republican-led effort in Texas, pushed by President Donald Trump as his party seeks to maintain its slim House majority in the midterm elections. The nation's two

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most populous states have emerged as the center of a partisan turf war in the House that could spiral into other states — as well as the courts — in what amounts to a proxy war ahead of the 2026 elections.

Texas lawmakers are considering a new map that could help them send five more Republicans to Washington. Democrats who so far have halted a vote by leaving the state announced Thursday that they will return home if Texas Republicans end their current special session and California releases its own recast map proposal. Both were expected to happen Friday.

However, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott is expected to call another special session to push through new maps.

Newsom goes to LA to launch campaign for new districts

In Los Angeles, Newsom staged what amounted to a campaign kickoff rally for the as-yet unreleased new maps with the state's Democratic leadership in a downtown auditorium packed with union members, legislators and abortion rights supporters.

Newsom and other speakers veered from discussing the technical grist of reshaping districts — known as redistricting — and instead depicted the looming battle as a conflict with all things Trump, tying it explicitly to the fate of American democracy.

"We can't stand back and watch this democracy disappear district by district all across the country," Newsom said. "We are not bystanders in this world. We can shape the future."

An overarching theme was the willingness to stand up to Trump, a cheer-inducing line for Democrats as the party looks to regroup from its 2024 losses.

"Donald Trump, you have poked the bear and we will punch back," said Newsom, a possible 2028 presidential contender.

Showdown between Texas and California could spread

Thursday's announcement marks the first time any state beyond Texas has officially waded into the mid-decade redistricting fight. The Texas plan was stalled when minority Democrats fled to Illinois, New York and Massachusetts on Aug. 3 to stop the Legislature from passing any bills.

Elsewhere, leaders from red Florida to blue New York are threatening to write new maps. In Missouri, a document obtained by The Associated Press shows the state Senate received a \$46,000 invoice to activate six redistricting software licenses and provide training for up to 10 staff members.

In California, lawmakers must officially declare the special election, which they plan to do next week after voting on the new maps. Democrats hold supermajorities in both chambers — enough to act without any Republican votes — and Newsom said he's not worried about winning the required support from two-thirds of lawmakers to advance the maps.

Newsom encouraged other Democratic-led states to get involved.

"We need to stand up — not just California. Other blue states need to stand up," Newsom said.

House control could come down to a few seats in 2026

Republicans hold a 219-212 majority in the U.S. House, with four vacancies. New maps are typically drawn once a decade after the census is conducted. Many states, including Texas, give legislators the power to draw maps. California is among states that rely on an independent commission that is supposed to be nonpartisan.

The California map would take effect only if a Republican state moves forward, and it would remain through the 2030 elections. After that, Democrats say they would return mapmaking power to the independent commission approved by voters more than a decade ago.

Opposition to California plan begins to take shape

Some people already have said they would sue to block the effort, and influential voices including former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger may campaign against it.

"Gavin Newsom's latest stunt has nothing to do with Californians and everything to do with consolidating radical Democrat power, silencing California voters, and propping up his pathetic 2028 presidential pipe dream," National Republican Congressional Committee spokesperson Christian Martinez said in a statement. "Newsom's made it clear: he'll shred California's Constitution and trample over democracy — running

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a cynical, self-serving playbook where Californians are an afterthought and power is the only priority.”

California Democrats hold 43 of the state’s 52 House seats, and the state has some of the most competitive House seats.

Outside Newsom’s news conference Thursday, U.S. Border Patrol agents conducted patrols, drawing condemnation from the governor and others.

“We’re here making Los Angeles a safer place since we don’t have politicians that will do that,” Gregory Bovino, chief of the patrol’s El Centro, California, sector, told a reporter with KTTV in Los Angeles. He said he didn’t know Newsom was inside nearby.

Malnourished kids arrive daily at a Gaza hospital as Netanyahu denies hunger

By MARIAM DAGGA and LEE KEATH Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — The dead body of 2 1/2-year-old Ro’a Mashi lay on the table in Gaza’s Nasser Hospital, her arms and rib cage skeletal, her eyes sunken in her skull. Doctors say she had no preexisting conditions and wasted away over months as her family struggled to find food and treatment.

Her family showed The Associated Press a photo of Ro’a’s body at the hospital, and it was confirmed by the doctor who received her remains. Several days after she died, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday told local media, “There is no hunger. There was no hunger. There was a shortage, and there was certainly no policy of starvation.”

In the face of international outcry, Netanyahu has pushed back, saying reports of starvation are “lies” promoted by Hamas.

However, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric this week warned that starvation and malnutrition in Gaza are at the highest levels since the war began.

The U.N. says nearly 12,000 children under 5 were found to have acute malnutrition in July — including more than 2,500 with severe malnutrition, the most dangerous level. The World Health Organization says the numbers are likely an undercount.

The past two weeks, Israel has allowed around triple the amount of food into Gaza than had been entering since late May. That followed 2 1/2 months when Israel barred all food, medicine and other supplies, saying it was to pressure Hamas to release hostages taken during its 2023 attack that launched the war. The new influx has brought more food within reach for some of the population and lowered some prices in marketplaces, though it remains far more expensive than prewar levels and unaffordable for many.

While better food access might help much of Gaza’s population, “it won’t help the children who are severely malnourished,” said Alex DeWaal, executive director of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University, who has worked on famine and humanitarian issues for more than 40 years.

When a person is severely malnourished, vital micronutrients are depleted and bodily functions deteriorate. Simply feeding the person can cause harm, known as “refeeding syndrome,” potentially leading to seizures, coma or death. Instead, micronutrients must first be replenished with supplements and therapeutic milk in a hospital.

“We’re talking about thousands of kids who need to be in hospital if they’re going to have a chance of survival,” DeWaal said. “If this approach of increasing the food supply had been undertaken two months ago, probably many of those kids would not have gotten into this situation.”

Any improvement is also threatened by a planned new Israeli offensive that Netanyahu says will capture Gaza City and the tent camps where most of the territory’s population is located. That will prompt a huge new wave of displacement and disrupt food delivery, U.N. and aid officials warn.

Preexisting conditions

The Gaza Health Ministry says 42 children died of malnutrition-related causes since July 1, along with 129 adults. It says 106 children have died of malnutrition during the entire war. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, is staffed by medical professionals and its figures on casualties are seen by the U.N. and other experts as the most reliable.

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The Israeli military Tuesday pointed to the fact that some children who died had preexisting conditions, arguing their deaths were "unrelated to their nutritional status." It said a review by its experts had concluded there are "no signs of a widespread malnutrition phenomenon" in Gaza.

At his press briefing Sunday, Netanyahu spoke in front of a screen reading "Fake Starving Children" over photos of skeletal children with preexisting conditions. He accused Hamas of starving the remaining Israeli hostages and repeated claims the militant group is diverting large amounts of aid, a claim the U.N. denies.

Doctors in Gaza acknowledge that some of those dying or starving have chronic conditions, including cerebral palsy, rickets or genetic disorders, some of which make children more vulnerable to malnutrition. However, those conditions are manageable when food and proper medical treatments are available, they say.

"The worsening shortages of food led to these cases' swift deterioration," said Dr. Yasser Abu Ghali, head of Nasser's pediatrics unit. "Malnutrition was the main factor in their deaths."

Of 13 emaciated children whose cases the AP has seen since late July, five had no preexisting conditions — including three who died — according to doctors.

Abu Ghali spoke next to the body of Jamal al-Najjar, a 5-year-old who died Tuesday of malnutrition and was born with rickets, which hinders the ability to metabolize vitamins, weakening bones.

In the past months, the boy's weight fell from 16 kilograms to 7 (35 pounds to 15), said his father, Fadi al-Najjar, whose lean face showed his own hunger.

Asked about Netanyahu's claim there was no hunger in Gaza, he pointed at Jamal's protruding rib cage. "Of course there's famine," he said. "Does a 5-year-old child's chest normally come to look like this?"

Skin and bones

Dr. Ahmed al-Farra, Nasser's general director of pediatrics, said the facility receives 10-20 children with severe malnutrition a day, and the numbers are rising.

On Sunday, a severely malnourished 2-year-old, Shamm Qudeih, cried in pain in her hospital bed. Her arms, legs and ribs were skeletal, her belly inflated.

"She has lost all fat and muscle," al-Farra said. She weighed 4 kilograms (9 pounds), a third of a 2-year-old's normal weight.

Doctors suspect Shamm suffers from a rare genetic condition called glycogen storage disease, which changes how the body uses and stores glycogen, a form of sugar, and can impact muscle and bone development. But they can't test for it in Gaza, al-Farra said.

Normally, the condition can be managed through a high-carbohydrate diet.

Her family applied a year ago for medical evacuation, joining a list of thousands the WHO says need urgent treatment abroad. For months, Israel slowed evacuations to a near standstill or halted them for long stretches. But it appears to be stepping up permissions, with more than 60 allowed to leave in the first week of August, according to the U.N.

Permission for Shamm to leave Gaza finally came this week, and on Wednesday, she was heading to a hospital in Italy.

A child died in her family's tent

Ro'a was one of four dead children who suffered from malnutrition brought to Nasser over the course of just over two weeks, doctors say.

Her mother, Fatma Mashi, said she first noticed Ro'a losing weight last year, but she thought it was because she was teething. When she took Ro'a to Nasser Hospital in October, the child was severely malnourished, according to al-Farra, who said Ro'a had no preexisting conditions.

At the time, in the last months of 2024, Israel had reduced aid entry to some of the lowest levels of the war.

The family was also displaced multiple times by Israeli military operations. Each move interrupted Ro'a's treatment as it took time to find a clinic to get nutritional supplements, Mashi said. The family was reduced to one meal a day — often boiled macaroni — but "whatever she ate, it didn't change anything in her," Mashi said.

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Two weeks ago, they moved into the tent camps of Muwasi on Gaza's southern coast. Ro'a's decline accelerated.

"I could tell it was only a matter of two or three more days," Mashi said in the family's tent Friday, the day after she had died.

Mashi and her husband Amin both looked gaunt, their cheeks and eyes hollow. Their five surviving children – including a baby born this year -- are thin, but not nearly as emaciated as Ro'a.

DeWaal said it's not unusual in famines for one family member to be far worse than others. "Most often it will be a kid who is 18 months or 2 years" who is most vulnerable, he said, while older siblings are "more robust."

But any number of things can set one child into a spiral of malnutrition, such as an infection or troubles after weaning.

"A very small thing can push them over."

Most US stocks fall after a disappointing inflation update, but Big Tech keeps Wall Street steady

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Most stocks fell on Wall Street Thursday after a disappointing report said inflation was worse last month at the U.S. wholesale level than economists expected. But gains for Amazon and some other influential Big Tech companies helped mask the losses.

Seven out of every 10 stocks within the S&P 500 fell, though the index edged up by less than 0.1% to set another all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 11 points, or less than 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite dipped by less than 0.1% from its record set the day before.

The inflation report said that prices jumped 3.3% last month at the U.S. wholesale level from a year earlier. That was well above the 2.5% rate that economists had forecast, and it could hint at higher inflation ahead for U.S. shoppers as it makes its way through the system.

The data forced traders to second guess their widespread consensus that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates at its next meeting in September. Lower rates can boost investment prices and the economy by making it cheaper for U.S. households and businesses to borrow to buy houses, cars or equipment, but they also risk worsening inflation.

"This doesn't slam the door on a September rate cut," but it may raise some doubt, according to Chris Larkin, managing director, trading and investing, at E-Trade from Morgan Stanley.

Traders now see a 7.4% chance that the Fed may hold rates steady in September, according to data from CME Group. A day earlier, they were betting on a 100% certainty that the Fed would cut its main rate for the first time this year.

Higher interest rates drag on all kinds of companies by keeping the cost to borrow high. They can hurt smaller companies in particular because they often need to borrow to grow. The Russell 2000 index of smaller U.S. stocks tumbled a market-leading 1.2%.

Thursday's disappointing data followed an encouraging update earlier in the week on prices at the consumer level. A separate report on Thursday, meanwhile, said fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week. That's a good sign for workers, indicating that layoffs remain relatively low at a time when job openings have become more difficult to find.

But a solid job market could also give the Fed less reason to cut interest rates in the short term.

The data helped send Treasury yields higher in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed to 4.28% from 4.20% just before the data reports' release and from 4.24% late Wednesday.

On Wall Street, Tapestry tumbled after the company behind the Coach and Kate Spade New York brands showed it's feeling the pressure of tariffs.

It detailed how much profit it could lose in its upcoming fiscal year because of tariffs and duties, and its forecast for profit fell short of analysts' expectations even though its forecast for revenue came in above. Its stock fell 15.7%, despite it also reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

Deere fell 6.8% even though the machinery maker likewise delivered a better profit than expected. There, too, the focus was on where profits are heading. It cut the top end of its forecasted range for profit this fiscal year and said its customers "remain cautious amid ongoing uncertainty."

On the winning side of Wall Street was Fossil Group, which jumped 29.8% after the seller of watches and other accessories reported better profit than expected. It also announced a plan to strengthen its finances, while trimming its forecast for how much it expects worldwide net sales to fall this year.

Big Tech stocks also helped mask Wall Street's losses. Amazon rose 2.9% to add to its gains from the prior day when it announced same-day delivery of fresh groceries in more than 1,000 cities and towns.

Because Amazon is so huge, with a market value of \$2.45 trillion, the movements for its stock carry much more weight on the S&P 500 than the typical company's.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 1.96 to 6,468.54 points. The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged down 11.01 to 44,911.26, and the Nasdaq composite dipped 2.47 to 21,710.67.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed across Asia and Europe ahead of a key meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday.

Taylor Swift's chat with the Kelces on 'New Heights' marks a milestone moment for podcasts

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Since nothing Taylor Swift ever does is small, her two-hour conversation with boyfriend Travis Kelce and his brother Jason Kelce on their "New Heights" podcast is a watershed moment for a media format that has already outlived the device it was named for.

By Thursday afternoon, Wednesday night's talk had already been seen more than 11.7 million times on YouTube. But that's only a fraction of its circulation — clips distributed on Instagram, TikTok, X and elsewhere have received more than 400 million views, and the episode was also available for streaming on audio platforms.

Swift, who infrequently gives interviews to journalists, revealed key information about her upcoming album, "The Life of a Showgirl," and talked about her relationships with Travis Kelce and her family, and her joy of gaining full control of her past work — a yearslong quest.

It was a revelation for fans with whom she's primarily communicated through her music and social media Easter eggs, a treasure hunt of clues about what she's doing professionally.

"We have not heard Taylor speak in like a long-form interview like that in about five years," Alex Antonides, a superfan from Dallas, told The Associated Press. "She's never been in that comfortable of a situation, either. It's always been like more professional, like a professional interviewer asking her questions. And then this is like with her boyfriend and his brother. So that was ... an environment we've truly never seen her in before."

Celebrities like a friendly face for public talks

Swift cemented a trend that's been seen in recent years among entertainers, sports figures and politicians who seek to deliver particular messages. A visit to friendly faces for a long-form conversation beats questions from nosy, prying journalists. In this case, Swift and Travis Kelce locked arms and cooed at each other between admiring queries. "My boyfriend says," Swift said in asides when Kelce laid things on too thick.

"The Kelce brothers have become the Barbara Walters of their generation," said Nick Cicero, founder of Mondo Metrics, which studies the podcast industry.

Fans ate it up. "I think it's really nice and refreshing, especially for a woman whose primary fan base is young women, to see somebody that is so celebratory of their partner and also not self-deprecating in a bad way, but also really admires what they do, and they don't try to minimize that," one fan, Britton Copeland, who goes by Britton Rae on TikTok, said in a Zoom interview.

Swift interpreters immediately began online discussions about What It All Means. One fan discussed theories about the still-unheard song, "The Fate of Ophelia," listed as the new album's first cut. Others

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pointed out that the album release date of Oct. 3 coincided with National Plaid Day — apparently a Swift obsession — and National Boyfriend's Day.

Such Easter eggs are likely to bring listeners back to the "New Heights" interview again and again, meaning it could eventually stand as the most listened-to podcast episode on YouTube ever. "It's got a chance," Cicero said.

Podcasts emerged in the 2000s as an audio-only programming format tied to Apple's now-defunct iPod. The New Oxford American Dictionary called "podcast" its word of the year in 2005, even as many in the industry sought an alternative name almost as soon as it was coined.

The well-regarded "Serial" podcasts helped bring the format into the mainstream a decade ago. Particularly since the pandemic, and with the explosive growth of YouTube and personalities like Joe Rogan, video podcasts have become far more popular. Like most interview podcasts, "New Heights" can also be enjoyed in an audio format — and it's background noise even for many who air it on YouTube — but being able to see Swift and the Kelces interact has its benefits.

Will Swift outdraw President Trump's appearance with Rogan?

Rogan's interview with President Donald Trump was a key moment in the 2024 presidential campaign, and has been seen 59 million times on YouTube in nine months. Certainly Swifties — and possibly Trump himself — will be eager to see if the "New Heights" interview exceeds that number. Swift is among the celebrities who has drawn the president's ire.

It has further to go to be a record-setter, though. The most-watched podcast episode ever on YouTube, and likely the most-consumed podcast ever, is Abdulrahman Abu Maleh's interview with relationship coach Yasser Hazimi for "Secrets to Thriving Relationships" from the Saudi Arabian company Thmanyah. It has racked up 144 million views in two years.

Swift's and the Kelces' teams were particularly skillful in creating a huge demand for the interview with how its spread clips across various social media platforms, said Tom Webster, founder of Sounds Profitable, a firm that analyzes the podcast industry. By Thursday morning, Instagram highlights alone from the interview were viewed more than 350 million times, Cicero said.

What to know if your Air Canada flight gets canceled

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

Summer travelers are facing uncertainty as the clock winds down on a possible strike by Air Canada flight attendants, which the airline said would force it to cancel almost all of its scheduled flights as soon as Saturday.

The Canadian carrier on Thursday began what it described as a "phased wind down" of most operations that included multiple flight cancellations. Air Canada said it was suspending its schedule and trying to get passengers booked with other airlines to limit disruptions if members of its cabin crews walk off the job.

Both the union that represents about 10,000 Air Canada flight attendants and the airline say disagreements over key issues, including pay raises, have brought contract talks to a standstill.

A complete shutdown of the country's largest airline threatens to impact about 130,000 people a day. Here's what to know about the rights of passengers and airline consumer protections:

Impacted passengers will be notified

Air Canada said it would reach out via email or text to let customers know if their flights are canceled. The cancellations on Thursday included some long-haul overseas flights. By the end of Friday, the airline expects to cancel 500 flights.

Flight attendants are threatening to strike at 1 a.m. EDT Saturday if they don't have a new contract by then. If the walkout happens, the airline said it would suspend all of its Air Canada and Air Canada Rouge flights, but not the regional Air Canada Express flights operated by Jazz Aviation and PAL Airlines.

How long the airline's planes will be grounded remains to be seen. Air Canada Chief Operating Officer Mark Nasr said the decision to lock out the union members even if it meant halting flights would help facilitate an orderly restart, "which under the best circumstances will take a full week to complete."

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A complete grounding would affect 25,000 Canadians a day who traveled abroad and may become stranded.

You have options if your flight is canceled

Passengers whose travel is impacted will be eligible to request a full refund on the airline's website or mobile app, according to Air Canada.

The airline said it would also offer alternative travel options through other Canadian and foreign airlines when possible. But it warned that it could not guarantee immediate rebooking because flights on other airlines are already full "due to the summer travel peak."

Passengers with the flexibility to reschedule their travel plans can also rebook their flights for dates between Aug. 21 and Sept. 12 at no additional cost, Air Canada said.

The airline says that under federal regulations, flight cancellations caused by a strike or lockout are considered outside the carrier's control, meaning customers are not eligible for compensation for food and lodging expenses incurred during the labor dispute.

Most of the union voted to strike

Air Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees have been in contract talks for about eight months, but they have yet to reach a tentative deal.

By the end of July, the union put it to a vote, and 99.7% approved a strike. The union on Wednesday gave Air Canada a 72-hour strike notice. The airline responded with a so-called lockout notice, saying it would prevent the flight attendants from working on Saturday.

The union said it rejected a proposal from the airline to enter a binding arbitration process that would have prevented flight attendants from walking off the job, saying it prefers to negotiate a deal that its members can then vote on.

Arielle Meloul-Wechsler, Air Canada's head of human resources, said the company was weighing all of its options, including asking for government intervention.

Negotiations break down over pay

Both the union and the airline say they remain far apart on the issue of pay and the unpaid work flight attendants do when planes aren't in the air.

The airline said its latest offer included a 38% increase in total compensation, including benefits and pensions over four years. But the union pushed back, saying the proposed 8% raise in the first year didn't go far enough because of inflation.

Vancouver-based flight attendant Henly Larden, who has worked for Air Canada since 2017, said the union also won't back down on its goal to get flight attendants paid for the time they're on the ground. Larden, 33, called it a "very archaic expectation" to work for free during the boarding process.

"Just because it's a past practice doesn't mean here in 2025 that it's OK or it's right, and we want to change that going forward," she said.

Supreme Court allows Mississippi to require age verification on social media like Facebook and X

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Thursday refused for now to block enforcement of a Mississippi law aimed at regulating the use of social media by children, an issue of growing national concern.

The justices rejected an emergency appeal from a tech industry group representing major platforms like Facebook, X and YouTube.

NetChoice is challenging laws passed in Mississippi and other states that require social media users to verify their ages, and asked the court to keep the measure on hold while a lawsuit plays out.

There were no noted dissents from the brief, unsigned order. Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote that there's a good chance NetChoice will eventually succeed in showing that the law is unconstitutional, but hadn't shown it must be blocked while the lawsuit unfolds.

NetChoice argues that the Mississippi law threatens privacy rights and unconstitutionally restricts the

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free expression of users of all ages.

A federal judge agreed and prevented the 2024 law from taking effect. But a three-judge panel of the 5th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in July that the law could be enforced while the lawsuit proceeds.

It's the latest legal development as court challenges play out against similar laws in states across the country.

Parents and even some teenagers are growing increasingly concerned about the effects of social media use on young people. Supporters of the new laws have said they are needed to help curb the explosive use of social media among young people, and what researchers say is an associated increase in depression and anxiety.

Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch told the justices that age verification could help protect young people from "sexual abuse, trafficking, physical violence, sextortion and more," activities that Fitch noted are not protected by the First Amendment.

Communications director MaryAsa Lee said the state is grateful for the decision, and expects the case to proceed "in a way that permits thoughtful consideration of these important issues."

NetChoice represents some of the country's most high-profile technology companies, including Google, which owns YouTube; Snap Inc., the parent company of Snapchat; and Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram. NetChoice has filed similar lawsuits in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Ohio and Utah.

Paul Taske, co-director of the NetChoice Litigation Center, called the decision "an unfortunate procedural delay."

"Although we're disappointed with the Court's decision, Justice Kavanaugh's concurrence makes clear that NetChoice will ultimately succeed in defending the First Amendment — not just in this case but across all NetChoice's ID-for-Speech lawsuits," he said.

Prosecutors seek death penalty against Zizians member charged with murdering Vermont border agent

By HOLLY RAMER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department said Thursday it will seek the death penalty against a member of the cultlike Zizians group accused of killing a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Vermont in the latest Trump administration push for more federal executions.

Teresa Youngblut, 21, of Seattle, is among a group of radical computer scientists focused on veganism, gender identity and artificial intelligence who have been linked to six killings in three states. She's accused of fatally shooting agent David Maland on Jan. 20, the same day President Donald Trump was inaugurated and signed a sweeping executive order lifting the moratorium on federal executions.

Youngblut initially was charged with using a deadly weapon against law enforcement and discharging a firearm during an assault with a deadly weapon. But the Trump administration signaled early on that more serious charges were coming, and a new indictment released Thursday charged her with murder of a federal law enforcement agent, assaulting other agents with a deadly weapon and related firearms offenses.

"We will not stand for such attacks on the men and women who protect our communities and borders," Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Galeotti said in a press release.

In February, Attorney General Pam Bondi mentioned Maland as an example when saying she expects federal prosecutors to seek the death penalty in cases involving the murder of law enforcement officers. And Youngblut's attorneys recently said they had been given a July 28 deadline to offer preliminary evidence about why she should be spared such a punishment. Her attorneys, who declined to comment Thursday, asked a judge last month to delay that deadline until January, but the judge declined.

At the time of the shooting, authorities had been watching Youngblut and her companion, Felix Bauckholt, for several days after a Vermont hotel employee reported seeing them carrying guns and wearing black tactical gear. She's accused of opening fire on border agents who pulled the car over on Interstate 91. An agent fired back, killing Bauckholt and wounding Youngblut.

The pair were among the followers of Jack LaSota, a transgender woman also known as Ziz whose on-

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line writing attracted young, highly intelligent computer scientists who shared anarchist beliefs. Members of the group have been tied to the death of one of their own during an attack on a California landlord in 2022, the landlord's subsequent killing earlier this year, and the deaths of one of the members' parents in Pennsylvania.

LaSota and two others face weapons and drug charges in Maryland, where they were arrested in February, while LaSota faces additional federal charges of being an armed fugitive. Another member of the group who is charged with killing the landlord in California had applied for a marriage license with Youngblut. Michelle Zajko, whose parents were killed in Pennsylvania, was arrested with LaSota in Maryland, and has been charged with providing weapons to Youngblut in Vermont.

Vermont abolished its state death penalty in 1972. The last person sentenced to death in the state on federal charges was Donald Fell, who was convicted in 2005 of abducting and killing a supermarket worker five years earlier. But the conviction and sentence were later thrown out because of juror misconduct, and in 2018, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison.

Craig Tremaroli, the FBI's special agent in charge in Albany, New York, called Thursday's indictments "the culmination of over six months of meticulous investigative collaboration" aimed at pursuing justice for Maland's family and friends.

"Today, our hearts remain with all those who continue to mourn the tragic loss of this veteran, son, brother, fiance, friend and colleague," he said in a statement.

DeSantis announces plans for second immigration detention facility dubbed 'Deportation Depot'

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration is preparing to open a second immigration detention facility dubbed "Deportation Depot" at a state prison as a federal judge decides the fate of the state's holding center for immigrants at an isolated airstrip in the Florida Everglades known as "Alligator Alcatraz."

DeSantis announced Thursday that the new facility is to be housed at the Baker Correctional Institution, a state prison about 43 miles (69 kilometers) west of downtown Jacksonville. It is expected to hold 1,300 immigration detention beds, though that capacity could be expanded to 2,000, state officials said.

After opening the Everglades facility last month, DeSantis justified building the second detention center by saying President Donald Trump's administration needs the additional capacity to hold and deport more immigrants.

"There is a demand for this," DeSantis said. "I'm confident that it will be filled."

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has trumpeted Republican governors' efforts to expand their immigration detention capacity, calling Florida's partnership a model for other state-run holding facilities.

Plans to open the facility in two to three weeks

DeSantis touted the relative ease and economy of setting up the northern Florida facility at a preexisting prison, estimating the build-out cost to be \$6 million. That's compared to the hundreds of millions of dollars the state has committed to construct the vast network of tents and trailers at the south facility in the rugged and remote Florida swamp.

"This part of the facility is not being used right now for the state prisoners. It just gives us an ability to go in, stand it up quickly, stand it up cheaply," DeSantis said of the state prison, calling the site "ready-made."

It could take two to three weeks to get the facility operational, according to Kevin Guthrie, the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the agency in charge of building the immigration facilities.

The state had announced plans to "temporarily" close the prison in 2021, due to persistent staffing shortages.

"A building that's been dormant now for a couple of years is going to have some unforeseen challenges," Guthrie said when estimating the construction timeline.

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Among the renovations needed: air conditioning, which is not required under Florida's standards for its prisons, despite the state's sweltering climate.

Florida National Guard to staff the site

Staffing at the site will be handled by the Florida National Guard and state contractors "as needed," DeSantis said. The state's National Guard had been called on to help run the state's prisons for more than two years due to chronic staff shortages, before being mobilized to support the state's immigration enforcement efforts.

DeSantis had previously floated plans to open a second detention facility at a nearby Florida National Guard training facility known as Camp Blanding, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southwest of Jacksonville. The long-standing military installation was a major U.S. Army training facility during World War II and serves as a "continuity of government" site for Florida's executive branch, according to the facility's website.

But announcing the plans Thursday, DeSantis said the Baker facility was a better fit because of its available capacity and proximity to a regional airport.

"Blanding does have air capacity, but probably not a big enough runway to handle large planes," DeSantis said.

Everglades facility faces civil rights lawsuit

DeSantis pledged that detainees at the new facility will have "the same services" that are available at the state's first detention center.

Attorneys for detainees at the Everglades facility have called the conditions there deplorable, writing in a court filing that some detainees are showing symptoms of COVID-19 without being separated from the general population. Rainwater floods their tents and officers go cell-to-cell pressuring detainees to sign voluntary removal orders before they're allowed to consult their attorneys.

"Recent conditions at Alligator Alcatraz have fueled a sense of desperation among detainees," the attorneys said in the court filing.

Conditions at the hastily built detention center were outlined in a filing made Wednesday ahead of a hearing Monday over the legal rights of the detainees. Civil rights attorneys want U.S. District Judge Rodolfo Ruiz to ensure that detainees at the facility have confidential access to their lawyers, which the lawyers say they haven't had.

The state of Florida disputed claims that detainees' attorneys have been unable to meet with their clients. Since July 15, when videoconferencing started at the facility, the state has granted every request for a detainee to meet with an attorney, and in-person meetings started July 28, state officials said. The first detainees arrived at the beginning of July.

Attorneys for detainees also wanted the judge to identify an immigration court that has jurisdiction over the detention center so that petitions can be filed for the detainees' bond or release. The civil rights attorneys say they've been told regularly that federal immigration courts in Florida don't have jurisdiction over the detainees held in the Everglades.

100 years of AP All-America football teams: Here's who we think are the best of the best

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Ohio State and Pittsburgh each placed three players on The Associated Press All-Time All-America team announced Thursday as part of the news organization's celebration of the 100th anniversary of the storied honor for the top players in college football.

Since 1925, nearly 2,000 men have been named AP first-team All-Americans, one of the most prestigious honors in the sport.

The Big Ten led all conferences with seven selections, two more than the Southeastern Conference.

Of the 25 players on the first team, five won the Heisman Trophy and 21 are in the College Football Hall of Fame, two are nominated for induction in 2026 and two are not eligible because they are not yet 10 years removed from their college careers.

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A panel of 12 AP sports writers who cover college football selected the all-time team. It won't be, and shouldn't be, considered definitive. There have been far more great players over the last century than spots available.

For a player to qualify, he must have been an AP first-team All-American at least once. His professional career, if any, was not to be considered. Also, a member of the all-time team could only be listed on the side of the ball where he was named first-team All-America. All-purpose players could come from any position.

Voters were cautioned against recency bias, but it is notable that only three of the first-team selections played before 1970. Of the 12 players who were three-time All-Americans, only four made the two all-time teams picked by AP.

Florida's Tim Tebow edged Texas' Vince Young (2005) for all-time first-team quarterback. Tebow won the Heisman and made the AP All-America team as a sophomore in 2007, his first year as the starter.

He led the Gators to their second national championship in three years in 2008 and narrowly missed a chance at another when the 2009 team started 13-0 but lost to Alabama in the SEC championship game. He remains the SEC career leader in rushing touchdowns and touchdowns responsible for.

Oklahoma State's Barry Sanders (1988) and Georgia's Herschel Walker (1980-81-82), both Heisman winners, are the running backs. Marshall's Randy Moss (1997) and Pittsburgh's Larry Fitzgerald (2003) are the wide receivers.

The offensive line is made up of Ohio State's Orlando Pace (1995-96) and Pitt's Bill Fralic (1982-83-84) at tackle, Alabama's John Hannah (1972) and Ohio State's Jim Parker (1956) at guard and Penn's Chuck Bednarik (1947-48) at center. The tight end is Georgia's Brock Bowers (2023).

The all-purpose player is Heisman winner Johnny Rodgers of Nebraska (1972).

On defense, Pitt's Hugh Green (1978-79-80) and Maryland's Randy White (1974) are the ends and Nebraska's Ndamukong Suh (2009) and Minnesota's Bronko Nagurski (1929) are the tackles. The linebackers are Illinois' Dick Butkus (1964), Alabama's Derrick Thomas (1988) and Ohio State's Chris Spielman (1986-87).

The secondary is made up of Heisman winner Charles Woodson of Michigan (1996-97) and Florida State's Deion Sanders (1987-88) at cornerback and Southern California's Ronnie Lott (1980) and Miami's Ed Reed (2000-01) at safety.

The specialists are Florida State kicker Sebastian Janikowski (1998-99) and Iowa punter Tory Taylor (2023).

Many fans might say Anthony Munoz and Ray Guy, among others, are glaring omissions.

Munoz, who played at Southern California from 1976-79, is considered one of the greatest offensive linemen of all time, college or pro. He's in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Alas, he was never a first-team AP All-American.

Guy, who played at Southern Mississippi from 1970-72, remains the only punter selected in the first round of an NFL draft. But punters were not included on AP All-America teams until 1981.

First team offense

Wide receivers — Randy Moss, Marshall, 1997; Larry Fitzgerald, Pittsburgh, 2003.

Tackles — Orlando Pace, Ohio State, 1995-96; Bill Fralic, Pittsburgh, 1982-83-84.

Guards — John Hannah, Alabama, 1972; Jim Parker, Ohio State, 1956.

Center — Chuck Bednarik, Penn, 1947-48.

Tight end — Brock Bowers, Georgia, 2023.

QB — Tim Tebow, Florida, 2007.

Running backs — Barry Sanders, Oklahoma State, 1988; Herschel Walker, Georgia, 1980-81-82.

Kicker — Sebastian Janikowski, Florida State, 1998-99.

All-purpose — Johnny Rodgers, Nebraska, 1972.

First team defense

Ends — Hugh Green, Pittsburgh, 1978-79-80; Randy White, Maryland, 1974.

Tackles — Ndamukong Suh, Nebraska, 2009; Bronko Nagurski, Minnesota, 1929.

Linebackers — Dick Butkus, Illinois, 1964; Derrick Thomas, Alabama, 1988; Chris Spielman, Ohio State, 1986-87.

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Cornerbacks — Charles Woodson, Michigan, 1996-97; Deion Sanders, Florida State, 1987-88.
Safeties — Ronnie Lott, Southern California, 1980; Ed Reed, Miami, 2000-01.
Punter — Tory Taylor, Iowa, 2023.
Second team offense
Wide receivers — DeVonta Smith, Alabama, 2020; Desmond Howard, Michigan, 1991.
Tackles — Jonathan Ogden, UCLA, 1995; Bryant McKinnie, Miami, 2001.
Guards — Brad Budde, Southern California, 1979; John Smith, Notre Dame, 1927.
Center — Dave Rimington, Nebraska, 1981-82.
Tight end — Keith Jackson, Oklahoma, 1986-87.
QB — Vince Young, Texas, 2005.
Running backs — Archie Griffin, Ohio State, 1974-75; Tony Dorsett, Pittsburgh, 1976.
Kicker — Martin Gramatica, Kansas State, 1997.
All-purpose — Tim Brown, Notre Dame, 1986-87.
Second team defense
Ends — Bubba Smith, Michigan State, 1966; Bruce Smith, Virginia Tech, 1984.
Tackles — Lee Roy Selmon, Oklahoma, 1975; Warren Sapp, Miami, 1994.
Linebackers — Jerry Robinson, UCLA, 1976-77-78; Brian Bosworth, Oklahoma, 1985-86; Lawrence Taylor, North Carolina, 1980.
Cornerbacks — Champ Bailey, Georgia, 1998; Tyrann Mathieu, LSU, 2011.
Safeties — Bennie Blades, Miami, 1986-87; Al Brosky, Illinois, 1951.
Punter — Reggie Roby, Iowa, 1981.
First team by conference
Big Ten — 7
SEC — 5
Independent — 4
ACC — 2
Big East — 2
Big Eight — 2
Big 12 — 1
MAC — 1
Pac-10 — 1
(asterisk)Based on players' school affiliations at the time they were in college

A car accident in small-town Tennessee leads to US charges against a major Mexican drug operation

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The investigation began years ago after two drug dealers got into a car accident in a small Tennessee town. What followed was a series of secret wiretaps, a shootout with police and the discovery of drugs hidden in a tractor trailer that would eventually lead federal investigators back to cartel leaders in Mexico.

The investigation culminated with Justice Department indictments unsealed Thursday against three leaders and two high-ranking enforcers of the United Cartels, a leading rival of Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

The U.S. government is offering a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the arrest of United Cartels' top leader, Juan José Farías Álvarez — "El Abuelo," or the grandfather — along with multimillion-dollar rewards for the four others. All five are believed to be in Mexico.

The cases, as outlined in court documents, provide a glimpse into how drugs produced by violent cartels in large labs in Mexico flow across the U.S. border and reach American streets. They also highlight the violent fallout that drug trafficking leaves in its path from the mountains of Mexico to small U.S. towns.

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"These cases in particular serve as a powerful reminder of the insidious impacts that global cartels can have on our local American communities," Matthew Galeotti, acting assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's criminal division said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The chain started with a violent cartel in Mexico and it ended with law enforcement being shot at in a small town."

United Cartels is an umbrella organization made up of smaller cartels that have worked for different groups over time. It holds a fierce grip over the western state of Michoacan, Mexico, an area of economic interest to the United States because its avocado exports.

United Cartels is not as widely known as Jalisco New Generation, but given its role as a prolific methamphetamine producer, it has become a top tier target for U.S. law enforcement. It was one of eight groups recently named foreign terrorist organizations by the Trump administration.

A car crash and an abandoned protective case

The case goes back to 2019, when two dealers got into a car accident near Rockwood, Tennessee, outside of Knoxville, according to a search warrant affidavit filed in court. While fleeing the scene of the crash, they threw a hardened protective case filled with meth behind a building before being caught by police, according to court documents.

Authorities began investigating, using wiretaps, search warrants and surveillance to identify a man believed to be leading a major drug ring in the Atlanta area: Eladio Mendoza.

The investigation into Mendoza's suspected drug operation led law enforcement in early 2020 to a hotel near Atlanta. During their surveillance, authorities spotted a man leaving with a large Doritos bag. Troopers tried to stop the man after he drove from Georgia into Tennessee but he fled and fired an AK-style rifle at officers, hitting one in the leg before another trooper shot him. Inside the bag, police found meth and heroin, and identified him as a low-level dealer for Mendoza's drug ring, court records say.

Weeks later, authorities searched properties linked to Mendoza and seized phones. They discovered messages between Mendoza and a close associate of "El Abuelo," the leader of United Cartels, that showed the drugs were coming from Mexico, according to the court records. On one of Mendoza's properties, investigators found a tractor trailer that had crossed from Mexico days earlier. When they searched it, authorities seized 850 kilograms of meth hidden in the floor of the truck and discovered more drugs inside a bus and a home on the property, court papers say.

Mendoza fled the U.S. a short time later and returned to Mexico, where he was killed by cartels leaders angry that U.S. authorities had seized their cash and drugs, according to prosecutors.

Cartels are targeted with terrorist designations

The case represents the latest effort by the Republican administration to turn up the pressure on cartels through not only indictments of the groups' leaders but sanctions targeting their financial network. The Treasury Department is also bringing economic sanctions against the five defendants as well as the United Cartels as a group and a cartel under its umbrella, Los Viagras.

"We have to pursue these criminals up and down the chain to make sure that the end result doesn't result in violence and narcotics distribution on our streets," Galeotti said.

In addition to "El Abuelo," those facing U.S. indictments are Alfonso Fernández Magallón, or Poncho, and Nicolás Sierra Santana or "El Gordo," who authorities say lead smaller cartels under the United Cartels organization. The two other defendants are Edgar Orozco Cabadas or "El Kamoni," who was communicating with Mendoza, and Luis Enrique Barragán Chavaz, or "Wicho," who serves as Magallón second-in-command, according to authorities.

The Trump administration has seen major cooperation from Mexico in recent months in turning over cartel leaders wanted by U.S. authorities.

In February, Mexico sent the U.S. 29 drug cartel figures, including drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who was behind the killing of a U.S. DEA agent in 1985, to the U.S. And on Tuesday, the Mexican government transferred to American custody 26 additional cartel leaders and other high-ranking members, including a man charged in connection to the killing of a Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy.

"We're working with the Mexican authorities to pursue these individuals," Galeotti said. "We continue to work proactively with them, and we expect that they'll be helpful with us in securing the presence of these individuals in United States courtrooms."

Taylor Swift's economic pull makes orange the new green for big brands

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Taylor Swift's upcoming album release and her love of all things orange isn't lost on her fans - or brands that are seeking a ride on what has become an enormous economic tailwind.

On Wednesday after Swift went on the "New Heights" podcast co-hosted by her boyfriend and NFL football star Travis Kelce to announce the imminent release of her 12th studio album "The Life of a Showgirl," major companies went into marketing overdrive.

The reason? Swift's ability to generate buzz and draw dollars.

Swift's tour appearances have become economic events. The singer's Eras Tour two years ago was the first such tour to cross the billion-dollar mark, according to Pollstar's 2023 year-end charts. Cities and their surrounding areas registered a sizeable economic boost after Swift appeared, with thousands of fans making the pilgrimage and spending money at hotels, restaurants and elsewhere.

Companies are no longer waiting to capitalize on Swift's gravitational pull and orange-themed memes from big brands began rolling out almost immediately.

That is because Swift appeared onstage wearing orange numerous times towards the end of her Eras Tour and she discussed her feelings about the color on the Wednesday podcast.

Numerous corporations, from United Airlines to Olive Garden, began posting orange hued memes on their own social media accounts soon after the new album was announced. Shake Shack, FedEx, Buffalo Wild Wings, Cinnabon, Walmart and Netflix did, too.

More than a dozen NHL teams followed with posts on social media acknowledging Swift's new album, both north and south of the border.

Even X got in on the action, declaring that it had a new profile pic: a glittery orange X. The post has garnered 5.5 million views so far.

Google is using its search engine to celebrate the October release of Swift's "The Life of a Showgirl." Users search for "Taylor Swift," are greeted with a stream of orange digital confetti, along with a flaming orange heart and the phrase, "And, baby, that's show business for you."

Many, it seemed, saw value in tying their brand to Swift.

Swift mentioned during the Wednesday podcast that she had Lasik eye surgery. The X account for LASIK.com wasted no time promoting the fortuitous namedrop.

"i got LASIK, i have incredible vision," they posted, accompanied by a video of Swift giving a shout out to the procedure on the "New Heights" podcast. "TAYLOR SWIFT EVERYONE (red heart emoji). WE'VE PEEKED!!!!!!!"

The post currently has more than 389,000 views and 15,000 likes.

Got the sniffles? Here's what to know about summer colds and the COVID-19 variant called stratus

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

Summer heat, outdoor fun ... and cold and flu symptoms?

The three may not go together in many people's minds: partly owing to common myths about germs and partly because many viruses really do have lower activity levels in the summer.

But it is possible to get the sniffles — or worse — in the summer. Federal data released Friday, for example, shows COVID-19 is trending up in most states, with emergency department visits up among people of all ages.

Here's what to know about summer viruses.

How much are colds and flu circulating right now?

The number of people seeking medical care for three key illnesses — COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV — is currently very low, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control

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and Prevention.

Flu is trending down and RSV has been steady. But COVID-19 is trending up in most U.S. states. Wastewater data from around the country estimates "moderate" COVID-19 activity.

CDC wastewater also shows the XFG variant — nicknamed stratus — is most common in the U.S. Stratus can cause a "razor blade" sore throat and is considered a "variant under monitoring" by the World Health Organization. The WHO said the variant is only marginally better at evading people's immune systems and vaccines still work against it.

The expectation is that COVID-19 will eventually settle into a winter seasonal pattern like other coronaviruses, but the past few years have brought a late summer surge, said Dr. Dean Blumberg, chief of pediatric infectious diseases at University of California Davis Children's Hospital.

Other viruses circulating this time of year include the one that causes "hand, foot and mouth" disease — which has symptoms similar to a cold, plus sores and rashes — and norovirus, sometimes called the stomach flu.

Do viruses spread less in the summer?

Many viruses circulate seasonally, picking up as the weather cools in the fall and winter. So it's true that fewer people get stuffy noses and coughs in the summer — but cold weather itself does not cause colds.

It's not just about seasonality. The other factor is our behavior, experts say. Nice weather means people are opening windows and gathering outside where it's harder for germs to spread.

But respiratory viruses are still around. When the weather gets too hot and everyone heads inside for the air conditioning, doctors say they start seeing more sickness. In places where it gets really hot for a long time, summer can be cold season in its own right.

"I grew up on the East Coast and everybody gets sick in the winter," said Dr. Frank LoVecchio, an emergency room doctor and Arizona State University researcher. "A lot of people get sick in the summer here. Why is that? Because you spend more time indoors."

With stratus spreading, should you get another COVID-19 booster?

For people who are otherwise healthy, timing is a key consideration to getting any vaccine. You want to get it a few weeks before that big trip or wedding, if that's the reason for getting boosted, doctors say. But, for most people, it may be worth waiting until the fall in anticipation of winter cases of COVID-19 really tick up.

"You want to be fully protected at the time that it's most important for you," said Dr. Costi Sifri, of the University of Virginia Health System.

People at higher risk of complications should always talk with their doctor about what is best for them, Sifri added. Older adults and those with weak immune systems may need more boosters than others, he said.

Are more younger kids getting sick with COVID-19?

Last month, the CDC noted emergency room visits among children younger than 4 were rising. That makes sense, Blumberg said, because many young kids are getting it for the first time or are unvaccinated.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in May that the shots would no longer be recommended for healthy kids, a decision that health experts have said lacks scientific basis. The American Academy of Pediatrics still endorses COVID-19 shots for children older than 6 months.

How else can I lower my risk?

The same things that help prevent colds, flu and COVID any other time of the year work in the summer, doctors say.

Spend time outside when you can, wash your hands, wear a mask. And if you're sick, stay home.

As Canada wildfires choke US with smoke, Republicans demand action. But not on climate change

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

The sternly worded statements and letters are filled with indignation and outrage: Republican U.S. lawmakers say Canada has done too little to contain wildfires and smoke that have fouled the air in several

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states this summer.

"Instead of enjoying family vacations at Michigan's beautiful lakes and campgrounds, for the third summer in a row, Michiganders are forced to breathe hazardous air as a result of Canada's failure to prevent and control wildfires," read a statement last week from the state's GOP congressional delegation, echoing similar missives from Republicans in Iowa, New York, North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

They've demanded more forest thinning, prescribed burns and other measures to prevent fires from starting. They've warned the smoke is hurting relations between the countries and suggested the U.S. could make it an issue in tariff talks.

But what they haven't done is acknowledge the role of climate change — a glaring and shortsighted omission, according to climate scientists. It also ignores the outsized U.S. contribution to heat-trapping gases from burning fossil fuels like coal and gas that cause more intense heat waves and droughts, which in turn set the stage for more destructive wildfires, scientists say.

"If anything, Canada should be blaming the U.S. for their increased fires," said Jennifer Francis, a climate scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

On Tuesday, the Canadian government announced almost \$46 million in funding for wildfire prevention and risk assessment research projects. But Corey Hogan, parliamentary secretary to the federal energy and natural resources minister, said international cooperation is needed.

"There's no people that want to do more about wildfires than Canadians," Hogan said. "But I think this also underlines the international challenges that are brought on by climate change ... we need to globally tackle this problem."

The country has "been fighting wildfires in this country at unprecedented rates since 2023," when Canada saw its largest wildfire on record, said Ken McMullen, president of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs. This year's first fire started in April, one of the earliest on record, and 2025 is now the second-worst year.

As of Thursday, more than 700 wildfires were burning across the country, two-thirds of them out of control, with more than 28,000 square miles (72,520 square kilometers) burned in 4,400 wildfires so far this year, according to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. That's almost five times the surface area that's burned so far in the U.S. this year. Most wildfires are started by people, sometimes on purpose but mostly by mistake, though McMullen said lightning is the culprit in many of Canada's fires, especially in remote areas.

McMullen said he has no interest in debating the role of climate change, but data show that something has changed. Sloughs and basins have dried up and water that once lapped at people's back doors in Canada's lake communities now is often hundreds of feet away.

"People can make up their own mind as to why that is," he said. "But something clearly has changed."

Denying climate change

President Donald Trump has called climate change a hoax — a belief echoed by many in the GOP — and his administration has worked to dismantle and defund federal climate science and data collection, with little to no pushback from Republicans in Congress.

He's proposed to revoke the scientific finding that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare — the central basis for U.S. climate change action. He's declared a national energy emergency to expedite fossil fuel development, canceled grants for renewable energy projects and ordered the U.S. to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, aimed at limiting long-term global warming to 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius) above preindustrial levels.

Minnesota state Rep. Elliott Engen, a Republican, said he believes in climate change, but now is not the time to discuss it "because we have folks with asthma who aren't able to go outside the entirety of the summer."

"That's not an immediate fix for my constituents; that sounds like a blame game without a solution being presented," said Engen, among a group of GOP lawmakers who asked the International Joint Commission to review Canada's wildfire management practices.

Democratic Rep. Chellie Pingree of Maine said the wildfires are jeopardizing health and air quality in her state, too, but faulted Republicans for failing to meet the crisis head on by acting on climate change.

"Rather than accept this reality and work together to find proactive, common-sense solutions for preventing and mitigating these fires, Republicans are burying their heads in the sand," she said.

Wisconsin Rep. Gwen Moore, a Democrat, criticized her Republican colleagues' letter to Canada's U.S. ambassador, saying those "who are in denial about climate change shouldn't be writing letters prescribing people's actions to try to contain it."

Difficult solutions

McMullen, the Canadian wildfire expert, said battling the fires isn't as simple as many seem to believe.

The country and its territories are vast and fires are often in remote areas where the best — and sometimes only — course of action if there are no residents or structures is to let them burn or "it is going to just create another situation for us to deal with in a year or two or 10 or 20 years from now," McMullen said.

Prescribed burns to clear underbrush and other ignition sources are used in some areas, but aren't practical or possible in some forests and prairies that are burning, experts said.

McMullen has advocated for a Canadian forest fire coordination agency to help deploy firefighters and equipment where they're needed.

But as for stopping worsening fires, "I don't think there's much they can do," said University of Michigan climate scientist Jonathan Overpeck. He noted that hotter temperatures are melting permafrost in northern Canada, which dries out and makes the vast boreal forests far more likely to burn.

Instead, the two countries should collaborate on climate change solutions "because our smoke is their smoke, their smoke is ours," Overpeck said. "As long as this trend of warming and drying continues, we're going to get a worsening problem.

"The good news is ... we know what the cause is ... we can stop it from getting worse."

Man accused of faking his death to avoid rape charges is found guilty of sexual assault in Utah

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A Rhode Island man accused of faking his death and fleeing the United States to evade rape charges was found guilty late Wednesday of sexually assaulting a former girlfriend in his first of two Utah trials.

An eight-person jury in Salt Lake County found Nicholas Rossi guilty of a 2008 rape after a three-day trial in which his accuser and her parents took the stand. Rossi, 38, declined to testify on his own behalf. He will be sentenced on Oct. 20 and is set to stand trial in September on another rape charge in Utah County.

First-degree felony rape carries a punishment in Utah of five years to life in prison, said Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill.

"We are grateful to the survivor in this case for her willingness to come forward, years after this attack took place," Gill said in a statement. "It took courage and bravery to take the stand and confront her attacker to hold him accountable."

Utah authorities began searching for Rossi, whose legal name is Nicholas Alahverdian, when he was identified through a decade-old DNA rape kit in 2018. He was among thousands of rape suspects identified and later charged when Utah made a push to clear its rape kit backlog.

Months after he was charged in Utah County, an online obituary claimed Rossi died on Feb. 29, 2020, of late-stage non-Hodgkin lymphoma. But police in his home state of Rhode Island, along with his former lawyer and a former foster family, cast doubt on whether he was dead.

He was arrested in Scotland the following year while receiving treatment for COVID-19 after hospital staff recognized his distinctive tattoos from an Interpol notice.

Extradited to Utah in January 2024, Rossi insisted he was an Irish orphan named Arthur Knight who was being framed. Investigators say they identified at least a dozen aliases Rossi used over the years to evade capture.

He appeared in court this week in a wheelchair, wearing a suit and tie and using an oxygen tank.

Rossi's public defender denied the rape claim and urged jurors not to read too much into his move

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overseas years later.

"You're allowed to move, you're allowed to go somewhere else, you're allowed to have a different name," attorney Samantha Dugan said. She declined further comment following the verdict.

Prosecutors painted a picture of an intelligent man who used his charm to take advantage of a vulnerable young woman. The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly.

The woman was living with her parents and recovering from a traumatic brain injury when she responded to a personal ad Rossi posted on Craigslist. They began dating and were engaged within about two weeks.

She testified Rossi asked her to pay for dates and car repairs, lend him \$1,000 so he wouldn't be evicted, and take on debt to buy their engagement rings. He grew hostile soon after their engagement and raped her in his bedroom one night after she drove him home, she said.

Deputy Salt Lake County District Attorney Brandon Simmons told jurors Wednesday that the woman did not consent. "This is not romantic, this is not her mistaking things."

The woman said her parents' dismissive comments convinced her not to go to the police. She came forward a decade later after seeing him in the news and learning he was accused of another rape from the same year.

Rossi's lawyers said the woman built up years of resentment after he made her foot the bill for everything in their monthlong relationship. They argued she accused him of rape to get back at him years later when he was getting media attention, and sought to undermine her credibility with jurors.

Rossi's accuser in the Utah County case, who testified at this week's trial, is also a former girlfriend. She went to police at the time of that alleged rape. He is accused of attacking her at his apartment in Orem in September 2008 after she came over to collect money she said he stole from her to buy a computer.

When police initially interviewed Rossi, he claimed she raped him and threatened to have him killed.

Rossi grew up in foster homes in Rhode Island and returned there before allegedly faking his death. He was previously wanted in the state for failing to register as a sex offender. The FBI says he faces fraud charges in Ohio, where he was convicted of sex-related charges in 2008.

For these incarcerated students, online school has been a disaster

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — To earn his freedom, 15-year-old Cayden Gillespie had to complete three school assignments a day. But school had gone virtual for Cayden and other incarcerated young people in Florida. And sometimes, he didn't understand it.

One day last summer, he kept failing an online pre-algebra test. There were too many words to read. He didn't know how to find the value of x. And there were no math teachers to show him.

"I couldn't figure it out, and it kept failing me," Cayden says. He asked the adult supervising the classroom for help. "She didn't understand either."

Frustrated, Cayden picked up his metal desk and threw it against the wall. A security guard radioed the office for help.

Cayden worried what might happen next.

A respected online school — and a rocky rollout

No matter the offense, states must educate students in juvenile detention. It's a complicated challenge, no doubt — and success stories are scarce.

Struggling to educate its more than 1,000 students in long-term confinement, Florida embarked last year on a risky experiment. Despite strong evidence that online learning failed many students during the pandemic, Florida juvenile justice leaders adopted the approach for 10- to 21-year-olds sentenced to residential commitment centers for offenses including theft, assault and drug abuse.

The Florida Virtual School is one of the nation's largest and oldest online school systems. Adopting it in Florida's residential commitment facilities would bring more rigorous, uniform standards and tailored classes, officials argued. And students could continue in the online school, the theory went, once they leave detention, since incarcerated youth often struggle to reintegrate into their local public schools.

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But students, parents, staff, and outside providers say the online learning has been disastrous, especially since students on average spend seven to 11 months in residential commitment. Not only are students struggling to learn online, their frustration with virtual school is sometimes leading them to get into more trouble — and thus extending their stay.

In embracing Florida Virtual School, the residential commitment centers stopped providing in-person teachers for each subject, relying instead on online faculty. The adults left to supervise classrooms rarely can answer questions or offer assistance, students say.

A dozen letters from incarcerated students, written to lawmakers and obtained by The Associated Press, describe online schoolwork that's hard to access or understand — with little support from in-person or online staff.

"Dear Law maker, I really be trying to do my work so I won't be getting in trouble but I don't be understanding the work," wrote one student. "They don't really hands on help me."

When Cayden arrived at the Orlando Youth Academy in January 2024, after four months in juvenile detention waiting for a bed in long-term confinement, he felt disoriented. He and his family had been told he would be placed at a residential center near their Gainesville home so they could visit on the weekends. The judge had recommended 30 days in the residential center — called "treatment" — after Cayden pleaded guilty to two fraud felonies for using stolen credit cards, including one belonging to his parents.

As he sat in a metal chair at his new case manager's desk, she described the routine and expectations of what she called "the program." He'd attend more than six hours of school a day and therapy five days a week, including with his parents over Zoom. None of this surprised Cayden.

But then she said something that got his attention. "The program" would likely last six to nine months.

Panicked, he asked to call his mother.

A monthslong stay in 'a teenage jail'

Robyn Gillespie stepped outside the Gainesville McDonald's she managed when she saw a call from the Department of Juvenile Justice. That can't be true, she said, when Cayden told her his sentence was far longer than expected.

So Cayden, still sitting next to his case manager, put down the phone and asked her again: Ma'am, you said six to nine months, right?

Gillespie hung up and cried. "They wouldn't understand him," she remembers thinking.

Gillespie's husband, Kenny Roach, initially thought going to juvenile detention could help Cayden, who had grown out of control. The family had recently moved to Florida to care for aging relatives, but Cayden's beloved older brother decided to return to Virginia, where they'd lived before.

Cayden, who has autism, struggled being in a new place without his brother. He began leaving the house in the evening with neighborhood teens when the parents worked late. That led to shoplifting and, eventually, credit-card fraud. Roach and Gillespie pressed charges against their son.

"He really needs to get a week in a detention home," Roach thought. As a youth, he himself had gone to juvenile detention twice, for as long as two weeks, and credited it for a life turnaround. "I thought it would be a learning experience."

When he learned Cayden's time in the juvenile detention system would last much longer, he was in shock.

"Good lord, what do they hope to accomplish? A kid his age, with his diagnosis?" Roach remembers thinking. "That's like being in a teenage jail."

Life in custody: Not much privacy, avoiding a 'level freeze'

Cayden and the other detainees inside Orlando Youth Academy woke up every day at 6 a.m. and cleaned their cells. Only when they passed inspection could they enter the common area.

Each detained youth had a toilet in their cell. For privacy, they were encouraged to lodge notebook paper into the door jamb to cover the narrow vertical window in their doors.

Phone calls with their parents were monitored. At family visits, Cayden's parents couldn't get too close or hug him more than once at the beginning and end, to prevent visitors from sharing contraband with the teens.

To relax, Cayden would lie on his stomach on his plastic-covered mattress and draw and write. He devel-

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oped a Pokemon-inspired story about a hero named One — the only time he allowed his mind to wander away from Orlando Youth Academy.

When the teens got in trouble, they had to go to bed early — 5:30 p.m. — and skip playing cards or watching TV, some of the only downtime they got. But the real punishment was called a “level freeze.” When a detainee got in trouble for fighting, damaging property, not attending therapy or refusing to log into online school, they stopped making progress toward release.

Online school lacked special education supports

Before Orlando Youth Academy and Florida’s other commitment centers adopted virtual learning in July 2024, Cayden’s main source of stress was the other students. They antagonized Cayden until he exploded. Therapists and staff coached him to avoid these situations.

School wasn’t a source of stress or conflict. Four teachers from the local schools came to their portable classroom and lectured students ages 12 to 18 from the front of the room.

Cayden came to the program midway through what should have been his seventh grade year. But after assessing him, the teachers placed Cayden in sixth grade.

When the state adopted virtual schooling, it was partly trying to meet the needs of students across different ages and abilities. But Cayden felt some of the new classes were too advanced, and he didn’t receive help he needed to do the work.

The complaints from other Florida detainees are similar.

“My zoom teachers they never email me back or try to help me with my work. It’s like they think we’re normal kids,” one youth wrote in a letter to Florida lawmakers. “Half of us don’t even know what we’re looking at.”

Under Cayden’s special education plan, which federal law requires detention center schools to follow, he’s entitled to receive assistance reading long texts. But he didn’t receive it after the virtual school started.

Florida Virtual School wouldn’t comment on Cayden’s case, citing privacy concerns. Within their school for students in long-term confinement, “every student with a disability receives specially designed instruction, support, and accommodations comparable to those listed in the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP),” says Robin Winder, chief academic officer of Florida Virtual School.

The instructor assigned to help Cayden and more than a dozen other students with their online work was overwhelmed by the students’ needs, Cayden says. Three different people held that job during the nine months he attended virtual school inside Orlando Youth Academy.

When Cayden threw the desk out of frustration with the new online learning program, he received a “level freeze” of three to five days, essentially extending his time at the residential commitment center.

It’s easy to tumble into ‘dead time’

Internal documents obtained by The Associated Press, plus interviews with parents, staff and outside specialists, show staff have recommended or given level freezes when students have broken laptops, refused to log into Zoom and even sent an email to ask for help initiating an online class. And when students don’t participate in virtual school, the department’s written protocol calls for taking away points they earn toward getting out.

“Students who have their heads down will be prompted by the teacher no more than two times to sit up and participate,” reads the Classroom Behavior Management Plan for Florida’s juvenile justice schools.

The first time Xavier Nicoll, 15, broke a laptop at his residential commitment center in Miami, it was because an online teacher wouldn’t respond to his questions, according to his grandmother, Julie, who has raised him. He was arrested and sent to a different detention center to face charges. The three weeks he spent there didn’t count toward his overall sentence because he can’t receive “treatment” there. Detainees call it “dead time.”

Once back at the residential center, he broke another laptop, his grandmother says, because a teen dared him to. Back he went to county detention and court for more dead time. Then, in January, when the in-person class supervisor wouldn’t help him get into a locked online assignment, he broke a third, says Julie Nicoll.

Xavier was initially meant to be held for six to nine months after breaking into a vape store. He’s now

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on track to be confined at least 28 months.

He's grown at least five inches in detention — and gone through puberty. Yet in school, Nicoll said in April, he was making no progress. "He went in as an eighth grader and is still an eighth grader — and failing," Nicoll said.

Xavier's March report card showed he was earning a 34% in Civics and Career Planning, 12% in Pre-Algebra, 13% in Comprehensive Science and 58% in Language Arts.

Nicoll has complained that her grandson, who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, hasn't been receiving special education services. The Department of Juvenile Justice and Florida Virtual School have canceled multiple meetings to discuss his education plan because Xavier keeps getting arrested and sent for dead time.

"He's trapped," says Nicoll. "No matter what we do, we can't seem to get him out."

Trouble rejoining the community?

Nicoll and her husband have spent more than \$20,000 in legal fees trying to win his release. They argue untreated brain inflammation due to mold exposure in detention, plus his disability, make it impossible for him to control his frustration during online school.

In May, Xavier was arrested a fourth time. After turning in an assignment, he realized he'd made a mistake and asked the in-class supervisor to return it. The supervisor wouldn't give back his work, and he broke another laptop.

Xavier pleaded guilty in August to two felonies for breaking laptops. "They're setting him up to go into the community a failure," said Nicoll.

It's unclear how many students are getting in trouble or extending their time because of behavior during virtual school. Arrests inside residential centers increased slightly in the first nine months after the department adopted virtual school, compared with the same period during the previous year. An analysis of publicly available data shows staff use of verbal and physical interventions has also risen slightly, to 2.4 physical or verbal interventions per 100 days from 1.8 interventions the previous year.

The total number of youth in Florida's residential commitment centers increased to 1,388 in June, the latest data reported by the state, up 177 since July 2024, when the department adopted virtual instruction. That could indicate detainees are staying in confinement longer.

"Correlation does not equal causation," responded Amanda Slama, a Department of Juvenile Justice spokeswoman. "Other contributing factors could explain an increase in arrests if there is one."

Since December, the department has ignored or refused AP requests to visit juvenile confinement, speak to officials and release anonymized exit documents for students leaving commitment centers.

Not all students are getting in trouble during online schooling, but that doesn't mean they're learning. Jalen Wilkinson, 17, received punishment during detention for fighting, but his father was unaware of punishment related to school.

But when school went online in July 2024, Jalen started complaining that there weren't enough adults to help students with the virtual program. School, he says, is basically free time.

Jalen has been especially frustrated that he couldn't complete his GED while confined — even though Florida Virtual School leaders say they've made it easier for detainees to take the exam.

He was released in July. His father, John Terry, worries the time locked up was a waste and Jalen will struggle to re-enter high school and graduate. "There's no rehabilitation whatsoever."

Cayden is still trying to restart school

In March, shackled with an ankle monitor, Cayden Gillespie finally left Orlando Youth Academy. The six to nine months his case manager predicted turned into 15. Between that and the "dead time" waiting for a residential center bed, he was detained 19 months.

Through therapy at the residential center, Cayden learned how to recognize his anger building and to take a break. His parents say the family therapy helped them better understand Cayden's needs and helped them all communicate.

"But the school part," Robyn Gillespie says, "that was a disaster."

Gillespie, her husband and Cayden are still trying to understand the consequences of going so long

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without proper schooling. Initially, they thought he'd go to the local public middle school, but the school said, at 15, he's too old. This spring, they tried to sign him up for Florida Virtual School, the same program he did in custody. Indeed, this was one of the arguments the state made for using virtual school inside confinement. But Robyn Gillespie says Florida Virtual told them he couldn't join so late in the year.

Asked about Cayden's case, Florida Virtual said all students "released from a facility receive one-on-one support from an FLVS transition specialist."

But Cayden's family said they were never offered transition help or told how he could continue where he left off in detention.

The best option, they've been told by the local school district, is a charter school, where he can make up coursework quickly.

"That's the kind of place where they dismiss you if you don't show up on time," says Robyn Gillespie. "And there's no transportation. I'm just not sure that's going to work well for our family."

The terms of Cayden's probation require him to attend school or face confinement again. He starts at the charter school later this month. Says Gillespie: "He has to be in school."

Six planets are hanging out in early morning skies this month. Here's how to spot them

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Six planets are hanging out in the sky this month in what's known as a planetary parade. Catch the spectacle while you can because it's the last one of the year.

These linkups happen when several planets appear to line up in the night sky at once. Such parades are fairly common, happening around every year depending on the number of planets. At least one bright planet can be spotted on most nights, weather permitting, according to NASA.

Six planets were visible in January skies and every planet of our solar system was visible in February, but not all could be spotted with the naked eye.

Venus, Jupiter, Saturn and a faint Mercury are visible this month without any special equipment, and the best chances to spot them are over the next week. Uranus and Neptune can only be glimpsed through binoculars and telescopes.

Jupiter and Venus made a close brush earlier this week and are still near each other in the eastern sky, "close together like cat's eyes," said Carolyn Sumners at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

Mercury will be at its farthest point from the sun on Tuesday morning, making it easier to spot before it disappears into the sun's glare.

To catch the planets, go out in the morning shortly before sunrise and look east. Try to find Jupiter and Venus clustered together first. Saturn is off to the side and Mercury will be close to the horizon, trying to rise before the sun.

"You're looking for little tiny pinpoints of light, but they are the brightest ones," said Justin Bartel with the Science Museum of Virginia. "They don't really twinkle like the stars do."

Before heading out, make sure it is a clear, cloudless morning and try to get away from tall buildings that could block the view.

Mercury will hide behind the sun again toward the end of the month, but a crescent moon will then join the parade. The next big planetary hangout is in February.

What to know about the Putin-Trump summit in Alaska

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

The U.S.-Russia summit in Alaska is happening 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.

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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 takes place Friday at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson outside Anchorage starting about 11:30 a.m. (1930 GMT, 3:30 p.m. EDT), between Putin and Trump as well as a meeting of the delegations, said Yuri Ushakov, Putin's foreign policy adviser.

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

Is Zelenskyy going?

Both countries confirmed a meeting between only Putin and Trump, despite initial suggestions that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy might take part. The Kremlin has long pushed back against Putin meeting Zelenskyy — at least until a peace deal is reached by both sides and is ready to be signed.

Putin said last week he wasn't against meeting Zelenskyy "but certain conditions need to be created" and were "still a long way off." That raised fears about excluding Ukraine from negotiations. Kyiv and its European allies stressed that peace cannot be achieved without Kyiv's involvement.

Zelenskyy was in Berlin for virtual meetings Wednesday with Trump and European leaders to try to ensure Ukraine and its allies are heard before the summit.

The Ukrainian president told the group Putin "is bluffing" about his military might and the effectiveness of sanctions, and "is trying to apply pressure ... on all sectors of the Ukrainian front" to try to show that Russia is "capable of occupying all of Ukraine." In reality, sanctions are "hitting Russia's war economy hard," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy also met with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer in London on Thursday.

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 by Russians as a naïve deal that generated remorse.

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 Ukraine. 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 recognize Russian as an official language along with Ukrainian.

Zelenskyy insists any peace deals include robust security guarantees to protect Ukraine 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 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."

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Also, some bad stuff for both."

Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw from the remaining 30% of the Donetsk region it still controls as part of a ceasefire deal, a proposal the Ukrainian categorically rejected. Kyiv won't give up territory it controls, he added, saying that would be unconstitutional and would serve only as a springboard for a future Russian invasion.

He said discussions led by the U.S. on ending the war have not addressed key Ukrainian demands, including security guarantees to prevent future Russian aggression and including Europe in negotiations.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Wednesday that Trump was "very clear" in a virtual meeting with European leaders and Zelenskyy that the U.S. wants to achieve a ceasefire. Macron added that Trump had been clear that "territorial issues relating to Ukraine ... will only be negotiated by the Ukrainian president."

What are expectations?

Trump said Wednesday there will be unspecified "very severe consequences" if Putin does not agree to stop the war after the summit.

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 amid swarms of Moscow's missiles and drones.

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 and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, 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. Putin also met with top government officials on the eve of the summit.

Today in History: August 15, Woodstock music festival begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 15, the 227th day of 2025. There are 138 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 15, 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York; more than 460,000 people attended the three-day festival, which would become a watershed event in American music and culture.

Also on this date:

In 1057, Macbeth, King of Scots, was killed in battle by Malcolm, the eldest son of King Duncan, whom

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Macbeth had slain.

In 1914, the Panama Canal officially opened as the SS Ancon crossed the just-completed waterway between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

In 1935, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed when their airplane crashed near Point Barrow in the Alaska Territory.

In 1947, India gained independence after nearly 200 years of British rule.

In 1961, as workers began constructing a Berlin Wall made of concrete, East German soldier Conrad Schumann leapt to freedom over a tangle of barbed wire.

In 1989, F.W. de Klerk was sworn in as acting president of South Africa, one day after P.W. Botha resigned because of a power struggle within the National Party.

In 1998, 29 people were killed by a car bomb that tore apart the center of Omagh (OH'-mah), Northern Ireland; a splinter group calling itself the Real IRA claimed responsibility.

In 2003, bouncing back from the largest blackout in U.S. history, cities from the Midwest to Manhattan restored power to tens of millions of people.

In 2021, the Taliban regained control of the Afghan capital of Kabul after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jim Dale is 90. Retired Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is 87. U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is 87. Author-journalist Linda Ellerbee is 81. Songwriter Jimmy Webb is 79. Actor Phyllis Smith is 76. Britain's Princess Anne is 75. Actor Tess Harper is 75. Actor Zeljko Ivanek (ZEHL'-koh eh-VAHN'-ehk) is 68. Celebrity chef Tom Colicchio is 63. Film director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (ihn-YAH'-ee-tu) is 62. Philanthropist Melinda French Gates is 61. Actor Debra Messing is 57. Actor Anthony Anderson is 55. Actor Ben Affleck is 53. Olympic gold medal beach volleyball player Kerri Walsh Jennings is 47. Rock singer Joe Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 36. Actor Jennifer Lawrence is 35.