

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 1 of 67

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)

[4- Picking up flowers at cemetery](#)

[5- Names Released in Fall River County Fatal Crash](#)

[6- Warner Sweeps Groton Area in Volleyball Action](#)

[7- First Lutheran to hold first vote on leaving the ELCA](#)

[8- SD SearchLight: South Dakota lawmakers approve \\$650 million prison construction project in Sioux Falls](#)

[10- SD SearchLight: South Dakota locks up women at a higher rate than any other state, report says](#)

[11- SD SearchLight: SD university professor files lawsuit opposing termination for social media post about Charlie Kirk](#)

[12- SD SearchLight: South Dakota utility regulators decide energy storage facility needs a state permit](#)

[13- SD SearchLight: 'Your countries are going to hell': Trump lashes out at world leaders at UN](#)

[15- SD SearchLight: Fewer households, businesses will get high-speed internet under revamped federal plan](#)

[19- Weather Pages](#)

[23- Daily Devotional](#)

[24- Subscription Form](#)

[25- Lottery Numbers](#)

[26- Upcoming Groton Events](#)

[27- News from the Associated Press](#)

Wednesday Sept. 24

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers cooked carrots.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League 6:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 5:30 p.m.

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

FFA Land and Range Contest at Webster

Thursday Sept. 25

School Breakfast: Maple French Toast Bake.

School Lunch: Chicken patty cooked broccoli.

Cross Country at Sisseton, 10 a.m.

Volleyball at Tiospa Zina ((7th-4, 8th-5; C-5, JV-6, V-7:15))

Boys Soccer hosts James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.

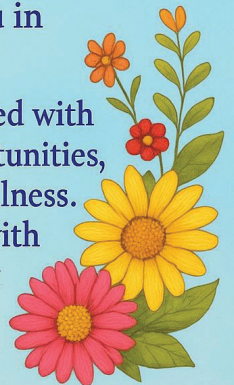
Good Morning Wednesday Blessing



May the Lord bless this day with peace for your heart, strength for your steps, and joy for your spirit. I pray His presence surrounds you, His hand of protection covers your home, and His favor goes before you in everything you do.

May this Wednesday be filled with answered prayers, new opportunities, and reminders of His faithfulness.

May your heart overflow with thankfulness, your mind rest in His peace, and your day shine with His goodness.



God's Spoken Word Ministries

Friday, Sept. 26

School Breakfast: Breakfast boats

School Lunch: French bread pizza, green beans.

Football hosts Clark/Willow Lake, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 27

C Team/JH Volleyball at Matchbox Tournament, 9 a.m.

Soccer at West Central (Boys at noon, Girls at 2 p.m.)

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

© 2025 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 2 of 67

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.

UN Convenes in NYC

President Donald Trump said yesterday Ukraine could reclaim territory from Russia, a shift from his earlier stance, after meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the United Nations' 80th General Assembly in New York. Earlier in the day, Trump questioned the UN's effectiveness during an address to the 193-member body and criticized nations for renewable energy initiatives, migration policies, and recognition of a Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, the US Secret Service announced it dismantled a vast telecom network that could have disrupted the annual UN gathering. Agents seized over 300 SIM servers across the New York area capable of disabling phone towers, blocking 911 calls, and sending mass messages. Officials said no plot to target the UN meeting was found, but they believe unnamed foreign governments used the system to communicate with organized crime and terrorist groups.

Roughly 150 leaders are expected to speak before the general debate concludes Monday.

Would-Be Assassin Convicted

The man accused of attempting to kill then-presidential candidate Donald Trump at his West Palm Beach, Florida, golf course last September was found guilty yesterday. A 12-person jury convicted Ryan Routh, 59, of all charges, including assaulting a federal officer; possessing a firearm as a felon; and attempting to assassinate a major presidential candidate.

Shortly after the verdict, the would-be assassin—representing himself—grabbed a pen off a desk and tried to stab himself in the neck before marshals removed him from the courtroom. Prosecutors presented evidence that he had spent weeks planning the attack, positioning himself between bushes and aiming a rifle at Trump from roughly 400 to 500 yards away, though he never fired a shot. He faces life in prison at his Dec. 18 sentencing and maintains he didn't intend to kill anyone.

Routh also faces a state trial, where he has pleaded not guilty to charges of terrorism and attempted murder.

'King of Storms'

Super Typhoon Ragasa is expected to make landfall near Shenzhen, China, today as the most powerful tropical cyclone in the world so far this year. The storm reached peak winds of 162 mph near its eye Monday, equivalent to a Category 5 hurricane. It has since been downgraded to a Category 4-equivalent storm.

Authorities in Guangdong province, a southern financial hub, canceled schools and businesses and relocated more than a million residents amid warnings of catastrophic flooding and waves up to 21 feet. Ragasa's impact is expected to raise water levels by about 6 feet along the coast, with some areas seeing between 12 and 15 feet. The typhoon struck the northern Philippines and eastern Taiwan earlier this week, causing 14 deaths in Taiwan and three in the Philippines. It is forecast to move westward toward Vietnam and Laos later this week.

China's meteorological agency has referred to Ragasa as the "King of Storms," drawing comparisons to Typhoon Mangkhut in 2018, which caused significant damage in Hong Kong and about \$592M in economic losses.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 3 of 67

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Nexstar and Sinclair, owners of a combined 70 ABC affiliate stations, decide not to air return of "Jimmy Kimmel Live!"

"KPop Demon Hunters" soundtrack hit "Golden" tops Billboard Hot 100 for sixth week, the longest run atop the chart for a soundtrack song since 2015

MLB approves use of "robot umps" in 2026 as part of a challenge system to determine balls and strikes.

Rudi Johnson, former NFL Pro Bowl running back, dies by suicide at age 45

Science & Technology

NASA targets early February for first launch of humans beyond low-Earth orbit in over five decades; 10-day mission aims to send four astronauts around the moon and back (More)

Meta launches pro-artificial intelligence political action committee to fight state-level policies hindering AI development.

Researchers develop AI tool to make quantum computing materials.

Paleontologists in Argentina unearth new dinosaur species, estimated at 23-feet-long nose to tail and 2,200 pounds, with jaw gripping ancient crocodile bone.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.6%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq -1.0%) after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell signals caution on further interest rate cuts, says equities appear to be "fairly highly valued"

OpenAI, Oracle, SoftBank plan to build five new US data centers with a capacity of 7 gigawatts of power over the next three years for \$500B Stargate project; flagship site in Abilene, Texas, now open

Tether Holdings, issuer of the world's largest stablecoin, reportedly in talks to raise as much as \$20B in deal that could value the company at around \$500B

Politics & World Affairs

Woman sentenced to over four years in prison for scheme to defraud Elvis Presley's family and sell his Graceland estate.

Judge rules alleged Gilgo Beach serial killer will be prosecuted for seven murders spanning 30 years in single trial; trial will be first to use nuclear DNA testing

Moldova's president warns of alleged Russian interference ahead of parliamentary elections Sunday; police arrested 74 people suspected of plotting civil unrest

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 4 of 67



Grandkids Rylan and Emery Blackwood help their Grandfather Bruce Babcock pick up the flower vases in the Groton Veterans Circle at the Groton Union Cemetery this past weekend.

(Courtesy Photo Bruce Babcock)

Names Released in Fall River County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 18, mile marker 44, four miles east of Hot Springs, SD

When: 7:04p.m., Friday, September 19, 2025

Driver 1: Wayne Ray Anspach, 62-year-old male from Hot Springs, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2007 Harley Davidson Night Train

Helmet Used: No

Passenger 1: Shawna Rae Anspach, 43-year-old female from Hot Springs, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Helmet Used: No

Fall River County, S.D.- Two people were injured Friday night, one fatally, when their motorcycle struck a deer, four miles east of Hot Springs, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates a motorcycle with two riders was traveling westbound on US Highway 18 near mile marker 48 when a deer ran into the roadway. The motorcycle struck the deer, tipped over, and the driver and passenger were separated from the motorcycle.

The driver, Wayne Ray Anspach, was transported to a Rapid City hospital where he died from his injuries. The passenger, Shawna Rae Anspach, was transported to Fall River Health Services with serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

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

#

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 6 of 67

Warner Sweeps Groton Area in Volleyball Action

Warner swept the Groton Area Tigers in volleyball action Tuesday night in Warner, taking the varsity match 3-0.

The opening set was a battle, featuring 12 ties and three lead changes. Groton held a 21-17 lead late, but Warner rallied to tie the score at 24 before edging out a 27-25 win. That late comeback seemed to swing the momentum.

The second set featured eight ties and three lead changes, the last at 13-13, before Warner surged ahead for a 25-19 win. The third set was all Warner, as they raced to an 8-1 lead and closed out the sweep with a 25-16 victory.

For Groton, McKenna Tietz recorded 1 kill, Tevan Hanson had 6 kills, Taryn Traphagen added 2 kills and 4 blocks, Chesney Webber finished with 5 kills and 2 blocks, Kella Tracy contributed 2 kills and 2 blocks, Rylee Dunker tallied 6 kills and a service ace, and Jaedyn Penning chipped in 4 kills and a block.

Warner was led by MaKenna Leidholt with 13 kills, 3 blocks, and a service ace. Jaycee Jung added 7 kills, 2 aces, and a block, while Miah Leidholt had 6 kills, Courtney Leidholt had 3 kills, Lilly Meehan 2 kills, and Tatum Hanson an ace.

In the undercard matches, Warner also swept. The Monarchs won the junior varsity contest 25-21, 25-17, with Groton highlights including Kinsley Rowen (2 kills), Hanson (1 kill), Sydney Locke (1 kill), Makenna Krause (3 kills), Abby Fjeldheim (3 kills), Emerlee Jones (2 kills), Elizabeth Cole (3 kills and a block), and Liby Althoff (2 kills). Kaydee Mackner paced Warner with 6 kills and an ace.

In the C-team match, Warner won 25-17, 25-19, and 15-6. Fjeldheim led Groton with 8 kills and an ace, while Addison Hoeft had 4 kills and a block. Neely Althoff added 2 kills and an ace, Rylen Eckern posted a kill and an ace, Audrey Davis had a kill, and Rowen added another kill. Warner's Collins Knuppe led the way with 6 kills, 2 blocks, and 2 aces. Warner also won the 7th- and 8th-grade contests.

Groton head coach Chelsea Hanson said her team's energy shifted after letting the first set slip away.

"We played so defeated and so down," Hanson said. "I thought we handled ourselves really well in the first game — we took the game to them — but we just weren't ourselves tonight."

Hanson emphasized that her disappointment wasn't about the loss itself, but the inability to bounce back.

"It's okay to lose the game. I'm not mad we lost. I'm mad that they let Warner take our joy and our energy away in those last seven points of the first set. We have to be better at handling our emotions."

She pointed to missed serves and hitting errors as costly mistakes against a strong opponent.

"When you play good teams like this, you can't afford that. A free ball is a kill against Warner. But the fact that the scores were as close as they were for how many errors we made is a testament to how good we actually are."

Hanson framed the match as a learning opportunity.

"No team goes through a season without bumps. These are good battle tests. I still think we were in that game, but we just didn't handle it well. Hopefully, we bounce back on Thursday."

The varsity match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Groton Legion, Heartland Energy, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge and The MeatHouse in Andover. Ryan Tracy provided the play-by-play commentary of JV and varsity matches. James Valley Thunder sponsored the junior varsity and C matches on GDILIVE.COM.

First Lutheran to hold first vote on leaving the ELCA

This Sunday First Lutheran Church of Sioux Falls — the historic downtown congregation long known for its music, outreach, and civic presence — will hold its first congregational vote on whether to disaffiliate from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The decision follows months of study, listening sessions, and the work of a Church Governance Task Force reviewing both theological and legal implications of staying in the denomination.

Why the vote is happening

In materials distributed to members, the Task Force outlined concerns with recent and proposed ELCA governance changes. These include questions about congregational control over governing documents, constitutional issues involving property, and new language the Task Force says could impact pastors' public speech and other areas of congregational autonomy. Church leaders stress the vote is about discerning the congregation's future direction while weighing risks and benefits of continued ELCA affiliation.

The congregation has also drawn on resources from the Lutheran Congregational Support Network (LCSN), an outside organization that helps congregations evaluate ELCA policy changes and, if needed, navigate disaffiliation. That preparation signals how seriously the church is taking the possibility of leaving.

Where they might go

So far, First Lutheran has not announced which denomination or network it would join if it leaves. Some congregations that disaffiliate join other Lutheran bodies like the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) or Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), while others remain independent. First Lutheran's documents emphasize process, not destination — meaning any decision on affiliation would likely follow if disaffiliation is approved.

A broader movement in South Dakota

First Lutheran is not alone in wrestling with this decision. According to a report in The Christian Post, "about half a dozen South Dakota congregations have vowed to disaffiliate from the ELCA and there might be more," reflecting a broader wave of concern about ELCA governance and policy direction.

While those congregations have not been publicly named, the report suggests a regional trend that could reshape the ELCA's presence in South Dakota in the coming years.

One of South Dakota's largest Lutheran churches

By size, First Lutheran is among the state's largest congregations. Its Ministry Site Profile listed nearly 3,000 baptized members as of 2021, with historic attendance that once filled its expansive downtown sanctuary. The congregation remains one of the largest Lutheran churches in South Dakota by membership and prominence.

What happens next

Sunday's vote is the first step in a two-vote process required for disaffiliation.

If members vote to move forward, subsequent actions would address pastoral calls, property, and whether to affiliate with another Lutheran body or remain independent.

The decision at First Lutheran — one of the state's largest and most visible congregations — could set the tone for other South Dakota churches considering similar moves.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota lawmakers approve \$650 million prison construction project in Sioux Falls

New facility — funded with cash saved and interest earnings since 2022 — will replace oldest part of pre-statehood penitentiary complex

BY: JOHN HULT-SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 6:57 PM

PIERRE — After 144 years, South Dakota lawmakers decided Tuesday it's time for "the Hill" to retire. The required two-thirds of each legislative chamber voted to endorse a 1,500-bed, \$650 million replacement for the state penitentiary building that opened its doors when South Dakota was still Dakota Territory. The new men's prison will be the most expensive capital project ever funded by the state's taxpayers.

Lawmakers convened at 9 a.m., and a joint committee of House and Senate members spent part of the morning and afternoon hearing testimony and discussing the prison legislation. There were several hours of afternoon and evening debate in the two chambers.

Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden signed the bill into law at about 8 p.m. Tuesday, about an hour and a half after the House of Representatives voted 51-18 to pass it. That was four more votes than the required two-thirds majority mandated for spending bills by the state constitution.

One House member, Rep. Jeff Bathke, R-Mitchell, was excused while on a military deployment but said last week he supports the project. The Senate approved the plan earlier in the afternoon, with a vote of 24-11 — exactly the two-thirds majority needed.

Rhoden said Tuesday evening it was "a great day," and that he'd "sleep well." But he also said the outcome of the vote was not assured Tuesday morning.

Throughout the day, Rhoden was spotted speaking with lawmakers in the Capitol's hallways, and on the floor of the House of Representatives.

"As we started counting noses, it was closer than I really thought it would be," Rhoden said. "So we got busy, and we didn't leave any stone unturned."

Immediately after signing the bill that authorized the prison's construction, the governor made good on his promise to sign an executive order creating a Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force. Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen will lead the group, which will also include six members of the House of Representatives, five senators, one judge, two representatives from law enforcement, an Indigenous representative, a health care or behavioral health representative and "any other interested representative deemed necessary by the governor."

The task force will study treatment options, Native American programming needs, faith-based correctional interventions and inmates' re-entry into society.

Lawmakers back task force plan

The prison will be built in northeast Sioux Falls, on an undeveloped patch of industrial land near the Sioux Falls Area Humane Society. The location is about 3 miles northeast of the penitentiary, which is nicknamed "the Hill" for its perch overlooking the Big Sioux River.

The votes came during a one-day special session at the Capitol called by Rhoden after a prison construction task force he created via executive order had recommended the prison plan.

A previous men's prison proposal, with a higher price and a controversial location in rural Lincoln County, was presented in February during the regular legislative session and failed to earn two-thirds support.

Several of the House lawmakers who said no to the Lincoln County prison said they switched their votes this time because the process addressed questions that had gone unanswered in the run-up to the Febru-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 9 of 67

ary vote on what would have been an \$825 million prison.

House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, was among those lawmakers. He served on the task force, and said each of his concerns — price, location, size, guaranteed pricing and space for rehabilitation programming — were addressed along the way.

To the still-skeptical members, Odenbach said, "Friends, if you didn't like the old prison plan, basically you got everything you wanted. And I would say take the win."

More questions expected in January

Tuesday's vote answers the most pressing and expensive question posed during a four-year saga on the future of South Dakota's prison facilities, but leaves open several others on how the new facility will play into future prison policy.

In 2021, then-Gov. Kristi Noem commissioned a study of Department of Corrections properties that concluded the state needed a new women's prison — which is now under construction in Rapid City at a cost of \$87 million — and that the oldest parts of the penitentiary had too many inmates and was unsafe for them and the staff.

Multiple lawmakers called the penitentiary inhumane, worn out and unsuitable for rehabilitation programming on Tuesday.

House Speaker Pro Tempore Karla Lems, R-Canton, voted against the prison during the special session. She said the state would be "putting the cart before the horse" by building a facility before addressing recidivism and rehabilitation — and before hiring a replacement for Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko, who is resigning effective next month.

"We're going forward without a completed plan, and without somebody in place at the Department of Corrections that has a great resume, that has a history of knowing how to reduce recidivism and put some of these policies in place," Lems said after the vote.

Payment plan both a selling point and sticking point

The state plans to pay for the new prison with cash. In 2022, lawmakers voted to begin putting millions in excess revenues, which ballooned thanks in part to federal cash infusions during the COVID-19 pandemic, into an incarceration construction fund that has since grown with further deposits and interest earnings. The next year, they approved the construction of the women's prison.

Rep. Liz May, R-Kyle, also switched her vote to a "yes" on the men's prison after voting against the Lincoln County plan in February. May said the House deserves credit for its willingness to take a fiscally conservative stance by saving money for a large project in advance.

Concerns about rehabilitation programming and policy changes are fair, May said, but none of them absolve the state of its responsibility to house inmates.

"I expect everybody in here to do their job, to watch the money," May said. "Bring your policy bills next year. You'll have support."

The bill passed Tuesday transfers \$78.7 million from the state's budget reserves to the prison construction fund and authorizes the Department of Corrections to spend up to \$650 million to build the new facility. Most of the money is already in the fund, but about \$42 million of the required funding is expected to come from future interest earnings.

That was an issue for Sen. John Carley, R-Piedmont. He said he doesn't necessarily trust that the interest income will materialize, and said supporters counting future interest earnings were overselling the amount of money in the incarceration construction fund.

"I get very concerned hearing that we have the cash on hand," Carley said. "We don't."

Between 2024 and Tuesday's vote, the state put \$52 million into a plan to build a 1,500-bed men's prison — at a price of \$825 million, in that case — in southern Lincoln County. Lawmakers rejected that prison pitch in February, an act that spurred the creation of Rhoden's Project Prison Reset task force. Last week, Rhoden's office said much of that investment was recaptured by reusing designs on the \$650 million version that did earn approval, but \$21 million of the money spent on the Lincoln County site is unrecoverable.

The approved prison legislation includes the purchase of the Sioux Falls land and an exchange of the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 10 of 67

Lincoln County land to the owner of the Sioux Falls site. In that \$17 million deal, which is included in the overall \$650 million project cost, about \$12.5 million will go to the landowner, along with the Lincoln County land, which the state valued at \$4.5 million.

The state shaved \$175 million off the cost of the Sioux Falls prison plan by shrinking common areas within the facility and designing 300 of the beds as a barracks. Rhoden said the new plan does not reduce rehabilitation or vocational programming space.

Questions on how to pay for the ongoing operations of the new prison will greet lawmakers when they return in January for their regular session.

Secretary Wasko, who tendered an Oct. 20 resignation in a letter to Rhoden earlier this month in the face of criticism, told lawmakers earlier this year that it could cost the state up to \$20 million more per year to run the new prison.

On Tuesday, Lt. Gov. Venhuizen said the figure is closer to \$17 million, and that the state will save money by improving rehabilitation programs and keeping people out of prison in the process.

"If that is successful, we will save money. Every person who's not in that prison saves us \$40,000 a year," Venhuizen said.

Two newer units on the grounds of the penitentiary in Sioux Falls will remain in service when the new men's prison opens. That's expected to happen in 2029.

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

South Dakota locks up women at a higher rate than any other state, report says

BY: JOHN HULT-SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 7:57 PM

South Dakota incarcerates women at a higher rate than other U.S. states — and countries — according to a new report from the Prison Policy Initiative.

The incarceration-reform nonprofit released the report Tuesday, the same day South Dakota lawmakers approved the construction of a men's prison in northeast Sioux Falls.

According to the study's authors, South Dakota women are imprisoned at a rate of 338 per 100,000. That's a higher rate than Montana or Idaho, in the second and third spots in the ranking of female incarceration rates. All three states have higher rates than El Salvador, the country with the highest incarceration rate.

The nationwide incarceration rate for women in the U.S. is 112 per 100,000.

The report is titled "States of Women's Incarceration: The Global Context 2025." The Prison Policy Initiative built its rankings by looking at women incarcerated in prisons, jails and tribal jails.

The press release on the report notes that well over half the women imprisoned in South Dakota are held on drug charges or crimes. It also notes that the state voted in 2022 to build a new women's prison in Rapid City to manage the overcrowded South Dakota Women's Prison in Pierre. The new women's prison is under construction at a cost of \$87 million.

Female incarceration rates have declined in most states, the report says, but South Dakota's rate has increased. According to a state data brief cited in the nonprofit's report, the number of women incarcerated for violent crimes in the state increased 33% between 2013 and 2023. The number of female drug offenders grew by 66% in the same time period.

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden pledged last week to create a rehabilitation and recidivism task force to study high rates of incarceration and repeat offenses.

The South Dakota Department of Corrections did not immediately return a request for comment Tuesday.

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.

SD university professor files lawsuit opposing termination for social media post about Charlie Kirk

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER-SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 1:30 PM

A University of South Dakota art professor facing the loss of his job over his online comments about the killing of Charlie Kirk filed a lawsuit Tuesday seeking to stop the university and state Board of Regents from terminating his employment.

Michael Hook, a tenured art professor, is alleging his placement on administrative leave and impending termination are a violation of his constitutional right to free speech. Hook wrote social media posts on his personal account in reaction to the killing of Kirk, a prominent conservative political commentator who was fatally shot on Sept. 10 during a public event at a Utah university.

Hook's first post on Sept. 10 after the shooting included profanity and used a derogatory term to describe Kirk. Hook questioned the difference in coverage and "concern" between Kirk's killing and the killing of a Minnesota legislator this summer and other school shootings.

He deleted the original and posted an apology "to those who were offended" three hours later.

South Dakota political leaders, including Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden and Republican House Speaker Jon Hansen, criticized Hook and publicly supported his termination.

Other educators around the country are also facing termination or discipline after sharing opinions on social media about the killing. An Iowa teacher, a South Carolina teacher aide and a Ball State employee filed lawsuits over their terminations following social media posts. A Sioux Falls School District staff member was terminated last year after she made a social media post about an assassination attempt on President Donald Trump.

Hook's lawsuit says his impending termination and the South Dakota Board of Regents' "overbroad regulation of speech" will have a chilling effect on free speech in the state for professors, students and citizens.

Hook and his attorney, Jim Leach, of Rapid City, filed the lawsuit in federal court in South Dakota, calling the premise for the termination "vague, overbroad and unconstitutional." The lawsuit seeks orders preventing retaliation against Hook, ending his administrative leave and canceling a Sept. 29 personal conference with him.

The lawsuit says Hook's social media posts are protected political speech under the U.S. Constitution and do not impact his professional role at the university.

"The debate about Mr. Kirk's beliefs is for the marketplace of ideas," the lawsuit says. "The First Amendment guarantees the marketplace stays open. The government may not punish people for their ideas."

The Board of Regents filed an intent to fire Hook after the post circulated online. Spokeswoman Shuree Mortenson said the organization doesn't comment on pending litigation.

The University of South Dakota notified Hook about his imminent termination on Sept. 12, based on the system's termination policy regarding "neglect of duty, misconduct, incompetence, abuse of power or other actions that manifest an unfitness to discharge the trust reposed in public university faculty members or to perform assigned duties."

Under the policy, Hook is able to attend a personal conference "to discuss" his planned termination. Hook is placed on administrative leave until he is officially fired or another decision is made.

The employee code of conduct establishes that when faculty "speak or write as private citizens on matters of public concern" they are "free of institutional censorship or discipline." At the same time, their "special position in the community imposes special obligations."

"As learned people and as educators, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances," the policy says. "Hence, they should at all times be accurate, show respect for the opinions of others and make every effort to indicate when they are not speaking for the institution."

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.

South Dakota utility regulators decide energy storage facility needs a state permit

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR-SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 4:35 PM

State utility regulators split Tuesday in Pierre over whether a proposed 120-megawatt energy storage facility in northeast South Dakota needs a state permit, ultimately voting 2-1 to deny a developer's request for an exemption.

Crowned Ridge Energy Storage petitioned the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission in August for a declaratory ruling that the project does not meet the legal definition of a facility subject to state permitting. The project is designed to store excess electricity from the electrical grid and from Crowned Ridge Wind's turbines in the Watertown area. It would store enough electricity to power tens of thousands of homes.

Crowned Ridge is an affiliate of Florida-headquartered NextEra Energy Resources.

Commissioner Chris Nelson moved to grant the company's petition. He said regulating large-scale batteries would exceed the commission's legal authority.

"Batteries don't generate electricity," Nelson said. "Secondly, if the Legislature had intended for these to be cited, they need to flat out say so, and not make us try to be electrochemical analysts to figure out whether it should or shouldn't be."

The energy storage facility, planned for commercial operation in December 2027, would be among the first large-scale energy storage projects in the state. Documents in the commission docket say the project would consist of rows of large lithium-ion batteries housed in white, semi-trailer-sized containers on about 15 acres.

Mike Nadolski, a lawyer for the company, said the battery system does not generate new electricity and therefore falls outside the commission's authority. He said the project simply stores and later injects that energy back into the power grid.

The state's three elected commissioners are assisted by staff. Staff attorney Amanda Reiss said their review centered on whether discharging stored power back into the grid could legally be considered "generation." Staff wrote in their review that the project could qualify as an energy conversion facility, which would require a permit. Staff left the question to commissioners after noting the laws were open to interpretation.

Commissioner Kristie Fiegen offered a substitute motion to deny the company's petition and make it seek a permit.

"Yes, energy is stored chemically, but when it comes out, electricity is generated," Fiegen said. "I'd rather err on the side of customer protection."

Chairman Gary Hanson joined Fiegen, calling the matter "the beginning of a new era in electricity in South Dakota." He said large-scale energy storage could reshape the grid and deserves regulation.

The 2-1 vote means Crowned Ridge must pursue a state permit; however, commissioners said the Legislature could still clarify how battery storage projects should be treated under South Dakota law. The Legislature will begin its annual lawmaking session in January.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

'Your countries are going to hell': Trump lashes out at world leaders at UN

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY-SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 2:45 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump harshly criticized fellow world leaders Tuesday at the United Nations General Assembly days after key allies of the United States recognized a Palestinian state, and as NATO vows to defend Europe amid recent Russian air incursions.

During his nearly hour-long address at the annual meeting in New York City, Trump briefly brushed on the Israel-Hamas war and his frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin. But the U.S. president focused much of his attention on the "double-tailed monster" of immigration and energy that he said will cause Europe to "fail."

"Your countries are going to hell," Trump said, later adding: "And I'm really good at predicting things."

"I'm telling you that if you don't get away from the green energy scam, your country is going to fail. And if you don't stop people that you've never seen before, that you have nothing in common with, your country is going to fail," Trump continued.

Trump said the U.S. stands "ready to provide any country with abundant, affordable energy supplies if you need them, when most of you do," and specifically encouraged the purchase of U.S. oil and gas.

The president attacked multilateral agreements to combat climate change, namely the Paris Climate Accord, and panned the overwhelmingly accepted science as "the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world, in my opinion."

Trump blames UN for faulty escalator, teleprompter

Trump attacked the U.N. as a body numerous times throughout his speech, including for what he claimed were a faulty escalator and teleprompter Tuesday.

"I don't mind making this speech without a teleprompter, because the teleprompter is not working. I feel very happy to be up here with you nevertheless, and that way you speak more from the heart, I can only say that whoever's operating this teleprompter is in big trouble," Trump said at the top of his remarks.

Trump claimed he ended "seven wars" without the help of the U.N.

"All I got from the United Nations was an escalator that on the way up stopped right in the middle. If the first lady wasn't in great shape, she would have fallen, but she's in great shape. We're both in good shape. We both stood," he said. "And then a teleprompter that didn't work. These are the two things I got from the United Nations, a bad escalator and a bad teleprompter. Thank you very much."

U.N. General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock refuted Trump's claim following his speech, saying, "As we are receiving queries, I would like to assure you that don't worry, the U.N. teleprompters are working perfectly."

Trump meets with Zelenskyy

Trump's remarks came after negotiations to end Russia's continued invasion into Ukraine have failed, despite Trump welcoming Putin to Alaska last month.

Trump met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for roughly an hour on the sidelines of the U.N. meeting Tuesday afternoon, where Trump said "we have great respect for the fight that Ukraine is putting up. It's pretty amazing actually."

Zelenskyy said he would brief the president on "good news" from the battlefield and said "we will continue until Russia will stop this war."

Zelenskyy also highlighted conversations with European leaders regarding cutting off dependence on Russian oil and gas.

When asked by the press if he thinks NATO countries should shoot down Russian aircraft if they enter their airspace, Trump responded "Yes, I do," according to journalists traveling with him.

Trump added it "depends on the circumstance" whether or not the U.S. would back up NATO allies.

When asked for an update on negotiations with Putin and if he still trusts the Russian president, Trump told reporters "I'll let you know in about a month from now."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 14 of 67

Gaza crisis

The U.S. president's speech to world leaders also comes after Israel all but blindsided the U.S. two weeks ago with a strike on Qatar, a key Middle East ally that hosts both a massive U.S. military presence as well as the Hamas political offices.

Trump received applause as he called for Hamas militants to release the remaining hostages kidnapped from Israel nearly two years ago during the group's brutal attack. But he criticized any recognition of a Palestinian state as "a reward for these horrible atrocities."

On Monday, France joined more than 150 countries to recognize Palestinian statehood. The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Portugal declared recognition Sunday.

Numerous world leaders, including those from Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey and Jordan, spoke on the assembly floor Tuesday about the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

More than 65,000 people have been killed in Gaza since October 2023, according to Palestinian health authorities. The U.N. has declared a famine in the roughly 25-mile-long coastal strip that borders Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

"The terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas are indefensible from any angle, but nothing, absolutely nothing, justifies the ongoing genocide in Gaza," Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said before Trump took the floor.

"Under tons of rubble are buried tens of thousands of innocent women and children. There we can see that international humanitarian law and the myth of ethical exceptionalism of the West are also being buried there. This massacre would not have happened without the complicity of those who could have prevented it," da Silva said.

Trump touts mass deportations

Administration officials seated at the U.S. table in the assembly hall included Trump's Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Treasury Scott Bessent, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, Middle East Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and recently confirmed U.N. Ambassador Mike Waltz, according to journalists traveling with the president.

Trump touted his domestic policies, including mass deportations and sending federal law enforcement and National Guard troops to Democratic-led American cities.

"Our message is very simple, if you come illegally into the United States, you're going to jail, or you're going back to where you came from, or perhaps even further than that. You know what that means," Trump said.

He then thanked the El Salvadoran government for its "successful and professional job they've done in receiving and jailing so many criminals that entered our country."

The U.S. agreed to pay El Salvador \$4.76 million in March to detain up to 300 immigrant men, many of them Venezuelan nationals, for up to a year at a notorious mega-prison where several maintain they faced physical and psychological torture. Many argue they were wrongfully deported and are not affiliated with criminal gangs the administration has targeted.

Brazil, Venezuela

Trump also lauded his global tariff policy as his strategy to "defend our sovereignty and security throughout the world, including against nations that have taken advantage of former U.S. administrations for decades."

He called out da Silva by name, saying he and the Brazilian leader quickly agreed before he walked on the floor to meet next week.

"I'm very sorry to say this, Brazil is doing poorly and will continue to do poorly. They can only do well when they're working with us," Trump said.

Trump imposed a 50% tariff on Brazilian goods coming into the U.S. after its Supreme Court prosecuted former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for plotting a coup. Trump has dubbed the prosecution a "witch hunt."

The U.S. Supreme Court will take up the question in November on whether Trump's sweeping global tariffs are legal.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 15 of 67

Trump also remarked on the U.S. military's increased activity in the Caribbean Sea.

"Let's put it this way, people don't like taking big loads of drugs in boats anymore," he said, referring to recent deadly U.S. strikes on boats near the coast of Venezuela.

The administration alleges the boats are involved in illegal drug smuggling. Trump's use of deadly military force against the vessels has drawn both criticism and praise from U.S. lawmakers.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Fewer households, businesses will get high-speed internet under revamped federal plan

Trump has scaled back a Biden-era program that aimed to close the digital divide

BY: MADYSON FITZGERALD AND AMELIA FERRELL KNISELY-SEPTEMBER 23, 2025 6:00 AM

LEFT HAND, W. Va. — The residents of Roane County, West Virginia, enjoy living among the rolling mountains and winding, two-lane roads. Situated between Charleston and Parkersburg, two of the state's largest cities, the rural county is known for its small towns and historic buildings.

That's how Sherry Husted, the director of the Roane County Public Libraries, described her native community as she worked last week at Geary Public Library in Left Hand, West Virginia. Each of the county's three library branches has at least three public computers and free internet access, among other services.

These services are essential to residents living in Roane — where less than 32% of the county's households, businesses and community buildings — have reliable internet connectivity, according to the Federal Communications Commission's National Broadband Map.

"We love our rural area," Husted said. "But there's always the catch. You love your rural area, but then access to things is always more limited there."

Members of the library staff regularly help patrons fill out job applications and build resumes. They also help those who have never used a desktop computer before — many of the county's residents rely on their cellular devices and spotty mobile service, Husted said. Most residents still use landline phones, she added.

And those with internet access at home are paying a steep price. Husted's plan with Frontier, which includes fiber internet and a landline, comes to \$170 a month.

"If you work from home, you need reliable internet," she said. "Frontier does the best they can. But this is a very rural area, so the trees and terrain are constantly messing up the internet. And because of the demand on these older lines, your internet may not be reliable enough to host things like meetings or classes."

Roane County is one of the areas federal officials hoped to support through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, or BEAD, a federal grant program meant to expand broadband access. The \$42.45 billion initiative, created under the Biden administration's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, aimed to close the digital divide — with a focus on rural communities.

The Trump administration's changes to the program, however, have disqualified hundreds of thousands of locations — including homes, businesses and community buildings — from receiving internet access. And the program's new technology-neutral approach will also shift a large portion of the federal funds toward satellite internet companies, including Elon Musk's Starlink, that cost less to build but have more uneven service than underground fiber optic cable. That means households and businesses that were looking forward to reliable, high-speed internet will no longer get support from the BEAD program.

While some experts were initially skeptical about the program's goals, every state utilized its allocated funds to develop plans to provide high-speed fiber internet to nearly every home and business in the country, said Christopher Mitchell, the director of the Community Broadband Networks Initiative with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, an anti-corporate advocacy group.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 16 of 67

Most states are expected to get started on deployment projects in 2026. But the Trump administration's changes have undermined the major investment for rural areas, Mitchell said.

"I think everyone should care about it — even though most people don't live in rural America — because when we electrified the entire country, the entire economy grew," Mitchell said. "We will all benefit from this when everyone has more options to share their knowledge, their gifts and their productivity in the economy."

Even West Virginia, ranking last in internet connectivity, would have effectively achieved universal broadband under the state's original proposal, according to an unreleased draft of the state's plan obtained by The Benton Institute for Broadband and Society, a policy group. West Virginia has about 78% connectivity, the only state with less than 80%.

But under West Virginia's updated final proposal, submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration earlier this month, tens of thousands of households and businesses will no longer have access to BEAD funding.

West Virginia Republican Gov. Patrick Morrisey said he is still optimistic about the rollout, telling reporters recently that some of the decrease in coverage was because of inaccurate information. Some areas had just a few homes, or addresses only had a barn on the property, he and an aide said.

"We've been trying to target all the available locations that are eligible," the governor said Sept. 18 at a news conference at the West Virginia State Capitol. "It's a pretty fulsome application, and so obviously there were some changes made to accommodate some of the responses from the administration. And in a positive way, they're trying to save money."

There are other changes: States and Washington, D.C., may no longer set rates for low-cost residential service options, raising worries that internet providers will put forward plans they say meet the low-cost requirement, no matter the price. And under the "technology-neutral" approach, some locations will no longer be receiving fiber internet, which the federal government previously emphasized due to its speed and durability.

The new guidelines also remove provisions that encouraged states to work with companies and representatives from minority communities. Requirements related to labor, the environment and climate change also were cut.

West Virginia isn't alone. Under the new rules, thousands of households, businesses and community buildings across the country will be disqualified from the federal government's push to provide internet access to the areas that need it most. And those locations that are still eligible for funding may not receive the best service available — or be able to afford it.

West Virginia has one of the country's worst workforce participation rates. Internet access is key to changing that, said Bill Bissett, chairman of the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council.

"We are hopeful that this new proposal will be supported because we need to get started on this development as soon as possible," Bissett said. "Because the longer we wait, the less people will be connected because of increased costs in deployment and infrastructure."

Following the required revisions, West Virginia fared well compared with other states, said Drew Garner, the director of policy engagement at the Benton Institute. But Garner said he expects frustration in other states.

"West Virginia, because it did a good job with its restructuring, is still going to have a lot of strong outcomes," Garner said. "But across the country in some of these other states, I think there's going to be a lot of frustration with these changes and the way it walked back from what was going to be a very promising outcome."

BEAD restructuring

In June, the Trump administration revised the rules of the BEAD program in what the U.S. Department of Commerce said was an effort to lessen regulatory burdens, reduce costs and streamline the process.

As of Sept. 18, 41 states had submitted their updated final proposals, according to a database from Connected Nation, a nonprofit that advocates for expanded broadband access.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 17 of 67

In December 2022, when the FCC released its updated National Broadband Map, nearly 12 million locations across the country were in need of internet service. Over the years, that number has decreased because of private investments, continued deployment by existing internet providers and additional support from other federal programs.

States originally identified 4.86 million locations that would be eligible for getting internet connectivity through BEAD funds. But that number is projected to fall to 4.19 million locations following revisions initiated by the Trump administration, according to an analysis from Broadband Expanded, a project from the New York Law School.

West Virginia was originally slated to deploy broadband to approximately 110,000 locations. Now, 73,560 of those locations will receive BEAD funding, according to the state's new proposal. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Nebraska and Rhode Island could see more than half of the locations in their state disqualified from the program.

But some of those locations may still be in need of internet, said Garner, of the Benton Institute.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, directed states to remove certain locations from the BEAD program because they'd acquired internet access from another source.

But, in an effort to save taxpayer money, states also had the option to say they were "financially incapable" of serving a location.

"One of the changes the administration made to the BEAD program is that states and the NTIA now have a way to simply say that these locations are just too expensive," Garner said. "They can say, 'It is just going to cost too much, so now we're going to say they're ineligible.'"

The BEAD program's new technology-neutral approach poses another challenge. The original program favored fiber because of its speed, reliability and ability to reach remote locations. But some argue that other technologies would be cheaper.

This change has opened the door for satellite internet providers, including Elon Musk's Starlink, to receive money from the program. Starlink could be awarded approximately \$10 billion, according to The Wall Street Journal.

In West Virginia, Starlink will serve more than 4,100 locations, according to the governor's office.

"Based on the technology and based on all the evidence we have, some of these technologies — uncensored fixed wireless especially — are not really a reliable internet service that's going to meet the needs of a 21st century household," Garner said.

Rural advocates speak up

In Nebraska, more than half of the counties in the state have signed onto letters to federal officials objecting to the changes, including the disqualification of nearly half the state's eligible locations.

"It's very frustrating. We have all these holes in our county, and BEAD was going to bring service to those areas," Milford County Commissioner Misty Ahmic told the Nebraska Examiner.

Critics in Pennsylvania have said directing funds toward satellite companies is "shortsighted." Satellite companies Starlink and Project Kuiper, an Amazon subsidiary, were awarded a combined \$19.2 million to expand internet access in Pennsylvania.

And in Oklahoma, critics noticed the updated plan would not be using \$225 million of the state's allocated BEAD funds.

The state's head broadband official said the new proposal would still serve everyone, but critics told the Oklahoma Voice that it would be wrong to send back any federal money while people across the state continue to struggle with internet access.

Originally, states were allowed to use these leftover funds to pay for things other than broadband deployment, such as West Virginia's plans to improve cellular service and streamline the permitting process for broadband projects. But the federal telecommunications agency has not released guidance on how the leftover funds are to be used under the restructured program.

"There's a lot of fear right now that NTIA may try to call that money back, which would be a big shame,"

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 18 of 67

Garner said. "That leftover money is the state's, according to the law. And these ancillary funds would play a huge role to support the BEAD program."

Affordability also will be a barrier for some households. States may no longer set low-cost service option rates for low-income households. And the federal Affordable Connectivity Program ended last year without additional funding from Congress.

Morrissey said his administration is being aggressive, collaborating with the Trump administration to get internet access to eligible areas.

"I applaud the Trump administration for working with us, but once again, I am not going to do a victory lap until we actually get this all done," the governor said.

Providing internet to every person in West Virginia was always a lofty goal, said Husted, the Roane County Public Library director. Other initiatives have promised to connect rural residents over the years, Husted said, and she remains skeptical about this outcome.

"In rural areas, you're going to need to plan for things, and sometimes that puts us at a disadvantage compared to the cities," Husted said. "With the internet or with other supplies, sometimes we have to decide what is more important to us."

Madyson Fitzgerald is a content producer and staff writer for Stateline.

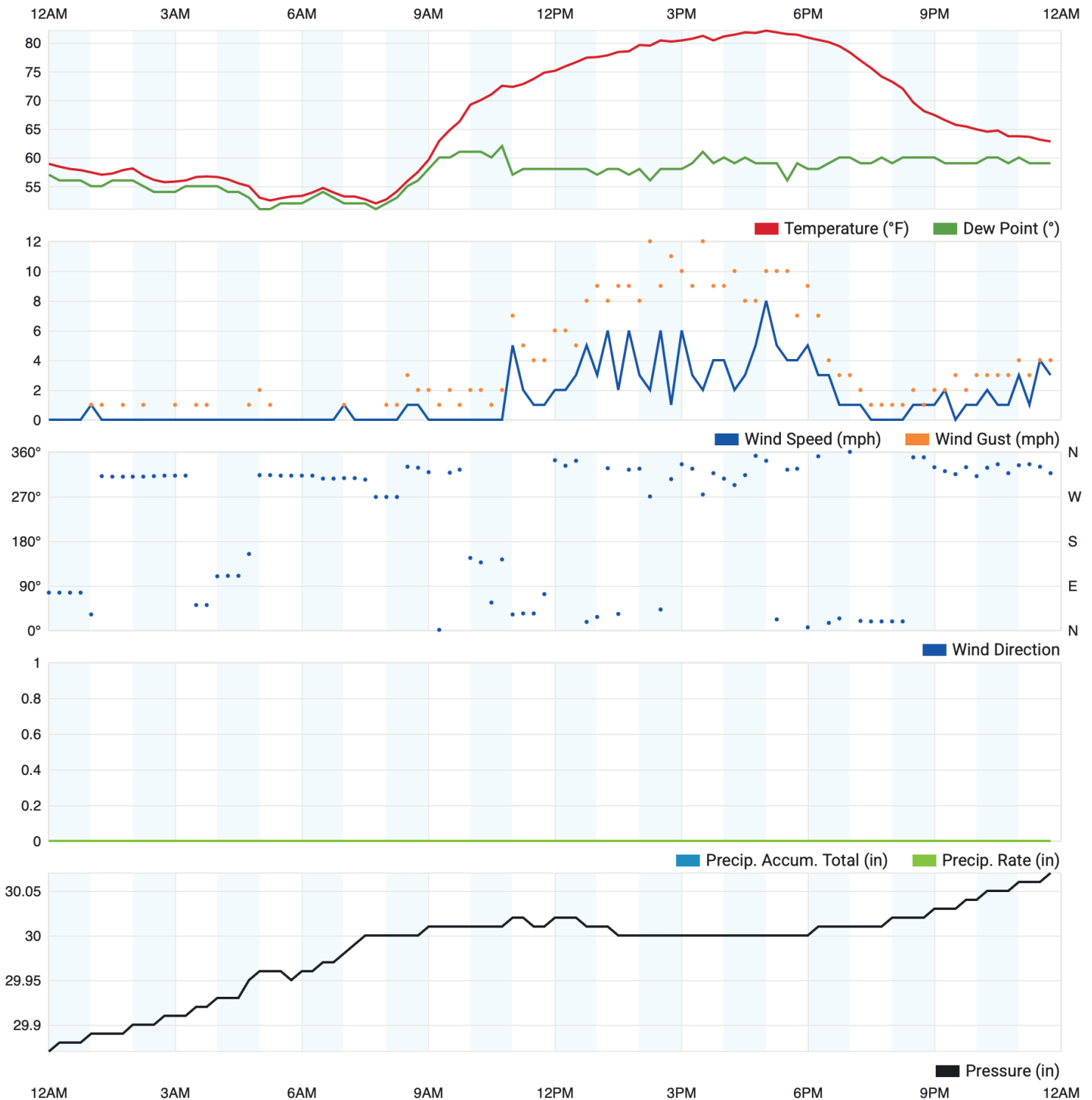
Amelia Ferrell Knisely is a reporter for West Virginia Watch.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 19 of 67

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 23, 2025



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 20 of 67

Today



High: 79 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 52 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 83 °F

Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 50 °F

Clear

Friday



High: 85 °F

Sunny

Today

PATCHY FOG



Highs: 75-82°

Patchy fog this morning over
northeast SD and west central MN

Upcoming Weather

Thursday



78-84°

Friday



80-88°

 **Breezy**

September 24, 2025 3:59 AM

 **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



weather.gov/abr

After some patchy fog this morning over northeast SD and west central MN, look for plenty of sunshine today and light winds as highs rise into the upper 70s to around 80 degrees. Several days of dry conditions and temperatures in the 70s and 80s are in store into early next week. Look for breezy south winds to develop on Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 21 of 67

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 82 °F at 4:57 PM

Low Temp: 52 °F at 7:46 AM

Wind: 12 mph at 2:11 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1935

Record Low: 23 in 2000

Average High: 72

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.59

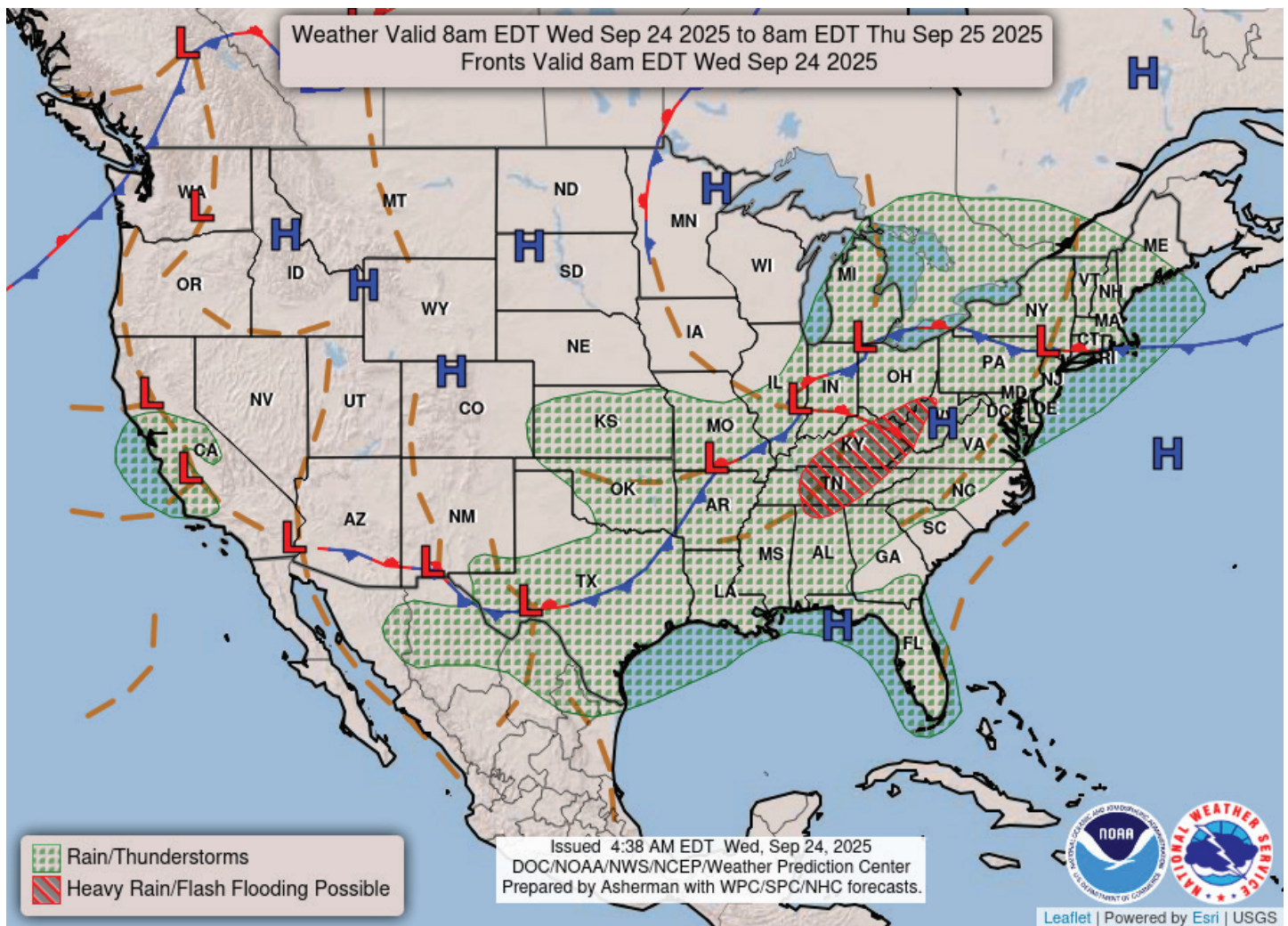
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.62

Average Precip to date: 17.93

Precip Year to Date: 22.92

Sunset Tonight: 7:26 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23 am



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 22 of 67

Today in Weather History

September 24, 1986: Thunderstorms brought high winds along with several tornados to parts of western and central South Dakota from the late evening in the morning hours of the 25th. Winds were estimated up to 80 mph. Many trees and power poles were downed along with damage to many buildings. The tornadoes occurred near Newell, east of Cedar Butte, west of Murdo, 20 miles northwest of Pierre, and northwest of Ridgeview in Dewey County.

September 24, 1992: South winds gusting to 50 to 55 mph across northeast South Dakota during the day toppled several trees and light poles. In Aberdeen, a front window was blown out of a store.

1926 - The temperature at Yellowstone Park dipped to nine degrees below zero. It was the coldest reading of record in the U.S. during September. Severe freezes were widespread over the northwestern U.S. causing great crop destruction. In Washington State, Spokane County experienced their earliest snow of record. Harney Branch Experiment Station in Oregon reported a temperature of 2 degrees above zero to establish a state record for the month of September. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1939: A thunderstorm on this day dropped 6.45 inches in six hours at Indio, CA. This rainfall preceded "El Cordonazo" or "The Lash of St. Francis", an actual tropical storm. For the entire storm, which started on this day and ended on the 26th, four inches of rain fell across the deserts and mountains as a dying tropical cyclone moved across Baja California into southwestern Arizona. This storm was the second tropical cyclone to impact California during this month. A strong El Niño may have contributed to the activity. The tropical storm produced 50 mph winds over the ocean and estimated seas of 40 feet. September rain records were set in Los Angeles with 5.66 inches and 11.6 inches at Mt. Wilson. 45 people died from sinking boats, and harbors were damaged. Total damage was estimated at \$2 million. Californians were unprepared and were alerted to their vulnerability to tropical storms. In response, the weather bureau established a forecast office for Southern California, which began operations in February of 1940.

1950 - A smoke pall from western Canada forest fires covered much of the eastern U.S. Daylight was reduced to nighttime darkness in parts of the Northeast. The color of the sun varied from pink to purple, blue, or lavender. Yellow to grey-tan was common. (24th-30th) (The Weather Channel)

1956: Hurricane Flossy made landfall near Destin, Florida as a Category 1 storm.

1972 - Lightning struck a man near Waldport, OR, a young man who it so happens was carrying thirty-five pieces of dynamite. (The Weather Channel)

1986: An F2 tornado, unusually strong for one in California, touched down just southeast of Vina on this day and traveled two miles through an agricultural area. A mobile home was destroyed, injuring a 22-year-old occupant. Eleven other buildings were damaged or demolished, and 50 acres of walnut orchards were flattened.

1987 - The first full day of autumn proved to be a pleasant one for much of the nation, with sunny skies and mild temperatures. Thunderstorms again formed over Florida and the southwestern deserts, and also formed along a cold front in the northeastern U.S. A storm spotter at Earp CA sighted a couple of funnel clouds, one on the California side of the state line, and the other on the Arizona side. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced large hail and damaging winds in the southeastern U.S., with reports of severe weather most numerous in North Carolina. Golf ball size hail was reported at Tick Creek and a number of other locations in North Carolina. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Forty-seven cities between the Rockies and the Appalachians reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 38 degrees at Abilene TX, 34 degrees at Jackson KY, and 36 degrees at Midland TX established records for the month of September. The low of 36 degrees at Midland smashed their previous record for the date by thirteen degrees. Fayetteville AR and Springfield MO reported their earliest freeze of record. Thunderstorms produced torrential rains in northeastern Florida. Jacksonville was deluged with 11.40 inches of rain, and flash flooding resulted in two deaths. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2001: A weak, F0 tornado passed in the sight of the Washington Monument. Soon after, an F3 tornado struck College Park, Maryland.

2005 - Early in the morning, major Hurricane Rita came ashore near the Texas/Louisiana border



WATCHING OUR WORDS

Years ago, while serving as a Navy chaplain, I was ordered to "park my car" in a specially designated area and stand beside it. I was rather amazed that a chaplain and an officer would be subjected to such scrutiny. I had my uniform on with the proper "symbols" to announce my status. "Why, of all people, am I being searched?" I asked. Looking at me as he would have looked at any other person, a shore patrolman said in a quiet, yet stern voice, "Just a routine matter, Sir." Only later was I told that a critical item was missing from the armory. He was ordered to carefully guard against anything leaving the installation without the commanding officer's approval.

David went to God with an unusual request: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep a watch over the door of my lips." David knew that he might say something that could be dangerous and destructive to others. But he had a solution: He asked God for "a guard" to control his speech. He did not want any evil words to exit his mouth that could harm others. No doubt he had been harmed by the words of others and knew how painful and harmful words could be.

Jesus said, "Nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean...it is from within, out of a man's heart, come evil thoughts (that) make a man 'unclean.'" Jesus knew how to stop "harmful words and deeds." Keep them away from me and me away from them!

David knew about harmful words. So, he also asked God for something else that was very important: "Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil." Why? Evil in - evil out.

Prayer: Lord, Your advice is so practical and purposeful. Let it "take over" our hearts and keep us from evil. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep a watch over the door of my lips. Psalm 141:3

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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 24 of 67

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- ☐ Black & White\$48.99/year
- ☐ Colored\$79.88/year
- ☐ Colored\$42.60/6 months
- ☐ E-Weekly*\$31.95/year

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- ☐ 1 Month\$15.98
- ☐ 3 Months.....\$26.63
- ☐ 6 Months.....\$31.95
- ☐ 9 Months.....\$42.60
- ☐ 12 Months.....\$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

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



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.23.25

13 24 41 42 70 18

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$474,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 39 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.22.25

2 5 34 41 44 10

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,390,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 54 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.23.25

18 19 38 42 44 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 9 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.20.25

1 5 21 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$29,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 9 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.22.25

32 49 50 56 63 19

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.22.25

3 29 42 46 59 15

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$127,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 26 of 67

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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 27 of 67

News from the Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Christian def. Waubay/Summit, 27-25, 25-12, 25-15
Avon def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-13, 25-10, 25-20
Baltic def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-14, 25-16, 24-26, 25-15
Bison def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-9, 25-16, 25-18
Bridgewater-Emery def. Hanson, 25-21, 25-13, 25-12
Britton-Hecla def. Waverly-South Shore, 19-25, 25-16, 25-15, 25-18
Burke def. Platte-Geddes, 25-13, 25-20, 23-25, 25-23
Canton def. Tri-Valley, 25-15, 26-24, 15-25, 25-13
Castlewood def. Great Plains Lutheran, 25-18, 25-18, 25-13
Chester def. Parker/Marion, 25-16, 25-13, 25-16
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Wapala, 25-14, 25-18, 25-18
Colman-Egan def. Canistota, 25-16, 25-19, 25-15
Corsica/Stickney def. Kimball-White Lake, 25-22, 25-16, 21-25, 25-13
Crawford, Neb. def. Edgemont, 25-23, 26-28, 25-13, 17-25, 15-11
Crow Creek Tribal School def. Crazy Horse, 25-15, 25-16, 25-10
Dakota Valley def. West Central, 21-25, 25-15, 25-14, 25-21
DeSmet def. James Valley Christian School, 25-8, 25-13, 25-11
Dell Rapids St Mary's def. Howard, 25-13, 25-10, 25-10
Dell Rapids def. Garretson, 25-13, 25-13, 25-13
Deubrook def. Deuel, 25-5, 25-16, 25-22
Faulkton def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-20, 21-25, 25-18, 25-15
Florence-Henry def. Sisseton, 15-25, 10-25, 25-21, 25-16, 15-11
Freeman def. Scotland, 25-5, 25-14, 25-22
Gayville-Volin High School def. Marty, 25-11, 25-10, 25-11
Hamlin def. Estelline-Hendricks, 25-10, 25-12, 25-16
Harding County def. Hulett, Wyo., 25-20, 25-12, 25-22
Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Washington, 25-18, 25-9, 25-19
Herreid-Selby def. Stanley County, 25-12, 25-19, 25-13
Hill City def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-12, 25-16, 25-21
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-20, 25-13, 25-21
Huron def. Aberdeen Central, 25-22, 25-21, 25-21
Jones County def. Chamberlain, 25-21, 25-18, 25-17
Langford def. Tiospa Zina, 25-6, 25-15, 25-12
Lennox def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-15, 25-19, 25-22
Lyman def. Wall, 25-21, 25-21, 25-22
Madison def. Arlington, 25-18, 25-19, 25-18
McCook Central-Montrose def. Flandreau, 25-20, 25-16, 26-24
Menno def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-17, 24-26, 25-6, 25-20
Miller def. Redfield, 25-11, 25-13, 25-14
Mitchell def. Brookings, 21-25, 25-23, 25-21, 24-26, 15-7
North Central def. Sully Buttes, 25-17, 25-18, 25-14
Northwestern def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-12, 25-11, 25-8
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland def. Mitchell Christian, 25-21, 25-9, 25-9
Parkston def. Winner, 26-24, 25-20, 25-18
Rapid City Christian def. Belle Fourche, 25-7, 25-12, 25-13

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 28 of 67

Sioux Falls Christian def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-15, 25-12, 25-14
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Yankton, 25-12, 25-12, 25-15
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Jefferson, 25-15, 25-18, 25-18
Sioux Valley def. Milbank, 25-18, 25-14, 22-25, 25-11
Spearfish def. Sturgis Brown High School, 25-19, 25-16, 25-23
Sunshine Bible Academy def. Lower Brule, 25-15, 25-10, 29-27
Timber Lake def. McLaughlin, 25-6, 25-23, 25-20
Todd County def. Gregory, 27-25, 22-25, 25-15, 17-25, 15-12
Tripp-Delmont-Armour def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-9, 25-12, 25-19
Wagner def. Bon Homme, 25-19, 25-6, 25-16
Warner def. Groton, 27-25, 25-19, 25-16
Watertown def. Tea, 25-15, 25-19, 26-24
Webster def. Wilmot, 25-8, 25-13, 25-10

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Typhoon Ragasa batters Hong Kong and south China after killing dozens in Taiwan and Philippines

By KANIS LEUNG and NG HAN GUAN Associated Press

SHENZHEN, China (AP) — Typhoon Ragasa, one of the strongest in years, whipped waves taller than lampposts onto Hong Kong promenades and turned seas rough on the southern Chinese coast on Wednesday after leaving deadly destruction in Taiwan and the Philippines.

In Taiwan, 17 people died in a flooded township, and 10 deaths were reported in the northern Philippines.

Nearly 1.9 million people were relocated across Guangdong province, the southern Chinese economic powerhouse. A weather station in Chuandao town recorded maximum gusts of 241 kph (about 150 mph) at noon, a high in Jiangmen city since record-keeping began. Huge waves battered Zhuhai city's coastline and strong winds buffeted trees under intense rain. Fallen branches were scattered on the streets.

State broadcaster CCTV said the typhoon made landfall along the coast of Hailing Island in Yangjiang city at about 5 p.m., packing maximum winds near the center of 144 kph (89 mph). It is forecast to keep moving west. Schools, factories and transportation services were initially suspended in about a dozen cities, but a few of them distant from the landfall location were preparing to resume work as winds weakened.

The fierce winds, brought by Ragasa, once a super typhoon, woke Hong Kong residents in the early hours, and many went online to describe scenes like a kitchen ventilation fan being blown down and a crane swaying.

Winds and waves lash Hong Kong, push seawater onto promenade

Strong winds blew away parts of a pedestrian bridge's roof and knocked down hundreds of trees across the city. A vessel crashed into the shore, shattering a row of glass railings along the waterfront. Areas around some rivers and promenades were flooded, including cycling lanes and playgrounds. At several promenade restaurants, furniture was scattered chaotically by the winds. Over 80 injured people were treated at hospitals.

A video that showed waves of water crashing through the doors of a hotel and flooding its interiors went viral in the financial hub. The hotel has not immediately commented on the incident. But staff were seen cleaning up the lobby, with parts of its exterior damaged.

Hong Kong and Macao, a nearby casino hub, canceled schools and flights, with many shops closed. Hundreds of people sought refuge in temporary centers in each city. Streets in Macao turned into streams with debris floating on the water. Rescue crews deployed inflatable boats to save those who were trapped. The gambling city's local electricity supplier suspended its power supply in some flooded, low-lying areas for safety.

Hong Kong's observatory said Ragasa had maximum sustained winds near the center of about 195 kph

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 29 of 67

(120 mph) and skirted around 100 kilometers (62 miles) to the south of the city. Hong Kong categorizes cyclones with sustained winds 185 kph or stronger as super typhoons to make residents extra vigilant about intense storms.

The observatory said Ragasa is the strongest tropical cyclone in the northwestern Pacific and South China Sea region so far this year. Preliminary analysis showed it also ranks as the second-strongest one in the South China Sea region since the observatory's record-keeping began in 1950, tying with typhoons Saola in 2023 and Yagi in 2024, it said.

Dozens dead in floods and at sea in Philippines and Taiwan

Ragasa earlier caused deaths and damage in Taiwan and the Philippines after the typhoon took a path between them.

In Taiwan, 17 people died after heavy rain caused a barrier lake in Hualien County to overflow Tuesday and torrents of muddy water destroyed a bridge, turning roads in Guangfu township into churning rivers that carried vehicles and furniture away.

Guangfu has about 8,450 people, more than half of whom sought safety on higher floors of their homes or on higher ground on Wednesday morning.

Rescuers managed to establish contact with more than 100 others who were previously unreachable, and were going door-to-door to check on the remaining 17 residents. A total of 32 people were injured across the self-ruled island.

At least 10 deaths were reported in the northern Philippines, including seven fishermen who drowned after their boat was battered by huge waves and fierce wind and flipped over on Monday off Santa Ana town in northern Cagayan province. Five other fishermen remained missing, provincial officials said.

Nearly 700,000 people were affected by the onslaught, of whom 25,000 fled to government emergency shelters.

Europe has a Russian drone problem. Here are ways it could be solved

By EMMA BURROWS AP European Security Correspondent

VINSKI, Estonia (AP) — Estonia is extending a fence along its border with Russia and building anti-tank ditches and bunkers in preparation for a potential conflict with Moscow. But those defenses won't guard against the threat it and its NATO allies face from Russian drones and electronic warfare.

From the Baltic to the Black Sea, countries bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine are facing the spillover from Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The incursion of about 20 Russian drones into Poland this month shone a spotlight on holes in NATO's air defenses, as multimillion-dollar jets had to be scrambled to respond to drones that cost thousands and that ended up crashing into the Polish countryside. Russia denied that it targeted Poland, but Polish officials suggested it was intentional.

Faced with a growing problem, some EU defense ministers will meet Friday to discuss creating a "drone wall."

NATO warned Russia on Tuesday that it would defend against any further breaches of its airspace after Estonia said Russian fighter jets violated it last week. But although the alliance knows how to identify threats from jets and missiles, dealing with drones is a greater challenge, officials said.

In Poland, "most of the drones were not detected," said Hanno Pevkur, Estonia's defense minister. "This is a real gap we have to solve."

Military and defense officials from the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — NATO and EU members that border Russia — told The Associated Press that defending against drones requires solving a complex set of technological, financial and bureaucratic problems.

Europe needs cheaper technology to buy and to speed up slow production and procurement cycles, they said. But even then, drone technology is advancing so quickly that anything bought now could be outdated in months.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 30 of 67

"What I need," said Lt. General Andrus Merilo who commands Estonia's military, is technology that is "good enough, it's affordable and can be produced in mass."

"I don't need high-end capabilities of which I can fire only one, against targets which will be attacking in hundreds," he said.

Europe's drone challenge

Russia is using drones every night in Ukraine because each drone is a "lottery ticket that always wins," said Kusti Salm a former top official at Estonia's Defense Ministry.

That's because a drone either hits something or, if Ukraine shoots it down with a missile, it drains Kyiv's air defenses and finances, since missiles are more expensive than drones, said Salm who now runs Frankenburg Technologies, a company developing low-cost anti-drone missiles.

Although NATO countries have a "very good understanding" of how to defend against conventional threats such as missiles and planes, they need to rapidly improve at dealing with drone threats, said Tomas Godliauskas, Lithuania's vice-minister of national defense.

When the Russian drones flew into Poland, NATO nations deployed fighter jets and attack helicopters and put missile defense systems on alert. But none of those options was specifically designed for drone warfare.

Although Russia and Ukraine have been firing more and more drones at each other, there has been less investment in counter-drone systems, said Salm. He suggested that's partly because it's easier to get a drone to fly than it is to develop something to detect or intercept it.

Slow, low-flying drones made from wood, fiberglass, plastic or polystyrene might not be detected by radar systems searching for a fast-moving missile made of metal, or they might look like birds or a plane. Enemy operatives can also bypass defenses by launching drones from inside a country, as Ukraine did to devastating effect when it attacked Russian airfields this year.

There are also other technological hurdles, including trying to jam the enemy's drones and communications without cutting your own, Merilo said.

Multiple drone incidents

In August, a Ukrainian drone — possibly sent off course by Russian electronic jamming — landed in a field in southeastern Estonia. It crashed because the military wasn't capable of detecting it, Merilo said.

The Estonian military and border force have also lost drones — used for surveillance and to stop illegal border crossings — to Russian jamming, which has also been blamed for disrupting flights.

Other drones have crashed in Romania, Moldova, Lithuania and Latvia, and there have been multiple unidentified drone sightings over military facilities and airports in Europe, including in Germany, the U.K., Norway and Denmark, where air traffic was halted for several hours Monday at Copenhagen Airport.

The number of incidents shows Europe needs to solve its drone problem "right now," said Col. Māris Tūtins, Head of Information Analysis and Operations at Latvia's Joint Forces Headquarters.

A drone wall

There is growing support among European leaders for establishing some sort of drone wall along the EU's eastern border, though the bloc in March denied funding to a joint Estonia-Lithuania proposal to establish one.

The EU needs to prioritize funding for the project, said Pevkur. But although support for the idea is growing, actually creating a drone defense system won't be easy.

"Drones are not mosquitoes," the Estonian minister said, suggesting they would be unlikely to be zapped by an "electronic wall" along NATO's borders.

There are many types of drones, including those used for intelligence and reconnaissance, that fly at high-altitude, that are used in attacks, or that even remain attached to a thin fiber-optic cable while flying, making them impossible to jam. Russia also uses decoy drones in Ukraine that carry no payload and are designed to exhaust air defenses.

Any plan to defend against drones needs a multilayered approach including sensors, "electronic warfare ... also low-cost small missiles or attack drones," said Merilo.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 31 of 67

A need for cheaper and more plentiful technology

Although the need for better drone defenses isn't new, it's still largely only possible to buy systems that are "really expensive," take a long time to develop and cannot be mass-produced, Merilo said.

He suggested that's partly because big defense companies that have spent decades developing billion-dollar air defense systems might not want something new — and cheaper — on the market.

"We have to understand this game," Merilo said, adding that some technology does exist, but "the question is who — and how fast they can start producing."

Facing nightly onslaughts, Ukraine is rapidly developing its technology, including long-range attack drones and smaller ones for use on the frontlines.

Latvia and some other NATO countries have turned to Salm's company, Frankenburg, to acquire its small anti-drone missiles once they're in production.

But a piecemeal approach isn't ideal, Salm said. Instead, the EU needs to invest more in European start-ups which can turbocharge drone defense production that can be used by allies across different weapons systems, he said.

Europe needs to switch to "semi-wartime thinking" and foster greater collaboration between the military, government and defense industries to be able to fill its technology gap, said Godliauskas.

In Ukraine, it's sometimes only a matter of weeks between drone technology being developed and used on the battlefield. Europe "doesn't have time" to spend years waiting to acquire equipment, the Lithuanian said.

Another lesson from Ukraine is that what works today, might not work tomorrow, Godliauskas noted.

While drone defense is critical now, it would be wrong to forget about everything else, said Tūtins. That's because Moscow is using "all means possible" to destabilize Europe, including hybrid warfare and cyberattacks, he said.

Iran starts rebuilding missile sites hit by Israel, but experts say a key component is missing

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran has begun rebuilding missile-production sites targeted by Israel during its 12-day war in June, satellite images analyzed by The Associated Press show, but a key component is likely still missing — the large mixers needed to produce solid fuel for the weapons.

Reconstituting the missile program is crucial for the Islamic Republic, which believes another round of war with Israel may happen. The missiles are one of Iran's few military deterrents after the war decimated its air defense systems — something that Tehran long has insisted will never be included in negotiations with the West.

Missile experts told AP that obtaining the mixers is a goal for Tehran, particularly as it prepares for possible United Nations sanctions to be reimposed on the country later this month. The sanctions would penalize any development of the missile program, among other measures. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is due to address the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday.

Known as planetary mixers, the machines feature blades that revolve around a central point, like orbiting planets, and offer better mixing action than other types of equipment. Iran could purchase them from China, where experts and U.S. officials say they've purchased missile fuel ingredients and other components in the past.

"If they're able to reacquire some key things like planetary mixers, then that infrastructure is still there and ready to get rolling again," said Sam Lair, a research associate at the James Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies who studied Iranian missile sites.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to questions about the country's efforts to rebuild its missile program.

Israeli war targeted solid-fuel missile sites

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 32 of 67

Solid-fuel missiles can be fired faster than those using liquid fuel, which must be loaded just before launch. That speed can make the difference between launching a missile and having it destroyed in a launcher — something that happened during the war with Israel.

Iran has solid-fuel missile manufacturing bases at Khojir and Parchin, two sites just outside Tehran, as well as at Shahroud, some 350 kilometers (215 miles) northeast of the capital. Even before the most recent war, all of those sites came under Israeli attack in October 2024 during hostilities between the countries.

Attacks during the war in June appeared aimed at destroying buildings that housed the mixers, which are needed to ensure the missile fuel is evenly combined, according to experts. Other sites struck by Israel included manufacturing facilities that likely could be used to make the mixers.

Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC taken this month and analyzed by AP show construction at both the Parchin and Shahroud facilities.

At Parchin, mixing buildings appear to be under repair, Lair said, and similar rebuilding is happening at Shahroud involving mixing buildings and other structures.

The speed at which Iran is rebuilding shows the importance Tehran puts on its missile program. Iran's bombed nuclear sites so far have not seen the same level of activity.

During the war, Iran fired 574 ballistic missiles at Israel, according to the Washington-based Jewish Institute for National Security of America, which has a close relationship with the Israeli military. In two exchanges of fire before the war, Iran launched another 330 missiles, the think tank said.

The Israeli military had estimated Iran's total arsenal at around 2,500 missiles, meaning that over a third of its missiles were fired.

Before the war, Iran was on track to be able to produce more than 200 solid-fuel missiles a month, said Carl Parkin, a summer fellow at the James Martin Center. That drew Israeli strikes to missile-building facilities.

"Israel's targeting indicates that they believed mixing was a bottleneck in Iran's missile production," he said. "If Iran is able to overcome their mixing limitations, they'll have all the casting capacity that they need to start producing at high volumes again."

The Israeli military declined to respond to questions over its strategy. Iran's defense minister, Gen. Aziz Nasirzadeh, recently claimed Tehran now has new missiles with more advanced warheads.

"The 12-day war with Israel has altered some of our priorities," he said on Aug. 22. "We are now focused on producing military equipment with higher precision and greater operational capabilities."

Chinese mixers seen at Syria missile site affiliated with Iran

Iran may choose to rely on China to obtain mixers and the chemicals to make solid fuel.

Such chemicals may have caused a massive explosion in April that killed at least 70 people at a port in Iran. Iran still has not explained the blast, which happened as its diplomats met with Americans in Oman over its nuclear program.

Just days after the explosion, the U.S. State Department sanctioned Chinese firms it said provided the Islamic Republic with "ballistic missile propellant ingredients."

Meanwhile, Iran's Revolutionary Guard likely supplied a planetary mixer to an underground ballistic missile construction facility in Syria near the town of Masyaf, some 170 kilometers (105 miles) north of the capital, Damascus, near the Lebanese border. Footage released by the Israeli military months after the September 2024 raid on the facility showed the mixer, which bore a resemblance to others sold online by Chinese firms.

Iran's president and military officials visited Beijing earlier this month for China's Victory Day parade. Iran's government has provided no detailed readout on what Pezeshkian said to Chinese President Xi Jinping, and China's state-run media offered no indications that Tehran asked for help.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry, asked about possibly supplying Tehran mixers and fuel ingredients, told AP that Beijing is "willing to continue leveraging its influence to contribute to peace and stability in the Middle East."

"China supports Iran in safeguarding its national sovereignty, security and national dignity," the ministry said. "At the same time, China is deeply concerned about the continued escalation of tensions in the Middle East."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 33 of 67

Can Kasapoğlu, a senior fellow with the Washington-based Hudson Institute, said Beijing could supply guidance systems and microprocessors as well for Iran's ballistic missiles.

"If Iran uses its relationship with China to bolster its disruptive military capabilities, the 12-day war could be a mere speed bump for the Iranian regime, rather than a decisive defeat," he wrote.

Lair, the analyst, said if Iran restarts its production at prewar levels, the sheer number of missiles produced will make it harder for the Israelis to preemptively destroy them or shoot them down.

"They are clearly very invested in their missile program, and I don't think that they're going to negotiate it away, ever," he said.

Claudia Cardinale, star of '8½' and 'The Leopard,' dies at 87

By VICTOR L. SIMPSON Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Acclaimed Italian actor Claudia Cardinale, who starred in some of the most celebrated European films of the 1960s and 1970s, has died in France, her agent said Wednesday. She was 87.

Cardinale died in Nemours, France, surrounded by her children, her agent Laurent Savry told The Associated Press.

Praise for Cardinale's talent, beauty and impact on the European cinema poured in on Wednesday, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying, "We French will always carry this Italian and global star in our hearts, in the eternity of cinema."

Cardinale starred in more than 100 films and made-for-television productions, but she was best known for embodying youthful purity in Federico Fellini's "8½," in which she co-starred with Marcello Mastroianni in 1963.

Cardinale also won praise for her role as Angelica Sedara in Luchino Visconti's award-winning screen adaption of the historical novel "The Leopard" that same year and a reformed prostitute in Sergio Leone's spaghetti western "Once Upon a Time in the West" in 1968.

Italian Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli offered condolences to Cardinale's family and hailed Cardinale's beauty and "exceptional talent" that inspired "milestones" of Italian cinema.

"With the death of Claudia Cardinale, one of the greatest Italian actresses of all time has passed away," he said in a statement late Tuesday.

Cardinale began her movie-career at the age of 17 after winning a beauty contest in Tunisia, where she was born of Sicilian parents who had emigrated to North Africa. The contest brought her to the Venice Film Festival, where she came to the attention of the Italian movie industry.

Before entering the beauty contest she had expected to become a school teacher.

"The fact I'm making movies is just an accident," Cardinale recalled while accepting a lifetime achievement award at the Berlin Film Festival in 2002. "When they asked me 'do you want to be in the movies?' I said no and they insisted for six months."

Her success came in the wake of Sophia Loren's international stardom and she was touted as Italy's answer to Brigitte Bardot. While never achieving the level of success of the French actor, she nonetheless was considered a star and worked with the leading directors in Europe and Hollywood.

"They gave me everything," Cardinale said. "It's marvelous to live so many lives. I've been living more than 150 lives, totally different women."

One of her earliest roles was as a black-clad Sicilian girl in the 1958 comedy classic "Big Deal on Madonna Street." It was produced by Franco Cristaldi, who managed her early career and to whom she was married from 1966 to 1975.

The sensuous brunette with enormous eyes was often cast as a hot-blooded woman. As she had a deep voice and spoke Italian with a heavy French accent, her voice was dubbed in her early movies.

Her career in Hollywood brought only partial success because she was not interested in giving up European film. Nonetheless, she achieved some fame by teaming with Rock Hudson in the 1965 comedy thriller "Blindfold" and another comedy "Don't Make Waves" with Tony Curtis two years later.

Cardinale herself considered the 1966 "The Professionals," directed by Richard Brooks as the best of her

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 34 of 67

Hollywood films, where she starred alongside Burt Lancaster, Jack Palance, Robert Ryan and Lee Marvin.

In a 2002 interview with the Guardian, she explained that the Hollywood studio "wanted me to sign a contract of exclusivity, and I refused. Because I'm a European actress and I was going there for movies."

"And I had a big opportunity with Richard Brooks, 'The Professionals,' which is really a magnificent movie," she said. "For me 'The Professionals' is the best I did in Hollywood."

Among her industry prizes was a Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement that she received at the Venice film festival nearly 40 years after her initial appearance on screen.

In 2000, Cardinale was named a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the defense of women's rights.

She had two children. One with Cristaldi and a second with her later companion, Italian director Pasquale Squitieri.

Activist flotilla seeking to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza says drones attacked its boats

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Activists taking part in a flotilla seeking to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza said Wednesday that some of their boats were attacked by drones overnight while sailing south of Greece.

The Global Sumud Flotilla said it was attacked during the night by "unidentified drones and communications jamming." It said that "at least 13 explosions" were heard on and around several flotilla boats, while drones or aircraft dropped "unidentified objects" on at least 10 boats.

No casualties were reported but there was damage to the vessels and "widespread obstruction in communications," it added.

Activists posted a brief video on the flotilla's social media account showing what appeared to be an explosion on or near one of the vessels. Greece's coast guard did not report any distress calls.

There was no immediate response to questions regarding the attack from the Israeli military.

Sailing to Gaza

The flotilla, comprised of dozens of boats from several countries, is carrying a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid, including food and medicine, for Palestinians in Gaza.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry has accused organizers of being linked to Hamas, and says it has proposed that the activists unload their aid in the Israeli port of Ashkelon for it to be transported into Gaza.

"Israel will not allow vessels to enter an active combat zone and will not allow the breach of a lawful naval blockade," the ministry said on Monday. "Israel urges the participants not to break the law and to accept Israel's proposal for a peaceful transfer of any aid they might have."

Italian citizens, including members of parliament and members of the European parliament, are participating in the flotilla, and Italy's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday it had "notified the Israeli authorities that any operation entrusted to Israel's armed forces be conducted in compliance with international law and the principle of absolute caution."

Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani "has asked the Italian Embassy in Tel Aviv to gather information and reiterate its previous request to the Israeli government to guarantee the absolute protection of the personnel on board," it added.

Attacks on the flotilla

The flotilla has reported several attacks since it set sail from Spain on Sept. 1, including two while some of its boats were in Tunisian waters.

The convoy is claimed to be the largest attempt to date to break the Israeli maritime blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has now lasted 18 years, long predating the current war in Gaza.

The almost two-year war has killed more than 65,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The ministry does not say how many were civilians or combatants, but says more than half have been women and children.

The world's leading authority on hunger crises said last month that Israel's blockade and ongoing of-

fensive had already pushed Gaza City into famine. More than 300,000 people have fled the city in recent weeks as Israel has ordered the population to move south, but an estimated 700,000 remain, according to U.N. agencies and aid groups.

The war began on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants carried out an attack inside Israel that killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, saw about 250 people taken hostage. Israel says its operation in Gaza is aimed at pressuring Hamas to surrender and return the remaining 48 hostages. Israel believes around 20 of the captives are still alive.

It is not the first time that activists trying to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza have come under attack.

Another vessel said it was attacked by drones in May in international waters off Malta. An overland convoy traveling across North Africa also attempted to reach the border but was blocked by security forces aligned with Egypt in eastern Libya.

In 2010, Israeli commandos raided the Mavi Marmara, a boat participating in an aid flotilla attempting to breach the blockade of Gaza, killing 10 Turkish activists on board.

Emotional Jimmy Kimmel says in late-night return he never intended to make light of Kirk's killing

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jimmy Kimmel returned to late-night television Tuesday after a nearly weeklong suspension and, in an emotional monologue where he appeared close to tears, said that he wasn't trying to joke about the killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

"I have no illusions about changing anyone's mind, but I do want to make something clear, because it's important to me as a human and that is, you understand that it was never my intention to make light of the murder of a young man," Kimmel said. "I don't think there's anything funny about it."

He added that he wasn't trying to blame any specific group "for the actions of what ... was obviously a deeply disturbed individual. That was really the opposite of the point I was trying to make." He said he understood his remarks last week to some "felt either ill-timed or unclear or maybe both."

But he made no apologies. And he criticized the ABC affiliates who took his show off the air. Two stations groups that represent about a quarter of ABC stations, Sinclair and Nexstar, ordered their outlets not to show Kimmel on Tuesday.

"That's not legal," Kimmel said. "That's not American. It's un-American."

Kimmel praises supporters and Kirk's widow

The incident triggered a national discussion about freedom of speech and President Donald Trump's ability to police the words of journalists, commentators and even comics. ABC suspended Kimmel's show last Wednesday following criticism of his remarks about the aftermath of Kirk's killing. But the network brought him back following a backlash against parent company Disney.

Kimmel thanked many supporters, including fellow late-night hosts past and present and even a former boss at a radio station in Seattle who checked in with him last week. He also singled out people he knows aren't fans of his comedy but stood up for his right to speak, including Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

"It takes courage for them to speak out against this administration," he said. "They did and they deserve credit for it."

Kimmel nearly broke down again in praising Kirk's widow, Erika, who publicly forgave her husband's killer.

"That is an example we should follow," he said. "If you believe in the teachings of Jesus as I do, there it was ... A selfless act of grace, forgiveness from a grieving widow. It touched me deeply. And I hope it touches many. And if there's anything we should take from this tragedy to carry forward, I hope it can be that. And not this."

Kimmel admitted that he was mad when ABC suspended him, but praised his bosses for putting him back on the air. "Unjustly, this puts them at risk."

He mocked Trump for criticizing him for bad ratings. "He tried his best to cancel me and instead he

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 36 of 67

forced millions of people to watch this show," Kimmel said.

The decisions by Sinclair and Nexstar left ABC stations in Washington, D.C.; St. Louis; Nashville, Tennessee, and Richmond, Virginia among the cities airing something else. WJLA-TV, the Sinclair-owned station in Washington, instead aired a newscast and an episode of the chain's show, "The National Desk."

Kimmel's suspension came after an angry reaction to comments he made in monologues early last week. A relentless Trump critic in his comedy, Kimmel suggested that many Trump supporters were trying to capitalize on Kirk's death and were "desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them."

FCC chair accuses Kimmel of misleading the public

Trump-appointed Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr last week said it appeared that Kimmel was trying to "directly mislead the American public" with his remarks about Tyler Robinson, the 22-year-old Utah man charged with Kirk's killing, and his motives. Those motives remain unclear. Authorities say Robinson grew up in a conservative family, but his mother told investigators his son had turned left politically in the last year.

"We can do this the easy way or the hard way," Carr said before ABC announced the suspension. "These companies can find ways to change conduct, to take action, frankly, on Kimmel, or there is going to be additional work for the FCC ahead."

Those remarks were key to the backlash, with Cruz saying that Carr acted like "a mafioso." Hundreds of entertainment luminaries, including Tom Hanks, Barbra Streisand and Jennifer Aniston, signed a letter circulated by the American Civil Liberties Union that called ABC's move "a dark moment for freedom of speech in our nation."

Podcaster Joe Rogan weighed in Tuesday on Kimmel's side. "I definitely don't think that the government should be involved — ever — in dictating what a comedian can or can't say in a monologue," Rogan said. "You are crazy for supporting this because this will be used on you."

Some consumers punished ABC parent Disney by canceling subscriptions to its streaming services.

Trump had hailed Kimmel's suspension and criticized his return, writing on his Truth Social platform: "I can't believe ABC Fake News gave Jimmy Kimmel his job back ... Why would they want someone back who does so poorly, who's not funny, and who puts the Network in jeopardy by playing 99% positive Democrat GARBAGE."

Actor Robert De Niro appeared on "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" on Tuesday, impersonating Carr being interviewed by Kimmel. De Niro, as Carr, said the FCC had a new motto, "sticks and stones can break your bones."

Isn't there more to the saying, Kimmel asked, that words can never hurt you?

"They can hurt you now," De Niro responded, saying you have to make sure to say the right ones.

Kimmel takes stage to a long standing ovation, soaks in the cheers

Kimmel took the stage to a long standing ovation and chants of "Jimmy, Jimmy." One audience member, Walter Bates, said after the taping that Kimmel's discussion of Kirk's widow "was a very moving moment. I got very emotional and so did my wife."

Trump's administration has used threats, lawsuits and federal government pressure to try to exert more control over the media industry. Trump sued ABC and CBS over news coverage, which the companies settled. Trump has also filed defamation lawsuits against The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, and successfully urged Congress to strip federal funding from NPR and PBS.

After pulling out of her planned performance at the premiere of Hulu's Lilith Fair documentary in protest over Kimmel's suspension, singer-songwriter Sarah McLachlan appeared on Kimmel's show as the musical guest. McLachlan had been booked on the show prior to the preemption, a representative told The Associated Press.

The other guest was actor Glen Powell.

The suspension happened at a time when the late-night landscape is shifting. Shows are losing viewers, in part because many watch highlights the next day online. CBS announced the cancellation of "Late Show" host Stephen Colbert's show over the summer. Kimmel's contract with ABC reportedly lasts through May.

Colbert, in his own monologue Monday shortly after ABC announced Kimmel would return, grabbed his

recently won Emmy Award for outstanding talk series, saying, "Once more, I am the only martyr on late night!"

A mother stranded in Gaza City says she and her daughters are 'waiting to die'

By JULIA FRANKEL and SALLY ABOU ALJOUD Associated Press

Explosions shake the walls of the dim basement in Gaza City where Noor Abu Hassira and her three daughters are sheltering. They can't see much through a small, raised window. But if the sounds of buzzing drones and booming airstrikes are any indication, Israeli forces are getting closer.

Abu Hassira is staying behind despite Israeli warnings to evacuate. She has debilitating leg injuries from an airstrike that destroyed her home at the start of the war and, like many in the devastated territory, she cannot come up with the \$2,000 she says it would cost to move to southern Gaza and pitch a tent in a displacement camp.

While most Palestinians in Gaza City have fled south at some point in the 23-month long war, Abu Hassira has been largely bedridden — except for the 11 times she's had to relocate within her city to keep safe from Israeli assaults. Her husband is in an Israeli prison, and she and her young girls — Jouri, Maria and Maha — are among the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians still in Gaza City, which before the war had a million residents.

"It feels like we're just waiting to die, I don't really care that much anymore," Abu Hassira wrote over text.

Israel says its offensive is aimed at destroying Hamas and freeing hostages taken during the attack that started the war. It says it is taking steps to mitigate harm to civilians.

If the Abu Hassira family could somehow make it to the south, their troubles would not be over.

"I'm afraid to live in a tent with my daughters. I'm afraid we will drown in the winter. I'm afraid of insects. How will we get water?" she said.

An airstrike destroyed their home

Eight months before the war, Abu Hassira and her family moved into an apartment in Gaza City. She worked as a medical lab technician. Her husband, Raed, was a journalist for a media outlet suspected of links to Hamas. Abu Hassira said her husband was not a member of the militant group.

Jouri, their oldest, was in elementary school. Maria was about to start kindergarten. Maha was just a baby.

"We worked and saved for 10 years to have a comfortable, nice home — our dream house. Now it's gone," she said.

After Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 and abducting 251 people, Israel responded with heavy airstrikes across Gaza and a ground invasion. That December, the Abu Hassiras' apartment building was struck.

The blast collapsed a concrete pillar that pinned Abu Hassira under the rubble, shattering her shoulders, back and legs and knocking her into a coma. Her daughters were also buried in the rubble, though all survived.

Israeli troops raided the hospital

Abu Hassira awoke at Shifa Hospital. Her daughter, Maria, lay beside her with a fractured skull.

Israeli forces had raided the hospital weeks earlier, accusing Hamas of sheltering there. Supplies were running low. It was packed with displaced families and doctors were preoccupied with a steady flow of casualties coming through the gates.

Her husband sent the other two girls to stay with an uncle so he could care for the mother and daughter at the hospital.

"He would change my diapers, my clothes," Abu Hassira said. "I lay on my back for three months, and he took care of me, combed my hair, and bathed me."

In March 2024, Israeli troops raided the hospital again, arresting scores of men, including Abu Hassira's husband. He is now one of hundreds of Palestinian men Israel has rounded up during the war whose

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 38 of 67

whereabouts and legal status remain unknown.

She hasn't heard from him, but Addameer, a Palestinian legal aid group, said an attorney visited him in an Israeli prison last November. Israel's prison service, Shin Bet intelligence agency and military declined to say why he was arrested or where he was being held.

"Maha was just over a year old when they took her father away," Abu Hassira said. "She's never once said the word 'daddy.'"

She feared her daughters would die

Israel's military said it killed some 200 militants over two weeks of fighting inside the sprawling Shifa hospital. The World Health Organization said 21 patients died during the siege. Israel denied harming civilians.

Abu Hassira, who said soldiers told her to leave, fled the incursion with a single bag, leaving her wheelchair and most of her clothes and food behind. The family spent the rest of the year moving from one place to another as Israel carried out raids in and around Gaza City.

"The hardest part is living at other people's homes ... especially with small children, and everything is expensive. I had no clothes or belongings, so I had to use theirs," she said.

In the fall of 2024, Israel largely sealed off northern Gaza, including Gaza City, launching major ground operations and heavily restricting humanitarian aid. Clean water was hard to find. They ate little more than bread. Jouri, her oldest, grew malnourished and sick.

"I felt weak, lonely, helpless," Abu Hassira said. "I was terrified my daughters would die and I couldn't do anything for them."

A neighbor volunteered to take Jouri to a malnutrition program where the girl began to recover.

In January, a long-awaited ceasefire took hold, raising hopes that the war would wind down. Hundreds of thousands of people returned to Gaza City, Abu Hassira's extended family was reunited, and Israel allowed humanitarian aid to flow in.

The war resumes

But Israel shattered the ceasefire in March, launching more airstrikes after halting imports of food, medicine and other goods — a complete blockade that would only be eased 2 ½ months later.

In Gaza City, families like the Abu Hassiras are often without food, which costs 10 times what it did before the war: a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of sugar around \$180, a kilogram of flour around \$60.

Over 65,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, but U.N. agencies and many independent experts view its figures as the most reliable estimate of casualties.

In August, international experts determined Gaza City was experiencing famine. Weeks later, Israel launched an offensive to occupy the city, saying it was needed to pressure Hamas into releasing 48 remaining hostages, around 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive.

Abu Hassira has seen the evacuation leaflets dropped by Israeli aircraft. Many of her neighbors have packed up and left.

But she can barely walk, and a truck ride south would cost around \$900. A tent would cost around \$1,100, she says, and who knows where they would put it. The Israeli-designated humanitarian zone largely consists of crowded camps and demolished buildings. Families who have moved to new grounds for the displaced have found them sparse and lawless, with armed gangs patrolling the area to demand rent.

For now, Abu Hassira says she and her daughters will remain in her parents' basement in the once-upscale Rimal neighborhood, near the Mediterranean Sea. She says she can't cook or wash, and spends her days sitting in a chair or lying down. She needs help to use the bathroom.

"I wish my daughters and I would die together before we are forced to leave," she said. "We are exhausted."

Many leaders back a UN call to address challenges together but Trump says 'America First'

By EDITH M. LEDERER, JENNIFER PELTZ and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — From France to South Korea, South Africa to Suriname, leaders gave strong support Tuesday to the U.N. chief's call to work together to address global challenges — war, poverty and climate chaos. But U.S. President Donald Trump had other ideas and touted his "America First" agenda.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres opened the annual meeting of presidents, prime ministers and monarchs at the General Assembly with a plea to choose peace over war, law over lawlessness, and a future where nations come together rather than scramble for self-interests.

France's President Emmanuel Macron warned that 80 years after the U.N. was founded on the ashes of World War II, "we're isolating ourselves."

"There's more and more divisions, and that's plagued the global order," he said. "The world is breaking down, and that's halting our collective capacity to resolve the major conflicts of our time and stopping us from addressing global challenges."

But Macron said a complex world isn't reason "to throw in the towel" on supporting the U.N.'s key principles of peace, justice, human rights and nations working together. Only respectful relations and cooperation among peers make it possible to fight against military proliferation, address climate change and have "a successful digital transformation," he said.

A call for collaboration

Speaker after speaker made similar appeals to support multilateralism.

Suriname's President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons called multilateralism "one of humanity's most important achievements, which needs our protection at this time of change."

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa said "our collective membership of the United Nations is our shared humanity in action," and the U.N. at 80 compels members to build "an organization that is able to address our common challenges."

As South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung put it, "The more difficult the times are, the more we must return to the basic spirit of the U.N." He added, "We today must cooperate more, trust more, and join hands more firmly, in order to build a better future, a better world for future generations."

The General Assembly meeting continues Wednesday with the leaders of Ukraine, Iran and Syria among the speakers.

Guterres in his remarks noted the world is becoming increasingly multipolar — certainly a nod to rising economic powers China and India but a slap to the U.S. insistence on superpower status. The U.N. chief said a world of many powers can be more diverse and dynamic, but warned that without international cooperation and effective global institutions there can be "chaos."

But Trump, making the first address to the General Assembly since he was elected to a second term last November, ceded no ground and gave an "America First" speech.

The United States has the strongest borders, military, friendships "and the strongest spirit of any nation on the face of the earth," he boasted. "This is indeed the golden age of America."

He portrayed the United Nations as ineffectual and "not even coming close to living up" to its potential, blaming the organization for an escalator that stopped en route to the assembly chamber and for a broken teleprompter. The U.N. cited a safety function for the escalator incident and the White House for the teleprompter.

Trump met with Guterres

While Trump told the assembly the U.N. delivers "empty words — and empty words don't solve war," his tone shifted at a later meeting with Guterres.

"Our country is behind the United Nations 100%," the president told Guterres at the start of their first meeting since his reelection. "I may disagree with it sometimes, but I am so behind it because the potential for peace at this institution is great."

U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said in an interview with The Associated Press late Tuesday that

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 40 of 67

their subsequent private meeting was “very good.”

The U.N. and U.S. leaders talked about ending conflicts around the world, about efficiency, about bringing in the private sector in a bigger way, and humanitarian efforts, Fletcher said. “At least we’ve got a conversation going. This is dialogue. This is diplomacy. And it’s technicolor — and it’s glorious.”

The U.N. is facing financial cuts as the U.S., its largest source of revenue, and some other nations have pulled back funding. Guterres said aid cuts are “wreaking havoc,” calling them “a death sentence for many.”

Fletcher said this year’s U.N. appeal for \$29 billion to help 114 million people around the world is only 19% funded. He said he has been talking with Saudis, Europeans, Americans and others about the funding crisis, calling it “a work in progress.”

U.N. talks about the wars in Ukraine and Gaza

Elsewhere at the U.N., the Security Council held emergency back-to-back meetings Tuesday on the two major wars – the more than three-year conflict in Ukraine sparked by Russia’s invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, and the nearly two-year war in Gaza that followed Hamas’ surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

In a dramatic shift, Trump posted on social media soon after meeting Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that he believes Ukraine can win back all the territory it lost to Russia. The U.S. leader previously called on Ukraine to make territorial concessions to end the war.

The emergency meeting on Gaza highlighted the isolation of the Trump administration, Israel’s closest ally.

A day after France led other nations in adding significantly to the list of countries recognizing Palestinian statehood, the U.N. Security Council once again witnessed the deep divide between the veto-wielding United States and most of the rest of the world over how to end the war in the Gaza Strip and resolve the nearly eight-decade Mideast conflict.

Most nations called for an immediate ceasefire and an influx of humanitarian aid, but the new U.S. ambassador, Mike Waltz, called the meeting a disappointing “charade” and expressed regret it was held on Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, preventing Israel from attending.

Speaking at the assembly earlier, Jordan’s King Abdullah II said it’s an illusion that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government “is a willing partner for peace,” pointing to its “hostile rhetoric: and violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Tunisia and most recently Qatar.”

“How long before we recognize the Palestinians as people who aspire to the same things you and I do — and we act on that recognition?,” Abdullah asked. “How long before we recognize that statehood is not something Palestinians need to earn? It is not a reward — it is an indisputable right.”

Black pastors say Charlie Kirk is not a martyr, while decrying racism and political violence

By AARON MORRISON and JAYLEN GREEN Associated Press

How Charlie Kirk is being memorialized — with many conservatives and white Christians, particularly evangelicals, emphasizing his faith and labeling him a martyr — has sparked debate among Black clergy, who are trying to square a heroic view of the 31-year-old with insulting statements about people of color that were key to his political activism.

“How you die does not redeem how you lived,” the Rev. Howard-John Wesley, of Alexandria, Virginia, said in a sermon in the aftermath of Kirk’s killing that has amassed tens of thousands of views online.

The reactions to Kirk’s death marked a notable split-screen moment in America’s racial divide, playing out at the same time on Sunday across the country.

From the pulpits of Black churches, pastors used their sermons to denounce what they called hateful rhetoric from Kirk that runs counter to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. In a packed football stadium in Arizona, tens of thousands of people celebrated Kirk in a religious-themed memorial as a martyr and inspirational and principled conservative hero.

Kirk’s killing on a college campus in Utah captured in a graphic video that went viral, as well as the aftermath of his death have become the latest fault line in politics and race in America under President

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 41 of 67

Donald Trump.

Many Black pastors in the largest African American Christian denominations linked the veneration of Kirk — who used his platform to discuss matters of race in America, including statements that denigrated Black people, immigrants, women, Muslims and LGBTQ+ people — to the history of weaponizing faith to justify colonialism, enslavement and bigotry.

"Christianity told itself that Black people were inferior and therefore enslaved us," said the Rev. Jacqui Lewis, pastor of Middle Collegiate Church in New York City, adding that powerful voices have long controlled the microphone and used it to reshape Christianity to serve power, exclusion and hate.

"We can call it Christian-esque, but it's white nationalism wrapped in talk of Jesus," Lewis said in an interview this week. "And it's not Christian. It's just not."

Now, Lewis and others said, Black pastors must speak boldly, looking to their tradition of speaking out against those who promote racism.

"We're criticizing the way the world is because that's our job," she said.

'Not the Jesus I know'

The presence of tens of thousands of followers who nearly filled a professional football stadium in Arizona for a memorial service Sunday attended by Trump, Vice President JD Vance and MAGA movement supporters is a testament to the massive influence that Kirk accumulated in conservative America.

"It was part memorial service, but another part of it was more like a political rally," said the Rev. Joel Bowman, pastor of Temple of Faith Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. "The conflation of Christian symbolism and right-wing conservatism has really been a hallmark of the brand of Christian nationalism we have seen in the last eight, nine, 10 years" since Trump has defined Republican politics.

Many spoke of Kirk as a family man whose strong Christian faith, belief in the unfettered expression of ideas and ultraconservative values were part of his appeal.

"My friends, for Charlie, we must remember that he is a hero to the United States of America. And he is a martyr for the Christian faith," Vance said.

The Rev. F. Bruce Williams, pastor of Bates Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, had rejected the martyrdom assertion well before Vance addressed Kirk's mourners in Arizona.

While emphasizing that Kirk's "life was tragically taken by violence," Williams said in a sermon shared more than 40,000 times on Facebook, "what is also tragic is they're trying to make him a martyr of the faith."

"Now, he did violently die, but he did not die for the faith. Not the faith that I know. Not for the Jesus I know."

"Charlie Kirk did not deserve to be assassinated," agreed Wesley, pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church, in his online sermon. "But I am overwhelmed seeing the flags of the United States of America at half-staff, calling this nation to honor and venerate a man who was an unapologetic racist and spent all of his life sowing seeds of division and hate into this land."

Clergy decry comparisons with Martin Luther King Jr.

Kirk once called the landmark civil rights law granting equal rights to people of color "a mistake," and described civil rights icon the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as "awful," leading many Black church leaders to reject comparisons between Kirk's killing and King's 1968 assassination.

"How dare you compare him to Martin Luther King," the Rev. Jamal Bryant, pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Seacrest, Georgia, said in a sermon posted to his Instagram account.

"The only thing they got in common is both of 'em was killed by a white man. After that, they got nothin' else in common."

The Rev. Freddy Haynes III, pastor of Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas, echoed Bryant in cautioning the Kirk-King comparison.

"Let me hasten to say, I'm anti-political violence. Kirk should still be alive."

But, he added in a sermon posted to Instagram: "I don't agree with anything Kirk said. What Kirk said was dangerous. What he said was racist. Rooted in white supremacy. Nasty and hate-filled. But he should still be alive."

Some pastors emphasize Kirk's faith and traditional values

Kirk's conservatism does resonate with some Black pastors because they are themselves conservatives who subscribe to the evangelical political ideology that has been on the rise in the Trump era.

Patrick L. Wooden Sr., a pastor in Raleigh, North Carolina, celebrated Kirk for his promotion of conservative Christian values. He believes that liberal policies promoting diversity, equity and inclusion have left behind working class Black Americans in favor of other groups. He also agreed with Kirk's statements against transgender individuals and others in the LGBTQ+ community.

"I pray that our country has not degenerated to the point that if you cannot overcome someone's point of view, someone's stated position ... I hope the response isn't that you shoot them with a gun," said Wooden, an ordained bishop in the predominantly African American Pentecostal denomination.

Ryan Routh is found guilty of trying to assassinate Trump at Florida golf course

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (AP) — After a two-week trial, a jury took just two hours Tuesday to convict Ryan Routh of trying to assassinate Donald Trump on a Florida golf course last year, a plot that was undone when a Secret Service agent spotted Routh and fired a shot that sent him running.

Chaos ensued in the courtroom shortly after Routh was found guilty on all counts by a federal jury of seven women and five men. Routh tried to stab himself in the neck with a pen and officers quickly dragged him out.

As he was removed, Routh's daughter, Sara Routh, screamed: "Dad, I love you, don't do anything. I'll get you out. He didn't hurt anybody." She was escorted from the courtroom and later waited outside with her brother, Adam Routh.

The pen Routh used was flexible, a design to prevent people in custody from using it as a weapon, according to a person familiar with the matter who could not publicly disclose details and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. Routh did not puncture his skin or otherwise hurt himself, the person said.

After order was restored, Routh was brought before U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon. He was shackled and no longer in the jacket and tie he wore while representing himself at the trial.

Cannon announced Routh will be sentenced on Dec. 18 at 9:30 a.m. He faces life in prison. Routh's standby defense attorneys did not comment after the verdict.

Following the verdict, Trump told reporters in New York that the case was "really well-handled."

"It's very important. You can't let things like that happen. Nothing to do with me, but a president -- or even a person, you can't allow that to happen," Trump said. "And so justice was served. But I very much appreciate the judge and jury and everybody on that."

Assassination attempt was planned

Prosecutors said Routh, 59, spent weeks plotting to kill Trump before aiming a rifle through shrubbery as the then-Republican presidential candidate played golf on Sept. 15, 2024, at his West Palm Beach country club.

Just nine weeks earlier, Trump had survived an attempt on his life while campaigning in Butler, Pennsylvania. That gunman had fired eight shots, with one bullet grazing Trump's ear. The gunman was then fatally shot by a Secret Service counter sniper.

At Routh's trial, Robert Fercano, who was a Secret Service agent helping protect Trump on the golf course, testified that he spotted Routh before Trump came into view. Routh aimed his rifle at the agent, who opened fire, causing Routh to drop his weapon and run away without firing a shot.

Law enforcement obtained help from a witness who testified that he saw a person fleeing the area after hearing gunshots. The witness was then flown in a police helicopter to a nearby interstate where Routh was arrested, and the witness confirmed it was the person he had seen.

Routh was charged with attempting to assassinate a major presidential candidate, possessing a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence, assaulting a federal officer, possessing a firearm and ammunition as

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 43 of 67

a convicted felon, and possessing a firearm with an obliterated serial number.

Routh told jurors in his closing argument that he didn't intend to kill anyone that day.

"It's hard for me to believe that a crime occurred if the trigger was never pulled," Routh said. He pointed out that he could see Trump as he was on the path toward the 6th-hole green and noted that he also could have shot a Secret Service agent if he had intended to harm anyone.

Routh elected to represent himself

Cannon signed off on Routh's request to represent himself following two hearings in July. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that criminal defendants have a right to represent themselves in court proceedings, as long as they can show a judge they are competent to waive their right to be defended by an attorney.

Routh's former defense attorneys served as standby counsel since he took over his own defense and were present during trial.

Routh exercised his constitutional right not to testify in his own defense. He rested his case Monday morning after questioning just three witnesses — a firearms expert and two character witnesses — for a total of about three hours. In contrast, prosecutors spent seven days questioning 38 witnesses.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a post on X that the guilty verdict "illustrates the Department of Justice's commitment to punishing those who engage in political violence."

"This attempted assassination was not only an attack on our President, but an affront to our very nation," Bondi said.

What's known of Routh's background

Routh was a North Carolina construction worker who in recent years had moved to Hawaii. A self-styled mercenary leader, Routh spoke out to anyone who would listen about his dangerous and sometimes violent plans to insert himself into conflicts around the world.

In the early days of Russia's war in Ukraine, Routh tried to recruit soldiers from Afghanistan, Moldova and Taiwan to fight the Russians. In his native Greensboro, North Carolina, he was arrested in 2002 for eluding a traffic stop and barricading himself from officers with a fully automatic machine gun and a "weapon of mass destruction," which turned out to be an explosive with a 10-inch (25-centimeter) fuse, police said.

In 2010, police searched a warehouse Routh owned and found more than 100 stolen items, from power tools and building supplies to kayaks and spa tubs. In both felony cases, judges gave Routh either probation or a suspended sentence.

Routh still faces state charges of terrorism and attempted murder for the plot against Trump.

Trump says he now believes Ukraine can win back all territory lost to Russia with NATO's help

By MATTHEW LEE, AAMER MADHANI and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he believed Ukraine could win back all territory lost to Russia, a dramatic shift from the U.S. leader's repeated calls for Kyiv to make concessions to end the war.

Trump posted on social media soon after meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly gathering of world leaders.

"I think Ukraine, with the support of the European Union, is in a position to fight and WIN all of Ukraine back in its original form," Trump wrote. "With time, patience, and the financial support of Europe and, in particular, NATO, the original Borders from where this War started, is very much an option."

The strengthened support from Trump, if it sticks, is a huge win for Zelenskyy, who has urged the American president to keep up the pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin to end his war. It was a departure from Trump's previous suggestions that Ukraine would never be able to reclaim all the territory that Russia has occupied since seizing the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

That had disheartened Zelenskyy, Europeans and Ukrainians and called into question the U.S. commitment to U.N. principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. But now, Trump's view of the battlefield coincides more with Ukraine's, Zelenskyy said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 44 of 67

"Trump is a game changer by himself," Zelenskyy told reporters after their meeting.

Trump needles Russia about war in Ukraine

Trump, going back to his 2024 campaign, insisted he would quickly end the war, but his peace efforts appear to have stalled following a diplomatic blitz last month, when he held a summit with Putin and a White House meeting with Zelenskyy and European allies.

Trump has acknowledged, including in his U.N. speech to world leaders, that he thought a resolution to this conflict would be "the easiest" because he has had a good relationship with Putin. Trump said he is open to imposing more sanctions on Russia and urged Europe to join in.

"Russia has been fighting aimlessly for three and a half years a War that should have taken a Real Military Power less than a week to win," Trump wrote on social media. "This is not distinguishing Russia. In fact, it is very much making them look like 'a paper tiger.'"

In his speech to the General Assembly, Trump said the war in Ukraine was making Russia "look bad" because it was "supposed to be a quick little skirmish."

"It shows you what leadership is, what bad leadership can do to a country," he said. "The only question now is how many lives will be needlessly lost on both sides."

Before meeting with Zelenskyy, Trump said the "biggest progress" toward ending the conflict "is that the Russian economy is terrible right now." Zelenskyy said he agreed with Trump's call for European nations to further halt imports of Russian oil and natural gas.

"We have great respect for the fight that Ukraine is putting up," Trump told Zelenskyy, who replied that he had "good news" from the battlefield.

How Trump's stance has shifted on Ukraine

Before his Alaska summit with Putin last month, Trump repeated that any resolution to the war would require "some land swapping."

In talks with Zelenskyy and Europeans just afterward, Trump said Putin reiterated that he wants the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that make up the Donbas, according to European officials. Days later, Zelenskyy and prominent European leaders came to the White House.

Following those meetings, Trump announced he was arranging for direct talks between Putin and Zelenskyy. But Putin hasn't shown any interest in meeting with Zelenskyy and Moscow has only intensified its bombardment of Ukraine.

European leaders as well as American lawmakers, including some Republican allies of Trump, have urged the president to dial up stronger sanctions on Russia.

"In the event that Russia is not ready to make a deal to end the war, then the United States is fully prepared to impose a very strong round of powerful tariffs, which would stop the bloodshed, I believe, very quickly," Trump told the General Assembly.

However, he repeated his calls for Europe to "step it up" and stop buying Russian oil, the engine feeding Putin's war machine.

Push for sanctions and cutting off Russian oil

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said before meeting with Trump that Europe would be imposing more sanctions and tariffs on Russia and that the bloc would be further reducing its imports of Russian energy.

Zelenskyy, speaking at a special U.N. Security Council session on Ukraine, also appealed for stronger U.S. pressure on Russia.

"Moscow fears America and always pays attention to it," said Zelenskyy, who has had strained ties with Trump in previous sitdowns and has previously faced White House accusations that he was partly to blame for Russia's invasion in 2022.

Russia denigrated the Security Council meeting as just the New York stop in the world tour of a "former actor," a reference to Zelenskyy.

"There is no added value for the establishment of peace in Ukraine generated from today's meeting," said Dmitry Polyanskiy, Russia's deputy ambassador to the U.N. "This will merely become yet another shameful episode in the market of hypocrisy."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 45 of 67

European leaders have supported Zelenskyy's diplomatic efforts, with some alarmed by the possibility that the war could spread beyond Ukraine as they are facing what they have called Russian provocations.

"I welcome the fact that the president of the United States believes in Ukraine's ability not only to hold the course" but to prevail, French President Emmanuel Macron said.

NATO allies will hold formal consultations at Estonia's request on Tuesday, after the Baltic country said three Russian fighter jets entered its airspace last week without authorization.

Trump said he would back NATO countries that choose to shoot down intruding Russian planes, but said direct U.S. involvement would depend on the circumstances.

New strikes in Ukraine as toll of war grows

The full-scale war, which began on Feb. 24, 2022, is taking a heavy toll on Ukrainian civilians. Russia said it shot down three dozen Ukrainian drones heading toward Moscow, while Ukraine said Russian missiles, drones and bombs killed at least two civilians.

The U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also said this month that Ukrainian civilian casualties increased by 40% in the first eight months of this year compared with 2024, as Russia escalated its long-range missile and localized drone strikes.

A U.N. Human Rights Office report released Tuesday described the dire situation of thousands of civilians detained by Russia in areas of Ukraine it has captured.

"Russian authorities have subjected Ukrainian civilian detainees in occupied territory to torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, in a widespread and systematic manner," the report said.

Camp Mystic plans to reopen in Texas next summer, a year after floods killed 27

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

The owners of Camp Mystic say they plan to partially reopen next summer the all-girls camp where 27 campers and counselors were killed during catastrophic floods that swept through the Texas Hill Country in July.

The area of the camp along the Guadalupe River that was destroyed by the floodwaters will not reopen next year, the owners said in a letter to Camp Mystic families, some of whom have criticized the nearly century-old camp over its safety measures and preparedness in wake of the tragedy. But another part of the camp that wasn't damaged will resume welcoming campers.

The letter was sent to families Monday, weeks after many of them stood behind Republican Gov. Greg Abbott as he signed tougher camp safety laws that prohibit cabins in dangerous parts of flood zones and require camp operators to develop detailed emergency plans, to train workers and to install and maintain emergency warning systems.

"As we work to finalize plans, we will do so in a way that is mindful of those we have lost," the letter said.

The campers and counselors were killed when the fast-rising floodwaters roared through a low-lying area of the summer camp before dawn on the Fourth of July. All told, the destructive flooding killed at least 136 people, raising questions about how things went so terribly wrong.

County leaders were asleep or out of town. The head of Camp Mystic had been tracking the weather beforehand, but it's now unclear whether he saw an urgent warning from the National Weather Service that had triggered an emergency alert to phones in the area, a spokesperson for camp's operators said in the immediate aftermath.

The camp, established in 1926, did not evacuate and was hit hard when the river rose from 14 feet (4.2 meters) to 29.5 feet (9 meters) within 60 minutes.

One of new state laws allocates \$240 million from the state's rainy day fund for disaster relief, along with money for warning sirens and improved weather forecasting.

Michael McCown, whose 8-year-old daughter Linnie died in the floods, was among those who urged lawmakers this summer to act.

"It will hurt my family forever that, for reasons I still do not know, these protections were not in place

nor thought out thoroughly for my daughter and the rest of the girls here," he said in August.

Cici Steward, whose 8-year-old daughter Cile remains missing, said "the truth is, Camp Mystic failed our daughters."

"For my family, these months have felt like an eternity. For the camp, it seems like nothing more than a brief pause before business as usual," she said in a statement Tuesday to The New York Times. "Camp Mystic is pressing ahead with reopening, even if it means inviting girls to swim in the same river that may potentially still hold my daughter's body."

The camp also said that it will build a memorial to those killed in the flooding.

"In the memorial's design, we will strive to capture the beauty, kindness and grace they all shared, while focusing on the joy they carried and will always inspire in us all," the letter said.

The letter said leaders are "working with engineers and other experts to determine how we will implement the changes required" under the newly passed bills.

The victims of the flood included Richard "Dick" Eastland, the owner of Camp Mystic, who a family spokesperson has said was killed while trying to rescue some of the campers.

"We are sorry that we have not been perfect at communicating, and we know that," read the letter, signed by members of the Eastland family. "The distance that has grown between some of us saddens us all, and we are here to communicate with you as much as you desire while respecting each of your individual needs."

US Justice Department official questions retired FBI agent's role in \$1.4B Sandy Hook lawsuit

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

A senior U.S. Justice Department official sent a letter to a lawyer for relatives of victims killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, asking pointed questions about a retired FBI agent's involvement in a defamation lawsuit that led to a \$1.4 billion judgment against conspiracy theorist Alex Jones.

Ed Martin Jr., who leads the Justice Department's "weaponization working group," asked in the letter whether retired agent William Aldenberg received any financial benefits from helping to organize the lawsuit, in which he was a plaintiff along with victims' family members.

Aldenberg, like the parents and other relatives of the 20 children and six educators killed in the 2012 school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, has been the subject of false conspiracy theories spread by Jones on his "Infowars" broadcasts.

Aldenberg was among the law enforcement officers who responded to the school and found the dead children. That then led to years of abuse from people who believed the shooting was a hoax, he has said. His share of the judgment totaled around \$120 million.

Martin sends lawyer letter asking about retired agent

In a Sept. 15 letter to Christopher Mattei, a lawyer who represents Sandy Hook families, Martin suggested he was scrutinizing Aldenberg's role in the lawsuit.

"As you may know, there are criminal laws protecting the citizens from actions by government employees who may be acting for personal benefit," Martin wrote.

Mattei responded to the letter in a text message to The Associated Press.

"Thanks to the courage of the Sandy Hook families, Infowars will soon be finished," he said, referring to the families' efforts in court to liquidate Jones' assets to help pay the judgment. "In his last gasps, Jones is once again harassing them, only now with the corrupt complicity of at least one DOJ official. It's as disgusting as it is pathetic, and we will not stand for it."

The Justice Department said it had no immediate comment Tuesday.

Martin, who has been examining President Donald Trump's claims of anti-conservative bias inside the Justice Department, has sent letters to a host of targets in other, unrelated matters, seeking information or making appeals, but it's unclear whether such requests have amounted to anything.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 47 of 67

Jones posted a copy of the letter on his X account Tuesday, saying "Breaking! The DOJ's Task Force On Government Weaponization Against The American People Has Launched An Investigation Into The Democrat Party / FBI Directing Illegal Law-fare Against Alex Jones And Infowars."

Retired agent testified at the trial

Aldenberg joined the relatives of eight Sandy Hook victims in suing Jones, alleging defamation and infliction of emotional distress.

Aldenberg was one of the first witnesses to testify at the trial in 2022. He broke down on the witness stand as he described entering the two classrooms where children and educators were shot.

He also testified about how he and others in the community and law enforcement were targeted with threats and conspiracy theories, including one that claimed he was an actor who also pretended to be the father of a victim.

Messages were left at a phone listing and email addresses listed for Aldenberg in public records.

Relatives of the shooting victims testified that they were subjected to violent threats, in-person harassment and abusive comments on social media because of Jones.

Martin has been serving as head of the Justice Department's "weaponization working group" since his nomination for top federal prosecutor in Washington was pulled amid bipartisan concerns about his modest legal experience and his advocacy for Jan. 6 rioters.

Attorney General Pam Bondi created the group to scrutinize matters in which conservatives have claimed they were unfairly targeted or treated.

Martin was also recently named a special prosecutor to help conduct the separate mortgage fraud investigations into Democratic New York Attorney General Letitia James and U.S. Sen. Adam Schiff.

In his letter to Mattei, he asked for several pieces of information and requested that the lawyer respond by Sept. 29.

In the letter, Martin asks Mattei to keep the correspondence confidential because "I do not wish to litigate this in the media." On Sept. 14, Jones posted a photo on his X account of him and Martin together, saying the two met in Washington, D.C.

Jones recently asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear his appeal of the \$1.4 billion judgment. He also is appealing a \$49 million judgment in similar lawsuit in Texas filed by two other parents of children killed in Newtown. He has cited free speech rights, but he has acknowledged that the shooting was "100% real."

Jones claims Democrats have been targeting him for his speech.

He filed for bankruptcy in late 2022. The Sandy Hook plaintiffs are now trying to liquidate Infowars' assets in state court proceedings in Texas.

OpenAI shows off Stargate AI data center in Texas and plans 5 more elsewhere with Oracle, Softbank

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

ABILENE, Texas (AP) — The afternoon sun was so hot that OpenAI CEO Sam Altman traded his usual crewneck sweater for a T-shirt on the last legs of a Tuesday visit to the massive Stargate artificial intelligence data center complex that will power the future of ChatGPT.

OpenAI announced Tuesday that its flagship AI data center in Texas will be joined by five others around the U.S. as the ChatGPT maker aims to make good on the \$500 billion infrastructure investment promoted by President Donald Trump earlier this year.

Stargate, a joint venture between OpenAI, Oracle and Softbank, said it is building two more data center complexes in Texas, one in New Mexico, one in Ohio and another in a Midwest location it hasn't yet disclosed.

But it's the project in Abilene, Texas, that promised to be the biggest of them all, transforming what the city's mayor called an old railroad town.

Oracle executives visiting the eight-building complex said it is already on track to be the world's largest AI supercluster once fully built, a reference to its network of hundreds of thousands of AI computer chips that will be running in its H-shaped buildings.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 48 of 67

Altman said, "When you hit that button on ChatGPT, you really don't — I don't, at least" — think about what happens inside the data halls used to build and operate the chatbot.

He and Oracle's new co-CEO Clay Magouyrk also sought to emphasize the steps they've taken to reduce the energy-hungry complex's environmental effects on a drought-prone region of West Texas, where temperatures hit 97 degrees Fahrenheit (36 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday.

"We're burning gas to run this data center," said Altman, but added that "in the long trajectory of Stargate" the hope is to rely on many other power sources.

The complex will require about 900 megawatts of electricity to power the eight buildings.

One is already operating, and a second that Altman and Magouyrk visited Tuesday is nearly complete. Each server rack in those buildings holds 72 of Nvidia's GB200 chips, which are specially designed for the most intensive AI workloads. Each building is expected to have about 60,000 of them.

More than 6,000 workers now commute to the massive construction project each day, in what Mayor Weldon Hurt described as a significant boost to the local economy. The campus and nearby expansion will provide nearly 1,700 jobs onsite when fully operational, Oracle said, with "thousands more indirect jobs" predicted to be created.

Hand-made signs lining the roads to the facility advertise "move-in-ready" homes for workers.

"AI WORKERS? HUGE DISCOUNTS" says one promising homes with one to six bedrooms.

But Hurt also acknowledged that residents have mixed feelings about the project due to its water and energy needs.

The city's chronically stressed reservoirs were at roughly half-capacity this week. Residents must follow a two-day-a-week outdoor watering schedule, trading off based on whether their address numbers are odd or even.

One million gallons of water from the city's municipal water systems provides an "initial fill" for a closed-loop system that cools the data center's computers and keeps the water from evaporating. After that initial fill, Oracle expects each of the eight buildings to need another 12,000 gallons per year, which it describes as a "remarkably low figure for a facility of this scale."

"These data centers are designed to not use water," Magouyrk said. "All of the data centers that we're building (in) this part of Stargate are designed to not use water. The reason we do that is because it turns out that's harmful for the environment and this is a better solution."

The closed-loop system shows that the developer is "taking its impact on local public water supplies seriously," but the overall environmental effect is more nuanced because such systems require more electricity, which also means higher indirect water usage through power generation, said Shaolei Ren, a professor at the University of California, Riverside, who has studied AI's environmental toll.

Indeed, the data center complex includes a new gas-fired power plant, using natural gas turbines similar to those that power warships. The companies say the plant is meant to provide backup power for the data halls and is a better option than traditional diesel generators. Most of the power comes from the local grid, sourced from a mix of natural gas with the sprawling wind and solar farms that dot the windy and sunny region.

Ren said that "even with emission-reduction measures, the health impacts of essentially turning the data center site into a power plant deserve further study for nearby communities."

Arlene Mendler, a Stargate neighbor, said she wished she had more say in the project that eliminated a vast tract of mesquite shrubland, home to coyotes and roadrunners.

"It has completely changed the way we were living," said Mendler, who lives across the street. "We moved up here 33 years ago for the peace, quiet, tranquility. After we got home from work, we could ride horses down the road. It was that type of a place."

Now, she doesn't know what to do about the constant cacophony of construction sounds or the bright lights that have altered her nighttime views. The project was essentially a done deal once she found out about it.

"They took 1,200 acres and just scraped it to bare dirt," said her husband, Fred Mendler.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 49 of 67

The first time most residents heard of Stargate — at least by that name — was when Trump announced the project shortly after returning to the White House in January. Originally planned as a facility to mine cryptocurrency, developers had pivoted and expanded their designs to tailor the project to the AI boom sparked by ChatGPT.

The partnership said at that time it was investing \$100 billion — and eventually up to \$500 billion — to build large-scale data centers and the energy generation needed to further AI development. More recently, OpenAI signed a \$300 billion deal to buy computing capacity from Oracle. It's a huge bet for the San Francisco-based AI startup, which was founded as a nonprofit.

OpenAI and Oracle invited media and politicians, including U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, to tour the site for the first time Tuesday.

Cruz called Texas "ground zero for AI" because if "you're building a data center, what do you want? No. 1, you want abundant, low-cost energy."

Of the other five Stargate data center projects announced Tuesday, Oracle is working with OpenAI to build one just northeast of Abilene, in Shackelford County, Texas, and another in New Mexico's Doña Ana County. It also said it is working to build one in the Midwest.

Softbank said it has broken ground on two more in Lordstown, Ohio, and in Milam County, Texas.

The projects offer OpenAI a way to break out from its longtime partnership with Microsoft, which until recently was the startup's exclusive computing partner. Altman told The Associated Press his company has been "severely limited for the value we can offer to people."

"ChatGPT is slow. It's not as smart as we'd like to be. Many users can't use it as much as they would like," Altman said. "We have many other ideas and products we want to build."

Trump tells UN in speech that it is 'not even coming close to living up' to its potential

By AAMER MADHANI and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — President Donald Trump castigated the United Nations as a feckless institution in a speech to the world body on Tuesday, praising the turn America has taken under his leadership while warning Europe will be ruined if it doesn't turn away from a "double-tailed monster" of ill-conceived migration and green energy policies.

His roughly hourlong speech before the U.N. General Assembly was both grievance-filled and self-congratulatory as he used the platform to applaud his second-term achievements and lament that some of his fellow world leaders' countries were "going to hell."

The address was the latest reminder for U.S. allies and foes that the United States — after a four-year interim under the more internationalist President Joe Biden — has returned to an unapologetically "America First" posture with an antagonistic view toward the United Nations. Trump also sharply criticized the global body for inaction, saying it was filled with "empty words" that "don't solve wars."

"What is the purpose of the United Nations?" Trump said. "The U.N. has such tremendous potential. I've always said it. It has such tremendous, tremendous potential. But it's not even coming close to living up to that potential."

Afterward, Trump attempted to assuage fears from some diplomats by assuring the top U.N. leader that the U.S. remained "100%" supportive of the global body despite his earlier criticism.

"I may disagree with it sometimes, but I am so behind it because the potential for peace at this institution is great," Trump told Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

It was another about-face after Trump offered a weave of jarring juxtapositions in his address to the assembly.

He trumpeted himself as a peacemaker and enumerated successes of his administration's efforts in several hotspots around the globe. At the same time, Trump heralded his decisions to order the U.S. military to carry out strikes on Iran and more recently against alleged drug smugglers from Venezuela and argued that "globalists" are on the verge of destroying successful nations.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 50 of 67

Warnings about 'green scam' and migration

Trump touted his administration's policies allowing for expanded drilling for oil and natural gas in the United States, and aggressively cracking down on illegal immigration, implicitly suggesting more countries should follow suit.

He sharply warned that European nations that have more welcoming migration policies and commit to expensive energy projects aimed at reducing their carbon footprint were causing irreparable harm to their economies and cultures.

"I'm telling you that if you don't get away from the 'green energy' scam, your country is going to fail," Trump said. "If you don't stop people that you've never seen before that you have nothing in common with, your country is going to fail."

Trump added, "I love the people of Europe, and I hate to see it being devastated by energy and immigration. This double-tailed monster destroys everything in its wake, and they cannot let that happen any longer."

Trump makes dramatic shift on Russia-Ukraine war

Trump also addressed Russia's war in Ukraine, once again threatening to hit Moscow with "a very strong round of powerful tariffs" if Russian President Vladimir Putin does not come to the table to end the war.

He waited until after the speech, and a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to announce a dramatic shift in his position on the war: He said he now believes Ukraine, with the help of NATO, can win back all territory lost to Russia.

Trump wrote in part in his post. "I think Ukraine, with the support of the European Union, is in a position to fight and WIN all of Ukraine back in its original form. With time, patience, and the financial support of Europe and, in particular, NATO, the original Borders from where this War started, is very much an option."

The strengthened support from Trump, if it sticks, is a huge win for Zelenskyy, who has urged the American president to keep up the pressure on Putin to end his brutal war on Ukraine.

Trump going back to his 2024 campaign insisted that he would quickly end the war. And he's frequently suggested that U.S. interests in the outcome were limited.

"Russia has been fighting aimlessly for three and a half years a War that should have taken a Real Military Power less than a week to win," Trump wrote. "This is not distinguishing Russia. In fact, it is very much making them look like 'a paper tiger.'"

Trump speaks out on Palestinian statehood push

The president also pushed back on longtime American allies who are using this year's General Assembly to spotlight the growing international campaign for recognition of a Palestinian state, a move that the U.S. and Israel vehemently oppose.

France became the latest nation to recognize Palestinian statehood on Monday at the start of a high-profile meeting at the U.N. aimed at galvanizing support for a two-state solution to the Mideast conflict.

Trump sharply criticized the effort.

"The rewards would be too great for Hamas terrorists," Trump said. "This would be a reward for these horrible atrocities, including Oct. 7."

The president also took part in a group meeting with officials from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan for talks focused on ending the Gaza war.

"This is my most important meeting," Trump said. "But this is the one that's very important to me because we're going to end something that should have probably never started."

Trump pokes at UN for escalator, teleprompter issues

Early in his speech, Trump broke from his prepared remarks to bemoan an inoperable escalator in U.N. headquarters that he happened upon as well as a defective teleprompter.

"These are the two things I got from the United Nations: a bad escalator and a bad teleprompter," Trump poked, eliciting laughs from delegates and leaders.

Stephane Dujarric, the U.N. spokesperson, said the escalator's abrupt stop happened after a videographer who accompanied the U.S. delegation may have inadvertently triggered a built-in safety mechanism.

A U.N. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue said the White House was operating the teleprompter for the president.

Trump has Oslo dreams

The president again made clear that he wants to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, repeating his spurious claim that he's "ended seven wars" since he returned to office.

"Everyone says that I should get the Nobel Prize — but for me, the real prize will be the sons and daughters who live to grow up because millions of people are no longer being killed in endless wars," Trump said in his address.

Trump regularly points to his administration's efforts to end several conflicts around the world, including fighting between Israel and Iran, India and Pakistan, and Egypt and Sudan.

"It's too bad that I had to do these things instead of the United Nations doing them," Trump said. "Sadly, in all cases, the United Nations did not even try to help in any of them."

Although Trump helped mediate relations among many of these nations, experts say his impact isn't as clear cut as he claims.

Trump's 'tough it out' advice to expectant moms is the latest example of men opining on women's pain

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

From the pulpit of the presidency, Donald Trump offered some advice to pregnant women: "Tough it out" before taking Tylenol.

Nine times in all, Trump said expectant mothers should suffer through their discomfort instead of reaching for acetaminophen — or paracetamol in countries outside the U.S. — to cure their fevers or headaches, despite the drug being one of the few painkillers that pregnant women are allowed to take.

"Fight like hell not to take it," Trump instructed at a Monday news conference meant to address autism. He added that if pregnant women absolutely have to take Tylenol, that'll be something that they "work out with themselves."

What many women and experts heard was the latest example of a man telling women how much physical pain they should endure — and an age-old effort to blame mothers for their babies' autism.

"His use of 'tough it out' really was infuriating because it dismissed women's pain and the real danger that exists with fever and miscarriage during pregnancy," said women's rights advocate and social media influencer Amanda Tietz, a 46-year-old mom of three in Wisconsin, in an email. "Not to mention the pain we can experience in pregnancy that can be debilitating."

Others saw a man opining — again, without evidence that maternal use of Tylenol causes autism or ADHD in children — on mothers, children with disabilities and their health at a time when studies show pain suffered by women is frequently dismissed. Women's health and their autonomy are especially fraught issues in the wake of the Supreme Court decision in 2022 to strip away constitutional protections for abortion, a deeply personal change for Americans nearly a half century after *Roe v. Wade*. The debate now roils state legislatures nationwide.

"Yesterday 5 powerful men stood together in the WH and shamed: Pregnant women, told to 'tough it out' through pain; Moms of autistic kids, blamed for their child's condition; Autistic people, called broken & in need of fixing," Trump's former surgeon general, Jerome Adams, posted on social media. "Can we all be kinder and less stigmatizing?"

Three women also spoke at Monday's press conference and thanked Trump: Dorothy Fink, the acting assistant secretary at HHS; and Jackie O'Brien and Amanda Rumer, two mothers who said they have autistic children.

Dr. Nicole B. Saphier of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center said pregnant women generally are advised to take acetaminophen only under medical supervision, when necessary and at the lowest effective dose. But equally important — and missing from Trump's message — was that untreated fever or severe pain can also pose serious risks to mothers and babies, she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 52 of 67

"For decades, women have endured a paternalistic tone in medicine. We've moved past dismissing symptoms as 'hysteria,'" Saphier, who also is a Fox News medical contributor, wrote in an email. "The President's recent comments on Tylenol in pregnancy are a prime example. Advising moderation was sound; delivering it in a patronizing, simplistic way was not."

Trump is not known for a delicate touch around policy where women are concerned. Ahead of the 2016 election, he erupted over tough questioning by Fox News' Megyn Kelly, later telling CNN: "You can see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever." He's got a special playbook for female opponents that includes put-downs about their appearance, their emotional stability and their intelligence.

There's a long history of men holding forth, sometimes incorrectly, about women's reproductive health. Former Missouri Republican Rep. Todd Akin sank his 2012 U.S. Senate campaign with remarks about what constituted "legitimate rape." Others have erred by suggesting publicly and falsely that rape victims can't get pregnant.

History offers a long list of men making medical policy for women based on the beliefs of their time — and, some say, suspicion about the power of women to create and shape their unborn babies. A nearly half-century-old theory, long discredited, held that "refrigerator mothers" — cold or distant figures — were responsible for their children's autism.

Trump's advice "took me straight back to when moms were blamed for autism," said Alison Singer, founder of the Autism Science Foundation. "He basically said, if you can't take the pain, if you can't deal with the fever, then it's your fault."

Trump's "tough it out" advice is familiar to Mary E. Fissell, a professor of medical history with Johns Hopkins University. "It's the classic blame-the-mother ...over and over again," she said. The "maternal imagination," for example, was a principle once thought to influence the way a baby forms.

"It's the idea that what a pregnant woman desires or feels or imagines will shape the form of her unborn child," said Fissell, who focuses on 17th- and 18th-century medical history.

Trump offered at least one moment of introspection during his news conference, acknowledging the awkward nature of his directive.

"You know, it's easy for me to say tough it out," the president allowed. "But sometimes in life or a lot of other things, you have to tough it out also."

MLB will use robot umpires in 2026

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Robot umpires are getting called up to the big leagues next season.

Major League Baseball's 11-man competition committee on Tuesday approved use of the Automated Ball/Strike System in the major leagues in 2026.

Human plate umpires will still call balls and strikes, but teams can challenge two calls per game and get additional appeals in extra innings. Challenges must be made by a pitcher, catcher or batter — signaled by tapping their helmet or cap — and a team retains its challenge if successful. Reviews will be shown as digital graphics on outfield videoboards.

New York Yankees outfielder Austin Slater, one of four players on the competition committee, said three voted in favor after getting support from 22 of the 30 teams. All six management reps voted in favor.

"I think with any sort of technology, there's not 100% certainty of the accurateness of the system," Slater said. "I think the same can be said of umpires. So I think it's just coming to grips with the impact that technology is going to have and whether or not we were willing to live with that error that was associated with the system, even if the error is very, very miniscule."

Big league umpires call roughly 94% of pitches correctly, according to UmpScorecards.

Adding the robot umps is likely to cut down on ejections. MLB said 61.5% of ejections among players, managers and coaches last year were related to balls and strikes, as were 60.3% this season through Sunday. The figures include ejections for derogatory comments, throwing equipment while protesting calls

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 53 of 67

and inappropriate conduct.

Yankees manager Aaron Boone, who leads the American League in ejections for the fifth straight year, called the adoption "inevitable."

"Throughout the year, I've been a little not totally on board with it or exactly how it's going to be implemented but it's going to be here and hopefully that's a good thing," he said. "A lot of the things that Major League Baseball has done I think have been really successful in the changes they've made and hopefully this is another one of them."

Guardians manager Stephen Vogt said players will have to adjust.

"You can like it, dislike it, it doesn't matter," Vogt said as Cleveland prepared to open a critical three-game series with Detroit. "It's coming. It's going to change the game. It's going to change the game forever."

ABS, which utilizes Hawk-Eye cameras, has been tested in the minor leagues since 2019. The independent Atlantic League trialed the system at its 2019 All-Star Game and MLB installed the technology for that year's Arizona Fall League of top prospects. The ABS was tried at eight of nine ballparks of the Low-A Southeast League in 2021, then moved up to Triple-A in 2022.

At Triple-A at the start of the 2023 season, half the games used the robots for ball/strike calls and half had a human making decisions subject to appeals by teams to the ABS.

MLB switched Triple-A to an all-challenge system on June 26, 2024, then used the challenge system this year at 13 spring training ballparks hosting 19 teams for a total of 288 exhibition games. Teams won 52.2% of their ball/strike challenges (617 of 1,182).

"I love it. I loved it in spring training," Phillies manager Rob Thomson said. "Not all of the players, but most of the players, if you ask them, they really liked it too. I think it keeps everybody accountable. It keeps everybody on their toes."

At Triple-A this season, the average challenges per game increased to 4.2 from 3.9 through Sunday and the success rate dropped to 49.5% from 50.6%. Defenses were successful in 53.7% of challenges this year and offenses in 45%.

In the first test at the big league All-Star Game, four of five challenges of plate umpire Dan Iassogna's calls were successful in July.

Teams in Triple-A do not get additional challenges in extra innings. The proposal approved Tuesday included a provision granting teams one additional challenge each inning if they don't have challenges remaining.

MLB has experimented with different shapes and interpretations of the strike zone with ABS, including versions that were three-dimensional. Currently, it calls strikes solely based on where the ball crosses the midpoint of the plate, 8.5 inches from the front and the back. The top of the strike zone is 53.5% of batter height and the bottom 27%.

"Throughout this process we have worked on deploying the system in a way that's acceptable to players," Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement. "The strong preference from players for the challenge format over using the technology to call every pitch was a key factor in determining the system we are announcing today."

This will be MLB's first major rule change since sweeping adjustments in 2024. Those included a pitch clock, larger bases, and restrictions on defensive shifts and pitcher disengagements such as pickoff attempts.

The challenge system introduces ABS without eliminating pitch framing, a subtle art where catchers use their body and glove to try making borderline pitches look like strikes. Framing has become a critical skill for big league catchers, and there was concern that full-blown ABS would make some strong defensive catchers obsolete.

"Unless you have a really good eye ... only getting two (challenges), I think a lot of the borderline ones are going to stay the same," Rangers catcher Kyle Higashioka said. "So it keeps some of the human element in in the game."

In addition to Slater, the other players on the competition committee are Arizona's Corbin Burnes and Zac Gallen and Seattle's Cal Raleigh, with the Chicago Cubs' Ian Happ at Detroit's Casey Mize as alternates. The union representatives make their decisions based on input from players on the 30 teams.

Bill Miller is the umpire representative. The Major League Baseball Umpires Association declined to comment Tuesday, saying its members "are focused on the 2025 season and postseason."

Immigration agent who shot man in Chicago-area traffic stop says injuries were 'nothing major'

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Police body camera footage released Tuesday shows a federal immigration agent who fatally shot a Mexican immigrant describing his own injuries during a vehicle pursuit as "nothing major," a contrast from the Trump administration's characterization of events in suburban Chicago earlier this month.

The Department of Homeland Security has said the officer was "seriously injured" by Silverio Villegas González, who allegedly tried to evade arrest after agents pulled over his car in Franklin Park. Nearly three hours of video and audio clips obtained by The Associated Press through a Freedom of Information Act request shed new light on the shooting that has escalated tensions amid a federal immigration crackdown in the country's third-largest city.

DHS said Villegas González drove his car at officers, dragging one of them "a significant distance," leaving the officer to "fear for his life." The officer then opened fire. Federal officials have said their officers weren't wearing body cameras at the time.

Franklin Park police footage shows local officers arriving at the roadside where a car had crashed into a cargo truck in Franklin Park, about 18 miles (29 kilometers) west of Chicago.

Two ICE agents attempt to explain to the police officer what had happened moments after an agent shot and killed Villegas González.

"He tried to run us over," an ICE agent says.

"I got dragged a little bit," said the injured agent, who can be seen walking and talking while wearing ripped jeans with blood on them.

The videos show the first agent saying his partner had suffered "a left knee injury and some lacerations to his hands" while speaking over a radio.

"Nothing major," the injured officer says while putting his arms up to shrug off concerns.

Immigrant rights advocates, Illinois' top elected officials and Mexico's president have called for a thorough investigation and more transparency after the shooting that put area schools on lockdown and prompted protests.

"We want answers to questions that we have raised," U.S. Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, a Chicago Democrat, said Tuesday. "The family is entitled to it. The community wants to know what is going on, and the public deserves answers as well."

Federal officials had previously said the agent suffered "multiple" and "serious injuries." DHS, which has not identified either agent, said the injured officer who fired his weapon has been a member of ICE since 2021 and served in the military. DHS said it was the officer's first time firing his weapon in a "use of force incident."

"His life was put at risk and he sustained serious injuries," Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who visited Chicago for an immigration operation last week, posted on X last week. Marcos Charles, the acting head of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations, told the AP on Friday that he had met with the officer in the hospital, saw his injuries and felt that the force used was appropriate. He declined further comment, saying there is an open investigation.

DHS officials did not return messages Tuesday.

The videos, from the perspective of multiple officers arriving on the scene, also show the two ICE agents performing chest compressions on an unresponsive man lying on the ground before other emergency personnel take over. Blood can be seen on the pavement.

ICE operations in Chicago, where federal officials have arrested more than 550 people, have drawn comparisons to the Trump administration's immigration crackdown in Los Angeles earlier this summer. In Los Angeles, at least two people died while attempting to evade ICE — a farmworker who fell from a

greenhouse roof during a raid and a man struck by an SUV while running from agents outside a Home Depot store.

Villegas González, who worked as a cook, had just dropped off one of his children at day care the morning of the shooting in the close-knit and largely Hispanic suburb of roughly 18,000 people. DHS said he had a history of reckless driving and did not have legal permission to live in the U.S.

The day care's director described him as a good father while many Franklin Park residents came to vigils and remembered him as a kind family man.

The 38-year-old was from the state of Michoacan in western Mexico, according to the Consulate General of Mexico in Chicago, which said it would "closely monitor" the investigation.

Iran's supreme leader rejects direct nuclear talks with US as European negotiations remain unmoved

By STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN, JON GAMBRELL and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Iran's supreme leader on Tuesday rejected direct negotiations with the United States over his country's nuclear program, likely slamming the door shut on a last-ditch effort to halt the reimposition of United Nations sanctions on Tehran.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks, aired on Iranian state television, likely constrain any possible outreach to the U.S. by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who is in New York for the U.N. General Assembly. Separately, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held meetings there with diplomats from France, Germany and Britain over the reimposition of the sanctions, set to take effect Sunday.

Talks with the U.S. represent "a sheer dead end," Khamenei said.

"The U.S. has announced the results of the talks in advance," he added. "The result is the closure of nuclear activities and enrichment. This is not a negotiation. It is a diktat, an imposition."

The German Foreign Office, in comments posted on X after the meeting with Araghchi, said that France, Germany, Britain and the EU urged Iran to take steps within days, "if not hours," to address concerns over its nuclear program. It should resume direct talks with the U.S. and provide the International Atomic Energy Agency with access to all its nuclear sites, "in line with its obligations," the statement said.

The three European countries, known as the E3, triggered the so-called "snapback" mechanism to reinstate sanctions — barring a last-minute accord — over Iran's failure to comply with conditions of a 2015 nuclear deal aimed at preventing Tehran from developing nuclear weapons.

The meeting Tuesday did not appear to move closer to a resolution before Saturday's deadline. But a French diplomat said that the European leaders plan to make "full use" of the remaining time. The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the private meeting.

The German Foreign Office said "diplomatic engagement" would continue even if sanctions are reimposed Sunday.

Earlier, Germany's Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul had described the chance of reaching an agreement with Iran by the weekend "extremely slim," the German news agency dpa had reported, even before Khamenei's comments.

In his speech late Tuesday, French President Emmanuel Macron said the Middle East region can only be at peace if Iran's nuclear program "is once again fully under control."

"The next steps to come will be decisive," he said, adding that he's willing to meet with Iran's president this week to secure a deal.

Iran has stopped inspectors, refused US talks

Amid a flurry of diplomatic engagements, Araghchi on Monday also met with Rafael Grossi, the IAEA director-general, in New York.

Earlier this month, the U.N. nuclear watchdog and Iran signed an agreement mediated by Egypt to pave the way for resuming cooperation, including on ways of relaunching inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities. However, that agreement has yet to fully take hold.

In July, Pezeshkian had signed a law adopted by his country's parliament suspending all cooperation

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 56 of 67

with the U.N. nuclear watchdog. That followed Israel's 12-day war with Iran in June, during which Israel and the U.S. bombed Iranian nuclear sites.

France, Germany and the U.K. began the process of reimposing sanctions on Iran at the end of August.

The process — termed a "snapback" by the diplomats who negotiated it into Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers — was designed to be veto-proof at the U.N. It started a 30-day clock ticking for the resumption of sanctions unless the West and Iran reach a diplomatic agreement.

European nations have said they would be willing to extend the deadline if Iran resumes direct negotiations with the U.S. over its nuclear program, allows U.N. nuclear inspectors access to its nuclear sites, and accounts for the more than 400 kilograms (880 pounds) of highly enriched uranium the U.N. watchdog says it has. Iran is the only nation in the world that enriches uranium up to 60%, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels, that does not have a weapons program.

If no diplomatic deal is found this week, the sanctions will automatically "snapback" on Sunday. That would again freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals with Tehran and penalize any development of Iran's ballistic missile program, among other measures, further squeezing the country's reeling economy.

Khamenei made a point in his roughly half-hour speech to say his comments focused only on America, not on Europe.

Iran maintains its atomic program is peaceful

Iran has long insisted its program is peaceful, though Western nations and the IAEA assess that Tehran had an active nuclear weapons program until 2003. Khamenei again pledged that Iran does not seek atomic bombs.

"We do not have a nuclear bomb and we will not have one, and we do not plan to use nuclear weapon," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew America from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, made a point to reference Tehran in his speech before the U.N. on Tuesday. He recounted writing a letter to Khamenei seeking talks. U.S. and Iranian negotiators met five times before the 12-day war in June.

"There is no more serious danger to our planet today than the most powerful and destructive weapons ever devised by man, of which the United States, as you know, has many," Trump said. "I've made containing these threats a top priority, starting with (the) nation of Iran."

However, Khamenei stressed that Israeli and American attacks would not destroy the nuclear knowledge gained by Iran over the decades over the crisis surrounding the program.

"Science will not be demolished by threats and bombing," he vowed.

FACT FOCUS: A look at false and misleading claims made by Trump about autism, Tylenol and pregnancy

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Monday that his administration is strongly recommending that women limit Tylenol use during pregnancy unless medically necessary. "I want to say it like it is, don't take Tylenol," he said, encouraging women to "just fight like hell not to take it." But his comments came under intense criticism from medical experts and researchers — because there's no proof tying the painkiller to autism. He also made a number of dubious claims about autism, vaccines and treatments.

Here's a look at the facts.

Are autism rates increasing?

TRUMP: "Since 2000, autism rates have surged by much more than 400%." He said the rate used to be 1 in 20,000, then 1 in 10,000 and now is 1 in 31, saying "there's something artificial" to explain it.

THE FACTS: It's true that autism rates have ballooned but Trump's numbers are off. The 1 in 10,000 figure dates back to the 1990s. In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention put the rate at 1 in 150. In 2018, it was 1 in 44. The latest count, based on 2022 data, is 1 in 31.

Scientists say the explanation is that decades ago diagnosis was rare, given only to kids with severe

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 57 of 67

problems. Diagnosis of “autism spectrum disorder” began jumping as scientists learned the developmental disorder encompasses a wide range of traits and symptoms. And as educational and other services grew, more parents began seeking diagnoses to help their kids.

Does maternal Tylenol use increase the baby’s chances of autism?

TRUMP: “Tylenol during pregnancy can be associated with a very increased risk of autism.”

THE FACTS: Studies don’t prove that. Even Trump’s Food and Drug Administration didn’t go nearly that far in a letter to doctors this week that instead they “should consider minimizing” acetaminophen’s use in pregnancy.

It’s clear that genetics are the biggest risk factor. Other risks include the age of a child’s father, preterm birth and whether the mother had health problems during pregnancy such as fevers, infections or diabetes.

Some studies have raised the possibility of a link between autism risk and using acetaminophen during pregnancy — but more haven’t found a connection.

These are observational studies that compare health records about prenatal acetaminophen and autism traits in children. The big problem: Those kinds of studies can’t tell if the painkiller really made any difference — or if instead it was the fever or other health problem that prompted the need for the pill.

The Coalition of Autism Scientists notes that use of acetaminophen — or paracetamol as it’s known outside the U.S. — during pregnancy hasn’t increased in recent decades like autism rates have.

The risks of not treating a fever

TRUMP: “There’s no downside in not taking it,” he said in urging women to not take Tylenol during pregnancy.

THE FACTS: There are huge downsides to avoiding Tylenol when a pregnant woman really needs it, according to the nation’s leading pregnancy doctors. Untreated fevers, for example, can increase the risk of birth defects, premature birth and miscarriages, according to the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

Both the society and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists say the painkiller is a safe and needed option during pregnancy. The over-the-counter drug’s label already tells pregnant women to consult their doctor about its use.

“The conditions people use acetaminophen to treat during pregnancy are far more dangerous than any theoretical risks,” ACOG said.

Autism has been gaining in visibility in Cuba

TRUMP: ““I hear Cuba doesn’t have it because it’s very expensive and they don’t have the money to have it, or they don’t want to spend the money to have it. They don’t have Tylenol. And I hear they have essentially no autism.”

THE FACTS: In Cuba, as in many regions around the world, autism has begun to gain visibility in recent years. Awareness campaigns have been launched on state television to promote the inclusion of autistic people. And according to Ministry of Education psychologist Lisbet Rizo Suárez, Cuba has nine educational institutions to serve autistic children.

As for paracetamol, as Tylenol is known outside of the U.S., it is widely used in Cuba and doctors prescribe it without restrictions.

Autism is found in Amish communities

TRUMP, saying certain groups that don’t take vaccines or pills have no autism, “the Amish, is an example. They have essentially no autism.”

THE FACTS: This is false. While there is limited scientific data around autism in the Amish community, studies have found that there are cases. A 2010 paper from the International Society for Autism Research found autism was less prevalent in Amish communities than the U.S. overall, but it called for further study to determine how “cultural norms and customs” played a role in the numbers.

Braxton Mitchell, an epidemiologist at the University of Maryland School of Medicine who has worked with the Amish community for 30 years, said his group has confirmed there is autism in the community. He said Tylenol is used by many Amish and some choose to vaccinate their children, others do not.

But he said it is a challenge to gather reliable data on the subject because autism and other related conditions require clinical assessments and expert diagnosis, which Amish families may not seek out.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 58 of 67

Trump overstates childhood vaccinations

TRUMP: "You have a little child, a little fragile child, and you get a vat of 80 different vaccines, I guess, 80 different blends."

THE FACTS: The current childhood vaccination schedule recommends routine protection against 18 diseases. They're not all given to "a little child" but at different ages.

How many shots that adds up to between birth and age 18 can vary. The number is closer to three dozen if you don't count once-a-year flu shots or an annual COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccines have been proven to protect children from once common deadly diseases. There is no evidence that the schedule is harmful.

As for autism, scientists and leading advocacy groups for people with autism agree there's no vaccine link to the disorder.

"Studies have repeatedly found no credible link between life-saving childhood vaccines and autism. This research, in many countries, involving thousands of individuals, has spanned multiple decades. Any effort to misrepresent sound, strong science poses a threat to the health of children," said Dr. Susan Kressly of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Why infants should get a hepatitis B vaccine

TRUMP: "Hepatitis B is sexually transmitted. There's no reason to give a baby that's almost just born Hepatitis B. So I would say wait till the baby is 12 years old and formed."

THE FACTS: Hepatitis B can cause serious liver damage and it's true that in adults, the virus is spread through sex or sharing needles during injection-drug use.

But for babies, it's a different story. If a pregnant woman carries the virus, she can pass it to her baby during delivery. While mothers-to-be are supposed to be tested, not all are. The virus also can live on surfaces for more than seven days at room temperature, meaning unvaccinated infants living with anyone with a chronic infection can be at risk.

Since 2005, U.S. health officials have recommended giving the first dose of a hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth for most infants. As a result, infant infections have dropped sharply.

The issue with up MMR vaccines

TRUMP: The MMR, I think, should be taken separately. This is based on what I feel, the, mumps, measles and and the three should be taken separately. And it seems to be that when you mix them, there could be a problem. So there's no downside in taking them separately. In fact, they think it's better."

THE FACTS: Trump is referring to the vaccine that combines protection against measles, mumps and rubella. And his suggestion of separating that one combination shot into three isn't possible. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there are no single-antigen versions – no measles-only, mumps-only, rubella-only shots – available.

Early concern about a possible link between vaccines and autism arose from falsified information about the MMR vaccine in a 1998 paper that was later retracted by the medical journal that published it.

Would it be safer for parents to break up vaccines for infants?

TRUMP: On spacing out vaccines for infants, "Break up your visits to the doctors. Break them up."

THE FACTS: That message infuriates pediatricians.

"Spacing out or delaying vaccines means children will not have immunity against these diseases at times when they are most at risk," said Kressly, the president of the AAP.

It's also hard for parents to make repeat visits for vaccinations outside of the normal well-baby schedule.

Trump touts an unproven treatment for autism

TRUMP, discussing a possible new treatment: "And the baby can get better, and in some cases may be substantially better."

THE FACTS: That's not proven, at least not yet. Trump was referring to a folic acid metabolite called leucovorin – and it's far from clear if it's really an effective treatment and if so, for which people.

Low levels of folate, a form of vitamin B, are linked to certain birth defects so women already are told to take folic acid before conception and during pregnancy.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 59 of 67

A small percentage of people with autism also appear to have low levels of folate in their brains, possibly because of antibodies that block it. The Autism Science Foundation cautions that their non-autistic relatives also often have those antibodies, suggesting that's not a cause of autism.

But the theory is that giving folate to that subset of autistic people might improve certain symptoms. Only a few very small clinical trials have been done with the drug. So the foundation and other autism experts say large, rigorous studies are needed before it can be recommended as a treatment.

US stocks slip as Wall Street's relentless rally takes a pause

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stock indexes slipped on Tuesday as Wall Street took a pause from its relentless rally.

The S&P 500 dipped 0.6%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 88 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 0.9%.

It's the first pullback for the indexes after the trio set all-time highs in each of the last three days. Since surging from a bottom in April, the broad U.S. stock market has been facing criticism that it's shot too high, too fast and become too expensive. Even the head of the Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, said on Tuesday that stock prices broadly look "fairly highly valued."

Nvidia weighed on the market after giving back some of its big gain from the day before, when it announced a partnership with OpenAI to build out data centers. Wall Street's most influential stock lost 2.8%.

Other Big Tech stocks that have been some of the biggest reasons for Wall Street's run to records gave back some of their big gains. Amazon fell 3%, and Microsoft slipped 1%.

But a 2% rise for Boeing helped limit the market's losses after Uzbekistan Airways agreed to buy 14 of its Dreamliner airplanes and said it may add eight more to the order.

Kenvue climbed 1.6% and recovered some of its drop from Monday, when it had sunk on worries that President Donald Trump would say its Tylenol product may increase the risk of autism in children. Trump did warn pregnant women about taking Tylenol, but he did not seem to cite any significant new research to back it up. Kenvue has disputed any link between the drug and autism.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 36.83 points to 6,656.92. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 88.76 to 46,292.78, and the Nasdaq composite sank 215.50 to 22,573.47.

Gold, meanwhile, continued its record-breaking rally and briefly topped \$3,800 per ounce. It's soared nearly 45% so far this year, even more than the U.S. stock market, in part on expectations that the Fed will cut interest rates to help the slowing U.S. job market.

Worries about potentially high inflation because of White House influence on the Fed, along with mountains of debt for the U.S. and other governments, have also sent gold's price higher.

Powell said again on Tuesday that the Fed is stuck in an unusual position because worries about the job market are rising at the same time that inflation has stubbornly remained above its 2% target. They were his first public remarks since the Fed cut its main interest rate last week for the first time this year.

Fed officials have penciled in more cuts to rates through the end of this year and into next, but they are remaining wary because lower rates can also give inflation more fuel.

An update on Friday will show how much prices are rising for U.S. households based on the Fed's preferred measure of inflation, and economists expect it to show a slight acceleration for last month.

A preliminary report suggested activity at U.S. businesses is still growing, but at a slower pace as tariffs raise prices for them. Companies may be finding it difficult to pass those higher costs fully on to customers because of "weaker demand and stiff competition," according to S&P Global.

The numbers suggest that inflation could moderate for U.S. households, but not by so much that it drops below the Fed's 2% target in the coming months, according to Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

In the bond market, Treasury yields ticked lower. The yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.11% from 4.15% late Monday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed amid modest moves across much of Europe and Asia. France's CAC 40 rose 0.5%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.7% for two of the bigger moves. Japan's stock market was closed for a national holiday.

Scientists discover a new dinosaur from Argentina with a crocodile bone in its mouth

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have discovered a new dinosaur from Argentina with powerful claws, feasting on an ancient crocodile bone.

The new find was possibly 23 feet (7 meters) long and hailed from a mysterious group of dinosaurs called megaraptorans. They prowled across what's now South America, Australia and parts of Asia, splitting off into different species over millions of years.

Megaraptorans were known for their stretched-out skulls and "huge and very powerful claws," said Lucio Ibiricu with the Patagonian Institute of Geology and Paleontology, who was part of the discovery team.

But it's not yet clear how these creatures hunted and where they fall on the evolutionary timeline — mainly because the fossils recovered so far were incomplete.

In a new study, researchers said they uncovered part of a skull as well as arm, leg and tail bones from the Lago Colhué Huapi rock formation in Patagonia. They noticed unique features in the bones that made them realize this could be a new species.

This latest member of the megaraptoran clan named *Joaquinraptor casali* "fills a major gap by providing one of the most complete skeletons yet," Federico Agnolin with the Argentine Museum of Natural Science Bernardino Rivadavia said in an email. Agnolin was not involved with the research, which was published Tuesday in the journal *Nature Communications*.

The creature likely lived between 66 and 70 million years ago — close to the time dinosaurs went extinct — and was at least 19 years old when it died, though scientists don't know what killed it.

The front leg bone pressed against its jaws — belonging to an ancient relative of crocodiles — could yield some clues to its diet and whether it was the top predator on the humid prehistoric flood plains.

Ibiricu named the new dinosaur in memory of his son Joaquin. While Joaquin was very young and hadn't yet developed a fascination with dinosaurs, Ibiricu still thinks he would have appreciated being named after one.

"All children love dinosaurs so he would probably be a fan too," he said.

Israel destroys evacuated health center in Gaza City, medics say

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A Palestinian medical charity said Tuesday that Israel destroyed its main center in Gaza City after ordering its evacuation.

The Palestinian Medical Relief Society said an Israeli strike reduced its six-story building in the central Samer area to rubble. It said the center was one of the main facilities in the city providing blood donation and testing services, trauma care, cancer medicine and chronic disease treatment.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has repeatedly bombed and raided hospitals in Gaza throughout the war.

In a separate development, Israel announced Tuesday complete closure of the border crossing between the occupied West Bank and Jordan until further notice after an attack last week that killed two Israelis.

The Allenby Bridge Crossing over the Jordan River, also known as King Hussein Bridge, is the only cargo and passenger crossing available to Palestinians in the West Bank that does not lead to Israel. It is also on a key route for delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Multiple hospitals in famine-stricken Gaza City have been forced to shut down as Israel forces advance. Israel accuses Hamas of using medical facilities for military purposes — which could cause them to lose

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 61 of 67

their protection under international law — but the military has often provided little or no evidence of a significant militant presence.

The head of the World Health Organization, which has partnered with the charity, condemned the strike. "Attacks on health facilities must end. The senseless violence must stop. Ceasefire!" Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X.

The medical charity said another of its centers was damaged and surrounded by Israeli troops, and that a third center was destroyed in a separate strike. Gaza's Health Ministry said Monday that the Al-Rantisi Children's Hospital and the Specialized Eye Hospital had been forced to shut down because of nearby Israeli military operations.

Several Western countries on Monday called on Israel to restore a medical corridor for Palestinians in Gaza to be treated in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, and for Israel to lift restrictions on medical supplies entering Gaza.

The statement was cosigned by 24 nations, including Canada, France and Germany, and comes as Israel has faced mounting criticism over the war in Gaza from even some of its closest allies.

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

Israel launched a major offensive earlier this month aimed at occupying Gaza City, the territory's largest, which has already suffered heavy damage from previous raids and bombardment. Israel says the operation is aimed at pressuring Hamas to surrender and return the remaining 48 hostages taken during its Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. Israel believes around 20 of the captives are alive.

The world's leading authority on hunger crises said last month that Israel's blockade and ongoing offensive had already pushed Gaza City into famine. More than 300,000 people have fled the city in recent weeks as Israel has ordered the population to move south, but an estimated 700,000 remain, according to U.N. agencies and aid groups.

Meanwhile a Palestinian man died from his injuries after being shot by Israeli settlers in the village of al-Mughayyir, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said Tuesday.

Palestinian residents of al-Mughayyir said Saeed Murad Naasan, 20, was shot after confronting settlers who were grazing their livestock on the outskirts of the village which is situated east of Ramallah.

The Israeli military said troops fired live rounds to disperse Palestinians hurling rocks at Israeli civilians during a "violent confrontation" that wounded one person. It said the incident is under review.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 in the Oct. 7 attack. Most of the captives have since been released in ceasefires or other deals.

The Gaza Health Ministry says at least 65,382 Palestinians have been killed in the war, without saying how many were civilians or combatants. It is part of the Hamas-run government. Its figures are seen by the U.N. and many independent experts as the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.

What Americans think about legal immigration, according to a new poll

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — As President Donald Trump's administration imposes new restrictions on the legal immigration system, U.S. adults are more likely than they were a year ago to think these immigrants benefit the country, according to a new poll.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that Americans are more likely than they were in March 2024 to say it's a "major benefit" that people who come to the U.S. legally contribute to economic growth and help American companies get the expertise of skilled workers. The survey also shows that Americans are less likely than they were in January to say the number of legal immigrants to the U.S. should be reduced. Slightly fewer than half of Americans say the number should remain the same, a similar percentage from earlier this year.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 62 of 67

At the same time, perceptions of illegal immigration haven't shifted meaningfully. Americans continue to see fewer benefits from people who come to the U.S. illegally, and they're more likely to see major risks from these immigrants, including the concern that they'll commit crimes while in the U.S.

Trump, a Republican, has focused much of his attention on arresting and deporting those in the country illegally, but new screenings, vetting and increased costs are also impacting people who want to come to the U.S. legally to work or study. On Friday, Trump signed a proclamation to overhaul the H-1B visa program, one of the most common pathways for highly skilled foreign workers, requiring now a \$100,000 fee for applications. The Trump administration is also subjecting green card applicants to "anti-Americanism" screening, and students applying for visas now need to adhere to social media vetting.

Even Republicans are less likely to say legal immigration should be reduced than they were earlier this year and more likely to say it should remain as is.

Philip Steers, of St. Petersburg, Florida, is a Republican and feels the U.S. makes it too difficult for people to migrate legally. His nephew married a woman from Cambodia, and they have been trying for months to secure a spouse visa.

"If you are pushing all those people who are illegal out, why not make it easier for people who want to come here legally?" said Steers, 76. "We need to speed up the process for those who want to come here to benefit our country."

Republicans less likely to want to reduce legal immigration

While slightly fewer than half of U.S. adults say the number of legal immigrants should stay as it is, about one-quarter say the number of legal immigrants to the U.S. should be reduced "a lot" or "a little." That marks a decrease from January, when about one-third said this.

The drop is largely driven by Republicans. About 3 in 10 Republicans now say that legal immigration should be reduced, down from 45% in January.

About 3 in 10 U.S. adults say the number of legal immigrants to the U.S. should be increased "a lot" or "a little," up slightly from January, when 24% of Americans wanted an increase in legal immigration.

"If you don't have immigration as a culture, the culture will stagnate. You have to have that balance," Steers said.

More see benefits from immigrants for economic growth and companies

Americans are more likely to see "major" benefits from people who come to the U.S. legally and less likely to see "major" risks, compared with an AP-NORC poll conducted early last year.

About 6 in 10 U.S. adults say a "major" benefit of immigrants in the country legally is that they contribute to economic growth, which went up from about 4 in 10 in March 2024. Similarly, 51% of U.S. adults say a "major" benefit of legal immigration is that American companies get the expertise of skilled workers in fields like science and technology, compared with 41% in March 2024.

Carlos Gonzalez, who was born in the U.S. to Panamanian parents, said immigrants "provide a lot to the economy of the United States."

"They bring different ideas that help the economy," said Gonzalez, 53, a Democrat from Waterbury, Connecticut, adding his mother served as a military nurse in Vietnam. "A lot of people don't realize that when they do come over here, they try to enrich the country and not take away from it."

Some of the perceived benefits are economic, but some are cultural, with about 46% saying a "major" benefit of legal immigrants is that they enrich American culture and values, up from 38% in the previous poll.

Shifting views don't extend to immigrants in the country illegally

Jeff Witoszczak, of El Paso, Texas, identifies as a moderate Republican and supports Trump's efforts to conduct large-scale deportations of people in the country illegally, saying he does not think the focus needs to be on those who have committed violent crimes. Witoszczak is married to a woman from Mexico who came to the U.S. legally when she was a child.

"Coming here illegally, that's a crime in and of itself," Witoszczak said. "They didn't follow due process coming in. They don't need due process going out."

Americans tend to see greater risks — and smaller benefits — from immigrants who are in the country illegally, and these views largely haven't shifted since last year.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 63 of 67

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults now say it's a major benefit that immigrants in the country illegally will take jobs Americans don't want, up from about one-third last year. And 42% say that immigrants in the country illegally contribute to economic growth, and 32% believe that they enrich American culture and values. Those findings have remained steady since last year.

About half of U.S. adults say it's a major risk that immigrants in the country illegally will burden welfare and safety net programs. Studies have shown that immigrants who work in the country illegally pay local, state and federal taxes and generally do not qualify for federal benefits.

Powell signals Federal Reserve to move slowly on interest rate cuts

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Tuesday signaled a cautious approach to future interest rate cuts, in sharp contrast with other Fed officials this week who have called for a more urgent approach.

In remarks in Providence, Rhode Island, Powell noted that there are risks to both of the Fed's goals of seeking maximum employment and stable prices. But with the unemployment rate rising, he noted, the Fed agreed to cut its key rate last week. Yet he did not signal any further cuts on the horizon.

If the Fed were to cut rates "too aggressively," Powell said, "we could leave the inflation job unfinished and need to reverse course later" and raise rates. But if the Fed keeps its rate too high for too long, "the labor market could soften unnecessarily," he added.

Powell's remarks echoed the caution he expressed during a news conference last week, after the Fed announced its first rate cut this year. At that time he said, "it's challenging to know what to do."

The careful approach he outlined is quite different from that of some other members of the Fed's rate-setting committee, particularly those who were appointed by President Donald Trump, who are pushing for faster cuts. On Monday, Stephen Miran said the Fed should quickly reduce its rate to as low as 2% to 2.5%, from its current level of about 4.1%. Miran was appointed by Trump this month and rushed through the Senate, taking his seat just hours before the Fed met last Tuesday. He is also a top adviser in the Trump administration and expects to return to the White House after his term expires in January, though Trump could appoint him to a longer term.

And earlier Tuesday, Fed governor Michelle Bowman also said the central bank should cut more quickly. Bowman, who was appointed by Trump in his first term, said inflation appears to be cooling while the job market is stumbling, a combination that would support lower rates.

When the Fed cuts its key rate, it often over time reduces other borrowing costs for things like mortgages, car loans, and business loans.

"It is time for the (Fed) to act decisively and proactively to address decreasing labor market dynamism and emerging signs of fragility," Bowman said in a speech in Asheville, North Carolina. "We are at serious risk of already being behind the curve in addressing deteriorating labor market conditions. Should these conditions continue, I am concerned that we will need to adjust policy at a faster pace and to a larger degree going forward."

Yet Powell's comments showed little sign of such urgency. Other Fed officials have also expressed caution about cutting rates too fast, reflecting deepening divisions on the rate-setting committee.

On Tuesday, Austan Goolsbee, president of the Federal Reserve's Chicago branch, said in an interview on CNBC that the Fed should move slowly given that inflation is above its 2% target.

"With inflation having been over the target for 4 1/2 years in a row, and rising, I think we need to be a little careful with getting overly up-front aggressive," he said.

Last week the Fed cut its key rate for the first time this year to about 4.1%, down from about 4.3%, and policymakers signaled they would likely reduce rates twice more. Fed officials said in a statement that their concerns about slower hiring had risen, though they noted that inflation is still above their 2% target.

In a question and answer session, Powell said that tariffs, so far, have had a fairly limited impact on

inflation, though he suggested that could change.

He said U.S. companies are paying most of the tariffs, which contradicts Trump administration claims that overseas companies are shouldering the payments. But he said that the pass-through of tariff costs to consumers "has been later and less than we expected."

He also said the Fed continues to tune out attacks against it and added that the Fed does not consider politics when making its decisions. Powell and the Fed have been under steady attack from Trump, though Powell did not name him.

"Whenever we make decisions, we're never, ever thinking about political things," Powell said. "Truth is, mostly people who are calling us political, it's just a cheap shot. ... We don't get into back and forth with external people."

Trump cancels White House meeting with Schumer and Jeffries despite risk of a government shutdown

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has abruptly canceled this week's planned meeting with congressional Democratic leaders, refusing to negotiate over their demands to shore up health care funds as part of a deal to prevent a potential looming federal government shutdown.

In a lengthy Tuesday social media post, Trump rejected the sit-down that the White House had agreed to a day before. It would have been the first time the Republican president met with the Democratic Party's leaders, Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, since his return to the White House.

"I have decided that no meeting with their Congressional Leaders could possibly be productive," Trump wrote in the post.

The president complained the Democrats "are threatening to shut down the Government of the United States" unless the Republicans agree to more funding for health care for various groups of people he has criticized. Trump did not close the door on a future sit-down with the Democratic leaders, but he warned of a "long and brutal slog" ahead unless Democrats dropped their demands to salvage health care funds.

The stalemate over a funding deal — or even talks between the White House and Congress to strike a compromise — has quickly intensified the risk of federal closures, starting as soon as next week, ahead of the Oct. 1 deadline for the start of the government's new fiscal year.

The Democratic leaders swiftly accused the Republican president of throwing a tantrum and running away from the situation.

"Trump Always Chickens Out," Jeffries posted on X.

In a post directed at Trump, Schumer said Democrats will sit down and discuss health care "when you're finished ranting."

Schumer said Trump "is running away from the negotiating table before he even gets there" and would "rather throw a tantrum than do his job."

Trump has been unafraid of shutting down the government and, during his first term, was president over the nation's longest federal closure, during the 2018-19 holiday season, when he was pushing Congress to provide funds for his long-promised U.S.-Mexico border wall.

The president insisted over the weekend that essential services, including those for veterans, would remain open.

Thursday's scheduled meeting would have potentially set up a showdown at the White House, reminiscent of the 2018 funding fight when Trump led an explosive public session with Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi.

Schumer and Jeffries had been demanding a meeting with Trump to work out a compromise over the health care funds, and earlier Tuesday had welcomed plans for this week's meeting.

But the Republican president has been reluctant to enter talks and instructed GOP leaders on Capitol Hill not to negotiate with the Democrats.

House Speaker Mike Johnson's office said that the Democrats are holding government funding "hostage" to their demands for vast amounts of health care funding.

Republicans, who have the majority in both the House and the Senate, have been trying to avoid a shutdown. Johnson had led the passage late last week of a temporary funding measure, which would have kept government offices running into November while talks get underway.

That's the typical way to buy time during funding fights, but the measure failed in the Senate. Democrats refused to support the stopgap bill because it did not include their priorities of health care funds. A Democratic proposal, with the health care money restored, was defeated by Senate Republicans.

The Democratic proposal would extend enhanced health insurance subsidies set to expire at the end of the year, plus reverse Medicaid cuts that were included in Republicans' big tax breaks and spending cuts bill enacted earlier this year.

Republicans have said the Democrats' demands to reverse the Medicaid changes are a nonstarter, but they have also said there is time to address the health insurance subsidy issue in the months ahead.

Congress was sent home amid the logjam, and the House called off next week's session. But Jeffries, in a letter to colleagues, summoned House Democrats back to work on Monday evening, when senators are also expected to resume their session — days before the funding deadline.

A drone flyover above Copenhagen Airport prompts concerns that Russia was behind it

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — Several unidentified drones shut down airspace over Copenhagen Airport on Monday night, prompting concerns that Russia could be behind the flyover above Scandinavia's largest airport.

There was no indication that the operators of two to three drones intended to cause harm to anyone, police said, and the drones disappeared after several hours. The incident caused a major disruption to air traffic in and out of the airport.

While it wasn't immediately clear who was behind the flyover, Denmark's prime minister and NATO's secretary-general said that Russian involvement couldn't be ruled out. And now Denmark — already on edge because of its proximity to Russia — will join a group of front-line countries Friday to discuss the European Union's plans for a "drone wall."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen called it "the most serious attack on Danish critical infrastructure to date."

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said that it was "too early to say" whether Russia was involved, while Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected suggestions that Moscow could be involved.

"Every time we hear unfounded accusations," he said in a call Tuesday with reporters, adding that "a party that takes a serious and responsible position mustn't make such unfounded accusations again and again."

'A capable actor'

Officials chose not to shoot down the drones because the risk was too great because of the airport being full of passengers, the planes on the runways and nearby fuel depots, Jes Jespersen, senior police inspector of the Copenhagen Police, said during a news conference.

Jespersen called the operators "a capable actor" and said they seemed intent on showing off their skills and possibly practicing their techniques. The drones' lights reportedly turned on and off and appeared to engage in different flight patterns.

"It all indicates that you are not out to attack anyone, but you are out to show off and maybe to practice," he said of the operators.

The two to three drones appeared to have flown many kilometers (miles) to reach the airport. Investigators are looking at how the drones reached the airport — whether it was by land or possibly by boat.

Flights at the airport resumed early Tuesday, though delays and cancellations continued throughout the day.

A drone in Norway

A drone incident the same evening at the airport in Oslo, Norway, forced all traffic to move to one runway, according to Norwegian broadcaster NRK. Traffic later returned to normal and it's unclear who was

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 66 of 67

responsible.

Jespersen said nothing immediately linked the Oslo and Copenhagen incidents, but officials would look into any potential ties.

In 2023, London's Gatwick Airport closed its runway for almost an hour after a drone was reported nearby. In December 2018, more than 140,000 travelers were stranded or delayed during the Christmas season after dozens of drone sightings shut down Gatwick for parts of three consecutive days.

Heightened security concerns

Security concerns in northern Europe are heightened following growing Russian aggression. On Tuesday, NATO warned Russia that it would use all means to defend against any further breaches of its airspace after the downing earlier this month of Russian drones over Poland and Estonia's report of an intrusion of Russian fighter jets last week.

"And here we see a clear pattern: Russia is testing the European borders, also probing our resolve and undermining our security throughout," Anitta Hipper, European Commission spokesperson, said Tuesday.

The Sept. 10 incident in Poland was the first direct encounter between NATO and Moscow since Russia launched a full-scale war on Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. It jolted leaders across Europe, raising questions about how prepared the alliance is against Russia.

'Nightmare bacteria' cases are increasing in the US

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Infection rates from drug-resistant "nightmare bacteria" rose almost 70% between 2019 and 2023, according to a new report from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention scientists.

Bacteria that are difficult to treat due to the so-called NDM gene primarily drove the increase, CDC researchers wrote in an article published Monday in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Only two antibiotics work against those infections, and the drugs are expensive and must be administered through an IV, researchers said.

Bacteria with the gene were once considered exotic, linked to a small number of patients who received medical care overseas. Though the numbers are still small, the rate of U.S. cases jumped more than five-fold in recent years, the researchers reported.

"The rise of NDMs in the U.S. is a grave danger and very worrisome," said David Weiss, an Emory University infectious diseases researcher, in an email.

It's likely many people are unrecognized carriers of the drug-resistant bacteria, which could lead to community spread, the CDC scientists said.

That may play out in doctors' offices across the country, as infections long considered routine and easy to treat — like urinary tract infections — could become chronic problems, said Dr. Maroya Walters, one of the report's authors.

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when germs such as bacteria and fungi gain the power to fight off the drugs designed to kill them. The misuse of antibiotics was a big reason for the rise — unfinished or unnecessary prescriptions that didn't kill the germs made them stronger.

In recent years, the CDC has drawn attention to "nightmare bacteria" resistant to a wide range of antibiotics. That includes carbapenems, a class of antibiotics considered a last resort for treatment of serious infections.

Researchers drew data from 29 states that do the necessary testing and reporting of carbapenem-resistant bacteria.

They counted 4,341 cases of carbapenem-resistant bacterial infections from those states in 2023, with 1,831 of them the NDM variety. The researchers did not say how many of the infected people died.

The rate of carbapenem-resistant infections rose from just under 2 per 100,000 people in 2019 to more than 3 per 100,000 in 2023 — an increase of 69%. But the rate of NDM cases rose from around 0.25 to about 1.35 — an increase of 460%, the authors said.

A researcher not involved in the study said the increase is probably related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 112 ~ 67 of 67

"We know that there was a huge surge in antibiotic use during the pandemic, so this likely is reflected in increasing drug resistance," said Dr. Jason Burnham, a Washington University researcher, in an email.

The CDC's count is only a partial picture.

Many states are not fully testing and reporting cases. Even in states that do, cases tend to be among hospital patients sick enough to warrant special testing. Many hospitals also aren't able to do the testing needed to detect certain forms of genetic resistance.

The CDC researchers did not have data from some of the most populous states, including California, Florida, New York and Texas, which means the absolute number of U.S. infections "is definitely underestimated," Burnham said.

This is not the first study to report a rise. A CDC report published in June noted an increase in NDM cases in New York City between 2019 and 2024.

Today in History: September 24 Protesting NFL players take a knee

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 24, the 267th day of 2025. There are 98 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 24, 2017, more than 200 NFL players kneeled or sat during the national anthem after President Donald Trump criticized the players' protests in a speech and a series of tweets.

Also on this date:

In 1789, President George Washington signed a Judiciary Act establishing America's federal court system and creating the post of attorney general.

In 1869, thousands of businessmen were ruined in a Wall Street panic known as "Black Friday" after financiers Jay Gould and James Fisk attempted to corner the gold market.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt established Devil's Tower in Wyoming as the first U.S. national monument.

In 1957, the Los Angeles-bound Brooklyn Dodgers played their last game at Ebbets Field, defeating the Pittsburgh Pirates 2-0.

In 1960, the USS Enterprise, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, was launched at Newport News, Virginia.

In 1963, the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty with Britain and the Soviet Union limiting nuclear testing.

In 1968, the TV news magazine "60 Minutes" premiered on CBS.

In 1969, the trial of the Chicago Eight, later the Chicago Seven, began. (Five were later convicted of crossing state lines to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic convention, but the convictions were ultimately overturned.)

In 1988, Jackie Joyner-Kersey won gold and set a world record in the women's heptathlon at the Summer Olympics in Seoul.

In 2013, a powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake rocked southwest Pakistan, killing at least 376 people.

In 2015, a stampede and crush of Muslim pilgrims occurred in the holy city of Mina, Saudi Arabia. While the official Saudi death toll stood at 769, The Associated Press estimated that more than 2,400 people were killed.

In 2022, Russian forces launched new strikes on Ukrainian cities as Kremlin-orchestrated votes took place in occupied regions of Ukraine to create a pretext for their annexation by Moscow.

Today's Birthdays: Football Hall of Famer Joe Greene is 79. Actor Gordon Clapp is 77. Actor Harriet Walter is 75. Filmmaker Brad Bird is 68. Actor Kevin Sorbo is 67. Actor-screenwriter Nia Vardalos is 63. Celebrity chef Robert Irvine is 60. Actor Jackie Sandler is 51. Actor Ian Bohen is 49. TV personality Ross Matthews is 46. Olympic gold medal gymnast Paul Hamm is 43. Actor Spencer Treat Clark is 38. Actor Grey Damon is 38. Actor Ben Platt is 32. Actor Joe Locke is 22.