

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

Wednesday, Aug. 20

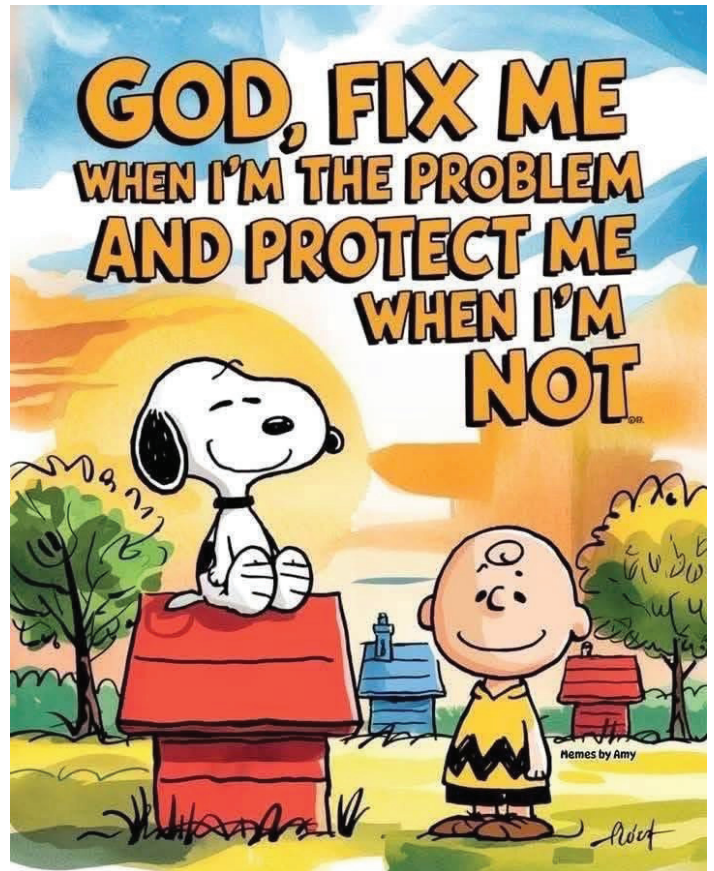
Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, mixed vegetables, Fruited Jell-O, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Pizza cruncher, corn.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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



Thursday, Aug. 21

Senior Menu: BBQ Chicken breast, catalina blend, pineapple tidbits, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Burgers, fries.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA "Do Day", 1:30 p.m.

Friday, August. 22

Senior Menu: Kielbasa, Mac 'n Cheese, winter blend, banana pudding, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, green beans.

Soccer hosts Belle Fourche, Girls at 4 p.m., Boys at 6 p.m.

Football hosts Webster Area, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 23

Glacial Golf Tourney at Olive Grove

Soccer at NSU. Girls vs. St. Thomas More at 11 a.m.; Boys vs. St. Thomas More at 1 p.m.

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

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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.

Texas Redistricting Effort

Dozens of Texas Democrats returned to Austin yesterday after a two-week walkout to block Republican-led redistricting efforts. Their return gives the Texas House the attendance needed to vote on a congressional map designed to shift five districts from Democratic to Republican ahead of the 2026 elections.

Gov. Greg Abbott (R) reconvened lawmakers this week, with redistricting a top priority. Civil arrest warrants remain in effect for Democrats who left in early August, and Republicans have already taken procedural steps to bring the maps back to the House floor for a vote. Meanwhile, California Democrats are advancing a redistricting proposal intended to send five more California Democrats to Washington, effectively offsetting potential Republican gains in Texas.

Redistricting typically occurs at the beginning of each decade to coincide with the census; Texas last redrew its map in 2021 after the 2020 census.

Rip Current Risk

Hurricane Erin is projected to bring life-threatening surf and rip currents across the US East Coast this week before turning northeastward into the North Atlantic. Erin remains a Category 4 storm as of this writing, passing by the southeastern Bahamas yesterday. The storm has maximum sustained winds of 130 to 156 mph.

Six-foot waves are expected to reach much of the coast today, above which is considered dangerous for swimmers. Eight- to 12-foot waves are predicted to impact the Southeast by tomorrow, from northern Florida and South Carolina to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Hatteras Island and Ocracoke Island have been evacuated amid a coastal flood watch.

Erin is the first hurricane of the 2025 Atlantic season and among the most rapidly intensifying storms in history. Storm names are typically recycled every six years, with exceptions for especially severe systems; the last time the US witnessed a Hurricane Erin was Sept. 11, 2001.

Soho House Deal

Soho House, a private members club operator, is set to be taken private in a \$2.7B deal led by New York-based MCR Hotels, with actor Ashton Kutcher joining the board. The move, announced yesterday, follows a turbulent market run since Soho House's 2021 debut on the New York Stock Exchange.

Founded in 1995 by Nick Jones above his London restaurant, Soho House pioneered a new generation of social clubs by creating an exclusive space mainly for creative professionals. The company has since expanded globally, operating 46 clubs and several hotel brands across multiple countries. It boasts over 270,000 members, including Prince Harry and Meghan, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Oprah Winfrey. Despite its cultural impact and growth, Soho House has struggled financially, failing to turn an annual profit.

Under the deal, shareholders will receive \$9 per share; financing support includes over \$700M in debt and equity from asset management firm Apollo Global. Soho House shares closed up nearly 15% on the news.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

MSNBC to change name to MSNOW, which stands for "My Source for News, Opinion, and the World," as part of Comcast's spinoff from NBCUniversal.

Texas and Penn State lead all schools with three players apiece selected to college football's AP Preseason All-America team, with the regular season set to begin Saturday.

Final defendant in Matthew Perry's October 2023 drug overdose case, the "Ketamine Queen," pleads guilty to five federal charges, including ketamine distribution.

Science & Technology

Tennessee Valley Authority enters a deal with Google and nuclear startup Kairos Power to purchase electricity from a small modular reactor slated for 2030, marking the first US utility offtake agreement with an advanced nuclear plant.

Surgery-free alternative to LASIK that uses electricity instead of lasers to reshape the cornea proves effective on rabbit eyeballs; initial results suggest the method could be a promising technique for correcting human vision.

Largest-ever space antenna, spanning 39 feet, deployed to detect changes within fractions of an inch on Earth's surface, such as shifting ice sheets and subtle movements caused by earthquakes, landslides, and volcanoes.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close near flatline (S&P 500 -0.0%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +0.0%) as investors await annual policy speech from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell at the central bank's Jackson Hole, Wyoming, summit Friday.

OpenAI employees, current and former, look to sell \$6B worth of shares to an investor group in a deal that values the AI company at \$500B.

Japanese tech giant SoftBank to invest \$2B in Intel.

GoodRx shares jump 37.3% after online pharmacy announces it will begin selling Novo Nordisk's GLP-1 drugs Ozempic and Wegovy.

Novo Nordisk shares rise 3.7% following US approval of Wegovy to treat MASH liver disease.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump says the US will help provide security guarantees to Ukraine in the event of a peace deal with Russia, encourages territory swaps; see other takeaways from Trump's meeting with leaders of Ukraine and Europe.

Cable news channel Newsmax agrees to pay \$67M to settle defamation lawsuit from Dominion Voting Systems over 2020 election claims.

President Donald Trump announces he will sign an executive order to end mail-in ballots.

Texas declares the end of its measles outbreak, which has sickened 762 people since January, state data reveals; last confirmed case was reported July 1.

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

August 19, 2025 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY
CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Archeological Survey Proposals – IMEG
4. Airport/Relocation of Baseball Concession Stand
5. Open Sealed Bids for Electric Metering System and Award
6. Stop Sign at 1st Street and 2nd Avenue
7. Transfer of Property at 105 N 3rd Street to Groton Development Corporation
8. Update on Permanent Radar Signs on HWY 12 and HWY 37
9. July Finance Report
10. Minutes
11. Bills
12. City Offices Closed on September 1, 2025, for Labor Day
13. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
14. Authorization to Re-Bid 2025 City Roof Repair Project
15. Adjournment

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BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS

COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes.*
4. Brad Borge, Public Defender
 - a. Discuss the purchase of a new copier
5. Approve & Authorize Vice-Chair to sign letter of support for Lawrence Welk 70th Anniversary
6. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. Discuss Elm Lake Bridge
 - b. Department Update
7. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes for August 12, 2025
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Claim Assignments
 - e. Travel Requests
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311) - Access Code: **601-168-909 #**

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

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Groton Boys Open Season at Sioux Valley Invitational

The Groton Area boys' golf team teed off their fall season Thursday at the Sioux Valley Invitational in Volga, finishing fifth in a strong 11-team field.

Roncalli captured top honors with a team score of 306, while Madison placed second at 328. Sioux Valley Blue was third with 331, followed by Brookings JV at 347. Groton Area rounded out the top five at 349. Other team scores included Sisseton (359), Parker (368), Sioux Valley Gold (377), Redfield (391), Sioux Valley JV (414), and Milbank (422).

Leading the way for Groton was Jace Johnson, who tied for 10th place individually. Johnson shot an 83 on the par-72 course, carding a 42 on the front nine and a 41 on the back nine.

Jared Erdman tied for 18th with an 86, rebounding from a 46 on the front with a 40 on the back. Jayden Schwan placed 23rd after shooting 88, including rounds of 46 and 42. Liam Johnson tied for 26th with a 92, posting scores of 49 and 43.

Rounding out the Groton lineup was Bentley Ehresmann, who tied for 57th with a 110, shooting 56 on the front and 54 on the back.

The Tigers will look to build on their opening performance as the season continues. The next meet is the Northeast Conference meet August 26 at Lee Park in Aberdeen.



The boys golf team is pictured above. Left to right they are Jarrett Erdmann, Jayden Schwan, Jace Johnson, Liam Johnson, Hayden Harder and Bentley Ehresmann. (Courtesy Photo)



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE

 YouTube

A production of the
Groton Daily Independent

**Webster at Groton
Football Action**
Friday, Aug. 22, 7 p.m.
Justin Olson with the play by play



For more info: GDILIVE.COM

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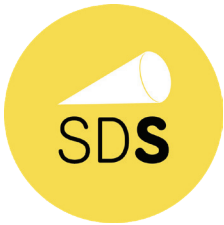
☆	10		Jace Johnson <i>Groton</i>													+11				83			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total		
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 133 / Course Rating™: 71.0 / Meadow Creek Golf Course																							
Yardage	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	6344		
Par	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	72		
Jace Johnson	5	3	5	6	6	4	4	4	5	42	4	4	4	6	7	4	6	3	3	41	83		
Starting Hole Eagle or Better Birdie Par Bogey Double Bogey or Worse																							

☆	18		Jarrett Erdmann <i>Groton</i>													+14				86			
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 133 / Course Rating™: 71.0 / Meadow Creek Golf Course																							
Yardage	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	6344		
Par	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	72		
Jarrett Erdmann	4	4	6	6	6	4	5	5	6	46	3	4	4	6	6	5	5	3	4	40	86		

☆	23		Jayden Schwan <i>Groton</i>													+16				88			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total	
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 133 / Course Rating™: 71.0 / Meadow Creek Golf Course																							
Yardage	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	6344		
Par	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	72		
Jayden Schwan	5	4	5	7	6	4	6	3	6	46	4	4	5	5	6	5	5	4	4	42	88		

☆	26		Liam Johnson <i>Groton</i>													+20				92			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total		
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 133 / Course Rating™: 71.0 / Meadow Creek Golf Course																							
Yardage	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	6344		
Par	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	72		
Liam Johnson	5	4	6	7	6	6	6	4	5	49	4	5	6	5	5	4	6	4	4	43	92		

☆	58		Bentley Ehersmann <i>Groton</i>													+38				110			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total		
Strokes																							
WHITE - Men Tee / SLOPE®: 133 / Course Rating™: 71.0 / Meadow Creek Golf Course																							
Yardage	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	407	179	354	494	502	350	404	130	352	3172	6344		
Par	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	4	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	36	72		
Bentley Ehersmann	7	5	6	7	8	6	6	5	6	56	7	4	6	7	9	5	6	4	6	54	110		



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota National Guard troops begin processing immigration paperwork for ICE

Work dovetails with multiple state agreements to aid federal deportation efforts

BY: JOHN HULT

National Guard troops on both sides of South Dakota are now processing paperwork for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden announced Monday that three guard members in Sioux Falls and three in Rapid City have begun to document and process ICE arrest information, which Rhoden said will let immigration agents stay in the field in search of migrants eligible for deportation.

The National Guard also assigned a liaison to serve as the communication point between ICE and the six people working on immigration paperwork.

The news is part of a flurry of immigration enforcement activity in South Dakota since the inauguration of President Donald Trump. Rhoden ascended to the state's chief executive post following the departure of his predecessor, Kristi Noem, to serve as secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the federal agency under which ICE operates.

The National Guard's ICE assistance is part of a broader, branded effort from Rhoden dubbed "Operation Prairie Thunder."

Last week, Rhoden's administration announced that the Board of Pardons and Paroles had granted early release to 10 men from various countries who lacked legal status and were in line for federal deportation proceedings upon their release from state custody.

South Dakota Democrats have bristled at the enforcement push, and have said Rhoden's immigration efforts are "politicized."



Sam Olson, Minneapolis field office director for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, speaks on July 28, 2025, at the Public Safety Administration Building in Sioux Falls. Standing near him is Gov. Larry Rhoden. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

Correctional actions

On Monday, as part of his press release on the National Guard, Rhoden said the DOC had finalized its cooperation agreement with ICE, known as a 287(g) agreement. According to the agreement and ICE's 287(g) website, the agreement was finalized on July 27.

Rhoden's office did not immediately respond to a question on why the announcement came three weeks after the agreement was finalized.

Such agreements allow local agencies to work with ICE through one of three cooperation models. The

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DOC's agreement was signed under the Jail Enforcement Model, which trains state-level officers to identify people without documentation of legal status and turn them over to ICE for removal.

The 10 inmates paroled last week were not identified by state correctional officers trained to work with ICE. They already had "ICE holds," which is a term used in corrections to note which inmates are expected to move into ICE custody upon their release from state or local custody.

The DOC has yet to identify how many employees will be trained to work with ICE on investigating the status of inmates not already identified as in line for deportation, DOC spokesman Michael Winder said in an email on Monday.

Rhoden previously signed a letter of intent to signal the prison system's plans to commit to an ICE agreement earlier this summer, while announcing Operation Prairie Thunder.

He also said at the time that ICE-trained state troopers would carry out limited immigration actions through the Highway Patrol's 287(g) agreement. The agency finalized its Task Force Model agreement on May 22, according to the ICE website. That model essentially deputizes local law enforcement to work with ICE.

Broader efforts

In his press release, Rhoden characterized the latest developments with the DOC and the National Guard as efforts to "to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free."

There are now five state agencies with active 287(g) agreements.

The state Division of Criminal Investigation is using the Task Force Model. Attorney General Marty Jackley, who leads that agency, has said his detectives will target undocumented people who've committed acts of violence.

Two local jails have agreements under the 287(g) Warrant Service Model. Under those agreements, staff at the Hughes and Minnehaha county jails can serve ICE warrants on people in custody, which saves ICE agents from appearing personally at the jail to do so.

All five of the agreements in South Dakota were finalized this year, after Trump signed an executive order to encourage more state and local agencies to sign 287(g) agreements.

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

South Dakota State lost \$66 million in federal research funding but hopes to get it back

Trump administration pulled previously awarded 'climate-smart' grant, offers chance to regain money with a greater focus on producers

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota State University is working to get back about \$66 million in federal funding it lost when the Trump administration canceled a grant program it said was a "climate slush fund."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded South Dakota's largest university \$86 million in 2023 to research the impact of bison and cattle ranchers' land management practices on soil health, and to open markets for farmers and ranchers using those practices. It was the largest research grant in South Dakota higher education history.

The grant came from the Partners for Climate-Smart Commodities program. Since 2022 during the Biden administration, the USDA had awarded 141 projects across the country a total of \$3 billion. In April, the Trump administration terminated the grants and renamed the program Advancing Markets for Producers, saying "select projects may continue if it is demonstrated that a significant amount of the federal funds awarded will go to farmers."

Brooke Rollins, head of the USDA, said at the time that the Biden-era version of the program "was largely built to advance the green new scam," a reference to policies undertaken by Biden to address climate change.

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SDSU had already spent about \$20 million when the climate-smart grants were terminated. The university lost an additional \$1.4 million in other grant funding. Two other South Dakota institutions also lost grant funding: the University of South Dakota lost \$223,892, and South Dakota Mines lost \$1.3 million.

The new program requires at least 65% of funding to go toward producer incentives, instead of 35% under the earlier version of the program. Kristi Cammack, assistant dean for SDSU agriculture West River operations, said the university renamed the project from "The Grass is Greener on the Other Side: Developing Climate-Smart Beef and Bison Commodities" to "Producers first: incentivizing land management and advancing markets for US beef and bison operations," and shifted some funding originally intended for research toward producer incentives.

"We learned quite a bit over the two years we've been working on this, so we've been able to make educated shifts from research to producers while still being able to answer research questions," Cammack said.

SDSU resubmitted its research proposal at the end of June with the hopes of regaining the award by the end of the summer.

"Producers are at the crux of the whole project," Cammack said.

The five-year program encourages bison and cattle producers to implement conservation land management and grazing practices. They collect soil samples measuring microbes and other indicators of soil health and carbon sequestration as a result of the changes. The program also has a goal of introducing those producers to new markets with customers interested in eco-friendly practices.

More than 100 producers, primarily raising cattle, were participating in the project at the time of termination. More were preparing to enroll this year. SDSU had eight faculty members working on the project, along with four other staff members and several graduate students, Cammack said.

If re-awarded the funding later this summer, Cammack said the team will have a "busy fall" collecting soil samples before the ground freezes.

The grant cancellation is "interruptive," she added, but her group is "nimble" and "research projects never go perfectly."

The grant cancellation comes during a period of broader concern about university research funding. Federal funding for science is the lowest in years due to cuts made by the Trump administration and has been declining for decades as a share of gross domestic product.

President Donald Trump proposed "draconian cuts" this spring, said Daniel Scholl, vice president of research and economic development at South Dakota State, to federal research funding agencies such as the USDA, National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation – the three largest funding agencies from which SDSU receives research grants.

Scholl said he hopes Congress will resist the cuts, but is "uncertain where things will land."

"We're optimistic based on the efforts members of Congress are putting out to restore research funding and preserve the prowess of U.S. research and enterprise that's largely driven by universities," Scholl said.

If the university isn't able to reinstate the remainder of its grant for the bison and cattle research project, Cammack said her team plans to apply for other grants and work with other partners to continue the program.

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.



A cow in a pasture near Eureka in September 2024. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Trump, Zelenskyy exit White House talks hopeful about security guarantee for Ukraine

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European allies at the White House Monday celebrated Russian President Vladimir Putin's concession of NATO-like security protections for Ukraine as part of a future peace deal between the two countries.

In a social media post on Monday night, Trump said he called Putin after the meetings were over and began arrangements for a meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy, at a location to be determined. After that meeting, all three would meet, Trump said.

At the White House earlier, Zelenskyy and officials from Western Europe called Putin's acceptance of security guarantees for Ukraine protecting the nation against another attack a major step toward ending the three-year-old war.

Dating to before the war, one point of tension between Ukraine and Russia has been Ukraine's increasingly warm relationship with the West, with potential membership in NATO a major issue for Putin.

But Trump said Putin accepted something like it during the pair's meeting in Alaska last week.

"The Alaska summit reinforced my belief that, while difficult, peace is within reach," Trump said before a group meeting in the White House's East Room. "In a very significant step, President Putin agreed that Russia would accept security guarantees for Ukraine."

Trump and Zelenskyy met one-on-one in the Oval Office before a handful of European leaders joined them for a multilateral meeting in the East Room.

During introductions for the multilateral meeting, Zelenskyy said it had been his best meeting with Trump to date, and he was "very happy" with Trump about the possibility of winning security guarantees.

"We spoke about it, and we will speak more about security guarantees," he said. "This is very important that (the) United States gives such (a) strong signal and is ready for security guarantees."

The other attendees Monday were NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Finnish President Alexander Stubb.



U.S. President Donald Trump meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Aug. 18, 2025 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

'Article 5-like'

Several European allies highlighted the issue of security guarantees for Ukraine, which they compared to the NATO charter's Article 5 that compels every member state to defend any other member that has been attacked.

"It's very good to hear that we're working on the security guarantees," von der Leyen said. "Article 5-like security guarantees: so important."

The next step in the peace process would be to set up direct talks between Putin and Zelenskyy, possibly also to include Trump.

Trump said he had spoken to Putin "indirectly" on Monday and that he planned to phone the Russian president following the meeting with European leaders.

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Ceasefire needed?

Before meeting with Putin, Trump had supported a ceasefire as a path toward a permanent end to the war, though he came out of the Alaska summit closer to Putin's position that a ceasefire was not necessary before a final peace agreement.

Monday, he said he would like a ceasefire to immediately end violence, but that it was not strictly necessary from a diplomatic point of view. The United States had helped negotiate the ends of other conflicts without a temporary ceasefire in place, he said.

"All of us would obviously prefer an immediate ceasefire while we work on a lasting peace," he said. "I don't know that it's necessary."

Germany's Merz pushed back, saying a ceasefire should be a precondition for a Putin-Zelenskyy meeting.

"I can't imagine that the next meeting would take place without a ceasefire," Merz said. "So let's work on that, and let's try to put pressure on Russia, because the credibility of these efforts we are undertaking today are depending on at least a ceasefire from the beginning of the serious negotiations."

Smoother meeting with Zelenskyy in suit

At the open-press portion of Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy, the two appeared on friendlier terms than they had during the Ukrainian leader's last Oval Office visit in February, when Trump and Vice President JD Vance complained Zelenskyy was not appreciative enough of U.S. aid.

As the February meeting turned heated, Trump told Zelenskyy he had "no cards" to fight Russia on his own or make demands of the United States.

But Monday, Trump resisted an option to return to that argument, brushing off a reporter's question about which country had "better cards."

And Zelenskyy also wore an all-black suit Monday after a writer at a pro-Trump media outlet questioned him at the February meeting about wearing military-style attire.

"You look fabulous in that suit," the same writer said Monday.

"I said the same thing," Trump echoed.

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

Four GOP states send nearly 1,000 National Guard to D.C. for Trump crackdown

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Four Republican governors are sending nearly 1,000 National Guard members to the District of Columbia after President Donald Trump last week activated 800 members from the district's Guard as part of his federal takeover of the nation's capital.

The deployment would bring the total number of National Guard troops to roughly 1,800 in the district's 68 square miles, following the president's "crime emergency" declaration, even though violent crime in the district is at a 30-year low.

Because the district, home to more than 700,000 residents, is not a state, the president has the sole authority over its National Guard members.

The president has not only activated the National Guard but through the district's Home Rule Act is using the Metropolitan Police Department's 3,400-member police force for immigration enforcement.

South Dakota: Not asked for help FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden, through spokeswoman Josie Harms, said the state has not been asked to send its National Guard troops to Washington, D.C.

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The 1,000 National Guard members sent from the states are expected to arrive in the district Monday and through the coming days and are expected to be armed, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine will send 150 military police from his state's National Guard; Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves will send 200 members; South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster approved 200 members; and West Virginia Gov. Patrick Morrisey will send up to 400 National Guard members.

McMaster and Morrisey added that the federal government would cover the cost of deploying state troops.

Unknown how long Guard will stay

It's unclear how long National Guard members will remain on duty in the district. National Guard members are usually deployed for natural disasters and kept in reserve. Most have civilian jobs and families that they are pulled away from when they are activated.

The Department of Defense did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

The president has 23 days left in his emergency declaration and has signaled he wants to extend the emergency longer, as well as request funding from Congress to finance his plans for the district. He's directed federal law enforcement officers to not only conduct local policing, but to clear out camps of homeless people.

It's not the first time Republican governors have signaled they will deploy their National Guard members at Trump's request. Iowa's Kim Reynolds has stated she will send troops to help with the Trump administration's mass deportation plans.

And last week Tennessee Republican Gov. Bill Lee said he's prepared to send his National Guard members to the district. He added that U.S. Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll told him that the military might request states to send troops to the district for law enforcement.

The Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 generally bars the use of the military for domestic law enforcement purposes.

Lee's office did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott, a Republican, declined a request from the Trump administration to send the state's National Guard to the district, according to Vermont Public.

DeWine, McMaster and Morrisey said the Pentagon made requests for additional National Guard members.

What other states might see deployments?

States Newsroom reached out to the offices of all 27 Republican governors to ask if the Trump administration had requested National Guard members.

The administration has not made any requests to Georgia, South Dakota and Virginia, according to spokespeople at those offices. Maryland, which borders the district and is led by Democratic Gov. Wes Moore, has not received a request from the Pentagon to send in National Guard members, according to a spokesperson for Moore's office.

A spokesperson for Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt said there are no current plans for a deployment of Na-



A member of the National Guard stands alongside a military vehicle parked in front of Union Station, near the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Monday, Aug. 18, 2025. (Photo by Jane Norman/

States Newsroom)

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tional Guard troops from the state.

Laura Strimple, communications director for Republican Gov. Jim Pillen of Nebraska, said in a statement that the governor supported the president's "initiatives to reduce crime and clean up the streets in our nation's capital, including placing the Metropolitan Police Department under federal leadership and tasking the District of Columbia National Guard and National Guard troops from several nearby states with security in Washington."

"At this time, the Nebraska National Guard is not part of this mission," she added.

A spokesperson for Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis did not directly answer States Newsroom's question if the state, which is preparing for Category 4 Hurricane Erin, had received a request from the Trump administration to send National Guard members to the district.

"We stand ready to mobilize any resources necessary in response to President Trump's federal priorities," the spokesperson said.

The rest of the state offices did not respond to States Newsroom's requests for comment.

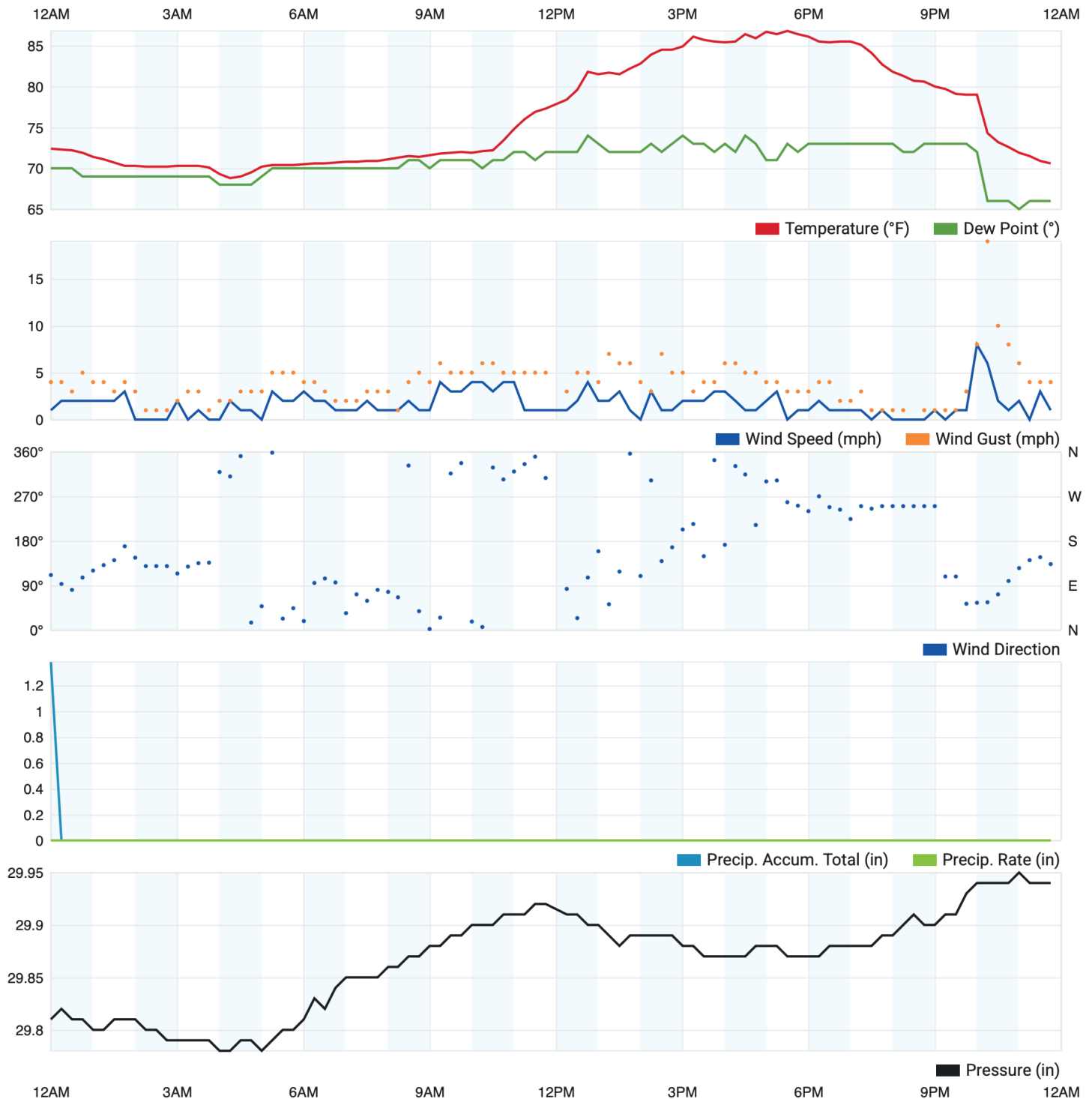
Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 18, 2025



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Today



High: 87 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 63 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 88 °F

Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 67 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 89 °F

Sunny then
Chance
T-storms

Today



Highs: 83-95°F

Hot and Sunny through
the day

Wednesday



Highs: 82-98°F

Hot and Sunny through
the day

Thursday



Highs: 84-99°F

Hot temperatures with
afternoon and evening
showers and storms
possible

August 19, 2025 3:07 AM



Aberdeen, SD

Warm temperatures and sunny skies will be occurring across central and northeastern SD as well as west central MN over the next couple of days. Temperatures will warm into the mid 80s to the mid and upper 90s across the area, with Thursday forecast to have the warmest temperatures this week. There will thankfully be a break in precipitation today and tomorrow, however Thursday looks to have increasing chances for showers and storms during the afternoon and evening.

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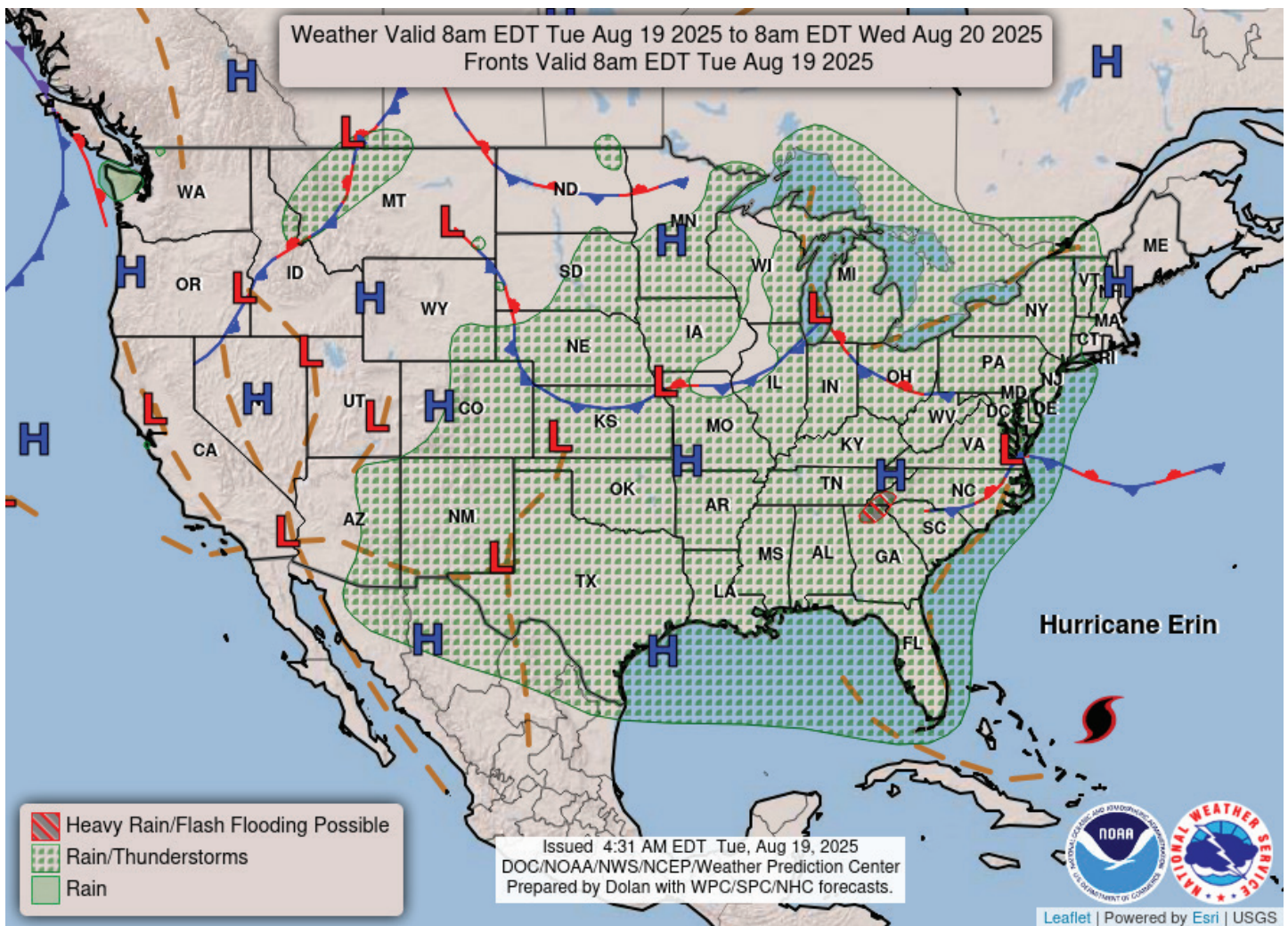
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 5:10 PM
Heat Index: 96 °F at 4:45 PM
Low Temp: 69 °F at 4:19 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 10:08 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 57 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1976
Record Low: 34 in 2004
Average High: 83
Average Low: 56
Average Precip in August.: 1.37
Precip to date in August: 4.40
Average Precip to date: 15.47
Precip Year to Date: 20.28
Sunset Tonight: 8:34:33 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:34:33 pm



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Today in Weather History

August 19, 1899: An estimated F3 tornado passed 3 miles north of Clear Lake. The tornado killed a man by flying debris as five homes, and many barns were destroyed.

August 19, 1983: Between 0155 and 0330 CST, thunderstorm winds blow through Brown County. At 0155, an estimated 64 mph wind gust was observed on the southeast corner of Warner. A 60 mph wind gust was measured at the Aberdeen Airport at 0218. By 0330 an estimated wind gust of 75 mph was observed in Ordway.

August 19, 1991: A thunderstorm produced about five inches of rain, strong winds, and hail in Ridgeview, Dewey County. Three-grain bins were blown over. One of the bins hit a house causing considerable damage. Wind gusts were estimated to be 60 mph. High winds continued into Sully and Hughes Counties.

1788 - A small but powerful hurricane inflicted great havoc upon forests along a narrow track from New Jersey to Maine. A similar storm track today would cause extreme disaster in the now populated area. (David Ludlum)

1890: An estimated F3 tornado hit South Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. About 400 buildings were destroyed in the industrial and more impoverished residential section of town. The death toll was 16 and damage was estimated at \$400,000.

1896: The famous Cottage City (Oak Bluffs) waterspout occurred off Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. The vortex was 3,600 feet high, formed three times, and was well photographed. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Boston Globe.

1969 - 'Never say die' Camille let loose a cloudburst in Virginia resulting in flash floods and landslides which killed 151 persons and cause 140 million dollars damage. Massies Hill VA received 27 inches of rain. (David Ludlum)

1986 - The temperature at San Antonio, TX, soared to an all-time record high of 108 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - Thunderstorms moving out of southeastern Nebraska spread severe weather into eastern Kansas and western Missouri during the day. Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced hail three inches in diameter at Albion, and high winds which downed a large tent at Waterloo injuring a dozen persons. Thunderstorms in Kansas produced baseball size hail northwest of Topeka, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Fulton. Ten persons were injured in a thunderstorm at Princeton KS, and damage to crops in southern Franklin County KS was estimated at 3.5 million dollars. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Raleigh, NC, reported a record hot temperature reading of 103 degrees. Afternoon thunderstorms in Oklahoma produced wind gusts to 75 mph in southern Pittsburgh County. Thunderstorms in Indiana produced 4.50 inches of rain at Morgantown. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Early morning thunderstorms deluged southeastern Delaware with six to ten inches of rain in four to six hours, with local reports of 13 to 20 inches of rain. Twenty-six major roads were closed or damaged, and fourteen bridges were washed out. Flooding caused nearly four million dollars damage to local businesses. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)



DOES SIZE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Have you ever heard that "bigger is better" or that "smaller is insufficient?" Some think that size makes a difference. And there may be times when both are true.

Psalm 117 provides a significant statement on size. It is the shortest chapter in the Bible. Yet it contains some of the largest themes in the Word of God.

For example, "Praise the Lord, all you nations." The Lord is not limited to any one nation or country. God did not send His Son to be the Savior of one particular group. His Word states that "The Father sent the Son to be the savior of the world..." There is no Biblical basis to believe that our Lord loves some one more than He does every one. The word world includes every continent - from the most God-hating to the most God-honoring.

It also states that His love is not limited: "For great is His love for us." Our God has no favorites. We may question why others are more prosperous than we are or have more of life's goods than we do. But that does not mean that they are loved more than anyone else. God gave them what He did for a particular reason, and He gives us what He did for a particular reason. They, as well as the rest of us, will be accountable to Him for each of His gifts. It is never what He gives us, but how we bless God and others with His gifts that He gives us.

Finally, His "faithfulness endures forever." God is not nice today and spiteful tomorrow. Who He is today He will be tomorrow and throughout eternity. His pledges and promises are predictable. His Word proves that fact.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for a love that includes all of us and Your faithfulness that will not waver. You truly deserve all our praise! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: – Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD. Psalm 117

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: 08.15.25

4 17 27 34 69 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$216,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 24 Mins 16
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.18.25

2 7 26 30 49 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,250,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 39 Mins
DRAW: 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.18.25

3 12 24 30 40 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 54 Mins 15
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.16.25

4 5 18 20 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.18.25

6 28 38 48 55 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins
DRAW: 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.18.25

15 46 61 63 64 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$643,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins
DRAW: 15 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

Beshear bans drug in Kentucky that's being targeted by attorneys general across the nation

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear took emergency action Monday to ban the sale of “designer Xanax,” responding to a request from his state’s attorney general who is leading a broader effort to combat the highly potent synthetic drug linked to dozens of overdose deaths last year in the Bluegrass State.

Beshear’s action in his state comes as a coalition of 21 attorneys general, led by Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman, is urging the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to take emergency action banning the unregulated drug. It poses a growing public health threat and is increasingly contributing to overdose deaths, the attorneys general said in a letter dated Monday to DEA Administrator Terry Cole.

“Law enforcement desperately needs the tools to drive this dangerous drug from our neighborhoods,” Coleman, a Republican, said in a news release.

In Kentucky, the classification of bromazepam — widely known as “designer Xanax” — as a Schedule 1 controlled substance took immediate effect following Beshear’s emergency regulation. Bromazepam, Coleman has warned, is being passed off as prescription pills including benzodiazepines, which are commonly used to treat conditions such as anxiety disorders, insomnia, and seizures.

He had urged Beshear’s administration to ban the drug in Kentucky, and the governor’s action on Monday empowers law enforcement to make arrests for selling or possessing the drug, Beshear’s office said.

“This deadly drug has no place in our communities, and now we have the tools needed to get it off the streets and protect more lives,” the Democratic governor said in a release.

Beshear, a former Kentucky attorney general now in his second term as governor, is widely seen as a potential candidate for president in 2028.

The drug he and Coleman targeted has been tied to a growing number of fatal overdoses in Kentucky and across the nation, Beshear’s office said. It was detected in nearly 50 overdose deaths in Kentucky last year, the office said.

“We live in a moment when as little as one pill can kill – and is killing – our kids,” Coleman said in response to Beshear’s action. “I’m glad we could work together to tackle this grave threat.”

In their letter to the head of DEA, the attorneys general said bromazepam is being sold illicitly on the streets and online. It is highly potent and unpredictable, they said, especially when combined with opioids or other central nervous system depressants. Unlike regulated medications, illicitly manufactured bromazepam lacks quality controls, making it particularly lethal for unsuspecting users, they said.

“Despite its clear dangers, bromazepam remains unscheduled at the federal level, creating significant challenges for law enforcement and public health officials trying to respond to this emerging crisis,” the letter said. “Without scheduling, this drug continues to evade traditional regulatory and prosecutorial tools, hindering interdiction efforts and enabling continued distribution through illicit channels.”

Emergency action by the DEA would help law enforcement remove the drug from circulation, give prosecutors the ability to hold traffickers accountable and would “send a clear signal that this dangerous substance has no place on our streets,” the letter said.

Besides Coleman, the request to the DEA included attorneys general from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia, Coleman’s office said.

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Omaha basketball player Deng Mayar drowns in a Utah reservoir

By The Associated Press undefined

Omaha basketball player Deng Mayar drowned Saturday in a Utah reservoir, police said.

Herriman police said Mayar died at Blackridge Reservoir after going underwater about 35 yards from shore.

Mayar, 22, was a graduate student who joined the Mavericks after playing two seasons for Summit League rival North Dakota. Mayar, from Salt Lake City, started 15 games in two seasons and averaged 6.3 points and 4.0 rebounds as a senior.

Omaha coach Chris Crutchfield said in a statement that Mayar had made "tremendous progress" during the summer.

"Deng was a joy to be around and made our culture better," Crutchfield said. "We will miss him greatly."

Herriman police responded to a 911 call reporting two people in distress at the reservoir. Sa Mafutaga, 21, made it to shore and then went back into the water to try to rescue Mayar. Bystanders entered the water to aid Mafutaga, who was treated at the scene and taken to a hospital. The report said Mafutaga is expected to recover.

Mayar's body was recovered from the reservoir by authorities after several hours of searching.

Hurricane Erin forces evacuations on North Carolina's Outer Banks, threatens dangerous rip currents

By BEN FINLEY, JOHN SEEWER and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Holly Andrzejewski hadn't yet welcomed her and her family's first guests to the Atlantic Inn on Hatteras Island when she had to start rescheduling them, as Hurricane Erin neared North Carolina's Outer Banks on Tuesday and threatened to whip up wild waves and tropical force winds.

Although the monster storm is expected to stay offshore, evacuations were ordered on such barrier islands along the Carolina coast as Hatteras as authorities warned the storm could churn up dangerous rip currents and swamp roads with waves of 15 feet (4.6 meters).

Andrzejewski and her husband purchased the bed-and-breakfast, known as the oldest inn on the island, less than a week ago. By Monday they had brought in all the outdoor furniture and made sure their daughter and her boyfriend, who are the innkeepers, had generators, extra water and flashlights as they stayed behind to keep an eye on the property.

"It's just one of those things where you know this is always a possibility and it could happen, and you just make the best out of it. Otherwise you wouldn't live at the beach," said Andrzejewski, who will also remain on the island, at her home about a 15 minutes' drive away.

Erin lashed part of the Caribbean with rain and wind Monday. Forecasters are confident it will curl north and away from the eastern U.S., but tropical storm and surge watches were issued for much of the Outer Banks.

Officials at the Wrightsville Beach, near Wilmington, North Carolina, reported to the National Weather Service rescuing at least 60 swimmers from rip currents Monday.

By early Tuesday, Erin had lost some strength from previous days but was still a Category 3 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph (185 kph), the National Hurricane Center in Miami said. It was about 675 miles (1,090 kilometers) southwest of Bermuda and 770 miles (1,240 kilometers) south-southeast of Cape Hatteras and was moving northwest at a slower 7 mph (11 kph).

A tropical storm warning remained in effect for the Turks and Caicos Islands, where government services were suspended, some ports were closed and residents were ordered to stay home.

On North Carolina's Outer Banks, coastal flooding was expected to begin Tuesday and continue through Thursday.

The evacuations on Hatteras Island and Ocracoke came at the height of tourist season on the thin stretch of low-lying barrier islands that jut into the Atlantic Ocean and are increasingly vulnerable to storm surges.

A year ago, Hurricane Ernesto stayed hundreds of miles offshore yet still produced high surf and swells that caused coastal damage.

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This time there are concerns that several days of heavy surf, high winds and waves could wash out parts of the main highway. Some routes could be impassible for days.

This is the first evacuation for Ocracoke since Hurricane Dorian in 2019 caused the most damage in the island's recorded history.

Tommy Hutcherson, who owns the community's only grocery store, said the island has mostly bounced back. He's optimistic this storm won't be as destructive.

"But you just never know. I felt the same way about Dorian and we really got smacked," he said.

Scientists have linked the rapid intensification of hurricanes in the Atlantic to climate change. Global warming is causing the atmosphere to hold more water vapor and is spiking ocean temperatures, and warmer waters give hurricanes fuel to unleash more rain and strengthen more quickly.

Bermuda will experience the most severe threat Thursday evening, said Phil Rogers, director of the Bermuda Weather Service. By then, waters could swell up to 24 feet (7 meters).

"Surfers, swimmers and boaters must resist the temptation to go out. The waters will be very dangerous and lives will be placed at risk," acting Minister of National Security Jache Adams said.

India's Modi to meet China's top diplomat as Asian powers rebuild ties

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and RAJESH ROY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet with China's top diplomat on Tuesday in a sign of easing tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors after a yearslong standoff between the Asian powers.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who arrived in India on Monday, is scheduled to hold talks with Modi and other leaders about the disputed border in the Himalayan mountains. Reducing the number of troops on the border and possibly resuming trade in the contested region are expected to be on the agenda.

The rebuilding of ties coincides with friction between New Delhi and Washington after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed steep tariffs on India, a longtime ally seen as a counterbalance against China's influence in Asia. India is part of the Quad security alliance with the U.S., along with Australia and Japan.

'Compromise at the highest political level'

India and China's decades-old border dispute worsened in 2020 after a deadly clash between their troops in the Ladakh region. The chill in relations affected trade, diplomacy and air travel as both sides deployed tens of thousands of security forces in border areas.

Some progress has been made since then.

Last year, India and China agreed to a pact on border patrols and withdrew additional forces along some border areas. Both countries continue to fortify their border by building roads and rail networks.

In recent months, the countries have increased official visits and discussed easing some trade restrictions, movement of citizens and visas for businesspeople. In June, Beijing allowed pilgrims from India to visit holy sites in Tibet. Both sides are working to restore direct flights.

Last week, the spokesman for India's foreign ministry, Randhir Jaiswal, said India and China were in discussions to restart trade through three points along their 3,488-kilometer (2,167-mile) border.

Manoj Joshi, a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank, said relations are still at an uneasy level of normalization.

"Settling the boundary issue between the two countries requires political compromise at the highest political level," said Joshi, who also served as a member of the advisory board for India's National Security Council. He asserted that the countries are "still talking past each other when it comes to the border dispute and issues surrounding it."

Ahead of his meeting with Modi, Wang met India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and discussed the way forward to bolster the relationship.

"The setbacks we experienced in the past few years were not in the interest of the people of our two countries. We are heartened to see the stability that is now restored in the borders," Wang said.

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On Monday, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Beijing is willing to take Wang's India visit as an opportunity to work with the Indian side to "properly handle differences and promote the sustained, sound and stable development of China-India relations."

Mao said Wang's meeting with Modi's national security adviser will "continue in-depth communication to jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border areas."

Modi plans to visit China soon

The thaw between Beijing and New Delhi began last October when Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met at a summit of emerging economies in Russia. It was the first time the leaders had spoken in person since 2019.

Modi is set to meet Xi when he travels to China late this month — his first visit in seven years — to attend the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional grouping formed by China, Russia and others to counter U.S. influence in Asia.

Earlier this year, Xi called for India and China's relations to take the form of a "dragon-elephant tango" — a dance between the emblematic animals of the countries.

Last month, India's external affairs minister visited Beijing in his first trip to China since 2020.

The US and Pakistan play roles in the thaw

The renewed engagement comes as New Delhi's ties with Trump are fraying. Washington has imposed a 50% tariff on Indian goods, which includes a penalty of 25% for purchasing Russian crude oil. The tariffs take effect Aug. 27.

India has shown no sign of backing down, instead signing more agreements with Russia to deepen economic cooperation.

Trump's renewed engagement with India's arch rival, Pakistan, has also encouraged New Delhi's overtures to China, said Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda, who led the Indian military's Northern Command from 2014 to 2016.

In June, Trump hosted Pakistan's army chief for a White House lunch and later announced an energy deal with Islamabad to jointly develop the country's oil reserves. Both followed Trump's claims of brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan after the two sides traded military strikes in May.

That clash saw Pakistan use Chinese-made military jets and missiles against India.

"China is heavily invested in Pakistan and, practically speaking, you can't have any expectation that Beijing will hold back support to Islamabad," Hooda said. "But you can't have two hostile neighbors on your borders and simultaneously deal with them also."

Japan's SoftBank to take \$2 billion stake in computer chip maker Intel

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Japanese technology giant SoftBank Group plans to take a \$2 billion stake in computer chip maker Intel as it deepens its involvement in U.S. semiconductor manufacturing and other advanced technology in the United States, the companies said Monday.

Shares in SoftBank fell 4% Tuesday in Tokyo following the announcement, which coincided with unconfirmed reports that President Donald Trump is considering having the U.S. government buy a stake in the chip maker.

SoftBank invests in an array of companies that it sees as holding long-term potential. It has been stepping up investments in the United States since Trump returned to the White House. In February, its chairman Masayoshi Son joined Trump, Sam Altman of OpenAI and Larry Ellison of Oracle in announcing a major investment of up to \$500 billion in a project to develop artificial intelligence called Stargate.

SoftBank plans to buy \$2 billion of Intel's common stock, paying \$23 per share. That would be about a 2% stake. Intel's shares closed at \$23.66 on Monday.

"Semiconductors are the foundation of every industry, Son said in a statement. "This strategic investment reflects our belief that advanced semiconductor manufacturing and supply will further expand in the United States, with Intel playing a critical role."

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SoftBank posted its first profit in four years in the April-June quarter as it raked in gains from its investment portfolios. It is a major shareholder in Arm Holdings, a British semiconductor and software design company.

Intel helped launch Silicon Valley but has fallen behind rivals like Nvidia Corp. and Advanced Micro Devices Inc. and is shedding thousands of workers and slashing costs under its new CEO, Lip-Bu Tan.

In the last quarter, the company reported a loss of \$2.9 billion.

Intel plans to end the year with 75,000 "core" workers excluding subsidiaries, through layoffs and attrition, down from 99,500 core employees at the end of 2024. The company previously announced a 15% workforce reduction.

Trump recently said Tan, who was made CEO in March, should resign. But after meeting with him last week Trump relented, saying Tan had an "amazing story."

Intel's rose 5.4% early Tuesday in pre-market trading.

Hurricane Erin's massive waves threaten to isolate North Carolina's Outer Banks

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

There's a popular T-shirt on Hatteras Island on the North Carolina Outer Banks that says: "One road on. One road off (sometimes)" — poking fun at the constant battle between Mother Nature and a thin ribbon of pavement connecting the narrow barrier island to the rest of the world.

Mother Nature is probably going to win this week. Hurricane Erin is forecast to stay hundreds of miles offshore but is still sending waves 20 feet (6 meters) or greater crashing over vulnerable sand dunes on the islands.

Officials have ordered evacuations of Hatteras and Ocracoke islands even without a hurricane warning because that tiny ribbon of highway called N.C. 12 will likely be torn up and washed out in several places, isolating villages for days or weeks.

The 3,500 or so Outer Bankers who live there have handled isolation before. But most of the tens of thousands of vacationers have not.

"We haven't seen waves of that size in a while and the vulnerable spots have only gotten weaker in the past five years," said Reide Corbett, executive director of the Coastal Studies Institute, a group of several universities that study the Outer Banks.

The Outer Banks are defined by water

In a basic sense, they are sand dunes that were tall enough to stay above the ocean level when many of the Earth's glaciers melted 20,000 years ago.

The barrier islands in some places are as far as 30 miles (48 kilometers) off mainland North Carolina. To the east is the vast Atlantic Ocean. To the west is the Pamlico Sound.

"Water, water everywhere. That really resonates on the Outer Banks," Corbett said.

The most built-up and populated part of the Outer Banks are in the north around Nags Head and Kill Devil Hills, which aren't under the evacuation order. South of the Oregon Inlet, scoured out by a 1846 hurricane, is Hatteras Island, where the only connection to the mainland is N.C. 12. South of there is Ocracoke Island, accessible only by boat or plane.

The first highways to reach the area were built more than 60 years ago. And the Outer Banks started booming, as it went from quaint fishing villages to what it is now, dotted with 6,000-square foot vacation homes on stilts.

Maintaining the highway is arduous

On a nice day, what look like snowplows and street sweeper brushes wait on the side of N.C. 12 to scoop and sweep away the constantly blowing sand.

When the storms come, water from the ocean or the sound punch through the sand dunes and wash tons of sand and debris on the road. In more extreme cases, storms can break up the pavement or even

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create new inlets that require temporary bridges.

The N.C. Department of Transportation spent more than \$1 million a year on regular maintenance to keep N.C. 12 open during the 2010s. It also spent about \$50 million over the decade on repairs after storms.

But the state estimates Dare County, which includes most of the Outer Banks, brings in \$2 billion in tourism revenue a year. So the cycle of clean up and repair continues.

The repairs take time. Hurricane Isabel in 2003 and Hurricane Irene in 2011 both cut inlets into Hatteras Island and ferries were needed for two months. It can still take days to reopen N.C. 12 after more routine Nor'easters.

The erosion is constant

It's not just storms that impact the island. As the planet warms and polar ice melts, rising ocean levels threaten the Outer Banks. In a place where most of the land is only a few feet above sea level, every inch of sand counts.

In Rodanthe, which sticks the farthest out into the Atlantic, the churning ocean has swallowed up more than a dozen homes since 2020. Officials think at least two unoccupied homes are likely to be lost if the waves from Erin are as strong as predicted.

The Outer Banks are still home

Shelli Miller Gates waited tables on the Outer Banks to earn money as a college student in the late 1970s. She remembers houses with no air conditioning, televisions or phones. And she adored it.

"I love the water. I love the wildness of it. It's the way I want to live my life," the respiratory therapist said.

It's a lifestyle embraced by many. The area's shorthand "OBX" shows up in many places as a source of pride, including the first three letters on license plates issued by the state.

The isolation contributes to a sense of community. Gates has seen people band together countless times when their connection to the outside world is severed. And there is always the allure of getting to live someplace where others just get to visit.

"There's things everywhere. There's earthquakes and lizards and floods. Looks at the poor people out in western North Carolina," Gates said. "There are so many things that can happen to you. I feel like you have to find the place that feels like home."

A ship with hundreds of tons of food aid for Gaza nears an Israeli port after leaving Cyprus

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

LIMASSOL, Cyprus (AP) — After setting off from Cyprus, a ship loaded with 1,200 tons of food supplies for the Gaza Strip was approaching the Israeli port of Ashdod on Tuesday in a renewed effort to alleviate the worsening crisis as famine threatens the Palestinian territory.

The Panamanian-flagged vessel is loaded with 52 containers carrying food aid such as pasta, rice, baby food and canned goods. Israeli customs officials had screened the aid at the Cypriot port of Limassol from where the ship departed on Monday.

Some 700 tons of the aid is from Cyprus, purchased with money donated by the United Arab Emirates to the so-called Amalthea Fund, set up last year for donors to help with seaborne aid. The rest comes from Italy, the Maltese government, a Catholic religious order in Malta and the Kuwaiti nongovernmental organization Al Salam Association.

"The situation is beyond dire," Cyprus Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos told The Associated Press.

Cyprus was the staging area last year for 22,000 tons of aid deliveries by ship directly to Gaza through a pier operated by the international charity World Central Kitchen and a U.S. military-run docking facility known as the Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore system.

By late July 2024, aid groups pulled out of the project, ending a mission plagued by repeated weather and security problems that limited how much food and other emergency supplies could get to those in need.

Cypriot Foreign Ministry said Tuesday's mission is led by the United Nations but is a coordinated effort — once offloaded at Ashdod, U.N. aid employees would arrange for the aid to be trucked to storage areas

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and food stations operated by the World Central Kitchen.

The charity, which was behind the first aid shipment to Gaza from Cyprus last year aboard a tug-towed barge, is widely trusted in the battered territory.

"The contribution of everyone involved is crucial and their commitment incredible," Kombos said.

Shipborne deliveries can bring much larger quantities of aid than the air drops that several nations have recently made in Gaza.

The latest shipment comes a day after Hamas said it has accepted a new proposal from Arab mediators for a ceasefire. Israel has not approved the latest proposal so far.

Israel announced plans to reoccupy Gaza City and other heavily populated areas after ceasefire talks stalled last month, raising the possibility of a worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, which experts say is sliding into famine.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin has dismissed reports of starvation in Gaza are "lies" promoted by Hamas. But the U.N. last week warned that starvation and malnutrition in the Palestinian territory are at their highest levels since the war began with the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 in which the militants abducted 251 people and killed around 1,200, mostly civilians.

Gaza's Health Ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals, said the Palestinian death toll from 22 months of war has passed 62,000. It does not say how many were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half the dead.

South Sudanese exiles face uncertain future after release from prison in Sudan

By JOSEPH FALZETTA and ADLAI COLEMAN Associated Press

RENK, South Sudan (AP) — As a young man in the mid-1980s, Daud Mahmoud Abdullah left his home in Aweil in South Sudan and headed north. It was a time of war. South Sudan was still part of Sudan and was fighting for independence, in a conflict that would claim about 2 million lives.

He never went back. But now at 60 and after six months in a Sudanese prison, he is closer to home than he's been in 40 years. This July, he finally crossed the border back into his native South Sudan, taking a deep breath and reminding himself, "I am alive."

After everything that has happened to him, it feels like a miracle.

Sudan — once his place of refuge — has been embroiled in a brutal civil war since April 2023 that has killed 40,000 people and displaced nearly 13 million more, according to U.N. agencies.

Abdullah lived in Wad Madani, the capital of Al Jazirah state, about 135 kilometers (85 miles) south of Khartoum. There had been incursions into the area by the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary force once known as the Janjaweed who were notorious for mass killings, rapes and other atrocities in Darfur two decades ago. More recently, the RSF have again been accused of by the International Criminal Court of committing war crimes, including the attacks on famine-hit Zamzam and other camps in North Darfur.

In January, the Sudanese armed forces began recapturing parts of Al Jazirah state from the RSF and making sweeping arrests. Abdullah got caught up in the incursions on his way home from the market: He was picked up by SAF soldiers and accused of cooperating with the RSF.

Abdullah says that he was "beaten, tortured and burned with cigarettes" to make him confess. Although he never made a confession, he was thrown in prison.

Held without charge and tortured in prison

In a report released in March, the top U.N. human rights body detailed how both the SAF and the RSF have detained tens of thousands of people "without charge, with limited or no contact with their families, in squalid and overcrowded facilities" in "a widespread pattern of arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment."

Abdullah can attest to this. He remembers inmates dying from starvation, beatings or illnesses like cholera daily. One morning, he discovered 28 of his fellow inmates had died in the night. For the next three days the bodies lay inside his cell, and the soldiers refused to remove them. "Even when you shouted to them, they would tell you, 'If you want to die also, you can die with them,'" Abdullah said.

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The Associated Press spoke to eight men in total, some of whom were detained in other prisons in Al Jazirah state and Khartoum. All recounted nightmarish conditions during their incarceration. They described being crammed into cells alongside hundreds of other prisoners. Cells were so crowded that they were forced to sleep with their knees tucked under their chin. Beatings occurred regularly; one said he lost the use of his right eye as a result.

Michael Deng Dut, 29, said he had been "tortured with electricity more than 18 times." Simon Tong, 39, said that he was tortured with a knife during an interrogation, and rolled up his sleeve to expose the scars on his arm.

Many of the men said they were given only a handful of food and a small cup of water once a day. "This is the reason many of us passed away, because of the lack of food and water," Tong said.

A place between north and south

In July, 99 South Sudanese prisoners were separated from the other inmates. As the men awaited their fate, one died, reducing their number to 98. On July 28, they were bundled into a bus and driven away, not knowing where they were going.

"They did not tell us they were going to release us," Abdullah said.

He didn't realize where he was until they reached the South Sudanese border and were taken to Renk, the country's northernmost town, by South Sudanese officials. Though still far from home, Abdullah was in his own country for the first time in 40 years.

The border town of Renk has become a hub for South Sudanese nationals trying to get home. When the Sudanese civil war broke out in 2023, UN agencies and the South Sudanese government established an onward transportation program which has moved more than 250,000 people, according to the U.N.'s International Office of Migration.

On June 1, the program was suspended due to global cuts to humanitarian funding. The number of people living in and around a transit center in Renk has since swelled to 12,000, roughly six times its intended capacity. Thousands are living in makeshift shelters made of sticks and cloth.

Reunited but stranded

But for Abdullah, arriving in Renk was a moment of overwhelming joy after months of torture and uncertainty. He was overcome to see his wife, daughter, and younger brother waiting for him. His wife had decided to take his family south after his younger brother had been arrested and released by SAF for the third time.

"When I saw Abdullah, I thanked God," she said. "We did not expect to see him alive again."

Abdullah now hopes to return to Aweil, the town where he was born. He still has family in Sudan, and is trying to contact them so that they might join him in Renk.

"If they come back safely, then we plan to go to Aweil," he said. "All of us, together."

Years after abuse reports, ex-coach at renowned US gymnastics academy is arrested by FBI

By RYAN J. FOLEY and EDDIE PELLIS Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — The U.S. gymnastics world was only just recovering from a devastating sexual abuse scandal when a promising young coach moved from Mississippi to Iowa to take a job in 2018 at an elite academy known for training Olympic champions.

Liang "Chow" Qiao, the owner of Chow's Gymnastics and Dance Institute in West Des Moines, thought highly enough of his new hire, Sean Gardner, to put him in charge of the club's premier junior event and to coach some of its most promising girls.

But four years later, Gardner was gone from Chow's with little notice.

USA Gymnastics, the organization rocked by the Larry Nassar sex-abuse crisis that led to the creation of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, had been informed by the watchdog group that Gardner was suspended from all contact with gymnasts.

The reason for Gardner's removal wasn't disclosed. But court records obtained exclusively by The As-

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sociated Press show the coach was accused of sexually abusing at least three young gymnasts at Chow's and secretly recording others undressing in a gym bathroom at his prior job in Mississippi.

Last week, more than three years after being suspended from coaching, the FBI arrested Gardner, 38, on a federal child pornography charge. But his disciplinary case has still not been resolved by SafeSport, which handles sex-abuse cases in Olympic sports.

In cases like Gardner's, the public can be in the dark for years while SafeSport investigates and sanctions coaches. SafeSport requires that allegations be reported to police to ensure abusers don't run unchecked outside of sports, but critics say the system is a slow, murky process.

"From an outward operational view, it seems that if SafeSport is involved in any way, the situation turns glow-in-the-dark toxic," said attorney Steve Silvey, a longtime SafeSport critic who has represented people in cases involving the center.

While acknowledging there can be delays as its investigations unfold, SafeSport defended its temporary suspensions in a statement as "a unique and valuable intervention" when there are concerns of a risk to others.

Nevertheless, in 2024, Gardner was able to land a job helping care for surgical patients at an Iowa hospital — two years after the abuse allegations against him were reported to SafeSport and the police.

And it was not until late May that West Des Moines police executed a search warrant at his home, eventually leading to the recovery of a trove of photos and videos on his computer and cellphone of nude young girls, court records show.

Authorities in Iowa sealed the court documents after the AP asked about the investigation earlier this month, before details of the federal charge were made public Friday. Gardner, Qiao and Gardner's former employer in Mississippi did not respond to AP requests for comment.

'The job that I've always wanted'

Chow's Gymnastics is best known as the academy where U.S. gymnasts Shawn Johnson and Gabby Douglas trained before becoming gold medalists at the 2008 and 2012 Olympics.

Qiao opened the gym in 1998 after starring on the Chinese national team and moving to the United States to coach at the University of Iowa. The gym became a draw for top youth gymnasts, with some families moving to Iowa to train there.

Gardner moved to Iowa in September 2018, jumping at the opportunity to coach under Qiao.

"This is the job that I've always wanted. Chow is really someone I have looked up to since I've been coaching," Gardner told the ABC affiliate WOI-TV in 2019. "And you can tell when you step foot in the gym, just even from coaching the girls, the culture that he's built. It's amazing. It's beautiful."

A year later, Gardner was promoted to director of Chow's Winter Classic, an annual meet that draws more than 1,000 gymnasts to Iowa. He also coached a junior Olympics team during his four-year tenure at Chow's.

Several of his students earned college gymnastics scholarships, but Gardner said he had bigger goals.

"You want to leave a thumbprint on their life, so when they go off hopefully to school, to bigger and better things, that they remember Chow's as family," he said in a 2020 interview with WOI-TV.

Coach accused of sexual misconduct in Iowa and Mississippi

Gardner is accused of abusing his position at Chow's and his former job at Jump'In Gymnastics in Mississippi to prey on girls under his tutelage, according to a nine-page FBI affidavit released Friday that summarizes the allegations against him.

A girl reported to SafeSport in March 2022 that Gardner used "inappropriate spotting techniques" in which he would put his hands between her legs and touch her vagina, the affidavit said.

It said she alleged Gardner would ask girls if they were sexually active and call them "idiots, sluts, and whores." She said this behavior began after his hiring in 2018 and continued until she left the gym in 2020 and provided the names of six other potential victims.

SafeSport suspended Gardner in July 2022 — four months after the girl's report — a provisional step it can take in severe cases with "sufficient evidentiary support" as investigations proceed.

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A month after that, the center received a report from another girl alleging additional "sexual contact and physical abuse," including that Gardner similarly fondled her during workouts, the FBI affidavit said. The girl said that he once dragged her across the carpet so hard that it burned her buttocks, the affidavit said.

SafeSport shared the reports with West Des Moines police, in line with its policy requiring adults who interact with youth athletes to disclose potential criminal cases to law enforcement.

While SafeSport's suspension took Gardner out of gymnastics, the criminal investigation quickly hit a roadblock.

Police records show a detective told SafeSport to urge the alleged victims to file criminal complaints, but only one of their mothers contacted police in 2022. That woman said her daughter did not want to pursue criminal charges, and police suspended the investigation.

Victims of abuse are often reluctant to cooperate with police, said Ken Lang, a retired detective and associate professor of criminal justice at Milligan University.

"In this case you have the prestige of this facility," he said. "Do they want to associate their name with that, in that way, when their aspirations were to succeed in gymnastics?"

Police suspended the investigation, even as Gardner was on probation for his second-offense of driving while intoxicated.

A dormant case reopened, and a year later, an arrest

The case stayed dormant until April 2024 when another former Chow's student came forward to the West Des Moines Police Department to report abuse allegations, according to a now-sealed affidavit signed by police detective Jeff Lyon. The AP is not identifying the student in line with its policy of not naming victims of alleged sexual abuse.

The now 18-year-old told police she began taking lessons from Gardner when she was 11 or 12 in 2019, initially seeing him as a "father figure" who tried to help her get through her parents' divorce. He told her she could tell him "anything," the affidavit said.

When she moved in 2021, she told police, he gave her a hug and said she could text and follow him on Instagram and other social media sites, where he went by the nickname "Coach Seanie," because gym policy barring such contact no longer applied.

According to a summary of her statement provided in Lyon's affidavit, she said Gardner fondled her during exercises, repeatedly touching her vagina; rubbed her back and butt and discussed his sex life; and made her do inappropriate stretches that exposed her privates.

She told police she suspected he used his cellphone to film her in that position.

Reached by the AP, the teen's mother declined comment. The mother told police she was interested in a monetary settlement with Chow's because the gym "had been made aware of the complaints and they did nothing to stop them," according to Lyon's affidavit. The gym didn't return AP messages seeking comment.

It took 16 months after the teen's 2024 report for the FBI to arrest Gardner, who made an initial court appearance in Des Moines on Friday on a charge of producing visual depictions of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct, which can carry up to 30 years in prison. A public defender assigned to represent him didn't return AP messages seeking comment.

It's unclear why the case took so long to investigate and also when the FBI, which had to pay \$138 million to Nassar's victims for botching that investigation, got involved in the case.

Among evidence seized by investigators in late May were a cellphone, laptop and a desktop computer along with handwritten notes between Gardner and his former pupils, according to the sealed court documents.

They found images of girls, approximately 6 to 14 years in age, who were nude, using the toilet or changing into leotards, those documents show. Those images appear to have come from a hidden camera in a restroom.

They also uncovered 50 video files and 400 photos, including some that appeared to be child pornography, according to the FBI affidavit. One video allegedly shows Gardner entering the bathroom and turning off the camera.

Investigators also found images of an adult woman secretly filmed entering and exiting a bathtub, and identified her as Gardner's ex-girlfriend. That woman as well as the gym's owner, Candi Workman, told

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investigators the images appeared to come from Jump'In Gymnastics' facility in Purvis, Mississippi, which has since been closed.

SafeSport's power has limits

SafeSport has long touted that it can deliver sanctions in cases where criminal charges are not pursued as key to its mission. However, Gardner's ability to land a job in health care illustrates the limits of that power: It can ban people from sports but that sanction is not guaranteed to reach the general public.

While not commenting about Gardner's case directly, it said in a statement provided to AP that a number of issues factor into why cases can take so long to close, including the 8,000 reports it receives a year with only around 30 full-time investigators. It has revamped some procedures, it said, in an attempt to become more efficient.

"While the Center is able and often does cooperate in law enforcement investigations," it said, "law enforcement is not required to share information, updates, or even confirm an investigation is ongoing."

USA Gymnastics President Li Li Leung called the center's task "really tough, difficult to navigate."

"I would like to see more consistency with their outcomes and sanctions," Leung said. "I would like to see more standardization on things. I would like to see more communication, more transparency from their side."

A case that lingers, even after the SafeSport ban

As the investigation proceeded, Gardner said on his Facebook page he had landed a new job in May 2024 as a surgical technologist at MercyOne West Des Moines Medical Center. It's a role that calls for positioning patients on the operating room table, and assisting with procedures and post-surgery care.

Asked about Gardner's employment, hospital spokesman Todd Mizener told the AP: "The only information I can provide is that he is no longer" at the hospital.

Meanwhile, the case lingers, leaving lives in limbo more than three years after the SafeSport Center and police first learned of it.

"SafeSport is now part of a larger problem rather than a solution, if it was ever a solution," said attorney Silvey. "The most fundamental professional task such as coordination with local or federal law enforcement gets botched on a daily basis, hundreds of times a year now."

A record 383 aid workers were killed in global hotspots in 2024, nearly half in Gaza, UN says

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A record 383 aid workers were killed in global hotspots in 2024, nearly half of them in Gaza during the war between Israel and Hamas, the U.N. humanitarian office said Tuesday on the annual day honoring the thousands of people who step into crises to help others.

U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said the record number of killings must be a wake-up call to protect civilians caught in conflict and all those trying to help them.

"Attacks on this scale, with zero accountability, are a shameful indictment of international inaction and apathy," Fletcher said in a statement on World Humanitarian Day. "As the humanitarian community, we demand — again — that those with power and influence act for humanity, protect civilians and aid workers and hold perpetrators to account."

The Aid Worker Security Database, which has compiled reports since 1997, said the number of killings rose from 293 in 2023 to 383 in 2024, including over 180 in Gaza.

Most of the aid workers killed were national staff serving their communities who were attacked while on the job or in their homes, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA.

So far this year, the figures show no sign of a reversal of the upward trend, OCHA said.

There were 599 major attacks affecting aid workers last year, a sharp increase from the 420 in 2023, the database's figures show. The attacks in 2024 also wounded 308 aid workers and saw 125 kidnapped

and 45 detained.

There have been 245 major attacks in the past seven plus months, and 265 aid workers have been killed, according to the database.

One of the deadliest and most horrifying attacks this year took place in the southern Gaza city of Rafah when Israeli troops opened fire before dawn on March 23, killing 15 medics and emergency responders in clearly marked vehicles. Troops bulldozed over the bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. U.N. and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later.

"Even one attack against a humanitarian colleague is an attack on all of us and on the people we serve," the U.N.'s Fletcher said. "Violence against aid workers is not inevitable. It must end."

According to the database, violence against aid workers increased in 21 countries in 2024 compared with the previous year, with government forces and affiliates the most common perpetrators.

The highest number of major attacks last year were in the Palestinian territories with 194, followed by Sudan with 64, South Sudan with 47, Nigeria with 31 and Congo with 27, the database reported.

As for killings, Sudan, where civil war is still raging, was second to Gaza and the West Bank with 60 aid workers losing their lives in 2024. That was more than double the 25 aid worker deaths in 2023.

Lebanon, where Israel and Hezbollah militants fought a war last year, saw 20 aid workers killed compared with none in 2023. Ethiopia and Syria each had 14 killings, about double the number in 2023, and Ukraine had 13 aid workers killed in 2024, up from 6 in 2023, according to the database.

Menendez brothers to be evaluated by parole board for release after 30 years in prison

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Menendez brothers are set to make their cases for parole starting Thursday, marking the closest they've been to winning freedom from prison since their convictions almost 30 years ago for murdering their parents.

Erik and Lyle Menendez were sentenced in 1996 to life in prison for fatally shooting their father, Jose Menendez, and mother, Kitty Menendez, in their Beverly Hills mansion in 1989. They were 18 and 21 at the time. While defense attorneys argued the brothers acted out of self-defense after years of sexual abuse by their father, prosecutors said the brothers killed their parents for a multimillion-dollar inheritance.

The brothers became eligible for parole after a Los Angeles judge in May reduced their sentences from life in prison without the possibility of parole to 50 years to life, making them immediately eligible for parole under California law because they were under the ages of 26 when they committed their crimes.

A panel of two or three parole hearing officers from a board of commissioners appointed by the governor will evaluate the brothers individually. Erik Menendez will have his hearing Thursday morning, followed by Lyle Menendez on Friday, over videoconference from the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego.

The board will assess whether the brothers pose an "unreasonable risk of danger to society" if released, considering factors like criminal history, motivation for the crime and signs of remorse, behavior while in prison and plans for the future, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Even if the board grants their parole, it could still be months before the brothers walk free — if at all. If the board grants each brother's parole, the chief legal counsel has 120 days to review the case. Then Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom has 30 days to affirm or deny the parole. Only then, if Newsom affirms the parole, would the Menendez brothers be able to leave prison.

Newsom had previously ordered the state parole board to conduct a risk assessment of the brothers in response to a clemency request. At the time, he emphasized that the key question was whether the brothers posed an "unreasonable risk to public safety."

He noted at a May news conference that he has both approved and rejected decisions by the parole board before and that he was the "ultimate arbiter."

The brothers' lawyer, Mark Geragos, sought release last month for Erik Menendez after he was hospital-

ized for a "serious medical condition." He has since returned to prison.

The case has captured the attention of true crime enthusiasts for decades and spawned documentaries, television specials and dramatizations. The Netflix drama "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" and the documentary "The Menendez Brothers," both released in 2024, have been credited for bringing new attention to the brothers.

In the last year, weigh-in from celebrities such as Kim Kardashian and a greater recognition of the brothers as victims of sexual abuse has helped amass a legion of supporters who have called for their release. Some have flown to Los Angeles over the past few months, holding rallies and attending court hearings as the brothers' attorneys pushed for their resentencing.

The previous LA County district attorney, George Gascón, first opened the door to possible freedom for the brothers last fall by asking a judge to reduce their sentences. Since their conviction, the brothers have gotten an education, participated in self-help classes and started various support groups for fellow people in prison, his office said in a petition.

The judge's decision to ultimately resentence the brothers followed months of pushback from current prosecutors, who argued the brothers hadn't taken adequate responsibility for their crimes.

The Menendez brothers still have a pending habeas corpus petition filed in May 2023 seeking a review of their convictions based on new evidence supporting their claims of sexual abuse by their father. Last month, a different judge ordered Los Angeles prosecutors to explain why their case shouldn't be reexamined.

The state corrections department has selected one media representative to view the proceedings virtually and share notes with the rest of the press at set intervals.

Hurricane Erin forces evacuations on North Carolina's Outer Banks but expected to stay offshore

By BEN FINLEY and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

Hurricane Erin forced tourists to cut their vacations short on North Carolina's Outer Banks even though the monster storm is expected to stay offshore after lashing part of the Caribbean with rain and wind on Monday.

Evacuations were ordered on some barrier islands along the Carolina coast as authorities warned the storm could churn up dangerous rip currents and swamp roads with waves of 15 feet (4.6 meters). Tropical storm and surge watches were issued Monday for much of the Outer Banks.

Officials at the Wrightsville Beach, near Wilmington, North Carolina, reported to the National Weather Service rescuing at least 60 swimmers from rip currents on Monday.

Tourists and residents waited for hours in a line of cars at Ocracoke Island's ferry dock — the only way to leave other than by plane.

"We definitely thought twice," said Seth Brotherton, of Catfish, North Carolina, whose weeklong fishing trip ended after two days. "But they said 'mandatory' and that pretty much means, 'get out of here.'"

Forecasters are confident Erin will curl north and away from the eastern U.S., but it's still expected to whip up wild waves and tropical force winds along the coastal islands, Dave Roberts of the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said.

The storm intensified to a Category 4 with 140 mph (225 kph) maximum sustained winds Monday while pelting the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the southeast Bahamas, according to the center. By Monday night, sustained winds had dropped some to 125 mph (200 kph) with Erin about 690 miles (1,110 kilometers) southwest of Bermuda and about 780 miles (1,255 kilometers) southeast of Cape Hatteras.

Government officials in the Turks and Caicos Islands said all services were suspended on three of its islands and ordered residents there to stay home. Some ports also closed.

On North Carolina's Outer Banks, coastal flooding was expected to begin Tuesday and continue through Thursday.

The evacuations that began Monday on Hatteras Island and Ocracoke came at the height of tourist

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season on the thin stretch of low-lying barrier islands that jut into the Atlantic Ocean and are increasingly vulnerable to storm surges.

A year ago, Hurricane Ernesto stayed hundreds of miles offshore yet still produced high surf and swells that caused coastal damage.

This time there are concerns that several days of heavy surf, high winds and waves could wash out parts of the main highway, the National Weather Service said. Some routes could be impassible for several days, authorities warned.

This is the first time Ocracoke has been evacuated since Hurricane Dorian struck in 2019, leaving behind the most damage in the island's recorded history.

Tommy Hutcherson, who owns the community's only grocery store, said the island has mostly bounced back. He's optimistic this storm won't be as destructive. "But you just never know. I felt the same way about Dorian and we really got smacked," he said.

Scientists have linked the rapid intensification of hurricanes in the Atlantic to climate change. Global warming is causing the atmosphere to hold more water vapor and is spiking ocean temperatures, and warmer waters give hurricanes fuel to unleash more rain and strengthen more quickly.

Daniel Pullen, a professional photographer who lives on Hatteras Island, said he's already lost three days of work shooting family portraits because of the evacuation order.

Pullen doesn't plan to evacuate, fearing he could be stuck off the island for days and even weeks if the main Highway 12 washes out.

"It's a bit like Russian roulette," Pullen said. "Do you stay and take the chance of it hitting you? Or do you leave and take the chance of getting stuck off the island for weeks at a time? I would say the majority of Hatteras Island residents can't afford to stay in a motel for a week or two weeks."

Erin, the year's first Atlantic hurricane, reached a dangerous Category 5 status Saturday with 160 mph (260 kph) winds before weakening. It is expected to remain a large hurricane into midweek.

"You're dealing with a major hurricane. The intensity is fluctuating. It's a dangerous hurricane in any event," the hurricane center's Richard Pasch said.

Bermuda will experience the most severe threat Thursday evening, said Phil Rogers, director of the Bermuda Weather Service. By then, waters could swell up to 24 feet (7.3 meters).

"Surfers, swimmers and boaters must resist the temptation to go out. The waters will be very dangerous and lives will be placed at risk," acting Minister of National Security Jache Adams said.

Erin's outer edges hit parts of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands with heavy rains and tropical storm winds Sunday, knocking out power to thousands.

Trump vows to change how elections are run. The US Constitution doesn't give him that power

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

President Donald Trump on Monday vowed more changes to the way elections are conducted in the U.S., but based on the Constitution there is little to nothing he can do on his own.

Relying on false information and conspiracy theories that he's regularly used to explain away his 2020 election loss, Trump pledged on his social media site that he would do away with both mail voting — which remains popular and is used by about one-third of all voters — and voting machines — some form of which are used in almost all of the country's thousands of election jurisdictions. These are the same systems that enabled Trump to win the 2024 election and Republicans to gain control of Congress.

Trump's post marks an escalation even in his normally overheated election rhetoric. He issued a wide-ranging executive order earlier this year that, among other changes, would have required documented proof-of-citizenship before registering to vote. His Monday post promised another election executive order to "help bring HONESTY to the 2026 Midterm elections."

The same post also pushed falsehoods about voting. He claimed the U.S. is the only country to use

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mail voting, when it's actually used by dozens, including Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Similar complaints to Trump's, when aired on conservative and conservative-leaning networks such as Newsmax and Fox News, have led to multimillion dollar defamation settlements, including one announced Monday, because they are full of false information and the outlets have not been able to present any evidence to support them.

Trump's post came after the president told Fox News that Russian President Vladimir Putin, in their Friday meeting in Alaska, echoed his grievances about mail voting and the 2020 election. Trump continued his attack on mail voting and voting machines in the Oval Office on Monday, during a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The announcement signals yet another way that Trump intends to stack the cards in his favor in the 2026 midterm elections, after he already has directed his attorney general to investigate a Democratic fundraising platform and urged states to redraw their congressional districts to help the GOP maintain its majority in the House of Representatives.

Here's a breakdown of Trump's latest election post and why Congress is the one entity that can implement national election rules.

Trump's post

Trump for years has promoted false information about voting, and Monday was no exception.

He claimed there is "MASSIVE FRAUD" due to mail voting, when in fact voting fraud in the U.S. is rare. As an example, an Associated Press review after the 2020 election found fewer than 475 cases of potential fraud in the six battleground states where he disputed his loss, far too few to tip that election to Trump.

Washington and Oregon, which conduct elections entirely by mail, have sued to challenge Trump's earlier executive order — which sought to require that all ballots must be received by Election Day and not just postmarked by then. The states argue that the president has no such authority, and they are seeking a declaration from a federal judge in Seattle that their postmark deadlines do not conflict with federal law setting the date of U.S. elections.

Trump also alleged that voting machines are more expensive than "Watermark Paper." That's a little-used system that has gained favor and investments among some voting conspiracy theorists who believe it would help prevent fraudulent ballots from being introduced into the vote count. Watermarks would not provide a way to count ballots, so they would not on their own replace vote tabulating machines.

While some jurisdictions still have voters use electronic ballot-marking devices to cast their votes, the vast majority of voters in the U.S. already vote on paper ballots, creating an auditable record of votes that provides an extra safeguard for election security.

In his post, Trump also claimed that states "are merely an 'agent' for the Federal Government in counting and tabulating the votes" and must do what the federal government "as represented by the President of the United States" tells them to do.

Election lawyers said that's a misrepresentation of the U.S. Constitution. It also flies in the face of what had been a core Republican Party value of prioritizing states' rights.

Thousands of elections, none under presidential control

Unlike in most countries, elections in the U.S. are run by the states. But it gets more complicated — each state then allows smaller jurisdictions, such as counties, cities or townships, to run their own elections. Election officials estimate there are as many as 10,000 different election jurisdictions across the country.

A frequent complaint of Trump and other election conspiracy theorists is that the U.S. doesn't run its election like France, which hand counts presidential ballots and usually has a national result on election night. But that's because France is only running that single election, and every jurisdiction has the same ballot with no other races.

A ballot in the U.S. might contain dozens of races, from president on down to city council and including state and local ballot measures.

The Constitution makes the states the entities that determine the "time, place and manner" of elections, but does allow Congress to "make" or "alter" rules for federal elections.

Congress can change the way states run congressional and presidential elections but has no say in the

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way a state runs its own elections. The president is not mentioned at all in the Constitution's list of entities with powers over elections.

"The president has very limited to zero authority over things related to the conduct of elections," said Rick Hasen, an election law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Courts have agreed — no presidential involvement

Parts of Trump's earlier executive order on elections were swiftly blocked by the courts, on the grounds that Congress, and not the president, sets federal election rules.

It's unclear what Trump plans to do now, but the only path to change federal election rules is through Congress.

Although Republicans control Congress, it's unclear that even his party would want to eliminate voting machines nationwide, possibly delaying vote tallies in their own races by weeks or months. Even if they did, legislation would likely be unable to pass because Democrats could filibuster it in the U.S. Senate.

Mail voting had bipartisan support before Trump turned against it during the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 election, but it's still widely used in Republican-leaning states, including several he won last November — Arizona, Florida and Utah. It's also how members of the military stationed overseas cast their ballots, and fully eliminating it would disenfranchise those GOP-leaning voters.

The main significance of Trump's Monday statement is that it signals his continuing obsession with trying to change how elections are run.

"These kinds of claims could provide a kind of excuse for him to try to meddle," Hasen said. "Very concerned about that."

Justice Department to begin giving Congress files from Jeffrey Epstein investigation, lawmaker says

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has agreed to provide to Congress documents from the Jeffrey Epstein sex trafficking investigation, a key House lawmaker said Monday in announcing a move that appears to avert, at least temporarily, a potential separation of powers clash.

The records are to be turned over starting Friday to the House Oversight Committee, which earlier this month issued a broad subpoena to the Justice Department about a criminal case that has long captivated public attention, recently roiled the top rungs of President Donald Trump's administration and been a consistent magnet for conspiracy theories.

"There are many records in DOJ's custody, and it will take the Department time to produce all the records and ensure the identification of victims and any child sexual abuse material are redacted," Kentucky Rep. James Comer, the Republican committee chair, said in a statement. "I appreciate the Trump Administration's commitment to transparency and efforts to provide the American people with information about this matter."

A wealthy and well-connected financier, Epstein was found dead in his New York jail cell weeks after his 2019 arrest in what investigators ruled a suicide. His former girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell, was convicted in 2021 of helping lure teenage girls to be sexually abused by Epstein and is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

The House committee's subpoena sought all documents and communications from the case files of Epstein and Maxwell. It also demanded records about communications between Democratic President Joe Biden's administration and the Justice Department regarding Epstein, as well as documents related to an earlier federal investigation into Epstein in Florida that resulted in a non-prosecution agreement.

It was not clear exactly which or how many documents might be produced or whether the cooperation with Congress reflected a broader change in posture since last month, when the FBI and Justice Department abruptly announced that they would not be releasing any additional records from the Epstein investigation after determining that no "further disclosure would be appropriate or warranted."

That announcement put the Trump administration on the defensive, with officials since then scrambling both to tamp down angry questions from the president's base and also laboring to appear transparent.

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Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche interviewed Maxwell at a Florida courthouse over two days last month — though no records from those conversations have been made public — and the Justice Department has also sought to unseal grand jury transcripts in the Epstein and Maxwell cases, though so far those requests have been denied.

A Justice Department spokesperson declined to comment Monday.

The House Oversight panel separately issued subpoenas to eight former law enforcement leaders as well as former Democratic President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Bill Clinton was among a number of luminaries acquainted with Epstein before the criminal investigation against him in Florida became public two decades ago. Clinton has never been accused of wrongdoing by any of the women who say Epstein abused them.

What to know about Bolivia's election that elevated a centrist shaking up the political landscape

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — One candidate is Rodrigo Paz, a conservative centrist senator and son of a neo-liberal ex-president who is pitching himself as a moderate reformer.

The other is former right-wing president Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, galvanizing voters through promises of harsh austerity and a scorched-earth approach to transforming Bolivia's state-directed economic model after 20 years of leftist dominance.

At stake in the outcome of Bolivia's consequential presidential election is the fate of one of South America's most resource-rich nations, where inflation has soared to heights unseen in decades and polls show growing distrust in major institutions.

"There has been a paradigm shift," said Bolivian sociologist Renzo Abruzzese. "What is truly historic is that the old cycle is over. It has carried away classical leftist thinking that dominated much of the 20th century."

The shadow of unrest among the fervent supporters of charismatic ex-President Evo Morales, founder of Bolivia's long-dominant Movement Toward Socialism party, or MAS, hangs over the next weeks of campaigning until the men face off in an unprecedented runoff on Oct. 19.

Front-runner Rodrigo Paz surprises

Screenshots of the Wikipedia entry for Paz's past political allegiances elicited waggish mockery on Bolivian social media about the fluid ideology of this former mayor and governor.

Paz began his political career in the Revolutionary Left Movement of his father, former President Jaime Paz Zamora. His movement emerged as a radical Marxist-inspired party and suffered brutal repression under Bolivia's 1964-1982 military dictatorship. Paz was born in exile in Spain.

But his father pivoted right as a pact with former dictator Hugo Bánzer vaulted him to the presidency in 1989.

The younger Paz rose through the political ranks over the past two decades in opposition to Morales' platform of generous subsidies and hefty public investment.

He joined Quiroga's right-wing party before gradually edging toward Bolivia's technocratic center.

Analysts say his enigmatic pragmatism served Paz in Sunday's election, as it did his father before him.

"Voters don't want hard right or hard left. They want things to function," said Veronica Rocha, a Bolivian political analyst. "Ambivalence is a political asset right now."

Even his supporters aren't sure how to describe his ideology.

"I don't care about politics, I'm sick of it, I just support the candidate who I think will steal the least," Emma Gesea Mamani, 57, said from her kiosk, selling snacks to hungry truckers wasting their days in lines for diesel as a result of Bolivia's crippling fuel shortages.

Jorge 'Tuto' Quiroga promises spending cuts

A former vice president, Quiroga briefly held the presidency after then-President and ex-dictator Bánzer retired for health reasons in 2001.

Fluent in English and educated at Texas A&M University, Quiroga has fashioned himself into a pro-

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business modernizer vowing to save Bolivia from what he calls “20 lost years” under the MAS party. He pledges drastic spending cuts, a bailout from the International Monetary Fund and fire sales of Bolivia’s inefficient state-run firms.

After years of Bolivia’s foreign policy alignment with China and Russia, Quiroga vows to restore relations with the United States and claims to be close with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

“For years we lived in a time of darkness and lack of opportunities like Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua,” said 60-year-old engineer Jimmy Copa Vargas. “With Tuto’s government, we’ll open ourselves to the world.”

Quiroga has run for president three times before, losing twice to Morales. Now 65, he hopes the fourth time’s the charm.

To attract young voters, Quiroga staged flashy concerts and named a wealthy young entrepreneur as his vice president.

He appears in campaign posters wearing a stern expression, tailored suit and Apple Watch and often peppers his speeches with wonky macroeconomic data, fueling the perception among some Bolivians that he’s out of touch with the rural poor in this majority-Indigenous nation.

“I can’t trust that he’s not going to be the first one out on a lifeboat when Bolivia starts sinking,” said Luis Quispe, a 38-year-old taxi driver.

Paz’s unusual campaign — and running mate

Paz went from polling near the bottom of the eight-candidate field to commanding over 32% of the vote on Sunday, stunning the country.

He and his popular running mate, former police captain Edman Lara, crisscrossed Bolivian cities holding modest rallies filled with cheap beer and grilled meat, often recording videos to post on TikTok.

Despite undergoing emergency knee surgery earlier in the year, Paz hit dozens of stops in the traditional bastions of Morales’ party, engaging with voters at once desperate for change but wary of a dramatic lurch to the right.

He has rejected an IMF bailout and proposed “capitalism for all,” touting accessible loans to boost young entrepreneurs and tax breaks to stimulate the formal economy.

“Rodrigo stands in the center, a refreshed version of social democracy,” said Bolivian analyst and former lawmaker Carlos Borth. “Meanwhile, Tuto has been marked as the radical right. That contrast matters.”

Many see Paz’s running mate, ex-police captain Lara, known here as El Capitán, as the driving force behind his win.

After 15 years in the police force, Lara in 2023 gained national prominence by posting tales of police corruption to his followers on TikTok and Instagram. His videos went viral, becoming must-see dispatches for disgruntled Bolivians and social media-savvy youth who tuned in regularly to watch him talk to the camera.

He faced disciplinary measures over the exposés and was fired from the force, solidifying his status as something of a folk hero. After his dismissal, he struggled to scrape by selling secondhand clothing. His wife drove for a ride-hailing app.

That has resonated with many workers in Bolivia’s vast informal economy who have watched politicians enrich themselves while their own finances collapse and the country’s economy spirals.

The election may not mean the end for Evo Morales

Sunday’s presidential election was the first since 2002 without Morales or a stand-in on the ballot.

Yet the outcome confirmed the maverick ex-union leader’s enduring influence. He transformed Bolivia over three straight terms marked by economic prosperity and political stability until his 2019 disputed reelection and subsequent ouster.

Disqualified from the race by a court ruling on term limits, Morales called on his followers to spoil their ballots against what he deemed an illegitimate election.

He campaigned hard for null votes nationwide, often attacking his leftist rivals — Eduardo Del Castillo, nominated by the unpopular President Luis Arce, and Senate leader Andónico Rodríguez, a former protégé and coca farming union activist — more than the right-wing opposition.

While Sunday’s elections swept aside the MAS party’s splintered factions, the null-and-void vote captured third place.

Spoiled ballots appealed to nostalgic Morales supporters who fault Arce for Bolivia's economic collapse and to voters disillusioned by politicians across the spectrum who they say are more focused more on their own power games than on the people they are supposed to serve.

"Those who say Evo Morales is finished are mistaken," Abruzzese said. "Morales and MAS won't just disappear."

Trump begins planning for Putin-Zelenskyy meeting while affirming US help with security guarantees

By SYLVIE CORBET, SAMYA KULLAB and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday he's begun arrangements for a face-to-face meeting between Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss a pathway to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while affirming that the U.S. would back European security guarantees aimed at preventing Moscow from reinvading its neighbor once the current conflict ends.

Details of the security guarantees and Trump's efforts to arrange peace talks were still evolving as an extended meeting among Trump, Zelenskyy and other European leaders wrapped up at the White House.

But as they emerged from their talks, the leaders expressed guarded optimism that Trump could be finding momentum in his quest to fulfill his campaign promise of ending the grinding war.

The "most important" outcome of the meeting was the "U.S. commitment to work with us on providing security guarantees," French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters.

Trump said he would forge ahead with arrangements for a meeting between Zelenskyy and Putin. He spoke by phone with Putin during Monday's talks with Zelenskyy and the leaders of Britain, Finland, France, Germany and Italy as well as the president of the European Commission and head of NATO.

The developments come amid a significant measure of trepidation on the continent that Trump is pressing Ukraine to make concessions that will only further embolden Putin after the U.S. leader hosted the Russian president for an Alaska summit last week.

"I called President Putin, and began the arrangements for a meeting, at a location to be determined, between President Putin and President Zelenskyy," Trump said in a social media post. "After that meeting takes place, we will have a Trilat, which would be the two Presidents, plus myself. Again, this was a very good, early step for a War that has been going on for almost four years."

It was not clear if Putin has fully signed on to such talks.

Russia state news agency Tass cited Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov saying Putin and Trump "spoke in favor" of continuing direct talks between the Russian and Ukrainian delegations. Ushakov said they also discussed "the idea of raising the level of the direct Russian-Ukrainian negotiations."

Zelenskyy told reporters following the White House meeting that if Russia does "not demonstrate a will to meet, then we will ask the United States to act accordingly."

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said in an appearance on Fox News that "if Russia is not playing ball" on direct talks with Ukraine, "the United States plus Europe will do more when it comes to tariffs and sanctions" on Moscow.

Zelenskyy previously had said he wanted Russia to agree to a ceasefire before any meeting between himself and Putin, but he said Monday that if the Ukrainians started setting conditions, the Russians would do the same.

"That's why I believe that we must meet without any conditions, and think about what development there can be of this path to the end of war," Zelenskyy said.

Earlier, Trump said during talks with Zelenskyy and the European leaders that a potential ceasefire and who gets Ukrainian territory seized by Russia should be hashed out during a face-to-face meeting between the warring countries' two leaders.

"We're going to let the president go over and talk to the president and we'll see how that works out," Trump said.

That was a shift from comments Trump made soon after meeting Putin last week in which he appeared

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to tilt toward Putin's demands that Ukraine make concessions over land seized by Russia, which now controls roughly one-fifth of Ukrainian territory.

Questions about US and NATO involvement

Trump stopped short of committing U.S. troops to a collective effort to bolster Ukraine's security. He said instead that there would be a "NATO-like" security presence and that all those details would be hashed out with EU leaders.

Zelenskyy said deep U.S. involvement in the emerging security guarantees is crucial.

"It is important that the United States make a clear signal, namely that they will be among the countries that will help to coordinate and also will participate in security guarantees for Ukraine," Zelenskyy said.

Speaking Monday before the White House meetings took place, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova rejected the idea of a possible NATO peacekeeping force in Ukraine. She said such a scenario could lead to further escalation and "unpredictable consequences."

Trump's engagement with Zelenskyy had a strikingly different feel to their last Oval Office meeting in February. It was a disastrous moment that led to Trump abruptly ending talks with the Ukrainian delegation, and temporarily pausing some aid for Kyiv, after he and Vice President JD Vance complained that Zelenskyy had shown insufficient gratitude for U.S. military assistance.

At the start of Monday's meeting, Zelenskyy presented a letter from his wife, Olena Zelenska, for Trump's wife, Melania.

Zelenskyy faced criticism during his February meeting from a conservative journalist for appearing in the Oval Office in a long-sleeve T-shirt. This time he appeared in a dark jacket and buttoned shirt. Zelenskyy has said his typically less formal attire since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 is to show solidarity with Ukrainian soldiers.

European leaders arrived in Washington looking to safeguard Ukraine and the continent from any widening aggression from Moscow.

Ahead of Monday's meeting, Trump suggested that Ukraine could not regain Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, setting off an armed conflict that led to its broader 2022 invasion.

Zelenskyy in his own post late Sunday, responded, "We all share a strong desire to end this war quickly and reliably." He said "peace must be lasting," not as it was after Russia seized Crimea and part of the Donbas in eastern Ukraine eight years ago and "Putin simply used it as a springboard for a new attack."

European heavyweights in Washington

European leaders suggested forging a temporary ceasefire is not off the table. Following his meeting with Putin on Friday, Trump dropped his demand for an immediate ceasefire and said he would look to secure a final peace settlement between Russia and Ukraine — a sudden shift to a position favored by Putin.

German and French leaders on Monday praised Trump for opening a path to peace, but they urged the U.S. president to push Russia for an immediate ceasefire.

"I would like to see a ceasefire from the next meeting, which should be a trilateral meeting," said German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

Trump, for his part, reiterated that a broader, war-ending peace agreement between the two countries is "very attainable," but "all of us would obviously prefer the immediate ceasefire while we work on a lasting peace."

Democrats get police escorts to prevent a new redistricting walkout as California moves to retaliate

By BILL BARROW, TRAN NGUYEN, FERNANDA FIGUEROA and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Democrats who ended a walkout Monday found themselves shadowed by law enforcement officers to keep them from repeating the protest that stalled Republican efforts to redraw congressional districts and fulfill President Donald Trump's desire to reshape U.S. House maps.

Republicans in the Texas House forced returning Democrats to sign what the Democrats called "permis-

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sion slips," agreeing to around-the-clock surveillance by state Department of Public Safety officers to leave the floor. However, Democratic Rep. Nicole Collier, of Fort Worth, refused and remained on the House floor Monday night.

The Democrats' return to Texas puts the Republican-run Legislature in position to satisfy Trump's demands, possibly later this week, as California Democrats advance new congressional boundaries in retaliation.

Lawmakers had officers posted outside their Capitol offices, and suburban Dallas Rep. Mihaela Plesa said one tailed her on her Monday evening drive back to her apartment in Austin after spending much of the day on a couch in her office. She said he went with her for a staff lunch and even down the hallway with her for restroom breaks.

"We were kind of laughing about it, to be honest, but this is really serious stuff," Plesa said in a telephone interview. "This is a waste of taxpayer dollars and really performative theater."

Collier, who represents a minority-majority district, said she would not "sign away my dignity" and allow Republicans to "control my movements and monitor me."

"I know these maps will harm my constituents," she said in a statement. "I won't just go along quietly with their intimidation or their discrimination."

2 states at the center of an expanding fight

The tit-for-tat puts the nation's two most populous states at the center of an expanding fight over control of Congress ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. The battle has rallied Democrats nationally following infighting and frustrations among the party's voters since Republicans took total control of the federal government in January.

Dozens of Texas Democratic lawmakers left for Illinois and elsewhere on Aug. 3, denying their Republican colleagues the attendance necessary to vote on redrawn maps intended to send five more Texas Republicans to Washington. Republicans now hold 25 of Texas' 38 U.S. House seats.

They declared victory Friday, pointing to California's proposal intended to increase Democrats' U.S. House advantage by five seats. Many absent Democrats left Chicago early Monday and landed hours later at a private airfield in Austin, where several boarded a charter bus to the Capitol. Cheering supporters greeted them inside.

Republican House Speaker Dustin Burrows did not mention redistricting on the floor but promised swift action on the Legislature's agenda.

"We aren't playing around," Republican state Rep. Matt Shaheen, whose district includes part of the Dallas area, said in a post on the X social media platform.

Democrats promise to keep fighting

Even as they declared victory, Democrats acknowledged Republicans can now approve redrawn districts. Texas House Minority Leader Gene Wu said Democrats would challenge the new designs in court.

Lawmakers did not take up any bills Monday and were not scheduled to return until Wednesday.

Trump has pressured other Republican-run states to consider redistricting, as well, while Democratic governors in multiple statehouses have indicated they would follow California's lead in response. Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom has said his state will hold a Nov. 4 special referendum on the redrawn districts.

The president wants to shore up Republicans' narrow House majority and avoid a repeat of the midterms during his first presidency. After gaining House control in 2018, Democrats used their majority to stymie his agenda and twice impeach him.

Nationally, the partisan makeup of existing district lines puts Democrats within three seats of a majority. Of the 435 total House seats, only several dozen districts are competitive. So even slight changes in a few states could affect which party wins control.

Redistricting typically occurs once at the beginning of each decade after the census. Many states, including Texas, give legislators the power to draw maps. California is among those that empower independent commissions, giving Newsom an additional hurdle.

California Democrats start redrawing process

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Democratic legislators introduced new California maps Monday. It was the first official move toward the fall referendum asking voters to override the independent commission's work after the 2020 census. The proposed boundaries would replace current ones through 2030. Democrats said they will return the mapmaking power to the commission after that.

State Republicans promised lawsuits.

Democrats hold 43 out of California's 52 U.S. House seats. The proposal would try to expand that advantage by targeting battleground districts in Northern California, San Diego and Orange counties, and the Central Valley. Some Democratic incumbents also get more left-leaning voters in their districts.

"We don't want this fight, but with our democracy on the line, we cannot run away from this fight," said Democrat Marc Berman, a California Assembly member who previously chaired the elections committee.

Republicans expressed opposition in terms that echoed Democrats in Austin, accusing the majority of abusing power. Sacramento Republicans said they will introduce legislation advocating independent redistricting commissions in all states.

Texas' governor jumped to the president's aid

Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott launched the expanding battle when he heeded Trump's wishes and added redistricting to an initial special session agenda that included multiple issues, including a package responding to devastating floods that killed more than 130 people last month.

Abbott has blamed Democrats' absence for delaying action on those measures. Democrats have answered that Abbott is responsible because he effectively linked the hyper-partisan matter to nonpartisan flood relief.

Abbott, Burrows and other Republicans tried various threats and legal maneuvers to pressure Democrats' return, including the governor arguing that Texas judges should remove absent lawmakers from office.

As long as they were out of state, lawmakers were beyond the reach of the civil arrest warrants that Burrows issued. The Democrats who returned Monday did so without being detained by law enforcement.

The lawmakers who left face fines of up to \$500 for each legislative day they missed. Burrows has insisted Democratic lawmakers also will pay pick up the tab for law enforcement who attempted to corral them during the walkout.

What to know about powerful Hurricane Erin as it heads past the US East Coast

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press/Report For America

Island communities off the coast of North Carolina are bracing for flooding ahead of the year's first Atlantic hurricane, Hurricane Erin.

Although forecasters are confident that the storm won't make direct landfall in the United States, authorities on a few islands along North Carolina's Outer Banks issued evacuation orders and warned that some roads could be swamped by waves of 15 feet (4.6 meters).

By Monday night the storm's top sustained winds had dropped to 130 mph (210 kph) but it's still a major, dangerous hurricane.

Tropical storm warnings were in effect for the southeast Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Here is what to know about Hurricane Erin.

Storm surge, high winds expected along North Carolina's coast

Forecasters say Erin will turn northeast — and away — from the eastern U.S. Still, the storm is expected to bring tropical storm force winds, dangerous waves and rip currents to North Carolina's coast. That is according to Dave Roberts of the National Hurricane Center. Coastal flooding in North Carolina is expected to begin Tuesday.

Evacuations were being ordered on Hatteras Island and Ocracoke Island along North Carolina's Outer Banks even though the storm is unlikely to make direct landfall. Authorities warned that some roads could be swamped by waves of 15 feet (4.6 meters).

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The orders come at the height of tourist season on the thin stretch of low-lying barrier islands that juts far into the Atlantic Ocean.

There are concerns that several days of heavy surf, high winds and waves could wash out parts of the main highway running along the barrier islands, the National Weather Service said. Some routes could be impassible for several days.

Portions of Highway 12 on Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands are most at risk for storm surge, National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said.

Erin's outer edges hit parts of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands with heavy rains and tropical-storm winds on Sunday, knocking out power for thousands.

Potentially devastating impacts

Storm surge is the level at which sea water rises above its normal level.

Much like the way a storm's sustained winds do not include the potential for even stronger gusts, storm surge doesn't include the wave height above the mean water level.

Surge is also the amount above what the normal tide is at a time, so a 15-foot storm surge at high tide can be far more devastating than the same surge at low tide.

Government officials in the Turks and Caicos Islands, which has a population of just over 46,000, said all services were suspended on three of its islands and ordered residents there to stay home.

The easternmost islands of the British territory have been most impacted by heavy rainfall and powerful winds.

Bermuda won't feel the full intensity of the storm until Thursday evening, acting Minister of National Security Jache Adams said, and services on the island were still "open for business" on Monday afternoon.

But Adams issued a stark warning that storm surge, which could reach up to 24 feet (7.3 meters) by Thursday, would make waters too dangerous to swim, surf or boat in.

A year ago, Hurricane Ernesto stayed hundreds of miles offshore from the U.S. Eastern seaboard yet still produced high surf and swells that caused coastal damage.

Fluctuating strength

Erin's strength has fluctuated significantly over the past week.

The most common way to measure a hurricane's strength is the Saffir-Simpson Scale that assigns a category from 1 to 5 based on a storm's sustained wind speed at its center, with 5 being the strongest.

Erin reached a dangerous Category 5 status Saturday with 160 mph (260 kph) winds before weakening. It is expected to remain a large, major hurricane into midweek.

"You're dealing with a major hurricane. The intensity is fluctuating. It's a dangerous hurricane in any event," the hurricane center's Richard Pasch said.

Lethal summer of floods

Although Erin is the first Atlantic hurricane of the year, there have been four tropical storms this hurricane season already. Tropical Storm Chantal made the first U.S. landfall of the season in early July, and its remnants caused flooding in North Carolina that killed an 83-year-old woman when her car was swept off a rural road.

And at least 132 people were killed in floodwaters that overwhelmed Texas Hill Country on the Fourth of July.

Just over a week later, flash floods inundated New York City and parts of New Jersey, claiming two lives.

Takeaways from Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy and Europeans: Praise, security talks, more meetings

By WILL WEISSERT and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — During their second meeting in the Oval Office this year, President Donald Trump said the U.S. would be willing to support European efforts to police any peace deal in Ukraine, while its leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his gratitude and wore dressier clothes.

And Vice President JD Vance kept his mouth shut.

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As Trump hosted Zelenskyy and top European leaders to energize months of stalled U.S.-led efforts to halt Russia's 3 1/2-year-old war, the tone and style of the sit-down was far different than when Ukraine's president was hounded out of the White House in February.

Following the talks, Trump called and spoke at length to Russian President Vladimir Putin who got the red carpet treatment at a summit with Trump last Friday in Alaska, to discuss the extraordinary gathering of allies. Trump said he would now work to arrange a meeting between Zelenskyy and Putin.

Here are key takeaways:

Trump says the US could back security guarantees for Ukraine

A central question for peace talks is how to prevent further Russian aggression in the future.

Trump has ruled out allowing Ukraine to join NATO, which would extend the military alliance's protection to the besieged country. He did, however, express support for security guarantees for Ukraine — though details remain vague.

European countries "want to give protection and they feel very strongly about it and we'll help them out with that," Trump said.

That pleased Zelenskyy, who said the U.S. was offering "such (a) strong signal."

With Europeans looking to set up a force that could backstop any peace agreement in Ukraine, Trump suggested that Putin would be open to accepting security guarantees. His special envoy, Steve Witkoff, said Sunday that Moscow was open to accepting NATO-style protections for Ukraine.

European leaders applauded that notion, and the larger meaning it would carry.

"When we speak about security guarantees, we speak about the whole security of the European continent," French President Emmanuel Macron said.

Macron said talks to determine what the U.S. is willing to provide will start as soon as Tuesday.

European leaders praise Trump but say tough work is still ahead

The Europeans came to show a united front on Ukraine, and many used public comments to heap praise on Trump. That was striking given tensions over Trump's threats to impose steep tariffs and other issues.

Ahead of their meeting, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte called Trump "dear Donald" and said of fighting in Ukraine: "If we play this well, we could end it." In an interview later with Fox News Channel, Rutte called Trump "amazing" and said potential swaps of Ukrainian territory weren't discussed.

"First, we need full clarity on security guidelines," Rutte said. Though Ukraine might not have NATO membership, he noted, there would be discussions for security guarantees similar to those extended to members of the alliance.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said after the meeting that there was "real progress" and a "real sense of unity."

Before the leaders spoke privately at the White House, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said all the parties were working together on "a just and lasting peace."

Offering a more measured tone was German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who said "the path is open now" to halting the fighting but next steps are "more complicated."

"Let's try to put pressure on Russia," Merz said, adding that he would like to see a ceasefire come together.

Trump was noncommittal, saying, "If we can do the ceasefire, great," but suggested it was far from a dealbreaker. He dropped his push for a ceasefire after Friday's summit, aligning with Putin's position that negotiations should focus on a long-term peace settlement instead.

The good feelings extended to Zelenskyy and Trump. After Ukraine's leader praised the "very good conversation" with Trump, the U.S. president responded, "Great remarks. I appreciated it."

Speaking to reporters Monday night, Merz said the Russian demand that Ukraine give up unconquered parts of its eastern Donbas region to end the fighting would be equivalent to the U.S. giving up Florida.

More formal attire — and a far different reception — for Zelenskyy

The meeting with Trump in the Oval Office on Monday was dramatically different than six months ago, when Trump and Vance harangued Zelenskyy for not being thankful enough for U.S. military support.

Trump even seemed to relish a reporter from a conservative outlet asking then why Zelenskyy wasn't

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wearing a suit at the White House.

Ukraine's leader came prepared this time, wearing a black shirt and blazer. The same reporter told Zelenskyy, "You look fabulous," and Trump responded, "I said the same thing."

Then Trump said to Zelenskyy: "That's the one that attacked you last time." The Ukrainian president said he remembered, then playfully needled his questioner.

"You are in the same suit," Zelenskyy said as laughter rippled through the room. "I changed. You did not."

Ukraine's president usually appears in a trademark hoodie or T-shirt — a show of solidarity with Ukrainian forces on the front lines.

Zelenskyy also expressed gratitude to the U.S. and European allies for supporting his country, and repeatedly thanked first lady Melania Trump for sending a letter to Putin about stopping the killing of children during the war.

In the Oval Office, Vance gave no public comments.

Next steps in the negotiations turn back to Putin

Trump, who bragged on numerous occasions during the campaign that he could settle Russia's war in Ukraine in a day, said repeatedly Monday that it was far more complicated than he ever thought it would be.

But he also suggested — likely implausibly — that the fighting that has raged for years could wind down quickly.

"A week or two weeks, we'll know whether we're going to solve this, or if this horrible fighting is going to continue," said Trump, even suggesting the issues yet to be hammered out weren't "overly complex."

Still, much remains unresolved, including red lines that are incompatible — like whether Ukraine will cede any land to Russia, the future of Ukraine's army and whether the country will ultimately have lasting and meaningful security guarantees.

Trump said he had begun arrangements for a face-to-face meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy. But Russian foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov said only that Putin and Trump had a 40-minute phone call and "spoke in favor" of continuing direct talks between the sides, Russian state news agency Tass reported.

Outside the White House, Zelenskyy said no date had been set for such a meeting but that the U.S. suggested it be as soon as possible.

"But for that, agreement of all sides is needed," he said. He added that the question of territory "is a matter that we will leave between me and Putin."

Though many European leaders oppose forgoing a possible ceasefire on the road to seeking lasting peace, they have supported a meeting by Trump, Zelenskyy and Putin in the meantime. Macron suggested that another summit could feature the three presidents and also top European leaders.

"The idea of trilateral meeting is very important, because this is the only way to fix it," the French president said.

'Ketamine Queen' accused of selling fatal dose to Matthew Perry agrees to plead guilty

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A woman known as the "Ketamine Queen," charged with selling Matthew Perry the drug that killed him, agreed to plead guilty Monday.

Jasveen Sangha becomes the fifth and final defendant charged in the overdose death of the "Friends" star to strike a plea agreement with federal prosecutors, avoiding a trial that had been planned for September.

She agreed in a signed statement filed in court to plead guilty to five federal criminal charges, including providing the ketamine that led to Perry's death.

In a brief statement, Sangha's lawyer Mark Geragos said only, "She's taking responsibility for her actions."

Prosecutors had cast Sangha, a 42-year-old citizen of the U.S. and the U.K., as a prolific drug dealer who was known to her customers as the "Ketamine Queen," using the term often in press releases and court documents.

She agreed to plead guilty to one count of maintaining a drug-involved premises, three counts of distri-

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bution of ketamine, and one count of distribution of ketamine resulting in death or serious bodily injury. The final plea deal came a year after federal prosecutors announced that five people had been charged in Perry's Oct. 28, 2023 death after a sweeping investigation.

Sangha admitted in the agreement to selling four vials of ketamine to another man, Cody McLaury, hours before he died from an overdose in 2019. McLaury had no relationship to Perry.

Prosecutors will drop three other counts related to the distribution of ketamine, and one count of distribution of methamphetamine that was unrelated to the Perry case.

Sangha will officially change her plea to guilty at an upcoming hearing, where sentencing will be scheduled, prosecutors said. She could get up to 45 years in prison. The judge is not bound to follow any terms of the plea agreement, but prosecutors said in the document that they will ask for less than the maximum.

She and Dr. Salvador Plasencia, who pleaded guilty last month, had been the primary targets of the investigation. Three other defendants — Dr. Mark Chavez, Kenneth Iwamasa and Erik Fleming — pleaded guilty in exchange for their cooperation, which included statements implicating Sangha and Plasencia.

Perry was found dead in his Los Angeles home by Iwamasa, his assistant. The medical examiner ruled that ketamine, typically used as a surgical anesthetic, was the primary cause of death.

Sangha presented a posh lifestyle on Instagram, with photos of herself with the rich and famous in cities around the globe. Prosecutors said she privately presented herself as a dealer who sold to the same kind of high-class customers.

Perry had been using ketamine through his regular doctor as a legal, but off-label, treatment for depression, which has become increasingly common. Perry, 54, sought more ketamine than his doctor would give him. He began getting it from Plasencia about a month before his death, then started getting still more from Sangha about two weeks before his death, prosecutors said.

Perry and Iwamasa found Sangha through Perry's friend Fleming. In their plea agreements, both men described the subsequent deals in detail.

Fleming messaged Iwamasa saying Sangha's ketamine was "unmarked but it's amazing," according to court documents. Fleming texted Iwamasa that she only deals "with high end and celebs. If it were not great stuff she'd lose her business."

With the two men acting as middlemen, Perry bought large amounts of ketamine from Sangha, including 25 vials for \$6,000 in cash four days before his death. That purchase included the doses that killed Perry, prosecutors said.

On the day of Perry's death, Sangha told Fleming they should delete all the messages they had sent each other, according to her indictment.

Her home in North Hollywood, California, was raided in March 2024 by Drug Enforcement Administration agents who found large amounts of methamphetamines and ketamine, according to an affidavit from an agent. She has been held in federal custody for about a year.

None of the defendants has yet been sentenced.

Sangha also agreed in her plea deal not to contest the seizure of her property that went with the investigation, including more than \$5,000 in cash.

Perry struggled with addiction for years, dating back to his time on "Friends," when he became one of the biggest stars of his generation as Chandler Bing. He starred alongside Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer for 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004 on NBC's megahit series.

Learn about the 5 people charged in connection with Matthew Perry's death

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One year ago, federal authorities announced that five people had been charged in connection with the ketamine overdose death of Matthew Perry.

All five have now agreed to plead guilty, including the personal assistant of the "Friends" star, an old acquaintance and two doctors.

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On Monday, Jasveen Sangha, who prosecutors say was a dealer known as the "Ketamine Queen," became the fifth and final defendant to reach a deal and avoid trial.

Here is a look at each of the defendants.

Jasveen Sangha

Sangha admitted in her plea agreement that she sold Perry the lethal dose of ketamine in the days before his death on Oct. 23, 2023.

A 42-year-old who was born in Britain, raised in the United States and has dual citizenship, Sangha's social media accounts before her indictment last year showed a jet-setting lifestyle, with photos of herself in posh spaces alongside rich-and-famous faces in Spain, Japan and Dubai along with her dual homes of London and Los Angeles.

Prosecutors say that lifestyle was funded by a drug business she ran for at least five years from her apartment in LA's San Fernando Valley.

They say she presented herself as "a celebrity drug dealer with high quality goods" and missed no opportunity to promote the idea that she was known to customers and others as the "Ketamine Queen." Her lawyers have derided the title as a "media-friendly" moniker.

Sangha went to high school in Calabasas, California — perhaps best known as home to the Kardashians — and went to college at the University of California, Irvine, graduating in 2005 and going on to work at Merrill Lynch. She later got an MBA from the Hult International Business School in London.

She was connected to Perry through his acquaintance and her co-defendant, Erik Fleming.

In a raid of her apartment in March 2024, authorities said they found large amounts of cocaine, methamphetamine and ketamine. She was arrested and released on bond.

In August 2024, she was indicted again with charges that tied her to Perry's death, and has been held without bail ever since.

CHARGES: Three counts of distribution of ketamine, one count of distribution of ketamine resulting in death or serious bodily injury and one count of maintaining a drug-involved premises.

SENTENCING: A judge will set her sentencing in the coming months after she appears in court to officially change her plea. She could get up to 45 years in prison.

WHAT THEY SAID: Sangha's lawyer Mark Geragos says "She's taking responsibility for her actions."

Kenneth Iwamasa

Iwamasa, Perry's live-in personal assistant, was intimately involved in the actor's illegal ketamine use, acting as his drug messenger and personally giving injections, according to his plea agreement. It was the 60-year-old Iwamasa who found Perry dead in the hot tub of his Pacific Palisades home on a day when he'd given him several injections.

He would become the first to reach a deal with prosecutors as they sought to use him as an essential witness against other defendants.

Iwamasa said he worked with co-defendants to get ketamine on Perry's behalf, including Dr. Salvador Plasencia, who taught him how to give Perry the injections.

"Found the sweet spot but trying different places led to running out," Iwamasa told Plasencia in one text message.

Iwamasa said in his plea deal that he injected Perry six to eight times per day in the last few days of his life.

CHARGE: One count of conspiracy to distribute ketamine causing death.

SENTENCING: He's scheduled to be sentenced November 19 and could get up to 15 years in prison.

WHAT THEY SAID: Iwamasa's attorneys have not responded to requests for comment.

Dr. Salvador Plasencia

"I wonder how much this moron will pay?"

That was a text message Plasencia sent to a fellow doctor when he learned Perry wanted to be illegally provided with ketamine, according to a plea agreement where the doctor admitted to selling 20 vials of the drug to the actor in the weeks before his death.

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Plasencia, a 43-year-old Los Angeles-area doctor known to patients as "Dr. P," was one of the two main targets of the prosecution and had been headed for a joint trial with Sangha when he reached the plea agreement in June.

According to court records, Perry was connected to Plasencia through another patient. Perry had been getting ketamine legally from his regular doctor as treatment for depression, an off-label but increasingly common use of the surgical anesthetic. But the actor wanted more.

Plasencia admitted to personally injecting Perry with some of the initial vials he provided, and left more for Iwamasa to inject, despite the fact that Perry froze up and his blood pressure spiked, after one dose.

Plasencia graduated from UCLA's medical school in 2010 and had not been subject to any medical disciplinary actions before the Perry case.

He has been free on bond since his indictment. His lawyers said he is caregiver for a toddler child.

Plasencia even got to keep practicing medicine after his indictment, but had to inform patients of the charges against him and couldn't prescribe dangerous drugs. He now intends to voluntarily surrender his license to practice, according to his lawyers.

CHARGES: Four counts of distribution of ketamine.

SENTENCING: He's scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 3 and could get up to 40 years in prison.

WHAT THEY SAID: His lawyers say he's "profoundly remorseful for the treatment decisions he made while providing ketamine to Matthew Perry."

Erik Fleming

Fleming, 55, was an acquaintance of Perry's who learned through a mutual friend that the actor was seeking ketamine, according to his plea agreement.

He told Iwamasa in text messages that he had a source known as the "Ketamine Queen" whose product was "amazing," saying she only deals with "high end and celebs."

In all, prosecutors say, Fleming delivered 50 vials of Sangha's ketamine for Perry's use, including 25 sold for a total of \$6,000 to the actor four days before his death.

CHARGE: One count of distribution of ketamine resulting in death.

SENTENCING: He is scheduled to be sentenced November 12 and could get up to 25 years in prison.

WHAT THEY SAID: Fleming's lawyers have declined comment.

Dr. Mark Chavez

Chavez, a San Diego doctor who ran a ketamine clinic, was the source of the doses that Plasencia sold to Perry, according to their plea agreements.

Chavez admitted to obtaining the ketamine from a wholesale distributor on false pretenses.

Chavez, 55, graduated from UCLA's medical school in 2004. He has surrendered his medical license.

CHARGE: One count of conspiracy to distribute ketamine.

SENTENCING: He is scheduled to become the first defendant sentenced, on Sept. 17. He could get 10 years in prison.

WHAT THEY SAID: His lawyer says he's "incredibly remorseful," has accepted responsibility and has been "trying to do everything in his power to right the wrong."

3 more GOP governors authorize deployment of National Guard troops as part of Trump show of force

By MATT BROWN and MIKE PESOLI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three more Republican governors authorized the deployment of National Guard troops to Washington on Monday, part of President Donald Trump's escalating show of force that he says is designed to crack down on crime and boost immigration enforcement in the nation's capital. The announcements by Mississippi, Tennessee and Louisiana brought the number of state troops detailed to the president's effort to more than 1,100 — and the number of states to six.

Governors from the states said they were responding to requests from the Trump administration to join the operation. It was not immediately clear why the administration requested additional military support.

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About 800 troops have already been called up from the Washington, D.C., guard and have had a limited assigned role so far in Trump's 10-day-old attempted takeover of D.C. law enforcement.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser said the descriptions of the operation needed to be more honest — and acknowledge that they weren't just about curtailing crime but about immigration enforcement, a centerpiece of the second Trump administration that has echoed across the country in recent months. During a news conference, Bowser pushed back on Trump's characterization of the city and voiced skepticism about the administration's intentions.

"I think it makes the point that this is not about D.C. crime," Bowser said of the administration and states deploying National Guard members onto the streets of the capital. "The focus should be on violent crime. ... Nobody is against focusing on driving down any level of violence. And so if this is really about immigration enforcement, the administration should make that plain."

Trump's executive order that launched the federal operation declared a "crime emergency" in the District of Columbia and initiated a takeover of Washington's police department. The administration has ordered local police to cooperate with federal agents on immigration enforcement, orders that would contradict local laws prohibiting such collaboration.

Federal agents have arrested 160 undocumented people in the district since the operation began, including people that White House officials allege are known gang members with prior felony offenses.

Friction with local government and community continues

The executive order has led to friction with the local government and heightened tensions in the community as a surge of federal agents in the capital garner praise and protest from residents.

The nation's capital can govern itself through powers delegated to it by Congress, though the federal laws that grant that autonomy give wide breadth to the president and Congress to intervene when they see fit. That longstanding tension has led to a legal standoff between local officials and the White House in the current troop deployment and surge of federal officers into the district.

In what could also heighten tensions on the streets, Washington has been informed about the intent for the National Guard to be armed, though it has not received details about when that could happen or where armed Guard members could be deployed in the District, according to a person familiar who was not authorized to disclose the plans and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It would be a departure from what the Pentagon and Army have said about the troops being unarmed. The Army said in a statement last week that "weapons are available if needed but will remain in the armory." Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson also said last week that troops won't be armed.

In response to questions about whether Guard members in Washington would be armed in the coming days, the District of Columbia National Guard said troops "may be armed consistent with their mission and training." Maj. Melissa Heintz, a spokesperson for the D.C. Guard, didn't provide more details.

The stepped-up guard presence grew further Monday with the new deployments from Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee, all led by Republican governors. A spokesperson for Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said that the governor had granted a request from the Trump administration for the state's National Guard members "to assist with monument security, community safety patrols, protecting federal facilities, and traffic control." The troops "are ready to assist as long as needed," the governor's office said.

In addition to Monday's announcements, West Virginia said it was deploying 300 to 400 troops, South Carolina pledged 200 and Ohio said it will send 150 in the coming days, deployments that built on top of Trump's initial order that 800 National Guard troops deploy as part of the federal intervention.

National Guard members in the District of Columbia have been assisting law enforcement with tasks including crowd control and patrolling landmarks such as the National Mall and Union Station. Their role has been limited thus far, and it remains unclear why additional troops would be needed, though attention-getting optics have long been a part of Trump's playbook.

Questions remain about who is actually running the DC police

On Friday, the city's attorney general sued the administration for appointing the head of the Drug Enforcement Administration as the city's "emergency police commissioner." The administration walked back

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the move but then issued a follow-up order that directed local police to “cooperate fully and completely with federal immigration authorities.”

“D.C. has been under siege from thugs and killers, but now, D.C. is back under Federal Control where it belongs,” Trump wrote on his social media website a day after issuing his order. “The White House is in charge. The Military and our Great Police will liberate this City, scrape away the filth, and make it safe, clean, habitable and beautiful once more!”

Federal agents from the DEA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service and other agencies have patrolled high-traffic areas around the capital over the last week. ICE officers, who work under the Department of Homeland Security, have made arrests in neighborhoods across the city, dispersed some public gatherings and torn pro-immigrant signs, according to videos published by the administration.

The White House has touted various arrests that local police and federal agents have made across the city since Trump’s executive order. Federal agents have made 380 arrests in the week since the start of the operation and in some cases issued charges to detained people. The White House has touted the surge of agents on social media and posted pictures of people arrested by local and federal officers.

“Washington, DC is getting safer every night thanks to our law enforcement partners,” Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote on social media. “Just this weekend, 137 arrests were made and 21 illegal firearms were seized. In total, there have been nearly 400 arrests—and we are not slowing down.”

Amid the crackdown, the administration has received criticism for the conduct of some federal agents, who in several high-profile incidents have arrested people while wearing masks that hide their identity and declined to identify themselves to media or members of the public when questioned. Bowser said Monday that she had asked D.C. Police Chief Pamela Smith to seek answers from the administration about the use of masked police.

“It’s very important to us that agents be identified,” Bowser said. “There’s no reason for a law enforcement official to be masked.”

On Monday, dozens of protesters gathered in the U Street neighborhood of Washington, where multiple federal agents patrols and arrests had taken place over the weekend, to protest the Trump administration’s actions.

No. 1 Texas, No. 2 Penn St each place 3 players on Associated Press preseason All-America first team

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Texas and Penn State, the top two teams in The Associated Press preseason Top 25, each had three players selected for the preseason AP All-America team announced Monday.

No. 1 Texas had one player from each level of its defense on the first team: edge rusher Colin Simmons, linebacker Anthony Hill Jr. and safety Michael Taaffe. No. 2 Penn State’s picks were running back Nicholas Singleton, offensive lineman Olaivavega Ioane and defensive lineman Zane Durant.

No. 3 Ohio State, No. 4 Clemson, No. 6 Notre Dame, No. 8 Alabama and Pittsburgh each had two players on the first team.

The Southeastern Conference had 12 players on the 27-man first team determined by media members on the AP Top 25 voting panel.

The Big Ten had seven players, the ACC four and the Big 12 two.

Clemson’s Cade Klubnik was the overwhelming preseason choice for first-team quarterback after throwing for 3,639 yards with 39 touchdowns and just six interceptions.

Ohio State safety Caleb Downs and Florida center Jake Slaughter are returning first-team AP All-Americans.

Downs, whose late interception against Texas helped wrap up a College Football Playoff semifinal win for defending champion Ohio State, starred as a freshman at Alabama two years ago and established himself as the nation’s top safety in his first season with the Buckeyes. He’s a projected top-three pick in the 2026 NFL draft.

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Downs was joined on the preseason-All-America first team by Buckeyes receiver Jeremiah Smith. Slaughter, a leading candidate for the Rimington Trophy as the nation's top center, played 800 snaps in his breakout season for the Gators. He allowed just one sack and was among the highest-rated run and pass blockers in the country, according to Pro Football Focus. The AP All-America team for this season will be released in December. It will mark the 100th anniversary of the first team published in 1925.

First team offense

Quarterback — Cade Klubnik, fourth year, Clemson.

Running backs — Jeremiyah Love, third year, Notre Dame; Nicholas Singleton, fourth year, Penn State.

Tackles — Spencer Fano, fourth year, Utah; Kadyn Proctor, third year, Alabama.

Guards — Olaivavega Ioane, fourth year, Penn State; Ar'maj Reed-Adams, sixth year, Texas A&M.

Center — Jake Slaughter, fifth year, Florida.

Tight end — Eli Stowers, fifth year, Vanderbilt.

Wide receivers — Jeremiah Smith, second year, Ohio State; Ryan Williams, second year, Alabama; Jordyn Tyson, fourth year, Arizona State.

All-purpose player — Desmond Reid, fourth year, Pittsburgh.

Kicker — Dominic Zvada, fourth year, Michigan.

First team defense

Edge — Dylan Stewart, second year, South Carolina; Colin Simmons, second year, Texas.

Tackles — Peter Woods, third year, Clemson; Zane Durant, fourth year, Penn State.

Linebackers — Anthony Hill Jr., third year, Texas; Whit Weeks, fifth year, LSU; Kyle Louis, fourth year, Pittsburgh.

Cornerbacks — Leonard Moore, second year, Notre Dame; Jermod McCoy, third year, Tennessee.

Safeties — Caleb Downs, third year, Ohio State; Dillon Thieneman, third year, Oregon.

Defensive back — Michael Taaffe, fifth year, Texas.

Punter — Brett Thorson, fourth year, Georgia.

Second team offense

Quarterback — Garrett Nussmeier, fifth year, LSU.

Running backs — Makhi Hughes, fourth year, Oregon; Isaac Brown, second year, Louisville.

Tackles — Francis Mauigoa, third year, Miami; Blake Miller, fourth year, Clemson.

Guards — Cayden Green, third year, Missouri; Keylan Rutledge, fourth year, Georgia Tech.

Center — Parker Brailsford, fourth year, Alabama.

Tight end — Max Klare, fourth year, Ohio State.

Wide receivers — Antonio Williams, fourth year, Clemson; Elijah Sarratt, fourth year, Indiana; Cam Coleman, second year, Auburn.

All-purpose player — Kaytron Allen, fourth year, Penn State.

Kicker — Peyton Woodring, third year, Georgia.

Second team defense

Edge — T.J. Parker, third year, Clemson; Matayo Uiagalelei, third year, Oregon.

Tackles — Tim Keenan III, fifth year, Alabama; Christen Miller, fourth year, Georgia.

Linebackers — Taurean York, third year, Texas A&M; Harold Perkins Jr., fourth year, LSU; Aiden Fisher, fourth year, Indiana.

Cornerbacks — Chandler Rivers, fourth year, Duke; D'Angelo Ponds, third year, Indiana.

Safeties — Koi Perich, second year, Minnesota; KJ Bolden, second year, Georgia.

Defensive back — Jalon Kilgore, third year, South Carolina.

Punter — Ryan Eckley, fourth year, Michigan State.

Hamas accepts an Arab ceasefire proposal on Gaza as Palestinian death toll passes 62,000

By VICTORIA EASTWOOD, SAMY MAGDY and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

RAFAH, Egypt (AP) — Hamas said Monday it has accepted a new proposal from Arab mediators for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip as Israel indicated its positions haven't changed, while Gaza's Health Ministry said the Palestinian death toll from 22 months of war has passed 62,000.

U.S. President Donald Trump appeared to cast doubt on the long-running negotiations that Washington has mediated as well. "We will only see the return of the remaining hostages when Hamas is confronted and destroyed!!! The sooner this takes place, the better the chances of success will be," he posted on social media.

Israel announced plans to reoccupy Gaza City and other heavily populated areas after ceasefire talks appeared to break down last month, raising the possibility of a worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, which experts say is sliding into famine.

Plans to expand the offensive, in part aimed at pressuring Hamas, have sparked international outrage and infuriated many Israelis who fear for the remaining hostages taken in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that started the war. Hundreds of thousands took part in mass protests on Sunday calling for their return.

Egypt says Witkoff invited to join talks

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said mediators are "exerting extensive efforts" to revive a U.S. proposal for a 60-day ceasefire, during which some of the remaining 50 hostages would be released and the sides would negotiate a lasting ceasefire and the return of the rest.

Abdelatty told The Associated Press they are inviting U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff to join the ceasefire talks.

Abdelatty spoke to journalists during a visit to Egypt's Rafah crossing with Gaza, which has not functioned since Israel seized the Palestinian side in May 2024. He was accompanied by Mohammad Mustafa, the prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, which has been largely sidelined since the war began.

Abdelatty said Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani had joined the talks, which include senior Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya, who arrived in Cairo last week. Abdelatty said they are open to other ideas, including for a comprehensive deal that would release all the hostages at once.

Bassem Naim, a senior Hamas official, told the AP that the militant group had accepted the proposal introduced by the mediators, without elaborating.

An Egyptian official, speaking to the AP on condition of anonymity to discuss the talks, said the proposal includes changes to Israel's pullback of its forces and guarantees for negotiations on a lasting ceasefire during the initial truce. The official said it is almost identical to an earlier proposal accepted by Israel, which has not yet joined the latest talks.

Diaa Rashwan, head of the Egypt State Information Service, told the AP that Egypt and Qatar have sent the Hamas-accepted proposal to Israel.

An Israeli official said Israel's positions, including on the release of all hostages, had not changed from previous rounds of talks. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak with the media.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until all the hostages are returned and Hamas has been disarmed, and to maintain lasting security control over Gaza. Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Netanyahu said in a video addressing the Israeli public that reports of Hamas' acceptance of the proposal showed that it is "under massive pressure."

Palestinian death toll surpasses 62,000

Hamas-led militants abducted 251 people and killed around 1,200, mostly civilians, in the attack that ignited the war. Around 20 of the hostages still in Gaza are believed by Israel to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefires or other deals.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the Palestinian death toll from the war had climbed to 62,004, with another

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156,230 people wounded. It does not say how many were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half the dead.

The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The U.N. and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties. Israel disputes its toll but has not provided its own.

The ministry said 1,965 people have been killed while seeking humanitarian aid since May, either in the chaos around U.N. convoys or while heading to sites operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an Israeli-backed American contractor.

Witnesses, health officials and the U.N. human rights office say Israeli forces have repeatedly fired toward crowds seeking aid. Israel says it has only fired warning shots at people who approached its forces. GHF says its armed contractors have only used pepper spray or fired into the air on rare occasions to prevent deadly crowding.

More deaths linked to malnutrition

Experts have warned that Israel's ongoing offensive is pushing Gaza toward famine, even after it eased a complete 2 1/2-month blockade on the territory in May. Gaza's Health Ministry said Monday that five more people, including two children, died of malnutrition-related causes.

It says at least 112 children have died of malnutrition-related causes since the war began, and 151 adults have died since the ministry started tracking adult malnutrition deaths in June.

Amnesty International on Monday accused Israel of "carrying out a deliberate campaign of starvation."

Israel has rejected such allegations, saying it allows in enough food and accusing the U.N. of failing to promptly deliver it. U.N. agencies say they are hindered by Israeli restrictions and the breakdown of law and order in the territory, around three-quarters of which is now controlled by Israel.

The U.N. World Food Program said Monday that U.N. partner organizations reported that community kitchens in north and south Gaza produced 380,000 daily meals daily last week — far fewer than the more than 1 million daily meals they produced in April. ____

Magdy reported from Cairo and Lidman reported from Tel Aviv, Israel. Associated Press writers Edith Lederer at the United Nations and Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia contributed to this report.

What to know about redistricting fights as Texas Democrats return and California starts work

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

Republicans can move ahead with redrawing Texas' congressional districts now that Democratic lawmakers have returned to the state. Efforts to thwart President Donald Trump's push to tilt the political map for next year's midterm elections in his favor shifted to California.

Dozens of Texas Democrats ended a two-week walkout Monday after Democrats in California heeded Gov. Gavin Newsom's call to counter the GOP effort in Texas.

In California, the Democratic-supermajority Legislature faces tight deadlines, and a plan would have to be approved by voters in November.

Republicans have more options for mid-decade redistricting than Democrats because they control more statehouses, and they've talked about redrawing districts in Florida, Indiana and Missouri.

Here's what to know.

Trump is trying to avoid a congressional check on him

Both Trump and the Democrats are looking ahead to the 2026 midterms knowing that they often go against the president's party, as they did during Trump's first term in 2018. Republicans currently have a seven-seat majority in the 435-member House.

State legislatures draw the lines after each U.S. census in most states — including Texas — and only a few dozen House districts are competitive.

In Texas, Republicans hold 25 of 38 seats, and they're trying to increase that to 30. In California, Demo-

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crats have 43 of the 52 seats, and they're trying to boost that to 48, to wipe out the advantage the GOP would gain from redrawing lines in Texas.

California is more complicated for Democrats

In some ways, the nation's most-populous state, California, is a reverse-mirror image of the nation's second most-populous state, Texas. Democrats are even more firmly in control of state government there than Republicans are in Texas, with Democratic supermajorities in both California legislative chambers.

But California's districts were drawn by an independent commission created by a statewide vote in 2008 after years of intense partisan battles over redistricting.

Democrats are trying to avoid legal challenges to a new map by asking voters to approve it as an exception to the normal process, which would require a special election in November. Texas has no such commission, so its Legislature doesn't have to seek voters' approval for its maps.

California lawmakers were returning Monday to the state capital from a summer break. They are scheduled to remain in session through Sept. 12.

Why a walkout stalled Republicans in Texas

Republicans have solid majorities in both chambers of the Texas Legislature, and a Democrat hasn't won statewide office there since 1994. But Texas is among a handful of states where two-thirds of each chamber must be present to conduct business, and the GOP majorities are not that large.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott already had called a special legislative session when Trump began pushing for a new congressional map, but GOP lawmakers could not conduct business after most Democratic lawmakers left for blue states, including California, Illinois and Massachusetts.

But there were pressures on Democrats against holding out longer. They were away from their families and nonlegislative jobs, and their walkout also prevented lawmakers from providing relief to the Texas Hill Country ravaged by deadly flash flooding in July. They also faced fines of \$500 per day, as well as efforts to oust some of them from office.

Cable's MSNBC will change its name later this year as part of corporate divorce from NBC

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Changing its mind about keeping its name, the MSNBC news network said Monday it will become My Source News Opinion World, or MS NOW for short, as part of its corporate divorce from NBC.

The TV network, which appeals to liberal audiences with a stable of personalities including Rachel Maddow, Ari Melber and Nicole Wallace, has been building its own separate news division from NBC News. It will also remove NBC's peacock symbol from its logo as part of the change, which will take effect later this year.

The name change was ordered by NBC Universal, which last November spun off cable networks USA, CNBC, MSNBC, E! Entertainment, Oxygen and the Golf Channel into its own company, called Versant. None of the other networks are changing their name.

MSNBC got its name upon its formation in 1996, as a partnership then between Microsoft and NBC. Even back then, it was a puzzling moniker to many. But it stuck, even after the NBC partnership with Microsoft that produced it ended, and Versant CEO Mark Lazarus said in the initial days of the spinoff that it would stay, making Monday's announcement an unexpected about-face.

Name changes always carry an inherent risk, and MSNBC President Rebecca Kutler said that for employees, it is hard to imagine the network under a different name. "This was not a decision that was made quickly or without significant debate," she said in a memo to staff.

"During this time of transition, NBC Universal decided that our brand requires a new, separate identity," she said. "This decision now allows us to set our own course and assert our independence as we continue to build our own modern newsgathering organization."

Kutler said the network's editorial direction will remain the same. "While our name will be changing, who we are and what we do will not," she said.

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Still, it's noteworthy that the business channel CNBC is leaving "NBC" in its name. MSNBC argues that CNBC has always maintained a greater separation and, with its business focus, is less likely to cover many of the same topics.

The affiliation between a news division that stresses objectivity and one that doesn't hide its liberal bent has long caused tension. President Donald Trump refers to the cable network as "MSDNC," for Democratic National Committee. Even before the corporate change, NBC News has been reducing the use of its personalities on MSNBC.

Some NBC News personalities, like Jacob Soboroff, Vaughn Hillyard, Brandy Zadrozny and Antonia Hylton, have joined MSNBC. The network has also hired Carol Leoning, Catherine Rampell and Jackie Alemany from the Washington Post, and Eugene Daniels from Politico.

Maddow, in a recent episode of Pivot, noted that MSNBC will no longer have to compete with NBC News programs for reporting product from out in the field — meaning it will no longer get the "leftovers."

"In this case, we can apply our own instincts, our own queries, our own priorities, to getting stuff that we need from reporters and correspondents," Maddow said. "And so it's gonna be better."

MSNBC's Joe Scarborough revealed the network's new logo on his show Monday morning. "It looks very sporty," he said.

Conservative network Newsmax agrees to pay \$67M in defamation case over bogus 2020 election claims

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The conservative network Newsmax will pay \$67 million to settle a lawsuit accusing it of defaming a voting equipment company by spreading lies about President Donald Trump's 2020 election loss, according to documents filed Monday.

The settlement comes after Fox News Channel paid \$787.5 million to settle a similar lawsuit in 2023 and Newsmax paid what court papers describe as \$40 million to settle a libel lawsuit from a different voting machine manufacturer, Smartmatic, which also was a target of pro-Trump conspiracy theories on the network.

Delaware Superior Court Judge Eric Davis had ruled earlier that Newsmax did indeed defame Denver-based Dominion Voting Systems by airing false information about the company and its equipment. But Davis left it to a jury to eventually decide whether that was done with malice, and, if so, how much Dominion deserved from Newsmax in damages. Newsmax and Dominion reached the settlement before the trial could take place.

The settlement was disclosed by Newsmax in a new filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. It said the deal was reached Friday.

"Newsmax believed it was critically important for the American people to hear both sides of the election disputes that arose in 2020," the company said in a statement. "We stand by our coverage as fair, balanced, and conducted within professional standards of journalism."

A spokesperson for Dominion said the company was pleased to have settled the lawsuit.

The disclosure of the settlement came as Trump, who lost his 2020 reelection bid to Democrat Joe Biden, vowed in a social media post Monday to eliminate mail-in ballots and voting machines such as those supplied by Dominion and other companies. It was unclear how the Republican president could achieve that.

The same judge also handled the Dominion-Fox News case and made a similar ruling that the network repeated numerous lies by Trump's allies about his 2020 loss despite internal communications showing Fox officials knew the claims were bogus. At the time, Davis found it was "CRYSTAL clear" that none of the allegations was true.

Internal correspondence from Newsmax officials likewise shows they knew the claims were baseless.

"How long are we going to play along with election fraud?" Newsmax host Bob Sellers said two days after the 2020 election was called for Biden, according to internal documents revealed as part of the case.

Newsmax took pride that it was not calling the election for Biden and, the internal documents show,

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saw a business opportunity in catering to viewers who believed Trump won. Private communications that surfaced as part of Dominion's earlier defamation case against Fox News also revealed how the network's business interests intersected with decisions it made related to coverage of Trump's 2020 election claims.

At Newsmax, employees repeatedly warned against false allegations from pro-Trump guests such as attorney Sidney Powell, according to documents in the lawsuit. In one text, even Newsmax owner Chris Ruddy, a Trump ally, said he found it "scary" that Trump was meeting with Powell.

Dominion was at the heart of many of the wild claims aired by guests on Newsmax and elsewhere, who promoted a conspiracy theory involving deceased Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez to rig the machines for Biden. The network retracted some of the more bombastic allegations in December 2020.

Though Trump has insisted his fraud claims are real, there's no evidence they were, and the lawsuits in the Fox and Newsmax cases show how some of the president's biggest supporters knew they were false at the time. Trump's then-attorney general, William Barr, said there was no evidence of widespread fraud.

Trump and his backers lost dozens of lawsuits alleging fraud, some before Trump-appointed judges. Numerous recounts, reviews and audits of the election results, including some run by Republicans, turned up no signs of significant wrongdoing or error and affirmed Biden's win.

After returning to office, Trump pardoned those who tried to halt the transfer of power during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and directed his Department of Justice to investigate Chris Krebs, a former Trump cybersecurity appointee who had vouched for the security and accuracy of the 2020 election.

As an initial trial date approached in the Dominion case earlier this year, Trump issued an executive order attacking the law firm that litigated it and the Fox case, Susman Godfrey. The order, part of a series targeting law firms Trump has tussled with, cited Susman Godfrey's work on elections and said the government would not do business with any of its clients or permit any of its staff in federal buildings.

A federal judge put that action on hold, saying the framers would view it as "a shocking abuse of power."

Hong Kong court begins hearing final arguments in Jimmy Lai's national security trial

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A Hong Kong court heard final arguments Monday in the landmark national security trial of former pro-democracy newspaper founder Jimmy Lai, who could be sentenced to up to life in prison if he is convicted.

Lai, 77, was arrested in 2020 under a national security law imposed by Beijing following anti-government protests in 2019. He is being tried on charges of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to issue seditious publications.

Lai founded Apple Daily, one of the local media outlets that was most critical of Hong Kong's government. His high-profile case that has stretched nearly 150 days, almost double the original estimate, is widely seen as a trial of press freedom and a test for judicial independence in the Asian financial hub.

It is unclear when a verdict will be delivered.

Arguments highlight alleged sanction calls

Prosecutor Anthony Chau said on Monday that Lai was arrested for collusion in August 2020, but he continued to make requests for sanctions, blockades or other hostile activities in the following months.

Chau suggested that the appeals for foreign actions did not only target individuals, but also China, while the foreign collaborations Lai had were long-term and persistent. Chau cited Lai's foreign connections to show what he called Lai's "unwavering intent" to solicit foreign actions.

A prosecution document shown in court argued that the law doesn't prohibit normal international exchanges. But how Lai attempted to draw an analogy of what he did to the cooperation between Hong Kong's prosecuting authority and the International Association of Prosecutors was bewildering.

"It is surprising to see that D1 (Lai) raised freedoms of thought and association as his shield," it said in the document.

Chau is expected to wrap up his closing statement Tuesday.

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Earlier in the trial, prosecutors alleged Lai asked foreign countries, especially the United States, to take actions against Beijing "under the guise of fighting for freedom and democracy."

On the first day of his testimony, Lai denied he had asked then-Vice President Mike Pence and then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to take action against Hong Kong and China during the 2019 protests.

When Lai's lawyer questioned him about an Apple Daily report saying he had asked the U.S. government to sanction Beijing and Hong Kong leaders, he said he must have discussed it with Pompeo, as he had no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report by the now-defunct newspaper he founded.

But Lai said he would not have encouraged foreign sanctions after the national security law was enacted on June 30, 2020.

Lai's health causes delay

Closing arguments have been delayed twice, first due to the weather then to concerns over Lai's health. On Friday, his lawyer, Robert Pang, said Lai had experienced heart palpitations while in prison. The judges wanted him to secure a heart monitor and medication first.

After Friday's hearing, the Hong Kong government alleged foreign media outlets had attempted to mislead the public about Lai's medical care. It said a medical examination of Lai found no abnormalities and that the medical care he received in custody was adequate.

When Lai entered the courtroom on Monday, he waved and smiled to those sitting in the public gallery and briefly instructed his legal team in a voice audible to public attendees. He closed his eyes for a while in the morning when the prosecution laid out its legal arguments.

The heart monitor was delivered to Lai and he had no complaints about his health, Chau said.

Case draws attention from foreign governments

Lai's yearslong detention in solidarity confinement has drawn concerns from foreign governments and rights groups. U.S. President Donald Trump, before being elected to his second term in November, said he would talk to Chinese leader Xi Jinping to seek Lai's release: "I will get him out."

In a Fox News radio interview released Aug. 14, Trump denied saying he would save Lai, but rather that he would bring the issue up.

"I've already brought it up, and I'm going to do everything I can to save him," he said.

China has accused Lai of stirring a rise in anti-China sentiments in Hong Kong and said it firmly opposes the interference of other countries in its internal affairs.

Dozens of people waited in the rain Monday for a seat in the main courtroom to see Lai. Former Apple Daily reader Susan Li said she worried about Lai's health as he looked visibly thinner and she would continue to pray for him.

"I wanted to let him know we are still here," she said.

When Hong Kong, a former British colony, returned to China in 1997, Beijing promised to retain the city's civil liberties for 50 years. But critics say the promise has become threadbare after the introduction of the security law, which Chinese and Hong Kong authorities insist was necessary for the city's stability.

Where Trump is popular, Democrats look to a new crop of candidates to help win back the House

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

FAIRVIEW, N.C. (AP) — Jamie Ager has spent much of the past year rebuilding his farm in the foothills of western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene tore through the region, cutting power, destroying fences and scattering livestock.

Then, earlier this year, Ager lost his beef contract with local schools, a casualty of billions of dollars in cuts to the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Trump administration.

Now, the fifth-generation farmer is running for Congress — part of a new crop of Democratic candidates the party is turning to as it tries to compete in the tough, often rural districts it may need to flip to retake the U.S. House in 2026.

Democrats say these new recruits are uniquely suited to break through in districts where President Donald

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Trump's popularity dominates. Many, like Ager, are already a well-known presence in their communities. And in parts of North Carolina, Kentucky, Michigan and elsewhere, the party is betting local credibility can cut through skepticism where the Democratic brand has fallen.

Ager says he sees national Democrats as out of touch with rural life: too "academic" and "politically correct and scripted."

"That's just not what people are interested in," he says. "The ideas of helping poor people, being neighborly, the ideal of doing those things, I think, are worthy, good ideas that are actually popular. But the execution of a lot of those ideas has been gummed up, you know, not well executed."

A shifting House map

Heading into next year's midterms, Democrats believe momentum is on their side. Historically, the president's party loses ground in the midterms. In 2018, during Trump's first term, Democrats flipped 41 seats to take control of the House. Republicans currently control the House by such a slim margin, Democrats need to pick up only a few seats to break the GOP's hold on Washington.

The Republican-led tax break and spending cut bill has added to Democrats' optimism. About two-thirds of U.S. adults expect the new law will help the rich, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About half say it'll do more harm than good for middle-class people and people like them.

Still, Republicans remain confident. They point to having fewer vulnerable seats than Democrats have this cycle. Only three Republicans hold House districts Democrat Kamala Harris won last year, while 13 Democrats represent districts Trump won.

They also note Democrats' low opinion of their own party after last year's losses. In a July AP-NORC poll, Democrats were likelier to describe their own party negatively than Republicans, with many Democrats calling it weak or ineffective.

In places where local dynamics may give Democrats a shot, it means finding the right candidates is especially important, party leaders say.

"Recruitment matters in these years when the environment is going to be competitive," Democratic pollster John Anzalone said.

Democrats hope a farmer in western North Carolina can regain trust

With power, water and telecommunications down due to last year's hurricane, Ager's Hickory Nut Gap farm became a hub for the community — hosting cookouts and using propane to grill food for neighbors.

Statewide, the storm caused nearly \$60 billion in damage and killed more than 100 people. Little federal aid has reached the hardest-hit parts of western North Carolina.

"Helene hitting definitely put an exclamation point on, like, 'Whoa, we need help and support,'" Ager said.

Democrats see Ager as a high-risk, high-reward candidate who could be successful in a district where Democrats have struggled.

No Democrat has won North Carolina's 11th Congressional District since it was redrawn by the Republican-controlled legislature in 2011. A court-ordered redistricting ahead of the 2020 election made it slightly more favorable to Democrats, encompassing Asheville and much of western North Carolina. Republican Rep. Chuck Edwards still won by nearly 14 percentage points last year and is expected to seek reelection.

Grayson Barnette, a Democratic strategist who helped recruit Ager, said in some districts it's a risk to run a candidate who hasn't held elected office before.

"But I would argue that's a good thing, especially when the Democrats just took the big hit we did," Barnette said. "We have to look in the mirror and say, 'Let's try something new.'"

In a district where nearly 62% of residents live in very low-density areas, Barnette believes Ager's identity — as a business owner, coach and father with deep local roots — could cut through. His unpolished, direct style, he says, may resonate more than a polished political résumé.

In the video launching his campaign, Ager shows flooding on the farm and is seen on the porch of his home, feeding chickens, driving a tractor and spending time with his wife and three sons.

"I'm not flashy, but I'm honest," he says in the video.

Ager doesn't call himself a Democrat in the roughly two-minute video and rarely used the word during a

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three-hour interview. Still, his ties to the party run deep: His brother serves in the state House, following in the footsteps of their father. His grandfather served six years in the U.S. House.

Asked whether that might be a liability in the district, Ager shrugged: "Then don't vote for me."

Trump's big bill could reshape a conservative district in Michigan

In western Michigan, state Sen. Sean McCann is a different kind of candidate from Ager. He's buttoned-up and soft-spoken, with a long resume in elected office and deep roots in Kalamazoo, having served for a decade on the city commission before winning a seat in the state House in 2010.

In a district anchored by conservative and religious values, Democrats see McCann as the kind of steady, experienced figure who can make inroads — especially as backlash builds to Trump's tax bill, which includes deep spending cuts.

At a recent meeting at Kalamazoo's Family Health Center, where nearly 65% of patients rely on Medicaid, the center's president warned the proposed Medicaid cuts would be devastating.

"It's about being home in the community and listening to our community's values — and carrying those to Washington," McCann said.

The district is represented by Republican Rep. Bill Huizenga, who won reelection by nearly 12 percentage points in 2022. But Huizenga hasn't said whether he'll seek another term, and Trump carried the district by only 5.5 percentage points in 2024.

Democrats hope strong ties help elsewhere

Across the country, Democrats are watching similar races in places like Iowa and Kentucky, where local candidates with strong community ties are running. In Iowa's 2nd District, state Rep. Lindsay James — a fourth-term lawmaker and Presbyterian pastor — is weighing a run in the northeast part of the state. In Kentucky's 6th, which includes Lexington and Richmond, former federal prosecutor Zach Dembo is running his first campaign, describing himself as a political outsider.

It's a mix of profiles: Ager, the farmer-turned-candidate feeding neighbors after a hurricane. McCann, the public servant meeting with health workers in his hometown. And others like them trying to reconnect a skeptical electorate.

"Yes, the Democratic Party has some taint to it," Ager said. "But when I go talk to Republicans who are friends that I've known forever, there's genuine admiration and mutual respect for each other. And that comes from being in this community forever."

Bolivia heads to a presidential runoff as 2 decades of left-wing dominance ends

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Bolivia's presidential vote headed to an unprecedented runoff after elections Sunday that ended more than two decades of left-wing dominance in the Andean nation but signaled voters' trepidation about a major lurch to the right.

A dark horse centrist, Sen. Rodrigo Paz, drew more votes than the right-wing front-runners, although not enough to secure an outright victory, early results showed.

Paz, a former mayor who has sought to soften the edges of the opposition's push for tough austerity to rescue Bolivia from a looming economic collapse, will face off against right-wing former President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, who finished second. Bolivia holds the presidential runoff — its first since its 1982 return to democracy — on Oct. 19.

"This economic model must change," Paz declared to crowds who cheered and chanted, "Renewal!"

Paz's campaign gained unexpected traction in recent weeks as he teamed up with Edman Lara, a social media savvy ex-police captain with evangelical backing whose supporters see him as a bold leader willing to stand up to corruption in the security forces.

With over 91% of the ballots counted Sunday, Paz received 32.8% of the votes cast. Quiroga secured 26.4%. Candidates needed to surpass 50%, or 40% with a 10-point margin of victory, to avoid a runoff.

Addressing fans and flanked by family as confetti hearts sprayed from the ceiling, Quiroga congratulated

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Paz on his lead.

"What happened is unprecedented," he said. "Bolivia told the world that we want to live in a free nation."

A leftist establishment confronts its demise

The results delivered a stunning blow to Bolivia's hegemonic Movement Toward Socialism, or MAS, party, which has governed Bolivia almost uninterrupted since its founder, charismatic ex-President Evo Morales, rose to power as part of the "pink tide" of leftist leaders that swept into office across Latin America during the commodities boom of the early 2000s.

The official MAS candidate, Eduardo del Castillo, finished sixth with just 3.2% of the vote. A leftist candidate considered to be the party's best hope, 36-year-old Senate president Andrónico Rodríguez, captured 8% of the vote.

During his almost 14 years in power, Morales expanded the rights of the country's Indigenous majority, defended coca growers against U.S.-backed eradication programs and poured natural gas profits into social programs.

But the maverick leader's increasingly high-handed attempts to prolong his presidency — along with allegations of sexual relations with underage girls — soured public opinion against him.

Simmering discontent turned into a tidal wave of outrage as Bolivia's once-stable economy imploded under Morales' protégé-turned-rival, President Luis Arce.

Annual inflation rate has soared from 2% less than two years ago to 25% as of last month. A scarcity of fuel has paralyzed the country. A desperate shortage of U.S. dollars needed to pay for essential imports like wheat has crippled the economy.

As the crisis accelerated, MAS leaders traded blame. A power struggle between Morales and Arce fractured the bloc and handed the opposition its first real shot at victory in decades even as its uncharismatic candidates failed to unite.

In perhaps the most visible sign of how fed up Bolivians are with the party, leftist politicians casting their ballots across Bolivia on Sunday faced barrages of boos, insults and thrown objects.

Morales' supporters heed calls to vote null

Blocked from running by a court ruling on term limits, Morales has been holed up in his tropical stronghold of Chapare for months evading an arrest warrant for allegedly impregnating a 15-year-old girl while president.

He has branded Rodríguez a traitor for competing and encouraged his supporters to register their anger at his exclusion by casting null-and-void ballots.

His followers appeared to heed his calls: An unusually high proportion of votes, 19%, were deemed invalid. Usually the share of blank and null votes doesn't exceed 6%.

Tensions ran high as Morales' supporters mobilized against elections but voting even in the restive jungle largely passed peacefully, authorities said, with only minor disruptions.

A dynamite stick went off near the school where Rodríguez planned to cast his ballot in Chapare. When he arrived hours later, pro-Morales crowds assaulted him with bottles and rocks as he voted. Whisked away by guards, Rodríguez later called it a "difficult moment."

A centrist takes a surprise lead

The win for Paz came as a shock to a nation that had been conditioned by weeks of opinion polls to expect that the leading right-wing contenders, Quiroga and businessman Samuel Doria Medina, would capture the top two spots.

Sunday marked Doria Medina's fourth failed presidential bid. He told grim-faced supporters that he had "no regrets."

"I wanted to serve Bolivia as president, and it hasn't been possible," he said.

The promotion of Paz and his more moderate tone reflects Bolivian ambivalence about a dramatic veer to the right.

Paz has sought to distance himself from pledges by Quiroga and Doria Medina to sell Bolivia's abundant lithium reserves to foreign companies and turn to the International Monetary Fund for billions of dollars of loans.

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But he has also launched blistering attacks on the MAS party and its economic model.

"I want to congratulate the people because this is a sign of change," Paz said.

New face, old roots

Despite their grand promises, Doria Medina and Quiroga struggled to stir up voter excitement.

Bolivians associate them both with the U.S.-backed neoliberal administrations that Morales repudiated when he stormed to office in 2006, declaring an end to Bolivia's 20-year experiment with free-market capitalism.

"If they couldn't govern well before, what makes us think they'll do it now?" asked Yaitzel Poma, 30, referring to Paz's right-wing rivals as she celebrated along the main avenue of Bolivia's capital of La Paz on Sunday. "We have to learn from the past to make better choices."

After 20 years of Morales' populist, state-directed policies, Bolivia faces a return to belt-tightening. After years of alignment with world powers like China and Russia, Bolivia seems set to reconcile with the United States.

Paz supporters have described the former mayor Bolivia's southern town of Tarija as a fresh face with new ideas.

"We want new people, new proposals, another chance for young people," said 38-year-old Jaqueline Cachaca, a Paz supporter who lost her job at a bank this year amid a wave of layoffs and now sells street food.

But Paz, too, has deep ties to Bolivia's old political elite. The 57-year-old lawmaker has had a long career in politics — running for senator with Quiroga's right-wing party in 2014.

He's the son of former President Jaime Paz Zamora, who began his political career as a co-founder of the Revolutionary Left Movement, a radical party persecuted under the bloody military dictatorship of Hugo Banzer in the 1970s, before striking a pact with Banzer's right-wing party in order to become president from 1989 to 1993.

Doria Medina served as his minister of planning in that government, which oversaw a series of privatizations that devastated local industry.

"What we're doing is moving back in time," said Kathryn Ledebur, director of the Andean Information Network, a Bolivian research group. "This is not a new actor with dynamic policies. He's a surrogate for the reconstruction of the traditional right."

A timeline of territorial shifts in Russia's war on Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's troops are continuing their slow war of attrition in eastern and northern Ukraine, even as the conflict enters a pivotal phase with a series of high-level meetings that are part of U.S. President Donald Trump's push for peace.

In the three-and-a-half years since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the front line has continued to move slowly with some unexpected strikes also redrawing the map.

Here is a look at some of the main events in the conflict.

Feb. 24, 2022 — Russian President Vladimir Putin launches an invasion of Ukraine from the north, east and south. Russian troops quickly reach Kyiv's outskirts, but their attempts to capture the capital and other cities in the northeast meet stiff resistance.

March 5, 2022 — Russian advances toward Kyiv and Kherson reach their height. The port city of Mariupol is surrounded.

April 2, 2022 — Ukraine defeats Russian forces in Kyiv after throwing them back in Chernihiv.

Aug. 29, 2022 — Ukraine's first counteroffensive starts in the east and south.

Sept. 30, 2022 — Russia illegally annexes Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine, even though it doesn't fully control either of the four.

September to November 2022 — Ukrainian forces reclaim vast parts of the Kharkiv, Mykolaiv and Kherson regions in the first counteroffensive, including the city of Kherson itself.

May 22, 2023 — Russia claims control of Bakhmut after months of fighting.

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June 6, 2023 — As Ukraine's long-anticipated second counteroffensive starts, the Russian-controlled Kak-hovka Dam explodes, sending a wall of water into southern Ukraine and upending Ukrainian battle plans.

Fall 2023 — The second Ukrainian counteroffensive ends, with little change to the front line.

Feb. 18, 2024 — Russian forces take complete control of the eastern city of Avdiivka after months of combat.

April 19, 2024 — The U.S. House of Representatives approves \$61 billion package for Ukraine after months of delay.

May 10, 2024 — Russia launches a new offensive in the northeastern region of Kharkiv, capturing a string of villages and opening a new front in the war.

Aug. 6, 2024 — Ukraine launches a lightning incursion into Russia's Kursk region, holding territory along the border in an unexpected and embarrassing episode for the Kremlin.

Jan. 20, 2025 — Trump is inaugurated as the 47th president of the United States. His election raises uncertainty as to whether Washington will continue to support Ukraine.

April 26, 2025 — Moscow says all Ukrainian troops have been forced out from Russia's Kursk region. Several weeks later, Putin visits the area in a show of strength and is filmed speaking with local volunteers.

June 1, 2025 — Ukraine strikes airfields deep inside Russia by launching drones that have been secretly stored and transported across the country on the back of trucks. The attack is codenamed Operation Spider Web.

Summer 2025 — Russia and Ukraine both step up drone strikes with the ability to strike deep into each other's territory.

June 30, 2025 — Russia says it has taken full control of Ukraine's Luhansk, one of four regions that Moscow illegally annexed in September 2022. July 31, 2025 — Russia says it has taken full control of the strategically important Ukrainian city of Chasiv Yar after a grinding, months-long assault.

August 2025 — Russian forces continue their push in the Donetsk region, where the Kremlin has focused the bulk of military efforts, capturing small villages and closing in on Pokrovsk, a strategically important city.

Aug. 15, 2025 — Putin meets Trump in Alaska for the first Russia-U.S. summit in four years to discuss ending the war in Ukraine. Zelenskyy and European officials say Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw from the remaining 30% of the Donetsk region that it controls as part of a deal.

Follow The Associated Press for full coverage of the war.

Today in History: August 19, last U.S. combat troops leave Iraq

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 19, the 231st day of 2025. There are 134 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On Aug. 19, 2010, the last American combat brigade exited Iraq, seven years and five months after a U.S.-led invasion marked the beginning of the Iraq War.

Also on this date:

In 1692, four men and one woman were hanged after being convicted of witchcraft at Salem in the Province of Massachusetts Bay; the story of one of the men, John Proctor, inspired Arthur Miller's play "The Crucible."

In 1807, Robert Fulton's North River Steamboat arrived in Albany, two days after leaving New York on its maiden voyage.

In 1812, the USS Constitution defeated the British frigate HMS Guerriere off Nova Scotia during the War of 1812, earning the nickname "Old Ironsides."

In 1814, during the War of 1812, British forces landed at Benedict, Maryland, with the objective of capturing Washington, D.C.

In 1854, 31 U.S. soldiers were killed after one of the soldiers fatally shot Brule Lakota Chief Conquering Bear, sparking the First Sioux War.

In 1909, Indianapolis Motor Speedway hosted its first automobile race.

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In 1934, German voters approved the vesting of sole executive power in Adolf Hitler.

In 1955, torrential rains caused by Hurricane Diane resulted in severe flooding in the northeastern U.S., claiming some 200 lives.

In 1960, a tribunal in Moscow convicted American U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers of espionage. (Although sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, Powers was returned to the United States in 1962 as part of a prisoner exchange.)

In 1980, 301 people aboard Saudia Flight 163 died as the jetliner made a fiery emergency return to the Riyadh airport.

In 2013, South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius was indicted in Pretoria, South Africa, on charges of murder and illegal possession of ammunition for the shooting death of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, at his home on Valentine's Day 2013; Pistorius maintained he'd mistaken her for an intruder. (Pistorius would be found guilty of murder and sentenced to prison; he was released on parole in January 2024.)

Today's Birthdays: Former tennis player & coach Renee Richards is 91. Actor Jill St. John is 85. Author Jack Canfield is 81. Rock singer Ian Gillan (Deep Purple) is 80. Former President Bill Clinton is 79. Actor Gerald McRaney is 78. Actor Jim Carter ("Downton Abbey") is 77. Tipper Gore, ex-wife of former Vice President Al Gore, is 77. Rock bassist John Deacon (Queen) is 74. Actor-director Jonathan Frakes is 73. Political consultant Mary Matalin is 72. Actor Peter Gallagher is 70. Actor Adam Arkin is 69. Actor Martin Donovan is 68. Football Hall of Famer Anthony Munoz is 67. Musician Ivan Neville is 66. Football Hall of Famer Morten Andersen is 65. Actor John Stamos is 62. Actor Kyra Sedgwick is 60. Actor Kevin Dillon is 60. Country singer Lee Ann Womack is 58. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella is 58. Country singer Clay Walker is 56. Rapper Fat Joe is 55. Olympic gold medal tennis player Mary Joe Fernandez is 54. Actor Erika Christensen is 43. Actor Melissa Fumero is 43. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Lindsey Jacobellis (jay-kuh-BEHL'-ihs) is 40. Author Veronica Roth is 37. Rapper-TV personality Romeo is 36. Actor Ethan Cutkosky (TV: "Shameless") is 26.