

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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.



THERE ARE TWO THINGS  
WE GET EVERYDAY  
WHEN WE WAKE UP-  
A CHANCE AND A CHOICE.

## 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.

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
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# 1440

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

## DC Crime Investigation

The Justice Department has launched an investigation into allegations that Washington, DC, police have falsified data to artificially lower crime rates.

The announcement comes a week after President Donald Trump deployed over 800 National Guard troops to combat crime in DC. Police data finds violent crime is down 27% since last year, with homicides down 11%. Trump has questioned the findings, citing the suspension of police commander Michael Pulliam, who is accused of manipulating crime data. The head of the DC Police Union also maintains that crimes are being deliberately undercounted or logged as lesser offenses (for example, classifying a carjacking as a theft). Mayor Muriel Bowser (D) says anomalies in the data appear to be limited to Pulliam's district.

Separately, six states—Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia—are deploying over 1,100 National Guard troops to support federal efforts in DC.

## Air Canada Strike Ends

Air Canada slowly restarted operations yesterday after reaching a tentative deal with its striking flight attendants union. Some of its roughly 700 daily flights resumed at 4 pm ET, but Canada's largest airline said it could take up to 10 days to restore full service.

About 10,000 flight attendants walked off the job early Saturday, demanding higher wages to offset inflation and pay for pre- and post-flight duties. Air Canada is among several airlines that have historically only paid flight attendants when a flight is in the air. While the terms of yesterday's agreement have not been disclosed as of this writing, the union confirmed it guarantees compensation for groundwork and instructed members to cooperate with the resumption of service. The new contract now awaits ratification by union members.

Over 500,000 travelers were affected by the nearly four-day strike.

## Sanctuary in Transit

A historic wooden church in northern Sweden is being moved across the town of Kiruna to make way for the expansion of the world's largest underground iron ore mine. The two-day operation is relocating the church about 3 miles to Kiruna's new town center, part of a decadeslong plan to shift the entire community. Mining beneath Kiruna by the state-owned company LKAB since 1910 has destabilized the ground, causing subsidence.

Built in 1912, the red-painted Lutheran church is one of Sweden's best-known landmarks, blending neo-Gothic architecture with Indigenous Sami motifs. The \$52M relocation is funded by LKAB. Engineers lifted the 130-foot-wide, 115-foot-tall structure from its foundation and placed it on a hydraulic transporter for the journey.

The event has drawn national attention, including a visit from King Carl XVI Gustaf and a performance by Sweden's 2025 Eurovision entry, KAJ. The church is expected to reopen in 2026.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Nexstar, the media giant with 200 owned or partner TV stations, purchases rival Tegna in \$6.2B deal; newly combined company's stations will cover 80% of TV households in the US.

Dr. Phil's media company sued by their distribution partner for alleged fraud and breach of contract over 10-year, \$500M deal.

"Stranger Things" creators Matt and Ross Duffer will depart Netflix in April 2026 after signing four-year deal with Paramount for exclusive rights to their upcoming projects.

## Science & Technology

Tech giant Nvidia reportedly developing China-bound AI chip that is more powerful than the H20, which the Trump administration approved last week for sale on Chinese markets.

James Webb Telescope discovers previously unknown moon orbiting Uranus, bringing the planet's moon count to 29; the moon's relatively tiny 6-mile diameter rendered it invisible to less advanced telescopes.

Megalibrary of nanoparticles helps researchers quickly find abundant, cheap alternative to iridium, a rare metal critical to clean hydrogen energy production; could accelerate discovery of commercially viable materials for various applications.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.6%, Dow +0.0%, Nasdaq -1.5%).

Wyoming becomes first state to issue a stablecoin—cryptocurrencies tied to the value of a traditional currency.

Trump administration expands 50% steel and aluminum tariffs to include more than 400 additional products, including items such as car parts, fire extinguishers, and specialty chemicals.

Databricks reportedly raising funding round that values the data analytics company at over \$100B; would make Databricks the fourth private company to surpass the \$100B mark, following SpaceX, ByteDance, and OpenAI.

What defines a recession? Tomorrow's 1440 Business & Finance newsletter explores significant downturns in the economy. [Subscribe here for free!](#)

## Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump rules out sending US troops to Ukraine to provide security guarantees to the country, will consider providing air support.

Transportation Security Administration pilots biometric "eGates," aiming to skip podium where an agent verifies a passenger's identity before the security screening; system is being tested in DC, Georgia, and Washington airports.

Food and Drug Administration issues recall for Great Value frozen shrimp products, sold at Walmart, after containers arriving at four US ports from Indonesia test positive for cesium-137, a radioactive isotope.



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**It was a very foggy morning for the first day of school.**

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## Groton Area Girls Soccer Team

Pictured in back, left to right, are Mia Crank, Tori Schuster, Emerlee Jones, Taryn Traphagen, Jaedyn Penning, Brenna Imrie, Halee Harder, Carly Gilbert, McKenna Tietz and Coach Matt Baumgartner; in front, left to right, are Addison Steffes, Addison Hoffman, Zoe Olson, Andi Iverson, Sydney Locke, Jerica Locke, Libby Johnson, Avery Crank, Amelia Ewalt, Ryelle Gilbert and Ashlynn Warrington. (Courtesy Photo)

## Groton Area girls shut out Garretson

The Groton Area girls soccer team got its first win Tuesday at Garretson with a 4-0 win.

Coach Matt Baumgartner said, "After a 40 minute lightning delay, we got started and attacked early and often. Ryelle Gilbert opening the scoring in the 6th minute after Jerica Lockes' quick throw in found McKenna Tietz in the penalty area who found space and slotted a nice pass across for Ryelle Gilbert to tap home. The second half finished with a smart score from McKenna Tietz and Jerica Locke with two of her own brilliant plays to cap the scoring out at four. "

"Next game up is Friday in Groton 4pm kickoff vs 0-1 Belle Fourche and Saturday is the big game of the weekend vs. 2-0 St. Thomas More at the NSU Pavilion, free admission is being granted so we'd love to see a packed crowd at 11 a.m. and for the 2-0 Groton boys at 1 p.m.!"

Final: Groton Area 4, Garretson 0

1st Half : Groton Area 1, Garretson 0

(1) Ryelle Gilbert assisted by Tietz

2nd Half: Groton Area 3, Garretson 0

(2) Tietz assisted by Ashlynn Warrington

(3) Jerica Locke assisted by Mia Crank

(4) Jerica Locke assisted by Brenna Imrie

Jaedyn Penning with the shutout victory and 5 saves in between the pipes.



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**y Elizabeth Varin**

The Groton City Council moved forward on several projects during its Tuesday evening meeting, with the largest price tag totaling \$283,064.

The council approved contracting with Irby to purchase a new electric metering system for the city. Irby was the only sealed bid received, though the company included two options to choose from.

The city approved the proposal, which included \$283,064 for the electric meter system, along with a \$21,462.48 annual maintenance fee.

Discussion about a new electric metering system stretched back nearly two years. Mayor Scott Hanlon asked Electric Utility Supervisor Todd Gay how long it would be before the new system was available. Gay replied his guess would be nine months to a year.

Council members also tabled discussion about adding a stop sign at First Street and Second Avenue.

The council had discussed possibly adding a stop sign at the intersection after plans to build a deck on a property at the intersection sparked concerns over visibility.

Homeowner Karen DeVine told the council she doesn't think her proposed deck will cause issues, but said she supports having a stop sign there. Some people turning off of Highway 37 onto Second Avenue race by without slowing at the intersection.

"I see it, and I support putting a stop sign there," she said.

Councilman Brian Bahr asked if the police chief had any input, to which Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich said the chief's opinion is the same as with previous stop sign discussion, which has been no to new stop signs.

Heinrich added, though, that "as a person that lives by that intersection as well, I would agree a stop sign there would probably not be the worst idea. A lot of people fly down that road."

Councilman Jon Cutler asked DeVine when the deck will be built, and she replied that the project, which had been approved with a variance by the Planning and Zoning Commission, has had that decision appealed to the council. It is going before the council at its next meeting in September.

Cutler said it makes more sense to wait until the appeal is decided and the deck is built before taking further action. That way, they can see if it really does block traffic, and, if it does, take action from there. He motioned to table the topic, which was approved with a unanimous vote.

The council also agreed to transfer a piece of property to the Groton Development Corporation for the future construction of an indoor activity center. The exact location of that project is still under consideration, and the land would revert back to the city if funding can't be secured by December 31, 2026.

In other business, the council heard an update on a previous discussion of adding permanent radar signs along Highways 12 and 37. No action was taken on the agenda item.

- Nancy Larsen, manager of The Pantry, spoke during the public comment section of the meeting, expressing thanks for the city's support for the food pantry and Common Cents Community Thrift Store. Larsen told the council she plans to retire after three years. A volunteer will take charge for now at the thrift store, and it should be business as usual. Council members expressed their thanks for the work Larsen and the other volunteers have done. Mayor Scott Hanlon said it's a no-brainer for the city to help. "If it's for the community, it's for everyone. It makes sense." Councilwoman Karyn Babcock added, "It makes Common Sense."

- The council approved working with Kogel Archaeological Consulting Services. The company will perform a survey of the area that is part of the upcoming sewer infrastructure improvement project. The cost for Kogel's service proposal will not exceed \$7,000, according to the contract.

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## Service Notice: Arlowene Hitchcock

Services for Arlowene Hitchcock, 98, of Conde will be 10:00 a.m., Friday, August 29th at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ferney. Pastor Bob Moeller will officiate. Burial will follow in Sunset Memorial Gardens, Aberdeen under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the chapel on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m. Arlowene passed away August 17, 2025 at Avantara Groton.



Groton  
Area  
Tigers  
Groton, SD

**GDILIVE**

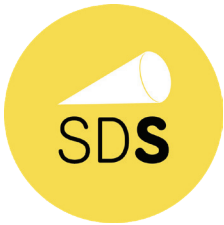


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For more info: [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)

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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Power outages across South Dakota government stymie services statewide

**State still looking into extent of issues, reasons for power losses**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER AND JOHN HULT**

South Dakota state government telephone systems and websites went down across several departments Tuesday, limiting systems and services.

One woman filling out driver's licensing paperwork at the Sioux Falls One Stop Tuesday afternoon yelled in exasperation over the news. There was no signage to warn her driver's license exams were closed, just an empty waiting room and blank TV screens.

She was informed about the closure by a passerby, and later a state Department of Motor Vehicles staff member.

People looking to get marriage licenses and vehicle registrations experienced similar hassles Tuesday across South Dakota.

As of Tuesday evening, the reason for the power outage behind the state's technical difficulties – and people's frustrations – was still unknown.

Bureau of Information and Telecommunications spokesperson Lisa Rahja said it's not clear how long the power outage will impact state operations and services, she said.

"The event affected all state-hosted services and some network communications," Rahja said in an emailed statement. "The state engineer and BIT technical staff have investigated the root cause and are taking measures to remediate."

The data center is not a single location, Rahja later told South Dakota Searchlight, but rather the term used by the IT bureau to refer to all the hardware scattered across multiple locations and connected to the state's communications network.

Rahja said the state was still looking into the cause and extent of the outages. But the situation was not weather-related, she said, and that "there's no reason to believe there's any other external factors."

"We're trying to really get that back up and running, but we can't even nail down what part of it is having the issues, because it's all very large and complex for the entire state."

An incident command center was launched Tuesday to streamline communications between the bureau and the office of the state engineer as they work to resolve the issue.

#### **Outages across multiple departments**

Some websites were entirely down Tuesday, including websites for the secretary of state, attorney general, auditor, treasurer, bureau of finance and management, as well as departments of social services,



**The waiting room at the driver licensing is empty on Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025. Exams were closed due to a state-wide power outage for government systems.** (Makenzie Huber/South

Dakota Searchlight)



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education, agriculture and natural resources, tourism, tribal relations and public safety.

The state's medical marijuana page was down even as the state's Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee met in Pierre. SD.net, the state-run service that streams government meetings, only streamed portions of that committee's Tuesday meeting. Coverage was also spotty for the audio stream of the state's Rules Review committee.

South Dakota's transparency website, Open SD, and the website that hosts meeting agendas, minutes and calendars for dozens of state regulatory and oversight boards and commissions were also affected.

Calls to the state Department of Health, which maintains the medical marijuana page, were dropped throughout the day. The state Department of Public Safety posted on Facebook that it would close driver's license exam stations until network service returned. A note on the Department of Revenue homepage said the department and clients were having issues accessing the state's online filing system.

The state Legislature and Unified Judicial System sites were working, though the UJS homepage said "connectivity issues" might prevent some online features from working, including the state's eCourts system.

In a post on X, Attorney General Marty Jackley apologized for a lack of public access to his office's services "You may not be able to reach our office at this time," Jackley said.

## Local impacts

Local agencies that rely on South Dakota state network access were impacted on Tuesday. The Minnehaha County Treasurer's office in Sioux Falls, for example, was unable to access the records needed to issue license plates and vehicle registrations.

"Computer issue — no registrations can be printed," a sign at the treasurer's office read. "We can review your paperwork."

Down the hall at the Minnehaha County Register of Deeds, county employees were unable to access any state records on births, deaths or marriages. People could pay in advance for records they'd need to get at a later date, Assistant Treasurer Vicki Fuglsby said, but only if they paid cash.

The system for accepting credit card payments is tied to the state and wasn't working, Fuglsby said.

"We had to turn away people looking for marriage licenses," Fuglsby said.

The Lawrence County Treasurer's office in Deadwood, like every other Treasurer's office in the state, was unable to print vehicle registrations on Tuesday. Typically, there's a mailing fee for customers who ask that records be sent, said Sally Atkinson, the First Deputy Treasurer in Lawrence County.

On Tuesday, attendants took checks and prepared paperwork for registrations, titles and the like, and offered to send the documents without the fee.

"It's not their fault. They drove up here to get this done, and now they can't," Atkinson said.

*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.*

*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.*

## Board backtracks on effort to remove student growth goals from SD teacher evaluation requirements

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A plan to remove an expectation of student growth from South Dakota's rules governing teacher evaluation rules stalled Monday.

Student growth is one performance outcome among many used to track student achievement. It's also part of the mix of factors used to measure teacher quality.

The South Dakota Board of Education Standards voted to rescind a previous decision to hold a public hearing on the effort to remove student growth from teacher evaluations. The rules will continue as they exist for now.

That's primarily because state Department of Education Secretary Joseph Graves said some state Board of Education Standards members shared concerns after the group approved the department's plan in May. He also expected the initiative to fail a legislative committee hearing required for the change, since the committee rejected a similar proposal last year.

The revision would have removed a requirement that teacher performance evaluations use "student learning objectives," which are student educational growth goals. The objectives are set by the teacher and school administration. The standard is beneficial for some school districts, but not for others, Graves said.

Graves previously told the board that the specific student growth piece of the evaluation has become "increasingly trite and meaningless" with some teachers or schools setting low standards they can easily meet.

Department officials plan to review the rules and bring the topic back to the board later in the year. That will allow the department to educate the board about why the state tied student achievement to teacher evaluation and what other options there are.

Board president Steve Perkins was the sole vote against the effort at the board's May meeting, saying he wanted another option presented and more time to study the issue. On Monday, he said he'd welcome a review of the policy.

"There is a problem, and this evaluation system is kind of broken for many districts," Perkins said. "If we're going to adopt a rule on it, we kind of need to understand it."

*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 Sioux Falls School District educator reads a book to junior kindergarten students in a classroom.** (Courtesy of Sioux Falls School District)

## Free AI testing platform rolled out to federal employees

BY: PAIGE GROSS

As a part of President Donald Trump's AI Action Plan, which rolled out at the end of last month, the U.S. General Services Administration launched a platform Thursday that will allow government employees to experiment with artificial intelligence tools.

USAi.gov allows federal workers to use generative AI tools, like chatbots, code builders and document summarization, for free. The platform is meant to help government employees determine which tools could be helpful to procure for their current work, and how they might customize them to their specific needs, a statement from the administration said.

The tools will come primarily from AI companies Anthropic, OpenAI, Google and Meta, FedScoop reported. OpenAI initially announced a partnership with the federal government last week, saying any federal agencies would be able to use ChatGPT Enterprise for \$1 per agency for the next year.

"USAi means more than access — it's about delivering a competitive advantage to the American people," said GSA Deputy Administrator Stephen Ehikian, in the statement.

The GSA called the platform a "centralized environment for experimentation," and said it will track performance and adoption strategies in a dashboard.

The platform's creation follows Trump's recently released plan to "accelerate AI innovation" by removing red tape around "onerous" regulations, and get AI into the hands of more workers, including federal employees.

The plan also calls for AI to be more widely adopted in manufacturing, science and in the Department of Defense, and proposes increased funding and regulatory sandboxes — separate trial spaces, like the USAi platform — for development.

A GSA official told FedScoop that before being added to the platform, AI models will be evaluated for safety, like whether a model outputs hate speech, its performance accuracy, and how it was red-teamed, or tested for durability.

But the GSA didn't say how the introduction of USAi.gov would affect the federal government's current tech procurement process, FedRAMP. The program, developed with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), provides a standardized way for government agencies to assess the safety and effectiveness of new tech tools.

"USAi helps the government cut costs, improve efficiency, and deliver better services to the public, while maintaining the trust and security the American people expect," said GSA Chief Information Officer David Shive in a statement.

*Paige Gross is a Philadelphia-based reporter covering the evolving technology industry for States Newsroom. Her coverage involves how congress and individual states are regulating new and growing technologies, how technology plays a role in our everyday lives and what people ought to know to interact with technology.*



**OpenAI CEO Sam Altman (right), accompanied by President Donald Trump, speaks during a news conference at the White House on Jan. 21, 2025. Trump announced an investment in artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure.** (Photo by

Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)



## Cities across the US are embracing AI guidelines for local government workers

BY: PAIGE GROSS

While some states and the federal government take their time in considering how artificial intelligence can and should be used, municipalities across the U.S. have been forging their own way in making AI policies for their government employees.

"AI is generally useful," Boston's Chief Innovation Officer Santiago Garces said. "But it is a set of technologies that also carries unique risks that need to be considered. And I think that our employees are generally concerned about accuracy, privacy, security and intellectual property."

Boston was among the first cities in the U.S. to make a set of guidelines for its employees, rolling out a document outlining the purpose of generative AI in government work, sample use cases, and a set of principles in May 2023.

Garces and his team watched the rollout and quick growth of ChatGPT in 2022, and believed that AI tools were going to have widespread adoption within most industries very quickly. Use of AI felt inevitable in most of the tedious or repetitive tasks of government employees, and Garces said they wanted to work with their employees to figure out the ethical use of AI, instead of resisting it.

"The notion behind the guidelines was enabling this city to be able to get into this period of responsible experimentation, so that we could learn," Garces said. "Instead of just waiting to see what happened, we would look at managing the risk in a way that was proactive, and engage with all of our workforce as partners in learning."



**Mayor Michelle Wu signs the Technology Modernization Executive Order on Aug. 18 to accelerate improvements to the City of Boston's tech infrastructure and digital processes, making it easier to harness innovation and keep projects moving forward.**

(Photo courtesy of the Boston Department of Innovation & Technology)

### What do the guidelines say?

Boston is far from alone in enacting its own AI policy. Many other cities and counties across the U.S. have developed similar policies in recent years, usually in the form of "guidelines" that steer how a government employee may evaluate AI's accuracy or efficiency with specific tasks.

Guidelines can mirror some state legislation, and dictate when not to use the technology, like with confidential information or in making life-altering decisions such as hiring. The guidelines are meant to stay open-ended and to be flexible with changing state regulations, several city tech officials said.

In Lebanon, New Hampshire, the city's AI policy is purposefully meant to be changed and shaped with the influence of state or city laws, Melanie McDonough, the city's chief innovation and AI officer, said.

"We're trying to build a policy that's robust, that can withstand the pace at which AI is changing," she said. "Policy is harder to change. Guidelines can be updated more frequently just to say, 'oh, be aware, we're actually not allowing the use of this particular feature internally because it doesn't have enough protection.'"

The city's policy, first released in December 2023, drew a lot from the Biden-era 2022 White House AI Blueprint. It's centered on how city workers may use AI operationally, how they can center privacy and protection in their use and how they may navigate new AI as it becomes more pervasive in everyday life.

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Boston's guidelines outline the purpose of generative AI, and call it a tool — "We are responsible for the outcomes of our tools," the policy says. The guidelines list several principles including empowerment, inclusion, respect, transparency, accountability, innovation, risk management, privacy, security and public purpose, and includes a list of "dos" and "do not's" in how to uphold those principles while using AI.

"We were thinking about how we capture the risk and opportunity specific to the technology in a way that does not create conflicting or additional things that might conflict with existing regulations," Garces said of Boston's policy.

Tempe, Arizona released a similar policy for its city workers just a month after Boston in 2023. Its principles also include ideas about the purpose and scope of the technology, and talks about human-centered approaches to using AI, and human responsibility with AI outcomes.

One of its creators, Stephanie Deitrick, Tempe's chief data and analytics officer, said she began thinking about an AI framework about a year and a half before the city released it, as she was researching data, bias and inequity when it came to machine learning algorithms. When ChatGPT released, Deitrick said she realized that generative AI chatbots would soon be in the hands of everyday people, and she felt the city needed safeguards.

All new AI tools are reviewed by a governance committee, Tempe's Director of Information Technology Jared Morris said, and state and federal legislation is reviewed and incorporated as needed. Though Tempe's policy specifically talks about AI use, Deitrick said it's broad enough to apply to any technology city workers use.

"These are our values, and we are going to make sure that whatever governance we have aligns with these values," she said of Tempe's policy. "And then it lays out the responsibility to the city, IT, the departments and the users that they have to participate in governance, and they are active users who are actively responsible for what they're doing."

## AI uses in local government

Garces' team is looking to update its 2023 guidelines, and surveyed its workforce this spring about how they currently use AI.

Of those surveyed, 60% of employees said that they use AI in some form at least once a week, and 78% said that they were interested in learning more about generative AI. Most of the current uses are for drafting memos, proofreading emails, and some data analysis or code generation, Garces said.

A few employees use multimodal models that can help generate images or videos. Garces said one of the city's departments recently used Google's Veo 3 to create a 20-second video about best practices on trash disposal. A preliminary quote for the educational video was around \$20,000 for traditional film-making, but using AI cost the department about \$30 in credits through Google, he said.

"You start seeing the potential impact in helping us do things that were either out of our reach or being able to do them faster or being able to do them for less money," Garces said.

In Tempe, city employees have about 150 different applications of AI in their work, Morris said, with employees reaching a high point of about 100,000 uses in a given month. Many of these AI uses are "off the shelf," models like ChatGPT that can assist with writing or research tasks. But others are paid models, like a partnership with AI company Axon, which does real-time object recognition that Tempe uses for a "whole of city" approach, Morris said.

For example, if someone calls into the emergency department about a person in distress in a blue car, the object recognition system can alert officials to blue cars out on the road, and get police or medical staff to them.

The city's guidelines are careful to outline the potential harms decisionmaking and generative AI tools are capable of contributing to, Morris said. Though they use object recognition, they aren't using facial recognition technology, he said.

"We're really careful, trying to be very, very careful on anything that could possibly deprive anyone of liberty or job opportunities," Morris said.

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## Why strike out on their own?

McDonough said her team found it more difficult to operate without an AI policy than with one, as she realized how important the technology was going to be. She said developing a policy for city government is different than one at the state or federal level — “we go and answer to a city council and we answer to the public.”

“In some ways, if people aren’t buying into what they’re hearing at the federal level, we don’t want them to get lost in the weeds,” she said. “Like, okay, here’s where we are. This is our policy, right here. You live in Lebanon, New Hampshire, and this is what we’re talking about.”

In Tempe, Deitrick said she felt that AI was so powerful that there was real potential for something to go wrong if the city didn’t outline how it expected its employees to use the technology.

“I think without policy and strong governance, not that mistakes won’t happen — but it just opens the door to very loose intentioned use of technology and data,” Deitrick said. “I think it makes us more intentional in what we’re doing and requires people to have the conversation.”

Garces echoes McDonough, saying that city workers might feel a pull to be more connected and responsive to their constituents than those in higher levels of government. And they may be able to act faster on societal developments, like AI, that have the power to drastically change the lives of the people in their city.

“We think that there’s a duty in trying to make sure that our constituents are informed and that they participate in these things,” Garces said.

Garces said he’d be happy for state or federal government officials to take inspiration from the policies that Boston and other cities have developed.

“My hope would be that state and federal regulators are working together with cities and not working against them,” Garces said. “Because I think that we have a lot of information and knowledge about how some of these things are starting to occur.”

*Paige Gross is a Philadelphia-based reporter covering the evolving technology industry for States Newsroom. Her coverage involves how congress and individual states are regulating new and growing technologies, how technology plays a role in our everyday lives and what people ought to know to interact with technology.*

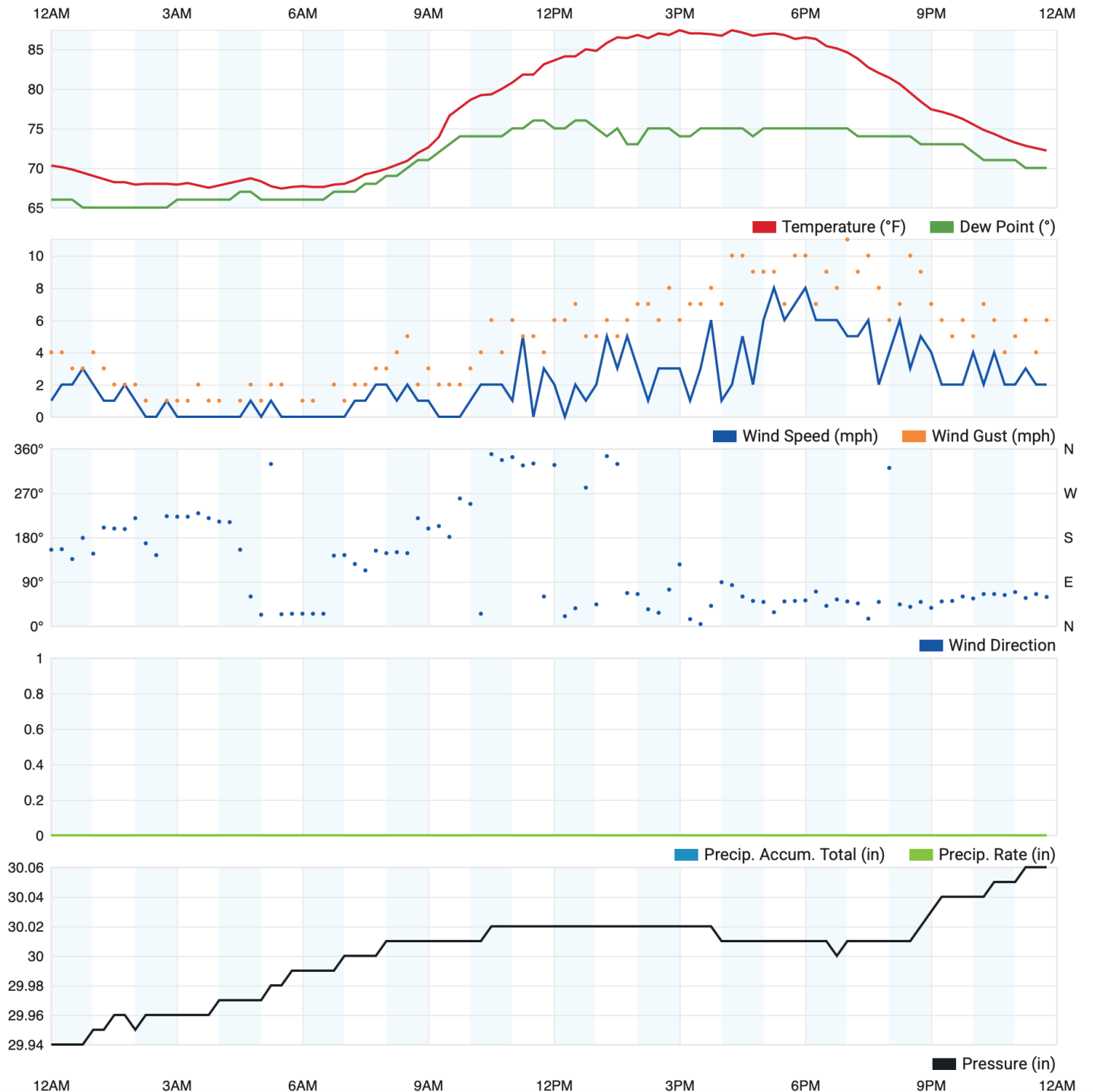


# Groton Daily Independent

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 19, 2025



# Broton Daily Independent

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Today



High: 86 °F

Patchy Fog  
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 66 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 89 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Chance  
T-storms

Thursday  
Night



Low: 60 °F

Chance  
T-storms

Friday



High: 78 °F

Sunny

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

### HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:  
Isolated to Scattered Severe  
Storms Possible

### TIMING

Late afternoon through  
the overnight

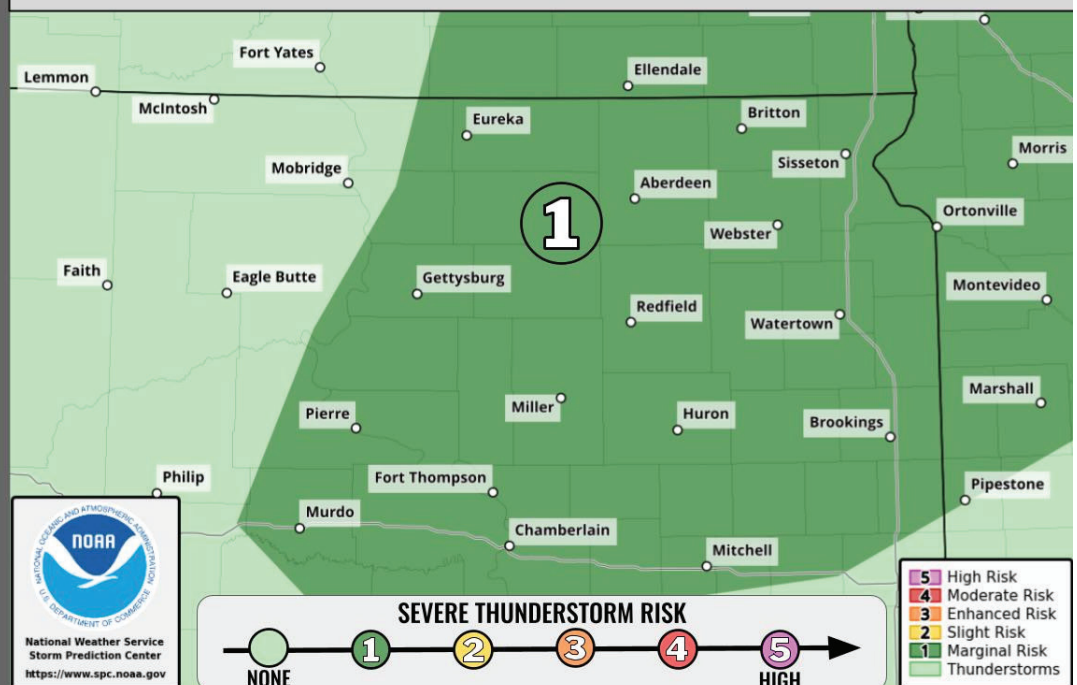
### PRIMARY THREAT



### SECONDARY THREATS



## Severe Storms Possible Thursday



There is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for isolated to scattered severe storms Thursday over central and northeastern SD from the late afternoon through the night. The primary threats will likely be damaging wind gusts of 60 mph and large hail around an inch in diameter. There is also a threat for heavy rainfall.

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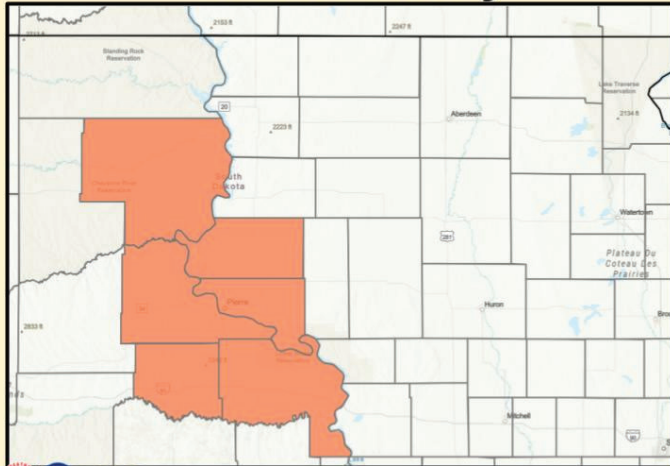
## Heat Risk and Heat Advisory for Wednesday

Category	Risk of Heat-Related Impacts
Yellow 1	Minor - This level of heat affects primarily those individuals extremely sensitive to heat, especially when outdoors without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration.
Orange 2	Moderate - This level of heat affects most individuals sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts possible in some health systems and in heat-sensitive industries.
Red 3	Major - This level of heat affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts likely in some health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure.

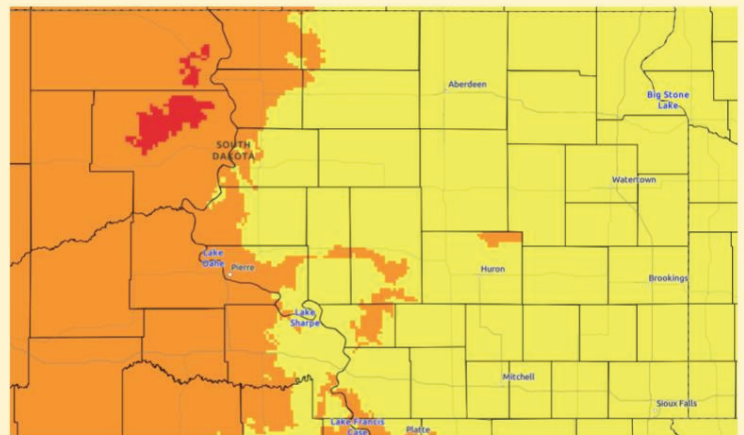
NWS Aberdeen, SD

August 20, 2025 3:51 AM

### Heat Advisory



### Today - minor to moderate and major HeatRisk



August 20, 2025

With temperatures in the mid to upper 90s over central SD causing heat index values to getting up to and above 100 degrees, the heat risk jumps up into the moderate to major heat impacts. This had lead to a heat advisory being issued for some central SD counties from 1 to 8 PM CDT.

## Practice HEAT SAFETY Wherever You Are

Heat related deaths are preventable.  
Protect yourself and others from the  
impacts of heat waves.



### Job Sites

Stay hydrated and  
take breaks in the shade  
as often as possible



### Indoors

Check up on the  
elderly, sick and those  
without AC



### Vehicles

Never leave kids or  
pets unattended -  
LOOK before you LOCK



### Outdoors

Limit strenuous outdoor  
activities, find shade,  
and stay hydrated



[weather.gov/heat](https://weather.gov/heat)



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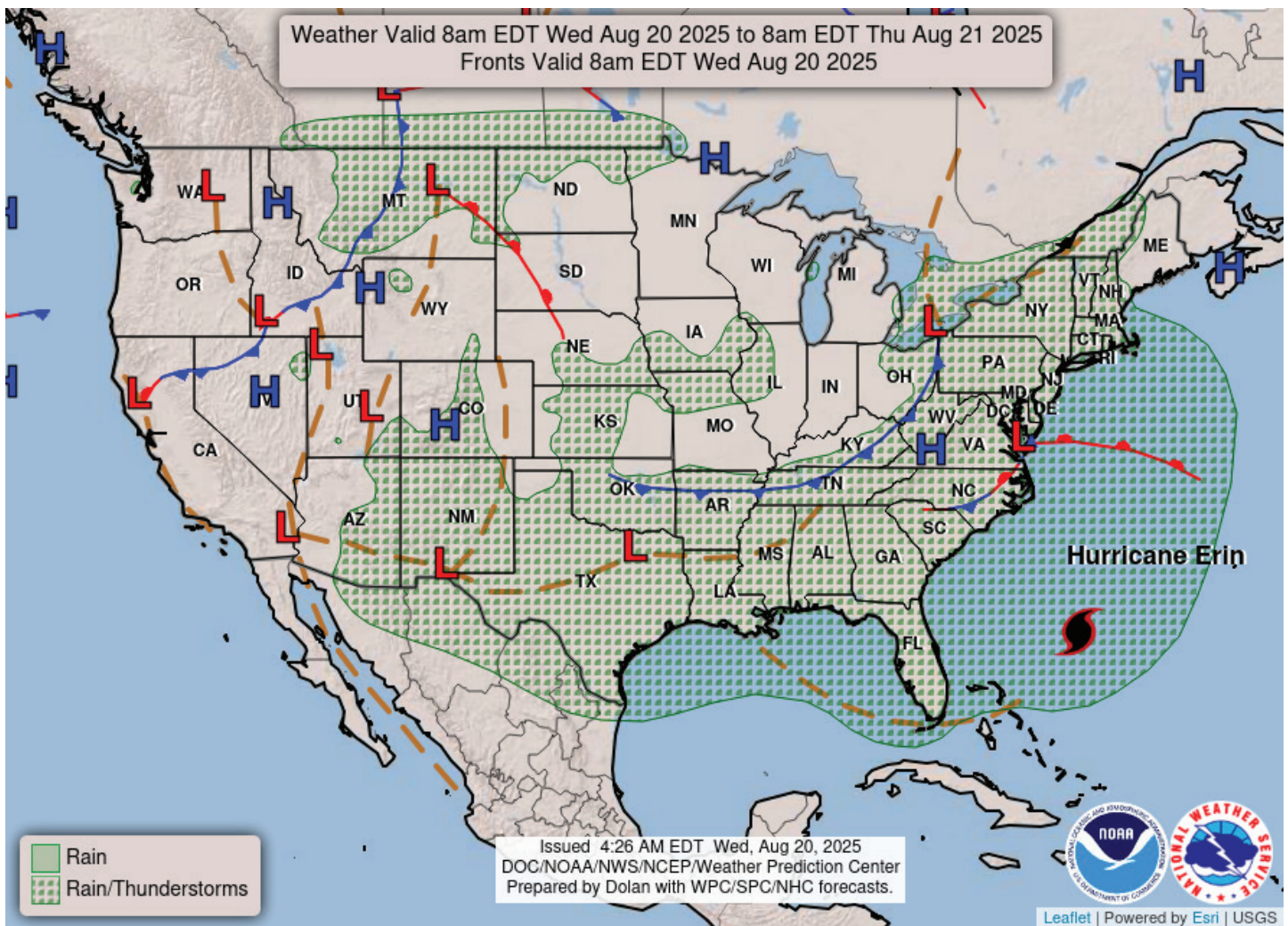
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**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, 54 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1976  
Record Low: 33 in 1950  
Average High: 82  
Average Low: 56  
Average Precip in August.: 1.44  
Precip to date in August: 4.40  
Average Precip to date: 15.54  
Precip Year to Date: 20.28  
Sunset Tonight: 8:32:51 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:39:41 am



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## Today in Weather History

August 20, 1904: A destructive, estimated F4 tornado moved ESE from 7 miles WNW of Willow Lake, through the town, and on into Bryant in Hamlin County, South Dakota. Most of the damage occurred in those two towns. All buildings on at least three farms were blown away. One woman died in Bryant as the tornado swept across the residential west side of town. Another man was killed just west of Willow Lake, as his farm house was scattered for miles. 1886: The 1886 Indianola Hurricane destroyed the town of Indianola, Texas and as such had a significant impact on the history and economic development of Texas. The storm ended the rivalry between Galveston and Indianola as the chief port of Texas. With the abandonment of Indianola and the unwillingness of the former residents to rebuild close to shore, Galveston became the essential Texan port until the 1900 Galveston Hurricane led to the rise of Houston as a major port. It was the fifth hurricane of the 1886 Atlantic hurricane season and one of the most intense hurricanes ever to hit the United States.

1886 - The 1886 Indianola Hurricane destroyed the town of Indianola, Texas and as such had a significant impact on the history and economic development of Texas. The storm ended the rivalry between Galveston and Indianola as the chief port of Texas. With the abandonment of Indianola and the unwillingness of the former residents to rebuild close to shore, Galveston became the essential Texan port until the 1900 Galveston Hurricane led to the rise of Houston as a major port. It was the fifth hurricane of the 1886 Atlantic hurricane season and one of the most intense hurricanes ever to hit the United States.

1910 - The big blow up of forest fires finally came to an end in Idaho. A record dry August fueled 1736 fires which burned three million acres destroying six billion board feet of timber. The fires claimed the lives of 85 persons, 78 of which were fire fighters, and consumed the entire town of Wallace. The smoke spread a third of the way around the world producing some dark days in the U.S. and Canada. The forest fires prompted federal fire protection laws. (David Ludlum)

1928 - A tornado estimated at F4 intensity initially touched down in Winnebago County, Iowa, moved to Freeborn County, Minnesota, and hit the south side of Austin, MN. Five of the six deaths were in Austin with 60 injuries.

1987 - Half a dozen cities in the Central Plains Region reported record high temperatures for the date, including Pueblo CO with a reading of 102 degrees, and Goodland KS with a high of 104 degrees. Hill City KS reached 106 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Sheridan, WY, reported a record hot temperature reading of 100 degrees. Evening thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail near Fortuna ND, and wind gusts to 70 mph near Webster SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early morning thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southeast Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma, with up to six inches reported around Tulsa OK. Some roads in the Tulsa area were closed by water 10 to 12 feet deep. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in northern Oklahoma and southern Kansas. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 75 mph in Major County OK, and hail two inches in diameter at Jennings KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



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***In his heart, a man  
plans his course, but  
the Lord determines  
his steps...***

James had unwrapped all of his birthday presents except one. It was a small truck that had a bubble of plastic over it that was sealed to a piece of cardboard.

He tried desperately to separate the plastic from the cardboard but had no success.

First, he thought he could slip his small fingernail between them — but his nail was too short. Then he tried to carefully squeeze the plastic to see if it would open up enough space for him to get his hand on the truck. That plan failed, too.

Next, he put the plastic bubble on the table and pushed on the cardboard, thinking that was the solution.

Frustrated, he looked at the little truck with teary eyes. It was a prize that became more valuable each time he tried to unwrap it.

Then he looked up at his Dad and asked, "What can I do to get my truck out of the box?"

"Well," said his Dad, "You could ask me for help."

Every plan that James had and tried failed. They all seemed sensible to him, but when he tried to make them work, nothing happened. Then he lifted his eyes and found someone who would help him to achieve his goal successfully.

In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps is great wisdom, worth accepting, and constantly applying.

We may design detailed, thorough plans to reach our goals, but when we attempt to make them work with our own strength, applying our own wisdom, we will become frustrated and discouraged when they fail.

It's essential to include the Lord in the praying and pre-planning stage and then work with Him until they are fulfilled.

Today's Prayer: Lord, we all want to succeed in everything we do. May we recognize how critical it is to always include You in everything we do, from the beginning to the end. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." Proverbs 16:9

*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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\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.19.25

10 19 24 49 68 10

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$234,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 10 Mins 2 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 DRAW: 16 Hrs 25 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.19.25

1 4 30 46 48 7

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.16.25

4 5 18 20 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.18.25

6 28 38 48 55 23

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 9 Mins 2 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 DRAW: 17 Hrs 9 Mins 2 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

### Newspapers are rescued from closure in Wyoming and South Dakota as buyers swoop in

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A dozen recently shuttered newspapers across Wyoming and South Dakota are set to publish again, after buyers stepped up within days to prevent the rural communities from becoming “news deserts” where little or no local media remains.

The swift rescues stand out in an industry where roughly two and a half newspapers disappear each week, according to a 2024 report from the Medill School of Journalism. The editor at one revived paper said his new owner saw ongoing profitability, while other outlets will be grabbed by publishers motivated by a sense of civic duty.

“It’s a little overwhelming, to be honest,” said Kayla Jessen, general manager of the Redfield Press, one of the rescued papers in South Dakota. “We’re all excited that we can bring news back to the community again.”

The turnarounds happened quickly. Illinois-based News Media Corporation announced on Aug. 6 it was immediately closing 31 outlets in five states because of financial problems. In less than two weeks, a publishing group in Wyoming said it would buy eight papers in the state, while a company in North Carolina said it would purchase four newspapers in South Dakota. Both buyers say all staff will be offered a chance to return.

The fate of other papers in Arizona, Illinois and Nebraska remains unclear.

After the closures, journalists and their communities scrambled for options to save the publications. In addition to regional news, many of the papers serve as their towns’ official outlet for legal notices.

Rural areas often don’t have local radio or TV stations, said Benjy Hamm, director at the University of Kentucky’s Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues. That can leave a lone newspaper as the only media outlet in the area.

“If it goes out, it has a significant impact on the community itself, not just the media,” Hamm said.

The publishers in Wyoming said they stepped in because they couldn’t imagine more newspapers going dark in their state.

“We believe in the importance of a newspaper in a community,” said Jen Hicks, co-publisher the Buffalo Bulletin. “We know that in communities without newspapers, that civic engagement goes down and specifically, voter participation goes down, which is a really tangible way to see the decline in civic life.”

Jen and her husband Robb Hicks said they teamed up with Rob Mortimore, president of Wyoming Papers, Inc., to enter into a purchase agreement with News Media Corporation for its eight publications in the state. Hicks declined to share how much they’ll pay for the newspapers.

In South Dakota, Benjamin Chase, managing editor of the rescued Huron Plainsman, said nearly a dozen offers came in to purchase one, two or all four of the closed newspapers. Champion Media, the North Carolina-based company, ultimately struck the deal.

“This was really an ideal situation because Champion works a lot with community and local papers,” the editor said, adding that every staff member was invited back.

Champion Media did not return requests for comment.

Chase credits buyers’ interest to the fact that the South Dakota papers have significant readership, with a combined circulation of around 10,000. The Brookings Register covers a town of nearly 25,000 people that lost its radio station last year but is home to the largest university in the state.

“This is a group of papers you’re going to immediately have audience for, and all of them are profitable and working to keep costs down,” Chase said. The Huron Plainsman and Brookings Register, which were previously dailies, will now have a print edition only two days a week.

Hamm, the professor, said it’s rare to find such speedy commitment to reviving newspapers. “It occurs,

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but it's a small number of places that actually have people step forward," he said.

Chris Kline, president of the Arizona News Media Association, said the Arizona papers are currently exploring options for local and out-of-state ownership.

## **Israel plans a new phase of war in Gaza**

By MELANIE LIDMAN and SAM METZ Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel is preparing to launch an expanded military operation in Gaza City, possibly in the coming days, even as negotiators scramble to bring Israel and Hamas to a ceasefire to end 22 months of fighting.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that the country's defense minister has approved plans to begin a new phase of operations in some of Gaza's most densely populated areas, and that it would call up 60,000 reservists and lengthen the service of an additional 20,000 reservists currently serving.

It comes as human rights groups warn that a humanitarian crisis could worsen in Gaza, where most residents have been displaced, vast neighborhoods lie in ruins, and communities are facing the threat of famine.

A military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity in line with military regulations, said that the military will be operating in parts of Gaza City where the Israeli military has not yet operated and where it believes Hamas is still active.

The official said that Israeli troops are already operating in the Zeitoun and Jabaliya neighborhoods of Gaza City to prepare the groundwork for the expanded operation, which is expected to receive approval from the chief of staff in the coming days.

Gaza City is Hamas' main military and governing stronghold and Israeli troops will be targeting Hamas' vast underground tunnel network, the official added.

Although Israel has targeted and killed much of Hamas' senior leadership, parts of the militant group are actively regrouping and carrying out attacks, including launching rockets towards Israel, the official said.

Gaza City operation could begin within days

It remains unclear when the operation will begin, but it could be a matter of days. The official said 50,000 reservists will be called up in the coming month, one of the largest mobilizations in months.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently said objective of the war is to secure the release of the remaining hostages and ensure Hamas and other militants can never again threaten Israel.

The planned offensive, first announced earlier this month, has heightened international condemnation of Israel and fueled fears of another mass displacement among Palestinians.

Netanyahu said on Aug. 9 that it would span parts of Gaza City and the central camps. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people are sheltering in the city and it holds some of the last remnants of critical infrastructure.

AP journalists saw small groups heading south from the city this week, but how many will voluntarily flee remains unclear. Some said they were waiting to see how events unfold before moving yet again, and many insist nowhere is safe from airstrikes.

Some exhausted reservists question war's goals

The call-up comes as a growing campaign of exhausted reservists is accusing the government of perpetuating the war for political reasons and failing to bring home the remaining hostages.

The families of the hostages and former army and intelligence chiefs have also expressed opposition to the expanded operation in Gaza City. Most of the families of the hostages want an immediate ceasefire and worry an expanded assault could imperil bringing the 50 hostages still in Gaza home. Israel believes that 20 are still alive.

The former chiefs are skeptical the goal of completely destroying Hamas is attainable. Former Shin Bet head Yoram Cohen called it a "fantasy," saying that "if anyone imagines that we can reach every terrorist and every pit and every weapon, and in parallel bring our hostages home — I think it is impossible."

Hamas-led militants started the war when they attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people,

mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefires or other deals. Hamas says it will only free the rest in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Mediation is underway in Cairo as worries grow about humanitarian crisis

Mediators and Hamas both said this week that Hamas leaders had agreed to cease-fire terms, though similar announcements have been made in the past that did not lead to ceasefires.

An Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media said that Israel is in constant contact with the mediators in an effort to secure the release of the hostages.

Netanyahu has repeatedly said he will oppose a deal that doesn't include the "complete the defeat of Hamas."

More than 62,000 people have been killed during Israel's 22-month offensive, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Monday. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The ministry does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half of them.

In addition to that toll, 154 adults have died of malnutrition-related causes since late June, when the ministry began counting such deaths, and 112 children have died of malnutrition-related causes since the war began.

## Bus crash in Afghanistan kills more than 70 Afghans returning from Iran

By The Associated Press undefined

A bus crash in northwestern Afghanistan killed at least 79 people returning from Iran, including 19 children, an official said.

Two people were also injured in the crash, Ministry of Interior spokesperson Abdul Mateen Qani told The Associated Press.

Tolo News, citing the official, said the accident happened Tuesday around 8:30 p.m. local time in Herat province. The bus collided with a truck and a motorbike, causing a massive fire that killed many on the spot, the outlet reported.

Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, mainly due to poor road conditions and driver carelessness.

Nearly 1.8 million Afghans have been forcibly returned from Iran in the past few months. A further 184,459 were sent back from Pakistan and more than 5,000 were deported from Turkey since the beginning of the year. Additionally, nearly 10,000 Afghan prisoners have been repatriated, mostly from Pakistan.

The Taliban criticized neighboring countries in July for the mass expulsion of Afghans, as Iran and Pakistan expel foreigners who they say are living there illegally. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said some 6 million Afghan refugees remain overseas.

## Paris residents fight overtourism and 'Disneyfication' of beloved Montmartre neighborhood

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — When Olivier Baroin moved into an apartment in Montmartre about 15 years ago, it felt like he was living in a village in the heart of Paris. Not anymore.

Stores for residents are disappearing, along with the friendly atmosphere, he says. In their place are hordes of people taking selfies, shops selling tourist trinkets, and cafés whose seating spills into the narrow, cobbled streets as overtourism takes its toll.

Baroin has had enough. He put his apartment up for sale after local streets were designated pedestrian-only while accommodating the growing number of visitors.

"I told myself that I had no other choice but to leave since, as I have a disability, it's even more complicated when you can no longer take your car, when you have to call a taxi from morning to night," he



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told The Associated Press.

Overtourism in European cities

From Venice to Barcelona to Amsterdam, European cities are struggling to absorb surging numbers of tourists.

Some residents in one of Paris' most popular tourist neighborhoods are now pushing back. A black banner strung between two balconies in Montmartre reads, in English: "Behind the postcard: locals mistreated by the Mayor." Another, in French, says: "Montmartre residents resisting."

Atop the hill where the Basilica of Sacré-Cœur crowns the city's skyline, residents lament what they call the "Disneyfication" of the once-bohemian slice of Paris. The basilica says it now attracts up to 11 million people a year — even more than the Eiffel Tower — while daily life in the neighborhood has been overtaken by tuk-tuks, tour groups, photo queues and short-term rentals.

"Now, there are no more shops at all, there are no more food shops, so everything must be delivered," said 56-year-old Baroin, a member of a residents' protest group called Vivre a Montmartre, or Living in Montmartre.

The unrest echoes tensions across town at the Louvre Museum, where staff in June staged a brief wildcat strike over chronic overcrowding, understaffing and deteriorating conditions. The Louvre logged 8.7 million visitors in 2024, more than double what its infrastructure was designed to handle.

A postcard under pressure

Paris, a city of just over 2 million residents if you count its sprawling suburbs, welcomed 48.7 million tourists in 2024, a 2% increase from the previous year.

Sacré-Cœur, the most visited monument in France in 2024, and the surrounding Montmartre neighborhood have turned into what some locals call an open-air theme park.

Local staples like butchers, bakeries and grocers are vanishing, replaced by ice-cream stalls, bubble-tea vendors and souvenir T-shirt stands.

Paris authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Visitors seemed largely to be enjoying the packed streets on a sunny Tuesday this week.

"For the most part, all of Paris has been pretty busy, but full of life, for sure," said American tourist Adam Davidson. "Coming from Washington, D.C., which is a lively city as well, I would say this is definitely full of life to a different degree for sure."

Europe's breaking point

In Barcelona, thousands have taken to the streets this year, some wielding water pistols, demanding limits on cruise ships and short-term tourist rentals. Venice now charges an entry fee for day-trippers and caps visitor numbers. And in Athens, authorities are imposing a daily limit on visitors to the Acropolis, to protect the ancient monument from record-breaking tourist crowds.

Urban planners warn that historic neighborhoods risk becoming what some critics call "zombie cities" — picturesque but lifeless, their residents displaced by short-term visitors.

Paris is trying to mitigate the problems by cracking down on short-term rentals and unlicensed properties.

But tourism pressures are growing. By 2050, the world's population is projected to reach nearly 10 billion, according to United Nations estimates. With the global middle class expanding, low-cost flights booming and digital platforms guiding travelers to the same viral landmarks, many more visitors are expected in iconic cities like Paris.

The question now, residents say, is whether any space is left for those who call it home.

## **Qatar urges a Gaza ceasefire after a 'positive response' from Hamas**

By SAM METZ, JON GAMBRELL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A key mediator on Tuesday stressed the urgency of brokering a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip after Hamas showed a "positive response" to a proposal from Arab countries, but Israel has yet to weigh in as its military prepares an offensive in some of the territory's most populated areas.

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The prospect of an expanded assault on Gaza City and other areas sheltering hundreds of thousands of civilians has sparked international outrage. Palestinians say there is nowhere to flee after 22 months of war that has already killed tens of thousands and destroyed much of the territory.

"They are talking about a 60-day truce, and after Israel gets its (hostages) they will strike us again," said Huda Rishe, who has been displaced four times since the start of the war. "We will return to Gaza City and then leave again. We have lost hope."

AP reporters saw some families arriving in central Gaza after fleeing Gaza City.

Many Israelis, who rallied in the hundreds of thousands on Sunday, fear the offensive will further endanger the remaining hostages in Gaza. Just 20 of the 50 remaining are thought to be alive.

"If this (ceasefire) proposal fails, the crisis will exacerbate," Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for Qatar's Foreign Ministry, told journalists, adding they have yet to hear from Israel on it.

US envoy is invited to rejoin the talks

Al-Ansari said Hamas had agreed to terms under discussion. He declined to provide details but said the proposal was "almost identical" to one previously advanced by U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff.

That U.S. proposal was for a 60-day ceasefire, during which some of the remaining hostages would be released and the sides would negotiate a lasting ceasefire and the return of the rest.

"If we get to a deal, it shouldn't be expected that it would be instantaneously implemented," al-Ansari said. "We're not there yet."

That cautious assessment came a day after the foreign minister of Egypt, the other Arab country mediating the talks, said they were pushing for a phased deal and noted that Qatar's prime minister had joined the negotiations with Hamas.

Witkoff has been invited to rejoin the talks, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty told The Associated Press. Witkoff pulled out of negotiations less than a month ago, accusing Hamas of not acting in good faith. It was not clear how Witkoff has responded to the invitation.

Abdelatty held a series of phone calls Tuesday with foreign ministers from the United Kingdom, Turkey and the European Union, seeking to put pressure on Israel to accept the ceasefire proposal.

"The ball is now in Israel's court," Abdelattay said in a statement.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, said the government's position has not changed. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he will pause the fighting to facilitate the release of hostages, but that the war will continue until all the hostages are returned and Hamas is defeated and disarmed.

34 Palestinians killed in Gaza

Hospitals in Gaza said they had received the bodies of 34 Palestinians killed Tuesday, including women and children, as Israeli strikes continued across the territory. Nasser Hospital said an airstrike killed a mother, father and three children in their tent overnight in Muwasi, a camp for hundreds of thousands of civilians.

"An entire family was gone in an instant. What was their fault?" the children's grandfather, Majed al-Mashwakhi, said, sobbing.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the strikes.

Nasser Hospital said nine people were killed while seeking aid in areas where U.N. convoys have been overwhelmed by looters and desperate crowds, and where people have been shot and killed while heading to sites run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, or GHF, an Israeli-backed American contractor.

Another two people were killed near a GHF site in central Gaza, according to Al-Awda Hospital. GHF said there were no violent incidents at any of its sites on Tuesday.

Witnesses, health officials and the U.N. human rights office say Israeli forces have killed hundreds of people seeking aid from GHF sites and U.N. convoys since Israel eased a 2 1/2 month blockade on Gaza in May. The military says it has only fired warning shots at people who approached its forces.

The overall Palestinian death toll in the war surpassed 62,000 on Monday, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The ministry does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up

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around half of them.

In addition to that toll, other Palestinians have died from malnutrition and starvation, including three reported in the past 24 hours, the ministry said Tuesday. It says 154 adults have died of malnutrition-related causes since late June, when it began counting such deaths, and 112 children have died of malnutrition-related causes since the war began.

Hamas-led militants started the war when they attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefires or other deals. Hamas says it will only free the rest in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Aid groups continue to struggle to deliver supplies to Gaza, where most of the population is displaced, large swaths are in ruins and experts say the "worst-case scenario of famine is currently playing out."

Israel imposed a full blockade in March, then allowed limited aid to resume two and a half months later. The Israeli military body in charge of humanitarian aid to Gaza, COGAT, said 370 trucks of aid entered Tuesday — still below the 600 per day that the United Nations and partners say is needed.

COGAT said Tuesday that 180 pallets of aid were airdropped into Gaza with help from countries including Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and France. The U.N. and partners have called airdrops expensive, inefficient and even dangerous for people on the ground.

## **Summer celebrations meet closed beaches and warnings on US East Coast due to Hurricane Erin**

By ALLEN G. BREED and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

RODANTHE, N.C. (AP) — From Florida to New England, people trying to enjoy the last hurrahs of summer along the coast were met with rip-current warnings, closed beaches and in some cases already treacherous waves as Hurricane Erin inched closer Wednesday.

While forecasters remain confident that the center of the monster storm will stay far offshore, the outer edges are expected to bring high winds, large swells and life-threatening rip currents into Friday. But the biggest swells along the East Coast could come as early as Wednesday.

New York City closed its beaches to swimming on Wednesday and Thursday, and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul ordered three state beaches on Long Island to prohibit swimming through Thursday. Several New Jersey beaches also will be temporarily off-limits, while some towns in Delaware have cut off ocean access.

Off Massachusetts, Nantucket Island could see waves of more than 10 feet (3 meters) later this week. But the biggest threat is along the barrier islands of North Carolina's Outer Banks, where evacuations have been ordered.

Erin has become an unusually large and deceptively worrisome storm, with its tropical storm winds stretching 230 miles (370 kilometers) from its core. Forecasters expect it will grow larger in size as it moves through the Atlantic and curls north.

On Tuesday it lashed the Turks and Caicos Islands, where government services were suspended and residents were ordered to stay home, along with parts of the Bahamas before its expected turn toward Bermuda.

Tropical storm watches were issued for Virginia and North Carolina as well as Bermuda.

Erin lost some strength from previous days and was a Category 2 hurricane with maximum sustained winds around 100 mph (155 kph), the National Hurricane Center in Miami said. It was about 495 miles (795 kilometers) south-southeast of North Carolina's Cape Hatteras.

On the Outer Banks, Erin's storm surge could swamp roads with waves of 15 feet (4.6 meters). Mandatory evacuations were ordered on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. More than 1,800 people had left Ocracoke by ferry since Monday.

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein warned coastal residents to be prepared to evacuate and declared a state of emergency Tuesday. Bulldozers shored up the dunes, and trucks from the local power company on Ocracoke were on hand to respond to downed wires.

Some side roads already saw some flooding on Hatteras, and the owners of a pier removed a few planks,



hoping the storm surge would pass through without tearing it up.

Most residents decided to stay even though memories are still fresh of Hurricane Dorian in 2019, when 7 feet (2.1 meters) of water swamped Ocracoke, county commissioner Randal Mathews said.

Tom Newsom, who runs fishing charters on Hatteras, said has lived there almost 40 years and never evacuated. He was not going to this time either.

Comparing this hurricane to others he has seen, he called this one a "nor'easter on steroids."

The Outer Banks' thin stretch of low-lying barrier islands jutting into the Atlantic are increasingly vulnerable to storm surges. There are concerns that parts of the main highway could be washed out, leaving some routes impassible for days. And dozens of beach homes already worn down from chronic beach erosion and the loss of protective dunes could be at risk, said David Hallac, superintendent of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Farther south, no evacuations were ordered but some beach access points were closed with water levels up to 3 feet (1 meter) over normal high tides expected for several days.

Climate scientists say Atlantic hurricanes are now much more likely to rapidly intensify into powerful and catastrophic storms fueled by warmer oceans. Two years ago Hurricane Lee grew with surprising speed while barreling offshore through the Atlantic, unleashing violent storms and rip currents.

## Villagers offer harrowing accounts of one of the deadliest attacks in Sudan's civil war

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — When Ahlam Saeed awoke last month to the sound of gunfire and roaring vehicle motors, the 43-year-old widow rushed outside her home in war-torn Sudan to find a line of at least two dozen vehicles, many of them motorcycles carrying armed fighters.

"They were firing at everything and in every direction," the mother of four said. "In an instant, all of us in the village were fleeing for safety." Many people were gunned down in their houses or while trying to flee. At least 200 people were killed, including many women and children, in the community of straw homes, according to a rights group tracking Sudan's civil war.

Saeed and her children — ages 9 to 15 — were among those who survived after rebel fighters rampaged through Shag al-Num, the small farming village of several thousand people in Sudan's Kordofan region. In interviews with The Associated Press, Saeed and four other villagers described the July 12 attack, one of the deadliest assaults since the war began more than two years ago over a power struggle between commanders of the military and the rival paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF.

The villagers' accounts add to the devastating toll of the conflict, which started in April 2023 and has wrecked the country in northeastern African. The fighting has killed more than 40,000 people, displaced as many as 14 million, caused disease outbreaks and pushed many places to the brink of famine.

Atrocities, including mass killings of civilians and mass rape, have also been reported, particularly in Darfur, triggering an investigation by the International Criminal Court into potential war crimes and crimes against humanity.

'Hell's door was opened'

The villagers from Shag al-Num said RSF fighters and their allied Janjaweed militias stormed into the community, looting houses and robbing residents, especially of women's gold. Some victims were held at gunpoint.

Some young villagers attempted to fight back by taking up rifles to defend their homes. The RSF fighters knocked them down and continued their rampage, witnesses said.

"It was as if the hell's door was opened," Saeed said, sobbing. Her straw house and neighboring homes were burned down, and one RSF fighter seized her necklace. "We were dying of fear," she said.

The villagers said the fighters also sexually abused or raped many women. One of the women said she saw three fighters wearing RSF uniforms dragging a young woman into an abandoned house. She said she later met the woman, who said she was raped.

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Satellite imagery from July 13 and 14 showed "intentional arson attacks" and "a large smoke point" over the village as well as "razed and smoldering" buildings, the Humanitarian Research Lab at the Yale School of Public Health reported.

In the two-day RSF attack in Shaq al-Noum and surrounding areas, more than 450 civilians, including 35 children and two pregnant women, were killed, according to UNICEF.

After the assault, many of the survivors fled, leaving behind a mostly deserted village.

The RSF did not respond to questions about the attack from the AP.

Both sides seek control of oil-rich Kordofan region

Beyond the village, the oil-rich Kordofan region has emerged as a major front line following the military's recapture of Khartoum earlier this year. The warring parties have raced for control of the three-province region stretching across southern and central Sudan because it controls vital supply lines.

"Kordofan has become the most strategic area of the country," said Cameron Hudson, an Africa expert with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The fighting has exacerbated the already dire conditions in the region.

In Kadugli, the provincial capital city of South Kordofan province, "roads have been cut off, supply lines have collapsed and residents are walking miles just to search for salt or matches," said Kadry Furany, country director for Sudan at Mercy Corps aid group.

A mental health therapist in Obeid, the provincial capital of North Kordofan province, said the city received waves of displaced people in recent weeks, all from areas recently ambushed by the RSF.

The therapist, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of concerns about her safety, said she supported 10 women and girls who endured sexual abuse, including rape, in RSF-seized areas in July alone. Among the victims were two women from Shag al-Num village, she said.

"The conditions are tragic," she said.

Another epicenter of starvation and disease

To the west of the Kordofan region is el-Fasher, the military's last stronghold in the five-province Darfur region. The city — which has been under constant RSF bombardment for over a year — is one of the hardest hit by hunger and disease outbreaks, according to the U.N.

The World Food Program has been unable to deliver aid by land. It warned this month that 300,000 people, who are "trapped, hungry and running out of time," are at risk of starvation.

"Everyone in el-Fasher is facing a daily struggle to survive," said Eric Perdison, the food program's director for eastern and southern Africa. "Without immediate and sustained access, lives will be lost."

The paramilitaries and their Janjaweed allies imposed a total blockade of el-Fasher, leaving no route out of the city that the RSF does not control, according to satellite imagery recently analyzed by the humanitarian lab at Yale.

The blockade caused food prices to spike up to 460% higher than in the rest of Sudan, according to the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies. Most staples are scarce or no longer available.

Civilians who want to leave the city are required to pass through a single RSF-controlled point, where they have been robbed, forced to pay bribes or killed, according to the Yale lab, aid workers and residents.

On Aug. 2, a group of people, including women and children, attempted to flee the city. When they reached Garni, a village on a crucial supply route just northwest of the city, RSF fighters ambushed the area, residents said.

"They tell you to leave, then they kill you," said al-Amin Ammar, a 63-year-old who said he escaped because he is old. "It's a death trap."

At least 14 people were killed, and dozens of others were wounded in the village, said the Emergency Lawyers rights group said.

Aside from fighting, the region has been ravaged by lack of food and a cholera outbreak, said Adam Regal, a spokesman for a local aid group known as General Coordination. Many people have nothing to eat and resorted to cattle fodder to survive, he said. Some have not found even fodder, he said.

He shared images of emaciated children with their exhausted, malnourished mothers on the outskirts of el-Fasher or the nearby town of Tawila.

"People don't await food or medicine," he said, "rather they await death."

The 12-year-old son of Sabah Hego, a widow, was admitted with cholera to a makeshift hospital in Tweila, joining dozens of other patients there.

"He is sick, and dying," Hego said of her youngest child. "He is not alone. There are many like him."

## Even at the grocery store, Texas troopers don't let Democrats out of sight after walkout

By JOHN HANNA, SARA CLINE and JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Democratic state Rep. Nicole Collier refused to come to the Texas state Capitol for two weeks. Now she won't leave, and fellow Democrats are joining her protest.

Collier was among dozens of Democrats who left the state for the Democratic havens of California, Illinois, Massachusetts and New York to delay the Republican-controlled Legislature's approval of redrawn congressional districts sought by President Donald Trump. When they returned Monday, Republicans insisted that Democrats have around-the-clock police escorts to ensure they wouldn't leave again and scuttle Wednesday's planned House vote on a new political map.

But Collier wouldn't sign what Democrats called the "permission slip" needed to leave the House chamber, a half-page form allowing Department of Public Safety troopers to follow them. She spent Monday night and Tuesday on the House floor, where she set up a livestream while her Democratic colleagues outside had plainclothes officers following them to their offices and homes.

Dallas-area Rep. Linda Garcia said she drove three hours home from Austin with an officer following her. When she went grocery shopping, he went down every aisle with her, pretending to shop, she said. As she spoke to The Associated Press by phone, two unmarked cars with officers inside were parked outside her home.

"It's a weird feeling," she said. "The only way to explain the entire process is: It's like I'm in a movie."

The trooper assignments, ordered by Republican House Speaker Dustin Burrows, was another escalation of a redistricting battle that has widened across the country. Trump is pushing GOP state officials to tilt the map for the 2026 midterms more in his favor to preserve the GOP's slim House majority, and Democrats nationally have rallied around efforts to retaliate.

Other Democrats join the protest

House Minority Leader Gene Wu, from Houston, and state Rep. Vincel Perez, of El Paso, stayed overnight with Collier, who represents a minority-majority district in Fort Worth.

On Tuesday, more Democrats returned to the Capitol to tear up the slips they had signed and stay on the House floor, which has a lounge and restrooms for members.

Dallas-area Rep. Cassandra Garcia Hernandez, called their protest a "slumber party for democracy" and said Democrats were holding strategy sessions on the floor.

"We are not criminals," Houston Rep. Penny Morales Shaw said.

Collier said having officers shadow her was an attack on her dignity and an attempt to control her movements.

Republican leader says Collier 'is well within her rights'

Burrows brushed off Collier's protest, saying he was focused on important issues, such as providing property tax relief and responding to last month's deadly floods. His statement Tuesday morning did not mention redistricting and his office did not immediately respond to other Democrats joining Collier.

"Rep. Collier's choice to stay and not sign the permission slip is well within her rights under the House Rules," Burrows said.

Under those rules, until Wednesday's scheduled vote, the chamber's doors are locked, and no member can leave "without the written permission of the speaker."

To do business Wednesday, 100 of 150 House members must be present.

The GOP wants 5 more seats in Texas



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The GOP plan is designed to send five additional Republicans from Texas to the U.S. House. Texas Democrats returned to Austin after Democrats in California launched an effort to redraw their state's districts to take five seats from Republicans.

Democrats also said they were returning because they expect to challenge the new maps in court.

Republicans issued civil arrest warrants to bring the Democrats back after they left the state Aug. 3, and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott asked the state Supreme Court to oust Wu and several other Democrats from office. The lawmakers also face a fine of \$500 for every day they were absent.

How officers shadowed Democratic lawmakers

Democrats reported different levels of monitoring. Houston Rep. Armando Walle said he wasn't sure where his police escort was, but there was still a heightened police presence in the Capitol, so he felt he was being monitored closely.

Some Democrats said the officers watching them were friendly. But Austin Rep. Sheryl Cole said in a social media post that when she went on her morning walk Tuesday, the officer following her lost her on the trail, got angry and threatened to arrest her.

Garcia said her 9-year-old son was with her as she drove home, and each time she looked in the rear-view mirror, she could see the officer close behind. He came inside a grocery store where she shopped with her son.

"I would imagine that this is the way it feels when you're potentially shoplifting and someone is assessing whether you're going to steal," she said.

## **Hurricane Erin churns up dangerous waves and closes beaches along US East Coast**

By ALLEN G. BREED and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

RODANTHE, N.C. (AP) — Hurricane Erin churned slowly toward the eastern U.S. on Tuesday, stirring up treacherous waves that already have led to dozens of water rescues and shut down beaches along the coast in the midst of summer's last hurrah.

While forecasters remain confident the center of the monster storm will remain far offshore, the outer edges are likely to bring damaging tropical-force winds, large swells and life-threatening rip currents into Friday.

Warnings about rip currents have been posted from Florida to the New England coast, and the biggest swells along the East Coast are expected over the coming two days. Rough ocean conditions already have been seen along the coast — at least 60 swimmers were rescued from rip currents Monday at Wrightsville Beach, near Wilmington, North Carolina.

New York City closed its beaches to swimming on Wednesday and Thursday, and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul ordered three state beaches on Long Island to prohibit swimming through Thursday. Several New Jersey beaches also will be off-limits.

"Enjoy the shore, enjoy this beautiful weather but stay out of the water," New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said Tuesday.

Off Massachusetts, Nantucket Island could see waves of more than 10 feet (3 meters) later this week. But the biggest threat is along the barrier islands of North Carolina's Outer Banks where evacuations have been ordered.

Erin has become an unusually large and deceptively worrisome storm, with its tropical storm winds stretching 230 miles (370 kilometers) from its core. Forecasters expect it will grow larger in size as it moves through the Atlantic and curls north.

It continued to lash the Turks and Caicos Islands on Tuesday, where government services were suspended a day earlier and residents were ordered to stay home, along with parts of the Bahamas before its expected turn toward Bermuda and the U.S.

By Tuesday, Erin had lost some strength from previous days and dropped to a Category 2 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 100 mph (161 kph), the National Hurricane Center in Miami said. It was

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about 540 miles (869 kilometers) south-southeast of North Carolina's Cape Hatteras.

Tropical storm watches were issued for Virginia and North Carolina as well as Bermuda.

Climate scientists say Atlantic hurricanes are now much more likely to rapidly intensify into powerful and catastrophic storms fueled by warmer oceans. Two years ago, Hurricane Lee grew with surprising speed while barreling offshore through the Atlantic, unleashing violent storms and rip currents.

On the Outer Banks, Erin's storm surge could swamp roads with waves of 15 feet (4.6 meters). Mandatory evacuations were ordered on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. More than 1,800 people had left Ocracoke by ferry since Monday.

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein warned residents along the coast to be prepared in case they need to evacuate and declared a state of emergency Tuesday. Bulldozers shored up the dunes, and on Hatteras, the owners of a pier removed a few planks, hoping the storm surge will pass through without tearing up the structure.

Most residents decided to stay even though memories are still fresh of Hurricane Dorian in 2019 when 7 feet (2.1 meters) of water swamped Ocracoke, said Randal Mathews, who serves as a county commissioner.

Tom Newsom, who runs fishing charters on Hatteras, said he's lived there almost 40 years and never evacuated, and he wasn't going to this time either.

Comparing this hurricane to others he has seen, he called this one a "nor'easter on steroids."

Bryan Philips, who also lives on the island, said he'd evacuate if they were getting a direct hit. He expects the roads will be open by the weekend to make sure one of the last summer weekends isn't lost.

"That's their main concern: getting tourists back on the island as soon as possible," said Philips.

The Outer Banks' thin stretch of low-lying barrier islands that jut into the Atlantic are increasingly vulnerable to storm surges. There are concerns that parts of the main highway could be washed out, leaving some routes impassable for days. And dozens of beach homes already worn down from chronic beach erosion and the loss of protective dunes could be at risk, said David Hallac, superintendent of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Farther south, no evacuations had been ordered, but some beach access points were closed as forecasts call for water levels up to 3 feet (1 meter) over normal high tides for several days.

## **Dangerous heat descends on California and the Southwest, raising wildfire risk**

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A dangerous heat wave descended on much of California and the U.S. Southwest, with triple-digit temperatures expected along with a higher risk of wildfires.

Officials opened cooling centers this week in Los Angeles, where residents are warned to avoid strenuous outdoor activities. California Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered state firefighting resources deployed in areas where blazes could ignite.

Here's what you need to know.

Sizzling hot

The National Weather Service issued an extreme heat warning for Southern California starting Wednesday into the weekend. If outdoor activities can't be avoided, forecasters say, they should be moved to early morning hours. And everyone should hydrate.

Downtown Los Angeles was forecast to reach 94 degrees Fahrenheit (34 degrees Celsius), while valleys to the north braced for temperatures as high as 108 F (42 C). It will be several degrees hotter in desert areas.

Candice Catlett, who uses a wheelchair, rolled herself toward some shade as temperatures started spiking Tuesday in downtown LA.

"It's sizzling hot out here," Catlett said. "I have sunblock. Hopefully, I can find some cold water. I'm trying to stay out of the direct sun."

Further north, nearly-always-hot Death Valley could see a severe 120 F (49 C), the weather service said.

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In Arizona, the peak of the heat wave will hit Thursday and Friday, with the mercury possibly reaching 110 F (43 C) in the southern and western parts of the state. Similar temperatures were likely in Las Vegas.

## Fire risk

Red flag warnings, signaling elevated wildfire danger, have been issued across Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties until Saturday.

"If you live in a high fire danger area in the mountains or foothills, review your evacuation plans and route and stay tuned to your local emergency officials," the weather service said in a statement.

The state has sent 10 fire engines and multiple firefighting teams to LA County to assist local agencies if blazes break out.

"By prepositioning firefighting crews, equipment, and other resources in high-risk areas, we can respond faster and more effectively when needed," said Nancy Ward, director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

In the Sierra Nevada, higher than normal temperatures, low humidity and the possibility of lightning storms will contribute to the fire risk.

California's largest blaze this year, the Gifford Fire, reached 95% containment Tuesday after charring nearly 206 square miles (534 square kilometers) of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties since erupting on Aug. 1. The cause is under investigation.

## US troops won't be sent to help defend Ukraine, Trump says

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday offered his assurances that U.S. troops would not be sent to help defend Ukraine against Russia after seeming to leave open the possibility the day before.

Trump also said in a morning TV interview that Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO and regaining the Crimean Peninsula from Russia are "impossible."

The Republican president, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other European leaders held hours of talks at the White House on Monday aimed at bringing an end to Russia's war against Ukraine. While answering questions from journalists, Trump did not rule out sending U.S. troops to participate in a European-led effort to defend Ukraine as part of security guarantees sought by Zelenskyy.

Trump said after his meeting in Alaska last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin that Putin was open to the idea of security guarantees for Ukraine.

But asked Tuesday on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" what assurances he could provide going forward and beyond his term that American troops would not be part of defending Ukraine's border, Trump said, "Well, you have my assurance, and I'm president."

Trump would have no control over the U.S. military after his term ends in January 2029.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later on Tuesday emphasized that "U.S. boots will not be on the ground" as part of any potential peacekeeping mission.

The president also said in the interview that he is optimistic that a deal can be reached to end the Russian invasion, but he underscored that Ukraine will have to set aside its hope of getting back Crimea, which was seized by Russian forces in 2014, and its long-held aspirations of joining the NATO military alliance.

"Both of those things are impossible," Trump said.

Putin, as part of any potential deal to pull his forces out of Ukraine, is looking for the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as recognition of Crimea as Russian territory.

Trump on Monday said that he was arranging for direct talks between Putin and Zelenskyy.

But the Kremlin has not yet said whether Putin, who has resisted previous calls by Trump and others for direct negotiations on ending the war, is committed to a face-to-face meeting with the Ukrainian leader.

Asked whether Putin has promised Trump that he'll meet directly with the Ukrainian leader, Leavitt responded affirmatively. "He has," Leavitt said of Putin.

Trump, early on Monday during talks with Zelenskyy and European leaders, said that he was pressing for three-way talks among Zelenskyy, Putin and himself.

But after speaking to Putin later in the day, Trump said that he was arranging first for a face-to-face between Zelenskyy and Putin and that three-way talks would follow if necessary.

"It was an idea that evolved in the course of the president's conversations with both President Putin, President Zelenskyy and the European leaders yesterday," Leavitt explained.

But when discussing a phone call held after the meeting between Trump and the Russian leader, Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov gave no indication that either a bilateral or a trilateral meeting with Ukraine had been agreed.

Trump said he believed Putin's course of action would become clear in the coming weeks.

"I think Putin is tired of it," Trump said. "I think they're all tired of it. But you never know. We're going to find out about President Putin in the next couple of weeks. That I can tell you."

## Trump administration revokes security clearances of 37 current and former government officials

By ERIC TUCKER, AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said Tuesday that it was revoking the security clearances of 37 current and former national security officials in the latest act of retribution targeting public servants from the federal government's intelligence community.

A memo from Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard accuses the singled-out individuals of having engaged in the "politicization or weaponization of intelligence" to advance personal or partisan goals, failing to safeguard classified information, failing to "adhere to professional analytic tradecraft standards" and other unspecified "detrimental" conduct.

The memo did not offer evidence to back up the accusations.

Many of the officials who were targeted left the government years ago after serving in both senior national security positions and lower-profile roles far from the public eye. Some worked on matters that have long infuriated Trump, like the intelligence community assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election on his behalf. And several signaled their concerns about Trump by signing a critical letter in 2019 that was highlighted on social media last month by right-wing provocateur and close Trump ally Laura Loomer.

The action is part of a broader Trump administration campaign to wield the levers of government against perceived adversaries, and reflects the president's continued distrust of career intelligence officials he has long seen as working against his interests. The revocation of clearances has emerged as a go-to tactic for the administration, a strategy critics say risks chilling dissenting voices from an intelligence community accustomed to drawing on a range of viewpoints before formulating an assessment.

"These are unlawful and unconstitutional decisions that deviate from well-settled, decades-old laws and policies that sought to protect against just this type of action," Mark Zaid, a national security lawyer whose own clearance was revoked by the Trump administration, said in a statement.

He called it hypocritical for the administration to "claim these individuals politicized or weaponized intelligence."

Gabbard on Tuesday sought to defend the move, which she said had been directed by Trump.

"Being entrusted with a security clearance is a privilege, not a right," she wrote on X. "Those in the Intelligence Community who betray their oath to the Constitution and put their own interests ahead of the American people have broken the sacred trust they promised to uphold."

The security clearance suspension comes amid a broader effort by Gabbard and other Trump administration officials to revisit the intelligence community assessment published in 2017 on Russian election interference, including by declassifying a series of years-old documents meant to cast doubt on the legitimacy of its findings.

Multiple government investigations have reached the same conclusion that Russia interfered in the 2016 election in sweeping fashion, including through a hack-and-leak operation of Democratic emails and a



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social media campaign aimed at sowing discord and swaying public opinion.

But Trump has long resisted the assessment that Russian President Vladimir Putin interfered in his favor, and his Justice Department has authorized a grand jury investigation that could bring fresh scrutiny to Obama-era officials.

Security clearances are important not only for current government workers but also former ones whose private-sector jobs require them to retain access to sensitive information. Stripping clearances from such employees could make it hard for them to do their jobs, though it's unclear how many of the former officials still have or require one.

On his first day of office, Trump said he would revoke the security clearances of the more than four dozen former intelligence officials who signed a 2020 letter saying that the Hunter Biden laptop saga bore the hallmarks of a "Russian information operation."

He's also revoked the clearances of former President Joe Biden and former Vice President Kamala Harris, and he attempted to do the same for lawyers at a spate of prominent law firms but was rebuffed by federal judges.

Some of those who were targeted in the latest action were part of Biden's national security team. Many only learned of the Gabbard action from news reports Tuesday, said two former government officials who were on the list. Both spoke on the condition of anonymity as they ponder whether to take legal action.

## Is this thing on? Accidental authenticity of Trump's hot mic moment is latest in a long global list

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Behold the power of the humble hot mic.

The magnifier of sound, a descendant of 150-year-old technology, on Monday added to its long history of cutting through the most scripted political spectacles when it captured more than two minutes of U.S. President Donald Trump and eight European leaders chit-chatting around a White House news conference on their talks to end Russia's war in Ukraine. The standout quote came from Trump himself to French President Emmanuel Macron even before anyone sat down. The American president, reflecting his comments after meeting in Alaska with Russian President Vladimir Putin: "I think he wants to make a deal for me, you understand, as crazy as it sounds."

How politics and diplomacy sound when the principals think no one is listening can reveal much about the character, humor and humanity of our leaders — for better and sometimes for worse. As public figures, they've long known what the rest of us are increasingly learning in the age of CCTV, Coldplay kiss cams and social media: In public, no one can realistically expect privacy.

"Whenever I hear about a hot mic moment, my first reaction is that this is what they really think, that it's not gone through the external communications filter," said Bill McGowan, founder and CEO of Clarity Media Group in New York. "That's why people love it so much: There is nothing more authentic than what people say on a hot mic."

Always assume the microphone — or camera — is turned on

Hot mics, often leavened with video, have bedeviled aspiring and actual leaders long before social media. During a sound check for his weekly radio address in 1984, U.S. President Ronald Reagan famously joked about attacking the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War.

"My fellow Americans," Reagan quipped, not realizing the practice run was being recorded. "I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." The Soviet Union didn't find it funny and condemned it given the consequential subject at hand.

Putin, too, has fallen prey to the perils of a live mic. In 2006, he was quoted in Russian media joking about Israel's president, who had been charged with and later was convicted of rape. The Kremlin said Putin was not joking about rape and his meaning had been lost in translation.

Sometimes a hot mic moment involves no words at all. Presidential candidate Al Gore was widely paro-

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died for issuing exasperated and very audible sighs during his debate with George W. Bush in 2000. In others, the words uttered for all to hear are profane.

Bush was caught telling running mate Dick Cheney that a reporter for The New York Times was a "major-league a--hole."

"This is a big f----- deal," then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden famously said, loudly enough to be picked up on a microphone, as President Barack Obama prepared to sign his signature Affordable Care Act in 2010.

Obama was caught on camera in South Korea telling Dmitri Medvedev, then the Russian president, that he'll have "more flexibility" to resolve sensitive issues — "particularly with missile defense" — after the 2012 presidential election, his last. Republican Mitt Romney, Obama's rival that year, called the exchange "bowing to the Kremlin."

"Sometimes it's the unguarded moments that are the most revealing of all," Romney said in a statement, dubbing the incident "hot mic diplomacy."

Live mics have picked up name-calling and gossip aplenty even in the most mannerly circles.

In 2022, Jacinda Ardern, then New Zealand's prime minister, known for her skill at debating and calm, measured responses, was caught on a hot mic tossing an aside in which she referred to a rival politician as "such an arrogant pr—" during Parliament Question Time.

In 2005, Jacques Chirac, then president of France, was recorded airing his distaste for British food during a visit to Russia. Speaking to Putin and Gerhard Schroder, he was heard saying that worse food could only be found in Finland, according to widely reported accounts.

Britain's King Charles III chose to deal with his hot mic moment with humor. In 2022, shortly after his coronation, Charles lost his patience with a leaky pen while signing a document on a live feed. He can be heard grouching: "Oh, God, I hate this!" and muttering, "I can't bear this bloody thing ... every stinking time."

It wasn't the first pen that had troubled him. The British ability to poke fun at oneself, he said in a speech the next year, is well known: "Just as well, you may say, given some of the vicissitudes I have faced with frustratingly failing fountain pens this past year."

Trump owns perhaps the ultimate hot mic moment

The American president is famously uncontrolled in public with a penchant for "saying it like it is," sometimes with profanity. That makes him popular among some supporters.

But even he had trouble putting a lid on comments he made before he was a candidate to "Access Hollywood" in tapes that jeopardized his campaign in the final stretch of the 2016 presidential race. Trump did not appear to know the microphone was recording.

Trump bragged about kissing, groping and trying to have sex with women who were not his wife on recordings obtained by The Washington Post and NBC News and aired just two days before his debate with Hillary Clinton. The celebrity businessman boasted "when you're a star, they let you do it," in a conversation with Billy Bush, then a host of the television show.

With major supporters balking, Trump issued an apology "if anyone was offended," and his campaign dismissed the comments as "locker room banter."

On Monday, though, the chatter on both ends of the East Room press conference gave observers a glimpse of the diplomatic game.

Dismissed unceremoniously from the White House in March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy now sat at the table with Trump and seven of his European peers: Macron, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Finland's President Alexander Stubb, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Trump complimented Merz's tan. He said Stubb is a good golfer. He asked if anyone wanted to ask the press questions when the White House pool was admitted to the room — before it galloped inside. The European leaders smiled at the shouting and shuffling.

Stubb asked Trump if he's "been through this every day?"

Trump replied, "All the time."

Meloni said she doesn't want to talk to the Italian press. But Trump, she noted, is game.

"He loves it. He loves it, eh?" she said.

## Nebraska announces plan for immigration detention center dubbed the 'Cornhusker Clink'

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska announced plans Tuesday for an immigration detention center in the remote southwest corner of the state as President Donald Trump's administration races to expand the infrastructure necessary for increasing deportations.

The facility will be dubbed the "Cornhusker Clink," a play on Nebraska's nickname of the Cornhusker State and an old slang term for jail. The alliterative name follows in the vein of the previously announced "Alligator Alcatraz" and "Deportation Depot" detention centers in Florida and the "Speedway Slammer" in Indiana.

Republican Gov. Jim Pillen said he and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had agreed to use an existing minimum security prison work camp in McCook — a remote city of about 7,000 people in the middle of the wide-open prairies between Denver and Omaha — to house people awaiting deportation and being held for other immigration proceedings. It's expected to be a Midwest hub for detainees from several states.

"This is about keeping Nebraskans — and Americans across our country — safe," Pillen said in a statement.

The facility can accommodate 200 people with plans to expand to 300. McCook is about 210 miles (338 kilometers) west of Lincoln, the state capital.

"If you are in America illegally, you could find yourself in Nebraska's Cornhusker Clink. Avoid arrest and self deport now using the CBP Home App," Noem said in a separate statement.

Noem's agency posted a picture on social media showing ears of corn wearing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement hats, standing in front of a prison fence.

The governor said later at a news conference in McCook that the center will have the advantage of being located at an existing facility and near a regional airport. He told reporters he didn't know if the center would house women as well as men or if children could be held there. He said he first learned the federal government was interested in the facility on Friday.

Pillen also announced he would order the Nebraska National Guard to provide administrative and logistical support to Nebraska-based immigration agents. About 20 soldiers will be involved. And he said the Nebraska State Patrol would allow six troopers to help federal immigration agents make arrests.

Adding detention facilities to hold growing number of immigrants arrested

The Trump administration is adding new detention facilities across the country to hold the growing number of immigrants it has arrested and accused of being in the country illegally. ICE centers were holding more than 56,000 immigrants in June, the most since 2019.

The new and planned facilities include the remote detention center in the Florida Everglades known as "Alligator Alcatraz," which opened last month. It's designed to hold up to 3,000 detainees in temporary tent structures. When Trump toured it, he suggested it could be a model for future lockups nationwide.

The Florida facility also been the subject of legal challenges by attorneys who allege violations of due process there, including the rights of detainees to meet with their attorneys, limited access to immigration courts and poor living conditions. Critics have been trying to stop further construction and operations until it comes into compliance with federal environmental laws.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced last week that his administration is preparing to open a second facility, dubbed "Deportation Depot," at a state prison in north Florida. It's expected to have 1,300 immigration beds, though that capacity could be expanded to 2,000, state officials said.

Also last week, officials in the rural Tennessee town of Mason voted to approve agreements to turn a former prison into an immigration detention facility operated by a private company, despite loud objections from residents and activists during a contentious public meeting.

And the Trump administration announced plans earlier this month for a 1,000-bed detention center in Indiana that would be dubbed "Speedway Slammer," prompting a backlash in the Midwestern state that hosts the Indianapolis 500 auto race.

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Corrections director Rob Jeffreys said the 186 inmates currently at the McCook work camp will be transferred to other state facilities over the next 45 to 60 days. The repurposed facility will be run by the state but will be paid for by the federal government. He said it's already set up and accredited to hold prisoners, so detainees won't be housed in tents or other temporary quarters.

The Nebraska plan has already raised concerns

In a video posted to social media, state Sen. Megan Hunt, an independent, blasted a lack of transparency about plans for a detention center, citing her unfulfilled request to the governor and executive branch for emails and other records.

She urged people to support local immigrant rights groups.

"The No. 1 thing we need to do is protect our neighbors, protect the people in our communities who are being targeted by these horrible people, these horrible organizations that are making choices to lock up, detain, disappear our neighbors and families and friends," Hunt said.

Around a half-dozen protesters sat in the hallway outside the governor's office Tuesday afternoon making signs that said, "No Nazi Nebraska" and "ICE = Gestapo."

Maghie Miller-Jenkins of Lincoln said she doesn't think an ICE detention center is a good idea, adding the state should tackle problems like child hunger and homelessness. "This state has numerous things they could focus on that would benefit the constituents," she said.

## **Syria's top diplomat and an Israeli delegation meet in Paris as US pushes for normalizing ties**

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's foreign minister held a rare direct meeting with an Israeli delegation in Paris on Tuesday, talks that were brokered by the United States as part of a diplomatic push for Syria and Israel to normalize relations despite a recent surge in tensions between them.

Syria's state-run SANA news agency said Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani met with Israeli officials to discuss de-escalating tensions and restoring a 1974 ceasefire agreement — a deal that established a demilitarized separation zone between Israeli and Syrian forces and stationed a U.N. peacekeeping force to maintain calm.

The statement gave no details on the outcome of the Paris meeting. But a senior Trump administration official, who was not authorized to comment publicly on the matter, confirmed the talks.

"The United States continues to support any efforts that will bring lasting stability and peace between Israel and its neighbors," the official told The Associated Press, adding that the backing follows President Donald Trump's outlined "vision of a prosperous Middle East" that includes a "stable Syria at peace with itself and its neighbors — including Israel."

"We want to do everything we can to help achieve that," the official added.

The long road to normalization

In the past, Syrian officials have acknowledged holding indirect talks with Israel to defuse tensions, but this was the first time they acknowledged taking part in direct negotiations. There was no immediate confirmation of the meeting from Israel.

Tensions have soared between the two neighbors following the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar Assad in December in a lightning rebel offensive led by Islamist insurgents.

Shortly after Assad's overthrow, Israeli forces seized control of the U.N.-patrolled buffer zone in Syria set up under the 1974 agreement and carried out airstrikes on military sites in what officials said was aimed at creating a demilitarized zone south of Damascus.

Israel has said it will not allow hostile forces to establish themselves along the frontier, as Iranian-backed groups did during Assad's rule. It distrusts Syria's new government, which is led by former Islamist insurgents.

Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, a former al-Qaida commander who severed ties with the militant group years ago, has pledged to build a new country that respects the rights of minorities, but sectarian



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violence has erupted on a number of occasions, raising concerns about Syria's fragile transition.

Sectarian clashes and Druze grievances

Israel stepped up its intervention when violence erupted in Syria's Sweida province last month between Bedouin clans and government forces on one side and armed groups from the Druze religious minority on the other.

During the fighting, some government forces allegedly killed Druze civilians, including a medical worker in a hospital in Sweida — an incident that was caught on video — and a U.S. citizen. Other videos circulating online have shown fighters forcibly shaving the mustaches off Druze sheikhs, or religious leaders, and stepping on Druze flags and photographs of religious clerics. The Syrian government has said it is investigating the allegations.

The conflict then prompted airstrikes against Syrian forces by Israel before a truce — mediated by the U.S., Turkey and Arab countries — halted most of the fighting.

Israel said it was acting to protect the Druze, who are seen as a loyal minority in Israel and often serve in the military. Israel launched dozens of airstrikes on convoys of Syrian forces around Sweida and struck the headquarters of the Syrian Ministry of Defense in the heart of Damascus, Syria's capital.

Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed the strategic plateau in a move that has only been recognized by the United States. The rest of the international community views the Golan as occupied Syrian territory.

A US envoy holds talks

Earlier on Tuesday, U.S. envoy to Syria Tom Barrack posted on X that he had held a "warm and informative meeting" with Moafaq Tarif, the spiritual leader of Druze in Israel, and that the two discussed "how to bring together the interests of all parties, de-escalate tensions, and build understanding."

Tarif described the meeting as "excellent" and said the Druze want American assistance with an end to the blockade of Sweida and humanitarian aid for the people there, the return of the Druze who were kidnapped during the fighting, as well as American assurances of Druze security.

Though the fighting has largely calmed down, Syrian government forces have surrounded the southern city of Sweida, named after the province, and the Druze have said that little aid is getting in, describing the situation as a siege.

While the Druze in Syria have historically been wary of Israel, an increasing number are now open to seeking Israeli assistance. Hundreds demonstrated in Sweida on Saturday to demand the right to self-determination for the Druze minority, with some protesters waving Israeli flags.

Videos and photos of the spectacle circulating on social media sparked outrage from many other Syrians, who accused the protesters of being traitors.

## The Latest: Trump says no to US troops in Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

President Donald Trump on Tuesday offered his assurances that U.S. troops would not be sent to Ukraine to defend against Russia, after seeming to leave open the possibility the day before. Trump also said in a morning TV interview that Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO and regaining the Crimean Peninsula are "impossible."

Details of the security guarantees and Trump's efforts to arrange peace talks continue to evolve after the U.S. president, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other European leaders held hours of talks at the White House aimed at ending Russia's war against Ukraine.

European leaders said they want U.S. support for "robust security guarantees," including the "deployment of a reassurance force" as Trump pursues his campaign promise to end the grinding war.

Here's the latest:

### Trump calls Israel's Netanyahu — and himself — war heroes

During an interview with conservative radio host Mark Levin, Trump talked about working with Benjamin Netanyahu to free Hamas-held hostages, saying Israel's prime minister is "a good man, he's in there fighting."

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He added that, though some detractors want Netanyahu jailed as a war criminal, "He's a war hero."

"He's a war hero, cause we worked together. He's a war hero. I guess I am too," Trump said during the interview, which aired Tuesday night. "Nobody cares. I am too. I sent those planes."

That was a reference to Trump having ordered June airstrikes against three critical enrichment facilities in Iran.

The president also complained throughout the interview that he'd not gotten enough credit for ordering those strikes, nor taking other, more recent actions to ease conflict around the world.

## **Sen. Graham says after call with Trump that the president is prepared to 'crush' Russia's economy**

Sen. Lindsey Graham told The Associated Press in a phone interview Tuesday that if peace talks between Ukraine and Russia aren't "moving in the right direction" by the time Congress returns next month, then "Plan B needs to kick in."

For months, the Republican senator has been pressing President Trump to support a bipartisan sanctions bill that would impose steep tariffs on countries helping fund Russia's war. On Tuesday morning, following a phone call with Trump, Graham signaled the president may now be willing to back the effort.

"Trump believes that if Putin doesn't do his part, that he's going to have to crush his economy. Because you got to mean what you say," Graham told reporters in South Carolina earlier on Tuesday.

## **DHS Secretary says entire southern border wall to be painted black**

Kristi Noem says that the idea behind painting the southern border wall black is to make the metal hotter to deter people from entering the U.S. illegally.

Noem spoke during a visit Tuesday to a portion of the wall in New Mexico. She also picked up a roller brush to help out with the painting.

She said the black paint idea was specifically at the request of President Trump "who understands that in the hot temperatures down here, when something is painted black, it gets even warmer and it will make it even harder for people to climb," she said. "So we are going to be painting the entire southern border wall black."

## **National Guard from other states start arriving in Washington, DC**

National Guard members from West Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana began arriving in Washington on Tuesday to help with President Donald Trump's federal crackdown on crime and homelessness, according to the Joint Task Force District of Columbia, the military unit overseeing the Guard.

Those troops will perform similar duties to local Guard members already on the streets, including protecting landmarks and crowd control, and will be staying at military base housing and hotels, JTF-DC said.

## **Nebraska governor announces plan for immigration detention center amid Trump crackdown**

Gov. Jim Pillen says he and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had agreed to use an existing minimum security prison work camp in a rural area of the state's southwest corner to house people awaiting deportation and being held for other immigration proceedings.

"This is about keeping Nebraskans — and Americans across our country — safe," Pillen said in a statement.

The Trump administration is adding new detention facilities across the country to hold the growing number of immigrants it has arrested and accused of being in the country illegally. Older and newer U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement centers were holding more than 56,000 immigrants in June, the most since 2019.

Pillen also announced he would order the Nebraska National Guard to provide administrative and logistical support to Nebraska-based immigration agents. About 20 Guard soldiers will be involved.

## **Trump won't be going on August vacation**

Trump won't be heading out on his traditional summer vacation in northern New Jersey, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, confirmed Tuesday.

"This is normally the time when the president goes on vacation, but not this president," Leavitt said, adding that there were "discussions about him working from Bedminster for a couple of weeks but he

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decided against it."

Bedminster is the location of his club in northern New Jersey, where Trump often goes for weekends. He also spent some stretches of time in August there for vacation during his first term.

The comments from Leavitt came when the White House took a portion of the day's press pool out to the renovated Rose Garden as the president tested out the area's new speakers.

The decision not to go on vacation comes as Trump works to negotiate a peace deal to end Russia's war in Ukraine, but Leavitt did not specify if the president's vacation decision was linked to the Ukraine talks.

## **White House video shows off Trump's Rose Garden renovations**

Deputy White House Chief of Staff Dan Scavino posted footage showing off new speakers installed as part of Trump's makeover of the White House's Rose Garden.

One of Trump's favorite songs, Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA," blares in the video, over a shot showing patio-style tables shielded by yellow umbrellas. The shot later focuses in on an American flag overhead.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt subsequently brought reporters to the Rose Garden and said Trump was controlling the playlist as crews tested the speakers for "what will be the best event in the history of the White House."

She said the next party there will be "hopefully soon."

Other songs being played included "Whiter Shade of Pale" by Procol Harum. The music was loud enough to be heard in other parts of the White House.

Trump administration revokes security clearances of 37 current and former government officials

The Trump administration has ordered the revocation of the security clearances of 37 current and former national security officials, including some who worked on the intelligence community's assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election, according to people familiar with the matter who were not authorized to discuss it by name.

A memo from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which was seen by The Associated Press, accuses the targeted individuals of having engaged in the "politicization or weaponization of intelligence" to advance personal or partisan gain.

It's the latest action of retribution by the Trump administration against national security officials he perceives as having been against him. It comes as his government has launched a sweeping effort to cast doubt on the legitimacy of intelligence community findings that Russia interfered on his behalf in the 2016 election.

## **President Trump amplified his attacks on the Smithsonian museums**

On Tuesday, he posted on Truth Social that they were 'OUT OF CONTROL' for emphasizing the negative parts of American history, including "how bad slavery was."

Trump, who has been at odd with various cultural institutions since returning to office in January, added that he had "instructed" his attorneys to begin the "exact same process" he has used against colleges and universities." The White House has withheld funding from Harvard, Columbia University and other schools and made various demands, from more control over student admissions to banning trans athletes from women's sports.

The Trump administration in March issued an executive order calling for the Smithsonian to overhaul its collection and present a more celebratory view of the country. The order has been denounced by historians and others as an attempt to censor the past.

## **Justice Department probing whether DC police falsified crime data**

The Justice Department has opened an investigation into whether police officials in Washington, D.C., have falsified crime data, according to a person familiar with the probe who wasn't authorized to publicly discuss an open investigation.

The investigation comes amid an escalating — and political — showdown between the Trump administration and the city over control of the police department. It wasn't immediately clear what federal laws could have been violated by the possible manipulation of crime data.

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The mayor's office declined to comment on the matter.

The New York Times was first to report on the investigation. Earlier this year, a Metropolitan Police Department commander suspected of manipulating crime data was placed on paid administrative leave, NBC Washington reported.

## **The IRS fired probationary workers without following protocol, says IRS Inspector General**

The IRS fired more than 7,000 probationary employees earlier this year without following internal procedures and failed to consider the workers' individual performance, despite firing them for bad performance reviews, a new report states.

The report was released by the IRS' Inspector General, Tuesday. It does not contain recommendations and is informational only.

Treasury's Inspector General for Tax Administration states that several senior IRS officials raised concerns to the IRS' inspector general that probationary employees did not have documented performance issues and were falsely terminated for bad performance.

The report states that many workers never had a performance review since they had only been recently hired. And of the 3,599 probationary employees who received a performance rating, 3,251 (or 90 percent) had a fully successful rating on their evaluation and 305 (8 percent) had an outstanding rating.

## **Trump's afterlife aspirations may be helping to drive his calculations on Ukraine**

Leavitt says she doesn't think Trump was joking when he suggested during a Fox News Channel interview that he was helping to seek peace between Russia and Ukraine, at least in part, because he wanted to go to heaven.

"I think the president was serious," the press secretary said.

She then added, to a smattering of laughter from reporters in the White House briefing room, "I think the president wants to get to heaven, as I hope we all do in this room as well."

## **White House: Commerce working on Intel deal**

The White House said Tuesday that the administration is working on a deal that would have the U.S. take a 10% stake in the computer chip maker Intel.

Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that the Commerce Department, led by Secretary Howard Lutnick, is working on it and "ironing out the details."

"The president wants to put America's needs first, both from a national security and economic perspective," Leavitt said Tuesday. "It's a creative idea that has never been done before to ensure that we're both reshoring these critical supply chains, while also gaining something of it for the American taxpayer."

## **White House says Putin promised Trump he'd have a direct meeting with Zelenskyy**

The Kremlin has not yet said whether Putin has signed off on Trump's push to arrange direct talks between the Russian leader and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

But asked Tuesday's whether Putin has promised Trump that he'll meet directly with the Ukrainian leader, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt responded affirmatively.

"He has," Leavitt said of Putin.

Trump early on Monday during talks with Zelenskyy and European leaders said that he was pressing for three-way talks among Zelenskyy, Putin and himself. But after speaking to Putin later in the day, Trump said that he was arranging first for a face-to-face between Zelenskyy and Putin and that three-way talks would follow if necessary.

"It was an idea that evolved in the course of the president's conversations with both President Putin, President Zelensky and the European leaders yesterday," Leavitt explained.

## **Top UN official welcomes US peace efforts on Russia-Ukraine, says talks should remain 'inclusive'**

Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, said Tuesday that his boss "very much welcomes" President Donald Trump's focus "on achieving a peaceful settlement in Ukraine" through the summits held in the last week. But he indicated that its crucial Ukraine remains at



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the table for any future negotiation.

"For him, it's very important that all involved continue to stay actively engaged and we want to an inclusive dialogue to sustain the important momentum that was created to bring an immediate ceasefire and sustainable peace," Dujarric said.

He added that the U.N. stands ready to provide any peacekeeping efforts as part of the security guarantees that are being discussed.

## **Pediatricians: 'We need to make the right choices for children'**

The AAP is strongly recommending COVID-19 shots for children ages 6 months to 2 years. This age group is at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, and it's important that recommendations continue to emphasize the need for them to get vaccinated, said Dr. James Campbell, vice chair of the AAP infectious diseases committee.

Shots also are advised for older children if parents want their kids vaccinated, and are recommended for older children whose chronic lung diseases or other conditions put them at higher risk for severe disease, the AAP said.

"It is going to be somewhat confusing. But our opinion is we need to make the right choices for children to protect them," Campbell said.

In a statement, Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson Andrew Nixon said "the AAP is undermining national immunization policymaking with baseless political attacks."

## **US pediatricians' new COVID-19 shot recommendations differ from CDC advice**

For the first time in 30 years, the American Academy of Pediatrics is substantially diverging from U.S. government vaccine recommendations.

The group's new COVID-19 recommendations — released Tuesday — come amid a tumultuous year for public health, as vaccine skeptics have come into power in the new Trump administration and government guidance has become increasingly confusing.

The AAP is strongly recommending COVID-19 shots for children ages 6 months to 2 years. Shots also are advised for older children if parents want their kids vaccinated, the AAP said.

That differs from guidance established under U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., which doesn't recommend the shots for healthy children of any age but says kids may get the shots in consultation with physicians.

## **Trump is trying to avoid a congressional check on his power**

Both Trump and the Democrats are looking ahead to 2026 knowing that the next midterm elections 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, Democrats 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.

## **Texas Democrat spends night in Legislature protesting police shadowing in redistricting battle**

Republicans are hoping to prevent more quorum delays as they redraw the U.S. House maps to give Trump five more seats, so they've required Democratic legislators to agree to around-the-clock surveillance before they leave the floor.

Rep. Nicole Collier, of Fort Worth, said she spent the night in the chamber rather than sign away her dignity and allow Republicans to "control my movements and monitor me."

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

The Department of Public Safety didn't immediately respond Tuesday to a message seeking comment. The Democrats' return to Texas puts the Republican-run Legislature in position to satisfy Trump's de-

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mands. If they do, California Democrats are preparing to retaliate by asking voters to approve their own new congressional boundaries.

## **It's gratitude diplomacy: Showering Trump with thanks**

World leaders understand that flattery is the way to winning over the unpredictable Trump, having taken their cue from Zelenskyy's disastrous White House scolding six months ago.

With peace talks on the table, Zelenskyy thanked Trump and others nine times in the first minute of their initial public meeting at the White House on Monday. Appearing later with top leaders from Europe, Zelenskyy expressed his thanks at least seven more times, twice for a map Trump had presented him.

He was not alone. Trump himself used the T-word about a dozen times in the later meeting. Starmer thanked the president four times. And NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte called Trump "amazing."

## **As out-of-state Guard troops arrive, Trump's federal crackdown ripples through DC neighborhoods**

By MATT BROWN, LINDSAY WHITEHURST and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The main drag in Washington's Columbia Heights neighborhood is typically crammed with people peddling pupusas, fresh fruit, souvenirs and clothing. On Tuesday, though, things felt different: The white tents that bulge with food and merchandise were scarcer than usual.

"Everything has stopped over the last week," said Yassin Yahyaoui, who sells jewelry and glass figurines. Most of his customers and fellow vendors, he said, have "just disappeared" — particularly if they speak Spanish.

The abnormally quiet street was one of many pieces of evidence showing how President Donald Trump's decision to flood the nation's capital with federal law enforcement and immigration agents has rippled through the city. While troop deployments and foot patrols in downtown areas and around the National Mall have gotten the most attention, life in historically diverse neighborhoods like Columbia Heights is being reshaped as well.

The White House has credited Trump's crackdown with hundreds of arrests, while local officials have criticized the aggressive intervention in the city's affairs.

The confrontation escalated on Tuesday as the top federal prosecutor in D.C. opened an investigation into whether police officials have falsified crime data, according to a person familiar with the situation who wasn't authorized to comment publicly. The probe could be used to bolster Trump's claims that the city is suffering from a "crime emergency" despite statistics showing improvements. The mayor's office and the police department declined to comment.

National Guard members from West Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana began arriving in Washington on Tuesday to assist in the crackdown, according to Joint Task Force District of Columbia, the military unit overseeing the D.C. Guard. Those troops from other states will perform similar duties to D.C. Guard members already on the streets, including protecting landmarks and crowd control, and will be staying at military base housing and hotels, JTF-DC said.

Stops are visible across the city

Blocks away from where Yahyaoui had set up shop, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and local police stopped a moped driver delivering pizza. The agents drove unmarked cars and wore tactical vests; one covered his face with a green balaclava. They questioned the driver and required him to present documentation relating to his employment and legal residency status. No arrest was made.

The White House said there have been 465 arrests since Aug. 7, when the federal operation began, including 206 people who were in the country illegally. The Trump administration has ramped up immigration enforcement and the president signed an executive order on Aug. 11 to put the police department under federal control for 30 days; extending that would require congressional approval.

Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said Trump was "unapologetically standing up for the safety of law-abiding American citizens."

Glوريا Gomez, who has been working a fruit stand in Columbia Heights for more than a decade, said

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business is worse now than during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said many vendors stopped coming because they were afraid of interacting with federal agents.

Customers seem less willing to spend money too. Reina Sosa, another vendor, said "they're saving it in case something happens," like getting detained by immigration enforcement.

Ana Lemus, who also sells fruit, said "we need more humanity on the part of the government."

"Remember that these are people being affected," she said. "The government is supposed to protect members of the community, not attack or discriminate against them."

Bystanders have captured some arrests on video. On Saturday morning, Christian Enrique Carias Torres was detained in another part of the city during a scuffle with ICE agents, and the footage ricocheted around social media. An FBI agent's affidavit said Carias Torres kicked one of the agents in the leg and another was injured when he fell during the struggle and struck his head on the pavement. A stun gun was used to subdue Carias Torres, who was charged Tuesday with resisting arrest.

An alphabet soup of federal agencies have been circulating in the city. In the Petworth neighborhood, roughly 20 officers from the FBI, Homeland Security, Park Police and U.S. Marshals descended on an apartment building on Tuesday morning. A man extended his hands out a window while officers cuffed him. Yanna Stelle, 19, who witnessed the incident, said she heard the chatter from walkie talkies as officers moved through the hallways.

"That was too many police first thing in the morning — especially for them to just be doing a warrant," she said.

More National Guard troops from other states are slated to arrive

From his actions and remarks, Trump seems interested in ratcheting up the pressure. His administration has asked Republican-led states to send more National Guard troops — a total of 1,100 on top of the 800 from the D.C.-based Guard. In addition to those states whose deployments started arriving Tuesday, Ohio and Tennessee have also said they will send forces.

Resistance to that notion is starting to surface, both on the streets and in Congress. On Tuesday, Democratic Rep. Sam Liccardo of California introduced a bill that would require a report outlining the cost of any National Guard deployment unrelated to a natural disaster, as well as its legal basis. It would also require reporting on any Guard interactions with civilians and other aspects of the operation.

Forty four Democrats have signed on in support, including Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington's non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives. While the measure stands little chance of passing while Republicans control the chamber, it's a sign of a wider Democratic response to Trump's unprecedented moves in Washington.

"Are L.A. and D.C. a test run for a broader authoritarian takeover of local communities?" Liccardo asked. He added that the country's founders were suspicious of "executive control of standing armies."

Abigail Jackson, a White House spokeswoman, said that "Democrats continue to side with criminals over law abiding Americans."

What kind of assistance will be offered?

It's unclear what kind of help the National Guard will be able to provide when it comes to crime.

"The fact of the matter is that the National Guard are not law-enforcement trained, and they're not going into places where they would be engaged in law enforcement activity," said Jeff Asher, a crime analyst and consultant at AH Datalytics. "So I don't know that it's fair to expect much of it."

Trump declared in a social media post that his initiative has transformed Washington from "the most unsafe 'city' in the United States" to "perhaps the safest, and getting better every single hour!"

The number of crimes reported in D.C. did drop by about 8% this week as compared to the week before, according to Metropolitan Police data. There was some variation within that data, with crimes like robberies and car thefts declining while burglaries increased a bit and homicides remained steady.

Still, a week is a small sample size — far from enough time for data to show meaningful shifts, Asher said. Referring to the month-long period that D.C.'s home rule law allows the president to exert control over the police department, he said: "I think 30 days is too short of a period to really say anything."

## California redistricting hearing turns heated as Republicans mount opposition campaign

By TRÂN NGUYỄN and JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A California legislative hearing turned into a shouting match Tuesday as a Republican lawmaker clashed with Democrats over a partisan plan to rewrite U.S. House maps to win Democrats more seats.

A committee voted along party lines to advance a new congressional map in response to a Republican redistricting effort in Texas that President Donald Trump wants. California Democrats do not need any Republican votes to move ahead.

Assemblymember David Tangipa, one of two Republicans on the committee that was considering the proposal Tuesday, spent 30 minutes asking questions of his colleagues before being told to make time for other members, prompting some boos from audience members. When the committee began voting, he shouted for more time.

At times during the hearing, lawmakers interrupted one another until the chair, a Democrat, called for order.

"This is not the way we conduct our hearing," Assemblymember Gail Pellerin, who chairs the committee, said as she called for order several times after hours of discussion.

Tangipa argued that California should spend its resources on other issues such as health care. Lawmakers are expected to schedule a Nov. 4 special election to put the new maps before voters, and they haven't revealed a cost estimate for the unexpected election. California Republicans estimated a special election could cost more than \$230 million.

"I'm asking how much this costs because the state is in a massive deficit and it's so personal to me," Tangipa said after the vote. He said his stepsister died a few weeks ago after a Medicaid provider refused to sign off on services she needed.

California begins voting on proposed congressional map

Tuesday's hearings were the first chance for California residents to tell lawmakers how they feel about the new congressional boundaries. A hearing in the Senate was far calmer, and the proposal passed easily.

California Democrats said they are pushing back against Trump and his desire to reshape U.S. House maps to his advantage in an expanding fight over control of Congress ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. The California Legislature is expected to approve a proposed congressional map and declare a Nov. 4 special election by Thursday to get required voter approval.

In Texas, state Rep. Nicole Collier stayed at the Capitol overnight and into Tuesday to protest a Republican requirement that she and some of her Democratic colleagues have around-the-clock law enforcement surveillance after they ended a two-week walkout that delayed a vote on the Trump-backed map.

On Tuesday, eight other Texas Democrats said they'll join Collier in spending the night on the House floor.

State Department of Public Safety officers are shadowing the lawmakers to ensure they return to the Capitol and do not leave Texas again. To leave the House floor Monday, the Democrats had to sign what they called "permission slips" agreeing to the surveillance.

Texas' Republican-controlled House scheduled a vote for Wednesday on the new map.

California Republicans mount an opposition campaign

Dozens of residents from up and down the state, leaders of local Republican groups and the conservative California Family Council showed up to a hearing Tuesday to voice opposition to Democrats' plan.

Some said the process has been shrouded in secrecy because the map was drawn without meaningful public input. Others said they would rather lawmakers focus on addressing issues instead of trying to bypass a bipartisan redistricting process.

"There's different needs and different requirements for everybody," Jim Shoemaker, a Republican running for Congress in a district south of Sacramento, said in an interview. "But if you have somebody that just has a little portion of an area, they're not going to represent the people the way they should because they're looking at the wrong thing."



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Labor union members and several key Democratic political allies said the partisan plan is needed to protect democracy and to fight back the president's aggressive agenda.

Public remarks may have little sway, though, as Democratic leaders are determined to rapidly advance the proposal.

Some Republican lawmakers filed an emergency petition with the state Supreme Court arguing Democrats are violating the state constitution. They assert that lawmakers can't vote this week because the constitution requires new legislation to have a 30-day wait for public review.

Democrats hold 43 out of California's 52 U.S. House seats and want to win five more. 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.

Texas Democrats have police escorts

In Texas, Republican legislative leaders assigned state troopers to watch their Democratic colleagues and ensure they don't flee the state again, as they did recently to block a vote on new maps. Suburban Dallas Rep. Mihaela Plesa said one followed 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.

"This is a waste of taxpayer dollars and really performative theater," Plesa said in a telephone interview.

A message seeking comment was sent Tuesday to the Department of Public Safety.

A national brawl unfolding

Redistricting typically occurs once at the beginning of each decade after the census. But Trump is looking to use mid-decade redistricting 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, several dozen districts are competitive, so even slight changes in a few states could affect which party wins control.

## **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 placed on its website's banned list and was suspended from all contact with gymnasts.

The reason for Gardner's removal wasn't publicly disclosed. But court records obtained exclusively by The Associated 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. The FBI said Tuesday it believes Gardner "primarily targeted children" at the gyms in Iowa and Mississippi, as well as at a third one in Louisiana where he worked for 10 years until 2014, and was seeking to identify additional potential victims.

His disciplinary case has still not been resolved by SafeSport, which handles sex-abuse cases in Olympic

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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.

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

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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.

Gardner is being detained at the Polk County Jail in Des Moines and will be transported to Mississippi to face the charge there, a spokesperson for the U.S. Marshals Service said.

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 investigators the images appeared to come from Jump'In Gymnastics' facility in Purvis, Mississippi, where Gardner worked from 2014 to 2018 and has since been closed.

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The FBI said that Gardner worked at Athletes in Motion in Prairieville, Louisiana, from 2004 to 2014. Athletes in Motion said that it had recently been notified about the investigation and was cooperating with authorities.

"We have coached athletes in our community for over 40 years and care deeply about the safety of all athletes in this sport," a gym statement said.

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, SafeSport said in a statement provided to the 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 SafeSport'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 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."

## Wall Street falls further from its records as Nvidia, Palantir and other AI stars dim

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street faded on Tuesday following drops for Nvidia and other stars that have been riding the mania surrounding artificial-intelligence technology.

The S&P 500 fell 0.6% for a third straight loss, though it remains near its all-time high set last week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 10 points, or less than 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite slumped 1.5%.

The heaviest weight on the market was Nvidia, whose chips are powering much of the move into AI. It sank 3.5%.

Another AI darling, Palantir Technologies, dropped 9.4% for the largest loss in the S&P 500. It's seen bets build up sharply that its stock price will drop, according to S3 Partners. Only Meta Platforms has seen a bigger increase this year in what's called "short interest," where traders essentially bet a stock's price will fall. Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, sank 2.1%.

Criticism has been rising that stock prices across Wall Street have shot too high, too fast since hitting a bottom in April and have become too expensive. Palantir's stock came into Tuesday with a tremendous gain of 130% for the year so far.

One way companies can make their stock prices look less expensive is to deliver growth in profits. Palo Alto Networks rose 3.1% after reporting earnings and revenue for the latest quarter that topped analysts'



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expectations. The cybersecurity company also gave forecasts for profit and revenue in its upcoming fiscal year that were above Wall Street's.

Home Depot's gain of 3.2%, meanwhile, was the biggest reason the Dow did better than other indexes. The retailer reported results for the latest quarter that were a bit short of what analysts expected, but it delivered growth in revenue and stood by its prior forecasts for revenue and profit over the full year.

Other big retailers will give their latest profit updates in coming days. Lowe's and Target are on deck for Wednesday, while Walmart and Ross Stores will report on Thursday.

The week's headliner for Wall Street is likely arriving on Friday. That's when the chair of the Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, will give a highly anticipated speech in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The setting has been home to big policy announcements from the Fed in the past, and the hope on Wall Street is that Powell may hint that cuts to interest rates are coming soon.

The Fed has kept its main interest rate steady this year, primarily because of the fear of the possibility that President Donald Trump's tariffs could push inflation higher. But a surprisingly weak report on job growth across the country may be superseding that.

Traders on Wall Street widely expect the Fed to cut interest rates at its next meeting in September in order to give the economy a boost. Treasury yields have come down notably in the bond market as a result, and they eased on Tuesday.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.30% from 4.34% late Monday.

Strategists at Bank of America warn that Powell may not sound as inclined to cut interest rates as the market is expecting. He could remain non-committal and discuss the possibility of a worst-case scenario for the economy called "stagflation." The Fed has no good tool to fix that situation, where the economy stagnates at the same time as inflation remains high.

On Wall Street, Viking Therapeutics tumbled 42.1% after the biopharmaceutical company released results from a clinical trial of an oral tablet that could treat obesity and other metabolic disorders.

Tegna rose 4.3% after Nexstar Media Group said it will buy the owner of 64 television stations across the country for \$22 per share in cash. Nexstar, which owns the CW and local television broadcasters of its own, added 0.7%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 37.78 points to 6,411.37. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 10.45 to 44,922.27, and the Nasdaq composite fell 314.82 to 21,314.95.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose in Europe after falling modestly in Asia.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index slipped 0.4% as market heavyweight SoftBank Group Corp. fell 4% after it announced it was taking a \$2 billion stake in U.S. chip maker Intel.

Intel climbed 7%. U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick also confirmed in an interview on CNBC that the Trump administration may take an ownership stake in Intel.

## **Oklahoma ideology test for teachers from New York and California draws criticism**

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

Oklahoma will require applicants for teacher jobs coming from California and New York to pass an exam that the Republican-dominated state's top education official says is designed to safeguard against "radical leftist ideology," but which opponents decry as a "MAGA loyalty test."

Ryan Walters, Oklahoma's public schools superintendent, said Monday that any teacher coming from the two blue states will be required to pass an assessment exam administered by PragerU, an Oklahoma-based conservative nonprofit, before getting a state certification.

"As long as I am superintendent, Oklahoma classrooms will be safeguarded from the radical leftist ideology fostered in places like California and New York," Walters said in a statement.

PragerU, short for Prager University, puts out short videos with a conservative perspective on politics and economics. It promotes itself as "focused on changing minds through the creative use of digital media."

Quinton Hitchcock, a spokesperson for the state's education department, said the Prager test for teacher

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applicants has been finalized and will be rolling out "very soon."

The state did not release the entire 50-question test to The Associated Press but did provide the first five questions, which include asking what the first three words of the U.S. Constitution are and why freedom of religion is "important to America's identity."

Prager didn't immediately respond to a phone message or email seeking comment. But Marissa Streit, CEO of PragerU, told CNN that several questions on the assessment relate to "undoing the damage of gender ideology."

Jonathan Zimmerman, who teaches history of education at the University of Pennsylvania, said Oklahoma's contract with PragerU to test out-of-state would-be teachers "is a watershed moment."

"Instead of Prager simply being a resource that you can draw in an optional way, Prager has become institutionalized as part of the state system," he said. "There's no other way to describe it."

Zimmerman said the American Historical Association did a survey last year of 7th- to 12th-grade teachers and found that only a minority were relying on textbooks for day-to-day instruction. He said the upside to that is that most history books are "deadly boring." But he said that means history teachers are relying on online resources, such as those from Prager.

"I think what we're now seeing in Oklahoma is something different, which is actually empowering Prager as a kind of gatekeeper for future teachers," Zimmerman said.

One of the nation's largest teachers unions, the American Federation of Teachers, has often been at odds with President Donald Trump's administration and the crackdown on teacher autonomy in the classroom.

"This MAGA loyalty test will be yet another turnoff for teachers in a state already struggling with a huge shortage," said AFT President Randi Weingarten.

She was critical of Walters, who pushed for the state's curriculum standards to be revised to include conspiracy theories about the 2020 presidential election.

"His priority should be educating students, but instead, it's getting Donald Trump and other MAGA politicians to notice him," Weingarten said in a statement.

Tina Ellsworth, president of the nonprofit National Council for the Social Studies, also raised concerns that the test would prevent teachers from applying for jobs.

"State boards of education should stay true to the values and principles of the U.S. Constitution," Ellsworth said. "Imposing an ideology test to become a teacher in our great democracy is antithetical to those principles."

State Rep. John Waldron, the Oklahoma Democratic Party chairman, decried the test as "political posturing."

"If you want to see a textbook definition of indoctrination, how about a loyalty test for teachers," said Waldron. "It's a sad echo of a more paranoid past."

Waldron, a New Jersey native, said he would have been in the target demographic for this kind of test when he moved from Washington, D.C., to Oklahoma to teach social studies in 1999. He said it would have struck him as an indication that the state "wasn't serious about attracting quality teachers."

"Teachers are not rushing here from other states to teach. We've got an enormous teacher shortage and it's not like we have a giant supply of teachers coming in from blue states anyway," he said.

## Trump administration vying to own a big stake in Intel after SoftBank's \$2 billion bet on company

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Tuesday confirmed the U.S. government is vying for a 10% stake in Silicon Valley pioneer Intel in an unusual deal that would deepen the Trump administration's financial ties with major computer chip manufacturers and punctuate a dramatic about-face from the president's recent push to oust the company's CEO.

The ambitions that Lutnick confirmed in a televised interview with CNBC came the day after various news outlets reported on the negotiations between the Trump administration and Intel. The investment

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would be made by converting federal government grants previously pledged under President Joe Biden's administration into a bushel of Intel stock that would turn the U.S. government into one of the company's largest shareholders.

"We think America should get the benefit of the bargain," Lutnick told CNBC as he explained why President Donald Trump is pushing for the deal. "It's obvious that it's the right move to make."

Intel declined to comment on the negotiations with the Trump administration.

The notion of the U.S. government holding a huge stake in Intel would have seemed inconceivable back in the company's heyday when its processors were powering a personal computer boom that began in the mid-1970s. But Intel has been mired in tough times after missing mobile computing era unleashed by the iPhone's 2007 debut.

Intel has fall even farther behind in recent years during an artificial intelligence craze that has been a boon for two of its once-smaller rivals, Nvidia and Advanced Micro Devices. The Trump administration is hitching a ride on their success by imposing a 15% commission on their sales of their chip sales in China in exchange for their export licenses. Those fees are expected to translate into billions of dollars in additional government revenue.

The U.S. government's negotiations to become a major Intel shareholder are coming on a heels of a \$2 billion investment Japanese technology giant SoftBank Group disclosed late Monday that it plans to make in the Santa Clara, California, company. Softbank is accumulating its 2% stake in Intel at \$23 per share — a slight discount from the stock's price when its investment was announced.

Intel's shares surged nearly 7% to close at \$25.31 on the news of Softbank's big bet on Intel, coupled with Trump's designs on the company.

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.

"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."

Trump's interest in Intel is also being driven by his desire to boost chip production in the U.S., which has been a focal point of the trade war that he has been waging throughout the world since he returned to the White House earlier this year for his second term in office. "We want Intel to be successful in America," Lutnick said during his CNBC interview.

Boosting domestic production of computer chips also ranked high on the Biden administration's agenda, which resulted in the 2022 passage of the CHIPS and Science Act.

Intel was among the biggest beneficiaries of the program, but it hasn't been able to revive its fortunes while falling behind on construction projects spawned by the CHIPS program. The company has received about \$2.2 billion of the \$7.8 billion pledged under the incentives program — money that Lutnick derided as a "giveaway" that would better serve U.S. taxpayers if it's turned into Intel stock, which he said would be in the form of non-voting shares so the government wouldn't be able to use the stake to sway how the company is managed.

But Intel's ongoing struggles also means the U.S. government is taking on a risky investment. The company is in the midst of its latest turnaround attempt under CEO Lip-Bu Tan, who was hired in March to shake things up. Tan's turnaround effort so far has been focused on a cost-cutting spree that is gutting the company's workforce and further delaying construction on a chip plant in Ohio that has been in the works since 2022.

Intel's market value is hovering around \$110 billion, only a slight uptick from where it was when Tan arrived and leaving it more than 60% below its peak reached about a quarter-century ago during the early phase of the internet boom.

In another strange twist to the new alliance, President Donald Trump had demanded that Tan resign in

an August 7 post spurred by concerns about investments that Tan had made in China chipmakers while he was working as a venture capitalist.

But Trump backed off after the Malaysia-born Tan professed his allegiance to the U.S. in a public letter to Intel employees and went to the White House to meet with the president, who applauded the Intel CEO for having an "amazing story." That truce apparently sparked the negotiations that may culminate in the U.S. government owning a chunk of Intel.

Although rare, it's not unprecedented for the U.S. government to become a significant shareholder in a prominent company. One of the most notable instances occurred during the Great Recession in 2008 when the government injected nearly \$50 billion into General Motors in return for a roughly 60% stake in the automaker at a time it was on the verge of bankruptcy. The government ended up with a roughly \$10 billion loss after it sold its stock in GM.

## Judge dismisses part of lawsuit over 'Alligator Alcatraz' immigration detention center

By DAVID FISCHER, MIKE SCHNEIDER and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A federal judge in Miami dismissed part of a lawsuit that claimed detainees were denied access to the legal system at the immigration detention center in the Florida Everglades known as "Alligator Alcatraz," and then moved the remaining counts of the case to another court.

Claims that the detainees were denied hearings in immigration court were rendered moot when the Trump administration last weekend designated the Krome North Processing Center near Miami as a site for their cases to be heard, U.S. District Judge Rodolfo Ruiz said in a 47-page ruling Monday night dismissing a Fifth Amendment count.

The judge granted the state defendants a change of venue motion to the Middle District of Florida, where the remaining claims of First Amendment violations will be addressed. Those include allegations of delays in scheduling meetings between detainees and their attorneys and an inability for the detainees to talk privately with their attorneys by phone or videoconference at the facility whose official name is the South Detention Facility.

ACLU attorney Eunice Cho, the lead attorney for the detainees, said the federal government only reversed course last weekend and allowed the detainees to petition an immigration court because of the lawsuit.

"It should not take a lawsuit to force the government to abide by the law and the Constitution," Cho said. "We look forward to continuing the fight."

The judge heard arguments from both sides in a hearing earlier Monday in Miami. Civil rights attorneys were seeking a preliminary injunction to ensure detainees at the facility had access to their lawyers and could get a hearing.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration raced to build the facility on an isolated airstrip surrounded by swampland two months ago in order to aid President Donald Trump's efforts to deport people in the U.S. illegally. The governor has said the location in the rugged and remote Everglades was meant as a deterrent against escape, much like the island prison in California that Republicans named it after. The detention center has an estimated annual cost of \$450 million.

The state and federal government had argued that even though the isolated airstrip where the facility is located is owned by Miami-Dade County, Florida's southern district was the wrong venue since the detention center is located in neighboring Collier County, which is in the state's middle district.

Judge Ruiz had hinted during a hearing last week that he had some concerns over which jurisdiction was appropriate. Attorneys for the detainees had argued that Ruiz's court was appropriate since the detainees were under the oversight of federal officials in the Miami regional office. Any transfer to another venue would cause a delay in a court decision.

Ruiz noted the facts in the case changed Saturday when the Trump administration designated the Krome facility as the immigration court with jurisdiction over all detainees at the detention center.



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Ruiz wrote that the case has “a tortured procedural history” since it was filed July 16, weeks after the first group of detainees arrived at the facility.

“Nearly every aspect of the Plaintiffs’ civil action — their causes of action, their facts in support, their theories of venue, their arguments on the merits and their requests for relief — have changed with each filing,” the judge wrote.

The state and federal government defendants made an identical argument last week about jurisdiction for a second lawsuit in which environmental groups and the Miccosukee Tribe sued to stop further construction and operations at the Everglades detention center until it’s in compliance with federal environmental laws.

U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams in Miami on Aug. 7 ordered a 14-day halt on additional construction at the site while witnesses testified at a hearing that wrapped up last week. She has said she plans to issue a ruling before the order expires later this week. She had yet to rule on the venue question.

Detainees at the facility have said worms turn up in the food, toilets don’t flush, flooding floors with fecal waste, and mosquitoes and other insects are everywhere.

Civil rights attorneys also said officers were going cell to cell to pressure detainees into signing voluntary removal orders before they’re allowed to consult their attorneys, and some detainees had been deported even though they didn’t have final removal orders. Along with the spread of a respiratory infection and rainwater flooding in tents, the circumstances had fueled a feeling of desperation among detainees, the attorneys wrote in a court filing.

## **Trump’s Justice Department is investigating whether DC police officials falsified crime data**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has opened an investigation into whether police officials in Washington, D.C., have falsified data to make crime rates appear lower than they are, according to two people familiar with the probe who weren’t authorized to publicly discuss an open investigation.

The investigation comes amid an escalating — and political — showdown between the Trump administration and the city over control of the police department. It wasn’t immediately clear what federal laws could have been violated by the possible manipulation of crime data.

President Donald Trump claimed that violent crime in Washington is getting worse as he ordered a federal takeover of the city’s police department, flooding the streets with hundreds of National Guard members. But he exaggerated or misstated many facts about public safety in Washington, where crime rates have fallen in recent years.

Mayor Muriel Bowser’s office declined to comment on the investigation. A spokesperson for U.S. Attorney Jeannine Pirro’s office in Washington didn’t respond to emails seeking comment.

The New York Times was first to report on the investigation.

Earlier this year, a Metropolitan Police Department commander suspected of manipulating crime data was placed on paid administrative leave, NBC Washington reported. Bowser told the television station last Tuesday that the city’s police chief “had concerns about one commander, investigated all seven districts and verified that the concern was with one person.”

“So, we are completing that investigation and we don’t believe it implicates many cases,” the mayor added.

Former interim U.S. Attorney Ed Martin, who was Pirro’s predecessor and Trump’s first pick to lead the office, said Washington’s violent crime had decreased in the first 100 days since Trump returned to the White House in January. In an April 28 news release, Martin’s office said MPD data showed that violent crime had dropped by 25 percent since the start of 2025.

“We are proving that strong enforcement and smart policies can make our communities safer,” Martin said in the release.

## Air Canada reaches deal with flight attendant union to end strike as operations will slowly restart

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Air Canada said it will gradually restart operations after reaching an agreement early on Tuesday with the union for 10,000 flight attendants to end a strike that disrupted the travel plans of hundreds of thousands of travelers.

The agreement came after Canada's biggest airline and the union resumed talks late Monday for the first time since the strike began over the weekend, affecting about 130,000 travelers a day at the peak of the summer travel season. Air Canada said flights will start resuming at 4 p.m. ET.

Flight attendants walked off the job early Saturday after turning down the airline's request to enter into government-directed arbitration, which allows a third-party mediator to decide the terms of a new contract.

The union said the agreement will guarantee members pay for work performed while planes are on the ground, resolving one of the major issues that drove the strike.

"Unpaid work is over. We have reclaimed our voice and our power," the union said in a statement. "When our rights were taken away, we stood strong, we fought back — and we secured a tentative agreement that our members can vote on."

Chief executive Michael Rousseau said restarting a major carrier is a complex undertaking and said regular service may require seven to 10 days. Some flights will be canceled until the schedule is stabilized.

"Full restoration may require a week or more, so we ask for our customers' patience and understanding over the coming days," Rousseau said in a statement.

The two sides reached the deal with the help of a mediator early Tuesday morning. The airline said mediation discussions "were begun on the basis that the union commit to have the airline's 10,000 flight attendants immediately return to work."

Air Canada declined to comment further on the agreement until the ratification process is complete. It noted a strike or lockout is not possible during this time.

The carrier said it plans to complete about half Tuesday's scheduled flights, with a focus on international outbounds. The ramp-up will begin on Wednesday morning for mainline North American routes.

Earlier, Air Canada said rolling cancellations would extend through Tuesday afternoon after the union defied a second return-to-work order.

The Canada Industrial Relations Board had declared the strike illegal Monday and ordered the flight attendants back on the job. But the union said it would defy the directive. Union leaders also ignored a weekend order to submit to binding arbitration and end the strike by Sunday afternoon.

The board is an independent administrative tribunal that interprets and applies Canada's labor laws. The government ordered the board to intervene.

Labor leaders objected to the Canadian government's repeated use of a law that cuts off workers' right to strike and forces them into arbitration, a step the government took in recent years with workers at ports, railways and elsewhere.

"Your right to vote on your wages was preserved," the union said in a post on its website.

Air Canada operates around 700 flights per day. The airline estimated Monday that 500,000 customers would be affected by flight cancellations.

Aviation analytics firm Cirium said that as of Monday afternoon, Air Canada had called off at least 1,219 domestic flights and 1,339 international flights since last Thursday, when the carrier began gradually suspending its operations ahead of the strike and lockout that began early Saturday.

Toronto's Pearson International Airport, Canada's largest, said it will deploy additional staff to assist passengers and support startup operations.

"I am relieved that Air Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees have reached a tentative agreement early this morning," Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement. "It is my hope that this will ensure flight attendants are compensated fairly at all times, while ending disruption for hundreds of thousands of Canadian families, workers, and visitors to Canada."

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

## Trump weaponization czar urged New York Attorney General James to resign over mortgage probe

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's political weaponization czar sent a letter urging New York Attorney General Letitia James to resign from office "as an act of good faith" four days after starting his mortgage fraud investigation of her. Then he showed up outside her house.

Ed Martin, the director of the Justice Department's Weaponization Working Group, told James' lawyer on Aug. 12 the Democrat would best serve the "good of the state and nation" by resigning and ending his probe into alleged paperwork discrepancies on her Brooklyn townhouse and a Virginia home.

"Her resignation from office would give the people of New York and America more peace than proceeding," Martin wrote. "I would take this as an act of good faith."

Then last Friday, Martin turned up outside James' Brooklyn townhouse in a "Columbo"-esque trench coat, accompanied by an aide and New York Post journalists. He didn't meet with James or go inside the building. A Post writer saw him tell a neighbor: "I'm just looking at houses, interesting houses. It's an important house."

James' lawyer Abbe Lowell shot back on Monday, telling Martin in a letter his blunt request for James' resignation defied Justice Department standards and codes of professional responsibility and legal ethics.

The Justice Department "has firm policies against using investigations and against using prosecutorial power for achieving political ends," Lowell wrote. "This is ever more the case when that demand is made to seek political revenge against a public official in the opposite party."

"Let me be clear: that will not happen here," Lowell added.

Lowell also blasted Martin's visit to James' home as a "truly bizarre, made-for-media stunt" and said it was "outside the bounds" of Justice Department rules. He included an image from security camera footage showing Martin, in his trench coat, posing for a photo in front of James' townhouse. He said Martin looked as if he were on a "visit to a tourist attraction."

The Associated Press obtained copies of both letters on Tuesday. A message seeking comment was left for Martin's spokesperson. James' office declined to comment.

The letters were the latest salvos in a monthslong drama involving Trump's retribution campaign against James and others who've battled him in court and fought his policies.

James has sued the Republican president and his administration dozens of times and last year won a \$454 million judgment against Trump and his companies in a lawsuit alleging he lied about the value of his assets on financial statements given to banks. An appeals court has yet to rule on Trump's bid to overturn that verdict.

Earlier this month, the AP reported, the Justice Department subpoenaed James for records related to the civil fraud lawsuit and a lawsuit she filed against the National Rifle Association.

Martin's investigation stems from a letter Federal Housing Finance Agency Director William Pulte sent to Attorney General Pam Bondi in April asking her to investigate and consider prosecuting James, alleging she had "falsified bank documents and property records."

Pulte, whose agency regulates mortgage financiers Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, cited "media reports" claiming James had falsely listed a Virginia home as her principal residence, and he suggested she may have been trying to avoid higher interest rates that often apply to second homes.

Records show James was listed as a co-borrower on a house her niece was buying in 2023. Lowell said records and correspondence easily disproved Pulte's allegation.

While James signed a power-of-attorney form that, Lowell said, "mistakenly stated the property to be Ms. James' principal residence," she sent an email to her mortgage loan broker around the same time that made clear the property "WILL NOT be my primary residence."

Pulte also accused James of lying in property records about the number of apartments in the Brooklyn townhouse she has owned since 2001.

A certificate of occupancy issued to a previous owner authorized up to five units in the building, where James lives and has rented out apartments. Other city records show the townhouse has four units, a number James has listed in building permit applications and mortgage documents.

On Aug. 8, Bondi appointed Martin, a former Republican political operative, to investigate. Martin, the current U.S. pardon attorney and former acting U.S. attorney for Washington, D.C., is also investigating mortgage fraud allegations against Sen. Adam Schiff, D-Calif. Schiff's lawyer called the allegations "transparently false, stale, and long debunked."

Lowell said it appears the working group Martin leads "is aptly named as it is 'weaponizing'" the Justice Department "to carry out the President's and Attorney General's threats."

## **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 more than 180 in Gaza.

Most of the aid workers killed were national staffers 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.

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 numbers 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 six in 2023, according to the database.

## Takeaways from AP's reporting on coach accused of abuse at renowned US gymnastics academy

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — More than three years after sexual abuse claims were first reported to authorities by his students, the FBI has arrested a former girls' coach at an elite U.S. gymnastics academy in Iowa on a child pornography charge.

The abuse investigation into Sean Gardner, formerly of Chow's Gymnastics and Dance Institute in West Des Moines, is testing the reforms put in place after the Larry Nassar sex abuse scandal rocked USA Gymnastics.

An Associated Press review found that while Gardner was swiftly removed from coaching in 2022, a criminal investigation stalled, the public was kept in the dark about the claims, and Gardner was able to get a job at an Iowa hospital.

Gardner faced multiple claims of sexual abuse by students over a period of years at Chow's, and had installed a hidden video camera at his former gym in Mississippi to record young girls using the bathroom, according to an FBI affidavit. Gardner hasn't returned AP messages seeking comment and a public defender assigned to represent him also didn't return messages.

Accused coach worked at elite Iowa gym

Gardner went to work at Chow's Gymnastics in 2018, saying he landed his dream job at the academy where U.S. gymnasts Shawn Johnson and Gabby Douglas trained before becoming gold medalists at the 2008 and 2012 Olympics.

He soon became 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, which was founded by Liang "Chow" Qiao, a former Chinese gymnast who opened it after moving to the United States.

Several of Gardner's students earned college gymnastics scholarships.

Investigation began after sexual abuse reports in 2022

In March 2022, a girl reported to the U.S. Center for SafeSport, a watchdog group created after the Nassar scandal to handle abuse investigations, that she had been sexually abused by Gardner, according to an FBI affidavit.

The girl said that Gardner used inappropriate spotting techniques in which he would put his hands between her legs and touch and rub her vagina, during sessions between 2018 and when she left the gym in 2020, the affidavit says.

Months later, another girl told SafeSport that Gardner had similarly sexually abused her during workouts and once dragged her across the carpet so hard that it caused burn marks on her buttocks, according to the affidavit.

Those reports were shared with West Des Moines police, and SafeSport issued a temporary ban on Gardner from coaching for unspecified misconduct. But the criminal investigation quickly stalled after none of the girls stepped forward to pursue criminal charges.

Criminal investigation took years to gain steam

The investigation was dormant until April 2024, when another former student came forward to the West Des Moines police to report she was sexually abused by Gardner at Chow's.

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, and she initially saw him as a father figure.

Before she moved away 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.

She told police Gardner made her do inappropriate stretches that exposed her anus and vagina outside

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her leotard and that she suspected he used his cellphone to film her in that position.

The teen told police that Gardner fondled her while spotting her, repeatedly touching her vagina. Gartner gave non-consensual hugs, rubbed her back and butt and discussed his sex life, she said.

Police find videos and photos from hidden camera in Mississippi

While serving a search warrant at Gardner's Iowa apartment in May, investigators seized a cellphone and computer equipment.

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

Additional examination by the FBI uncovered videos that showed at least seven young girls using the gym bathroom at Jump'In Gymnastics in Purvis, Mississippi, where Gardner worked until 2018.

On one of the videos Gardner is shown entering the bathroom and turning off the camera, the FBI says. The owner of the gym, Candi Workman, hasn't returned AP messages seeking comment.

Gardner 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. He was ordered detained pending further proceedings in Mississippi.

During investigation, he got a job at an Iowa hospital

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.

## **The Boston Celtics have a new owner. The drive to add more NBA championships won't change**

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The Boston Celtics have a new owner, and there's one thing that isn't going to change at the NBA's most-decorated franchise.

"Coming in second is not the objective, and it's not acceptable," private equity mogul Bill Chisholm said Tuesday after taking control of the team from Wyc Grousbeck. "The ultimate yardstick is winning championships. Wyc's got two, and we're going to get more, and he and I together are going to help drive that."

Chisholm leads a group that bid \$6.1 billion for the Celtics — a record price for an American professional sports franchise. The NBA unanimously approved the deal last week, and all that was left was for the money to change hands on Tuesday.

"We are committed to building on the legacy of the Celtics and raising banners," Chisholm said. "And I can't wait for the team to get back out there this fall."

A Massachusetts native, Chisholm said his earliest Celtics memories are of the Dave Cowens, JoJo White and John Havlicek teams that won two NBA titles in the 1970s, but he really fell hard for the teams with Larry Bird, Robert Parish and Kevin McHale that added three more banners to the Boston Garden rafters in the '80s.

"I became a rabid fan during the Bird, McHale, Parish era. That was my team," Chisholm said in an interview with The Associated Press shortly after the deal was finalized. "How can you be a teenager in Massachusetts, or New England, with that group and not end up being a lifelong Celtics fan?"

The team was put on the market last summer, soon after Tatum and Brown vanquished the Dallas Mavericks in the NBA finals. Chisholm won the bidding in March and leads a group that now has majority ownership control of the team, with full control coming by 2028 at a price that could bring the total value to \$7.3 billion.

That's the highest price ever paid for a team in the four major North American sports, though a piece of the Los Angeles Lakers changed hands this summer at a price that would value the entire franchise at

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\$10 billion.

Other investors include Aditya Mittal, Bruce Beal, Andrew Bialecki, Dom Ferrante, Rob Hale, Mario Ho and Ian Loring. Sixth Street is also a "major participant" in the investment group, the team said in a news release.

Grousbeck and co-owner Steve Pagliuca led a group that bought the Celtics in 2002 for \$360 million and presided over an era in which the Celtics won two NBA titles, lost in the finals two other times and made the playoffs in 20 of 23 seasons. The team's most recent title came in 2024, led by Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown.

Team president Rich Gotham, general manager Brad Stevens and coach Joe Mazzulla are all expected to remain in their positions. Chisholm will represent the team in league matters as governor, with Grousbeck staying on as co-owner, CEO and alternate governor to run the day-to-day operations alongside Chisholm.

"We've got a really solid core to the roster. We've got, I think, the best basketball people that there are. And we've got a really talented business operations team," Chisholm said. "And then we've got a leader like Wyc. I mean, why would you go make major changes to that?"

"I think there are things we can always improve on," he said. "But that is a really, really good place to start."

Grousbeck said he can already tell that Chisholm understands the significance of owning one of the NBA's charter franchises, with its unmatched 18 championships and a history of Hall of Famers from Red Auerbach, Bob Cousy and Bill Russell to Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett.

"It's an unbelievable responsibility, and an unbelievable thrill," Grousbeck said. "But it's a huge challenge because the greats built it. And we're just here trying to maintain the legacy, which is a great honor."

Chisholm takes over the team in a bit of a transition just two seasons after its latest title.

Tatum is recovering from surgery to repair the ruptured right Achilles tendon injury he suffered in Boston's Eastern Conference semifinal loss to the New York Knicks, dooming the Celtics' hopes of a repeat. Jrue Holiday and Kristaps Porzingis — key parts of the title-winning team — were traded to avoid the NBA's punitive second apron payroll tax.

Grousbeck said the days of outspending opponents to win championships are over.

"We had our two years at supermax, 100 mph, and now you take a year to reset a little bit, which every team will be doing," Grousbeck said. "And we'll be back. We're coming back as hard as we can."

## Despite a flurry of meetings on Russia's war in Ukraine, major obstacles to peace remain

By BARRY HATTON and KATIE MARIE DAVIES Associated Press

The second Oval Office meeting in six months between U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy went off smoothly Monday, in sharp contrast to their disastrous encounter in February.

European leaders joined the discussions in a show of transatlantic unity, and both they and Zelenskyy repeatedly thanked Trump for his efforts to end Russia's three-year war on Ukraine.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said his expectations for the meeting "were not just met, they were exceeded," while Zelenskyy on Tuesday called the sit-down "an important step toward ending this war."

But despite the guarded optimism and friendly banter among the leaders, there was little concrete progress on the main obstacles to peace — and that deadlock likely favors Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose forces continue to make steady, if slow, progress on the ground in Ukraine.

"Putin cannot get enough champagne or whatever he's drinking," Gabrielius Landsbergis, a former foreign minister of Lithuania, said of Monday's meeting.

As NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte told The Ingraham Angle on Fox News: "All the details have to be hammered out."

Here is a look at the issues that must be resolved:

Security guarantees for Ukraine

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To agree to a peace deal with Russia, Ukraine wants assurances that it can deter any future attacks by the Kremlin's forces.

That means, Zelenskyy says, a strong Ukrainian army that is provided with weapons and training by Western partners.

It could potentially also mean securing a guarantee resembling NATO's collective defense mandate, which sees an attack on one member of the alliance as an attack on all. How that would work is not clear.

Additionally, Kyiv's European allies are looking to set up a force that could backstop any peace agreement in Ukraine.

A coalition of 30 countries, including European nations, Japan and Australia, have signed up to support the initiative, although the role that the U.S. might play in such a force is unclear.

European leaders, fearing Moscow's territorial ambitions won't stop in Ukraine, are keen to lock America's military might into the plan.

On Tuesday, Trump told Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" that U.S. troops would not be sent to help defend Ukraine against Russia.

Russia has repeatedly said that it would not accept NATO troops in Ukraine.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron co-chaired an online meeting Tuesday of the coalition countries.

Agreeing on a ceasefire

Ukraine and its European supporters have repeatedly called for a ceasefire while peace talks are held.

Putin has balked at that prospect. With his forces inching forward in Ukraine, he has little incentive to freeze their movement.

Ahead of his meeting with the Russian leader last week, Trump threatened Russia with "severe consequences" if it didn't accept a ceasefire. Afterward, he dropped that demand and said it was best to focus on a comprehensive peace deal — an approach that Putin has pushed for.

Trump said in Monday's Oval Office meeting with Zelenskyy that a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine was "unnecessary." But after his closed-door meeting with European leaders and Zelenskyy, Trump told reporters that "all of us would obviously prefer the immediate ceasefire while we work on a lasting peace."

Where Trump ultimately falls on that issue is important because it could affect how much Ukrainian land Russia has seized by the time the two sides get around to hammering out how much it could keep.

Occupied Ukrainian territory

Zelenskyy and European leaders said that Putin has demanded that Ukraine give up the Donbas, the country's industrial heartland made up of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. It has seen some of the most intense fighting of the war though Russian forces have failed to capture it completely.

Moscow also illegally annexed Crimea and its forces hold parts of four other regions outside the Donbas. In all, they hold about one-fifth of Ukraine.

Zelenskyy has long noted the Ukrainian Constitution prohibits breaking up his country. He has also suggested the demand for territory would serve as a springboard for a future Russian invasion.

Rutte said the possibility of Ukraine ceding occupied territory to Russia in return for peace wasn't discussed in Monday's talks. That is an issue for Zelenskyy and Putin to consider, he said to Fox News.

A Putin-Zelenskyy meeting

Zelenskyy has repeatedly suggested sitting down with Putin, even challenging the Russian leader to meet him as part of direct peace talks between the two sides in Turkey in May. Putin snubbed that offer, saying that significant progress on an agreement would have to be made before the pair met in person.

On Monday, Trump appeared to back Zelenskyy's plan. "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.

He said he would join the two leaders afterward.

But when discussing a phone call held after the meeting between Trump and the Russian leader, Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov gave no indication that either a bilateral or a trilateral meeting with Ukraine had been agreed.



European leaders know that Putin doesn't want to meet Zelenskyy and that he won't allow Western troops in Ukraine — but they're expressing optimism that these things could happen in the hopes of forcing Putin to be the one to say no to Trump, according to Janis Kluge of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

"Europeans hype up expectations to create a reality in which Putin disappoints," he wrote on X.

## **Zelenskyy deploys gratitude diplomacy in second White House meeting with Trump**

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wasn't going to risk being accused of being ungrateful this time.

With peace talks on the table and a chance to rebound from his disastrous White House scolding six months ago, Zelenskyy made sure to show his gratitude to U.S. President Donald Trump during Monday's meeting in the Oval Office.

In fact, he said thanks nine times to Trump and others in the first minute of their brief public meeting that preceded a short news conference.

"Thanks so much, Mr. President," he said. "First of all, thank you for the invitation and thank you very much for your efforts, personal efforts to stop killings and stop this war. Thank you."

In February, Zelenskyy's meeting with Trump quickly spiraled into a public relations disaster when Vice President JD Vance berated him for not being sufficiently thankful.

"You should be thanking the President for trying to bring an end to this conflict," Vance said in a moment that caught Zelenskyy off guard. "Have you said thank you once? In this entire meeting? No, in this entire meeting, have you said thank you?"

Zelenskyy tried to defend himself, saying he had always expressed his appreciation to the U.S. for the military and financial support it provided after Russia invaded it in 2022. But the damage was done.

World leaders took their cue and learned that flattery is the way to winning over the unpredictable Trump, a strategy on full display in a larger meeting later in the day that included other European leaders and the head of NATO.

Zelenskyy was advised by his peers on how to approach the meeting, said German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who had a much smoother Oval Office debut in June.

"He asked for that," Merz said. "He saw that my meeting with Donald Trump went very differently from his meeting."

With a chance to make a better second impression in the Oval Office, gratitude diplomacy was front and center for Zelenskyy.

In addition to thanking the president six times, Zelenskyy extended gratitude to Melania Trump for personally writing to Russian President Vladimir Putin to think about the Ukrainian children and urge peace.

And he twice thanked his European allies who had arrived as reinforcements in Washington to present a unified front to push for a ceasefire and security guarantees if there is a peace deal with Russia.

In a subsequent meeting with top leaders from Europe, Zelenskyy expressed his thanks at least seven times, including two mentions for a map Trump had presented him.

"Thank you for the map, by the way," he said.

He was not alone.

Trump himself used the T-word about a dozen times in the later meeting and heaped praise on his fellow leaders from Europe.

He called Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni a great leader with a long career ahead, said he liked French President Emmanuel Macron even more since he's gotten to know him — something he noted was unusual for him — and he complimented Merz's tan.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who has worked hard to forge a close relationship with Trump, thanked the president four times, noting that after three years of fighting, nobody else had been able to

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bring the conflict as close to a possible end.

"So I thank you for that," Starmer said.

Ben Hodges, former commanding general of the U.S. Army in Europe, said the "whole lot of deference and homage" paid to Trump was "nauseating but necessary" to keep Trump in support of NATO.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, who addressed Trump as "dear Donald" during the meeting, later called the president "amazing."

## NFL stars under pressure: Which players have the most to prove this season?

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr. AP Pro Football Writer

The pressure is on several big-name NFL players as they enter a season that will go a long way toward determining their playing futures — and possibly that of their teams.

New York Jets quarterback Justin Fields is getting another chance as a starter on his third team in five years, this time looking to help end the league's longest active playoff drought at 14 seasons.

Jacksonville's Trevor Lawrence got a huge payday before last season — a five-year, \$275 million contract extension, including \$142 million guaranteed — but struggled with injury and inconsistency as the Jaguars missed the postseason.

Young quarterbacks such as Minnesota's J.J. McCarthy, Indianapolis' Anthony Richardson, Chicago's Caleb Williams and Carolina's Bryce Young also are in the spotlight. But it's not only the signal-callers.

Buffalo running back James Cook, San Francisco running back Christian McCaffrey, Dallas wide receiver George Pickens, Atlanta tight end Kyle Pitts and New England defensive lineman Milton Williams are among a handful of NFL stars with something to prove because of injuries, mediocre play or needing to justify big contracts.

James Cook, RB, Bills

The star running back ended his contract standoff last Wednesday by signing a four-year deal that will pay him \$48 million — including \$30 million in guaranteed money. Cook tied for the NFL lead with 16 touchdown runs last season, a breakout year for the 2022 second-rounder out of Georgia. He now must live up to that lofty contract while helping Josh Allen make Buffalo's offense roll.

Justin Fields, QB, Jets

Fields was a first-rounder in 2021 by Chicago, which hoped he was the Bears' franchise quarterback. He was gone after just three seasons, sent to Pittsburgh — where he went 4-2 for an injured Russell Wilson before heading to the bench for the veteran. He now is replacing Aaron Rodgers with the Jets, who signed him to a two-year, \$40 million deal, installed him as their starter and believe his dual-threat playmaking ability is a perfect fit for their new-look offense.

Trevor Lawrence, QB, Jaguars

The No. 1 overall pick in the 2021 draft went to the Pro Bowl as an alternate in his second season with a breakout year, but he hasn't been able to match that success. Lawrence played in only 10 games last season because of a shoulder injury and then a concussion. He is playing for a new coach in Liam Coen and is still considered a potential franchise quarterback. Two-way rookie sensation Travis Hunter should help, but Lawrence's health and consistency are the key to the Jaguars' success on offense.

Christian McCaffrey, RB, 49ers

The 2023 AP Offensive Player of the Year has proven himself before, bouncing back from injuries to become a dominant playmaker. McCaffrey will need to do it again for the 49ers, and this time is coming off a season marred by knee and Achilles tendon issues. And, he's 29, an age when many running backs start to decline. McCaffrey has looked like himself during the summer and another rebound season could help the 49ers get back to the playoffs.

J.J. McCarthy, QB, Vikings

The 10th overall pick in last year's draft very well could've been Minnesota's starter as a rookie if not for a knee injury in the preseason opener that sidelined him the rest of the season. Sam Darnold stepped in

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and had the best year of his career. But the Vikings decided to not re-sign Darnold, who signed a three-year, \$100.5 million contract with Seattle. Minnesota has turned its offense over to McCarthy, who needs to reward their faith in him by being a capable leader for a playoff-ready team.

George Pickens, WR, Cowboys

In May, Dallas acquired the 2022 second-round pick from Pittsburgh to be its No. 2 receiver and complement CeeDee Lamb as Dak Prescott's primary options in the passing game. Pickens was a playmaker for the Steelers, but not enough — with just one season of 60 or more catches and 1,000 yards receiving, both in 2023. His frustration over a lack of targets, penalties and sideline outbursts also helped make his stay in Pittsburgh short.

Kyle Pitts, TE, Falcons

Pitts came to Atlanta as the highest-selected tight end in NFL draft history at No. 4 overall. His mix of speed, size and physicality had the Falcons daydreaming of mismatches all over the field. Instead, Pitts has failed to be that consistently dominant force. He has topped 60 catches and 1,000 yards receiving just once, both in his first season. Pitts is in the final year of his rookie contract.

Brock Purdy, QB, 49ers

No longer just a feel-good NFL story after he was "Mr. Irrelevant" as the final pick in the 2022 draft, Purdy already has played in a Super Bowl. Some critics have attributed Purdy's success to him simply being a product of coach Kyle Shanahan's offense. The 49ers see him as much more, though, and rewarded him with a five-year \$265 million contract extension in May. After his numbers dropped a bit in 2024, getting McCaffrey and eventually wide receiver Brandon Aiyuk back from injuries should help Purdy.

Anthony Richardson, QB, Colts

Richardson has been an enigma on the field since being selected fourth overall in 2023. He played in only four games as a rookie because of a sprained shoulder and started just 11 last season while finishing with an NFL-worst 47.7% completion rate. Richardson missed four games with injuries and also was benched for two in favor of Joe Flacco in the middle of the season after asking out of a game because of fatigue. Richardson now will have to overcome yet another setback: He'll start this season as a backup after coach Shane Steichen declared Daniel Jones his starter.

Kayvon Thibodeaux, Edge, Giants

The pass rusher's name came up in trade rumors during the offseason, particularly after the Giants drafted Penn State edge rusher Abdul Carter with the third overall pick. New York insisted it wanted to keep Thibodeaux — the Giants picked up his fifth-year contract option — to complement a solid pass rush rotation. Thibodeaux, a first-rounder in 2022, is coming off a season with just 5 1/2 sacks but insists his goal entering every year is to set the single-season record.

Caleb Williams, QB, Bears

The first overall pick last year is entering only his second NFL season, but all eyes have been on him in Chicago with new coach Ben Johnson taking over. Williams put up solid numbers as a rookie with 3,541 yards passing, 20 TDs and only six interceptions. But he took way too many sacks — a league-high 68. Some of the blame was on the offensive line, which has been upgraded, but Williams also routinely held the ball too long.

Milton Williams, DL, Patriots

Williams was a third-round pick by Philadelphia in 2021 and worked his way into being a force for the Eagles on their vaunted D-line. After Fletcher Cox retired following the 2023 season, Williams saw increased snaps and capped a breakout year by taking down Patrick Mahomes twice — including a strip-sack and fumble recovery in the Super Bowl win over Kansas City. He signed a four-year, \$104 million contract with New England in the offseason, making his annual salary the highest ever for a Patriots player.

Bryce Young, QB, Panthers

The No. 1 overall pick in 2023 had the expected up-and-down struggles of a rookie QB but was benched last season in favor of Andy Dalton after just two games. Young regained the starting role after five games when Dalton went down with an injury and finished on a positive note with seven TD passes and no INTs with three rushing scores in his final three games, including two overtime wins. He needs to build on that

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to erase any doubt the Panthers have about their long-term plans at quarterback.

## **Today in History: August 20, Soviets invade Czechoslovakia**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 20, the 232nd day of 2025. There are 133 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 20, 1968, the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the "Prague Spring" liberalization movement.

Also on this date:

In 1858, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was first published, in the "Journal of the Proceedings of the Linnean Society".

In 1862, the New York Tribune published an open letter by editor Horace Greeley calling on President Abraham Lincoln to take more aggressive measures to free enslaved people and end the South's rebellion.

In 1866, President Andrew Johnson declared the official end of the Civil War.

In 1882, Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" had its premiere in Moscow.

In 1910, a series of wildfires swept through parts of Idaho, Montana and Washington, killing at least 85 people and burning some 3 million acres.

In 1920, the American Professional Football Conference was established by representatives of four professional football teams; two years later, with 18 teams, it would be renamed the National Football League.

In 1940, exiled Communist revolutionary Leon Trotsky was attacked in Coyoacan, Mexico by assassin Ramon Mercader. (Trotsky died the next day.)

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Economic Opportunity Act, a nearly \$1 billion anti-poverty measure.

In 1986, postal employee Patrick Henry Sherrill went on a deadly rampage at a post office in Edmond, Oklahoma, shooting 14 fellow workers to death before killing himself.

In 1989, 51 people died when the pleasure boat Marchioness sank in the River Thames in London after being struck by a dredger.

In 2012, after 80 years in existence, Georgia's Augusta National golf club (home to the Masters Tournament) invited former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and South Carolina financier Darla Moore to become its first female members; both accepted.

In 2023, Tropical Storm Hilary struck Baja California, killing three and causing \$15 million in damage.

Today's Birthdays: Boxing promoter Don King is 94. Former U.S. Senator and diplomat George Mitchell is 92. Former U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, is 90. Broadcast journalist Connie Chung is 79. Rock singer Robert Plant is 77. Country singer Rudy Gatlin is 73. Singer-songwriter John Hiatt is 73. Actor-director Peter Horton is 72. TV weather presenter Al Roker is 71. Actor Joan Allen is 69. Movie director David O. Russell is 67. Rapper KRS-One (Boogie Down Productions) is 60. Actor Colin Cunningham is 58. Actor Billy Gardell is 56. Rock singer Fred Durst (Limp Bizkit) is 55. Actor Ke Huy Quan is 54. Baseball Hall of Famer Todd Helton is 52. Actor Amy Adams is 51. Actor Misha Collins (TV: "Supernatural") is 51. Actor Ben Barnes is 44. Actor Andrew Garfield is 42. Actor-singer Demi Lovato is 33.