

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 1 of 57

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Groton Tigers Sweep Tiospa Zina on the Road](#)
- [4- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [5- SD SearchLight: South Dakota program offers aspiring farmers a rare path into agriculture](#)
- [6- SD SearchLight: Opposition to Summit pipeline fueled by 'horseshoe politics' on left and right, panelists say](#)
- [7- SD SearchLight: Three inmates die in three days at Sioux Falls penitentiary complex](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Former FBI Director Comey indicted on 2 federal charges after Trump urged prosecution](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: TikTok sale to US investors OK'd by Trump in deal valued in billions](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Trump threatens mass firings of federal employees in a government shutdown](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: USDA cancels food security report that anti-hunger advocates say showed the effects of food policies](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [18- Daily Devotional](#)
- [19- Subscription Form](#)
- [20- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [21- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [22- News from the Associated Press](#)

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.)

Sunday, Sept. 28

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School 10:15 a.m.; Choir 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Groton Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.;



Worship, 11 a.m.

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

5th Grade Grils Basketball at GHS, 4 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 29

School Breakfast: Eggs.

School Lunch: Beef stroganoff, rice.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Region 1A Boys Golf at Madison, 10 a.m.

JH/JV Football at Clark (JH at 4 p.m., JV at 5 p.m.)

3rd-6th GBB Skills, 6-8 p.m.

A few changes to the sports schedule for Monday, September 29th:

Cross Country at Groton (Olive Grove) begins at 3:00pm (rolling schedule - times are approximate):

- 3pm Girls Varsity
 - 3:30pm Boys Varsity
 - around 4pm Munchkin Fun Run
 - 4pm Girls/Boys JV
 - 4:30pm Girls/Boys MS
- Soccer vs Dakota Valley begins at 3:30pm
- 3:30pm Boys Varsity
 - around 5:00pm Girls Varsity

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

© 2025 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 2 of 57

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.

Former FBI Director Indicted

A federal grand jury indicted former FBI Director James Comey yesterday on two criminal charges—lying to Congress and obstruction. The charges came five days before the statute of limitations was set to expire. If convicted, Comey faces up to five years in prison.

The indictment stems from Comey's virtual testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 30, 2020. Comey stated "no" when asked if he had ever authorized someone at the FBI to serve as an anonymous source about the Trump-Russia investigation to news reports. Prosecutors contend Comey perjured himself with this statement and obstructed a congressional proceeding.

Comey has long accused President Donald Trump of politicizing the Justice Department. The grand jury indictment was sought by interim US Attorney Lindsey Halligan of the Eastern District of Virginia. She was nominated by Trump after the former US attorney—who refused to bring charges against Comey—was ousted. Halligan previously served as a White House aide and Trump's defense attorney.

Prime Payout

Amazon reached a \$2.5B settlement with the Federal Trade Commission yesterday, ending a civil trial over claims it enrolled customers in Prime without consent and intentionally made cancellations difficult. The company's shares fell 1% on the news.

Without admitting wrongdoing, Amazon will pay a \$1B civil penalty—the largest in FTC history—and refund \$1.5B to affected consumers. The fine represents 0.1% of Amazon's roughly \$2.3T market cap. Prime, with over 200 million paying members, helped generate almost \$24B in subscription revenue in the first half of 2025. However, the FTC alleges Amazon locked nearly 40 million consumers into recurring subscriptions with deceptive page designs, including a four-page, six-click, 15-option journey to cancel called "Iliad Flow." Amazon revised the flow in 2023 and must continue streamlining user journeys under the settlement.

In recent weeks, the FTC settled similar lawsuits against Match Group for \$14M and Chegg for \$7.5M and filed a new complaint against the operators of LA Fitness.

Sarkozy Sentenced

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison after being convicted of criminal conspiracy, marking the first time a French president in modern history has been sentenced to prison. Sarkozy, 70, led France from 2007 to 2012.

Prosecutors said he conspired between 2005 and 2007 to secure millions of euros from Libyan dictator Muammar Gadhafi to finance his 2007 presidential bid. Then serving as interior minister, he allegedly promised to help restore Libya's international standing in exchange for the funds. The case described a network of Libyan officials, intermediaries, and covert cash transfers into Paris. He was acquitted of separate charges of passive corruption, illegal campaign financing, and embezzlement.

Sarkozy has prior convictions for corruption, influence peddling, and campaign finance violations, and has been stripped of the Legion of Honor, France's highest distinction. He is expected to begin serving his sentence within a month, but has said he plans to appeal.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 3 of 57

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2025 MLB regular season wraps up this weekend; see latest playoff picture.

Seattle Mariners' Cal Raleigh becomes the seventh player to hit 60 home runs in a single season.

"Jimmy Kimmel Live!" brings in 6 million viewers, its largest audience in more than a decade, in his Tuesday return after being suspended by Disney last week.

Golf's Ryder Cup, a team competition pitting the US against Europe, kicks off today from the Bethpage Black Course in New York.

UEFA reportedly to suspend Israeli soccer teams from international competitions over the war in Gaza.

Science & Technology

OpenAI launches ChatGPT Pulse, a paid feature that generates personalized subject matter briefs for users overnight.

Scientists find more sea creatures living on toxic sunken World War II warheads than in the surrounding seabed, raising questions about how marine life responds to pollution.

New Earth-mapping satellite captures North Dakota farmland and Maine's coast in detail; the joint US-India mission will track shifts in land and ice to help forecasters and first responders address natural disasters.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.5%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq -0.5%).

US trade deficit falls to two-year low in August, per federal trade report.

President Donald Trump approves deal divesting TikTok's US operations from Chinese owner, ByteDance, to new joint venture including Oracle, private equity firm Silver Lake, and Abu Dhabi's MGX; China must approve deal.

Trump announces new tariffs on goods including pharmaceutical drugs, furniture.

Starbucks to lay off 900 nonretail employees, will close hundreds of North American locations as part of \$1B restructuring plan.

Elon Musk's xAI sues OpenAI for allegedly stealing trade secrets about Grok chatbot.

Politics & World Affairs

Denmark temporarily shuts down several airports after drone sightings in four locations, including an air base housing F-16 and F-35 fighter jets.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas speaks before UN General Assembly, puts forth governance plan for postwar Gaza excluding Hamas.

Microsoft cuts off cloud services to Israel's military following reports they were used to surveil Palestinians.

White House directs federal agencies to plan mass firings in the event of a government shutdown next week.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth summons hundreds of generals and admirals for a rare meeting next week.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 4 of 57

Groton Tigers Sweep Tiospa Zina on the Road

The Groton Area volleyball team wasted little time getting back on track after their tough loss to Warner earlier in the week. On Thursday night in Agency Village, the Tigers rolled to a straight-set sweep of the Tiospa Zina Wambdi, 25-12, 25-12, 25-8, improving to 8-3 on the season.

From the opening serve, Groton showed sharp focus and efficiency. In the first set, the Tigers jumped out to a quick lead and then strung together a nine-point run to build a commanding advantage. Behind four kills and four ace serves from Jaedyn Penning, along with six kills from Tevan Hanson, Groton closed the opener with ease, 25-12. Reflecting on the set, Coach Chelsea Hanson said, "I was impressed with how the girls executed offensively. Coming into games like this, we've made a lot of errors before, but tonight they were aggressive and smart."

The second set followed a similar script. After Tiospa Zina managed to tie the score at 8-8, the Tigers roared back with eight straight points to pull away once again. Penning added three more kills and three aces, while Rylee Dunker delivered three aces and a kill to pace Groton to another 25-12 victory. Hanson noted, "These are the kinds of matches where serving and passing are key. I was really happy to see our serve receive improve, giving our offense a chance to play."

Tiospa Zina battled early in the third, briefly holding a 3-1 lead, but Groton quickly flipped the momentum. The Tigers went on an 8-0 run and never looked back, finishing off the sweep 25-8. Sydney Locke fired in four aces in the set, and Kella Tracy chipped in three kills to help seal the win. Hanson added, "It was good to see the team stay confident and focused, even when the Wambdi had a few early points. That shows growth in our mental game."

On the night, Penning stood out with 8 kills, 7 ace serves, and 4 digs, while Hanson finished with 10 kills and an assisted block. Taryn Traphagen added 7 kills and a block assist, Dunker tallied 4 aces and 3 kills, and Locke contributed 4 aces. Setter Chesney Weber guided the offense with 26 assists, 3 kills, and 2 aces. Defensively, Jerica Locke recorded 6 digs and McKenna Tietz added 3. As a team, Groton was nearly flawless at the line, going 63 of 70 in serves with 19 aces. The Tigers also hit 52 of 64 on attacks with 37 kills, while piling up 28 assists and 22 digs.

For the Wambdi, Faith Four Stars led the way with 5 kills and an ace. Madison Mattison-Keoke and Harmony Rodlund each added 2 kills, Talia Robertson had a kill and an ace, and Brileigh Bartunek registered a block.

Groton's junior varsity also came away with a sweep, topping Tiospa Zina 2-0 by identical scores of 25-8. Liby Althoff highlighted the win with 11 ace serves, while Abby Fjeldheim tallied 8 kills, McKenna Krause added 6 aces and a kill, and Emerlee Jones chipped in 5 kills.

Hanson reflected on the overall performance: "I love coming here every year. The Wambdi are great hosts, and the girls feed off that energy. But more importantly, the team executed well and gained confidence. That's huge moving forward into our next matches and tournaments."

The Tigers now turn their attention to next week's home matchup against Great Plains Lutheran on Tuesday, before entering a busy weekend tournament in Redfield where they will face Madison, Timber Lake, Redfield, and North Central. Hanson concluded, "We're hoping to build momentum and keep our confidence high. This was exactly the kind of match we needed to get back into rhythm."



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

Football
Clark/Willow Lake
Fri., Sept. 26
7:00: Doney Field



GDILIVE
YouTube



A production of the
Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota program offers aspiring farmers a rare path into agriculture

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 5:49 PM

MITCHELL — Cody Kafka had dreamed of farming his own land since he began working on a farm in his teens, but that seemed unlikely without land to inherit. So it felt good when he finally walked across his own acres for the first time this year.

"It was one of the most freeing feelings I've ever really felt," Kafka said.

He owed the feeling to a little-known program administered by the state.

Kafka and his wife, Codi, who live in Alexandria, started thinking seriously about getting into farming last year. But finding a lender was difficult until the Kafkas came across South Dakota's Beginning Farmer Bond Program.

"Without this program, I don't think it would have been possible," Kafka said.

Kafka, an ag products salesman in Mitchell, and his wife, an accountant, were approved this year for the program along with one other applicant.

The program facilitates the sale of bonds to purchasers who receive federally tax-exempt interest, enabling loans to first-generation farmers at low interest rates. The program helps new farmers acquire land, equipment or livestock. Awardees must farm the land, not just own it.

Board members affiliated with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, which administers the program, approved a total of \$4.6 million in bonds for 13 applicants statewide from 2019 to this year, an average of about \$354,000 per award. The office said it has received no reports of awardees not paying off loans on time.

High land and equipment costs mean aspiring farmers face limited access to credit, and modern farming methods have allowed fewer farmers to farm more land.

U.S. Department of Agriculture reports show the number of farms in the state dropped from 34,000 in 1994 to 28,300 in 2024. The sharpest declines occurred among medium-sized farms. Large-scale farms operating on 2,000 acres or more now control over two-thirds of the cropland in the state, according to a South Dakota State University report. Thirty years ago, large farms controlled less than half of the state's cropland.

And those aren't the only challenges facing new farmers.

"Commodity prices fluctuating, droughts, excessive rain, etcetera," Kafka said. "It really is a risky business, and so it was very, very nerve-racking to take a big financial step such as this."

The Kafkas received \$510,000 to purchase 160 acres near Gregory. This spring, Cody Kafka planted corn.

For Bill Even, commissioner of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, overseeing the program is personally gratifying. When he was a young, "asset-poor farmer," he said, a U.S. Department of Agriculture farmer loan program "allowed me the chance to buy my first piece of farm ground."

Even said that without that program's low-interest rate, plus his own equity and a commercial lender, he wouldn't have been able to get established.

Kafka said he was turned down for a USDA farmer loan because he did not have the required farm income history. That's when he came across the state-administered program online.

"It's still stringent — you need balance sheets, cash flows, all of that," he said. "But they want people exactly like us, with little experience but stable finances, to get a chance."

Kafka said he is working to improve the soil health of his new land, and experimenting with cover crops,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 6 of 57

rotational grazing and regenerative practices.

The math is tough this year. Corn prices are down nearly a dollar per bushel from what the Kafkas budgeted.

"We're penciling in a loss," Kafka said.

But they view the land as a long-term investment. With off-farm income to cushion their losses, he hopes to weather the early years.

"Land hasn't depreciated since the 1980s," he said. "That, and it'll be paid for in 20 years. And, hopefully, I'll live another 20 after that."

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.

Opposition to Summit pipeline fueled by 'horseshoe politics' on left and right, panelists say

BY: JACOB ORLEDGE-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 3:15 PM

A South Dakota lobbyist hinted this week that Summit Carbon Solutions' plan to build a 2,000-mile carbon dioxide pipeline is on life support without the ability to secure easements through eminent domain.

Pipeline opponents in his state, according to David Owen, president of the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce before retiring earlier this year, have argued Summit is free to move forward with the carbon dioxide pipeline that would bring 18.5 million tons of carbon dioxide to North Dakota annually. Some have said that while the company can no longer use eminent domain to secure the pipeline route without landowners' consent, Summit could obtain voluntary easements for 100% of the project's path.

"I like that fantasy," Owen said of constructing the pipeline without use of eminent domain. "I wish that were true. But it's not."

In addition to facing the obstacle of South Dakota's law against eminent domain, Summit also still needs a permit from South Dakota's Public Utilities Commission for the project to move forward.

Summit proposes to build a network of pipelines in five states to capture carbon emissions from ethanol plants. The main portion of the pipeline would run through South Dakota.

Owen was speaking Tuesday on a panel at the Greater North Dakota Chamber's annual policy summit. He warned the audience that South Dakota's opposition to eminent domain for carbon dioxide pipelines, which he attributed to the strain of political populism shared by both states, might be "contagious."

Jessica Bell, Rainbow Energy vice president and former Republican state lawmaker who moderated the panel discussion, attributed this opposition to "horseshoe politics."

"The opposition comes not only from those on the far left who frame these projects as perpetuating fossil fuel use, but also from the far right who view them as government overreach," Bell said. "While these groups rarely agree on much they do converge here in trying to stop development. For conservatives in particular, leadership on energy policy cannot always be simply saying 'no' to something and everything."

Owen pushed back on the idea that property owners "gathered in a barn" and organically built a successful opposition to use of eminent domain.

"Landowners teamed up with environmental groups, who supplied a lot of money, and they hired damn good political talent," said Owen, who hopes this is only a "pause" and South Dakota will return to the table down the road.

Owen was joined on the panel by Brian Kalk, chief research officer at the Energy and Environmental Research Center and a former member of the Public Service Commission, and North Dakota Rep. SuAnn Olson, a Republican from Baldwin.

Olson noted some of the opposition to Summit's pipeline has been created by mixed messaging from the company and government officials. The pipeline was "adamantly described," Olson said, as a way to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 7 of 57

deliver CO2 to a storage facility in North Dakota. But Summit officials have also said the pipeline could be used in the future for enhanced oil recovery if a customer developed an agreement with Summit.

Enhanced oil recovery is under development in order to extract a greater percentage of North Dakota's oil, extending the life of Bakken wells. One technique being researched would use carbon dioxide to re-pressurize underground reservoirs. Bell noted current estimates require 100 million tons of carbon dioxide annually, far more than is produced in North Dakota, to make it happen.

The pipeline route permit approved by the North Dakota Public Service Commission specifies that the CO2 would go into permanent underground storage.

"Even the 100 million tons annually that's needed is built on lots of assumptions," Olson said. "None of us, if you want to be accurate, can be sure exactly what that's going to be and where it's going to come from."

Kalk suggested it was possible for North Dakota and the United States to become "third world countries," like those he said he visited as a U.S. Marine logistics officer for 20 years.

"That's what some of these other countries are because they don't have progressive thinking about building pipelines, about building a power grid," said Kalk. "I think North Dakota right now is kind of in that spot where we have done great things, but what's next?"

North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley said during a radio interview last week he's researching what legal options the state could have to challenge South Dakota's law against eminent domain.

North Dakota Monitor reporter Jacob Orledge can be reached at jorledge@northdakotamonitor.com.

This story was originally produced by North Dakota Monitor, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

Jacob Orledge is a reporter based in Bismarck through ProPublica's Local Reporting Network. He most recently worked for the Tioga Tribune in Williams County. You can reach him at jorledge@northdakotamonitor.com.

Three inmates die in three days at Sioux Falls penitentiary complex

BY: JOHN HULT-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 3:03 PM

Three inmates died on three consecutive days at the South Dakota State Penitentiary this week, continuing an uptick in deaths within the state's prison system.

The week began with the Monday death of 57-year-old Keith McLain in the penitentiary's Jameson Annex. A press release from the Department of Corrections said McLain died by "apparent suicide." He was found unresponsive in his cell, the release said, and taken to a Sioux Falls hospital, where he died.

On Tuesday, inmate Kaleb Lukkes, 25, was found unresponsive in his South Dakota State Penitentiary cell.

"This death is being aggressively investigated in collaboration with the Division of Criminal Investigation and the DOC Office of the Inspector General," Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko said in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight.

Lukkes died on the same day lawmakers and Gov. Larry Rhoden met for a special legislative session at the Capitol in Pierre and approved a plan to build a 1,500-bed, \$650 million men's prison in northeast Sioux Falls.

On Wednesday, 64-year-old Frank Twiggs died "in a comfort care setting" at the Jameson Annex.

A request for a response to the deaths sent to spokespeople for Rhoden was not immediately returned Thursday.

South Dakota tracks inmate deaths by state fiscal years, which run from July 1 through June 30. The three deaths this week bring the number of deaths for fiscal year 2026 to six, consistent with a recent uptick for in-custody deaths.

The department says there were 19 in-custody deaths during the fiscal year that ended June 30. That's

the highest fiscal year tally since at least 2018.

Since the beginning of the 2025 calendar year, 18 men have died in South Dakota prisons, at least four by suicide. Another three men died from drug overdoses.

Attorney General Marty Jackley announced charges in drug distribution cases tied to those deaths earlier this summer, and announced charges last week against a separate set of defendants — including one former correctional officer — for their alleged roles in a drug smuggling ring.

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.

Former FBI Director Comey indicted on 2 federal charges after Trump urged prosecution

BY: JACOB FISCHLER-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 8:36 PM

Former FBI Director James Comey was indicted Thursday on two federal charges, after President Donald Trump publicly urged Attorney General Pam Bondi to prosecute Comey, a Trump critic who led an investigation into the president's first election victory.

A federal grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia, indicted Comey on one charge of making false statements to Congress and another of obstructing a proceeding of Congress. Prosecutors had sought an additional charge of making false statements, but the grand jury returned only one.

"No one is above the law," Bondi wrote on social media Thursday. "Today's indictment reflects this Department of Justice's commitment to holding those who abuse positions of power accountable for misleading the American people. We will follow the facts in this case."

FBI Director Kash Patel on social media referenced the FBI's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, which Trump won. Comey was FBI director at the outset of that investigation.

"Today, your FBI took another step in its promise of full accountability," Patel wrote. "For far too long, previous corrupt leadership and their enablers weaponized federal law enforcement, damaging once proud institutions and severely eroding public trust. ...Nowhere was this politicization of law enforcement more blatant than during the Russiagate hoax, a disgraceful chapter in history we continue to investigate and expose."

'We can't delay any longer'

The Senate confirmed Comey, 93-1, in 2013. He oversaw the agency's probe of Russia's involvement in the 2016 election. Trump fired him after pressuring him to end the investigation and failing.

Trump and Comey have publicly sparred since his dismissal. Comey has denied wrongdoing.

Over the weekend, Trump posted on social media urging Bondi to take action against Comey and other political enemies, demanding retribution for his own prosecutions.

"Pam: I have reviewed over 30 statements and posts saying that, essentially, 'same old story as last time, all talk, no action. Nothing is being done,'" Trump wrote. "We can't delay any longer, it's killing our reputation and credibility. They impeached me twice, and indicted me (5 times!), OVER NOTHING. JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!! President DJT."

Trump was impeached twice during his first term and was indicted in four criminal proceedings following his first term.

On Monday, Lindsey Halligan was sworn in as the new interim top federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of Virginia, where the Comey indictments were returned. Halligan, who was endorsed by Trump for the post, has represented Trump as his personal lawyer.

Virginia U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, a Democrat, said Halligan's appointment — after the firing of Erik Siebert, the permanent U.S. attorney in the district, who declined to pursue charges against Comey — showed the prosecution was political.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 9 of 57

"I've had my differences with James Comey in the past, but I can spot trumped-up charges a mile away," Kaine wrote in a statement. "Trump said he'd go after him, then fired a superb, ethical prosecutor when he refused to bring frivolous charges against those whom Trump perceived to be his enemies."

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

TikTok sale to US investors OK'd by Trump in deal valued in billions

BY: JACOB FISCHLER-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 5:36 PM

A group of U.S. investors will take over the massive video-sharing platform TikTok, President Donald Trump said Thursday.

Trump signed an executive order certifying a transaction for TikTok complies with a 2024 law requiring the platform's Chinese parent company, Byte Dance Ltd., divest TikTok or face a ban in the U.S.

The company is valued at \$14 billion in the deal, Vice President JD Vance said. A new U.S.-backed joint venture will hold 80% of the company, while Byte Dance will retain a 20% stake, according to the order. The U.S. parties will control the app's coveted algorithm that tailors content for users as well as content moderation, according to the order.

The White House did not immediately release a list of U.S. investors, but Trump said Oracle and its CEO, Larry Ellison, would be major players. He also mentioned computer entrepreneur Michael Dell and conservative media magnate Rupert Murdoch as others involved.

"It's run by American investors, American companies," Trump said.

Sale needed

The 2024 law responded to concerns about the national security risks of the Chinese government's perceived involvement with the widely used app. TikTok consistently denied the Chinese Communist Party had any control over the platform.

Without a sale, TikTok faced a ban in the United States.

The administration's goal was to keep the platform operating in the U.S., while securing users' data, Vance said.

"The fundamental thing that we wanted to accomplish is that we wanted to keep Tiktok operating, but we also wanted to make sure that we protected Americans' data privacy as required by law, both because it's the right thing to do, but also because it's a legal requirement of the law that was passed last year by Congress," he said.

Deal staves off TikTok shutdown

TikTok said in 2023 that it has 150 million monthly users in the country. The order updated that number to 170 million.

The app was shut down for about 24 hours in January, before Trump suspended enforcement of the law on his first day in office. He has extended that delay several times, most recently last week when he reset the deadline for December.

Thursday's order extends the pause on enforcement of the law into January.

Lawmakers across the aisle have expressed concern that China's ruling Communist Party could access TikTok user data and manipulate what type of content users see.

"This deal really does mean that Americans can use TikTok, but actually use it with more confidence than they had in the past, because their data is going to be secure and it's not going to be used as a propaganda weapon against our fellow citizens," Vance said Thursday.

Republicans in Congress want protections

Others, also across party lines, have argued that free-speech principles should mean the government cannot shut down a private speech platform.

And TikTok has argued that it is a U.S.- and Singapore-based company. The app is not even available in

mainland China, where the government exerts considerable control over speech, CEO Shou Zi Chew told the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee in 2023.

A trio of senior Republicans on that committee — Chairman Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, Gus Bilirakis of Florida and Richard Hudson of North Carolina — said in a Thursday statement the deal was a positive step.

"As the details are finalized, we must ensure this deal protects American users from the influence and surveillance of CCP-aligned groups," they wrote. "Limiting the influence and involvement of China remains a vital national security interest, and we look forward to seeing a deal that secures America's interests on the global stage."

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

Trump threatens mass firings of federal employees in a government shutdown

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 9:57 AM

WASHINGTON — The White House has sent guidance to departments and agencies, telling them that if a shutdown begins Wednesday, they're expected to institute mass firings and layoffs.

The two-page memo, shared with States Newsroom by a Trump administration official, says any programs that received funding in the "big, beautiful" law will "continue uninterrupted."

But the vast majority of federal departments and agencies need Congress to approve an annual funding bill or a stopgap spending bill before the start of the new fiscal year to keep running.

The memo says the employees who run those programs may receive a Reduction in Force notice if lawmakers don't broker an agreement before the Oct. 1 deadline.

Those reductions will apply to programs, projects, or activities that are "not consistent with the President's priorities," according to the memo.

"RIF notices will be in addition to any furlough notices provided due to the lapse in appropriation," the memo states. "RIF notices should be issued to all employees working on the relevant (programs, projects, or activities), regardless of whether the employee is excepted or furloughed during the lapse in appropriations."

Once lawmakers reach a deal and the government reopens, the memo says agencies should rework their reduction in force plans "to retain the minimal number of employees necessary to carry out statutory functions."

Employee union urges compromise

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., wrote in a statement the memo represents "an attempt at intimidation."

"Donald Trump has been firing federal workers since day one—not to govern, but to scare. This is nothing new and has nothing to do with funding the government," Schumer wrote. "These unnecessary firings will either be overturned in court or the administration will end up hiring the workers back, just like they did as recently as today."

American Federation of Government Employees National President Everett Kelley wrote in a statement the memo shows that White House budget director Russ Vought intends "to pursue another DOGE-like round of illegal mass firings in the event of a shutdown, adding to the chaos."

"The truth is simple: Republicans cannot fund the government without Democratic votes. That means the only path forward is compromise," Kelley wrote. "The president and congressional leaders must sit down and negotiate in good faith to keep the lights on for the American people. Nothing less is acceptable."

Maryland Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen wrote in a statement that "Trump is engaged in mafia-style blackmail, with his threats ultimately harming the American people."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 11 of 57

"He is threatening to double down on the failed actions of Elon Musk and his chainsaw — going after patriotic civil servants that provide Americans with critical services — despite having to rehire many of these workers after Americans experienced the negative impact of those cuts," Van Hollen wrote. "These dedicated workers have nothing to do with the ongoing political and policy disputes that have brought us to the brink of a shutdown."

House GOP departs until after Oct. 1

The House voted mostly along party lines to approve a seven-week stopgap spending bill last week before leaving town. GOP leaders were supposed to bring lawmakers in that chamber back to Capitol Hill on Monday, but extended their break and won't return until after the shutdown deadline.

The move was largely seen as a way to jam the Senate, specifically Democrats, with the short-term government funding bill that they largely oppose because GOP lawmakers wrote it behind closed doors without bipartisan negotiations.

The Senate tried to advance the House-passed Republican stopgap bill but didn't have the necessary 60 votes to move the legislation toward final passage.

Democrats have maintained for weeks that if Republican leaders want their support on a short-term spending bill, they should have negotiated with party leaders on key issues, including an extension of the enhanced tax credits for people who buy their health insurance on the Affordable Care Act Marketplace.

Those tax credits are set to expire at the end of the year but Americans who rely on the marketplace for their health insurance will begin purchasing their plans for next year on Nov. 1.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has said he views negotiations on those tax credits as an issue for December, not this month, despite the open enrollment period ending on Dec. 15.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., has said repeatedly he views the issue as separate from government funding.

Jeffries says Dems 'ready, willing and able to have a conversation'

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., said during a Thursday press conference that Democrats are "ready, willing and able to have a conversation to see if we can find common ground in a bipartisan way to reach a spending agreement that meets the needs of the American people."

"Republicans have decided they don't even want to have a conversation with Democrats to reach a bipartisan agreement. No one in America thinks that's reasonable," Jeffries said. "It's an inherently unreasonable position — my way or the highway."

Jeffries criticized Trump and Republicans for having unified control of government, but not taking action to lower costs for Americans, including on health care.

"Donald Trump promised to lower costs on day one. Costs aren't going down in America, they're going up. Inflation is going up," Jeffries said. "Life has become more expensive under Donald Trump and Republican policies and that includes health care premiums, which are about to skyrocket."

It would be "foolish," he said, for Democrats to trust the Republicans will negotiate on the enhanced ACA tax credits later in the year, given their actions so far on health care.

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

USDA cancels food security report that anti-hunger advocates say showed the effects of food policies

BY: CAMI KOONS-SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 7:00 AM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has canceled a report that hunger-fighting organizations say was "essential" data to see the results of federal and local policies aimed at ending hunger.

USDA, in a news release about the decision said the reports were "redundant, costly, politicized" and did "nothing more than fear monger."

Paige Chickering, vice chair of the Iowa Hunger Coalition, said agencies like hers, along with researchers and even politicians, used the now-canceled report to analyze the impact of certain policies on food insecurity. Chickering said the announced cancellation of the report coincides with the "largest cut" to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

"That can't just be coincidence," Chickering said. "That seems very intentional, because it is very likely that the cuts will make it harder for Americans, and Iowans, to access their grocery benefits, and we will very likely see that in the data about food security – except now we won't, because it's no longer being collected."

The Republican-led budget reconciliation law, enacted July 4 and known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," included significant cuts to the SNAP program.

According to an analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the law cut \$187 billion, or about 20%, of federal funding to SNAP through 2034. CBO said the law "takes away food assistance" via its changes to the Thrifty Food Plan, requirements for some states to provide matching funds, expanded work requirements and changes to eligibility based on immigration status. The CBO report estimates 4 million people that rely on SNAP will see their food assistance terminated, or reduced substantially.

The Iowa Hunger Coalition estimates the changes to the program from the new law will result in a loss of nearly \$50 million in funding to SNAP in Iowa in 2026. By 2034, the loss of funding per fiscal year will be more than \$200 million, according to the coalition.

"Millions of American children are facing food insecurity, and willfully neglecting that fact, and preventing the federal government from collecting and reporting the data that tells us how many kids are impacted is frankly unacceptable," said Chickering, who is also the Iowa state manager for the Save the Children Action Network.

What is the Household Food Security Report?

The USDA and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Center for Health Statistics partnered in the 1990s to create a supplement to the Current Population Survey, known as the CPS Food Security Supplement.

This supplement, which has been issued annually since 1995, gathers data for a national measure of food security. Data from the report is used to generate Household Food Security Reports.

According to the news release from USDA announcing the termination of the project, the study was initiated under the Clinton administration as a "means to support the increase of SNAP eligibility and benefit allotments."

USDA called the survey "redundant" in the release and said it "failed to present anything more than subjective, liberal fodder."

The food security survey is one of several elements used by Feeding America, a national organization of food banks, pantries and meal programs, for its reports on hunger in America. The latest report shows 47 million people in the nation face food insecurity, and that 1 in 5 children is food insecure.

Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, Feeding America's CEO, said in a statement that the loss of the survey "will create gaps." Babineaux-Fontenot said while the survey was never a "a perfect resource," it has revealed trends and highlighted the experiences of children and households experiencing food insecurity.

"They helped us to see that food insecurity touches every county in every state and that the deepest challenges are often in rural counties," Babineaux-Fontenot said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 13 of 57

She said the report also showed when certain issues like the “staggering inflation” of 2022 left people “reeling” or when policies, like the investments into nutrient-dense local foods in late 2020, had positive outcomes on food security rates and health outcomes.

“While neither the USDA report nor any single report that is created will be perfect, these efforts help ensure the information we collect and act on is as accurate and useful as possible,” Babineaux-Fontenot said.

“As USDA’s report sunsets, there is a risk of losing consistent national benchmarks that have helped guide solutions. Feeding America is committed to working alongside partners to ensure we continue building on that foundation.”

USDA said in its release that “trends in the prevalence of food insecurity have remained virtually unchanged” despite increases to SNAP spending from 2019-2023.

Chickering said that claim is “not true” and cited Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap study which shows food insecurity rates nationally have increased more than 3% in the last two years.

“They’ve not remained the same; they are actually on the rise,” Chickering said. “And then we also see strong anecdotal evidence of this as well when we talk about what food banks and food pantries are experiencing ... they’re experiencing higher and higher demand.”

USDA’s own survey results from September 2024, reflecting 2023 data from the survey, also show a sharp increase in food insecurity rates from 2021 to 2023.

Share Our Strength, another organization that uses the food security data with its No Kid Hungry campaign, said Americans should be “deeply concerned” about the elimination of the survey.

Anne Filipic, the organization’s CEO, said in a statement the data has been used to “illuminate how policy decisions impact how children and families across America experience hunger.”

“By helping policymakers and advocates understand the impact policy decisions and the economy have on hunger trends, this research helps ensure we’re wisely investing taxpayer dollars efficiently and effectively on programs that work to end hunger,” Filipic said in a statement.

Chickering said the announcement from USDA insinuates the report is “costing American taxpayers a ton of money” which she said is misleading since the survey is a supplement to the existing Current Population Survey.

“We get a ton of data out of this report that’s foundational to the study of food insecurity in our country at a very low cost to the government,” Chickering said.

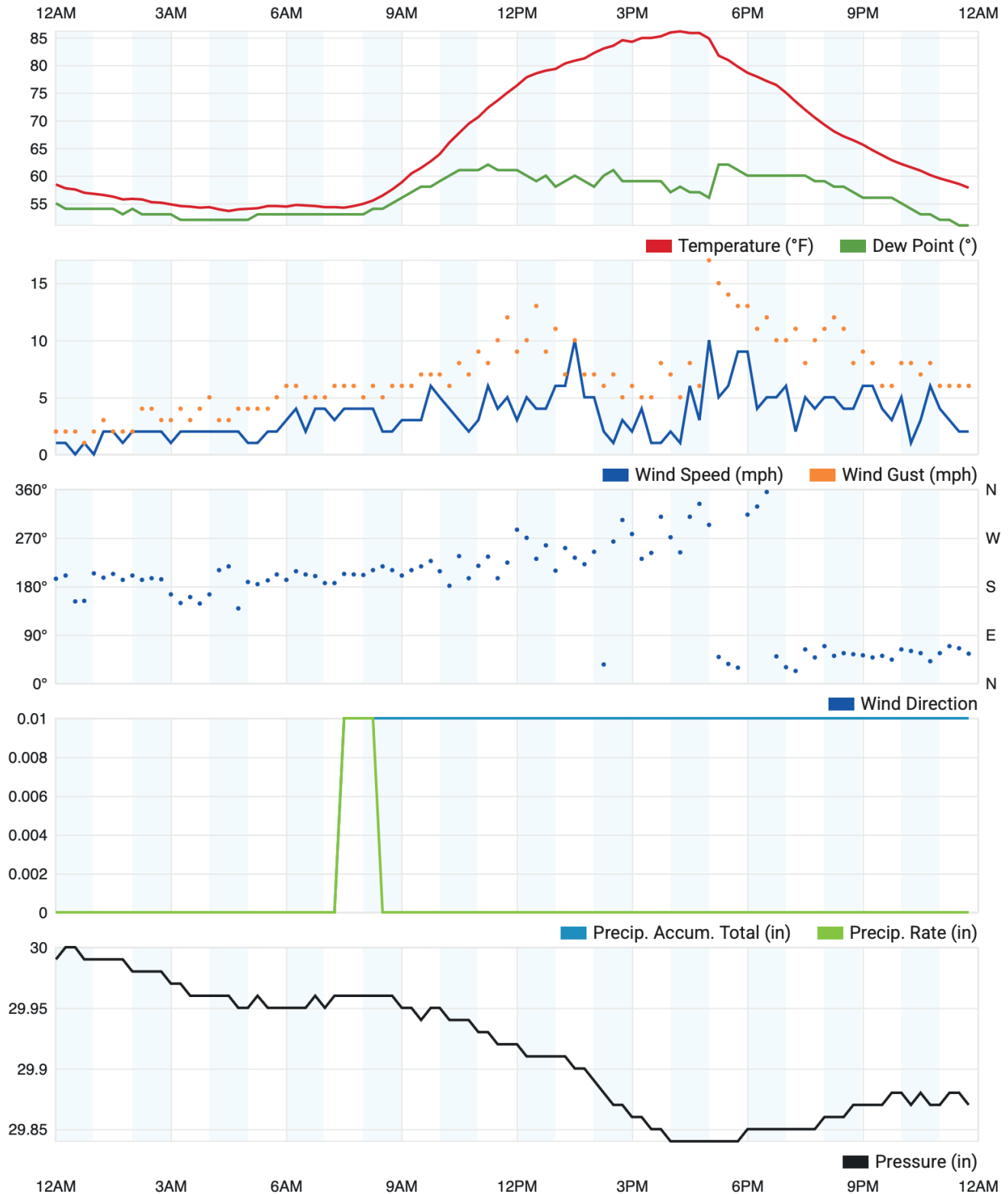
This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, which is part of States Newsroom, a non-profit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 14 of 57

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 15 of 57

Today



High: 83 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 48 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 73 °F

Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 49 °F

Clear

Sunday



High: 81 °F

Sunny



Dry & Mild With A Brief Cool Down Saturday

September 26, 2025

3:32 AM

And off and on windy conditions

Friday



20-30mph

81 - 89°

Saturday



70 - 75°

Sunday



20-35mph

80 - 86°

Monday



25-40mph

82 - 86°

Tuesday



25-35mph

80 - 85°

range above normal:

+15 to +20

0 to +5

+15 to +20

+15 to +20

+15 to +20



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Mild and dry conditions are expected to continue through the next several days. With the dry weather and above normal temperatures, we will also see increased winds.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 16 of 57

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 4:14 PM

Low Temp: 54 °F at 4:27 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 5:01 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1974

Record Low: 17 in 1939

Average High: 71

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.72

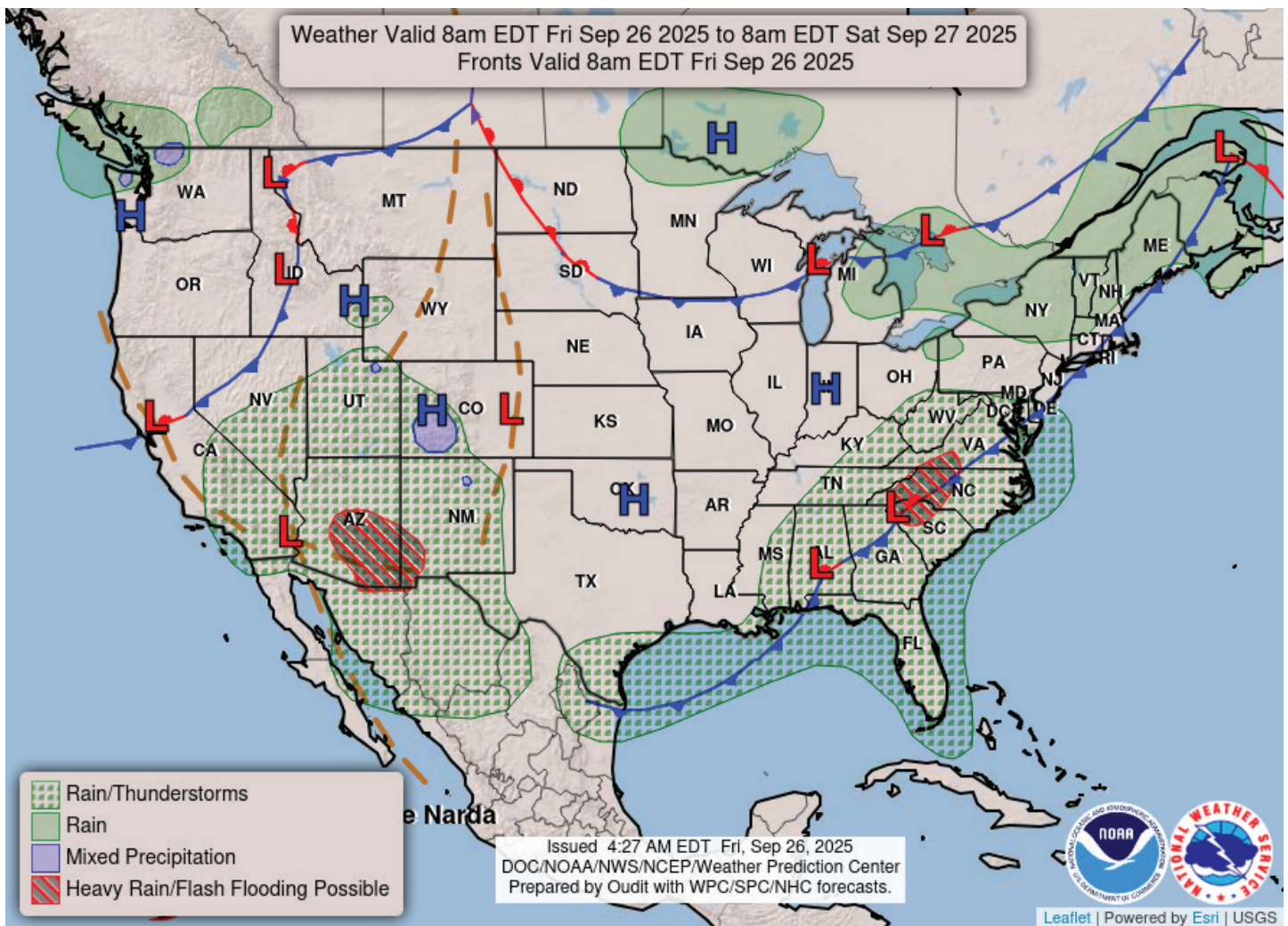
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.62

Average Precip to date: 18.06

Precip Year to Date: 22.92

Sunset Tonight: 7:22 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:25 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 17 of 57

Today in Weather History

September 26, 1965: A hard freeze hit most of Minnesota in the early morning causing the loss of millions of bushels of corn and soybeans. Temperatures fell below 20 degrees in the northern part of the state.

September 26, 1981: A tornado touched down in the early morning hours several times east of Vermilion. Two barns received extensive damage.

1898: A school teacher saved 32 children from death in Merritton, Ontario, when she spotted an approaching tornado and led her students to a safe corner. Unfortunately, falling debris killed one of the children and injured several others.

1936: A forest fire burned several miles east of the town of Brandon, Oregon. The fire was far enough away that residents were not particularly worried. A sudden shift in the winds drove the flames westward and through town. The fire, caused by summer drought and fueled by the abundant Gorse Weed found in many of the empty spaces between buildings in Brandon, caused so much destruction that only a handful of structures were left standing when the fire finally died down.

1936: The heaviest snowfall ever recorded in September and the heaviest snowfall ever recorded so early in the season dumped a total of 16.5 inches of snow on downtown Denver and 21.3 inches at Denver Municipal Airport. The 15.0 inches of snow measured from 6:00 PM on the 27th to 6:00 PM on the 28th is the greatest 24-hour snowfall ever recorded in September. This was the first snow of the season. The snow was intermittent on the 26th, but continuous from early afternoon on the 27th to around midnight on the 28th, except for a period of rain during the afternoon of the 28th.

1950 - Residents of the northeastern U.S. observed a blue sun and a blue moon, caused by forest fires in British Columbia. (David Ludlum)

1955: On this date, the Atlantic reconnaissance aircraft, "Snowcloud Five" went down while investigating Hurricane Janet and was never heard from again. Lt. Comdr. Windham with a crew of 8 and two newspapermen reported that they were about to begin penetrating the central core of the hurricane.

Hurricane Janet made landfall at peak intensity near Chetumal, Mexico on September 29th. Janet's landfall as a Category 5 hurricane on the Yucatán Peninsula was the first recorded instance that a storm of such intensity in the Atlantic made landfall on a continental mainland; prior to Janet, landfalls of Category 5 intensity were only known to have taken place on islands.

1963 - San Diego, CA, reached an all-time record high of 111 degrees. Los Angeles hit 109 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1970 - Santa Ana winds brought fires to Los Angeles County, and to points south and east. Half a million acres were consumed by the fires, as were 1000 structures. Twenty firemen were injured. (25th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1971: Project Stormfury was an attempt to weaken tropical cyclones by flying aircraft into them and seeding with silver iodide. The project was run by the United States Government from 1962 to 1983. Hurricane Ginger in 1971 was the last hurricane Project Stormfury seeded.

1979 - In the midst of a hot September for Death Valley, California, the afternoon high was 104 degrees for the second of three days, the coolest afternoon highs for the month. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Freezing temperatures were reported in the Northern and Central Appalachians, and the Upper Ohio Valley. The morning low of 27 degrees at Concord NH tied their record for the date. Temperatures soared into the 90s in South Dakota. Pierre SD reported an afternoon high of 98 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across Florida. Afternoon highs of 92 degrees at Apalachicola and 95 degrees at Fort Myers were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Rain spread from the southeastern states across New England overnight. Cape Hatteras NC reported measurable rainfall for the fourteenth straight day, with 15.51 inches of rain recorded during that two week period. Phoenix AZ reported a record high of 108 degrees, and a record 134 days of 100 degree weather for the year. Afternoon temperatures were only in the 40s over parts of northwest Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. (The National Weather Summary)

1998: There were four hurricanes were spinning simultaneously in the Atlantic basin: Georges, Ivan, Jeanne, and Karl. That was the first time this had happened since 1893.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 18 of 57



IT'S THERE - WAITING

Mary and I had been on a long trip. We had been driving for hours. We arrived home in the midst of a storm. The wind seemed to be coming from every direction, and the rain was cold and biting. We sat in our car for a moment looking at our home that was dark and empty. I left the lights on in the car and made my way up the steps, turned on the lights and turned up the thermostat. Suddenly, what had once been dark and dismal was now warm and welcoming.

Although our home was cold and dark, power was available to eliminate the darkness and provide energy for warmth. But it was necessary for me to do "something" to change things.

In a spiritual sense, this is true of prayer. The writer of Psalm 118 was in a situation where he desperately needed help. He knew there was a source of power that was beyond himself that he could go to if he chose to. And he did! Hear his words: "In my anguish, I cried to the Lord, and He answered me by setting me free!"

The prayer of faith is far more powerful than any source of power we know. It is the most unused force for good that is available to man.

It was Jesus who challenged us to go to this Source of power for anything and everything: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!" Jesus set no limits on what we might ask for as long as it is in keeping with His nature and character. Whatever we ask for, if it will bring honor and glory to His name, He will give us.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to take Your challenge to pray for anything that we might need as long as it honors You. Thank You for Your light and warmth. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: – In my anguish, I cried to the Lord, and He answered me by setting me free. Psalm 118:5

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

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 19 of 57

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 20 of 57



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.23.25

13 24 41 42 70 18

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$474,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 10 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

6 24 27 35 46 2

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,570,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 25 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.25.25

5 7 19 28 34 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

5 6 11 13 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$32,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 40 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

10 21 23 30 56 25

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 9 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

15 31 45 49 53 19

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$145,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 9 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 21 of 57

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

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 22 of 57

News from the Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Christian def. Wilmot, 25-12, 25-8, 25-18
Aberdeen Roncalli def. Sisseton, 25-15, 25-12, 25-11
Alcester-Hudson def. Centerville, 19-25, 25-21, 25-23, 14-25, 18-16
Avon def. Colome, 25-5, 25-5, 25-6
Baltic def. Parker/Marion, 25-16, 25-15, 25-17
Belle Fourche def. Bison, 25-21, 25-9, 24-26, 25-20
Bennett County def. Lyman, 26-24, 25-20, 25-17
Beresford def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 27-29, 25-13, 25-20, 25-23
Bon Homme def. Burke, 25-23, 16-25, 25-23, 20-25
Boyd County, Neb. def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-12, 25-20, 25-12
Brandon Valley def. Sioux Falls Jefferson, 25-11, 25-22, 17-25, 25-23
Bridgewater-Emery def. Canistota, 25-15, 25-12, 25-21
Britton-Hecla def. Florence-Henry, 25-17, 25-21, 18-25, 25-18
Burke def. Chamberlain, 25-13, 25-6
Chester def. Garretson, 25-9, 25-7, 25-12
Clark-Willow Lake def. Deuel, 25-17, 25-18, 25-23
Colman-Egan def. Gayville-Volin High School, 26-24, 25-17, 25-23
Corsica/Stickney def. Gregory, 25-16, 25-11, 20-25, 25-20
Dell Rapids St Mary's def. Arlington, 25-14, 25-21, 25-18
Dell Rapids def. Flandreau, 25-18, 25-15, 25-7
Deubrook def. Estelline-Hendricks, 25-18, 23-25, 19-25, 26-24, 15-12
Freeman def. Menno, 25-9, 25-18, 15-25, 23-25, 15-4
Gettysburg def. Stanley County, 25-12, 25-23, 22-25, 23-25, 15-10
Great Plains Lutheran def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-18, 16-25, 25-13, 25-8
Groton def. Tiospa Zina, 25-12, 25-12, 25-8
Hamlin def. Webster, 25-10, 25-15, 25-11
Hanson def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-21, 16-25, 25-18, 25-19
Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-10, 25-15, 25-14
Highmore-Harold def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 26-24, 25-17, 18-25, 25-11
Hot Springs def. Lakota Tech
Huron def. Brookings, 25-13, 25-20, 25-15
Ipswich def. Langford, 25-21, 25-19, 25-16
Jones County def. Todd County, 11-25, 25-18, 19-25, 25-22, 15-8
Lead-Deadwood def. Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud, 25-22, 25-16, 25-22
Lemmon High School def. Philip, 25-20, 25-14, 25-20
Lennox def. West Central, 25-19, 25-21, 25-18
Madison def. Tri-Valley, 25-10, 20-25, 25-18, 25-21
North Central def. Timber Lake, 25-6, 25-9, 25-16
Northwestern def. Waubay/Summit, 25-13, 25-9, 25-15
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland def. Flandreau Indian, 25-11, 25-4, 25-8
Rapid City Stevens def. Rapid City Central, 22-25, 25-11, 25-13, 25-22
Redfield def. Milbank, 25-17, 25-14, 25-22
Sioux Falls Christian def. Dakota Valley, 25-16, 25-23, 26-24
Spearfish def. Custer, 25-17, 25-15, 25-17
Sully Buttes def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-17, 25-21, 25-18

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 23 of 57

Viborg-Hurley def. Howard, 25-16, 25-15

Wagner def. Kimball-White Lake, 25-20, 25-16, 25-14

Wessington Springs def. Lower Brule, 25-13, 25-13, 25-16

Wolsey-Wessington def. James Valley Christian School, 25-7, 25-12, 25-10

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

Hegseth says Wounded Knee soldiers will keep their Medals of Honor

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has announced that he has decided that the 20 soldiers who received the Medal of Honor for their actions in 1890 at Wounded Knee will keep their awards in a video posted to social media Thursday evening.

Hegseth's predecessor, Lloyd Austin, ordered the review of the awards in 2024 after a Congressional recommendation in the 2022 defense bill — itself a reflection of efforts by some lawmakers to rescind the awards for those who participated in the bloody massacre on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation near Wounded Knee Creek.

While the events of that day are sometimes described as a battle, historical records show that the U.S. Army, which was in the midst of amid a campaign to repress the tribes in the area, killed an estimated 250 Native Americans, including women and children, of the Lakota Sioux tribe, while attempting to disarm Native American fighters who had already surrendered at their camp.

"We're making it clear that (the soldiers) deserve those medals," Hegseth said in the video, before adding that "their place in our nation's history is no longer up for debate."

After the fighting, Medals of Honor were given to 20 soldiers from the 7th Cavalry Regiment, and their awards cite a range of actions including bravery, efforts to rescue fellow troops and actions to "dislodge Sioux Indians" who were concealed in a ravine.

The event also became a celebrated part of the regiment's history, with their coat of arms still featuring the head of a Native American chief to "commemorate Indian campaigns," according to the military's Institute of Heraldry.

In 1990, Congress apologized to the descendants of those killed at Wounded Knee but did not revoke the medals.

According to Hegseth, the review panel ordered by Austin "concluded that these brave soldiers should, in fact, rightfully keep their medals from actions," but an official from the defense secretary's office couldn't say if the report he was referencing in the video would be made public.

President Donald Trump issued an executive order in March titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History" that decried efforts to reinterpret American history and, since then, Hegseth has undertaken multiple actions that have subverted the recommendations of a Congressionally-mandated commission that examined the use of Confederate names and references in the military.

He reverted the names of several Army bases back to their original, Confederate-linked names, though by honoring different figures.

Hegseth also restored a 1914 memorial to the Confederacy that was removed from Arlington National Cemetery. The monument features a classical female figure, crowned with olive leaves, representing the American South, alongside sanitized depictions of slavery.

In September, the US Military Academy at West Point, New York, also confirmed that a painting of Gen. Robert E. Lee dressed in his Confederate uniform was back on display in the school's library after being removed in 2022. The portrait shows a Black man leading Lee's horse in the background, which had been hanging in the library since the 1950s before it was placed in storage.

Henkel celebrates expansion of flagship manufacturing facility in Brandon, South Dakota to advance mobility and electronics innovations

Henkel Adhesive Technologies invests in future-ready operations serving the electric vehicle and electronics industries.

BRANDON, S.D., Sept. 25, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Henkel, a global leader in adhesives, sealants, and functional coatings, and leading manufacturer of well-known consumer brands, celebrated the expansion of its manufacturing facility in Brandon, South Dakota. With an investment of approximately \$30 million and additional support from South Dakota's government and economic development organizations, the site has doubled in size - from 35,000 to 70,000 square feet - enhancing its role as Henkel's North American flagship for thermal management and adhesives solutions.

This strategic expansion plays a pivotal role in delivering high-performance materials, manufactured under the leading LOCTITE® and BERGQUIST® brands, tailored to the evolving needs of the electric vehicle (EV) and electronics industries.

"This expansion marks a significant milestone in Henkel's journey to support the long-term growth of the EV and electronics markets with sustainable, high-performance solutions," said Bjoern Jackisch, Senior Vice President, Operations & Supply Chain, Henkel Adhesive Technologies. "Our investment in Brandon reflects our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and strong partnerships – with our customers and the community. We're proud to strengthen our footprint in North America and contribute to the future of mobility."

A Hub for Sustainable Manufacturing

Henkel's Brandon facility is the first in its North American Adhesive Technologies business to achieve LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, the most widely recognized green building rating system. The project is registered with the certification goal of LEED Silver® and underscores Henkel's dedication to sustainable operations and responsible growth.

Advanced Capabilities for Long-term Growth

The expansion includes the installation of additional mixers, enabling high-volume production of advanced thermal management and adhesive solutions. These technologies are essential for maintaining optimal operating temperatures and ensuring the long-term performance, safety, and durability of automotive batteries and electronic components. The upgraded facility now has the capacity to produce thermal management materials at a robust scale, supporting the long-term growth of the EV and electronics market across North America.

"This expansion is more than an investment in infrastructure - it's a testament to what's possible when industry, government, and community come together with a shared vision," stated Marcel Fleck, Senior Vice President, Automotive Components, Henkel Adhesive Technologies. "Aligned with the addition of our new North America Battery Application Center in Madison Heights, Michigan, we are deepening our collaboration with customers and accelerating innovation in EV and electronics and building a more sustainable future. We are grateful for the unwavering support of our local community and government officials, along with the dedicated employees, who together, have made this expanded facility a reality."

Empowering People and Digitizing Operations

The Brandon facility is home to over 100 talented employees whose pioneering spirit reflects Henkel's global values. The expansion also supports Henkel's long-term strategy to digitize operations for enhanced efficiency and sustainability, including paperless workflows and automated temperature and timing controls. The Brandon facility was built in 2009. Henkel's significant investment in Brandon was announced in October 2021, followed by the start of construction in September 2022.

About Henkel in North America

European countries meet to discuss a 'drone wall' as airspace violations mount

BRUSSELS (AP) — Representatives from European countries with borders close to Russia and Ukraine

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 25 of 57

are holding talks on Friday about building a "drone wall" to plug gaps in their defenses following several airspace violations.

Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have been working on a drone wall project, but in March, the European Union's executive branch rejected a joint Estonia-Lithuania request for funds to set one up.

Since then, Europe's borders have been increasingly tested by rogue drones. Russia has been blamed for some of the incidents, but denies that anything was done on purpose or that it played a role.

NATO jets scrambled on Sept. 10 to shoot down a number of Russian drones that breached Polish airspace, in an expensive response to a relatively cheap threat. Airports in Denmark were temporarily closed this week after drones were flown nearby.

EU Defense Commissioner Andrius Kubilius is chairing Friday's talks. The meeting, via video-link, will include those countries plus officials from Bulgaria, Denmark Romania and Slovakia, along with representatives from Ukraine and NATO.

The aim is to establish what equipment those countries have to counter drone intrusions, what more they might need to plug any gaps along NATO's eastern flank, and for Kubilius work out where EU funds might be found to help the effort.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said earlier this month that Europe "must heed the call of our Baltic friends and build a drone wall."

"This is not an abstract ambition. It is the bedrock of credible defense," von der Leyen told EU lawmakers.

It should be, she said, "a European capability developed together, deployed together, and sustained together, that can respond in real time. One that leaves no ambiguity as to our intentions. Europe will defend every inch of its territory."

Von der Leyen said that 6 billion euros (\$7 billion) would be earmarked to set up a drone alliance with Ukraine, whose armed forces are using the unmanned aerial vehicles to inflict around two-thirds of all military equipment losses sustained by Russian forces.

What to know about the international flotilla seeking to break Israel's blockade of Gaza

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Spain and Italy say they are sending navy ships to where a flotilla of boats carrying activists seeking to break Israel's blockade of Gaza is sailing, after the activists said they were attacked by drones near Greece.

The Global Sumud Flotilla said on Friday it was preparing to set sail on the final leg to Gaza after being targeted by drones and communications jamming, with several explosions occurring on or near some of the boats. Some of the vessels were damaged, but no injuries were reported.

Here's what to know about the flotilla.

The flotilla's goal

Organizers say the flotilla includes 52 mostly small vessels carrying activists from dozens of countries. They are carrying a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid, mainly food and medicine, for Palestinians in the besieged enclave of Gaza.

The 23-month war has led to a humanitarian catastrophe in the territory that has seen much of it reduced to rubble. The world's leading authority on the food crisis has declared famine in Gaza's largest city.

Activists hope their actions will focus attention on the plight of Palestinians. They say the flotilla is the largest attempt to date to break Israel's maritime blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has now lasted 18 years, long predating the current war in Gaza.

Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from importing arms, while critics consider it collective punishment.

The boats' journey

The core vessels set sail from Spain on Sept. 1, heading east across the Mediterranean Sea, and have been joined by boats from other countries along the way.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 26 of 57

The flotilla includes larger vessels that are providing support and provisions for smaller boats.

Participants include high-profile activists such as Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and former Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau, as well as members of Italy's parliament and the European parliament. Organizers say delegates from 46 countries had committed to participating, with activists including military veterans, doctors, clergy and lawyers.

The bulk of the flotilla was sailing south of the Greek island of Crete on Thursday, heading eastwards. Organizers said they expected to reach the Gaza area within a week.

Drone attacks

Organizers have reported at least three separate instances of participating boats being targeted by drones: twice in Tunisia on Sept. 8 and 9, and once while sailing south of Greece in the early hours of Wednesday.

In the latest attack, the flotilla said it was targeted during the night by "unidentified drones and communications jamming." Activists said "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.

Thunberg said on Thursday that she expects the attacks to intensify in the coming days, adding in an online post: "But we continue undeterred. And the closer we are to Gaza, the bigger grows the risk of escalation towards us."

Israel vows to block the boats

Israel said Thursday it had no problem with Italy and Spain's plan to send rescue ships to accompany the flotilla but renewed strong criticism of the aid initiative — warning that the boats would not be allowed to reach Gaza.

"The real purpose of this flotilla is provocation and serving Hamas, certainly not humanitarian effort," Israeli Foreign Ministry official Eden Bar Tal said. "Israel will not allow any vessel to enter the active combat zone."

Bar Tal warned the activists against attempting to reach Gaza. "Any further refusal will put the responsibility on the flotilla organizers," he said, without elaborating.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to questions regarding Wednesday's drone attack.

Spain and Italy ready navy ships

Italy and Spain said they were sending military ships to provide assistance and possible rescues if needed.

"The Spanish Government demands that international law be complied with and that the right of our citizens to navigate the Mediterranean safely be respected," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said.

Spanish officials said a navy offshore patrol vessel, the Furor, was being prepared to sail from the Mediterranean port of Cartagena.

Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto condemned the drone attack on civilian boats as "totally unacceptable" during a parliamentary address Thursday. A day after Premier Giorgia Meloni delivered one of her toughest criticisms of Israel's actions in Gaza at the U.N. General Assembly, Italy was sending an Italian navy ship ready to assist the flotilla if needed.

Crosetto urged the flotilla to offload aid instead in Cyprus, suggesting Italy and the Catholic Church could deliver it safely to Palestinians. He emphasized that Italy couldn't guarantee the flotilla's security once it entered another country's waters, noting Israel might view it as a "hostile act."

Cypriot deputy government spokesman Yiannis Antoniou said Israel had stated its willingness to accept the aid from Cyprus. "Cyprus is ready to assist if any request for help is made," he said.

Flotilla organizers rejected the Cyprus proposal and vowed to continue on to Gaza.

EU warns against use of force

In Athens, activists staged a protest outside the foreign ministry, urging the government to condemn the drone attacks, provide naval protection to the flotilla, and join other European nations in formally recognizing Palestinian statehood.

"I think (recognition) is the very least they could do," protest organizer Mariketi Stasinou told The As-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 27 of 57

sociated Press. "But beyond that, more immediate measures are needed to have real impact and show meaningful solidarity with the Palestinian people."

U.N. Human Rights Office spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan called for an investigation, while the European Union also warned against the use of any force. "The freedom of navigation under international law must be upheld," said Eva Hrnčirová, a European Commission spokesperson.

Past attempts to break Israel's blockade of Gaza

It is not the first time activists trying to break Israel's Gaza blockade 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 maritime blockade of Gaza. Nine Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American on board were killed.

The current war

The war began on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel and killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 others hostage. Israel says its offensive is aimed at pressuring Hamas to surrender and return the remaining 48 hostages, about 20 of whom Israel believes are still alive. Most of the rest were released in ceasefires or other deals.

The Israeli offensive has killed more than 65,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It does not say how many were civilians or combatants, but says around half were women and children.

Trump to put import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, kitchen cabinets, furniture and heavy trucks

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he will put import taxes of 100% on pharmaceutical drugs, 50% on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, 30% on upholstered furniture and 25% on heavy trucks starting on Oct. 1.

The posts on his social media site showed that Trump's devotion to tariffs did not end with the trade frameworks and import taxes that were launched in August, a reflection of the president's confidence that taxes will help to reduce the government's budget deficit while increasing domestic manufacturing.

While Trump did not provide a legal justification for the tariffs, he appeared to stretch the bounds of his role as commander-in-chief by stating on Truth Social that the taxes on imported kitchen cabinets and sofas were needed "for National Security and other reasons."

Under the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the administration launched a Section 232 investigation in April about the impacts on national security from pharmaceutical drug and truck imports. The Commerce Department launched a 232 investigation into timber and lumber in March, though it's unclear whether the furniture tariffs stem from that.

The tariffs are another dose of uncertainty for the U.S. economy with a solid stock market but a weakening outlook for jobs and elevated inflation. These new taxes on imports could pass through to consumers in the form of higher prices and dampen hiring, a process that economic data suggests is already underway.

"We have begun to see goods prices showing through into higher inflation," Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned in a recent news conference, adding that higher costs for goods account for "most" or potentially "all" of the increase in inflation levels this year.

The president has pressured Powell to resign, arguing that the Fed should cut its benchmark interest rates more aggressively because inflation is no longer a concern. Fed officials have stayed cautious on rate cuts because of the uncertainty created by tariffs.

Trump said on Truth Social that the pharmaceutical tariffs would not apply to companies that are building manufacturing plants in the United States, which he defined as either "breaking ground" or being "under construction." It was unclear how the tariffs would apply to companies that already have factories in the U.S.

In 2024, America imported nearly \$233 billion in pharmaceutical and medicinal products, according to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 28 of 57

the Census Bureau. The prospect of prices doubling for some medicines could send shock waves to voters as health care expenses, as well as the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, potentially increase.

The pharmaceutical drug announcement was shocking as Trump has previously suggested that tariffs would be phased in over time so that companies had time to build factories and relocate production. On CNBC in August, Trump said he would start by charging a "small tariff" on pharmaceuticals and raise the rate over a year or more to 150% and even 250%.

According to the White House, the threat of tariffs earlier this year contributed to many major pharmaceutical companies, including Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, Roche, Bristol Myers Squibb and Eli Lilly, among others, to announce investments in U.S. production.

Pascal Chan, vice president for strategic policy and supply chains at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, warned that the tariffs could harm Americans' health with "immediate price hikes, strained insurance systems, hospital shortages, and the real risk of patients rationing or foregoing essential medicines."

The new tariffs on cabinetry could further increase the costs for homebuilders at a time when many people seeking to buy a house feel priced out by the mix of housing shortages and high mortgage rates. The National Association of Realtors on Thursday said there were signs of price pressures easing as sales listings increased 11.7% in August from a year ago, but the median price for an existing home was \$422,600.

Trump said that foreign-made heavy trucks and parts are hurting domestic producers that need to be defended.

"Large Truck Company Manufacturers, such as Peterbilt, Kenworth, Freightliner, Mack Trucks, and others, will be protected from the onslaught of outside interruptions," Trump posted.

Trump has long maintained that tariffs are the key to forcing companies to invest more in domestic factories. He has dismissed fears that importers would simply pass along much of the cost of the taxes to consumers and businesses in the form of higher prices.

His broader country-by-country tariffs relied on declaring an economic emergency based on a 1977 law, a drastic tax hike that two federal courts said exceeded Trump's authority as president. The Supreme Court is set to hear the case in November.

The president continues to claim that inflation is no longer a challenge for the U.S. economy, despite evidence to the contrary. The consumer price index has increased 2.9% over the past 12 months, up from an annual pace of 2.3% in April, when Trump first launched a sweeping set of import taxes.

Nor is there evidence that the tariffs are creating factory jobs or more construction of manufacturing facilities. Since April, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that manufacturers cut 42,000 jobs and builders have downsized by 8,000.

"There's no inflation," Trump told reporters Thursday. "We're having unbelievable success."

Still, Trump also acknowledged that his tariffs against China had hurt American farmers, who lost out on sales of soybeans. The president separately promised on Thursday to divert tariff revenues to the farmers hurt by the conflict, just as he did during his first term in 2018 and 2019 when his tariffs led to retaliation against the agricultural sector.

Ex-FBI Director James Comey indicted after Trump pushes for prosecution of longtime foe

By ERIC TUCKER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — James Comey was charged Thursday with lying to Congress in a criminal case filed days after President Donald Trump appeared to urge his attorney general to prosecute the former FBI director and other perceived political enemies.

The indictment makes Comey the first former senior government official involved in one of Trump's chief grievances, the long-concluded investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, to face prosecution. Trump has for years derided that investigation as a "hoax" and a "witch hunt" despite multiple government reviews showing Moscow interfered on behalf of the Republican's campaign, and has made clear his desire for retribution.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 29 of 57

The criminal case is likely to deepen concerns that the Justice Department under Attorney General Pam Bondi is being weaponized in pursuit of investigations and now prosecutions of public figures the president regards as his political enemies. It was filed as the White House has taken steps to exert influence in unprecedented ways on the department, blurring the line between law and politics at an agency where independence in prosecutorial decision-making is a foundational principle.

Trump on Thursday hailed the indictment as "JUSTICE FOR AMERICA!" Bondi, a Trump loyalist, and FBI Director Kash Patel, a longtime vocal critic of the Russia investigation, issued similar statements. "No one is above the law," Bondi said.

Comey, in a video he posted after his indictment, said: "My heart is broken for the Department of Justice but I have great confidence in the federal judicial system, and I'm innocent. So let's have a trial."

Comey was fired months into Trump's first administration and since then has remained a top target for Trump supporters seeking retaliation related to the Russia investigation. He was singled out by name in a Saturday social media post in which Trump appeared to appeal directly to Bondi bring charges against Comey and complained that Justice Department investigations into his foes had not resulted in criminal cases.

"We can't delay any longer, it's killing our reputation and credibility," Trump wrote, referencing the fact that he himself had been indicted and impeached multiple times. "JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!"

Turmoil in the office that filed the case

The office that filed the case against Comey, the Eastern District of Virginia, was thrown into turmoil last Friday following the resignation of chief prosecutor Erik Siebert, who had not charged Comey and had faced pressure to bring charges against another Trump target, New York Attorney General Letitia James, in a mortgage fraud investigation.

The following evening, Trump lamented in a Truth Social post aimed at the attorney general that department investigations had not resulted in prosecutions. He nominated as the new U.S. Attorney Lindsey Halligan, a White House aide who had been one of Trump's personal lawyers but has not previously served as a federal prosecutor.

Halligan had rushed to present the case to a grand jury this week because prosecutors evaluating whether Comey lied to Congress during testimony on Sept. 30, 2020, had until Tuesday to bring a case before the five-year statute of limitations expired. The push to move forward came even as prosecutors in the office had detailed in a memo concerns about the pursuit of an indictment.

The sparse two-count indictment does not deal with the substance of the Russian investigation but instead consists of charges of making a false statement and obstructing a congressional proceeding.

It accuses Comey of lying to the Senate Judiciary Committee when he said he had not authorized anyone else at the FBI to be an anonymous source in news reports about a particular investigation. Though the indictment does not mention the investigation or its subject, it appears from the context to refer to an FBI inquiry related to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who ran for president against Trump in 2016.

It also alleges that he did "corruptly endeavor to influence, obstruct and impede the due and proper exercise" of the Senate's inquiry.

Lingering anger over the Russia investigation

Trump has for years railed against both a finding by U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia preferred him to Clinton, a Democrat, in the 2016 election as well as criminal investigation that tried to determine whether his campaign had conspired with Moscow to sway the outcome of that race.

Prosecutors led by special counsel Robert Mueller did not establish that Trump or his associates criminally colluded with Russia, but they did find that Trump's campaign had welcomed Moscow's assistance.

The indictment comes against the backdrop of a Trump administration effort to recast the Russia investigation as the outgrowth of an effort under Democratic President Barack Obama to overhype Moscow's interference in the election and to undermine the legitimacy of Trump's victory.

Administration officials, including CIA Director John Ratcliffe and Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, have declassified a series of documents meant to chip away at the strength of an Obama-era intelligence assessment that said Moscow had engaged in a broad campaign of interference at the direc-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 30 of 57

tion of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A senior Justice Department official in Republican President George W. Bush's administration, Comey was picked by Obama to lead the FBI in 2013 and was director when the bureau opened the Russia investigation in the summer of 2016.

Comey's relationship with Trump was strained from the start and was exacerbated when Comey resisted a request by Trump at a private White House dinner to pledge personal loyalty to the president. That overture so unnerved the FBI director that he documented it in a contemporaneous memorandum.

Trump fired Comey in May 2017, an action later investigated by Mueller for potential obstruction of justice.

After being let go, Comey authorized a close friend to share with a reporter the substance of an unclassified memo that documented an Oval Office request from Trump to shut down an FBI investigation into his first national security adviser, Michael Flynn. Trump and his allies later branded Comey a leaker, with the president even accusing him of treason. Comey himself has called Trump "ego driven" and likened him to a mafia don.

The government's handling of the Trump-Russia investigation is among the most studied chapters of modern American history, with multiple reviews and reports dedicated to it, and yet prosecutors have not pursued cases against senior FBI officials.

Prosecutors in the first Trump Justice Department declined to prosecute Comey following an inspector general review into his handling of memos documenting his conversations with Trump in the weeks before he was fired. He also was not charged by a special counsel, John Durham, who scrutinized the FBI's handling of the Trump-Russia investigation.

Earlier this year, the department fired Comey's daughter, Maurene Comey, from her job as a prosecutor in the Southern District of New York. She has since sued, saying the termination was carried out without any explanation and was done for political reasons.

Separately, Comey's son-in-law, Troy Edwards, resigned as a federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of Virginia minutes after Comey was indicted. Troy Edwards wrote in a one-sentence resignation letter addressed to Halligan that he quit his job "to uphold my oath to the Constitution and the country."

Arizona jury convicts man in string of shootings that killed 8 in metro Phoenix

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and SEJAL GOVINDARAO Associated Press

Phoenix (AP) — An Arizona man was convicted Thursday on eight murder charges for a string of fatal shootings that targeted random victims and his own mother and stepfather over a three-week span.

The crimes in late 2017 happened during a time of unease in metro Phoenix when people were scared to go out at night or drive on freeways because of two other serial shooting cases in the summer of 2015.

While details trickled out on those cases, the killings Cleophus Cooksey Jr. was accused of generated no publicity until his arrest in 2018 — a surprising development given that the public hadn't been told about investigators trying to find a serial killer.

Cooksey, 43, is now facing the death penalty when he is sentenced Monday on murder convictions, as well as on kidnapping, sexual assault and armed robbery in a trial that has spanned months.

Cooksey's victims in Phoenix and nearby Glendale included two men found dead in a parked car, a security guard shot while walking to his girlfriend's apartment and a woman who was kidnapped, her body found in an alley after she was sexually assaulted.

Cooksey, an aspiring musician, knew some of the victims but wasn't acquainted with others, police said. Authorities never offered a motive.

Cooksey looked down at the defense table as the verdicts were read. He has maintained his innocence. 'He took my mom'

Adriana Rodriguez, the daughter of victim Maria Villanueva, said after the verdict that her family was finally getting closure, a day they had feared would never come.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 31 of 57

"He took my mom, the only support system that I had," Rodriguez added as she broke into tears.

The killings started four months after Cooksey was released from prison on a manslaughter conviction for his participation in a 2001 strip club robbery in which an accomplice was fatally shot.

A friend of Cooksey's mother, Rene Cooksey, and stepfather, Edward Nunn, said the defendant deserved a death sentence. Eric Hampton said he watched Cooksey grow up and attended Thursday's hearing to see if the defendant showed sympathy for his victims.

"I thought maybe he had a little heart. But he doesn't have any heart at all, you know, to actually do these things to people and actually the worst part, kill your own mom," Hampton said outside the courthouse.

"He's a monster, and I'm just hoping that when the sentencing phase of this is over that, you know, that they put him to sleep," he added.

The Maricopa County Attorney's Office, which prosecuted Cooksey, declined to comment on the verdict.

The Associated Press left phone and email messages for Robert Reinhardt, an attorney for Cooksey.

A trail of victims

The first victims, Parker Smith, 21, and Andrew Remillard, 27, were found Nov. 27, 2017. They had been fatally shot while sitting in a vehicle in a parking lot. Five days later, security guard Salim Richards, 31, was shot to death while walking to his girlfriend's apartment.

Over the next two weeks, Latorrie Beckford, 29, and Kristopher Cameron, 21, were killed in separate shootings at apartment complexes in Glendale, and the body of Villanueva, 43, was found naked from the waist down in an alley in Phoenix. Authorities said Cooksey's DNA was found on her body.

Finally, on Dec. 17, 2017, Cooksey answered the door when officers responded to a shots-fired call at his mother's apartment. He told officers who had noticed a large amount of blood that he had cut his hand and was the only one home. Police say when an officer tried to detain him, Cooksey threatened to slit the officer's throat. Rene Cooksey, 56, and Nunn, 54, were found dead.

On the sofa in the living room, investigators said they found Richards' gun, which was later linked to the killings of Beckford, Cameron and Villanueva. The keys to Villanueva's vehicle also were found there, and police say Cooksey was wearing Richards' necklace when he was arrested.

Police also suspected Cooksey of a ninth killing — that of his ex-girlfriend's brother. But prosecutors ultimately declined to charge him in the December 2017 shooting death of Jesus Real at his home in Avondale.

Cooksey's trial was repeatedly delayed by the pandemic. In a January 2020 handwritten letter to a judge, Cooksey said he was in a hurry to prove "my charges are no more than false accusations." He said he was not a rapist or murderer: "I am a music artist."

Earlier serial shootings in Phoenix

Cooksey's arrest followed two other serial shooting cases in metro Phoenix.

In 2015, 11 shootings occurred on Phoenix-area freeways between late August and early September. No one was seriously injured, and charges were later dismissed against the only person charged.

The next case occurred over nearly a one-year period ending in July 2016. Bus driver Aaron Juan Saucedo was arrested in April 2017 and charged with first-degree murder in attacks that killed nine people.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against Saucedo with a trial scheduled for December. He has declared his innocence.

Human remains in Washington state identified as Travis Decker, wanted for killing his daughters

WENATCHEE, Wash. (AP) — Forensic tests confirmed that human remains found on a remote mountain in Washington state this month were those of Travis Decker, a former soldier wanted for killing his three young daughters last spring, officials confirmed Thursday.

His remains were discovered on a steep, remote, wooded slope part way up Grindstone Mountain in central Washington, less than a mile (1.6 km) from the campsite where the bodies of 9-year-old Paityn Decker, 8-year-old Evelyn Decker and 5-year-old Olivia Decker were found on June 2, the Chelan County Sheriff's Office said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 32 of 57

Law enforcement teams had been searching more than three months for Decker, 32, before the sheriff's office announced last week it had located human remains believed to be his. Sheriff Mike Morrison said Thursday that DNA tests on clothing found at the scene as well as from the remains matched Decker.

The sheriff said investigators wanted to honor the girls' memory by solving the case, and he apologized to their mother, Whitney Decker, that it took so long.

"I hope you can rest easier at night knowing that Travis is accounted for," Morrison said.

Decker had been with his daughters on a scheduled visit but failed bring them back to his former wife, who a year ago said that his mental health issues had worsened and that he had become increasingly unstable.

He was often living out of his truck, she said in a petition seeking to restrict him from having overnight visits with them.

A deputy found Decker's truck as well as the girls' bodies three days after Decker failed to return them to their mother's house. Autopsies found the girls had been suffocated.

Decker was an infantryman in the Army from March 2013 to July 2021 and deployed to Afghanistan for four months in 2014. He had training in navigation, survival and other skills, authorities said, and once spent more than two months living in the backwoods off the grid.

More than 100 officials with an array of state and federal agencies searched hundreds of square miles, much of it mountainous and remote, by land, water and air during the on and off search. The U.S. Marshals Service offered a reward of up to \$20,000 for information leading to his capture.

At one point early in the search, authorities thought they spotted Decker near a remote alpine lake after receiving a tip from hikers.

Officials say the coroner's office continues to work on determining the cause and time of his death.

Trump signs executive order supporting proposed deal to put TikTok under US ownership

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday that he says will allow TikTok to continue operating in the United States in a way that meets national security concerns.

Trump's order will enable an American-led group of investors to buy the app from China's ByteDance, though the deal is not yet finalized and also requires China's approval.

Much is still unknown about the actual deal in the works, but Trump said at a White House signing ceremony Thursday that Chinese leader Xi Jinping has agreed to move forward with it.

Vice President JD Vance added that "there was some resistance on the Chinese side, but the fundamental thing that we wanted to accomplish is that we wanted to keep TikTok operating, but we also wanted to make sure that we protected Americans' data privacy as required by law."

The Chinese embassy in Washington didn't immediately respond to an Associated Press inquiry seeking confirmation of China's approval.

President Joe Biden signed legislation passed by Congress last year that would ban TikTok unless ByteDance sold its U.S. assets to an American company by early this year. Trump has repeatedly signed orders that have allowed TikTok to keep operating in the U.S. as his administration tries to reach an agreement for the sale of the company.

The executive order itself is a declaration by the president that the proposed deal meets the security concerns laid out in that law. And it gives all negotiating parties an additional 120-day reprieve in order to finalize it.

Young people especially "really wanted this to happen," Trump said.

Any major change to the popular video platform could have a huge impact on how Americans — particularly young adults and teenagers — consume information online.

About 43% of U.S. adults under the age of 30 say they regularly get news from TikTok, higher than any

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 33 of 57

other social media app including YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, according to a Pew Research Center report published Thursday.

Asked if he'd want a U.S.-owned TikTok algorithm to suggest more content promoting his Make America Great Again movement, Trump said he'd make it "100% MAGA" if he felt he could, but he intends for "every philosophy, every policy" to be "treated right."

Vance said the deal ensures that "American investors will actually control the algorithm" that determines the content seen on the social media app. He said more information about the deal will be revealed in the coming weeks.

Who will control the new TikTok venture?

Under the terms of the deal that have so far been revealed by the White House, the app will be spun off into a new U.S. joint venture owned by a consortium of American investors — including tech giant Oracle and investment firm Silver Lake Partners.

Though the details have yet to be finalized, the investment group's controlling stake in the new venture would be around 80%. While ByteDance is expected to have a stake in the new venture, it would be less than 20% — a portion of the ownership reserved for foreign investors. The board running the new platform would be controlled by U.S. investors. ByteDance will be represented by one person on the board, but that individual will be excluded from any security-related matters.

TikTok's new owners include many whose business or political interests are tied to Trump, including Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison and Rupert Murdoch, raising questions about whether political influence will be exerted into the platform.

Although he stepped down as Oracle's CEO more than a decade ago, Ellison remains heavily involved as chairman and chief technology officer. Now 81, he could be in line to become a behind-the-scenes media power player, having already helped finance Skydance's recently completed merger with Paramount, a deal engineered by his son, David.

Trump said Dell founder Michael Dell will also be an investor in the new venture.

TikTok users could now "get the editorial policies of the people who now have control of the company," said David Greene, civil liberties director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation. "It won't be 100% MAGA. The question is how it will treat criticism of him and people he likes."

What we know about the algorithm powering the platform

The recommendation algorithm that has steered millions of users into an endless stream of video shorts has been central in the security debate over TikTok. China previously maintained the algorithm must remain under Chinese control by law. But a U.S. regulation that Congress passed with bipartisan support said any divestment of TikTok must mean the platform cut ties with ByteDance.

American officials previously warned the algorithm — which is a complex system of rules and calculations that platforms use to deliver content to your feed — is vulnerable to manipulation by Chinese authorities, but no evidence has ever been presented by U.S. officials showing that China has attempted to do so.

Trump's order says that a licensed copy of ByteDance's algorithm — "retrained" solely with U.S. data — will power the new U.S. version of the app. The joint venture will control and monitor the code and all content-moderation decisions. Administration officials say the retraining will nullify any risk of Chinese interference and influence.

It's not clear if the U.S. version of TikTok would be a different experience than what users in the rest of the world are used to. Any noticeable changes made to a social media platform's service raises the risk of alienating its audience, said Jasmine Enberg, an analyst for the research firm eMarketer.

In a prime example of how a change of control can reshape a once-popular social media platform, billionaire Elon Musk triggered an almost immediate backlash after he completed his takeover of Twitter nearly three years ago.

But Musk made extremely visible changes, including changing its name to X, pulling back on its content moderation and adding exclusive features for paid subscribers. The changes that gradually occur while different data is fed into the U.S. copy of TikTok's algorithm could be unnoticeable to most of its audience.

"Social media is just as much about the culture as it is the technology, and how users will take to new

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 34 of 57

ownership and potentially a new version of the app is still an open question," Enberg said.

What motivated China to make this deal

Beijing once called the demand that TikTok be spun off from its Chinese parent company an act of "robbery," but Chinese officials changed their tune as the U.S.-China trade war progressed.

A TikTok deal would allow China to keep the ball rolling on trade negotiations, said Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Washington-based think tank Stimson Center. "TikTok alone does not compare with the importance of amicable U.S.-China relations."

Dimitar Gueorguiev, associate professor of political science at Syracuse University, argues that Beijing is more interested in retaining access to U.S. technology and services, at least in the short term, so it can build up self-sufficiency in semiconductor, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing.

"That is the front line of technological competition," Gueorguiev said. "TikTok, by contrast, is a maturing consumer app with diminishing strategic weight."

Trump says he will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump vowed Thursday not to allow Israel to annex the occupied West Bank, offering strong assurances that he'd block a move that Arab leaders in the region have staunchly opposed.

Asked about Israel officials suggesting in recent weeks that their government could move to seize control of at least some parts of the West Bank, Trump was blunt.

"I will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank," he told reporters in the Oval Office while signing executive orders unrelated to foreign policy. "I will not allow it. It's not going to happen."

Possible annexation has been floated in Israel in response to a string of countries — including key U.S. allies like the United Kingdom and Canada — moving to recognize a Palestinian state. Trump said he'd spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but that he'd be firm in not allowing annexation, adding, "It's been enough. It's time to stop now."

Trump prides himself on his full-throated support for Israel, but has also sought to broker an end to the fighting in Israel's ongoing war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. His comments constituted a rare instance of potential pushback against top Israeli officials — even as Trump has continued to demand the release of hostages seized by Hamas.

The timing is also fraught, given that Israel is waging a major offensive in famine-stricken Gaza City, while expanding settlements in the West Bank, and Netanyahu is scheduled to visit the White House on Monday — his fourth trip to Washington since Trump's second term began in January.

Unlike Gaza, the West Bank is administered by the Palestinian Authority.

Trump has long bragged about his close relationship with Netanyahu. But the president has faced pressure from Arab leaders, who have publicly expressed concerns about Israeli annexation. The United Arab Emirates has warned that any Israeli move to annex would be a "red line."

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three territories to form their future state. They, and much of the international community, say annexation would all but end any remaining possibility of a two-state solution, which is widely seen internationally as the only way to resolve decades of Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel's current government strongly opposes Palestinian statehood and supports the eventual annexation of much of the West Bank.

There is some skepticism about Trump's ability to compel Netanyahu one way or the other since the president criticized Israel's recent attack on Hamas officials in Qatar, but hasn't offered any major consequences as a result.

Netanyahu leads Israel's most nationalist government in history, and has been under pressure from key coalition allies to deepen Israel's control over the occupied territory. They were hoping that Trump's history of broad support for Israel's policies could pave the way for an expansion of Israeli control over the

occupied territory.

Not acting toward annexation might ultimately threaten Netanyahu's governing coalition at home, though expressing willingness not to move forward also could win concessions from the Trump administration.

More than half a million Jewish settlers now live in the West Bank in some 130 settlements. The international community largely views the settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Western countries are outraged by Israel's intensifying offensive in Gaza, and several have recognized Palestinian statehood, which is opposed by Trump and the U.S. but has been a major issue at the United Nations General Assembly this week.

Recognizing statehood is meant to galvanize support for a two-state solution. Some 10 countries, including Britain, France and Australia, have done so this week — hoping to revive the long-moribund peace process, a move that the U.S. and Israel have vehemently rejected.

Germany, one of Israel's closest allies, has not joined the calls for a ceasefire or the push for Palestinian statehood, but has halted some military exports.

Those actions have been welcomed by Palestinians across Gaza and the West Bank, but many on the ground continue to express doubt that it can improve their dire circumstances as Israel's offensive continues.

What to know about Arizona serial killings that resulted in 8 murder convictions

PHOENIX (AP) — An Arizona man was convicted Thursday on eight murder charges for a string of fatal shootings in Phoenix and neighboring Glendale after a trial that spanned several months.

A jury in Phoenix found Cleophus Cooksey Jr., 43, guilty in the killings of eight people that targeted random victims and the defendant's mother and stepfather over a three-week span in 2017. He was also found guilty of other crimes including kidnapping, sexual assault and armed robbery.

Authorities never offered a motive. Cooksey maintained his innocence at trial.

The sentencing portion of the trial begins Monday, and prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Here's a timeline of the serial killings:

Nov. 27, 2017

Andrew Remillard, 27, and Parker Smith, 21, are found dead with gunshot wounds to the head inside a parked car in Phoenix.

Dec. 2, 2017

Salim Richards, 31, is shot and killed while walking in west Phoenix. His 9 mm Glock handgun and a necklace are missing.

Dec. 13, 2017

Latorrie Beckford, 29, is found shot twice in the head in the common area of a Glendale apartment complex.

Dec. 15, 2017

Kristopher Cameron, 21, is shot and killed upon arriving at a Glendale apartment complex to complete a drug transaction with Cooksey, police say.

Dec. 15, 2017

About 90 minutes after Cameron was shot, Maria Villanueva, 43, parks her car at another complex 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away. Surveillance cameras show an unknown man approach her and then drive away in Villanueva's car with her in the front passenger seat. She is found partially nude and shot to death in a Phoenix alley the next morning.

Dec. 17, 2017

Police responding to gunfire at a central Phoenix apartment find Cooksey at the scene and, after a brief altercation, take him into custody. They find the bodies of his mother, Rene Cooksey, 56, and her husband, Edward Nunn, 54, behind the front door. Both had been shot to death.

Investigators said they found Richards' gun, which was later linked to the killings of Beckford, Cameron

and Villanueva. The keys to Villanueva's vehicle also were found there, and police say Cooksey was wearing Richards' necklace when he was arrested.

LA County response to deadly fires slowed by lack of resources, outdated alert process, report says

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A lack of resources and outdated policies for sending emergency alerts led to delayed evacuation warnings as flames began consuming neighborhoods during deadly Los Angeles-area wildfires in January, according to an outside review.

The Independent After-Action Report produced by the consulting firm McChrystal Group was commissioned by Los Angeles County supervisors just weeks after the Eaton and Palisades fires killed more than 30 people and destroyed thousands of homes in and around Pacific Palisades and Altadena.

The report released Thursday says a series of weaknesses, including "outdated policies, inconsistent practices and communications vulnerabilities," hampered the county's response.

Interviews with survivors and an Associated Press analysis of available data found evacuation orders for some neighborhoods of Altadena where the Eaton Fire swept through came long after houses burned down. AP reporting also showed similar delays for the Palisades Fire, though the Los Angeles Police Department initially handled evacuation management. The report sheds more light on flaws in the county alert system.

Staffing shortages

The report cites critical staffing shortages including a high number of sheriff's deputy vacancies and an under-resourced Office of Emergency Management. In addition, first responders and incident commanders were unable to consistently share information due to unreliable cellular connectivity, inconsistent field reporting methods, and the use of various unconnected communication platforms.

"While frontline responders acted decisively and, in many cases, heroically, in the face of extraordinary conditions, the events underscored the need for clearer policies, stronger training, integrated tools, and improved public communication," the report says.

It is not intended to investigate or assess blame, county officials said in a news release.

"This isn't about pointing fingers. It's about learning lessons, improving safety, and restoring public trust," said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, whose district includes Altadena.

The Office of Emergency Management began putting together its staffing plan for predicted heavy winds Jan. 3, four days before the Palisades and Eaton fires ignited. But an experienced staffer had been sent out of town for a training event. That meant several less-knowledgeable staffers were in key positions, according to the report.

They were also working with some new emergency notification software provided by an existing vendor: The county signed the expanded contract with emergency alert company Genasys in November, just before the holidays. Only four staff members were trained on Genasys when the fires hit, according to the report.

The review also found that the process to communicate an evacuation decision to the public was slow, convoluted and involved multiple leadership roles across county-level departments.

In the case of the Palisades Fire, the Los Angeles County Fire Department and Sheriff's Department identified areas that required evacuation. They then communicated those areas to a member of the County's Office of Emergency Management at the Incident Command center. This person then made a phone call or sent a text message to another OEM staffer located in the Emergency Operations Center, who then updated the system put in place by the third-party vendor and triggered an alert to the public.

Alerting the public

During the January inferno, according to the report, this process took between 20 and 30 minutes. That's an improvement over the old system that took between 30 and 60 minutes for the public to receive notice of an evacuation, the report said.

Still, many of the county's methods to alert the public require opting in.

Some of the evacuation alerts required residents to click a separate link to get complete information,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 37 of 57

hindering messaging. The communication system used for alerts did not provide complete information about the fire's progression. Power outages and cell tower issues further hindered evacuation notices and the fire was moving too fast to keep up, the report found.

Before the fire, the county sent out a handful of warnings about the incoming Santa Ana wind event and amplified National Weather Service messaging on social media and in news releases, but there was no official, stand-alone preparedness messaging provided by the county.

Challenges during evacuations

Some sheriff's department vehicles were aiding with evacuations in the Palisades area when the Eaton Fire broke out across the county. Those units headed to help evacuate residents in Altadena, along with responders from other agencies including search and rescue teams and staff from a downtown LA jail.

Still, a shortage of vehicles hindered the sheriff's department response across neighborhoods where the Eaton Fire was burning.

"Vulnerable populations, especially older residents who were not monitoring alerts due to a digital divide and possible mobility challenges, faced increased risks of delayed evacuation," the authors wrote.

What went right

The authors praised the heroism of first responders including sheriff's deputies and county firefighters who evacuated senior care facilities, led public transit bus drivers through impacted neighborhoods and rescued people from burning homes.

"This heroic response was driven by urgency and their commitment to save lives, but it also added additional complexity to their responsibilities as they worked to maintain broader operational oversight in the field," the authors wrote.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to review the 133-page report when it meets next Tuesday.

The causes of the two fires are still under investigation.

After-action reports and investigations revealed issues with alert systems in other California blazes: in the 2017 Tubbs Fire, which killed 22 people in Santa Rosa; the 2018 Camp Fire, which killed 85 people in Paradise; the Woolsey fire, which started the same day and killed three in Malibu; as well as in Colorado's 2021 Marshall Fire, which destroyed more than 1,000 homes outside Denver; and in Hawaii's 2023 Lahaina Fire, which decimated that historic town and killed 102.

Hegseth abruptly summons top military commanders to a meeting in Virginia next week

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN, EMMA BURROWS and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has summoned the military's top officers — hundreds of generals and admirals — to a base in northern Virginia for a sudden meeting next week, according to three people familiar with the matter.

The directive did not offer a reason for the gathering next Tuesday of senior commanders of the one-star rank or higher and their top advisers at the Marine Corps base in Quantico. The people, who described the move as unusual, were not authorized to publicly discuss the sensitive plans and spoke Thursday on condition of anonymity.

The Pentagon's top spokesman, Sean Parnell, confirmed that Hegseth "will be addressing his senior military leaders early next week."

Across the military, there are 800 generals and admirals of all ranks. Many command thousands of service members and are stationed across the world in more than a dozen countries and time zones.

President Donald Trump didn't seem to know about the meeting when he was asked about it by reporters during an Oval Office appearance later Thursday.

"I'll be there if they want me, but why is that such a big deal?" Trump said.

Vice President JD Vance argued that the media had turned it into a "big story" and that it was "not particularly unusual that generals who report to" Hegseth are coming to speak with him.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 38 of 57

The meeting, first reported by The Washington Post, comes on the heels of several unusual and unexplained actions that Hegseth has taken involving military leaders.

In May, Hegseth ordered that the military cut 20% of its four-star general officers, directed an additional 10% cut from all general and flag officers across the force, and told the National Guard to shed 20% of its top positions.

In February, Hegseth fired Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the Navy's top officer, and Gen. James Slife, the Air Force's second highest officer, without explanation. He also relieved the military's top lawyers.

Since then, Hegseth has fired other military leaders without saying why. Most recently it was a general who led a military intelligence agency whose initial assessment of U.S. damage to Iranian nuclear sites in American strikes angered Trump.

Man who fired on ICE facility hated US government, sought to kill federal agents, officials say

By SEAN MURPHY and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The gunman who opened fire on an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Dallas hated the U.S. government and wanted to incite terror by killing federal agents, officials said Thursday, offering the first hint of a motive in the attack.

Citing handwritten notes found at his suburban home, authorities said 29-year-old Joshua Jahn set out to ambush the agency and then fatally shot himself following the assault.

The shooting at daybreak Wednesday targeted the ICE office building, including a van in a gated entryway that held detainees. One detainee was killed, and two others were critically wounded. No ICE personnel were hurt.

Jahn "specifically intended to kill ICE agents," firing at vehicles carrying ICE personnel, federal agents and detainees. "He also fired multiple shots in the windows of the office building where numerous ICE employees do their jobs every day," said Joseph Rothrock, agent in charge of the FBI's Dallas field office.

Jahn's notes indicated "that he did not expect to survive this event," Rothrock said. "He wanted to cause terror."

The gunman, who authorities said fired indiscriminately from a nearby rooftop, was involved in a "high degree of pre-attack planning," FBI Director Kash Patel said on the social platform X.

Patel quoted a note that said: "Hopefully this will give ICE agents real terror, to think, is there a sniper with AP rounds on that roof?" The note used an apparent abbreviation for armor-piercing bullets.

The attack happened as heightened immigration enforcement has generated a backlash against ICE agents and stirred fear in immigrant communities across the country.

The assailant appeared to have acted alone. Nancy Larson, the acting U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas, said investigators discovered the notes at Jahn's residence. Another note said, "Yes, it was just me." Other notes were sharply critical of ICE agents and indicated he hoped to avoid hurting any detainees.

Investigators have not found that the gunman was a member of any particular group or entity, Larson said. And while he broadly wrote about hatred of the federal government, he did not mention any federal agencies other than ICE, she said.

The gunman had also downloaded a document titled "Dallas County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management" containing a list of Homeland Security facilities, Patel said.

Hours before the shooting, the assailant conducted multiple internet searches for ballistics information and video of the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk on a Utah university campus this month, Patel said. Last month, the man searched for apps that tracked the presence of ICE agents, he added.

On Wednesday, Patel posted a photo on social media showing a bullet found at the scene with "ANTI-ICE" written on it. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem ordered more security at ICE facilities across the U.S., according to a post by the DHS on X.

Shooter arrived before dawn with a ladder

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 39 of 57

The ICE facility is along Interstate 35 East, just southwest of Dallas Love Field, a large airport serving the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, and blocks from hotels.

Jahn was seen driving into the area about 3 a.m. with a large ladder on top of his vehicle, Larson said. The ladder is believed to have been used to climb to the roof of a nearby building.

The gunfire started around 6:30 a.m., Larson said. Shots were sprayed along the length of the ICE facility, into the windows and into the van, she said.

Jahn legally obtained the bolt-action rifle used in the shooting in August, Rothrock said.

He "also acknowledged the potential for other casualties," Rothrock said. "He knew with a high likelihood ICE detainees would be transported that morning in the exact location where he was facing from his perch" atop the roof.

Following ICE procedures, the detainees were restrained inside the van, said Marcos Charles, field office director of enforcement and removal operations for ICE.

"Under gunfire, multiple federal agents ran into that fire to remove these individuals and to attempt to render lifesaving aid under the most dire circumstances," Rothrock said.

Authorities have not released the names of the victims.

Who was the gunman?

Noah Jahn described his brother as "unique" and told NBC News that the anti-ICE messages were surprising.

"He didn't have strong feelings about ICE as far as I knew," Noah Jahn said. "He wasn't interested in politics on either side as far as I knew."

He said the two grew up about 30 miles away in Allen, Texas, and that his brother took an interest in coding but was unemployed. Noah Jahn said he last saw his brother two weeks ago at their parents' house and that nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

A spokesperson for Collin College in nearby McKinney, said via email that a Joshua Jahn studied there "at various times" between 2013 and 2018.

In late 2017, Jahn drove cross-country to work a minimum-wage job harvesting marijuana for several months, said Ryan Sanderson, owner of a legal cannabis farm in Washington state.

ICE has been targeted elsewhere

Noem noted a recent uptick in targeting of ICE agents.

On July 4, attackers in black, military-style clothing opened fire outside the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, southwest of Dallas, federal prosecutors said. One police officer was wounded. At least 11 people have been charged in connection with the attack.

Days later, a man with an assault rifle fired dozens of rounds at federal agents leaving a Border Patrol facility in McAllen. The man, identified as Ryan Louis Mosqueda, injured a responding police officer before authorities shot and killed him.

Trump hosts Turkey's Erdogan as the US considers lifting a ban on F-35 sales to the NATO ally

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump held talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House on Thursday and signaled that the United States might soon lift its hold on sales of advanced fighter jets to Ankara.

During Trump's first term, the U.S. removed Turkey, a NATO ally, from its flagship F-35 fighter jet program after Turkey purchased an air defense system from Russia. U.S. officials worried that Turkey's use of Russia's S-400 surface-to-air missile system could be used to gather data on the capabilities of the F-35 and that the information could end up in Russian hands.

Trump started his two-hour meeting with Erdogan by offering hope that a resolution to the matter could be found during the leaders' talks.

"He needs certain things, and we need certain things, and we're going to come to a conclusion. You'll

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 40 of 57

know by the end of the day," Trump said. The president added to Erdogan, "And I think you'll be successful with buying the things" you would "like to buy."

The president, in a brief exchange with reporters as he bid farewell to Erdogan, called it a "good meeting" but did not offer further details. Trump later called the meeting "very conclusive on so many different things" and said announcements from both countries about the discussions would be coming out later.

It was Erdogan's first trip to the White House since 2019. The two leaders forged what Trump has described as a "very good relationship" during his first White House term.

Over the years, U.S. officials have cited concerns about Turkey's human rights record under Erdogan and the country's ties with Russia. Tensions between Turkey and Israel, another important American ally, over Gaza and Syria have made relations difficult with Turkey at times.

Trump, in remarks before reporters, focused his concerns on Turkey's continued economic relationship with Russia. Turkey has been one of the biggest buyers of Russian fossil fuel since the European Union announced in early 2023 it would boycott most Russian seaborne oil.

Since January 2023, Ankara has purchased more than \$90 billion in Russian oil, coal and natural gas. Only China and India have bought more from Russia in that period.

"The best thing he could do is not buy oil and gas from Russia," Trump said of Erdogan.

After their meeting, the U.S. president said he believed that Erdogan would stop buying oil from Russia — not that Turkey's leader had directly committed to doing so during their discussion.

"I don't want to say that" Erdogan agreed to stop the purchases, "but if I want him to, he will," Trump said.

Tom Barrack, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Trump's envoy to Syria, said the presidents discussed all the major issues in the U.S.-Turkey relationship, including Russia and the F-35 program, "with paths forward."

Asked if Turkey is amenable to cutting off its substantial oil purchases from Russia, Barrack replied, "You have to ask them."

Trump added that Erdogan is respected by both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"I think he could have a big influence if he wants to," Trump said.

The push on Erdogan to become more engaged in pressuring Putin comes after Trump earlier this week said he believed Ukraine could win back all territory lost to Russia in the war. It was a dramatic shift from Trump's repeated calls for Kyiv to make concessions to end the war.

Erdogan has made clear he is eager to see the hold on F-35s lifted, telling Trump that he came prepared to "thoroughly discuss" the issue.

The Turkish president was even blunter in a television interview this week. "I don't think it's very becoming of strategic partnership, and I don't think it's the right way to go," Erdogan said in an interview this week on Fox News Channel's "Special Report with Bret Baier."

Past reluctance to engage with Turkey

Democratic President Joe Biden's administration kept Erdogan, who has served as president since 2014 and was prime minister for more than a decade before that, at an arm's length during Biden's four years in office.

The reluctance to engage deeply was borne out of Turkey's record of democratic backsliding as well as Ankara's close ties to Moscow.

Opposition parties and human rights organizations have accused Erdogan of undermining democracy and curbing freedom of expression during his more than two decades in power. International observers say that baseless investigations and prosecutions of human rights activists, journalists, opposition politicians and others remain a persistent problem in Turkey.

Trump sees Erdogan as a critical partner and credible intermediary in his effort to find ends to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. The Republican's administration is also largely in sync with Turkey's approach to Syria as both nations piece together their posture toward the once isolated country after the fall of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad in December.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 41 of 57

Trump and European leaders have followed Erdogan in embracing Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, who once commanded a rebel group that was designated a foreign terrorist organization.

Trump also said that Erdogan deserves credit for backing the rebel forces that ousted Assad from Syria. "I think President Erdogan is the one responsible for Syria, for the successful fight in ridding Syria of its past leader," Trump said. "He doesn't take the responsibility, but it's actually a great achievement."

Trump's chief diplomat, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, met with al-Sharaa on Monday on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

Erdogan sees a key role for Turkey

Erdogan has sought to position his country as a point of stability in a tumultuous moment. He believes Turkey can play an essential role for European security and is able to span geopolitical divisions over Ukraine and Syria as well as U.S. tariffs, which have sparked a global trade war.

Turkey also believes it has emerged as a credible broker in the Black Sea region, preserving relations with both Ukraine and Russia.

Turkey is influential in neighboring Syria. The rebel groups it supported during the civil war took power in December. But the fall of Assad aggravated tense relations between Turkey and Israel.

Trump has urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be "reasonable" in his dealings with Ankara.

Erdogan on Tuesday took part in a group meeting hosted by Trump on the sidelines of the General Assembly, when Trump gathered the leaders of eight Arab and Muslim countries to discuss the war in Gaza.

Erdogan has been critical of Israel's handling of the war, which was launched after Hamas militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking about 250 people captive. More than 65,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and about 90% of homes in the territory have been destroyed or damaged.

Erdogan, in his U.N. address, alleged that Israeli forces have committed genocide, an allegation contested by Israel and United States.

Ryder Cup matchups for the opening session at Bethpage Black

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. (AP) — U.S. captain Keegan Bradley made sure a most anticipated Ryder Cup would get off to a most explosive start Friday at Bethpage Black. Bryson DeChambeau with all his power and energy will be leading off in foursomes for the Americans.

Europe counters with the equally fiery Jon Rahm, who has never lost a foursomes match.

DeChambeau will have Justin Thomas, perhaps the most outwardly passionate American, as his partner in the opening match. Rahm is with Tyrrell Hatton again. They also were sent off first two years ago at Marco Simone and delivered the first point for Europe.

Here's a brief look at the foursomes matches in the opening session:

Jon Rahm and Tyrrell Hatton, Europe vs. Bryson DeChambeau and Justin Thomas, United States

Talk about the Ryder Cup starting off with a bang. DeChambeau brings the muscle and the energy, and Thomas was viewed as the player Europe most wanted to beat in Rome because of his passion. Europe counters with Rahm and Hatton. They also were the lead match in Rome and cruised to a 4-and-3 to give Europe in its first point of 2023.

Ludvig Aberg and Matt Fitzpatrick, Europe, vs. Scottie Scheffler and Russell Henley, United States

European captain Luke Donald said he wanted to make some changes from what is essentially the same team from Rome. Aberg and Fitzpatrick will be playing for the first time together. Fitzpatrick is 0-3 in foursomes over two Ryder Cups. Scheffler and Henley formed a successful partnership in the Presidents Cup last year. Henley is the only Ryder Cup rookie playing the opening session for the Americans.

Rory McIlroy and Tommy Fleetwood, Europe, vs. Collin Morikawa and Harris English, United States

McIlroy and Fleetwood also were paired together in the opening session in Rome in the anchor match and registered a 2-and-1 victory. This European tandem won both its foursomes matches at Marco Simone. Morikawa is 2-1 in foursomes with two partners. English did not play foursomes when he made his Ryder

Cup debut at Whistling Straits.

Robert MacIntyre and Viktor Hovland, Europe, vs. Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay, United States
In another twist for Europe, Donald has moved Hovland off Aberg and put him with MacIntyre for the first time. MacIntyre, the lefty from Scotland, played only fourballs in his debut in 2023. Schauffele and Cantlay are viewed as a top U.S. team that dates to the 2019 Presidents Cup in Australia. They won both their team matches in 2021 and lost both their team matches in 2023.

Greenspan, Bernanke and Yellen urge Supreme Court to let Lisa Cook keep her job as a Fed governor

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alan Greenspan, Ben Bernanke, Janet Yellen and other former top economic officials appointed by presidents of both parties urged the Supreme Court on Thursday to preserve the Federal Reserve's political independence and allow Lisa Cook to remain as a central bank governor for now.

The justices are weighing an emergency appeal from the administration to remove Cook while her lawsuit challenging her firing by Republican President Donald Trump proceeds through the courts.

The White House campaign to unseat Cook marks an unprecedented bid to reshape the Fed board, which was designed to be largely independent from day-to-day politics. No president has fired a sitting Fed governor in the agency's 112-year history.

Earlier in September, a judge determined that Trump's move to fire Cook probably was illegal. An appeals court rejected an emergency plea to oust Cook before the Fed's meeting last week when Cook joined in a vote to cut a key interest rate by one-quarter of a percentage point.

A day after that meeting, the administration turned to the Supreme Court and again asked for her prompt removal.

In their filing, lawyers for the former economic officials wrote that immediately ousting Cook "would expose the Federal Reserve to political influences, thereby eroding public confidence in the Fed's independence and jeopardizing the credibility and efficacy of U.S. monetary policy."

Greenspan, Bernanke and Yellen served as successive chairs of the Fed's seven-member board of governors, spanning six presidential administrations back to 1987. Greenspan and Bernanke were initially appointed by Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, respectively. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, nominated Yellen to the Fed and she was Democratic President Joe Biden's treasury secretary.

The list of signatories includes other treasury secretaries, heads of the Council of Economic Advisers and former Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, a former chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

In a separate high court filing Thursday, lawyers for Cook warned that blocking the lower-court ruling and allowing Cook's removal "would signal to the financial markets that the Federal Reserve no longer enjoys its traditional independence, risking chaos and disruption."

Trump sought to fire Cook on Aug. 25, but a judge ruled that she could remain in her job. Trump has accused Cook of mortgage fraud because she appeared to claim two properties, in Michigan and Georgia, as "primary residences" in June and July 2021, before she joined the board. Such claims can lead to a lower mortgage rate and a smaller down payment than if one of them was declared as a rental property or second home.

Cook has denied any wrongdoing and has not been charged with a crime. According to documents obtained by The Associated Press, Cook did specify that her Atlanta condo would be a "vacation home," according to a loan estimate she obtained in May 2021. In a form seeking a security clearance, she described it as a "2nd home." Both documents appear to undercut the administration's claims of fraud.

The attempt to fire Cook differs from Trump's dismissal of board members of other independent agencies. Those firings, including at the National Labor Relations Board, Federal Trade Commission and Consumer Product Safety Commission, have been done at will.

In allowing those firings to proceed for now, the Supreme Court cautioned that it viewed the Fed differently. Trump has invoked the provision of the law that set up the Federal Reserve and allowed for governors to be dismissed "for cause."

Amazon to pay \$2.5 billion to settle FTC allegations it duped customers into enrolling in Prime

By SALLY HO The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Amazon has reached a historic \$2.5 billion settlement with the Federal Trade Commission, which said the online retail giant tricked customers into signing up for its Prime memberships and made it difficult for them to cancel after doing so.

The Seattle company will pay \$1 billion in civil penalties — the largest such fine in the agency's history for a rule violation — and \$1.5 billion will be paid back to consumers who were unintentionally enrolled in Prime, or were deterred from canceling their subscriptions, the agency said Thursday.

The surprise settlement comes just days after the trial began in U.S. District Court in Seattle this week. At the heart of the case is the Restore Online Shoppers' Confidence Act, a 2010 law designed to ensure that people know what they're being charged for online.

FTC officials said Amazon had its back against the wall and the consumer refund amount exceeded even the agency's expert projections.

"I think it just took a few days for them to see that they were going to lose. And they came to us and they paid out," said Chris Mufarrige, director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection, on the settlement negotiations.

Amazon, however, said it was confident it would win case but that it chose to resolve it quickly instead of going through potentially years of trial and appeals. The company admitted no wrongdoing in the case, which was first filed two years ago.

"Amazon and our executives have always followed the law and this settlement allows us to move forward and focus on innovating for customers," said spokesman Mark Blafkin in a statement. "We work incredibly hard to make it clear and simple for customers to both sign up or cancel their Prime membership, and to offer substantial value for our many millions of loyal Prime members around the world."

Certain Prime customers who are eligible for automatic refunds of up to \$51 include those who may have signed up for a membership via the company's "Single Page Checkout," among other links, between June 23, 2019, to June 23, 2025. Those customers will be reimbursed within 90 days of the settlement order.

Amazon is also on the hook to set up a claims process for more than 30 million customers who may have been affected by the other issues at the heart of the FTC case, including its cancellation process.

Amazon Prime provides subscribers with perks that include faster shipping, video streaming and discounts at Whole Foods for a fee of \$139 annually, or \$14.99 a month.

It's a key and growing part of Amazon's business, with more than 200 million members. In its latest financial report, the company reported in July that it booked more than \$12 billion in net revenue for subscription services, a 12% increase from the same period last year. That figure includes annual and monthly fees associated with Prime memberships, as well as other subscription services such as its music and e-books platforms.

The FTC said Amazon deliberately made it difficult for customers to purchase an item without also subscribing to Prime. In some cases, consumers were presented with a button to complete their transactions — which did not clearly state it would also enroll them in Prime, the agency said.

Getting out of a subscription was often too complicated, and Amazon leadership slowed or rejected changes that would have made canceling easier, according to an FTC complaint.

Internally, Amazon called the process "Iliad," a reference to the ancient Greek poem about the lengthy siege of Troy during the Trojan war. The process requires the customer to affirm on three pages their desire to cancel membership.

The FTC began looking into Amazon's Prime subscription practices in 2021 during the first Trump ad-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 44 of 57

ministration, but the lawsuit was filed in 2023 under former FTC Chair Lina Khan, an antitrust expert who had been appointed by Biden.

The agency filed the case months before it submitted an antitrust lawsuit against the retail and technology company, accusing it of having monopolistic control over online markets.

In 2019, Facebook, now known as Meta, was fined \$5 billion for violating a FTC order against the company on user privacy. The fine Amazon now faces is the largest such penalty for violating an FTC rule that applies to all companies.

As part of the settlement terms, Amazon is prohibited from misrepresenting the terms of the subscriptions. It must fully disclose the costs to be incurred and obtain the customer's express consent for the charge. For example, it must have a clear option for customers to accept or decline a Prime subscription being offered during a purchase, avoiding potentially confusing language such as: "No thanks, I don't want free shipping."

Automatic renewals for memberships must be clearly marked and the company is also required to use a cancellation process, which "must not be difficult, costly, confusing or time consuming," according to the settlement.

Amazon said the settlement doesn't require it to make any additional changes — only to maintain its current sign-up and cancellation process that it had put in place in recent years.

'Palestinians will not leave,' their president tells world leaders at UN in defiant, virtual speech

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and LEE KEATH Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Speaking over video after the United States denied his visa, the Palestinian leader told world leaders Thursday that his people reject the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel and pledged that the militant group would have no role in governing the Gaza Strip after war ends and must hand over its weapons to his administration. Said Mahmoud Abbas to his people: "The dawn of freedom will emerge."

Abbas told the U.N. General Assembly that Palestinians in Gaza "have been facing a war of genocide, destruction, starvation and displacement" by Israel. His speech came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads to New York to give his own address in person on Friday.

In a short but resolute speech, Abbas laid out his continued vision for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza alongside Israel. That two-state solution has gained traction after a string of countries — including top U.S. allies -- announced recognition of a Palestinian state this past week.

But it also appears further than ever from realities on the ground. Netanyahu's government has rejected the creation of a Palestinian state.

He says his administration is 'ready'

Israeli troops control most of the Gaza Strip. Netanyahu says Israel will maintain security control over the territory after Hamas is defeated, and he has rejected giving Abbas' Palestinian Authority any role in there. Some ministers in Netanyahu's government have pushed for annexing the occupied West Bank, where Abbas' authority currently administers small pockets of territory.

"There can be no justice if Palestine is not freed," Abbas said.

The 89-year-old Abbas spoke for only 20 minutes — shorter than his previous addresses, which often ran over an hour. In it, he sought to build on the growing, but largely symbolic recognition of statehood to present his government as an alternative to Hamas — and to Israel's plans.

He said the Palestinian Authority is "ready to bear full responsibility for governance and security" in Gaza. He added that "Hamas will have no role to play in governance," and will have to hand over their weapons to the Palestinian authorities.

Hamas has agreed to step down from power in Gaza but has rejected Israeli demands that it disarm, saying it has a right to resist Israeli occupation.

Hamas and Abbas' Fatah faction, which dominates the Palestinian Authority, have long been rivals. Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007 in clashes with Fatah, and since then multiple attempts at reconciliation

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 45 of 57

and unity have failed. Meanwhile, Abbas' Palestinian Authority has grown increasingly unpopular among Palestinians, many of whom see it as ineffective, corrupt and a tool of Israel — even as Israel works to diminish its role.

Abbas said Israel's campaign in Gaza "is not merely an aggression, it is a war crime and a crime against humanity."

An increasing number of experts around the world have accused Israel of genocide in its Gaza assault. Israel denies the accusation, blaming Hamas for the death and destruction in the territory.

Abbas thanked the world leaders who have stood up for Palestinians throughout the Gaza war, saying that the recent recognition of Palestinian statehood has presented his people with hope for peace and an end to the conflict. He welcomed the recent announcements from France, the U.K. and Canada to recognize them as an independent state and called for the remaining few dozen countries to do the same.

But, he added, symbolic recognition is not enough to address the present moment.

"The time has come for the international community to do right by the Palestinian people, so that they may obtain their rights for their legitimate rights to be rid of the occupation and to not remain a hostage to the temperament of Israeli politics, which denies our rights and continue in their injustice, oppression and aggression," Abbas said.

An appeal for resolve

Before concluding, he sent a message of hope to the Palestinian people, saying that no matter how long the suffering continues, "its results will not break our will to live and survive."

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 65,000 people and wounded more than 167,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It doesn't say how many were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half the fatalities. More than 90% of housing in the territory has been destroyed, most of the population of more than 2 million have been displaced, and famine has been declared in northern Gaza.

Israel's campaign was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Forty-eight captives remain in Gaza, around 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive.

"The dawn of freedom will emerge, and the flag of Palestine will fly high in our skies as a symbol of dignity, steadfastness and being free from the occupation," Abbas said. "We will not leave our homeland. We will not leave our lands."

Israel is increasingly being treated as a global pariah. It's shielded by Trump, for now

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses world leaders at the United Nations on Friday, it will be at the helm of a country that is increasingly being treated as a pariah, even by some of its longtime allies.

Western countries are outraged by Israel's intensifying offensive in the Gaza Strip and several have recognized Palestinian statehood. The European Union is weighing tariffs and sanctions. Democratic voters in the United States have expressed disgust in polls, and small cracks are showing in Republican support. The prospect of sports and cultural boycotts is growing, and Israeli tourists have been made to feel unwelcome in some countries.

Even Netanyahu's flight to New York on Thursday was fraught. An unplanned landing in Europe could have exposed him to arrest on charges of crimes against humanity filed by the International Criminal Court, which he denies. The Haaretz news site reported that the flight took a longer, alternate path to avoid some European airspace. An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter, confirmed the report.

Netanyahu still seems to have the unwavering support of President Donald Trump, and the U.S. has done much to shield Israel from censure. But as its latest invasion of Gaza City puts Trump's hoped-for

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 46 of 57

ceasefire further out of reach, and as some on the right express outrage, that too could change.

"The concern is that there's a tipping point out there," said Michael Oren, a historian and former Israeli ambassador to the U.S. "We're not a pariah state yet, but we could be."

Global censure

Last month, 28 Western-aligned countries that had rallied around Israel after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack called on it to end its offensive, which has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians. They also criticized Israel's restrictions on humanitarian aid, which have contributed to famine.

Ten countries, including Britain, France, Canada and Australia — recognized Palestinian statehood this week, hoping to revive the long-moribund peace process, a move that the U.S. and Israel have vehemently rejected. Germany, one of Israel's closest allies, has not joined the calls for a ceasefire or the push for Palestinian statehood, but has halted some military exports.

Several Arab states, including some with longstanding relations with Israel, have accused it of committing genocide in Gaza, as have leading genocide scholars, U.N. experts and some Israeli and international rights groups. The U.N.'s highest court, the International Court of Justice, is weighing genocide allegations raised by South Africa that Israel vehemently denies.

Netanyahu acknowledged the country's isolation in a speech last week, saying Israel might have to become a self-sufficient, militarized "Super Sparta." He backtracked the next day after the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange took a dive.

"This is a bitter fact that has begun to spread like a bushfire beyond the sphere of diplomatic relations," Itamar Eichner wrote in Israel's daily Yediot Ahronot. "Israel is already becoming an ostracized country."

Trump stands firm

Trump has stood by Israel through it all, applying no public pressure after it ended a ceasefire he had helped broker earlier this year; or when it cut Gaza off from food and medicine for several weeks, or when it invaded Gaza City earlier this month.

Trump aired his displeasure after Israel's strike on Hamas leaders in Qatar derailed negotiations aimed at a ceasefire and hostage release. But there was no daylight seen between the two allies when Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Israel days later.

The administration has meanwhile imposed sanctions on ICC judges and prosecutors, cracked down on pro-Palestinian protests on college campuses, shielded Israel from U.N. calls for a ceasefire and provided billions of dollars worth of arms — continuing the Biden administration's massive military support.

Public opinion is shifting

U.S. public opinion polls over the past year raise doubt over how long such support will last.

About half of Americans say Israel's military response in Gaza has "gone too far," according to a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's up from November 2023, shortly after the start of the war, when 40% said it had.

A recent poll by the University of Maryland found that nearly half of Democratic voters sympathize more with the Palestinians, compared to just 6% who sympathize more with Israel. The survey of 1,514 Americans was carried out July 29-Aug. 7 and had a margin of error of 2.9 percentage points.

The same poll found a growing divide among Republicans, with younger people showing far less support for Israel. While 52% of Republicans aged 35 and older said Israel's actions in Gaza were justified under the right to self-defense, just 22% of Republicans 18 to 34 agreed.

Evangelical Christian Republicans, a bulwark of support for Israel, showed a smaller but significant divide, with 59% of older respondents and 36% of younger respondents saying Israel's actions were justified.

"This is unprecedented, and I say that as someone who's been doing research on this issue for decades," said Shibley Telhami, the professor who authored the survey.

He said the polls indicate a "paradigmatic shift" is underway, comparable to the souring toward foreign intervention after the wars in Vietnam and Iraq.

"We have a Gaza generation, and I think this Gaza generation doesn't trust Israel, sees Israel as a source of a problem, sees what's happening in Gaza largely to be genocide. And I don't think that's likely

to change once the war ends," he said.

Israel blames antisemitism and Hamas

There's no indication that any of this has chastened Israeli leaders. Netanyahu says Israel is waging a lawful war of self-defense in response to the Oct. 7 attack, chalking up the criticism to antisemitism and Hamas propaganda.

Last month, Israel approved a major settlement project that could split the occupied West Bank in half and that its Western allies — including past U.S. administrations — had long opposed. Netanyahu has hinted he might annex parts of the territory in response to Western countries recognizing a Palestinian state.

"When the Western world is condemning us, our reaction is not to give in, but to dig our heels in deeper," said Oren, the former ambassador. "There are some things that Israel just cannot do or will not do in order to ameliorate its international standing: For example, creating a Palestinian state which would fall to Hamas within 24 hours."

Israel's increasingly frustrated allies warn of the opposite — that if it continues to rule over millions of Palestinians who are denied basic rights, it will have to choose between some form of apartheid or a bi-national state in which Jews may not be a majority.

"The approach of your government, some ministers especially, is to destroy the possibility of a two-state solution," French President Emmanuel Macron said last week in an interview with an Israeli TV network. "It's the last minute," he said, before such a solution becomes "totally impossible."

Paris court sentences Nicolas Sarkozy to 5 years in prison for criminal conspiracy in Libya case

By SYLVIE CORBET and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A Paris court on Thursday sentenced former French President Nicolas Sarkozy to five years in prison after finding him guilty of criminal conspiracy in a scheme to finance his 2007 campaign with funds from Libya, a verdict that the still-influential conservative leader denounced as "a scandal."

The historic ruling made Sarkozy the first former president of modern France sentenced to actual time behind bars. In a major surprise, the court ruled that the 70-year-old will be incarcerated despite his intention to appeal. It said his imprisonment would start at a date yet to be fixed, sparing the former head of state the humiliation of being led out of the packed courtroom by police, bound for a cell.

The court found Sarkozy guilty of criminal association in a plot from 2005 to 2007, when he served as interior minister, to finance his winning presidential campaign with funds from Libya in exchange for diplomatic favors. It cleared him of three other charges including passive corruption, illegal campaign financing and concealing the embezzlement of public funds.

Sarkozy denounced the ruling as a humiliation for the country.

"If they absolutely want me to sleep in prison, I will sleep in prison. But with my head held high. I am innocent. This injustice is a scandal," he said with his wife, the singer and model Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, at his side.

"I ask the French people — whether they voted for me or not, whether they support me or not — to grasp what has just happened. Hatred truly knows no bounds," he said.

"Should I appear in handcuffs before the Court of Appeal? Those who hate me this much, think it's humiliating for me. What they humiliated today is France."

With Sarkozy standing in front of her, chief judge Nathalie Gavarino said in sentencing him that "the goal of the criminal conspiracy was to give you an advantage in the electoral campaign" and "to prepare an act of corruption at the highest possible level in the event that you were elected President of the Republic."

The facts were "exceptionally serious" and "capable of undermining citizens' trust in public institutions," with Sarkozy having used his position as interior minister "to prepare an act of corruption at the highest level," the judge said.

Sarkozy described the financing plot as simply "an idea."

"I am being convicted for having supposedly allowed two of my staff members to go ahead with the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 48 of 57

idea — the idea — of illegal financing for my campaign,” he said.

The court found that two of Sarkozy’s closest associates when he was president -- former ministers Claude Guéant and Brice Hortefeux — were guilty of criminal association, but likewise acquitted them of some other charges. The court sentenced Hortefeux to two years imprisonment, but said time can be served outside prison with an electronic monitoring bracelet. Guéant was handed a six-year prison term but wasn’t incarcerated immediately for health reasons.

The court said both Guéant and Hortefeux held secret meetings in 2005 with Abdullah al-Senoussi, the brother-in-law and intelligence chief of former Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

Gadhafi was toppled and killed in an uprising in 2011, ending his four-decade rule of the North African country. Al-Senoussi is considered the mastermind of attacks on a Pan Am jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988 and a French airliner over Niger the following year — causing hundreds of deaths. In 2003, Libya took responsibility for both plane bombings.

The Paris court described the contacts as a “corruption pact.” It said favors offered to Libya by Sarkozy and associates included talks about Al-Senoussi’s judicial fate as well as financing for nuclear power in Libya and continued French efforts to help Libya shed its status as a pariah state under Gadhafi.

The ruling from the panel of three judges said Sarkozy allowed his associates to reach out to Libyan authorities “to obtain or try to obtain financial support.” But the court said it wasn’t able to determine with certainty that Libyan money ended up financing Sarkozy’s campaign. The court explained that under French law, a corrupt scheme can still be a crime even if money wasn’t paid or cannot be proven.

Sarkozy, who was elected in 2007 but lost his bid for reelection in 2012, denied all wrongdoing during a three-month trial earlier this year.

Despite multiple legal scandals that have clouded his presidential legacy, Sarkozy remains an influential figure in right-wing politics in France and in entertainment circles, by virtue of his marriage to Bruni-Sarkozy.

Alleged Libya financing

The accusations trace their roots to 2011, when a Libyan news agency and Gadhafi said the Libyan state had secretly funneled millions of euros into Sarkozy’s 2007 campaign.

In 2012, the French investigative outlet Mediapart published what it said was a Libyan intelligence memo referencing a 50 million-euro funding agreement. Sarkozy denounced the document as a forgery and sued for defamation. The court ruled Thursday that it “now appears most likely that this document is a forgery.”

Investigators also looked into a series of trips to Libya made by people close to Sarkozy when he served as interior minister, including his chief of staff.

In 2016, Franco-Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine told Mediapart that he had delivered suitcases filled with cash from Tripoli to the French Interior Ministry under Sarkozy. He later retracted his statement.

That reversal is now the focus of a separate investigation into possible witness tampering. Both Sarkozy and his wife were handed preliminary charges for involvement in alleged efforts to pressure Takieddine. That case has not gone to trial yet.

Takieddine, who was one of the co-defendants, died on Tuesday in Beirut. He was 75. He had fled to Lebanon in 2020 and did not attend the trial.

Sarkozy denounced a ‘plot’

The trial shed light on France’s back-channel talks with Libya in the 2000s, when Gadhafi was seeking to restore diplomatic ties with the West.

During the trial, Sarkozy denounced the allegations as a “plot” cooked up by “liars and crooks” including the “Gadhafi clan.”

He suggested they were retaliation for his call — once installed as France’s president — for Gadhafi’s removal. He was one of the first Western leaders to push for military intervention in Libya in 2011, when pro-democracy protests swept the Arab world.

“What credibility can be given to such statements marked by the seal of vengeance?” Sarkozy said during the trial.

Stripped of the Legion of Honor

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 49 of 57

In June, Sarkozy was stripped of his Legion of Honor medal — France's highest award — after his conviction in a separate case.

Earlier, he was found guilty of corruption and influence peddling for trying to bribe a magistrate in 2014 in exchange for information about a legal case in which he was implicated.

Sarkozy was sentenced to wear an electronic monitoring bracelet for one year. He was granted a conditional release in May due to his age, which allowed him to remove the electronic tag after just over three months.

In another case, Sarkozy was convicted last year of illegal campaign financing in his failed 2012 reelection bid. He was accused of having spent almost twice the maximum legal amount and was sentenced to a year in prison, of which six months were suspended.

Sarkozy has appealed that verdict to the highest Court of Cassation, and that appeal is pending

Israeli strikes kill at least 17 Palestinians in Gaza as international pressure for ceasefire grows

By WAFAA SHURAF, DAVID RISING and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel struck houses and tents in central and southern Gaza Thursday, crushing families inside and killing at least 17 people, including 10 children and three women, local health officials said, as international pressure for a ceasefire continued to grow.

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, French President Emmanuel Macron told France 24 his country had recognized a Palestinian state on the conviction it "is the only way to isolate Hamas," which has proved itself able to regenerate even after many of its leaders have been killed.

"Total war in Gaza is causing civilian casualties but can't bring about the end of Hamas," Macron said in the interview Wednesday. "Factually, it's a failure."

He said he had been lobbying U.S. President Donald Trump to press Israel again for a ceasefire. "You cannot stop the war if there is no path to peace," Macron added.

Some Israeli ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government have pushed for annexing the occupied West Bank in response to international recognition of Palestinian statehood — a move that could effectively strip the Palestinian Authority of its civil and security powers in parts of the territory.

Macron said such a move would be a red line for France, and "I think it's also a red line for the United States of America."

Neither the White House nor the State Department responded to requests for comment on Macron's statement.

Netanyahu has said he won't make any decisions until he returns from the U.S., where he is to address the U.N. General Assembly on Friday and then meet with Trump in Washington.

Deadly strikes hit central and southern Gaza

In the early hours Thursday, an Israeli strike hit a tent and a house in the central town of Zawaida, killing at least 12 people, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby city of Deir al-Balah.

Among the dead were a couple and their five of their children, along with three other children. AP footage showed the building collapsed into a pile of rubble — the lifeless arm of one child sticking out from under a slab of concrete. Relatives said another child was still missing under the wreckage.

Another strike hit a tent in Deir al-Balah, killing a girl and wounding seven other people, the hospital said.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, an Israeli attack hit an apartment building, killing a man, his pregnant wife and their 10-year-old child as well as another female relative, according to Nasser Hospital, where the bodies were taken.

Hunger crisis in northern Gaza worsens

Israel launched another major ground operation earlier this month in Gaza City, which experts say is experiencing famine. More than 300,000 people have fled, but up to 700,000 are still there, many because they can't afford to relocate.

The food situation in the north has worsened the past two weeks, as Israel has halted aid deliveries

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 50 of 57

through its crossing into northern Gaza since Sept. 12 and has increasingly rejected U.N. requests to bring supplies from southern Gaza into the north, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA, said.

Many charity kitchens in the north have been forced to shut down by Israeli military operations, reducing by half the number of free meals being provided to only 59,000 meals a day, according to OCHA, which warned that Israel's closure this week of the border crossing between the occupied West Bank and Jordan threatens to "severely undermine" its ability to deliver aid to Gaza.

It said that last month a quarter of the aid destined for Gaza through the U.N. humanitarian effort came through the Allenby Bridge Crossing over the Jordan River, also known as the King Hussein Bridge.

Israel announced the closure on Tuesday after an attack last week that killed two Israelis.

Israel strikes Yemen after Houthi drone attack

The Israeli military said Thursday it carried out strikes in Yemen, with dozens of aircraft targeting Houthi military command headquarters, military camps and security and intelligence facilities.

The strikes came a day after a drone launched by the Houthis rebels wounded 22 people in the southern Israeli city of Eilat, a rare breach of Israel's air defenses.

The Houthi Health Ministry said two people were killed and dozens wounded in the strike and that emergency workers were searching for people under rubble. One strike hit a building believed to house a leading Houthi figure in a residential area of the capital Sanaa, killing a woman and child nearby, witnesses said. The blast damaged a nearby school, causing injuries among children playing in the courtyard, they said.

Netanyahu denounces leaders who have recognized a Palestinian state

On Monday, France, Andorra, Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, and Monaco announced or confirmed their recognition of a Palestinian state in the hopes of galvanizing support for a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict.

Their announcements came a day after the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Portugal did the same, in defiance of Israel and the United States.

Netanyahu lashed out at the idea early Thursday before heading to New York.

"At the U.N. General Assembly I will speak our truth," he told reporters. "I will denounce those leaders who, instead of denouncing the murderers, the rapists, the child burners, want to give them a state in the heart of the land of Israel. It will not happen."

At separate events in New York on Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump's lead negotiator Steve Witkoff both offered optimistic views about what Witkoff called a "Trump 21-point plan for peace" that was presented to Arab leaders Tuesday.

The U.S. has not released details of the plan or said whether Israel or Hamas accepts it.

The U.S., along with Egypt and Qatar, have spent months trying to broker a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release. Those efforts suffered a major setback earlier this month when Israel carried out an airstrike targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 65,000 people and wounded more than 167,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It doesn't say how many were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half the fatalities. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government. U.N. agencies and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.

Israel's campaign was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Forty-eight captives remain in Gaza, around 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive, after most of the rest were freed in ceasefires or other deals.

Scientists find marine life thriving on World War II explosives in the Baltic Sea

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — An undersea submersible has spotted crabs, worms and fish thriving on the surfaces

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 51 of 57

of World War II explosives thought to be toxic to marine life.

At a former weapons dump site in the Baltic Sea, scientists found more creatures living on top of war-heads than in the surrounding seabed.

"We were prepared to see significantly lower numbers of all kinds of animals," said study author Andrey Vedenin with the Senckenberg Research Institute in Germany. "But it turned out the opposite."

Past conflicts have left their mark on the world's oceans, Vedenin said. German waters alone contain about 1.6 million tons (1.5 million metric tonnes) of dumped weapons, mostly from the two world wars in the 20th century. Dumped relics can contain nuclear and chemical remnants as well as explosives like TNT.

It's the latest example of wildlife flourishing in polluted sites. Previous research has shown shipwrecks and former weapons complexes teeming with biodiversity.

In the new study, researchers filmed networks of anemones, starfish and other underwater life in the Bay of Lübeck off the coast of Germany. They were lurking on pieces of V-1 flying bombs used by Nazi Germany.

"Normally, one does not study the ecology of bombs," said University of Georgia ecologist James Porter, who was not involved with the research.

The research was published Thursday in the journal *Communications Earth and Environment*.

Why would sea creatures make their home on contaminated weapons? They could be drawn to the hard surfaces, which are in short supply in the Baltic Sea. The seafloor is mainly a flat bed of mud and sand because stones and boulders were fished out of the water for construction in the 1800s and 1900s, Vedenin said.

The area is also fairly isolated from human activity because of the chemicals, creating a somewhat protective bubble for the critters to thrive despite some toxic tradeoffs.

Scientists hope to calculate how much contamination was absorbed by sea life. Another important next step is to see what happens after the critters settle and whether they're capable of reproducing, Porter said.

Studies like these are a testament to how nature takes advantage of human leftovers, flipping the script to survive, said marine conservation biologist David Johnston with Duke University. He recently mapped sunken World War I ships that have become habitats for wildlife along the Potomac River in Maryland.

"I think it's a really cool testimony to the strength of life," Johnston said.

What to know about the opposition around renaming new Pell grants after Trump

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A proposal to brand a new type of federal Pell Grant as "Trump Grants" has sparked pushback from Rhode Island lawmakers who want the program to retain the name of its creator — the state's longest-serving U.S. senator.

The name change is currently tucked inside a House spending bill for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education for the upcoming fiscal year.

Rhode Island's congressional delegation this week argued that the proposal would "erase Senator Pell's name from a program that has uplifted generations and replace it with a President whose record on education is defined by cuts and dismantlement is a profound insult to that legacy."

Here's what you need to know.

Pell grants have long been a fixture of federal student aid

Created as a way to promote access to education, Pell grants are special scholarships reserved for undergraduates and other students with the most significant financial need. Rhode Island's longstanding former U.S. Sen. Claiborne Pell, a Democrat, was pivotal in getting the program enacted in 1973.

Through the program, lower-income Americans can currently receive up to \$7,395 annually for roughly six years. Unlike loans, the grants generally don't need to be paid back but often don't cover the full cost of college. According to the Department of Education, \$31 billion in Pell grants went to approximately 6.5 million undergraduate students in fiscal year 2023.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 52 of 57

With new tweak to Pell Grant program, controversy erupts

Under the massive tax and spending cuts package that President Donald Trump signed into law in July, the Pell Grant program was tweaked to include a new grant called the Workforce Pell Grant. Starting next year, students enrolled in eligible career training programs can now receive Pell grants as long as they are in "in-demand industry sectors or occupations."

A separate House of Representatives appropriations bill has since proposed renaming Workforce Pell Grants as "Trump Grants," a change Rhode Island's congressional delegation objected to in a letter released earlier this week.

Democratic U.S. Reps. Gabe Amo and Seth Magaziner said Trump's record on education includes efforts to dissolve the federal Department of Education, freeze federal funding for education and research, and pressure schools to roll back initiatives like those focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion.

"These grants should remain rooted in the legacy of Senator Pell, whose name symbolizes opportunity, integrity and the belief that education is the cornerstone of a strong democracy," the two Rhode Island congressmen wrote.

Who was the father of the Pell Grant program?

Claiborne Pell was a quirky blue blood who represented the smallest state in the country as its U.S. Senator for 36 years, the longest ever to serve in the role.

Pell, the son of a New York congressman, was first elected to the Senate in 1960 and quickly became known as an unabashed liberal who prioritized eliminating financial barriers to higher education — even as a descendant of early New York landowners who lived among the old-money families in Rhode Island's affluent Newport.

Pell was a multimillionaire who often wore old, ill-fitting suits and sometimes jogged in a tweed coat. He also had a deep fascination with UFOs and extrasensory perception.

Pell devised legislation that Congress eventually enacted in 1973 that began providing direct aid to college students. At the time, the funding was called Basic Education Opportunity Grants, but eventually changed to Pell Grants in 1980.

He also helped establish the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities.

When asked his greatest achievement, Pell always was quick to answer, "Pell Grants."

Pell died in 2009 after having Parkinson's disease. He was 90.

US economy expanded at a surprising 3.8% pace in significant upgrade of second quarter growth

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An uptick in consumer spending helped the U.S. economy expand at a surprising 3.8% from April through June, the government reported in a dramatic upgrade of its previous estimate of second-quarter growth.

U.S. gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — rebounded in the spring from a 0.6% first-quarter drop caused by fallout from President Donald Trump's trade wars, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The department had previously estimated second-quarter growth at 3.3%, and forecasters had expected a repeat of that figure.

The first-quarter GDP drop, the first retreat of the U.S. economy in three years, was mainly caused by a surge in imports — which are subtracted from GDP — as businesses hurried to bring in foreign goods before Trump could impose sweeping taxes on them. That trend reversed as expected in the second quarter: Imports fell at a 29.3% pace, boosting April-June growth by more than 5 percentage points.

Consumer spending rose at a 2.5% pace, up from 0.6% in the first quarter and well above the 1.6% the government previously estimated. Spending on services advanced at a 2.6% annual pace, more than double the government's previous estimate of 1.2%.

"The U.S. consumer remained a lot stronger than many thought, even in the midst of a stock market sell-off and a lot of trade uncertainty," Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, posted

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 53 of 57

on social media.

A category within the GDP data that measures the economy's underlying strength came in stronger than previously reported as well, growing 2.9% from April-June, up from 1.9% in the first quarter and in the government's previous estimate. This category includes consumer spending and private investment, but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

But private investment fell, including a 5.1% drop in residential investment. Declining business inventories took more than 3.4 percentage points off second-quarter growth.

Spending and investment by the federal government fell at a 5.3% annual pace on top of a 5.6% drop in the first quarter.

Stephen Stanley, chief U.S. economist at Santander, noted that GDP growth averaged 1.6% in the first half of 2025 and consumer spending 1.5% — "not great but much better than initially thought."

Since returning to the White House, Trump has overturned decades of U.S. policy in support of freer trade. He's slapped double-digit taxes — tariffs — on imports from almost every country on earth and targeted specific products for tariffs, too, including steel, aluminum and autos.

Trump sees tariffs as a way to protect American industry, lure factories back to the United States and to help pay for the massive tax cuts he signed into law July 4.

But mainstream economists — whose views Trump and his advisers reject — say that his tariffs will damage the economy, raising costs and making protected U.S. companies less efficient. They note that tariffs are paid by importers in the United States, who try to pass along the cost to their customers via higher prices. Therefore, tariffs can be inflationary — though their impact on prices so far has been modest.

The unpredictable way that Trump has imposed the tariffs — announcing and suspending them, then coming up with new ones — has left businesses bewildered, contributing to a sharp deceleration in hiring.

From 2021 through 2023, the United States added an impressive 400,000 jobs a month as the economy bounded back from COVID-19 lockdowns. Since then, hiring has stalled, partly because of trade policy uncertainty and partly because of the lingering effects of 11 interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve's inflation fighters in 2022 and 2023.

Labor Department revisions earlier this month showed that the economy created 911,000 fewer jobs than originally reported in the year that ended in March. That meant that employers added an average of fewer than 71,000 new jobs a month over that period, not the 147,000 first reported. Since March, job creation has slowed even more — to an average 53,000 a month.

On Oct. 3, the Labor Department is expected to report that employers added just 43,000 jobs in September, though unemployment likely stayed at a low 4.3%, according to forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet.

Seeking to bolster the job market, the Fed last week cut its benchmark interest rate for the first time since December and signaled that it expected two more cuts this year. But the surprisingly strong second-quarter GDP growth may give the central bank less reason to cut rates — despite intense pressure from Trump to do so. Fed officials will be watching even more closely than unusual when their favorite inflation gauge — the Commerce Department's personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index — comes out Friday.

Thursday's GDP report was Commerce Department's third and final look at second-quarter economic growth. It will release its initial estimate of July-September growth on Oct. 30.

Forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet currently expect the GDP growth to slow to an annual pace of just 1.5% in the third quarter.

US economy expanded at a surprising 3.8% pace in significant upgrade of second quarter growth

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An uptick in consumer spending helped the U.S. economy expand at a surprising

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 54 of 57

3.8% from April through June, the government reported in a dramatic upgrade of its previous estimate of second-quarter growth.

U.S. gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — rebounded in the spring from a 0.6% first-quarter drop caused by fallout from President Donald Trump's trade wars, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The department had previously estimated second-quarter growth at 3.3%, and forecasters had expected a repeat of that figure.

The first-quarter GDP drop, the first retreat of the U.S. economy in three years, was mainly caused by a surge in imports — which are subtracted from GDP — as businesses hurried to bring in foreign goods before Trump could impose sweeping taxes on them. That trend reversed as expected in the second quarter: Imports fell at a 29.3% pace, boosting April-June growth by more than 5 percentage points.

Consumer spending rose at a 2.5% pace, up from 0.6% in the first quarter and well above the 1.6% the government previously estimated. Spending on services advanced at a 2.6% annual pace, more than double the government's previous estimate of 1.2%.

"The U.S. consumer remained a lot stronger than many thought, even in the midst of a stock market sell-off and a lot of trade uncertainty," Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, posted on social media.

A category within the GDP data that measures the economy's underlying strength came in stronger than previously reported as well, growing 2.9% from April-June, up from 1.9% in the first quarter and in the government's previous estimate. This category includes consumer spending and private investment, but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

But private investment fell, including a 5.1% drop in residential investment. Declining business inventories took more than 3.4 percentage points off second-quarter growth.

Spending and investment by the federal government fell at a 5.3% annual pace on top of a 5.6% drop in the first quarter.

Stephen Stanley, chief U.S. economist at Santander, noted that GDP growth averaged 1.6% in the first half of 2025 and consumer spending 1.5% — "not great but much better than initially thought."

Since returning to the White House, Trump has overturned decades of U.S. policy in support of freer trade. He's slapped double-digit taxes — tariffs — on imports from almost every country on earth and targeted specific products for tariffs, too, including steel, aluminum and autos.

Trump sees tariffs as a way to protect American industry, lure factories back to the United States and to help pay for the massive tax cuts he signed into law July 4.

But mainstream economists — whose views Trump and his advisers reject — say that his tariffs will damage the economy, raising costs and making protected U.S. companies less efficient. They note that tariffs are paid by importers in the United States, who try to pass along the cost to their customers via higher prices. Therefore, tariffs can be inflationary — though their impact on prices so far has been modest.

The unpredictable way that Trump has imposed the tariffs — announcing and suspending them, then coming up with new ones — has left businesses bewildered, contributing to a sharp deceleration in hiring.

From 2021 through 2023, the United States added an impressive 400,000 jobs a month as the economy bounded back from COVID-19 lockdowns. Since then, hiring has stalled, partly because of trade policy uncertainty and partly because of the lingering effects of 11 interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve's inflation fighters in 2022 and 2023.

Labor Department revisions earlier this month showed that the economy created 911,000 fewer jobs than originally reported in the year that ended in March. That meant that employers added an average of fewer than 71,000 new jobs a month over that period, not the 147,000 first reported. Since March, job creation has slowed even more — to an average 53,000 a month.

On Oct. 3, the Labor Department is expected to report that employers added just 43,000 jobs in September, though unemployment likely stayed at a low 4.3%, according to forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet.

Seeking to bolster the job market, the Fed last week cut its benchmark interest rate for the first time

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 55 of 57

since December and signaled that it expected two more cuts this year. But the surprisingly strong second-quarter GDP growth may give the central bank less reason to cut rates — despite intense pressure from Trump to do so. Fed officials will be watching even more closely than unusual when their favorite inflation gauge — the Commerce Department's personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index — comes out Friday.

Thursday's GDP report was Commerce Department's third and final look at second-quarter economic growth. It will release its initial estimate of July-September growth on Oct. 30.

Forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet currently expect the GDP growth to slow to an annual pace of just 1.5% in the third quarter.

The issue of drugs doesn't usually get showcased at the UN General Assembly. This year is different

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Every year, tons of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and other drugs flow around the world, an underground river that crisscrosses borders and continents and spills over into violence, addiction and suffering. Yet when nations' leaders give the U.N. their annual take on big issues, drugs don't usually get much of the spotlight.

But this was no usual year.

First, U.S. President Donald Trump touted his aggressive approach to drug enforcement, including decisions to designate some Latin American cartels as foreign terrorist organizations and to carry out deadly military strikes on speedboats that he says said were carrying drugs in the southern Caribbean.

"To every terrorist thug smuggling poisonous drugs into the United States of America: Please be warned that we will blow you out of existence," he boasted at the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday.

Hours later, his Colombian counterpart fired back that Trump should face criminal charges for allowing an attack on unarmed "young people who were simply trying to escape poverty."

The U.S. "anti-drug policy is not aimed at the public health of a society, but rather to prop up a policy of domination," Colombia's Gustavo Petro bristled, accusing Washington of ignoring domestic drug dealing and production while demonizing his own country. The U.S. recently listed Colombia, for the first time in decades, as a nation falling short of its international drug control obligations.

Fissures in approach to the issue are revealed

The barbs laid bare, on global diplomacy's biggest stage, the world's wide and pointed differences over how to deal with drugs.

"The international system is extremely divided on drug policy," said Vanda Felbab-Brown, who has followed the topic as a senior fellow at the Washington-based Brookings Institution think tank. "This is not new, but it's really just very intense at this UNGA."

While the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, climate change and other crises got much of the focus in the U.N.'s marathon week of speeches and meetings, the topic of drugs turned up from Trump's and Petro's tough talk to side events on such themes as gender-inclusive drug policy and international cooperation to fight organized crime.

Some 316 million people worldwide used marijuana, opioids and/or other drugs in 2023, a 28% rise in a decade, according to the most recent statistics available from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime. The figures don't count alcohol or tobacco use.

The specifics vary by region, with cocaine use growing in Europe, methamphetamine on the rise in Southeast Asia, and synthetic opioids making new inroads in West and Central Africa and continuing to trouble North America, though opioid-related deaths have been falling.

The U.N. drug office says trafficking is increasingly dominated by organized crime groups with tentacles and partnerships around the world, and nations need to think just as broadly about trying to tackle the syndicates.

"Governments are increasingly seeing organized crime and drug trafficking as threats to national and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 56 of 57

regional security and stability, and some are coming around to the fact that they need to join up diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement and central-bank efforts to push back," agency chief of staff Jeremy Douglas said by email.

Although organized crime hasn't featured very prominently in top-level discussions at the General Assembly to date, he said, "we're at a point where this needs to, and hopefully will, change."

Working together can help

Nations pair up in various joint counternarcotics operations and working groups and sometimes form regional coalitions, but some experts and leaders see a need to go global.

Countries need to "pool resources in a fight that must be a common cause among all nations," Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino told the assembly. He said his nation had seized a "historic and alarming" total of 150 tons of cocaine and other drugs this year alone.

To be sure, there is already some global-scale collaboration on drug control. The U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs decides what substances are supposed to be internationally regulated under decades-old treaties, and it can make policy recommendations to the U.N.'s member countries. The International Narcotics Control Board monitors treaty compliance.

But the U.N. is big-tent politics at its biggest, so even as some components of the world body deal with drug enforcement, others emphasize public health programs — substance abuse treatment, overdose prevention and other services — over prohibition and punishments.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has advocated for decriminalizing at least some drug use while clamping down on illegal markets. Given that policing hasn't reduced substance use or crime, "the so-called war on drugs has failed, completely and utterly," he said last year.

Separately, a U.N. Development Programme report last week said punitive drug control had led to deaths and disease among users who shied from seeking help, racial disparities in enforcement, and other societal downsides.

At a gathering marking the report's release, former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo deplored that "the global drug control regime has become a substantial part of the problem."

"The question is: Do governments have the wisdom and courage to act?" asked Zedillo, now a Yale professor and a commissioner of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, a Geneva-based anti-drug-war advocacy group.

How can common ground be found?

The other question is whether they could ever agree on what action to take.

Even if countries agree — or say they do — with ending the drug trade and resulting ills, "the objectives might be different, and certain means, tools, resources they're willing to devote to them, are different," Felbab-Brown said.

Nations' own drug laws vary widely. Some impose the death penalty for certain drug crimes. Others have legalized or decriminalized marijuana. At least one — Thailand — legalized it only to have second thoughts and tighten the rules. Countries' openness to needle exchange programs, safe injection sites and other "harm reduction" strategies is similarly all over the map.

As leaders took their turns at the assembly rostrum this week, observers got occasional glimpses of the world's different views of its drug problem.

Tajikistan's president, Emomali Rahmon, called drug trafficking "a serious threat to global security." Guyanese President Irfaan Ali endorsed international efforts to address drug trafficking, which he counted among the "crimes that are destroying the lives of our people, especially young people."

Syria's new president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, noted that his administration closed factories that produced the amphetamine-like stimulant Captagon, also known as fenethylline, during his now-ousted predecessor's time. Costa Rican Foreign Minister Arnoldo André Tinoco said drug smuggling networks are exploiting routes traveled by migrants and "taking advantage of the vulnerability of those seeking international protection."

"Isolated responses are insufficient," as the traffickers just go elsewhere and create new hotspots of crime, Tinoco said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 26, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 114 ~ 57 of 57

Reviewing the challenges facing Peru, President Dina Boluarte listed transnational organized crime and drug trafficking alongside political polarization and climate change.

"None of these problems is merely national, but rather global," she said. "This is why we need the United Nations to once again be a forum for dialogue and cooperation."

Today in History: September 26, Kennedy and Nixon hold nationally televised presidential debate

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Sept. 26, the 269th day of 2025. There are 96 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 26, 1960, the first nationally televised debate between presidential candidates took place as Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Richard M. Nixon faced off in Chicago.

Also on this date:

In 1777, British troops occupied Philadelphia during the American Revolution.

In 1954, the Japanese commercial ferry Toya Maru sank during a typhoon in the Tsugaru Strait, claiming more than 1,150 lives.

In 1986, William H. Rehnquist was sworn in as the 16th chief justice of the United States, while Antonin Scalia joined the Supreme Court as its 103rd member. Rehnquist died in 2005 and Scalia in 2016.

In 1990, the Motion Picture Association of America announced it had created a new rating, NC-17, to replace the X rating.

In 1991, four men and four women began a two-year stay inside a sealed-off structure in Oracle, Arizona, called Biosphere 2; they emerged from Biosphere 2 on this date in 1993.

In 2000, thousands of anti-globalization protesters clashed with police in demonstrations during a summit of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Prague.

In 2005, Army Pfc. Lynndie England was convicted by a military jury in Fort Hood, Texas, on six of seven counts stemming from the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal.

In 2020, President Donald Trump nominated Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. (Barrett would be confirmed the following month.)

In 2022, NASA's Dart mission became the first spacecraft to ram an asteroid in a dress rehearsal for deflecting a space object's trajectory.

In 2024, Helene, a major Category 4 hurricane, made landfall in Florida's Big Bend region. It went on to cut a swath across Georgia and South Carolina before triggering historic flooding in North Carolina and Tennessee, causing an estimated \$78 billion in damage and 219 deaths.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer David Frizzell is 84. Television host Anne Robinson is 81. Singer Bryan Ferry is 80. Author Jane Smiley is 76. Singer-guitarist Cesar Rosas (Los Lobos) is 71. Actor Linda Hamilton is 69. Actor Melissa Sue Anderson is 63. Actor Jim Caviezel (kuh-VEE'-zuhl) is 57. Singer Shawn Stockman (Boyz II Men) is 53. Hockey Hall of Famers Daniel and Henrik Sedin are 45. Tennis player Serena Williams is 44. Singer-actor Christina Milian (MIHL'-ee-ahn) is 44. Actor Zoe Perry is 42.