

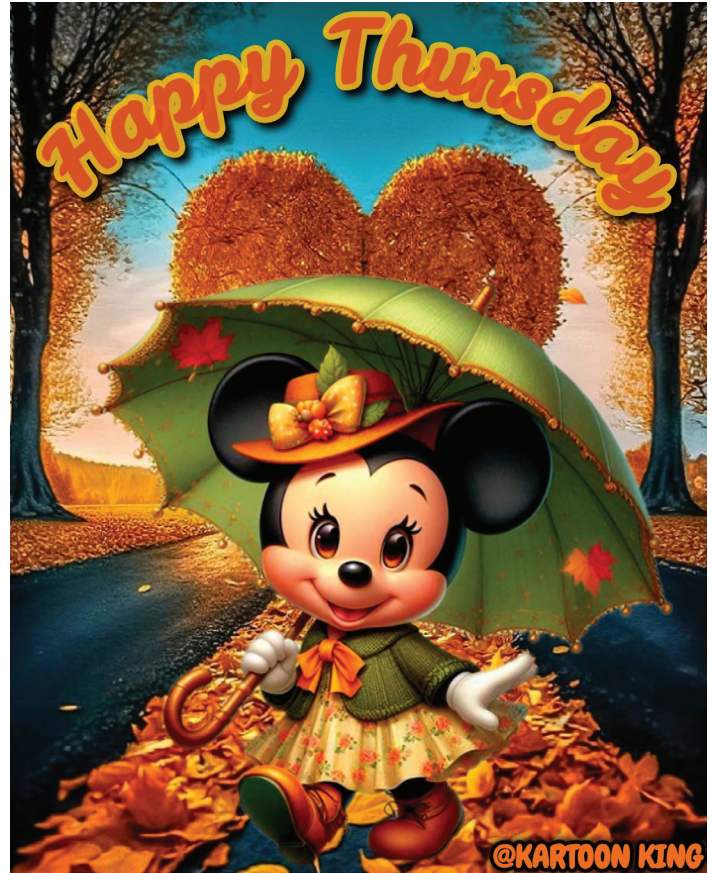
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Thursday, Sept. 9

Senior Menu: Baked fish, au gratin potatoes, 3-bean salad, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Biscuits.
School Lunch: Sloppy joe, tri taters.
Flu Shot at Groton Area, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Northeast Conference Cross Country Meet, 1 p.m. at Webster
Parent-Teacher Conferences, 1:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Third Grade GBB, 5 p.m.
Third through Sixth Grade GBB Skills, 6 p.m.
Groton Lions Club meeting, 6 p.m., at 104 N Main.



Friday, Sept. 10

NO SCHOOL

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken over biscuits, peas and carrots pineapple..

Lake Region Marching Festival, 10 a.m.

JV Football vs. Sisseton at Langford, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 11

Second Round Soccer Playoffs: Girls soccer at Dakota Valley, 2 p.m.

Junior High Volleyball Tournament at Warner
Pumpkin Fest, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

United Methodist Charge Conference with lunch, noon.

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Gaza Peace Plan Advances

The first step in a phased deal between Hamas and Israel to end the war in the Gaza Strip has been reached, according to President Donald Trump yesterday evening. The announcement comes one day after the second anniversary of an attack by Hamas and other Hamas-led groups that killed nearly 1,200 Israelis.

While full details have yet to be released, the deal reportedly follows a 20-point plan from the Trump administration and would see the return of 48 hostages (around 20 of whom are believed to be alive). In exchange, Israeli forces would begin a withdrawal from the 140-square-mile region, with aid beginning to flow to its 2 million residents and Palestinian prisoners returned by Israel. The prisoner release could happen as soon as Monday.

An estimated 67,000 Palestinians have been killed during the fighting, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry (the figure does not distinguish between civilians and combatants).

Arrest in Palisades Fire

Federal authorities announced yesterday the arrest of a Florida man in connection with the Palisades Fire, which burned over 23,400 acres in Los Angeles over 24 days this January. Jonathan Rinderknecht, a 29-year-old former California resident, is charged with destruction of property by means of fire, a felony with a five- to 20-year prison sentence.

The blaze began Jan. 7 on a trail in Pacific Palisades after strong winds reignited a holdover fire—remnants of an earlier blaze smoldering underground. Officials allege the suspect used a “barbecue-style” lighter to start that earlier fire Jan. 1, then called 911 before fleeing. Digital records reportedly show he returned to film firefighters suppressing the blaze, repeatedly watched a music video showing fires, and used ChatGPT to make images of a burning city. Authorities have not suggested a motive.

The Palisades Fire killed 12 people and destroyed nearly 6,900 structures, making it the ninth deadliest and third most destructive wildfire in California history.

Comey Pleads Not Guilty

Former FBI Director James Comey pleaded not guilty yesterday to criminal charges of lying to Congress and obstructing a congressional proceeding tied to testimony he gave more than five years ago. The 64-year-old’s trial is set for Jan. 5 and is expected to last two to three days.

The plea comes less than two weeks after a federal grand jury indicted Comey over his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2020. He allegedly falsely 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 the media (see clip). Prosecutors contend Comey interfered with Congress’ investigation by lying under oath, while Comey’s lawyers argue the case is politically motivated.

Comey faces five years in prison if convicted. While his case is rare, another former FBI head faced now-dropped charges in the 1970s after the Watergate scandal for allegedly approving illegal break-ins targeting a domestic terror group.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2025 MacArthur Foundation's "genius grant" recipients announced; each of this year's 22 winners gets a no-strings-attached \$800K award.

Cristiano Ronaldo becomes first soccer player to top \$1B net worth, combining his career salary, investments, and endorsements.

Taylor Swift's "The Life of a Showgirl" breaks Adele's record for most albums sold in one week with 3.5 million sold in just five days.

Science & Technology

Nobel Prize in chemistry awarded to US-, Australia-, and Japan-based scientists for developing porous molecular architecture used to extract pollutants from water, capture carbon dioxide from air, and store hydrogen for energy.

Scientists identify brain area linked to chronic pain, which affects one in five people worldwide; finding could lead to interventions that mute pain signals.

SoftBank strikes \$5.4B deal to buy robotics arm of Swiss engineering firm ABB; Japanese tech conglomerate seeks to merge artificial intelligence and robots.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow -0.0%, Nasdaq +1.1%), Nasdaq and S&P 500 close at record highs after Federal Reserve meeting minutes from September show officials see at least two more rate cuts this year.

Elon Musk agrees to settle \$128M lawsuit over unpaid severance with four former Twitter executives, who were fired after Musk took over the company in 2022.

Johnson & Johnson ordered to pay \$966M in talc-based baby powder cancer case after jury finds company liable.

Politics & World Affairs

Internal Revenue Service furloughs over 34,000 employees—nearly half its staff—amid government shutdown; workers guaranteed back pay, despite President Donald Trump's earlier objections to the policy.

Supreme Court appears poised to revive Republican challenge to Illinois law accepting late-arriving mailed ballots; Illinois is among 18 states and the District of Columbia that accept ballots postmarked on or before Election Day.

Myanmar military strike kills at least 24 people and wounds nearly 50 during Buddhist candlelight vigil opposing military rule, per government-in-exile.

The Life of Dean D. Sombke

November 23, 1961 – October 5, 2025

Dean D. Sombke, age 63, of Grand Island, passed away on Sunday, October 5, 2025.

A funeral service will be held on Thursday, October 9th at 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church with Pastor Adam Snoberger officiating. Memorials are suggested to Trinity Lutheran Church. A burial will take place later at St. John's Lutheran Cemetery in Columbia, SD. All faiths Funeral Home is entrusted with arrangements. Condolences can be left at www.giallfaiths.com.

Dean was born on November 23, 1961 in Aberdeen, SD to Dallas and Carol (Weihrauch) Sombke. He was raised on a farm outside of Ferney, SD and graduated from Groton High School in 1980. Dean graduated from UNL with a degree in Business Administration.

Dean was united in marriage to Paulette Zegers and to this union three children were born.

When Dean was growing up he was part of 4-H and showed cows and sheep. He enjoyed being outdoors whether it was scuba diving, fishing walleye in SD or pheasant hunting with his dogs. His children fondly remember the many trips to amusement parks, baseball games, fishing, hiking and tent camping. Dean even built a plane and over time became his children's personal pilot. He liked spending his winters in Arizona. He was an avid Husker fan. Above everything else his greatest pride and joy was his grandchildren and the time he got to spend with them.

Dean was employed as a sales rep throughout his career while also being an entrepreneur. In his retirement he found a variety of activities and projects to keep him busy.

Those left to cherish his memory include his children, Dream (Tyler) Solko of St. Paul, Dakota Sombke of St. Paul and Destin (Kendall) Sombke of Lincoln; grandchildren, Dallas, Emma and Sawyer Solko and Emmett and Maura Sombke; brother, Doug (Mel) Sombke of Groton, SD; sister, Sharolyn Sombke of Aberdeen, SD and nieces, nephews and their families, Nikki, Brett, Bryce, Bryan, Sashia and Peyton.

Dean was preceded in death by his parents.



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Rausch Carries on Family Tradition in Monument Crafting

BIG STONE CITY — For Val Rausch, working with granite isn't just a job — it's a legacy. As a third-generation craftsman in the monument and cemetery lettering business, Rausch has spent his life continuing the work his grandfather began.

"I started when I was about 19," Rausch said. "Our family's Rausch Granite Company has been part of this community for a long time. I grew up in the business — I'm third generation."

Rausch branched out from the family business 26 years ago to start his own company, continuing the tradition with a modern twist. "With computers today, if you're in the printing business, you know about two million fonts," he joked. "Unfortunately, the old days of standardized shop activities are gone, so I've got to try to copy whatever's there by whoever the latest guy is that can run a program."

Rausch explained that monument lettering often comes down to precise craftsmanship — and patience. When asked about the pressure used for his work, he shared, "I'm right about a hundred PSI. I can do probably 75 to 100 depending. You can do it with less; it just takes longer."

This fall has been a busy one for him. "September deaths hadn't been buried yet, so it was kind of crazy," he said. "Normally, they're waiting for me to show up."

Through changing times and new technologies, Val Rausch continues to uphold his family's legacy, carving lasting memories in stone for families across the region.



Val Rausch gets everything lined up perfectly. He only has one shot at getting it right.



Rausch gives it a shot of black paint to make it stand out.



Rausch applies 100 psi to the stone to carve out the date.



And the date is all done.

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Groton's Events



**Nov. 11: Veteran's Day Program,
2 p.m.**



**Dec. 5: Tour of Trees at Wage
Memorial Library, 3:30-5:30 p.m.**



**Nov. 27:
Community
Thanksgiving
at the
Community
Center,
11:30 a.m.
to 1:30 p.m.**



**Dec. 6: Olive Grove Holiday
Party, 6 p.m.**

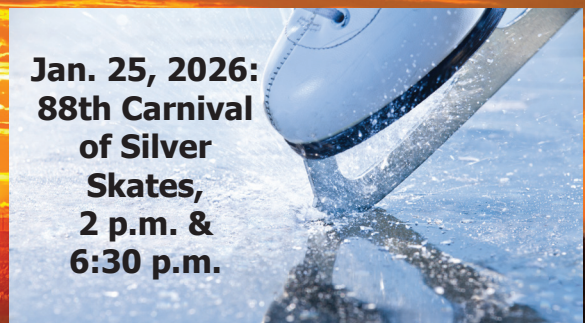
Snow Queen Festival

**Nov. 30: Groton Snow Queen
Contest, 4 p.m.**

**Nov. 15:
Legion Post
#39 Turkey
Party,
6:30 p.m.**



**Jan. 25, 2026:
88th Carnival
of Silver
Skates,
2 p.m. &
6:30 p.m.**



**Jan. 25, 2026:
Groton Robotics
Pancake Feed at
the Community
Center,
10 am. to 1 p.m.**

GROTON

Chamber of Commerce

120 N Main, Groton, SD 57445

605/397-8422 ~ GrotonChamber.com

Names Released in Lincoln County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: 275th Street and 466th Avenue, four miles north of Lennox, SD

When: 11:12 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025

Driver 1: Elijah Malik Cooper, 21-year-old male from Sioux Falls, SD, life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee

Seat belt Used: Yes

Passenger 1a: Tyree Anthony Wilson, 51-year-old male from Sioux Falls, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Lincoln County, S.D.- One man died and another seriously injured in a single vehicle crash late Saturday night four miles north of Lennox, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Elijah Malik Cooper, the driver of a 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee, was traveling eastbound on 275th Street just west of 466th Avenue. The Jeep crossed the center line then entered the north ditch, hit a field approach and rolled, ejecting the passenger, Tyree Anthony Wilson.

Cooper was taken to a Sioux Falls hospital with life-threatening injuries. Wilson died at the scene.

Names Released in Sanborn County Fatal Crash

What: Train/pick-up fatal crash

Where: 399th Avenue and 237th Street, seven miles southeast of Woonsocket, SD

When: 4:39 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025

Driver 1: Alejandro Mackenzie Flores, 30-year-old male from Rosharon, TX, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2012 Ford F350 Super Duty

Seat belt Used: Under investigation

Passenger 1a: Andrew Murray Lacy, 29-year-old male from Rosharon, TX, minor injuries

Seat belt Used: Under investigation

Driver 2: Brian Michael Parker, 41-year-old male from Aberdeen, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 2: BNSF Train

2nd Engineer: Jerett Wilson, no injuries

Sanborn County, S.D.- One man died and another was injured Saturday afternoon when their pick-up was struck by a train seven miles southeast of Woonsocket.

Preliminary crash information indicates Alejandro Mackenzie Flores, the driver of a 2012 Ford F350, and a passenger, Andrew Murray Lacy, was near the intersection of 399th Avenue and 237th Street in Sanborn County working in the area along the tracks. The truck was unable to get off the tracks before being struck by a BNSF train.

Flores died at the scene. Lacy was taken to a Mitchell hospital with minor injuries. Two engineers on the train, Brian Michael Parker and Jerett Wilson were not injured.

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

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

Spink County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 37, near SD Highway 28, 19 miles north of Huron, SD

When: 11:36 a.m., Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Driver 1: 65-year-old male from Fort Pierre, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2003 Ford F150 pulling a camper

Seat belt Used: Yes

Passenger 1a: 63-year-old female from Fort Pierre, SD, minor injuries

Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: 44-year-old male from Huron, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2012 Freightliner FM2

Seat belt Used: Under investigation

Spink County, S.D.- Three people were injured, one fatally, in a two vehicle crash Tuesday morning 19 miles north of Huron, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2003 Ford F150 who was pulling a camper, was traveling northbound on SD Highway 37. At the same time, the driver of a 2012 Freightliner box truck was traveling southbound on Highway 37 and collided with the Ford in the northbound lane. The Ford came to rest in the east ditch. The Freightliner came to rest on the shoulder of the northbound lane.

The driver of the Ford sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries and his passenger suffered minor injuries. The driver of the Freightliner died from his injuries.

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

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

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South Dakota Mosquito



SD WNV (as of October 8):

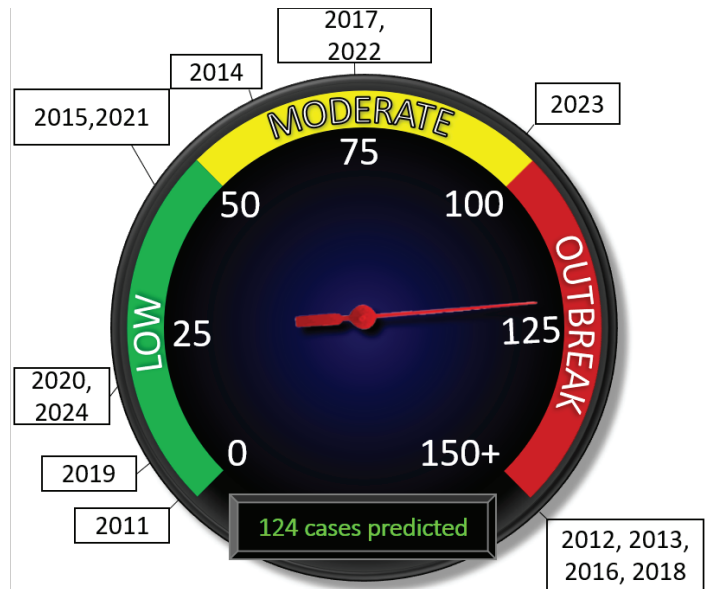
83 human cases (Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Brown, Corson, Codington, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Gregory, Haakon, Hamlin, Hand, Hughes, Hutchinson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marshall, Meade, Miner, Minnehaha, Pennington, Roberts, Sanborn, Stanley, Spink, Todd, Yankton, Walworth) and 4 deaths

9 human viremic blood donors (Brookings, Brown, Codington, Meade, Minnehaha, Pennington)

7 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brown, Brookings, Codington, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of October 7): 1433 cases (AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2025, South Dakota (as of October 8)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2025

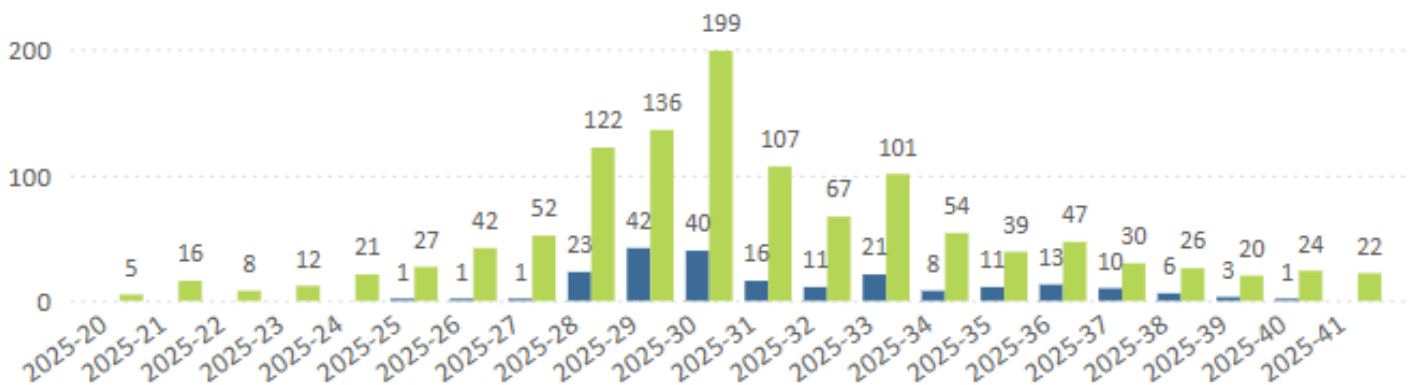
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 57

Total mosquito pools tested: 1,385

% positivity: 15.02%

Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Sinkhole victims ask Supreme Court to help them seek compensation from state

Black Hawk landowners say failure to properly fill mining tunnels left them without full property rights

BY: JOHN HULT-OCTOBER 8, 2025 5:32 PM

Landowners forced from their homes five years ago by a sinkhole asked the South Dakota Supreme Court on Wednesday to hold the state accountable.

The Hideaway Hills development in Black Hawk was built atop a former gypsum mine first used more than a century ago on the eastern edge of the Black Hills. For more than 50 years, that work involved a network of underground tunnels. The mine was dormant until the mid-1980s, when the state purchased it to mine gypsum on the land's surface for use in a Rapid City cement plant the state owned at the time.

The state reclaimed about 16 acres of mined land, then reseeded it for use as rangeland before selling it in 1994. The man who bought it later sold it to the developers who turned it into Hideaway Hills in the early 2000s. The state maintained subsurface mineral rights to the land in the sale.

Homeowners first reported cracking in their homes' foundations in 2008, about three years after the Meade County development welcomed its first residents. Twelve years later, a sinkhole yawned open near a cluster of homes, forcing evacuations and spawning a lawsuit.

The plaintiffs, representing 164 properties, say the state put them at risk when it failed to properly backfill the land. They also claim the state reopened tunnels in search of more gypsum, a claim the state denies.

A lower court ruled against the families. The judge agreed with the state, which argued it has immunity from "tort" lawsuits that seek to assign liability and collect monetary damages.

The landowners appealed to the state Supreme Court. They say their claim is not a "tort," but is rather about a "taking" of their land that was akin to eminent domain. Their "inverse condemnation" claim says the state robbed them of their full property rights by failing to backfill the mine correctly and using the mined material in a cement plant whose proceeds were used for a public purpose.

Proceeds from the 2001 sale of the cement plant were used to establish a trust whose returns now help fund state government.

Landowners: State stole property rights

Arguments in the case took place Wednesday morning at the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law in Vermillion.

Matthew Hughes, one of the landowners' lawyers, said the state had a duty to reclaim and backfill its mined areas with material that would hold up as time passed, rather than with gypsum. That material sank in over time, he said.

"That backfill is under every place that the state mined," Hughes said, and "all the problems" the homeowners have are related to the reclamation.

What the homebuilders or real estate agents may or may not have said to homebuyers about the land is immaterial, he argued, because "the sole cause of the subsidence and the collapse is the state's use of problematic backfill."

Because the surface land was sold in the public interest, he said, and because the state retained the mining rights to the area beneath it, the state owes the homeowners for their losses.

"That reclamation was undertaken for the purpose of selling the surface for money," Hughes said.

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State: Buyer responsible for issues

Terra Larson, an attorney representing the state, disputed that the state's actions caused the sinkhole to appear. But she also said it doesn't matter.

The landowners have a tort claim, she said, and the state's immune to those.

The claim of "taking" by inverse condemnation doesn't fit, she said. The state constitution says that private land can't be taken for a public purpose without "just compensation."

No one took land from the current landowners without just compensation, Larson said.

"All of the damage that occurred here occurred when the state owned this property," Larson said, referring to the reclamation.

"Then, when it sold that property, it sold it for approximately \$50,000 less than it had purchased the property for, to people who absolutely knew that the state had mined it for gypsum," Larson said.

Justice Mark Salter wanted to know about the "contemporaneous" aspect of the landowners' claim. Does the state have a duty to landowners because it kept the mineral rights to the area below the surface?

"There's a present day resonance to this," Salter said.

The land's 1994 buyers knew about the underground tunnels, Larson said, and the agents who later sold the land "fraudulently concealed" the issue. When a new owner discovers a danger on a property and doesn't disclose it, Larson said, "the responsibility has shifted to that third party" for lawsuits by subsequent property owners.

Matthew Leerberg, another attorney for the homeowners, said in his rebuttal the state can't both maintain the right to mine the land far beneath the homes and escape its responsibility to those who built them.

"At some point, hopefully we will be before a jury, and we will get to show that these clients are suffering, that they can't live in their homes anymore, and that it's the state's actions, both in the past and the present, that have caused that," Leerberg said.

The court will issue a ruling on the Hideaway Hills case at a later date.

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.

Average residential bill would go up \$21 monthly if regulators approve Xcel electric rate increase

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR-OCTOBER 8, 2025 12:57 PM

Xcel Energy is requesting a rate increase that would cause electric bills for the company's average South Dakota residential customer to go up by 19%, which equates to \$21 per month.

If approved by state regulators, it would be Xcel's second increase in two years. The company attempted to raise rates by 18% in 2023, but regulators reduced that to 6%, which equated to a roughly \$5 monthly increase for the average residential customer.

The company filed its latest request with the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission on June 30. Xcel said it needs the increase to cover inflationary costs, upgrade infrastructure, and recover costs from investments in wind turbines, natural gas facilities and transmission lines. The rate hike would raise \$43.6 million in additional annual revenue for the company.

The commission's staff is reviewing the request and will make a recommendation later this year. If approved, the new rates would take effect no earlier than Jan. 1.

Xcel has a total of 107,000 South Dakota electrical customers in Hanson, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, Moody, Sanborn and Turner counties in the southeast part of the state. Most of the customers are located in the Sioux Falls area.

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.

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Senate confirms new US attorney for South Dakota

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF-OCTOBER 8, 2025 10:45 AM

The U.S. Senate confirmed Ron Parsons on Tuesday as South Dakota's new U.S. attorney.

Senators voted 51-47 to confirm a lengthy list of presidential nominees that included Parsons. Majority Leader John Thune and Sen. Mike Rounds, Republicans from South Dakota, each voted in favor of the list.

This will be Parsons' second stint as the top federal prosecutor in the state. He previously served in the job during the first Trump administration.

Thune congratulated Parsons in a post to X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday.

"Ron has already proved he has what it takes to be a great U.S. attorney, and I know he'll continue to work hard for the people of South Dakota," Thune said.

Parsons has degrees from the University of Minnesota and the University of South Dakota's Knudson School of Law. He succeeds Alison Ramsdell, who was appointed during the Biden administration.

Parsons' confirmation came after a Senate rule change, spearheaded by Thune, that allows the chamber to confirm some of the president's appointees in large batches instead of one at a time. The change followed weeks of frustration from President Donald Trump and numerous Republican senators, who were exasperated by Democrats slowing down the confirmation process for lower-ranking nominees.

US Senate rejects restriction of military strikes on vessels in the Caribbean

South Dakota's Thune and Rounds vote against advancing resolution

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA-OCTOBER 8, 2025 9:10 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate failed to advance Wednesday night a resolution designed to curb the president's power regarding military actions abroad after the Trump administration ordered four strikes on boats in the Caribbean.

The resolution failed to advance 48-51. Democratic Sens. Adam Schiff of California and Tim Kaine of Virginia forced a procedural vote on the measure, which would have blocked the Trump administration from engaging in hostilities abroad without congressional approval.

Two Republicans, Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, joined nearly all Democrats voting in favor. Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was the only Democrat to vote against advancing the measure.

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 is a tool for Congress to check the balances of power of the executive branch by limiting the president's ability to initiate or escalate military actions abroad.

Since September, President Donald Trump has approved four known military strikes in the Caribbean that have killed 21 so far, and, without offering evidence, said the boats were used by drug cartel members.

"We call them water drugs," Trump said about the most recent known boat strike on Oct. 3. "The drugs that come in through the water."

The White House has released few details of the strikes.

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, also without providing any evidence, said on social media that the boats contained narcotics heading for the U.S.

"Our intelligence, without a doubt, confirmed that this vessel was trafficking narcotics, the people on-board were narco-terrorists, and they were operating on a known narco-trafficking transit route," Hegseth wrote. "These strikes will continue until the attacks on the American people are over!!!!"

Those attacks have taken place in international waters off the coast of Venezuela, Hegseth added.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, in a statement, condemned the attacks as an "illegal incursion of combat aircraft from the United States."

Use of military

It's illegal for the U.S. military to intentionally kill civilians who are not actively taking part in hostilities against the U.S.

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Senate Democrats and some Republicans have expressed skepticism about claims from the Trump administration that the boats were affiliated with drug cartels and have pushed the White House for more information on the boat strikes.

Kaine said it's possible that more people have died in the boat strikes, but they are seeking that information. He added that the strikes circumvent Congress' authority to declare war.

"We are vested with the power of declaring war. We ask basic questions," Kaine, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said. "Give us the intel about these particular boats, that they're actually carrying narcotics."

The Trump administration has argued that the strikes on the boats don't warrant notification to Congress because they don't rise to the level of war, and that the attacks are in self-defense. Kaine said he rejects those arguments.

"That's just an invented rationale," he said. "Self-defense has always been understood (as) imminent attack, imminent invasion of the United States. It is not within the norm of self-defense to define a drugrunner's operation."

Paul said he is working on getting a briefing from the White House about the strikes and was skeptical that in the most recent strike, the four people killed were affiliated with drug cartels.

"If they're members of a gang and you know them to be terrorists, and you're convinced enough to kill them, why shouldn't you know their names?" Paul said.

Schiff said that since the first U.S. military attack near Venezuela in early September, the White House has not answered his and other lawmakers' questions on those missions.

"We just have little or no information about who was on board these ships, or what intelligence was used, or what the rationale was, and how certain we can be that everyone on that ship deserved to die," he said.

Congress passed the War Powers Resolution in 1973 to limit the president's authority to wage war overseas after the Nixon administration secretly bombed Vietnam and Cambodia, killing hundreds of thousands of people. Then-President Richard Nixon vetoed the resolution, but Congress overrode the veto.

South Dakota's votes

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Majority Leader John Thune and Sen. Mike Rounds, Republicans of South Dakota, each voted against advancing a resolution designed to curb the president's power regarding military actions abroad after the Trump administration ordered four strikes on boats in the Caribbean.

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

Biofuels leaders: Iowa cedes its ethanol 'crown' to Nebraska with CO2 pipeline start

Iowa Renewable Fuels Association calls for greater support for carbon capture and sequestration

BY: CAMI KOONS-OCTOBER 8, 2025 5:47 PM

Iowa biofuels and corn experts congratulated Nebraska for its first shipments of carbon dioxide on the Tallgrass Trailblazer pipeline, but said Wednesday that the development means Iowa is no longer king at turning corn into ethanol.

Monte Shaw, the executive director of Iowa Renewable Fuels Association, said now that Nebraska has a functioning CO2 pipeline, ethanol plants in the state can take advantage of lucrative tax credits from the federal government and sell into the ultra-low carbon ethanol market.

"Iowa has worn the crown," Shaw said at a new conference Wednesday. "We have been the world's best place to turn corn into ethanol, and we've held that crown for 25 years. Last week, we got knocked off."

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Trailblazer and 45z

Tallgrass' Trailblazer pipeline, which is slated to stretch several hundred miles and transport CO2 from ethanol plants in Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming to an underground storage site in Wyoming, had its first CO2 shipment Oct. 3.

The Trailblazer pipeline formerly carried natural gas, but the company was able to convert the pipeline to instead sequester liquified carbon dioxide. By sequestering the carbon dioxide created in the process of turning corn into ethanol, the plants are able to lower the "lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions" of the fuel below a certain level, set by the U.S. Department of Energy, that makes the fuel eligible for a per-gallon tax credit.

These credits, known as 45z, were initiated under the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act. While the IRA was mostly dismantled by the Trump administration, 45z credits were extended under the Republican led tax cut law, known as the "one big beautiful bill."

Shaw said the credits can add about 66 cents per gallon of ethanol, which is a lot for an industry that "usually tries to make a penny or two."

Impacts to Iowa

According to IRFA, Iowa produces about 4.7 billion gallons of ethanol annually. Shaw said if each of those gallons could take advantage of the credits and add 66 cents per gallon, it would equate to more than \$3 billion in added value to the industry annually.

"If Iowa wants to maintain low taxes, if we want to do further property tax reform and things of that nature, then the state needs a strong ag economy," Shaw said. "Ethanol producers need access to the tools in this state to remain competitive with the plants around us that are moving forward."

Steve Kuiper, vice president of Iowa Corn Growers Association, said the boost to Iowa ethanol would directly impact corn farmers by increasing demand and potential price for corn, but would also "trickle down" to the state's economy.

Farmers have faced several years in a row of high interest rates, high input costs, and low market prices for their crops. Trade wars between the U.S. and the countries where it sells ag commodities and purchases inputs have also added stress to farmers. According to a September survey from the National Corn Growers Association, nearly 50% of U.S. farmers believe the nation is on the brink of a farm crisis.

"The Iowa agriculture economy is in tough shape," Kuiper said. "Farmers are farming at a loss. Lenders are very, very anxious right now."

Dave Miller, the chief economist with Decision Innovation Solutions, said as corn yields continue to grow, farmers need a market that accounts for an extra 150 million bushels a year through 2050.

Miller said the low-carbon ethanol market facilitated by carbon sequestration could create the potential for an additional 12 million gallons of ethanol, which he said could be fulfilled by the current farming yield increases.

"The Nebraska plants that are on the pipeline, that door has now been opened," Miller said. "So there's a real competitive advantage that's going to open up for Nebraska farmers compared to Iowa farmers."

Seth Harder, CEO of two ethanol plants in Nebraska and one in Iowa, said he has seen the things in the industry that Iowa does "really great" but he also sees that the states he operates in are on the edge of a "paradigm shift."

"As Nebraska sees this influx of funds, we hear plants are talking about not only expanding, but doubling," Harder said.

Harder said the demand for ethanol appears to be on the rise with the recent decision from California allowing the sale of a higher blend of ethanol fuel, E-15, and the prospect of more states joining in on the trend.

Challenges

Shaw said he believes Iowa is on the cusp of a "fairly substantial farm crisis."

"Nothing will solve this problem until we grow demand or reduce production, and reducing production would be devastating to the economy of Iowa in the Midwest," he said.

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Carbon sequestration projects have faced challenges in Iowa, largely because of landowner opposition to CO2 pipeline projects, including the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline. Debate on the topic caused splits among GOP lawmakers during the legislative session and has continued to be a divisive issue in the party.

The Trailblazer pipeline had fewer roadblocks than those that have popped up in Iowa. This is in part because Nebraska does not require state approval for CO2 pipelines, and because much of the pipeline was already built as the natural gas line.

Landowners and environmental groups, including the Sierra Club Iowa Chapter, that are opposed to CO2 sequestration pipelines call the Summit project a “boondoggle.” Opponents worry about property values and the safety of carbon sequestration pipelines. They have also said sequestering carbon should not qualify as a public use, which a project must have in order to use eminent domain.

Shaw said it doesn’t matter what someone thinks about carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and why it should or shouldn’t be sequestered, because for renewable fuel members, this is a “business decision.”

The Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline is the most well known carbon sequestration project in Iowa, but Shaw said there are other companies and facilities looking for places in Iowa to sequester carbon, or to otherwise build carbon sequestration pipelines.

On the nearest horizon, Southwest Iowa Renewable Energy, or SIRE located near Council Bluffs, is slated to connect to the Trailblazer pipeline and potentially begin sequestering carbon at the plant in late 2026.

The Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline cannot begin construction in Iowa until it secures permits for storage in North Dakota and for passage through South Dakota, which has become challenging due to the enactment of a restricting law in South Dakota. The company filed to change its permit with the Iowa Utilities Commission to remove the Dakota-specific language, in the event it is able to secure a “better solution” for storage and passage.

Shaw said the “economic consequences” of the development in Nebraska could be a “bump in the road” for Iowa if the state adapts and brings its own carbon sequestration practices online, or it could lead to “production and demand flow from places like Iowa to places like Nebraska.”

“We’re asking the Iowa Legislature to support President Trump’s energy leadership and to help avert what I personally feel is a pending farm crisis, and to help put Iowa’s economy back on stable ground,” Shaw said.

This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, 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.

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.

Shutdown day eight: Congress standoff unchanged as first missed federal payday nears

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT-OCTOBER 8, 2025 1:07 PM

WASHINGTON — Congress has just one week to break the stalemate and fund the government before active duty military members miss their first paycheck of the shutdown.

That would be followed later in the month by absent wages for federal civilian employees and the staffers who work for lawmakers — benchmarks that would traditionally increase pressure on Democrats and Republicans to negotiate a deal.

But both sides remained dug in Wednesday, as the Senate failed to pass Republicans’ short-term government funding bill for the sixth time and Democrats were unable to get the support needed to advance their counterproposal.

The 54-45 vote on the GOP bill and the 47-52 vote on Democrats’ legislation didn’t reach the 60 votes

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needed to advance under Senate rules.

Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto and Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman, both Democrats, as well as Maine independent Sen. Angus King voted with Republicans to advance their multi-week funding bill. Kentucky GOP Sen. Rand Paul voted no.

The shutdown began on Oct. 1, the start of the federal government's 2026 fiscal year.

Trump warms up to idea of separate bill on military pay

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., rejected the idea of voting on a stand-alone bill to provide paychecks to active duty military members during the shutdown, saying that if Democrats wanted to ensure salaries for federal workers, they should vote to advance the stopgap spending bill.

"They live with that vote. They made that decision. The House is done," Johnson said at a morning press conference. "The ball is now in the Senate's court. It does us no good to be here dithering on show votes. We did it. We sent the product over."

Trump, speaking from the White House later in the afternoon, broke with GOP leaders in Congress on passing a stand-alone bill to provide pay for military members during the shutdown.

"Yeah, that probably will happen. We don't have to worry about it yet. That's a long time," Trump said. "You know what one week is for me? An eternity. One week for me is a long time. We'll take care of it. Our military is always going to be taken care of."

Johnson also appeared to fully reject an idea floated by the Trump administration not to provide back pay for furloughed federal employees, which is required by a 2019 law.

"It's my understanding that the law is that they would be paid. There is some other legal analysis that's floating around. I haven't yet had time to dig into and read that," Johnson said. "But it has always been the case, it is tradition and I think it is statutory law that federal employees be paid. And that's my position. I think they should be."

Trump muddled the waters on that issue during his afternoon appearance, blaming Democrats for how his administration plans to handle back pay for furloughed federal workers.

"We're going to see. Most of them are going to get back pay and we're going to try to make sure of that," Trump said. "But some of them are being hurt very badly by the Democrats and they therefore won't qualify."

The shutdown will likely only end after congressional leaders begin talking with each other about core policy issues, including how to address enhanced tax credits for people who buy their own health insurance from the Affordable Care Act Marketplace. The credits are set to expire at the end of the year, spurring huge increases in health insurance costs.

Democrats say a deal must be reached before they'll vote to advance the GOP stopgap spending bill that would fund the government through Nov. 21. Republican leaders maintain they won't negotiate until after Democrats vote to open the government.

'You can't take the federal government hostage'

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said he and other GOP lawmakers are willing to talk with Democrats about the tax credits, but only after the government reopens.

"They have other issues that they want to bring up, which I said before we're happy to discuss, and yes, there are some things that I think there's interest on both sides in trying to address when it comes to health care in this country," Thune said. "But you can't take the federal government hostage and expect to have a reasonable conversation on those issues."

Thune said the stopgap funding bill is needed to give both chambers more time to work out a final agreement on the dozen full-year government funding bills, which were supposed to become law by the start of the fiscal year.

"What this does is provide a short-term extension in order for all that to happen," he said. "That's all that we're talking about."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Republicans are divided on health care issues and want to avoid a public debate over the Affordable Care Act tax credits.

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Schumer then read part of a social media post by Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene in which she said she was "absolutely disgusted" that health premiums will double by the end of the year without action.

"More Republicans should listen to her because, on this issue, she's right on the money," Schumer said. "Meanwhile, Democrats' position hasn't changed. We urge our Republican colleagues to join us in a serious negotiation to reopen the government and extend ACA premiums."

Trump threats

The shutdown's ramifications will continue to get worse the longer lawmakers remain intransigent, especially given President Donald Trump's efforts to differentiate this funding lapse from those in the past.

Trump has said he'll lay off federal workers by the thousands, cancel funding approved by Congress for projects in Democratic regions of the country and may not provide back pay for the hundreds of thousands of furloughed federal employees.

Trump and administration officials have been vague about when and how they'd implement layoffs, but a federal judge hearing arguments in a suit brought by a federal employee labor union has ordered government attorneys to file a brief later this week detailing its plans and its timeline.

Northern District of California Judge Susan Illston has given the Trump administration until the end of Friday to share details of any planned or in-progress Reduction in Force plans, "including the earliest date that those RIF notices will go out."

Illston, who was nominated by former President Bill Clinton, also told the Trump administration to detail what agencies anticipate implementing layoffs and how many employees that would impact.

Illston set Oct. 16 for oral arguments between the American Federation of Government Employees and federal government attorneys over AFGE's request for a temporary restraining order to block the Trump administration from implementing layoffs during the shutdown.

Murkowski reports informal talks

Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski, part of a bipartisan group that has begun informal talks, said during a brief interview Wednesday that the government must reopen before real steps can be taken on the ACA tax credits.

"I think the leadership has made very, very clear that the way to open up the government is, let's pass a bill that will allow us to open up the government, and then there's a lot of good conversations that can go on," Murkowski said. "It doesn't mean that we wait until then to start conversations, and that's what we're doing. We're talking but we're talking outside of the range of your microphones."

She said, "There are not a lot of guarantees around this place, are there?" when asked by a reporter whether Republicans could provide Democrats with assurances on floor votes on ACA tax credit extensions if they vote for the stopgap spending bill.

North Carolina GOP Sen. Thom Tillis said he expects the shutdown to last for at least a couple more weeks and urged Democratic senators to vote to reopen the government.

"Go take a look at the list of Democrats who are either not running for reelection or not up until '28 or '30," Tillis said. "There are plenty of them to walk the plank like I have multiple times to get the government funded and then the discussions start."

Oklahoma Republican Sen. Markwayne Mullin said that talks between Democrats and Republicans are "stalled" but "we're having conversations with everybody."

South Dakota GOP Sen. Mike Rounds said that lawmakers have had bipartisan "visits" though no real conversations.

"There's no framework," Rounds said. "There's just a matter of a clarification about how important it is to get the shutdown over with. And once we get that shutdown over with, we'll go back to bipartisan work in the Senate."

Ariana Figueroa contributed to this report.

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.

Former FBI Director Comey pleads not guilty to criminal charges demanded by Trump

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY-OCTOBER 8, 2025 10:54 AM

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Former FBI Director James Comey pleaded not guilty to two felony charges Wednesday in federal court in Virginia, in response to an indictment that followed an extraordinary pressure campaign from President Donald Trump.

A federal grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia, indicted Comey in September on one charge of making false statements to Congress during testimony in 2020 and another of obstructing a proceeding of Congress. Prosecutors had sought an additional charge of making false statements, but the grand jury returned only the two charges.

Comey faces up to five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 for each charge.

The indictment came just days before the statute of limitations ran out.

A trial is set for early January. Comey's lawyer, Patrick Fitzgerald, said he plans to file two batches of motions this month, including one alleging vindictive and selective prosecution.

"Our view is this prosecution was brought by President Trump," Fitzgerald said.

Trump told his AG: 'We can't delay any longer'

Trump has long targeted Comey for his role leading the FBI during an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential 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.

Trump in September posted on social media urging Attorney General Pam 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."

The president then forced out the acting U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia when he declined to pursue charges against Comey. Trump replaced the office's top prosecutor with former personal lawyer Lindsey Halligan, who swiftly obtained an indictment.

Comey's legal team plans to fight Halligan's appointment as unlawful.

Classified information expected to be included

U.S. District Judge Michael S. Nachmanoff for the Eastern District of Virginia agreed to Comey's request for a trial in January, after there were no objections from the government to schedule the proceeding beyond the Dec. 17 speedy trial deadline.

Fitzgerald's challenge to Halligan's appointment will be heard by a judge outside the Eastern District of Virginia according to standard protocol, Nachmanoff said, adding the separate track will have no bearing on Comey's case schedule.

Nachmanoff, who was nominated by former President Joe Biden, ordered the parties to swiftly agree on obtaining security clearances for Comey and Fitzgerald, as the government contends some of the evidence may be classified.

"We haven't seen a single piece of discovery to date," Fitzgerald told Nachmanoff, adding he had not received communication from government prosecutors until Tuesday.

Government prosecutor Nathaniel Lemons said he expects a "large amount" of discovery will be classified. Discovery is the process of exchanging information about witnesses and evidence in a legal case.

"We're just getting our hands around the discovery as well," Lemons said.

Nachmanoff responded he is "a little skeptical."

"This does not appear to be a particularly complex case," Nachmanoff said during the roughly 30-minute

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arraignment.

Fitzgerald told the judge the defense is "a bit confused" about the government's slow movement on producing discovery.

"Frankly, we feel in this case the cart has been put before the horse," Fitzgerald said.

Nachmanoff ordered the parties to come to a discovery agreement by week's end, or risk the court setting one for them.

"I want to get this resolved promptly. ... There should be no reason this case gets off track because of the existence of classified information," he said.

Comey's family accompanies him

Fitzgerald, who served as the U.S. attorney in Chicago for over a decade during the George W. Bush administration, is known for his role as Special Counsel in 2005 during the CIA leak case against Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

Fitzgerald told Nachmanoff that representing Comey is "the honor of my life."

Several of Comey's family members attended the arraignment at the Eastern District's Albert V. Bryan Courthouse, including his daughter, Maurene Comey, who was fired earlier this year from her role as a federal prosecutor in Manhattan.

Comey's son-in-law, Troy Edwards Jr., was also in attendance. Edwards resigned from his position as prosecutor for the Eastern District of Virginia immediately after Comey was indicted last month.

Oral arguments are set for Nov. 19 and Dec. 9. A trial is set for Jan. 5.

Fitzgerald initially argued for a Jan. 12 trial date, but Nachmanoff denied the request.

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

Noem visits Portland ICE facility as lawsuit over National Guard deployment continues

Oral arguments before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals are scheduled for Thursday morning

BY: ALEX BAUMHARDT AND JULIA SHUMWAY-OCTOBER 8, 2025 5:00 AM

As Oregon awaits more clarity from a federal appeals court on the Trump administration's attempts to deploy National Guard troops from multiple states to Portland, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem traveled to the city's Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility on Tuesday.

The ICE processing facility in south Portland has been the center of mostly small protests for months. Ahead of Noem's arrival Tuesday, about two dozen demonstrators waited outside the ICE facility playing music and holding signs. About an hour before Noem's arrival, federal police took down protest signs that had been affixed to nearby walls and fences for weeks.

Oregon Guard and combat veteran Noah Mrowczynski was among the small group of protestors. Mrowczynski, 45, hadn't been to the facility before but said he wanted to join the protest when he heard Noem was coming.

"I'm a combat veteran, a veteran who fought real wars against real terrorists," he said. "Not this so-called insurrection and so-called terrorists Trump would have you believe we are in Portland."

Federal District Judge Karin Immergut, appointed by President Donald Trump in his first term, blocked Trump from mobilizing 200 Oregon National Guard troops on Saturday. On Sunday, she issued a broader order blocking troops from anywhere in the U.S. from coming to Portland after the administration began sending federalized troops from California and called up 400 Texas National Guard members to federal service.

On Tuesday, Gov. Tina Kotek sent a letter to the head of the U.S. Northern Command, which is overseeing Oregon and California troops, urging him to immediately send home the 200 Oregon soldiers stationed at Camp Rilea in Warrenton and the 200 California soldiers stationed at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley.

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"Our citizen soldiers deserve better than to be uprooted from their families and careers, only to be mobilized for an illegal mission positioning our soldiers in opposition to the U.S. Constitution's 1st, 4th and 10th amendments, of which they have taken an oath to uphold," Kotek wrote.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals set oral arguments for Thursday morning on the federal government's request to stay Immergut's ruling. Without a stay, a restraining order will continue to block troops from being deployed until mid-October, when Immergut will decide whether to renew the order. She set a trial on the merits of the state's case for the end of the month.

Attorneys for Oregon, the city of Portland and now California have argued that deploying federalized troops violates the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees that police power within the states resides with the states. They argued that sending troops to Portland would cause irreparable harm, including financial harm, by inciting greater protests than would exist without the federal troops.

Immergut agreed, saying in her Saturday ruling that there was no evidence of a rebellion or danger of a rebellion in Portland protests.

"Furthermore, this country has a longstanding and foundational tradition of resistance to government overreach, especially in the form of military intrusion into civil affairs," Immergut wrote. "This historical tradition boils down to a simple proposition: this is a nation of Constitutional law, not martial law. Defendants have made a range of arguments that, if accepted, risk blurring the line between civil and military federal power — to the detriment of this nation."

Noem visits

Federal agents pushed protesters and local reporters back from the ICE facility before Noem arrived, but a handful of conservative influencers — including one arrested for fighting outside the ICE facility last week — accompanied her. One posted a video on X showing Noem praying over a meal from Burgerville, the Vancouver-based regional fast food chain.

After that meal, Noem was spotted on the roof of the ICE facility looking out at the small group of protesters and press.

Gov. Tina Kotek said in a statement Tuesday that she met Noem at the airport Tuesday after hearing through unofficial channels that she might visit. Kotek said she told Noem that Oregon is united in opposition to military policing in communities.

"Today, in my meeting with Secretary Noem, I reiterated again that there is no insurrection in Oregon," Kotek said. "Twice now, a federal judge has affirmed that there is no legal basis for military deployment in Portland. I was clear that I have confidence in local law enforcement to meet the moment."

Sen. Ron Wyden, also a Democrat, was harsher in his statement.

"Kristi Noem is cosplaying as a public official," Wyden. "In reality, she's been sent by Trump to incite violence."

This story was originally produced by Oregon Capital Chronicle, 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.

Senior reporter Alex Baumhardt covers education and the environment for the Oregon Capital Chronicle. Before coming to Oregon, she was a national radio producer and reporter covering education for American Public Media's documentaries and investigations unit, APM Reports. She earned a master's degree in digital and visual media as a U.S. Fulbright scholar in Spain, and has reported from the Arctic to the Antarctic for national and international media and from Minnesota and Oregon for The Washington Post.

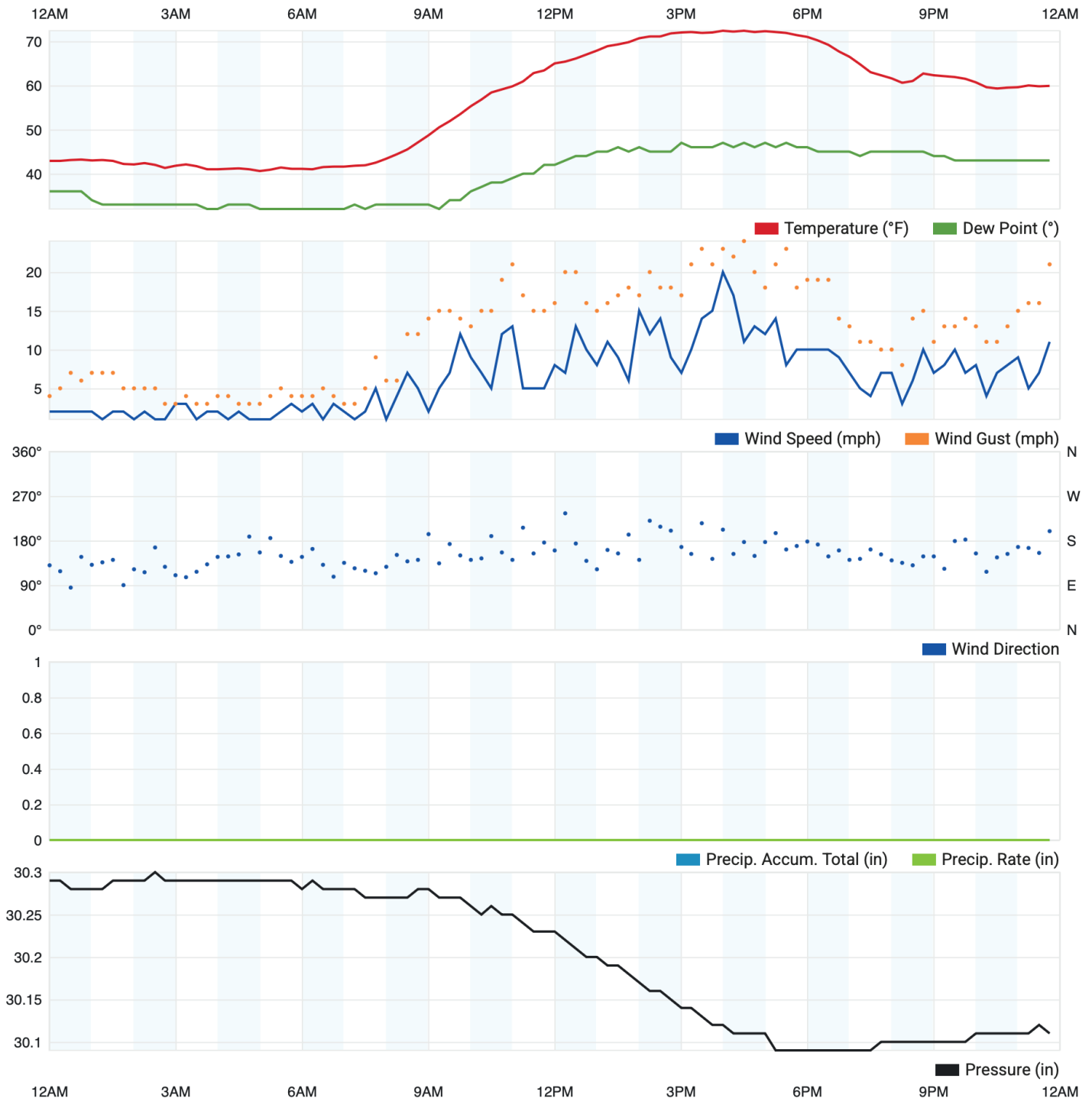
Julia Shumway is the Oregon Capital Chronicle's editor. Before joining the Capital Chronicle in 2021, she was a legislative reporter for the Arizona Capitol Times in Phoenix and reported on local and state government and politics in Iowa, Nebraska and Bend. An award-winning journalist, Julia also serves as president of the Oregon Legislative Correspondents Association, or Capitol press corps.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

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Today



High: 75 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 42 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 64 °F

Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 40 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 64 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers

Today



Highs: 70-79°F

Lows: 40-48°F

-Southerly winds turning
northwesterly with gusts of 25 to 35
mph, diminishing this evening

Friday



Highs: 60-70°F

Lows: 38-48°F

-Cooler

weather.gov/aberndeen October 9, 2025



Dry weather expected today through Friday. Winds will be breezy today with gusts of 25 to 35 mph out of the south, switching northwesterly, and diminishing this evening. Cooler temps for Friday

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 73 °F at 4:04 PM

Low Temp: 41 °F at 4:55 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 4:27 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 87 in 2024

Record Low: 14 in 1964

Average High: 63

Average Low: 37

Average Precip in Oct.: 0.68

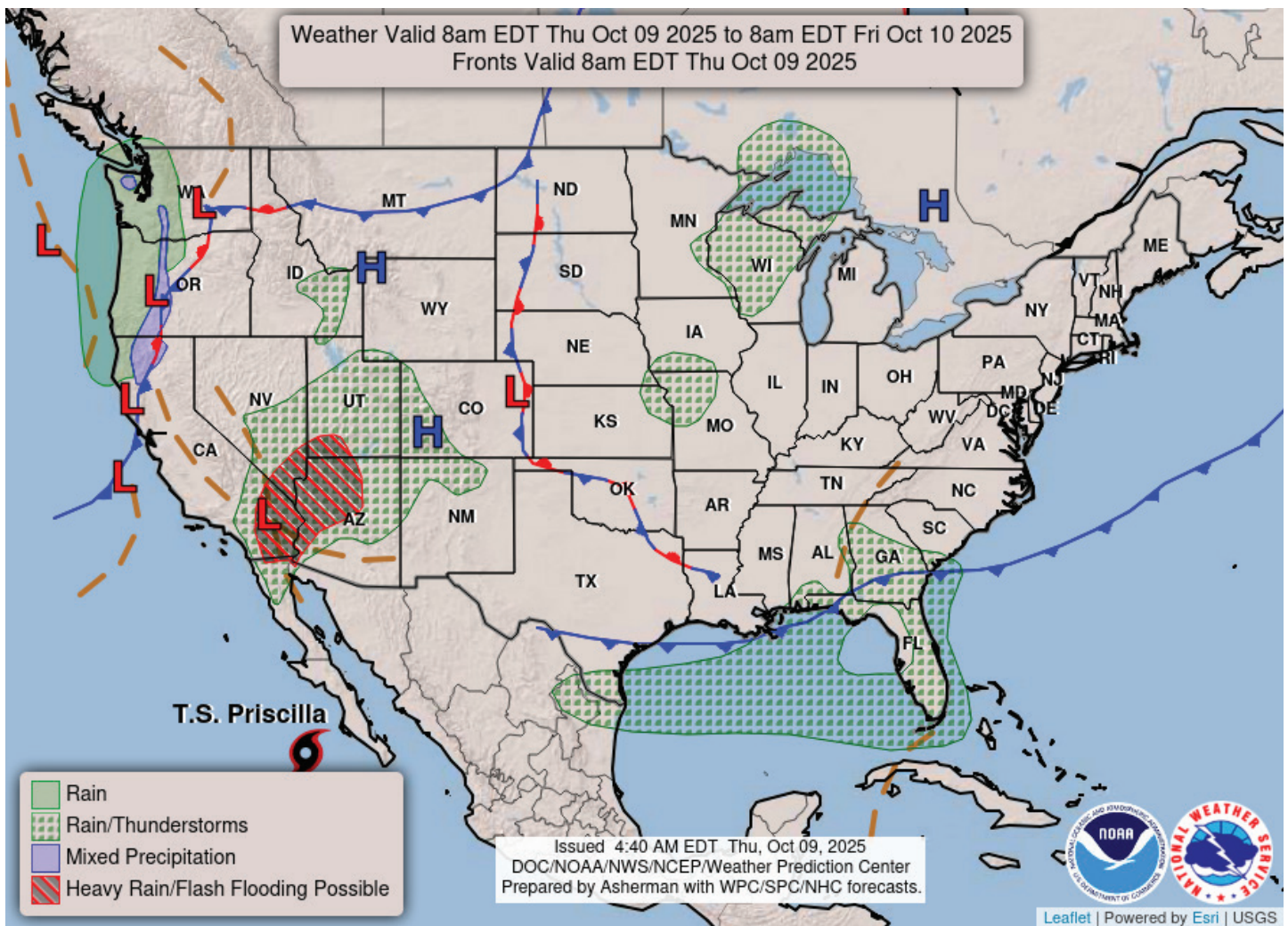
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 19.01

Precip Year to Date: 22.92

Sunset Tonight: 6:57 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42 am



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Today in Weather History

October 9, 1964: Record cold occurred on this day in 1964 across parts of central and northeast South Dakota with temperatures falling into the mid-teens to around 20 degrees at many locations. Sisseton had a record low of 20 degrees; Watertown had a record low of 16 degrees, with Kennebec recording the lowest temperature of 13 degrees on this day in 1964. Although not a record low, Aberdeen fell to 14 degrees.

October 9, 1980: On this day in 1980, hot air streamed across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota with highs mostly in the 80s. Record highs were established at Watertown with 86 degrees and both Wheaton and Sisseton with 87 degrees. One of the warmest temperatures across the area was 89 degrees at Kennebec.

1804: The famous Snow Hurricane moved ashore near Atlantic City on this day. After briefly passing through Connecticut and into Massachusetts, cold air was entrained in the circulation with heavy snow falling between New York to southern Canada. Berkshires Massachusetts and Concord New Hampshire record two feet of snow with this hurricane. This storm produced the first observation of snow from a hurricane, but not the last. Hurricane Ginny of 1963 brought up to 18 inches (400 mm) of snow to portions of Maine.

1903 - New York City was deluged with 11.17 inches of rain 24 hours to establish a state record. Severe flooding occurred in the Passaic Valley of New Jersey where more than fifteen inches of rain was reported. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 - The temperature at San Juan, Puerto Rico, soared to 98 degrees to establish an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eighteen cities in the southeastern U.S. and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region reported record low temperatures for the date. Asheville NC dipped to 29 degrees, and the record low of 47 degrees at Jacksonville FL marked their fourth of the month. A second surge of cold air brought light snow to the Northern Plains, particularly the Black Hills of South Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Ten cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Hartford CT with a reading of 28 degrees. Snow continued in northern New England through the morning hours. Mount Washington NH reported five inches of snow. Warm weather continued in the western U.S. Los Angeles CA reported a record high of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably cold weather continued in the Upper Midwest. Thirteen cities in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana reported record low temperatures for the date, including Marquette MI with a reading of 20 degrees. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the western U.S. as the San Francisco Giants won the National League pennant. San Jose CA reported a record high of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2001: An unusually strong fall outbreak of tornadoes spawned at least 23 twisters across parts of Nebraska and Oklahoma. Hardest hit was the town of Cordell, OK, but a 22 minute lead time led to an amazingly low casualty count: only nine injuries and no fatalities.

2013: The Puglia region of southern Italy saw tornadoes on this day.

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Daily Devotion

Making Him Known

Are you finding ways to share the goodness of God with others?

Acts 17:16-33: In Athens

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'[b]

29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." 33 At that, Paul left the Council.

There are three questions everyone must face eventually: Who is the one true God? What is He like? Is it possible to have a personal relationship with Him? Throughout history, countless people have grappled with these questions.

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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Let's look at today's passage. Imagine walking into church one Sunday and sitting in front of a giant statue made of bronze or gold. We might sing a few songs in honor of it, listen to a sermon, then take up an offering and lay it at the foot of the statue. After some additional music, church is over and we return to our houses. What would we gain from that worship? What assurance could we claim? There would be no joy, peace, or security in this life or for the one to come because we bowed down to something that is lifeless and unable to hear us.

When the apostle Paul was in Athens, he provided answers for the people there by preaching about the one true God. Today, as Christians, we should do the same because it is God's will that every single person know Him (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

As believers, we have a relationship with God through Christ, but countless people in this world have never heard about the Savior. Do not be content just to live your Christian life quietly. Instead, find a way to share your peace and joy with someone else.

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.07.25

17 26 33 45 56 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$575,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 53 Mins
24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.08.25

4 10 15 17 19 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$4,520,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 8 Mins
23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.08.25

9 13 14 35 46 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 23 Mins 23
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.08.25

1 16 21 30 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$45,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 23
Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.08.25

8 13 19 34 53 24

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 52
Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.08.25

8 10 44 48 54 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$244,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 52
Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

08/09/2025 Groton Legion 30th Anniversary Celebration
08/07/2025 Groton Firemen Summer Splash in the GHS Parking Lot 7:30-8:30pm
08/11/2025 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 3:30-6pm
08/23/2025 Glacial Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/06-07/25 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/07/2025 Couples Sunflower Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
09/07/2025 9th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2025 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/15/2025 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving 11:30am-1:30pm Community Center (Thanksgiving)
11/30/2025 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Trump's \$100,000 H-1B visa fee threatens rural schools and hospitals reliant on immigrant workers

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — When Rob Coverdale started his job in 2023 as superintendent of the K-12 Crow Creek Tribal School in South Dakota, there were 15 unfilled teaching positions.

Within nine months, he had filled those vacancies with Filipino teachers, the majority of whom arrived on the H-1B, a visa for skilled workers in specialty occupations.

"We've hired the H-1B teachers because we quite simply didn't have other applicants for those positions," Coverdale said. "So they're certainly not taking jobs from Americans. They're filling jobs that otherwise just simply we would not get filled."

Now a new \$100,000 fee for H-1B visa applications spells trouble for those like Coverdale in rural parts of the country who rely on immigrants to fill vacancies in skilled professions like education and health care.

The Trump administration announced the fee on Sept. 19, arguing that employers were replacing American workers with cheaper talent from overseas. Since then, the White House has said the fee won't apply to existing visa holders and offered a form to request exemptions from the charge.

H-1Bs are primarily associated with tech workers from India. Big tech companies are the biggest user of the visa, and nearly three-quarters of those approved are from India. But there are critical workers, like teachers and doctors, who fall outside that category.

Over the last decade, the U.S. has faced a shortage in those and other sectors. One in eight public school positions are vacant or filled by uncertified teachers, and the American Medical Association projects a shortage of 87,000 physicians in the next decade. The shortages are often worse in small, rural communities that struggle to fill jobs due to lower wages and often lack basic necessities like shopping and home rental options.

H-1B and J-1 visas provide communities an option to hire immigrants with advanced training and certification. The J-1s are short-term visas for cultural exchange programs that aren't subject to the new fee but, unlike the H-1B, don't offer a pathway to permanent residency.

While large companies may be able to absorb the new fee, that's not an option for most rural communities, said Melissa Sadorf, executive director of the National Rural Education Association.

"It really is potentially the cost of the salary and benefits of one teacher, maybe even two, depending on the state," she said. "Attaching that price tag to a single hire, it just simply puts that position out of reach for rural budgets."

A coalition of health care providers, religious groups and educators filed a lawsuit on Friday to stop the H-1B fee, saying it would harm hospitals, churches, schools and industries that rely on the visa. The Department of Homeland Security declined to comment and referred a query to its website.

Filling classrooms where Americans won't go

Coverdale said spots like Stephan, where Crow Creek is based, struggle to attract workers in part because of their isolation. Stephan is nearly an hour's drive from the nearest Walmart or any place that sells clothes, he said.

"The more remote you are, the more challenging it is for your staff members to get to your school and serve your kids," he said.

Among Coverdale's hires is Mary Joy Ponce-Torres, who had 24 years of teaching experience in the Philippines and now teaches history at Crow Creek. It was a cultural adjustment, but Ponce-Torres said she's made friends and Stephan is now a second home.

"I came from a private school," she said. "When I came here, I saw it was more like a rural area ... but maybe I was also looking for the same vibe, the same atmosphere where I can just take my time, take things in a much slower pace."

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Many immigrants like Ponce-Torres leave their family behind to pursue the experience and higher wages that a U.S. job can provide.

Sean Rickert, superintendent of the Pima Unified School District in Pima, Arizona, said he would stop seeking H-1B teachers if the new fee is imposed. "I just plain don't have the money," he said.

Though schools can also use J-1 visas to bring in immigrant teachers, it increases turnover because it is shorter term.

"It's so important that we find permanent people, people who can buy homes, who can become part of our community," said George Shipley, superintendent at Bison Schools in the town of Bison, South Dakota. "So the H-1B opens that possibility. It is super important, in my opinion, to actually transition from the J-1 visas to the H-1B."

Without enough staff, schools may hire uncertified teachers, combine classes, increase caseloads for special education managers or drop some course offerings. Shipley said any future shortage of teachers in Bison would force some classes to move online.

The rural reliance on immigrant teachers is concentrated on harder-to-fill specialties, Sadorf said.

"It's a lot more difficult to find a high school advanced math teacher that's qualified than it is to fill a second or third grade elementary class position," she said.

Closing gaps in the nation's doctor shortage

The fee could be a "huge problem" for health care, said Bobby Mukkamala, president of the American Medical Association and a doctor in Flint, Michigan. Without enough doctors, patients will have to drive farther and wait longer for care.

One-quarter of the nation's physicians are international medical graduates, according to the AMA.

"It's just going to be terrible for the physician shortage, particularly in rural areas," said Mukkamala, whose parents came to the U.S. as international medical graduates. "The people that do graduate from here, who want to practice medicine, obviously have a choice and they're going to pick Detroit, they're going to pick Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco. ... This is kind of where everybody goes."

Leading medical societies have called on the Trump administration and lawmakers to grant exemptions from the fee to immigrant health care workers.

"Given the staffing and financial challenges our hospitals are already facing, the increased petition fees outlined in the September 19 Proclamation would likely prevent many of them from continuing to recruit essential health care staff and could force a reduction in the services they are able to provide," the American Hospital Association said in a statement.

Allison Roberts, vice president of human resources at Prairie Lakes Healthcare System in Watertown, South Dakota, said the change could be dire for health care in rural America.

"If we end up not being exempt, the variation between what it is now and that \$100,000 fee is going to really take your smaller, rural health care institutions out of the picture," she said.

The Latest: Trump says Israel and Hamas have agreed to the 'first phase' of his peace plan

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. President Donald Trump announced Wednesday that Israel and Hamas have agreed to the "first phase" of his peace plan to pause fighting and release at least some hostages and prisoners, in a major breakthrough in the two-year-old war.

"This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace," Trump wrote on social media.

Hamas will release all 20 living hostages in the coming days in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, while the Israeli military will begin a withdrawal from the majority of Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on social media, "With God's help we will bring them all home." Hamas said separately that the deal would ensure the withdrawal of Israeli troops as well as allow

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for the entry of aid and exchange of hostages and prisoners.

Here's the latest:

Thousands of observant Jews rejoice in Jerusalem

Thousands of observant Jews have streamed into Jerusalem's old city to mark the holiday of Sukkot at the Wall, with extra rejoicing for the upcoming release of the hostages in Gaza.

"God is making miracles, we know from the past. But today we saw it," said Avi Kozman, who was holding Sukkot's traditional palm branch after receiving the Priestly Blessing, or Birkat Kohanim.

Sukkot explicitly encourages Jews to rejoice, and many in the jubilant crowds that broke into spontaneous dancing by Jerusalem's old walls saw divine intervention in the timing of the announcement.

"We always see his hand in the salvation he gives us," said Hindel Berman as she returned from prayer with her son. The New Jersey resident had come to Jerusalem to mark Sukkot. She called the announcement an answer to the prayers she'd been fervently making since Oct. 7.

"We were screaming and singing last night," she said. "We never, never, never gave up hope. Every prayer was helping, and every good deed."

Egypt's president says the plan 'opens the door of hope'

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt is hailing the deal between Israel and Hamas as a "historic moment."

"This agreement does not only close the chapter of war; it also opens the door of hope for the peoples of the region for a future defined by justice and stability," el-Sissi wrote in a social media post.

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun said he hoped the plan would "constitute a first step toward a permanent ceasefire and an end to the humanitarian suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people in Gaza."

The United Arab Emirates, which struck a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel in 2020, also praised the move toward a ceasefire.

Saudi Arabia welcomes possible start of a ceasefire

The kingdom said in a foreign ministry statement that it hoped the peace deal will lead to urgent action to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and a complete Israeli withdrawal.

Saudi Arabia also expressed hope that the peace plan would lead to the "initiation of practical steps to achieve a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders."

European leaders praise peace deal

European leaders have praised the peace deal reached between Israel and Hamas, with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer expressing relief Thursday.

Starmer, who is on a two-day visit to India, said at a joint news conference with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the agreement must now be implemented in full without delay and be accompanied by the immediate lifting of all restrictions on lifesaving humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called for all parties to uphold the agreement's terms, while the EU's policy chief, Kaja Kallas, wrote on X that "The EU will do what it can to support its implementation."

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni hailed the deal as "extraordinary news" and urged its swift implementation, while Dutch Foreign Minister David van Weel expressed hope for wider peace in the region.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron said the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas brings hope for hostages, Palestinians in Gaza, and the entire region. He added the agreement will be discussed in Paris later Thursday.

"This agreement must mark the end of the war and the beginning of a political solution based on the two-state solution," he said.

Turkey's Erdogan thanks Trump for showing 'necessary political will'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose country played a role in the negotiations, expressed pleasure with the ceasefire agreement reached between Hamas and Israel.

In a statement posted on X, Erdogan thanked Trump for "demonstrating the necessary political will" as

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well as Qatar and Egypt for facilitating the deal.

Erdogan said Turkey would closely monitor the full implementation of the agreement and continue to contribute to the process.

"I extend my heartfelt greetings to my Palestinian brothers and sisters who have endured indescribable suffering for two years," the Turkish president said.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry meanwhile, said that sending humanitarian aid to the region is a priority and stressed the urgent need to begin rebuilding Gaza.

Violence breaks out in Pakistan ahead of pro-Palestinian march

Dozens of people were wounded early Thursday, ahead of a planned pro-Palestinian march to Islamabad, when violence broke out in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore after police launched a raid on the headquarters of the Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan.

Video and photos released by the party showed several injured supporters lying on the floor of a mosque near its headquarters.

There was no immediate comment from the police.

The latest clashes erupted a day before the group was scheduled to stage a sit-in near the U.S. embassy in the capital.

The unrest also came just hours before Israel and Hamas agreed to a pause in fighting in Gaza.

Peace plan hailed by more world leaders

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called the deal a step toward lasting peace in the Middle East.

On Thursday, he praised Trump for his role in the deal and acknowledged Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey for their mediation efforts.

"Above all, we pay tribute to the resilience of the Palestinian people, who have endured unimaginable hardship that must never be repeated," Sharif said.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim lauded the progress and urged all parties to seize the opportunity for enduring peace.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese also welcomed the agreement, expressing hope for a brighter future in the region.

Exhausted Palestinians welcome peace deal with mix of hope and skepticism

Exhausted and hardened by months of brutal bombings, some Palestinians were skeptical yet impatient to see the first phase of the Trump peace plan come into effect, just hours after the agreement between Israel and Hamas was announced.

Paramedic Saeed Awad said he was first skeptical about the possibility of a ceasefire because of previous failed attempts to end the war.

"They all ended in failure. So we didn't really pay attention to this (round)," he said.

When he first heard the news, Awad said, he had to check with others, seeking confirmation.

"We have been in this war and in this suffering for two years," Awad said.

Alaa Abd Rabbo, displaced from northern Gaza to Deir al-Balah, said the ceasefire deal is "a Godsend day of relief."

He said he has been displaced from his home several times, to different parts of Gaza.

"We are tired. We have been displaced and this is the day we have been waiting for," Abd Rabbo said.

"We want to go home, to tend to our affairs, to check on our homes. Even though there are no more homes, but we still want to go home. We want to work. We have been sleeping and staying on the streets."

World leaders are praising peace deal

World leaders have praised the peace agreement in Gaza brokered by Donald Trump.

Argentine President Javier Milei applauded the deal Wednesday, calling it historic, and said he would nominate Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney expressed relief that hostages will soon be reunited with their families and called on all parties to implement the agreed terms swiftly.

New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters said Israelis and Palestinians have suffered immensely

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and that "Today is a positive first step in bringing that suffering to an end."

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi also welcomed the agreement as a "major step" toward calming the situation and achieving a two-state settlement.

Israeli military says northern Gaza remains a 'dangerous combat zone'

The Israeli military warned Palestinians in Gaza against returning north to Gaza City or approaching areas where troops are stationed until further notice.

Israel's Arabic language spokesperson Avichay Adraee issued the warning on X, hours after Hamas and Israel agreed to the first phase of the Trump plan to pause the fighting and release hostages and prisoners.

"For your safety, refrain from returning north or approaching areas where (troops) are stationed or operating throughout" Gaza, he said.

Adraee said northern Gaza is "still considered a dangerous combat zone."

Journalists in Gaza City celebrate peace deal

In Gaza City, where bombings had been heard in the early hours of Thursday before news of the deal, a few journalists roamed the dark streets of the city, shouting in jubilation that "the war has ended," according to a video they posted on social media.

The journalists, laughing and jumping, shouted that most people who remained in the city have no internet and needed to be woken up to hear the news.

In the south of Gaza, a group of young men lifted another journalist on their shoulders as he broadcast the news to his channel, celebrating the ceasefire.

The journalist posted a video of the interaction on his social media.

The men also performed a traditional Palestinian dance, Debka, on the streets, while singing. Communications and internet connection have been badly severed by the war, and large parts of Gaza had no connection, particularly during the night.

UNGA president says ceasefire agreement must lead to immediate aid deliveries

Annalena Baerbock said the agreement announced by Trump finally offers "a ray of hope after more than 700 days of death, destruction and despair."

She said the moment must be seized to fully implement the agreement, end the war in Gaza, release all hostages and ensure "the immediate and unimpeded entry of humanitarian aid."

Baerbock said many world leaders at their recent meeting in the United Nations General Assembly stressed that a permanent ceasefire can open a path to peace, end Hamas' rule in Gaza and Israel's occupation, and lead to a two-state solution, the only way Israelis and Palestinians can live in lasting peace and security.

The former German foreign minister commended the U.S., Qatar, Egypt, Turkey and the many others involved "for their efforts to bring the suffering of Israeli hostages and Palestinian civilians to an end."

Hostage families chant 'Nobel prize to Trump' in Tel Aviv

Families of hostages and their supporters started chanting "Nobel prize to Trump" as they gathered in the early hours of the morning in Tel Aviv's hostages square.

People gathered there after the agreement was announced, with freed hostages and families of those still captive cheering, singing and crying at the news.

Israeli ambassador says end of hostilities in Gaza depends on first-stage implementation

Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel Leiter told CNN that living hostages held by Hamas would be released on Sunday or Monday — with a 72-hour clock for Hamas to make the release beginning once the Israeli Cabinet meets, Thursday afternoon or evening, to approve the list of Palestinian prisoners to be released in the agreement.

Leiter said that Israel hopes the deal will lead to an end to the war, but that will depend on how well it is implemented.

"We hope it leads to a complete cessation of hostilities and a rebuilding of Gaza for the sake of the Gazans and for the sake of Israel," he said.

"But it's the first stage, and we've got to see the first stage implemented completely in the next few days."

Leiter, whose eldest son was killed in the war while serving in the Israeli forces, credited Israeli military

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pressure with bringing Hamas to the negotiating table after two years of conflict.

Hostages to be 'probably' released Monday, Trump says

In an interview on Fox News, Trump said that Hamas will begin releasing hostages "probably" on Monday. "This is more than Gaza," Trump told host Sean Hannity in a telephone interview. "This is peace in the Middle East."

Trump also said a future Gaza will be a "peaceful, much safer place" and that the U.S. would remain involved to ensure its safety and prosperity.

"Other countries in the area will help it reconstruct because they have tremendous wealth," Trump said, adding: "We'll be involved in helping them make it successful and helping it stay peaceful."

Trump confirmed that he spoke to Netanyahu earlier Wednesday night. The prime minister told him, "I can't believe it," according to the president's retelling.

"I said, 'Israel cannot fight the world, Bibi, they can't fight the world,' and he understands that very well," Trump said.

Israeli Army welcomes agreement, prepares for 'any scenario'

The Israeli Army released a statement Wednesday that it "welcomes the signing of the agreement for the return of the hostages."

According to the statement, the Chief of the General Staff instructed all forces "to prepare strong defenses and be ready for any scenario."

Israeli hostage families in Washington thank Trump

Relatives of Israeli hostages who came to Washington to mark the two year anniversary of the Oct. 7 attack released a statement praising Trump for the deal.

"Thank you the Trump administration for doing everything you can to bring them home," the statement reads.

Jubilation in Tel Aviv's Hostages Square

Joyful hostage families and their supporters began spilling into the central Tel Aviv square that has become the main gathering point in the struggle to free the captives.

Some popped open a bottle of Champagne and cheered.

Crying tears of joy, families hugged previously released hostages as the square continued to fill with Israelis.

Family campaigns against release of Palestinian prisoner

Jamal Al-Hur is a high profile Palestinian prisoner rumored to be released in the upcoming deal.

Isidore Karten, whose uncle was killed by Al-Hur in 1996, said Wednesday that while the family is "extremely thankful for the Trump administration" and are "extremely happy" for the hostages and their families, they fear that the deal could be done in a way that risks the repetition of the Oct. 7 attack.

Karten's family has been campaigning against the release of Al-Hur for the last few days.

Father of hostage says deal could have come earlier

Yehuda Cohen, father of hostage Nimrod said this moment is what they'd been waiting for.

"It could have come much earlier. Let this next three days pass with no one trying to sabotage it," he said.

Hostages 'aware of their pending freedom,' former hostage says

Omer Shemtov, a hostage who was freed earlier this year, told reporters that based on his personal experience, he believed the hostages were aware of their pending freedom.

"I believe they know and that they are very excited."

Israeli hostage families welcome Gaza breakthrough

Einav Zangauker, the mother of captive Matan and a prominent advocate for the hostages' freedom, told reporters she wants to tell her son she loves him.

"I want to smell his smell," she said through tears. "If I have one dream it is seeing Matan sleep in his own bed."

A forum of hostage families said they met the news with "excitement, anticipation and apprehension."

"This represents important and meaningful progress toward bringing everyone home, but our struggle is not over and will not end until the last hostage returns," it said in a statement.

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Hamas official says Palestinian prisoner list handed over

A senior Hamas official said the group has handed over a list of Palestinian prisoners who will be released as part of the ceasefire deal.

Zaher Jabarin, who oversees Palestinian prisoners' affairs, said in a statement the list was prepared in accordance with "the criteria agreed upon in the agreement."

He said the group is still "awaiting final agreement on the names," and that they will be announced "once the relevant procedures and understandings are completed."

Palestinian aid coordinator says joy mixed with sorrow

Eyad Amawi, a Palestinian aid coordinator displaced in central Gaza, says he has mixed feelings of happiness and sadness over the ceasefire deal.

"We believe and don't believe. We have mixed feelings, between happiness and sadness, memories, everything is mixed," he said.

Amawi said he hopes the deal is implemented as agreed so that people can return to their homes and begin to "renew the (will) and the hope for life" in Gaza where many children are injured and rubble is everywhere.

His biggest fear, he said, is Israel putting obstacles to implementing the agreement.

The eyes of the Palestinians in Gaza are on how the world will help Gaza to rebuild.

"We need to fix everything here, especially the psychological effects to (continue) with our lives."

Amawi said the priority for him and everyone else is the return of the displaced to their homes.

He plans to return to Gaza City as soon as the deal takes effect to resume his work and life, and help with the rehabilitation of the city.

He said the news of the deal came late in Gaza, so most people were asleep.

"The celebrations will be great. But also the sadness and the worries will be great also," he said.

To the world, Amawi said: "We need you."

'I can't believe the news,' Palestinian man says

A Palestinian man, Ayman Saber, reacted to the ceasefire announcement.

The Khan Younis resident said he plans to return to his home in the city and try to rebuild his house, which was destroyed in an Israeli strike last year.

"I will rebuild the house, we will rebuild Gaza," he said.

Grandson of killed and released hostages thanks Trump

Daniel Lifshitz, whose grandmother was freed and grandfather was killed in captivity, on Wednesday thanked world leaders for helping secure the newly signed agreement to release all hostages held in Gaza.

"We express our deepest gratitude as the historic agreement has been signed — the hostages, our brothers and sisters, are coming home," Lifshitz said in a statement.

He thanked Trump for his "decisive leadership and unwavering commitment to bringing every hostage back within 72 hours," and also praised the roles of Egyptian, Turkish and Qatari leaders and negotiators, citing their "personal dedication and relentless efforts."

Lifshitz also expressed appreciation to Israel's negotiation team and Netanyahu "for their determination and courage in achieving this vital agreement."

From the 20 hostages returned, four are from his community including lifelong friends. "This united cooperation and shared moral responsibility have proven that when the right people stand together, humanity prevails" he said.

Displaced Palestinian man waits to return home

"It's a huge day, huge joy," Ahmed Sheheiber, a displaced Palestinian man from northern Gaza, said of the ceasefire deal.

Crying over the phone from his shelter in Gaza City, he said he is waiting "impatiently" for the ceasefire to go into effect to return to his home in the Jabaliya refugee camp.

UN welcomes Gaza peace agreement as 'desperately needed breakthrough'

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the agreement between Israel and Hamas late

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Wednesday to begin the initial phase of a U.S.-brokered peace deal while urging all parties to "abide fully by the terms of the agreement."

Guterres said that the U.N. will support the full implementation of the agreement and has been ready to scale up delivery of humanitarian aid in Gaza that has been sitting on the borders of Jordan and Egypt.

"I urge all stakeholders to seize this momentous opportunity to establish a credible political path forward towards ending the occupation, recognizing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and achieving a two-state solution that enables Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security," he said.

Netanyahu, Trump talked about 'historic achievement,' Israeli leader's office says

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with U.S. President Donald Trump, and they congratulated each other on an agreement to release all the hostages which Netanyahu's office described as a "historic achievement"

According to a statement from the prime minister's office, the conversation was "warm and moving."

Netanyahu thanked Trump for his "efforts and global leadership," while Trump praised Netanyahu's "determined leadership and the actions he led."

Deal to head to Israeli Cabinet for approval

The agreement will head to the Israeli Cabinet on Thursday for its approval, and once that occurs, Israeli forces will begin withdrawing to the agreed upon boundary, according to a senior White House official. That should take less than 24 hours, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss planning.

Hamas then has 72 hours to release hostages, and the White House believes they will begin being released on Monday, the official said.

Hamas to release all 20 living hostages this weekend

Hamas plans to release all 20 living hostages this weekend, people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. The deceased hostages will come out in a later stage in phases. The Israel army will move out of 70% of the area, they said.

It was not immediately clear whether the parties had made any progress on thornier questions about the future of the conflict, including whether Hamas will demilitarize, as Trump has demanded, and eventual governance of the war-torn territory. But the agreement nonetheless marked the most momentous development since a deal in January and February that involved the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

Netanyahu will convene Israeli government tomorrow

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said he would convene the government tomorrow in order to approve the deal.

"I thank President Trump and his team from the bottom of my heart for their commitment to this sacred mission of freeing our hostages," Netanyahu said.

Trump pleased with Kushner, Witkoff for getting deal closed

Trump was pleased with Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff for their work to get the first phase of the agreement closed after arriving in Egypt earlier on Wednesday, according to a person who has been briefed on the negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the delicate negotiations.

In the lead-up to Wednesday's announcement, Israeli officials were pushing back on inclusion of Marwan Barghouti, the most prominent Palestinian prisoner who is serving five life sentences in an Israeli jail, the person added.

Israeli officials made clear to the U.S. that the release of Barghouti would set off the far-right members of Netanyahu's coalition.

It was not immediately clear which Palestinian prisoners, including Barghouti, will be included in the first phase of the deal.

Hamas says deal reached to end war in Gaza

Hamas says a deal has been reached to end the war in Gaza that will ensure the withdrawal of Israeli troops as well as the entry of aid and the exchange of hostages and prisoners.

The group said in a statement the deal came after "responsible and serious negotiations" over the

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proposal by Trump. Hamas called on Trump and the mediators to ensure that Israel implements all the provisions agreed upon without delay or changes.

Qatar says Israel, Hamas agree on first phase of Gaza ceasefire deal

A Qatar Foreign Ministry spokesman says Israel and Hamas reached an agreement on all the provisions and implementation mechanisms of the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal.

The agreement "will lead to ending the war, the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and the entry of aid," said Majed al-Ansari, Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman, speaking on behalf of the mediators of the deal. He said the details will be announced later.

Group representing hostage families receive ceasefire news with 'excitement'

The Hostages Families Forum, a grassroots organization representing many of the hostage families, said it received the news of a ceasefire with "excitement, anticipation, and apprehension."

The Forum called on the Israeli government to immediately convene to approve the deal, and praised Trump for his "commitment and determination that led to this historic breakthrough."

Trump says Israel, Hamas have agreed to 'first phase' of his peace plan

U.S. President Donald Trump has announced that Israel and Hamas have agreed to the "first phase" of his peace plan to pause fighting and release at least some hostages and prisoners.

"This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace," Trump wrote late Wednesday.

Blue Jays beat Yankees 5-2 in Game 4 to reach first ALCS since 2016

By MIKE FITZPATRICK AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After taking down the storied New York Yankees in their own ballpark, Toronto manager John Schneider was ready to revel in the triumph.

"Start spreading the news!" Schneider exclaimed while popping a bottle of bubbly to set off the Blue Jays' jubilant celebration inside their Yankee Stadium clubhouse Wednesday night.

With the party underway, those familiar lyrics from Frank Sinatra's version of "New York, New York" — the Yankees' longtime victory anthem — sounded in the background as roaring Toronto players sprayed each other with booze in the Bronx.

This time, it was their time.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and George Springer each drove in a run, and eight Toronto pitchers shut down the Yankees in a 5-2 victory that sent the Blue Jays to the American League Championship Series for the first time in nine years.

"Kind of fitting that it took everyone to win today," said Schneider, his hair and T-shirt soaked.

Nathan Lukes provided a two-run single and Addison Barger had three of Toronto's 12 hits as the pesky Blue Jays, fouling off tough pitches and consistently putting the ball in play, bounced right back after blowing a five-run lead in Tuesday night's loss.

AL East champion Toronto, wearing its lucky caps with the white panels, took the best-of-five Division Series 3-1 and will host Game 1 in the best-of-seven ALCS on Sunday against the Detroit Tigers or Seattle Mariners.

Those teams are set to decide their playoff series Friday in Game 5 at Seattle.

"It feels great," Guerrero said through a translator. "Everybody was just together since the first day. You could tell that something special was there."

Guerrero was something special himself. The \$500 million slugger batted .529 with three homers and nine RBIs in the ALDS, tormenting the Yankees in October in the mold of David Ortiz, Ken Griffey Jr. and George Brett decades ago.

Jeff Hoffman retired Austin Wells with the bases loaded to end the eighth inning and got four outs for

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his first postseason save, advancing the worst-to-first Blue Jays to their eighth AL Championship Series. Toronto's only pennants came in 1992 and '93, when the club won consecutive World Series crowns. A season ago, the Blue Jays finished last in the AL East at 74-88.

"Maybe some people don't believe in the team through the year, but I always remind everyone that we have an entire country behind us that believe in us, and hopefully we can get the World Series back to Canada," Guerrero said.

Ryan McMahon homered and Aaron Judge had an RBI single for the wild-card Yankees, unable to stave off elimination for a fourth time this postseason as they failed to repeat as AL champions.

Despite a terrific playoff performance from Judge following his previous October troubles, the 33-year-old superstar and team captain remains without a World Series ring. New York is still chasing its 28th title and first since 2009.

"We got beat here. Credit to the Blue Jays," manager Aaron Boone said. "They took it to us this series."

New York tied Toronto for the AL's best regular-season record at 94-68 but lost a head-to-head tiebreaker for the division title. In the end, the Yankees never could get past the Blue Jays — going 1-8 in Toronto this year and losing 11 of 17 meetings overall.

Judge extended New York's season one last time with an RBI single off the left-field wall with two outs in the ninth. Hoffman then struck out Cody Bellinger, and happy Blue Jays players poured out of the dugout to bounce in unison near the mound.

About 25 minutes later, a group of Toronto fans was still chanting "Let's go Blue Jays!" behind the third-base dugout.

"I think we more than showed what we can do in this series between all that pitching, defense, everything," Schneider said. "The guys in here know what we're capable of and we don't really care what anyone else thinks."

Lukes made it 4-1 with a two-run single off Devin Williams after an error by Yankees second baseman Jazz Chisholm Jr. cost rookie starter Cam Schlittler a chance to get through the seventh with an inning-ending double play.

"Just missed it," Chisholm said. "Been thinking about that since the play happened, still thinking about it now. Still can't get it out of my head."

Myles Straw, who came in off the bench for outfield defense, added an RBI single in the eighth after Alejandro Kirk's leadoff double.

With the score tied 1-all, Ernie Clement singled leading off the Toronto fifth and went to third when No. 9 batter Andrés Giménez bounced a single through the middle. Clement, who had nine hits in the series, scored on Springer's sacrifice fly.

Toronto left veteran right-handed starters Max Scherzer and Chris Bassitt off the ALDS roster, choosing instead to carry four left-handed relievers against the Bronx Bombers as the Blue Jays pointed toward a bullpen parade in Game 4 if the series went that far.

Turned out to be a winning decision.

Toronto opener Louis Varland, who gave up game-changing homers Tuesday to Judge and Chisholm in relief, became the first pitcher in major league history to lose a postseason game and start the next day.

Varland worked 1 1/3 scoreless innings with two strikeouts, and seven relievers followed as Schneider mixed and matched with planning help from his coaching staff. No pitcher got more than five outs — but all of them were effective.

Seranthony Domínguez tossed 1 2/3 hitless innings for the win.

On the other side, Schlittler was coming off one of the most dominant pitching performances in playoff annals, when he beat rival Boston 4-0 in the winner-take-all Game 3 of their Wild Card Series last Thursday at Yankee Stadium.

This time, he was charged with four runs — two earned — and eight hits in 6 1/3 innings. The right-hander joined Dakota Hudson (2019 for St. Louis) as the only rookies in big league history to make their first two postseason starts in potential elimination games.

Up next

Toronto went 4-3 against Detroit this season and 4-2 versus Seattle. Veteran right-hander Kevin Gausman and rookie Trey Yesavage, the Blue Jays' top two starters in the ALDS, will be fully rested for the first two games of the ALCS.

World leaders express hope after Trump says Israel and Hamas agreed to first phase of peace deal

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — World leaders on Thursday expressed hope for peace and urged Israel and Hamas to fulfill their commitments in the hours after U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the parties had agreed to the "first phase" of a deal signaling a major breakthrough in the two-year war in Gaza.

Hamas will release all 20 living hostages in the coming days in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, while the Israeli military will begin a withdrawal from the majority of Gaza.

"This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace," Trump wrote on social media.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on social media: "With God's help we will bring them all home."

Here's how other leaders responded.

Turkey

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose country played a role in the negotiations, on Thursday hailed the agreement. In a statement posted on X, Erdogan thanked Trump for "demonstrating the necessary political will" as well as Qatar and Egypt for facilitating the deal.

Erdogan said Turkey would closely monitor the full implementation of the agreement and continue to contribute to the process.

"I extend my heartfelt greetings to my Palestinian brothers and sisters who have endured indescribable suffering for two years," he said.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry said sending humanitarian aid to the region is a priority and stressed the urgent need to begin rebuilding Gaza.

Egypt

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi hailed the deal between Israel and Hamas as a "historic moment."

"This agreement does not only close the chapter of war; it also opens the door of hope for the peoples of the region for a future defined by justice and stability," el-Sissi wrote on social media.

United Nations

"The United Nations will support the full implementation of the agreement and will scale up the delivery of sustained and principled humanitarian relief, and we will advance recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza," U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said in a statement.

The U.N. chief urged all parties "to seize this momentous opportunity to establish a credible political path forward towards ending the occupation, recognizing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and achieving a two-state solution that enables Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security."

China

China hoped for a "lasting and comprehensive" ceasefire in Gaza, with Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun saying that Xi Jinping's government expects the agreement to ease the "humanitarian crisis" in Gaza and calm tensions in the Middle East.

"We are ready to work with the international community to make unremitting efforts to promote a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue and the realization of peace and stability in the Middle East," he said, noting that China advocates for a two-state solution.

France

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French President Emmanuel Macron said the agreement is a "great hope for the hostages and their families, for the Palestinians in Gaza, and for the entire region."

In a message posted on X, Macron commended "the efforts of President @realDonaldTrump, as well as the Qatari, Egyptian, and Turkish mediators who helped make it happen," and called on the warring parties "to strictly uphold" the terms of the deal.

Macron added that the deal will be discussed in Paris later Thursday during a meeting between European and Arab countries' foreign ministers on the future of Gaza. "This agreement must mark the end of the war and the beginning of a political solution based on the two-state solution," he said.

Britain

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed news of the agreement and urged an immediate lifting of restrictions on aid.

Speaking while on a trade mission to India, Starmer praised the "tireless diplomatic efforts" of the U.S., as well as Egypt, Qatar and Turkey in bringing about the deal. The U.K. will support efforts to turn the ceasefire into a "sustainable path" to long-term peace, he said.

"This is a moment of profound relief that will be felt all around the world, but particularly for the hostages, their families and for the civilian population of Gaza, who have all endured unimaginable suffering over the last two years," he said.

Germany

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz welcomed the agreement and said he was hopeful for a full deal this week.

Merz said the developments are encouraging and there's "a great opportunity to reach an agreement with Hamas in the coming hours already" for the remaining hostages to be released this week and for the Israeli military to pull back.

He told reporters that "hopes regarding Israel and the Gaza Strip increased again last night, but this is not yet really concluded, so we are of course watching the situation very closely and remain optimistic that ... a solution will be reached there this week."

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia welcomed the possible start of a ceasefire, with the foreign ministry expressing "its hope that this important step will lead to urgent action to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, a complete Israeli withdrawal, the restoration of security and stability and the initiation of practical steps to achieve a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders."

Jordan

Jordan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, praised the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States and thanked Turkey for its role in the deal.

Safadi stressed the need for aid to enter Gaza and said Jordan was ready to resume aid deliveries.

Lebanon

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun said he hoped the initial agreement would "constitute a first step toward a permanent ceasefire and an end to the humanitarian suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people in Gaza."

Aoun called for "continued international and regional efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the region that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and for Israel to "halt its aggressive policies in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria."

Italy

Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni hailed the agreement, calling it "extraordinary news."

"This agreement and the broader path outlined by the Trump plan constitute a unique opportunity to end this conflict that must be seized," Meloni said. "Therefore, I urge all parties to fully respect the measures already agreed upon and to work to swiftly implement the next steps envisaged in the peace plan."

Meloni said Italy will continue to support the mediators' efforts, standing "ready to contribute to the stabilization, reconstruction, and development of Gaza."

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Netherlands

Foreign Minister David van Weel, speaking during a visit to Indonesia, said the agreement is "a significant step and a historical turning point for peace and stability in the Middle East."

"It can put an end to two years of unimaginable suffering. But the full implementation of this plan is crucial. And that starts with the release of hostages, the unhindered access for humanitarian aid, and the cessation of all hostilities," he said.

Canada

"I am relieved that the hostages will soon be reunited with their families," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney posted on social media.

"After years of intense suffering, peace finally feels attainable," he said. "Canada calls on all parties to swiftly implement all agreed terms and to work towards a just and lasting peace."

Carney, like several other leaders, praised Qatar, Egypt and Turkey for their role in the negotiations.

Argentina

"I want to take the opportunity to say that I will sign the candidacy of Donald J. Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to international peace," Argentine President Javier Milei posted on X.

"Any other leader with similar achievements would have received it a long time ago," the libertarian leader and Trump ally wrote.

Australia

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the agreement as a "ray of light." The announcement brought "hope that after eight decades of conflict and terror, we can break this cycle of violence and build something better," he said.

"Today the world has cause for real hope," the Australian leader added.

India

"We hope the release of hostages and enhanced humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza will bring respite to them and pave the way for lasting peace," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on X.

Japan

"Japan welcomes that the agreement on the 'first phase' has been reached among the involved parties," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters. "This agreement is an important step toward de-escalating the situation and achieving the two-state solution," he said.

He also praised the U.S., Qatar, Egypt, Turkey and other mediating countries for their "relentless effort" and sought "sincere and steady implementation" by all involved parties.

Hayashi promised Tokyo's support and contribution to improving Gaza's humanitarian conditions and reconstruction.

2 Pennsylvania state police officers and a suspect were shot while officers responded to a call

CHAMBERSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Two state police officers and a suspect were shot while officers were responding to a call in Pennsylvania, authorities said.

The troopers were taken to hospitals after Wednesday's shooting, Pennsylvania State Police said in a statement. An update on their conditions would be made public later, it said, along with information about what happened and suspects.

Gov. Josh Shapiro said he and his wife, Lori, were praying for the officers and asked others to join them.

"Pennsylvania's law enforcement officers are the very best of us — running towards danger every day to keep our communities safe," Shapiro said in a post on the social platform X.

State police said there was no threat to the public but "the scene remains very active."

The shooting took place in southern Franklin County, which is about 85 miles (135 kilometers) northwest of Baltimore.

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Tropical Storm Jerry churns in the Atlantic as a weakened Priscilla nears Mexico's Baja peninsula

MIAMI (AP) — Priscilla lost its hurricane status and was downgraded to a tropical storm as it churned up Mexico's western Pacific coast, while Tropical Storm Jerry strengthened in the Atlantic on its approach to the Leeward Islands, forecasters said early Thursday.

Priscilla approached major hurricane status Tuesday before weakening to a tropical storm a day later. Early Thursday, the tropical storm was centered about 270 miles (434 kilometers) west of the southern tip of Baja California and moving northwest at 8 mph (13 kph) with maximum sustained winds of about 50 mph (80 kph), the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said.

Priscilla was bringing high surf and gusty winds to Baja California Sur, which was under a tropical storm watch from Cabo San Lucas to Cabo San Lazaro. Heavy rainfall and flash flooding were possible as the storm moves along Mexico's Pacific coast and through the weekend across the U.S. Southwest, forecasters said.

In the Atlantic, Tropical Storm Jerry was centered about 395 miles (635 kilometers) east-southeast of the northern Leeward Islands and moving west-northwest at 20 mph (32 kph) with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph (105 kph), the center said early Thursday.

Jerry was expected to strengthen gradually and could become a hurricane by the weekend. On Thursday into early Friday, 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimeters) of rain could fall across the Leeward Islands, bringing the risk of flash flooding, forecasters said.

A tropical storm watch was in effect for Antigua, Barbuda and Anguilla, St. Kitts, Nevis and Montserrat, St. Barts and St. Martin, Saba and St. Eustatius and Guadeloupe and the adjacent islands, the center said.

In the Pacific, Octave weakened Wednesday evening but remained a tropical storm early Thursday. The storm did not threaten land and was likely to dissipate Thursday, forecasters said.

Octave was located about 430 miles (692 kilometers) south-southwest of the southern tip of Baja California and moving east-northeast at 18 mph (29 kph) with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (64 kph), the center said.

Trump was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize before. Experts say he's unlikely to win this year

By MARK LEWIS Associated Press

STAVANGER, Norway (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump's bid to win the Nobel Peace Prize has drawn added attention to the annual guessing game over who its next laureate will be.

Longtime Nobel watchers say Trump's prospects remain remote despite a flurry of high-profile nominations and some notable foreign policy interventions for which he has taken personal credit.

Experts say the Norwegian Nobel Committee typically focuses on the durability of peace, the promotion of international fraternity and the quiet work of institutions that strengthen those goals. Trump's own record might even work against him, they said, citing his apparent disdain for multilateral institutions and his disregard for global climate change concerns.

Still, the U.S. leader has repeatedly sought the Nobel spotlight since his first term, most recently telling United Nations delegates late last month "everyone says that I should get the Nobel Peace Prize."

A person cannot nominate themselves.

Public lobbying campaigns but a private committee decision

Trump's boasts and previous high-profile nominations make him the blockbuster name on the list of bookmakers' favorites. But it's unclear whether his name comes up in conversation when the five-member Nobel committee, appointed by Norway's parliament, meets behind closed doors.

Trump has been nominated several times by people within the U.S. as well as politicians abroad since 2018. His name also was put forward in December by U.S. Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY), her office said

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in a statement, for his brokering of the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states in 2020.

Nominations made this year from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Pakistan's government occurred after the Feb. 1 deadline for the 2025 award.

Trump has said repeatedly that he "deserves" the prize and claims to have "ended seven wars." Last week, he teased the possibility of ending an eighth war if Israel and Hamas agree to his peace plan aimed at concluding the nearly two-year war in Gaza.

"Nobody's ever done that," he told a gathering of military leaders at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. "Will you get the Nobel Prize? Absolutely not. They'll give it to some guy that didn't do a damn thing."

Israel and Hamas have since agreed to the first phase of the peace plan for Gaza, paving the way for a pause in the fighting and the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. In the early hours of Thursday, families of hostages and their supporters started chanting "Nobel prize to Trump" as they gathered in Tel Aviv's hostages square.

Sustained peace efforts prioritized over quick wins

Nobel veterans say the committee prioritizes sustained, multilateral efforts over quick diplomatic wins. Theo Zenou, a historian and research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society, said Trump's efforts have not yet been proven to be long-lasting.

"There's a huge difference between getting fighting to stop in the short term and resolving the root causes of the conflict," Zenou said.

Zenou also highlighted Trump's dismissive stance on climate change as out-of-step with what many, including the Nobel committee, see as the planet's greatest long-term peace challenge.

"I don't think they would award the most prestigious prize in the world to someone who does not believe in climate change," Zenou said. "When you look at previous winners who have been bridge-builders, embodied international cooperation and reconciliation: These are not words we associate with Donald Trump."

Avoiding political pressure

The Nobel committee was met with fierce criticism in 2009 for giving then-U.S. President Barack Obama the prize barely nine months into his first term. Many argued Obama had not been in office long enough to have an impact worthy of the Nobel.

And Trump's own outspokenness about possibly winning the award might work against him: The committee won't want to be seen as caving in to political pressure, said Nina Græger, director of the Peace Research Institute Oslo.

Trump's prospects for the prize this year are "a long shot," she said. "His rhetoric does not point in a peaceful perspective."

The Nobel announcements began with the prize in medicine on Monday, and continued with physics on Tuesday and chemistry on Wednesday. The literature prize is being awarded on Thursday. The winner of the prize in economics will be announced on Monday.

Israel and Hamas will exchange hostages and prisoners after agreeing to 1st phase of Gaza peace plan

By SAMY MAGDY, SAM MEDNICK and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Israel and Hamas agreed to the first phase of a peace plan for Gaza, paving the way for a pause in the fighting and the release of the remaining hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. Palestinians greeted the news cautiously Thursday as a possible breakthrough in ending the devastating 2-year-old war.

Uncertainty remains about some of the thornier aspects of the plan advanced by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump — such as whether and how Hamas will disarm, and who will govern Gaza. But the sides appear closer than they have been in months to ending a war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, destroyed most of Gaza and brought famine to parts of it, and triggered other conflicts across the Middle East.

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The war, which began with Hamas' deadly attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, has sparked worldwide protests and increasingly isolated Israel, as well as bringing allegations of genocide that Israel denies.

Even with agreement expected to be signed later in the day, Israeli strikes continued, with explosions seen Thursday morning in northern Gaza. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strikes but earlier in the day said it had begun preparations for the implementation of the ceasefire, and troops were planning to transition to "adjusted deployment lines."

Following news of the agreement, Alaa Abd Rabbo, originally from northern Gaza but forced to move multiple times during the war, said it was "a godsend."

"This is the day we have been waiting for," he said from the central city of Deir al-Balah. "We want to go home."

In Tel Aviv, families of the remaining hostages popped champagne and cried tears of joy when the deal was announced.

"This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace," Trump wrote on social media late Wednesday after the agreement was reached. "All Parties will be treated fairly!"

Under the terms, Hamas intends to release all 20 living hostages in a matter of days, while the Israeli military will begin a withdrawal from the majority of Gaza, people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss details of an agreement that has not fully been made public.

In an interview on Fox News, Trump said Hamas will begin releasing hostages "probably" on Monday.

The breakthrough came on the third day of indirect talks in Egypt.

"With God's help we will bring them all home," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaimed on social media shortly after Trump's announcement. Netanyahu said he would convene the government Thursday to approve the deal.

Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who has opposed previous ceasefire deals, said he had "mixed emotions on a complex morning."

While he welcomed the return of the hostages, he said he had "immense fear about the consequences of emptying the jails and releasing the next generation of terrorist leaders" and said that as soon as the hostages are returned, Israel must continue trying to eradicate Hamas and ensure Gaza is demilitarized.

Hamas, meanwhile, called on Trump and the mediators to ensure that Israel implements "without disavowal or delay" the troop withdrawal, the entry of aid into the territory and the exchange of prisoners.

Ahmed al-Farra, the general director of pediatrics at Khan Yunis' Nasser Hospital, which has seen many of the casualties of the war, said he was still skeptical of Israel following through on the deal but held out hope.

"We need to go back to living," he said.

Trump's peace plan

The Trump plan calls for an immediate ceasefire and release of the 48 hostages that militants in Gaza still hold from their attack on Israel two years ago. Some 1,200 people were killed by Hamas-led militants in that assault, and 251 were taken hostage. Israel believes around 20 of the hostages are still alive.

Under the plan, Israel would maintain an open-ended military presence inside Gaza, along its border with Israel. An international force, comprised largely of troops from Arab and Muslim countries, would be responsible for security inside Gaza. The U.S. would lead a massive internationally funded reconstruction effort in Gaza.

The plan also envisions an eventual role for the Palestinian Authority — something Netanyahu opposes. But it requires the authority, which administers parts of the West Bank, to undergo a sweeping reform program that could take years to implement.

The Trump plan is even more vague about a future Palestinian state, which Netanyahu firmly rejects.

Even with many details yet to be agreed, some Palestinians and Israelis expressed relief at the progress.

"It's a huge day, huge joy," Ahmed Sheheiber, a Palestinian displaced man from northern Gaza, said of the ceasefire deal.

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Crying over the phone from his shelter in Gaza City, he said he was waiting "impatiently" for the ceasefire to go into effect to return to his home in the Jabaliya refugee camp.

Joyful relatives of hostages and their supporters spilled into the central Tel Aviv square that has become the main gathering point in the struggle to free the captives.

Einav Zangauker, the mother of Israeli captive Matan Zangauker and a prominent advocate for the hostages' release, told reporters that she wants to tell her son she loves him.

"If I have one dream, it is seeing Matan sleep in his own bed," she said.

This would be the third ceasefire since the start of the war.

The first, in November 2023, saw more than 100 hostages, mainly women and children, freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. In the second, starting in January of this year, Palestinian militants released 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight more in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israel ended that ceasefire in March with a surprise bombardment.

Praying for a deal

In the Gaza Strip, where much of the territory lies in ruins, Palestinians have been desperate for a breakthrough. Thousands fleeing Israel's latest ground offensive have set up makeshift tents along the beach in the central part of the territory, sometimes using blankets for shelter.

More than 67,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and nearly 170,000 wounded, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants but says around half of the deaths were women and children, is part of the Hamas-run government. The United Nations and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.

Ayman Saber, a Palestinian from Khan Younis, reacted to the ceasefire announcement by saying he plans to return to his home city and try to rebuild his house, which was destroyed last year by an Israeli strike.

"I will rebuild the house, we will rebuild Gaza," he said.

Pope urges news agencies to stand as bulwark against lies, manipulation and post-truths

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV encouraged international news agencies on Thursday to stand firm as a bulwark against the "ancient art of lying" and manipulation, as he strongly backed a free, independent and objective press.

History's first American pope called for imprisoned journalists to be released and said the work of journalists must never be considered a crime. Rather, journalism is a right and a pillar upholding "the edifice of our societies" that must be protected and defended, he said.

"If today we know what is happening in Gaza, Ukraine and every other land bloodied by bombs, we largely owe it to them," Leo said of journalists. "These extraordinary eyewitness accounts are the culmination of the daily efforts of countless people who work to ensure that information is not manipulated for ends that are contrary to truth and human dignity."

Leo's comments came in a speech to executives of international news agencies belonging to MINDS International, a consortium of leading agencies including The Associated Press.

In his five months as pope, the Chicago-born Leo has spoken out strongly on the need to protect freedom of expression and the rights of journalists. In his first meeting with reporters right after his election, Leo called for the release of imprisoned journalists and affirmed the "precious gift of free speech and the press."

More recently, he insisted that journalism was "not only an act of justice, but a duty of all those who long for a solid and participatory democracy." In a letter to a crusading Peruvian journalist repeatedly sued for her work, Leo affirmed the freedom of the press was an "inalienable common good."

On Thursday, he strongly encouraged news agencies amid a double crisis they are facing, with economic pressures threatening their survival and consumers increasingly unable to distinguish truth from lies.

"I urge you: Never sell out your authority!" Leo said.

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He quoted Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism" in asserting that the world needs free and objective information. He cited her warning that "the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction and the distinction between true and false no longer exist."

Leo said even with the challenges posed today by artificial intelligence, news agencies must stand firm. "With your patient and rigorous work, you can act as a barrier against those who, through the ancient art of lying, seek to create divisions in order to rule by dividing," he said. "You can also be a bulwark of civility against the quicksand of approximation and post-truth."

US diplomat fired over relationship with woman accused of ties to Chinese Communist Party

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department said Wednesday that it has fired a U.S. diplomat over a romantic relationship he admitted having with a Chinese woman alleged to have ties to the Chinese Communist Party.

The dismissal is believed to be the first of its kind for violating a ban on such relationships that was introduced late last year under the Biden administration.

The Associated Press reported earlier this year that in the waning days of Democrat Joe Biden's presidency, the State Department imposed a ban on all American government personnel in China, as well as family members and contractors with security clearances, from any romantic or sexual relationships with Chinese citizens.

Tommy Pigott, a State Department spokesman, said in a statement that the diplomat in question was dismissed from the foreign service after President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio reviewed the case and determined that he had "admitted concealing a romantic relationship with a Chinese national with known ties to the Chinese Communist Party."

"Under Secretary Rubio's leadership, we will maintain a zero-tolerance policy for any employee who is caught undermining our country's national security," Pigott said.

The statement did not identify the diplomat, but he and his girlfriend had been featured in a surreptitiously filmed video posted online by conservative firebrand James O'Keefe.

In Beijing, a Chinese government spokesperson declined to comment on what he said is a domestic U.S. issue. "But I would like to stress that we oppose drawing lines based on ideological difference and maliciously smearing China," the Foreign Ministry's Guo Jiakun said at a daily briefing.

Federal court to weigh Trump's deployment of National Guard troops in Chicago area

By SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

President Donald Trump's deployment of National Guard troops in Illinois faces legal scrutiny Thursday at a pivotal court hearing that will occur the day after a small number of Guard troops started protecting federal property in the Chicago area.

U.S. District Judge April Perry will hear arguments over a request to block the deployment of Illinois and Texas Guard members. Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and local officials strongly oppose use of the Guard.

An "element" of the 200 Texas Guard troops sent to Illinois started working in the Chicago area on Wednesday, according to a spokesperson for the U.S. Northern Command, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to discuss operational details not been made public. The spokesperson did not say where specifically the troops were sent.

The troops, along with about 300 from Illinois, arrived this week at a U.S. Army Reserve Center in Elwood, southwest of Chicago. All 500 troops are under the Northern Command and have been activated for 60 days.

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The Guard members are in the city to protect U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement buildings and other federal facilities and law enforcement personnel, according to Northern Command. Trump earlier sent troops to Los Angeles and Washington, and a small number this week started assisting law enforcement in Memphis.

Those troops are part of the Memphis Safe Task Force, a collection of about a dozen federal law enforcement agencies ordered by Trump to fight crime in the city. Tennessee Republican Gov. Bill Lee supports using the Guard.

The nearly 150-year-old Posse Comitatus Act limits the military's role in enforcing domestic laws. However, Trump has said he would be willing to invoke the Insurrection Act, which allows a president to dispatch active duty military in states that are unable to put down an insurrection or are defying federal law.

Chicago and Illinois have filed a lawsuit to stop the deployments, calling them unnecessary and illegal. Trump, meanwhile, has portrayed Chicago as a lawless "hellhole" of crime, though statistics show a significant recent drop in crime.

The Republican president said Wednesday that Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and Pritzker, both Democrats, should be jailed for failing to protect federal agents during immigration enforcement crackdowns.

In a court filing in the lawsuit, the city and state say protests at a temporary ICE detention facility in the Chicago suburb of Broadview have "never come close to stopping federal immigration enforcement."

"The President is using the Broadview protests as a pretext," they wrote. "The impending federal troop deployment in Illinois is the latest episode in a broader campaign by the President's administration to target jurisdictions the President dislikes."

Also Thursday, a panel of judges in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was scheduled to hear arguments over whether Trump had the authority to take control of 200 Oregon National Guard troops. The president had planned to deploy them in Portland, where there have been mostly small nightly protests outside an ICE building. State and city leaders insist troops are neither wanted nor needed there.

U.S. District Judge Karin J. Immergut on Sunday granted Oregon and California a temporary restraining order blocking the deployment of Guard troops to Portland. Trump had mobilized California troops for Portland just hours after Immergut first blocked him from using Oregon's Guard.

The administration has yet to appeal that order to the 9th Circuit.

Immergut, who Trump appointed during his first term, rejected the president's assertions that troops were needed to protect Portland and immigration facilities, saying "it had been months since there was any sustained level of violent or disruptive protest activity in the city."

Texas National Guard troops now protecting federal property in Chicago area, official says

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A small number of National Guard troops has started protecting federal property in the Chicago area and assisting law enforcement in Memphis on Wednesday, according to officials.

An "element" of 200 Texas Guard troops were working in the Chicago area, according to a spokesperson for the U.S. Northern Command, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to discuss operational details not been made public. The troops are in the city to protect U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement buildings and other federal facilities and law enforcement personnel, Northern Command said online.

The troops, along with about 300 from Illinois, had arrived Tuesday at a U.S. Army Reserve Center in Elwood, 55 miles (89 kilometers) southwest of Chicago. All 500 troops are under the Northern Command and have been activated for 60 days. The spokesperson wasn't able to immediately offer details about how the troops were armed.

A lawsuit and Democratic leaders have vigorously fought the deployment, and a hearing is set for Thursday.

In Memphis, a small group of troops were helping Wednesday with the Memphis Safe Task Force, said

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a state Military Department spokesperson who did not specify the exact role or number of the Guard members. The task force is a collection of about a dozen federal law enforcement agencies ordered by President Donald Trump to fight crime.

Tennessee Republican Gov. Bill Lee, who has welcomed the Guard, has said previously that he would not expect more than 150 Guard members to be sent to the city.

President Donald Trump's administration has an aggressive immigration enforcement operation in Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, and protesters have frequently rallied at an ICE building in Broadview.

U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis signaled Wednesday that she planned to restrict federal agents from using certain crowd control tactics, such as tear gas, against peaceful protesters and journalists who have regularly gathered at the Broadview building.

Trump has been emphatic in sending the Guard to Democratic-run cities that he argues have a rampant crime crisis, though statistics don't always back that up.

Elsewhere, an appeals court has scheduled a hearing the same day over the government's desire to send the Guard to Portland, Oregon. A judge blocked that effort over the weekend.

The nearly 150-year-old Posse Comitatus Act limits the military's role in enforcing domestic laws. However, Trump has said he would be willing to invoke the Insurrection Act, which allows a president to dispatch active duty military in states that are unable to put down an insurrection or are defying federal law.

"This is about authoritarianism. It's about stoking fear," Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson said. "It's about breaking the Constitution that would give him that much more control over our American cities."

In Portland, an ICE facility in the city has been the site of nightly protests for months, peaking in June when police declared a riot, with smaller clashes since then. Federal officials had requested that the city set up "free speech zones" for demonstrators and ensure agents' access to the building with a perimeter, which was in place for Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem's visit on Tuesday.

Mayor Keith Wilson told the Department of Homeland Security that the city "commits to peacefully facilitating free speech" and that police will "continue to evaluate the situation on the ground."

Greenland's leader hails EU as trusted friend and urges investment in its minerals

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Greenland's leader on Wednesday thanked the European Union for being "a trusted friend" and urged the 27-nation bloc to invest in his country's mineral resources, renewable energy, airports and internet services.

In a speech to the European Parliament, Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said that "2025 has been an eventful if not dramatic year for Greenland." He noted the challenge posed by climate change but did not mention President Donald Trump's talk of seizing the Arctic island.

"We need cooperation and partnerships with like-minded countries and institutions who share our values. The EU has been a stable, reliable and important partner for Greenland for more than 40 years," the 34-year-old premier said in Strasbourg, France.

He extended "a heartfelt thank you" to the EU "for your strong support for Greenland during challenging times we are going through right now. You have stood by us as a friend and partner. We will never forget this."

Greenland was a colony under Denmark's crown until 1953, when it became a province in the Scandinavian country. In 1979, the island was granted home rule, and 30 years later, Greenland became a self-governing entity. It remains part of the Danish realm.

Denmark, which also currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, and Greenland have rejected Trump's offers to buy the island. He hasn't ruled out military force to take control of the mineral-rich territory.

When asked by a reporter before his speech about relations with the Trump administration, Nielsen said that U.S.-Greenland ties should be managed "in mutual respect, with respect for international law."

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"We seek to have more and better cooperation also with the USA, when we can fulfill the respectful tone," he said.

During the speech, Nielsen said that Greenland has most of the critical raw minerals that the EU is seeking, but that mining these resources is "capital intensive." He also urged the bloc to invest in the untapped hydroelectricity potential provided by the island's rivers and glaciers.

Nielsen also called for financial support to develop telecommunications networks, particularly in the poorly connected north, and to build two regional airports.

"It is essential for us that those who operate telecommunications in Greenland are trusted and reliable actors. This is vital to ensure the stability of the infrastructure, and to prevent unauthorized parties from disrupting and compromising connections," he said.

Lawmakers gave Nielsen a standing ovation as he said "thank you for being a trusted friend of Greenland."

Man charged with sparking the most destructive wildfire in Los Angeles history

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER, JAIMIE DING and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A 29-year-old man has been charged with sparking California's deadly Palisades Fire, one of the most destructive wildfires in its history, authorities said Wednesday.

Federal officials said Jonathan Rinderknecht, who lived in the area, started a small fire on New Year's Day that smoldered underground before reigniting nearly a week later and roaring through Pacific Palisades, home to many of Los Angeles' rich and famous.

The fire, which left 12 dead in the hillside neighborhoods across Pacific Palisades and Malibu, was one of two blazes that broke out on Jan. 7, killing more than 30 people in all and destroying over 17,000 homes and buildings while burning for days in Los Angeles County.

Rinderknecht was arrested Tuesday in Florida and made his first court appearance Wednesday in Orlando on charges including malicious destruction by means of a fire, which carries a minimum sentence of five years in prison. Wearing shorts and a T-shirt while shackled at the ankles, he told a federal magistrate in a soft-spoken voice that he was not under the influence and did not have mental issues.

The judge set a hearing for Oct. 17 to consider bond and extradition proceedings. Messages seeking comment were left for Aziza Hawthorne, the federal assistant public defender assigned to represent Rinderknecht.

Los Angeles Fire Department Interim Fire Chief Ronnie Villanueva said the arrest was an important first step toward justice.

The department released a report Wednesday that found firefighters lacked enough resources and struggled to communicate clearly in the first 36 hours of the blaze, and that those challenges hampered their response during a critical time. The report said the department did not pre-deploy enough resources despite warnings of severe winds.

Suspect talked to authorities three weeks after the fire

Investigators said Wednesday that Rinderknecht was working as an Uber driver on New Year's Eve, 2024. After dropping off a passenger in Pacific Palisades, he parked and walked up a trail. He took videos at a nearby hilltop area and listened to a rap song with a music video showing objects being lit on fire, prosecutors said. Shortly after midnight, he lit the fire, they alleged.

He fled the scene after starting the fire but returned to the trail to watch it burn, acting U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli said.

"He left as soon as he saw the fire trucks were headed to the location. He turned around and went back up there. And he took some video and, and watched them fight the fire," Essayli said.

Uber said in a statement that it worked with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to determine the driver's whereabouts around the time of the fire.

Rinderknecht also made several 911 calls to report the fire, according to a criminal complaint.

During an interview Jan. 24, Rinderknecht told investigators where the fire began, information not yet

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public and that he would not have known if he hadn't witnessed it, the complaint said.

He lied about his location, claiming he was near the bottom of the hiking trail, Essayli said.

He was visibly anxious during that interview, according to the complaint. His efforts to call 911 and his question to ChatGPT about a cigarette lighting a fire indicated that he wanted to create a more innocent explanation for the fire's start and to show he tried to assist with suppression, the complaint said.

A 'holdover fire,' and investigators say they found a lighter

Federal officials called the Palisades blaze a "holdover fire" from the Jan. 1 fire, which was not fully extinguished by firefighters. LA's interim fire chief said such fires linger in root systems and can reach depths of 15 to 20 feet (4.6 to 6.1 meters), making them undetectable by thermal imaging cameras.

Investigators determined the initial blaze was likely lit by a lighter taken to vegetation or paper, according to the criminal complaint.

Investigators found a "barbecue-style" lighter in the glove compartment of Rinderknecht's car on Jan. 24. It appeared to be the same lighter as one that was in his apartment on Dec. 31, based on a photo on his phone. He admitted to bringing a lighter with him when he walked up the hill, authorities said.

Federal prosecutors will need to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the Palisades Fire grew from the blaze six days earlier, said Jerod Gunsberg, a California criminal defense attorney with experience in arson cases.

Fire department examines its own response

The department found that there was a delay in communicating evacuation orders to the public, resulting in spontaneous evacuations without traffic control that caused residents to block routes to the fire. The incident command had to be frequently relocated to escape the fire front, the report said.

The first evacuation orders came 40 minutes after some homes were already burning, reporting by The Associated Press has found.

The department could not effectively recall off-duty personnel, and some fire chiefs had limited experience with "managing an incident of such complexity," the report said. Most firefighters worked for more than 36 hours without rest.

Second fire remains under investigation

The Eaton Fire broke out the same day in the community of Altadena, destroying more than 9,400 homes and killing 19 people. Investigators have not officially determined a cause, but the federal government sued utility Southern California Edison last month, alleging that its equipment sparked the fire.

An outside review released in September found that a lack of resources and outdated policies for sending emergency alerts led to delayed evacuation warnings.

The report commissioned by Los Angeles County supervisors said a series of weaknesses, including "outdated policies, inconsistent practices and communications vulnerabilities," hampered the county's response.

Canada's prime minister discussed reviving contentious Keystone XL pipeline with Trump

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney raised the prospect of reviving the contentious Keystone XL pipeline project with U.S. President Donald Trump during his White House visit this week, a government official familiar with the matter said Wednesday.

A Canadian company pulled the plug on it four years ago after the Canadian government failed to persuade then-President Joe Biden to reverse his cancellation of its permit on the day he took office. It was to transport crude from the oil sand fields of western Canada to Steele City, Nebraska.

Trump previously revived the long-delayed project during his first term after it had stalled under the Obama administration. It would have moved up to 830,000 barrels (35 million gallons) of crude daily, connecting in Nebraska to other pipelines that feed oil refineries on the U.S. Gulf Coast.

The Canadian government official said Trump was receptive to the idea when it was talked about during their White House meeting Wednesday. The official said Carney linked energy cooperation to Canada's steel

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and aluminum sectors, which is subject to 50% U.S. tariffs. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

Carney mentioned building major projects and “unleashing Canadian energy” in a live video call with business leaders in Toronto on Wednesday.

Biden canceled Keystone XL’s border crossing permit in 2021 over longstanding concerns that burning oil sands crude could make climate change worse and harder to reverse.

A spokesperson for South Bow Corp., the oil pipeline operator that owns the existing Keystone pipeline system, said they are not privy to the ongoing discussions between the Canadian and U.S. governments.

“South Bow is supportive of efforts to find solutions that increase the transportation of Canadian crude oil. We will continue to explore opportunities that leverage our existing corridor with our customers and others in the industry,” the spokesperson said in an email.

Carney is under pressure from the oil-rich province of Alberta to get a pipeline built.

Former Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said building a new pipeline to increase oil shipments to the U.S. Gulf Coast would be the cheapest, fastest and least complicated route for a major oil pipeline.

“Strategically this would increase, not decrease our dependence on the US export market. But it would be a brilliant judo move to find common ground with the Trump Administration, and help him to realize that the US benefits from and needs its privileged relationship to Canada, and access to our resources,” Kenney posted on social media.

“Played smartly, Canada’s cooperation could be strong leverage to push for reductions in Trump tariffs,” he added.

Carney mentioned Wednesday in the call that tariffs on Canada’s aluminum exports are not wise, noting the country provides 60% of the aluminum the U.S. needs.

“For the U.S. to produce that much aluminum, it would need the equivalent of the energy of 10 Hoover Dams,” Carney said. “Is making aluminum really the first best use of that power at a time when you’ve got the AI revolution, and you’re reassuring manufacturing that you want to keep people’s electricity costs down at home.”

Carney also reiterated that Canada’s relationship with the U.S., which led to increasing integration over many years, has changed.

“Our relationship will never again be what it was,” Carney said. “We understand America first.”

New California law aims to improve school nutrition by phasing out some ultraprocessed foods

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California will phase out certain ultraprocessed foods from school meals over the next decade under a first-in-the-nation law signed Wednesday by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The law seeks to define ultraprocessed foods, the often super-tasty products typically full of sugar, salt and unhealthy fats. The legislation requires the state’s Department of Public Health to adopt rules by mid-2028 defining “ultraprocessed foods of concern” and “restricted school foods.”

Schools have to start phasing out those foods by July 2029, and districts will be barred from selling them for breakfast or lunch by July 2035. Vendors will be banned from providing the “foods of concern” to schools by 2032.

Newsom, flanked by first partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and state lawmakers, signed the measure at a middle school in Los Angeles.

“California has never waited for Washington or anyone else to lead on kids’ health — we’ve been out front for years, removing harmful additives and improving school nutrition,” Newsom said in a statement. “This first-in-the-nation law builds on that work to make sure every California student has access to healthy, delicious meals that help them thrive.”

Newsom issued an executive order earlier this year requiring the Department of Public Health to provide recommendations by April on limiting harms from ultraprocessed foods. The Democratic governor signed

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a law in 2023 banning certain synthetic food dyes from school meals.

Legislatures across the country have introduced more than 100 bills in recent months seeking to ban or require labeling of chemicals that make up many ultraprocessed foods, including artificial dyes and controversial additives.

Americans get more than half their calories from ultraprocessed foods, which have been linked to a host of health problems, including obesity, diabetes and heart disease. However, studies haven't been able to prove that the foods directly cause those chronic health problems.

Defining ultraprocessed foods

Defining ultraprocessed foods has been tricky. The most common definition is based on the four-tier Nova system developed by Brazilian researchers that classifies foods according to the amount of processing they undergo.

Researchers often describe ultraprocessed foods as the types of products that contain industrially made ingredients that you won't find in a home kitchen.

But some highly processed foods — think tofu, certain types of whole-grain bread and infant formula — can be healthful. And it's not clear whether it's the processing of the foods or the combination of nutrients such as sugar, fat and salt that leads to poor health outcomes.

U.S. health officials recently launched an effort to come up with a federal definition of ultraprocessed foods, saying there are concerns over whether current definitions "accurately capture" the range of foods that may affect health.

Some say California's ban goes too far

Some critics of the ban say it is too broad and could unintentionally limit access to nutritious foods.

"For foods served in schools, food and beverage manufacturers meet the rigorous unique safety and nutrition standards set by the USDA and state agencies," John Hewitt with the Consumer Brands Association said in a statement. He added the brands the association represents are committed to "providing safe, nutritious and convenient" products.

The California School Boards Association is concerned about the cost for districts to phase out these foods in the next few years. There is no extra money attached to the bill.

"You're borrowing money from other areas of need to pay for this new mandate," spokesperson Troy Flint said.

The law could raise costs for school districts by an unknown amount by potentially making them purchase more expensive options, according to an analysis by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Some districts already overhauling school menus

Some school districts in California are already phasing out foods the law seeks to ban.

Michael Jochner spent years working as a chef before taking over as director of student nutrition at the Morgan Hill Unified School District about eight years ago. He fully supports the ban.

"It was really during COVID that I started to think about where we were purchasing our produce from and going to those farmers who were also struggling," he said.

Now they don't serve any ultraprocessed foods, and all their items are organic and sourced within about 50 miles (80 kilometers) of the district, Jochner said. They removed sugary cereals, fruit juices and flavored milks, and deep-fried foods such as chicken nuggets and tater tots from their menus, he said.

Many of their dishes are made from scratch or semi-homemade, including an item that has long been a staple in U.S. school cafeterias: pizza.

Pizza is also a popular option for students in the Western Placer Unified district northeast of Sacramento, where Director of Food Services Christina Lawson has spent the past few years introducing more meals made from scratch to their school menus.

She estimates up to 60% of school menus in the district are made up of dishes made from scratch, up from about 5% three years ago. They also purchase more foods locally to prepare a wide variety of items, including buffalo chicken quesadillas using tortillas made in nearby Nevada City.

"I'm really excited about this new law because it will just make it where there's even more options and

even more variety and even better products that we can offer our students," Lawson said. "Because variety is the number one thing our students are looking for."

Dr. Ravinder Khaira, a pediatrician in Sacramento who supports the law, said at a legislative hearing that the ban will help respond to a surge of chronic conditions in children fueled by poor nutrition.

"Children deserve real access to food that is nutritious and supports their physical, emotional and cognitive development," Khaira said. "Schools should be safe havens, not a source of chronic disease."

Senate Republicans vote down legislation to check Trump's use of war powers against cartels

By STEPHEN GROVES and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans voted down legislation Wednesday that would have put a check on President Donald Trump's ability to use deadly military force against drug cartels after Democrats tried to counter the administration's extraordinary assertion of presidential war powers to destroy vessels in the Caribbean.

The vote fell mostly along party lines, 48-51, with two Republicans, Sens. Rand Paul and Lisa Murkowski, voting in favor and Democratic Sen. John Fetterman voting against.

It was the first vote in Congress on Trump's military campaign, which according to the White House has so far destroyed four vessels, killed at least 21 people and stopped narcotics from reaching the U.S.. The war powers resolution would have required the president to seek authorization from Congress before further military strikes on the cartels.

The Trump administration has asserted that drug traffickers are armed combatants threatening the United States, creating justification to use military force. But that assertion has been met with some unease on Capitol Hill.

Some Republicans are asking the White House for more clarification on its legal justification and specifics on how the strikes are conducted, while Democrats insist they are violations of U.S. and international law. It's a clash that could redefine how the world's most powerful military uses lethal force and set the tone for future global conflict.

The White House had indicated Trump would veto the legislation, and even though the Senate vote failed it gave lawmakers an opportunity to go on the record with their objections to Trump's declaration that the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with drug cartels.

"It sends a message when a significant number of legislators say, 'Hey, this is a bad idea,'" said Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat who pushed the resolution alongside Democratic Sen. Adam Schiff of California.

What is the War Powers Resolution?

Wednesday's vote was brought under the War Powers Resolution of 1973, which was intended to reassert congressional power over the declaration of war.

"Congress must not allow the executive branch to become judge, jury and executioner," Paul, a Kentucky Republican who has long pushed for greater congressional oversight of war powers, said during a floor speech.

Paul was the only Republican to publicly speak in favor of the resolution before the vote, but a number of GOP senators have questioned the strikes on vessels and said they are not receiving enough information from the administration.

Sen. Kevin Cramer, a North Dakota Republican, acknowledged "there may be some concern" in the Republican conference about the strikes. However, Republican leaders argued against the resolution on the Senate floor Wednesday, calling it a political ploy from Democrats.

"People were attacking our country by bringing in poisonous substances to deposit into our country that would have killed Americans," said Sen. Jim Risch, the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "Fortunately most of those drugs are now at the bottom of the ocean."

Risch thanked Trump for his actions and added that he hoped the military strikes would continue.

What has the administration told Congress about the strikes?

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Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee received a classified briefing last week on the strikes, and Cramer said he was "comfortable with at least the plausibility of their legal argument." But he added that no one representing intelligence agencies or the military command structure for Central and South America was present for the briefing.

"I'd be more comfortable defending the administration if they shared the information," he said.

Kaine also said the briefing did not include any information on why the military chose to destroy the vessels rather than interdict them or get into the specifics of how the military was so confident that the vessels were carrying drugs.

"Maybe they were engaged in human trafficking, or maybe it was the wrong ship," Schiff said. "We just have little or no information about who was onboard these ships or what intelligence was used or what the rationale was and how certain we could be that everyone on that ship deserved to die."

The Democrats also said the administration has told them it is adding cartels to a list of organizations deemed "narco-terrorists" that are targets for military strikes, but it has not shown the lawmakers a complete list.

"The slow erosion of congressional oversight is not an abstract debate about process," Sen. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in a floor speech. "It is a real and present threat to our democracy."

A visit from Rubio

Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited the Republican Conference for lunch Wednesday to emphasize to senators that they should vote against the legislation. He told the senators the administration was treating cartels like governmental entities because they have seized control of large portions of some Caribbean nations, according to Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota.

"These drug trafficking organizations are a direct threat to the safety and security of the United States to unleash violence and criminality on our streets, fueled by the drugs and the drug profits that they make," Rubio told reporters at the Capitol. "And the president is the commander in chief, has an obligation to keep our country safe."

Still, there is worry in the Senate that the recent buildup of U.S. maritime forces in the Caribbean was a sign of shifting U.S. priorities and tactics that could have grave repercussions. Senators warned that further military strikes had the potential to set off a conflict with Venezuela.

"This is the kind of thing that leads a country, unexpectedly and unintentionally, into war," Schiff said.

Following the vote, Sen. Todd Young, an Indiana Republican, said in a statement that even though he voted against the resolution, he was still "highly concerned about the legality" of the strikes.

He also raised concern that the military buildup in the Caribbean could divert resources from countering China's military elsewhere. Young said he would be meeting with Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth about those concerns and also called for a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"The administration should adhere to the Constitution and keep the people's representatives informed on this critical national security issue," he said.

Trump has yet to provide Congress hard evidence that targeted boats carried drugs, officials say

By AAMER MADHANI, SEUNG MIN KIM, MATTHEW LEE and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has yet to provide underlying evidence to lawmakers proving that alleged drug-smuggling boats targeted by the U.S. military in a series of fatal strikes were in fact carrying narcotics, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

As bipartisan frustration with the strikes mounts, the Republican-controlled Senate on Wednesday voted down a war powers resolution that would have required the president to seek authorization from Congress before further military strikes on the cartels.

The military has carried out at least four strikes on boats that the White House said were carrying drugs, including three it said originated from Venezuela. It said 21 people were killed in the strikes.

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The officials, who were not authorized to comment publicly about the matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the administration has only pointed to unclassified video clips of the strikes posted on social media by President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and has yet to produce "hard evidence" that the vessels were carrying drugs.

The administration has not explained why it has blown up vessels in some cases, while carrying out the typical practice of stopping boats and seizing drugs at other times, one of the officials said.

The Republican administration, in a retroactive memo justifying one of the strikes last month, declared drug cartels to be "unlawful combatants" and said the United States is now in an "armed conflict" with them.

The declaration has raised stark questions about how Trump intends to use his war powers. It also has been perceived by several senators as pursuing a new legal framework to carry out lethal action and has raised questions about the role of Congress in authorizing any such action.

Trump administration points to videos as proof

Asked about the lack of underlying evidence provided to Congress, the Pentagon on Wednesday pointed to videos of the strikes, which do not confirm the presence of drugs.

The Pentagon also noted public statements by Hegseth, including a social media post following the latest fatal strike in which he said, "Our intelligence, without a doubt, confirmed that this vessel was trafficking narcotics, the people onboard were narco-terrorists, and they were operating on a known narco-trafficking transit route."

Lawmakers have expressed frustration that the administration is offering little detail about how it came to decide the U.S. is in armed conflict with cartels or even detailing which criminal organizations it claims as "unlawful combatants."

Independent Sen. Angus King of Maine said Wednesday that he and other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in a classified briefing this week, were denied access to the Pentagon's legal opinion about whether the boat strikes adhered to U.S. law.

His comments came at a confirmation hearing for Joshua Simmons, a top legal adviser to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, to be the CIA's next general counsel. At the hearing, Simmons refused to say whether he had partaken in any deliberations over the targeting of cartels in the Caribbean, saying any legal advice he gave Rubio or other U.S. officials would've been confidential.

Attorney General Pam Bondi was pressed at a Senate hearing Tuesday about what advice she's provided Trump to legally justify the strikes. She said, "I'm not going to discuss any legal advice that my department may or may not have given or issued at the direction of the president."

A White House official suggested that lawmakers were being disingenuous with their criticism and that the Trump administration has been "much more forthcoming" with the legal rationale than Democratic President Barack Obama's administration was when it carried out strikes targeting militants in the Middle East.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Pentagon officials have held six separate classified briefings to Congress on the operations.

Trump administration officials have argued that the strikes are necessary acts of self-defense as cartels funnel drugs into the United States that they say are leading to thousands of U.S. deaths. While Venezuela produces cocaine, the bulk of it is sent to Europe.

A few in the administration are said to be driving the push for strikes

Trump has largely bypassed traditional interagency processes in formulating his strategy to carry out strikes against drug cartels, according to the U.S. officials and a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

A small group of top administration officials — including Rubio, Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau and Trump aide Stephen Miller — has driven the push to carry out the fatal strikes, officials said.

Rubio, dating back to his days in the Senate, has advocated for taking a harder line on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

During Trump's first term, Maduro was indicted on U.S. federal drug charges, including narcoterrorism and conspiracy to import cocaine. This year, the Justice Department doubled a reward for information leading

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to Maduro's arrest to \$50 million, accusing him of being "one of the largest narco-traffickers in the world."

Trump has focused attention on the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, which he claims is serving as "front" for Maduro, and said members of the gang were in the first boat targeted last month. No details on alleged affiliations have been released in the three other strikes.

Maduro was sworn in for a third six-year term in January despite credible evidence that he lost last year's election. The U.S. government, along with several other Western nations, does not recognize Maduro's claim to victory and instead points to tally sheets collected by the opposition coalition showing that its candidate, Edmundo González, won by more than a two-to-one margin.

A pause in diplomacy

Early in his term, however, Trump dispatched special envoy Richard Grenell to Caracas to meet with Maduro. Six Americans who had been detained in Venezuela were freed by Maduro's government during Grenell's visit.

But diplomatic efforts with Caracas have been largely paused in recent months, with Grenell mostly sidelined, said the person familiar with the matter and a congressional aide, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Maduro says the boat strikes are an attempt to undercut his authority and try to foment unrest that would lead to his ouster from power.

The State Department pushed back against the notion that the administration had been involved in anything other than an operation targeting drug traffickers.

"Maduro is not the legitimate leader of Venezuela; he's a fugitive of American justice who undermines regional security and poisons Americans and we want to see him brought to justice," said Tommy Pigott, a State Department spokesman. "The U.S. is engaged in a counter-drug cartel operation and any claim that we are coordinating with anyone on anything other than this targeted effort is completely false."

Last of 10 New Orleans jail escapees from May is captured under a house in Atlanta

By JEFF MARTIN and JACK BROOK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A monthslong search for the only Louisiana inmate still on the run after an audacious May jailbreak ended Wednesday when authorities say they found him hiding in a crawl space beneath an Atlanta home, bringing the last of the 10 escapees into custody.

Derrick Groves, 28, was convicted of murder and facing a possible life sentence before the inmates escaped through a hole behind a toilet in a New Orleans jail. He had the most violent criminal record of the group and authorities offered a \$50,000 reward for tips leading to his capture.

A SWAT team spent hours searching the house for Groves after obtaining a warrant, Deputy U.S. Marshal Brian Fair said.

"They couldn't find him, they had to deploy gas multiple times into the house and basement," Fair said. "Based on how long it took a seasoned, well-trained SWAT team to get him out, he had planned to hide for a while."

A police dog eventually located him, Atlanta police Deputy Chief Kelley Collier said. In video provided by the department, Groves — shirtless, shoeless and shackled at his wrists and ankles — blew a kiss and grinned at the camera as he was led into a police car.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry applauded law enforcement for putting all 10 escapees "back where they belong: BEHIND BARS," in a post on X.

The tip that led to his capture came through New Orleans Crimestoppers, Fair said.

Several people appeared to be helping Groves and could face charges for aiding and abetting, Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill said at a press conference Wednesday, adding that Groves is scheduled to be in court in Georgia Thursday for a hearing on extradition.

The home's garage door was collapsed inward Wednesday afternoon as police blocked off the scene. The brick house on a sloping lawn surrounded by trees is in a neighborhood beside Tyler Perry Studios,

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one of the nation's largest movie production facilities. Inside the home, police also found a pistol and 15 pounds (6.8 kg) of marijuana, Murrill said.

Groves' attorney, Peter Freiberg, said he had not yet spoken with his client and declined to comment. He was appointed to represent Groves by the Orleans Public Defender conflict panel.

"Literally all I know is the alert from the city of New Orleans saying he was arrested in Atlanta," Freiberg said.

The other nine inmates were recaptured within six weeks of the May 16 breakout, most inside Orleans Parish city limits.

Escapee's mother reacts to his capture

"I'm all messed up, I'm just trying to talk to him," said Groves' mother, Stephanie Groves, who spoke to The Associated Press after learning about the arrest online.

Fighting tears, she said she had urged her son to surrender peacefully and didn't know why he went to Atlanta. She said her family had been followed and watched by law enforcement since the breakout.

"I'm just glad it's over with," she said. "Of course he was going to get caught."

Groves had been convicted of second-degree murder in 2024 for opening fire on a family block party on Mardi Gras day, killing two people and injuring others. He faces life imprisonment without parole.

The jailbreak in New Orleans

Groves and the nine others yanked open a faulty cell door, squeezed through a hole behind a toilet, scaled a barbed-wire fence and vanished into the night. It was one of the largest jailbreaks in recent U.S. history.

Their absence wasn't discovered until a morning headcount hours later. Inside the cell, investigators found an arrow drawn toward the hole and a taunting message: "To Easy LoL."

Officials later blamed ineffective cell locks and said the lone guard monitoring them was getting food during the escape. But authorities insist the escape may have been an inside job.

A jail maintenance worker was arrested for allegedly helping them escape by turning off water to the toilet. His lawyer said he was simply unclogging it and was unaware of the plot. Another former jail employee, identified as Groves' girlfriend, is accused of helping coordinate the breakout.

Search for the fugitives

Hundreds of officers scoured New Orleans, using phone records and hundreds of tips to quickly track down some of the men.

At least 16 people, many of them friends or relatives, were arrested on felony charges of helping the fugitives before or after the jailbreak by providing food, cash, transport and shelter.

One escapee was captured in Baton Rouge after allegedly hiding in a vacant house his friend had been hired to paint. Two others were caught in Texas after a high-speed car chase. Antoine Massey, one of the last fugitives to be recaptured, allegedly posted photos and videos on social media while on the run.

Orleans Parish Sheriff Susan Hutson, who has largely blamed the breakout on the lockup's ailing infrastructure, has faced heavy criticism from state and local officials over her handling of the escape and management of the jail.

Escapees face additional charges

Many of the men were in jail awaiting sentences or trials over violent crimes, including murder. The nine other men pleaded not guilty to escape charges in July, appearing via video from Louisiana State Penitentiary.

"Everyone is entitled to due process," Murrill said. "But there's a video of these detainees running out of the jail in the middle of the night. They were not heading to court hearings."

Orleans Parish District Attorney Jason Williams hailed the end of the search and said prosecutors "will pursue every available legal avenue" against Groves.

All 10 men are charged with simple escape, punishable by two to five years in prison, on top of their original counts.

Groves was booked into the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta on Wednesday afternoon. He's charged with being a fugitive from justice, jail records show.

IRS will furlough nearly half of its workforce as the government shutdown enters a second week

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS will furlough nearly half of its workforce on Wednesday as part of the ongoing government shutdown, according to an updated contingency plan posted to its website. Most IRS operations are closed, the agency said in a separate letter to its workers.

The news comes after President Donald Trump and Congress failed to strike an agreement to fund federal operations, and the government shutdown has entered its second week, with no discernible endgame in sight.

The agency's initial Lapsed Appropriations Contingency Plan, which provided for the first five business days of operations, stated that the department would remain open using Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act funds.

Now, only 39,870 employees, or 53.6%, will remain working as the shutdown continues. It is unclear which workers will remain on the job.

Doreen Greenwald, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, said in a statement that taxpayers should expect increased wait times, backlogs and delays implementing tax law changes as the shutdown continues.

"Taxpayers around the country will now have a much harder time getting the assistance they need, just as they get ready to file their extension returns due next week," she said. "Every day these employees are locked out of work is another day of frustration for taxpayers and a growing backlog of work that sits and waits for the shutdown to end."

She urged the Trump administration and Congress to "reach an agreement that reopens government and restores the services that Americans need and deserve."

The notice to workers states that furloughed workers and those who remain on the job will receive back pay once the shutdown ends. This is notable since the Republican administration on Tuesday warned of no guaranteed back pay for federal workers affected by a government shutdown.

Last week, Trump said roughly 750,000 federal workers nationwide were expected to be furloughed across agencies, with some potentially fired by his administration.

Representatives from the IRS, the Treasury and the White House did not comment on the furlough plans.

Earlier this year the IRS embarked on mass layoffs, spearheaded by the Department of Government Efficiency, affecting tens of thousands of workers. At the end of 2024, the agency employed roughly 100,000 workers — and currently that hovers around 75,000.

Federal government shutdown grinds into a week two as tempers flare at the Capitol

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tours at the Capitol have come to a standstill. The House is keeping its doors closed, while the Senate repeated its loop Wednesday of failed votes to reopen the government. President Donald Trump is threatening to mass fire federal workers and refuse back pay for the rest.

As the government shutdown entered a second week, there's no discernible endgame in sight.

"Congress, do your damn job," said Randy Erwin, president of the National Federation of Federal Employees, with other top union leaders near the Capitol.

No negotiations, at least publicly, are underway, but behind the scenes quiet talks are emerging. Clusters of lawmakers, Republicans and Democrats, are meeting privately, searching for ways out of the impasse, which hinges on striking a deal for preserving health care subsidies.

Signs of discomfort are apparent: Military personnel and federal employees are set to miss paychecks, flights are being delayed at airports nationwide and federal programs are disrupted. Confrontations erupted

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at the Capitol.

Two dueling bills, one from Republicans and the other from Democrats, failed again in the Senate.

Shutdown grinds on and tempers flare

The Republicans who have majority control in Congress believe they have the upper hand politically, as they fend off Democratic demands to quickly fund health insurance subsidies as part of any plan to end the shutdown.

House Speaker Mike Johnson appears so confident he is preparing to take live questions from callers on C-SPAN's Thursday morning public affairs show.

But so have Democrats dug in, convinced that Americans are on their side in the fight to prevent the looming health care price spikes and blaming Trump for the shutdown.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer insisted it was Republicans who are "feeling the heat."

Tensions rose Wednesday to a boil.

Outside the speaker's office, Arizona's two Democratic senators who were demanding that Johnson reopen the House to swear in Rep.-elect Adelita Grijalva. She won a special election to the state's Tucson-area seat last month and has said she would sign on to releasing the files on the sex trafficking investigations into Jeffrey Epstein, but has yet to be seated in Congress.

Johnson, facing a diminished GOP majority once the new Democrat takes office, declined.

A short time later House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York was confronted by home state GOP Rep. Mike Lawler. He was demanding the leader's support for a one-year extension of the expiring health care subsidies, as Democrats pushed for a better deal. The encounter quickly digressed.

"You shut the government down," Lawler railed.

"You're embarrassing yourself," Jeffries retorted.

Health insurance for millions is at stake

At its core, the debate is over the health care issue that has tangled Congress for years, and in particular, the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, that Trump tried, and failed, to repeal and replace during his first term at the White House.

Congress increased the federal subsidies that help people purchase private insurance policies on the Affordable Care Act exchanges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal aid was popular, and it boosted ACA enrollment to a record 24 million people. Those enhanced subsidies are set to expire at year's end.

Republicans say Congress can deal with the health insurance issue in the months ahead. Democrats are fighting to resolve the problem now, as people are receiving notices of higher policy rates for the new year.

Two prominent Republicans, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, have broken from their party, saying something must be done to help Americans pay for the coming health insurance rate hikes.

Trump wants to make a health care deal

A loosely formed collection of senators, Republicans and Democrats, have bantered about options for addressing the health insurance problem. Some of them met over Thai food dinner.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine has offered her own plan for kickstarting talks. It involves reopening the government now, but with a "commitment," she said, to discussing the health care issue.

Another option floated by GOP Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, a former state governor, is a temporary extension of the subsidies, for one year, and then a phase out.

And Trump himself signaled he was open to negotiating with Democrats over their demands to save health care subsidies. Earlier this week, the president said that talks were already underway as he wants "great health care" for the people, only to shift his tone hours later to say the government must reopen first.

"I'm pretty discouraged," Rounds said Wednesday. "My sense is that's probably past the point of getting anything done."

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., sounded a similarly sour note.

"I'm an optimist, but wow are we not making much progress," Coons said.

But GOP Sen. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, who is close to Trump, said, "There's always a group talking,"

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Missed paychecks for workers, and more failed votes

While federal employees have often missed paychecks during shutdowns, Trump is now threatening to do away with guaranteed back pay, which would be a stark departure from what is normal. The White House budget office, under Russ Vought, argues the law says back pay is not automatic, and Congress would need to approve it.

The union leaders warned Trump against using the federal workers as “political pawns” in the political brawl.

“And president, you better start obeying the Constitution,” Erwin said.

Part of the reason the parties are so unwilling to budge from their positions is because their internal data is encouraging them not to cave.

Senate Democrats have been briefed on information suggesting their health care messaging was resonating with voters. A memo from Senate Majority PAC was also circulated to House Democrats and campaigns nationwide on Tuesday, with a clear directive: hold the line.

Republicans, meanwhile, are sticking to their own playbook. A memo from the House GOP’s campaign arm urged candidates to focus on the shutdown’s economic impact, including a district-level breakdown of who would be affected by a government shutdown.

Each side has framed the shutdown fight as a precursor to the 2026 midterm elections.

Retired Justice Kennedy laments coarse discourse of Trump era and its effects on the Supreme Court

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Retired Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy said Wednesday he was troubled that partisanship seemed to be “creeping its way into the court,” and that the state of political discourse in the country has gotten so vulgar and vile that he worries for the country.

The tone of recent opinions bothers him more than outcomes of cases, Kennedy said in an interview with The Associated Press in his court office in advance of next week’s publication of his memoir, “Life, Law & Liberty.”

“The justices have to resist thinking of themselves as being partisan,” he said. “In our current discourse, it seems to me, partisanship is creeping its way into the court.”

He declined to identify any justices or opinions, but at another point he returned to the personal nature of some court opinions.

“Of course, when you disagree, you criticize the other, but you criticize the opinion and the reasoning. You don’t criticize the author,” he said during the nearly hourlong interview. “And that point seems to be eclipsed. Some of the recent opinions are attacks on your colleagues, on the judges. I was astounded, very worried about it.” From members of Congress who use “the four-letter F-word” in public to President Donald Trump, Kennedy said he is routinely put off by what he is hearing.

“Concerned. Worried. Disappointed with,” Kennedy said. “The rest of the world looks to us to see how free speech works, how democracy works, and in many respects they will not be impressed by what they see,” he said. “I think our high officials ought to elevate the content and elegance of our discourse.” With the nation’s 250th birthday approaching next year, the 89-year-old Kennedy cast a baleful eye at the future. “What about the next 250? I’m not so sure. I’m not so sure,” he said.

A nominee of Republican President Ronald Reagan, Kennedy was the decisive vote in many of the court’s most impactful cases, leaning left on abortion and gay rights and right on guns and campaign finance.

He has had little to say publicly since he stepped down from the court in 2018.

The memoir, published by Simon & Schuster, explores his roots in Sacramento, California, before turning to his 43 years as a federal judge, including 30 on the Supreme Court. The writer, Joan Didion, a childhood friend who died in 2021, looked at some early drafts and offered encouragement, Kennedy said.

It is being issued as Kennedy still is grieving the sudden death of his son, Gregory, in January. When

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the conversation turned to family, Kennedy retrieved a picture of his son and daughter-in-law on their wedding day some 30 years ago.

A copy of Justice Sonia Sotomayor's latest book, "Just Shine!" lay on a bookshelf, a level below a photograph of a granddaughter who is a professional ballerina in New York.

The Supreme Court, decidedly more conservative after Kennedy's retirement and the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg two years later, has overturned several of his opinions, including a decision he co-authored in 1992 that had preserved the right to an abortion.

"That was a close and difficult case. In my view, our earlier decision was correct," he said.

In the same 2022 case from Mississippi, Justice Clarence Thomas suggested that Kennedy's opinion giving constitutional protection to same-sex marriage should be next.

Uncomfortable discussing the case, Kennedy said he thought the decision might survive because so many people have relied on it and overturning it "would cause great hurt" to same-sex couples and their children.

As it happens, the court will soon consider an appeal from Kim Davis, a former county clerk in Kentucky, who is asking the justices to overturn the 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The court wasn't immune from individual criticism when he served, but they were exceedingly rare. In the book, Kennedy recounts one occasion, Justice Antonin Scalia's dissent in the same-sex marriage case, in which a personal attack led to cooled relations between the two men.

Scalia noted that he'd rather "hide my head in a bag" than join Kennedy's opinion and also said Kennedy was not a genuine Westerner because "California does not count."

Seven months later, Scalia apologized in a visit to Kennedy's office that ended with a hug. Scalia was about to leave for a hunting trip in Texas that, he told Kennedy, would be his last long trip. Scalia died in Texas just over a week later.

Kennedy's views about Trump are difficult to pin down. Several passages in the book seem to be written with him in mind.

"The Constitution does not work if any one branch of the government insists on the exercise of its powers to the extreme," Kennedy wrote.

Responding to questions Wednesday, he said the president was among those who make intemperate remarks.

But when Kennedy wrote about his visit to the White House after he told his colleagues of his plans to retire, he described Trump as "gracious, cordial and eager to talk."

He acknowledged that the White House consulted with him on Trump's choice of Justice Brett Kavanaugh and other judicial nominees.

But he said there was no discussion of his plans with Trump or anyone else in the Republican administration beforehand and no effort by the president to induce his departure.

Kennedy also sought to explain a comment he made to Trump that was picked up by microphones following the president's address to Congress in March.

"Thank you for teaching young people to love America," Kennedy said.

He confirmed the remark while wondering how the seemingly private moment went public.

"I said that. Sure. I said, that should be your principal mission," Kennedy said on Wednesday.

Asked to evaluate how Trump is doing in that regard, Kennedy said, "Well, I'm not totally sure."

US stocks hit records after the briefest of stumbles as gold's price keeps rising

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street got back to rising on Wednesday, while the price of gold pushed further past \$4,000 per ounce.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.6% a day after snapping a seven-day winning streak and set its latest all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged down by 1 point, or less than 0.1%, while the Nasdaq

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composite rose 1.1% to its own record.

Trading has been relatively muted recently following the U.S. government's latest shutdown. The closure has delayed the release of several major economic reports that usually move the market. Stocks have been drifting without them or other signals to change expectations for cuts to interest rates by the Federal Reserve, one of the major reasons the stock market has surged since April.

Another force that's pushed the market to records is the frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology. Advanced Micro Devices jumped another 11.4% to add to its rally from earlier in the week, when it announced an AI-related deal. AMD was the best performing stock in the S&P 500.

Right behind was Dell Technologies, which piled more gains onto its own rally from Tuesday, when it talked up its growth opportunities related to AI. Dell rose 9.1%.

Poet Technologies climbed 17% and likewise added to its surge from Tuesday, when it said it raised \$75 million in investment to accelerate its growth. The company sells high-speed optical engines and other products used in the AI systems market.

AI-related stocks have broadly been on a tear. Nvidia has soared nearly 41% so far this year. Oracle is up 73.2% over the same time, while Palantir Technologies has more than doubled with a nearly 143% surge.

The performances have been so strong that criticism is rising about prices having gone too far, like they did during the 2000 dot-com mania. That bubble ultimately imploded, and the S&P 500 halved in value.

Proponents say AI stocks are backed by big growth in profits, something that many dot-com stocks didn't have at the turn of the millennium. But the Bank of England nevertheless warned Wednesday of the rising risk that tech stock prices pumped up by the AI boom could face a "sudden correction."

"On a number of measures, equity market valuations appear stretched, particularly for technology companies focused on Artificial Intelligence," policymakers at the U.K. central bank said in a report. With Big Tech companies accounting for an increasingly outsized share of stock market indexes, stocks are "particularly exposed should expectations around the impact of AI become less optimistic."

Elsewhere on Wall Street, AST SpaceMobile jumped 8.6% after Verizon Communications agreed to use its space-based network to offer service to cellular customers when needed, starting in 2026. Verizon slipped 0.2%.

On the losing end of Wall Street was Jefferies Financial Group, which fell 7.9%. The investment bank disclosed some details about its exposure to First Brands Group, a supplier of aftermarket auto parts that filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last week.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 39.13 points to 6,753.72. The Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped 1.20 to 46,601.78, and the Nasdaq composite rose 255.02 to 23,043.38.

Gold, meanwhile, continued its stellar year and rose further past \$4,000 per ounce. Investors have traditionally seen gold as a way to protect against rising inflation, and its price has soared more than 50% this year.

Worries are high about big debt loads that the U.S. and other governments are building, which threaten to push inflation higher. Political instability around the world, uncertainty created by President Donald Trump's tariffs and expectations for rate cuts by the Fed are also pushing up interest in gold.

The Fed cut its main interest rate for the first time this year last month, and it hinted that more reductions may be on the way. Minutes from that last meeting released on Wednesday showed growing concerns among Fed officials about the slowing job market.

Lower rates could help boost the job market and economy, but Fed officials say they're also staying mindful of inflation, which remains above the Fed's target of 2%. Lower rates can give inflation more fuel.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose in Europe following a weaker finish in Asia.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.12% from 4.14% late Tuesday.

Trump says Illinois governor and Chicago mayor should be jailed as they oppose Guard deployment

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday said the Illinois governor and Chicago mayor should be jailed as they oppose his deployment of National Guard troops for his immigration and crime crackdown in the nation's third-largest city. The officials said they would not be deterred.

The Republican president made the comment in a social media post, the latest example of his brazen calls for his Democratic opponents to be prosecuted or locked up — a break from longtime norms as the Justice Department traditionally has strived to maintain its independence from the White House.

Trump wrote on Truth Social that Mayor Brandon Johnson and Gov. JB Pritzker "should be in jail for failing to protect Ice Officers!" It was a reference to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

It was not immediately clear what Trump was objecting to.

Johnson, in a post on X, said, "This is not the first time Trump has tried to have a Black man unjustly arrested. I'm not going anywhere." Pritzker, also on X, said, "I will not back down. Trump is now calling for the arrest of elected representatives checking his power. What else is left on the path to full-blown authoritarianism?"

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson, when asked what crimes the president believed Pritzker and Johnson had committed, failed to identify any, but she said they "have blood on their hands" and pointed to Chicago Police Department reports that at least five people were killed and 25 shot over the weekend.

"Instead of taking action to stop the crime, these Trump-Deranged buffoons would rather allow the violence to continue and attack the President for wanting to help make their city safe again," Jackson said.

National Guard troops from Texas are positioned outside Chicago, despite a lawsuit by the state and city to block the deployment.

The troops' mission is not clear, but the Trump administration has undertaken an aggressive immigration enforcement operation in Chicago.

Trump has called Chicago a "hellhole," though police statistics show significant drops in most crimes, including homicides. Protesters have skirmished with agents outside a detention center in the village of Broadview, outside Chicago.

A woman in Chicago was shot by a Border Patrol agent over the weekend after she and a man were accused of using their vehicles to strike and then box in the agent's vehicle. The agent then exited his car and fired five shots at Marimar Martinez, 30.

Martinez and Anthony Ruiz, 21, are charged with forcibly assaulting a federal officer and were ordered to be released Monday pending trial. Martinez's lawyer, Christopher Parente, claimed body camera footage contradicts the federal government's narrative of her actions.

Trump's comment came as former FBI Director James Comey appeared in a Virginia courtroom, pleading not guilty in a case that has intensified concerns about the Justice Department's efforts to target Trump adversaries.

When Trump was campaigning for the White House in 2024 at a time he faced criminal and civil investigations, he told supporters, "I am your retribution."

The Justice Department has also opened criminal investigations this year against California Sen. Adam Schiff, New York Attorney General Letitia James and former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who is running for New York City mayor. The three, all Democrats, have all denied wrongdoing and say the investigations are politically motivated.

Pritzker, one of Trump's fiercest critics, has called the president a "wannabe dictator," comparing his leadership to that of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The governor has suggested that Trump, who has threatened Chicago with apocalyptic force, suffers from dementia.

Pritzker, eyed as a potential 2028 White House contender, has strongly fought any federal intervention along with Johnson, saying it is not wanted or needed in Illinois or Chicago.

"Certainly there's a lot more going on in the world than for him to send troops into Chicago," Pritzker

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told The Associated Press in August during a visit to a South Side neighborhood where a campaign videographer was also in tow. "He ought to be focused on some of the bigger problems."

Pritzker alleges that Trump is trying to militarize cities to affect the outcome of the 2026 election by impeding voting efforts in Democratic strongholds like Chicago.

The heir to the Hyatt Hotel fortune is seeking a third term as governor next year and has sidestepped questions about higher ambitions. Pritzker was among the finalists considered as a running mate for Democratic Kamala Harris' presidential run in 2024.

Trump has often singled out Chicago and Illinois because they have some of the country's strongest immigrant protections. Both are "sanctuary" jurisdictions, which limit cooperation between police and federal immigration agents.

Johnson, a first-term mayor, has strengthened those protections with executive orders, including one that bars immigration agents from using city-owned land as staging areas for operations. He calls Trump's actions unconstitutional.

Johnson has accused Trump of waging a war on Chicago and having an "animus" toward women and people of color. Nearly one-third of Chicago's 2.7 million residents are Black and roughly one-third are Hispanic.

"He's a monster," Johnson told reporters in May. "Period."

Is there an AI bubble? Financial institutions sound a warning

By KELVIN CHAN and MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writers

LONDON (AP) — Lingering doubts about the economic promise of artificial intelligence technology are starting to get the attention of financial institutions that raised warning flags this week about an AI investment bubble.

Officials at the Bank of England on Wednesday flagged the growing risk that tech stock prices pumped up by the AI boom could burst.

"The risk of a sharp market correction has increased," the U.K. central bank said.

The head of the International Monetary Fund raised a similar alarm hours after the Bank of England's report.

Global stock prices have been surging, fired up by "optimism about the productivity-enhancing potential of AI," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said.

But financial conditions could "turn abruptly," she warned in a speech ahead of the organization's annual meeting next week in Washington.

Is there an AI bubble?

"Bubbles obviously are never very easy to identify, but we can see there are a few potential symptoms of a bubble in the current situation," said Adam Slater, lead economist at Oxford Economics.

Those symptoms include rapid growth in tech stock prices, the fact that tech stocks now comprise about 40% of the S&P 500, market valuations that appear "stretched" beyond their worth and "a general sense of extreme optimism in terms of the underlying technology, despite the enormous uncertainties around what this technology might ultimately yield," Slater said.

The most optimistic projections about the fruits of generative AI products foresee a transformation of the economy, leading to annual productivity gains that Slater says have not been seen since the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. At the lower end, economist Daron Acemoglu of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has predicted a "nontrivial but modest" U.S. productivity gain of just 0.7% over a decade.

"You've got this incredibly wide range of possibilities," Slater said. "Nobody really knows where it's going to land."

Doubts about the worth of top AI companies

Investors have closely watched a series of intertwined deals over recent months between top AI developers such as OpenAI, maker of ChatGPT, and the companies building the costly computer chips and data centers needed to power these AI products.

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OpenAI doesn't turn a profit but the privately held San Francisco firm is now the world's most valuable startup, with a market valuation of \$500 billion. It recently signed major deals with chipmaker Nvidia, the world's most valuable publicly traded company, and its rival AMD, and a \$300 billion deal with tech giant Oracle for the buildout of future data centers.

The Bank of England didn't name any specific companies but said that on "a number of measures, equity market valuations appear stretched, particularly for technology companies focused on Artificial Intelligence."

The report said stock market valuations are "comparable to the peak" of the 2000 dotcom bubble, which then deflated and led to a recession. With tech stocks accounting for an increasingly large share of benchmark stock indexes, stock markets are "particularly exposed should expectations around the impact of AI become less optimistic."

The bank outlined so-called downside risks, including shortages of electricity, data or chips that could slow AI progress, or technological changes that could lessen the need for the type of AI infrastructure currently being built around the world.

The IMF's Georgieva said current stock valuations "are heading toward levels we saw during the bullishness about the internet 25 years ago. If a sharp correction were to occur, tighter financial conditions could drag down world growth," she said.

What the tech bosses say

Tech company bosses are downplaying the doomsayers.

The current AI boom is an industrial, rather than financial or banking, bubble and will be beneficial for society even if it bursts, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos said.

"The ones that are industrial are not nearly as bad. It could even be good because when the dust settles and you see who are the winners, society benefits from those inventions," Bezos said at a recent tech conference in Italy.

He compared it to a previous biotech bubble in the 1990s that resulted in new life-saving drugs.

The excitement around AI is drawing in a huge wave of money to fund new business ideas, but it's also clouding investors' judgment, Bezos said.

"Every company gets funded, the good ideas and the bad ideas. And investors have a hard time in the middle of this excitement distinguishing between the good and bad ideas and so that's also probably happening today," he said.

On a tour last month of a Texas data center, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman predicted people will "make some dumb capital allocations" and there will be short-term ups and downs of overinvestment and underinvestment.

But he added that "over the arc that we have to plan over, we are confident that this technology will drive a new wave of unprecedented economic growth," along with scientific breakthroughs, improvements to quality of life and "new ways to express creativity."

Awaiting the promise of more useful AI agents

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang acknowledged in a CNBC interview on Wednesday that OpenAI doesn't yet have the money to buy its chips, but "they're going to have to raise that money" through revenue, which "is growing exponentially," along with equity or debt.

Huang said he also believes a transition has happened as leading AI developers are moving from chatbots that operated "basically at a loss" because the models "weren't useful enough to pay for" to one in which the AI systems are capable of higher-level reasoning.

"It's doing research before it answers a question," he said. "It goes on the web and studies other PDFs and websites, it can now use tools, generate information for you, and it creates responses that are really useful."

AI companies have spent more than a year pitching the transformative potential of "AI agents" that can go beyond a chatbot's capability by being able to access a person's computer and do coding and other work tasks on their behalf. But as the initial hype fades, Forrester analyst Sudha Maheshwari said businesses looking to buy these AI tools are taking a closer look at whether they're getting enough return on their investments.

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"Every bubble inevitably bursts, and in 2026, AI will lose its sheen, trading its tiara for a hard hat," she wrote in a report Wednesday.

Joan Kennedy, first wife of Sen. Edward Kennedy, has died

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Joan B. Kennedy, the former wife of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy who endured a troubled marriage marked by family tragedies, her husband's infidelities and her own decades-long struggles with alcoholism and mental health, died on Wednesday. She was 89.

The former Joan Bennett, one of the last remaining members of a family generation that included President John F. Kennedy, was a model and classically-trained pianist when she married Ted Kennedy in 1958.

Their lives would change unimaginably over the next decade and a half. Brother-in-law John F. Kennedy was elected president in 1960 and assassinated three years later. Brother-in-law Robert F. Kennedy served as attorney general under JFK, was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1964 and assassinated while seeking the presidency.

Her husband was elected to the U.S. Senate and became among the country's most respected legislators despite initial misgivings that he was capitalizing on his family connections. But Ted Kennedy also lived through scandals of his own making. In 1969, the car he was driving plunged off a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island, killing his young female passenger, Mary Jo Kopechne.

Kennedy, who swam to safety and waited hours before alerting police, later pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident. Chappaquiddick shadowed him for the rest of his life, weighing against his own chances for the presidency.

Joan Kennedy had three children with her husband, but also had miscarriages, including one shortly after the Chappaquiddick accident. She stood by her husband through the scandal, but their estrangement was nearly impossible to hide by the time of his unsuccessful effort to defeat President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 Democratic primaries. They had been separated by then, and would later divorce. One bumper sticker from the campaign read "Vote for Jimmy Carter, Free Joan Kennedy."

Her death comes about a year after Ethel Kennedy, the wife of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, died at the age of 96, having raised their 11 children after he was assassinated, and remaining dedicated to social causes and the family's legacy for decades thereafter.

Virginia Joan Bennett was born into a prominent Bronxville, N.Y., family and as a teen she worked as a model in TV ads. She was a classmate of Jean Kennedy, the future senator's sister, at Manhattanville College, where her exceptional beauty caught Ted Kennedy's eye when he visited the campus for a building dedication in 1957.

They married a year later, but Joan Kennedy struggled from the start to fit in to the high-powered family. "Joan was shy and a really reserved person, and the Kennedys aren't," Adam Clymer, author of "Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography" said in an 2005 interview with the AP.

Her love of piano would be a trademark for much of her life. She was known for opening her husband's campaign rallies with a piano serenade and, after they divorced, touring with orchestras around the world. Her family said she would combine her masterful playing with a message about the transformational potential of the arts and the need for equitable arts education.

In a 1992 Associated Press interview, she recalled playing piano for brother-in-law Bobby when he ran for president in 1968. "He took me with him and encouraged me," she said. "He had a theme, 'This Land Is Your Land,' the Woody Guthrie song. I'd play that on the piano and everybody would come in, feeling really great about everything."

"It seems like a long time ago, but it's part of my memories," she said, while promoting a book she wrote, which was a guide to appreciating classical music.

She also talked in the interview about how music helped her get through some difficult times, including the deaths of Jack and Bobby Kennedy, when her son Ted Jr. lost his leg to cancer and her separation and divorce from Ted Kennedy.

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"I do advise listening to music when you're in grief," she said. "Music has give me a lot of courage to carry on."

In a statement, former Rep. Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island praised his mother for her courage and talent.

"Besides being a loving mother, talented musician, and instrumental partner to my father as he launched his successful political career, Mom was a power of example to millions of people with mental health conditions," his statement said. "She will be missed not just by the entire Kennedy Family, but by the arts community in the City of Boston and the many people whose lives that she touched."

She also became one of the first women to publicly acknowledge her struggles with alcoholism and depression.

"I will always admire my mother for the way that she faced up to her challenges with grace, courage, humility, and honesty," Ted Kennedy Jr. said in a statement. "She taught me how to be more truthful with myself and how careful listening is a more powerful communication skill than public speaking."

After Chappaquiddick, her drinking worsened. A series of drunken driving arrests led to stays in alcohol treatment programs. Then in 2005, a passerby found her passed out on a Boston sidewalk in the rain, and she was hospitalized with a concussion and broken shoulder. Her children intervened, with Ted Jr. obtaining a court-ordered guardianship for his mother's care.

Maria Shriver praised her cousins for doing "a great job caring for her, respecting her privacy, and loving her."

"She courageously shared what it was like to lose a child, get divorced from a famous man, and carry on. Her life was challenging, but she persevered," the daughter of Eunice Kennedy Shriver and Sargent Shriver posted in a eulogy for her aunt. "As a young girl, I marveled at her grace, her beauty, her elegance. As a woman, I respected her grit, her resilience, her perseverance."

Joan Kennedy is survived by her two sons, nine grandchildren, a great-grandchild and nearly 30 nieces and nephews. Her daughter, Kara, died in 2011.

Comey pleads not guilty as lawyers signal intent to argue Trump foe's case is politically motivated

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

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — James Comey pleaded not guilty Wednesday in a criminal case that has highlighted the Justice Department's efforts to target adversaries of President Donald Trump, with lawyers for the former FBI director saying they plan to argue the prosecution is politically motivated and should be dismissed.

The arraignment lasted less than half an hour, but it was nonetheless loaded with historical significance given that the case has amplified concerns the Justice Department is being weaponized in pursuit of the Republican president's political enemies and is operating at the behest of an administration determined to seek retribution.

Comey's not guilty plea to allegations that he lied to Congress five years ago kick-starts a process of legal wrangling that could culminate in a trial months from now at the federal courthouse in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside of Washington. Defense lawyers said they intend to ask that the case be thrown out before trial on grounds that it constitutes a vindictive prosecution and also plan to challenge the legitimacy of the appointment of the prosecutor who filed the charges just days after Trump hastily appointed her to her position.

"It's the honor of my life to represent Mr. Comey in this matter," one of Comey's lawyers, Patrick Fitzgerald, a longtime friend who served with him in President George W. Bush's Justice Department, said in court on Wednesday.

The indictment two weeks ago followed an extraordinary chain of events that saw the Trump administration effectively force out the prosecutor who had been overseeing the Comey investigation and replace him with Lindsey Halligan, a White House aide who previously served as one of the president's former lawyers

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but had never served as a federal prosecutor. The president also publicly implored Attorney General Pam Bondi to take action against Comey and other perceived adversaries.

Less than a week after being appointed, Halligan rushed to file charges before a legal deadline lapsed despite warnings from other lawyers in the office that the evidence was insufficient for an indictment. She sat at the prosecution table Wednesday.

In a sign of the unusual nature of the case, the two prosecutors who have signed on to handle it are both based in North Carolina as opposed to the elite Eastern District of Virginia, which Halligan now leads.

What the indictment says

The two-count indictment alleges that Comey misled the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 30, 2020, when he was asked whether he had authorized any associate to serve as an anonymous source to the news media related to investigations of either Trump or 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. Comey replied that he stood by earlier testimony that he had not given such authorization.

The two-count indictment charging him with making a false statement and obstructing a congressional proceeding does not identify the associate or say what information may have been discussed with the media, making it challenging to assess the strength of the evidence or to even fully parse the allegations.

Comey has denied any wrongdoing and has said he's looking forward to a trial, which the judge set for Jan. 5, though that date will be subject to change.

Though an indictment is typically just the start of a protracted court process, the Justice Department has trumpeted the development itself as something of a win, regardless of the outcome. Trump administration officials are likely to point to any conviction as proof the case was well-justified, but an acquittal or even dismissal may also be held up as further support for their long-running contention the criminal justice system is stacked against them.

The judge was nominated by Biden

The judge randomly assigned to the case, Michael Nachmanoff, was nominated to the bench by President Joe Biden's Democratic administration and is a former federal defender in Virginia. Known for methodical preparation and a cool temperament, the judge and his background have already drawn Trump's attention, with the president deriding him as a "Crooked Joe Biden appointed Judge."

He signaled in court Wednesday that he intended to push the case forward and would not permit unnecessary delays.

Several Comey family members were in court for his arraignment, including his daughter Maurene, who was fired by the Justice Department earlier this year from her position as a federal prosecutor in Manhattan, as well as Troy Edwards Jr., a son-in-law of Comey's who minutes after Comey was indicted resigned his job as a prosecutor in the Eastern District of Virginia — the office that filed the charges.

Comey is not the only Trump foe under investigation. Others include New York Attorney General Letitia James and Sen. Adam Schiff of California. Lawyers for James and Schiff, both Democrats, call the investigations meritless.

Trump and Comey's fraught relationship

The indictment was the latest chapter in a long-broken relationship between Trump and Comey.

Trump arrived in office in January 2017 as Comey, appointed to the FBI director job by President Barack Obama about four years earlier, was overseeing an investigation into ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

The dynamic was fraught from the start, with Comey briefing Trump weeks before he took office on the existence of uncorroborated and sexually salacious gossip in a dossier of opposition research compiled by a former British spy.

During their subsequent private interactions, Comey would later reveal, Trump asked his FBI director to pledge his loyalty to him and to drop an FBI investigation into his administration's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn. Comey said Trump also asked him to announce that Trump himself was not under investigation as part of the broader inquiry into Russian election interference, something Comey did not do.

Comey was abruptly fired in May 2017, with Trump later saying he was thinking about "this Russia thing" when he decided to terminate him. The firing was investigated by Justice Department special counsel

Robert Mueller as an act of potential obstruction of justice.

Comey in 2018 published a memoir, "A Higher Loyalty," that painted Trump in deeply unflattering ways, likening him to a mafia don and characterizing him as unethical and "untethered to truth."

Trump, for his part, continued to angrily vent at Comey as the Russia investigation led by Mueller dominated headlines for the next two years and shadowed his first administration. On social media, he repeatedly claimed Comey should face charges for "treason" — an accusation Comey dismissed as "dumb lies" — and called him an "untruthful slime ball."

Manchester synagogue attacker pledged allegiance to Islamic State group, police say

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The assailant in last week's attack on a synagogue in the northwest of England that left two congregants dead pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group, police said Wednesday.

The attacker, Jihad Al-Shamie, called emergency dispatchers during his deadly attack on Oct. 2. to express his commitment to the terror group, Counter Terrorism Policing North West said in a statement.

Al-Shamie, 35, was shot dead by police outside the Heaton Park Congregation Synagogue in Manchester after he rammed a car into pedestrians, attacked them with a knife and tried to force his way into the building.

Assistant Chief Constable Rob Potts said that minutes after Greater Manchester Police were alerted to the attack and as firearms officers were making their way to the scene, Al-Shamie called 999 — the U.K.'s emergency phone number — claiming responsibility for the attack.

"He also pledged allegiance to Islamic State," Potts said.

Congregation members Melvin Cravitz, 66, and Adrian Daulby, 53, died in the attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year.

Police say Daulby was accidentally shot by an armed officer as he and other congregants barricaded the synagogue to block Al-Shamie from entering. Three other men remain hospitalized with serious injuries.

"This has been a week of deep trauma and mourning for the Jewish community at a time when they should have been observing one of the holiest periods in the calendar of their faith," Potts said.

Police have revealed that Al-Shamie was on bail over an alleged rape at the time of the attack, but hadn't been charged. However, police have said he had never been referred to the authorities for exhibiting extremist views.

Potts said that "at this stage of our investigation, we are more confident that he was influenced by extreme Islamist ideology. The 999 call forms part of this assessment."

As police work to determine whether or not the attacker acted alone, they have arrested three men and three women in the greater Manchester area on suspicion of the "commission, preparation and instigation of acts of terrorism."

A court on Saturday granted police five more days to hold four of the suspects: men ages 30 and 32, and women ages 46 and 61. An 18-year-old woman and a 43-year-old man were released over the weekend with no further action, and two further releases are planned for later Wednesday, police said.

Police haven't identified those arrested or disclosed their links to Al-Shamie.

The attack has devastated Britain's Jewish community and intensified debate about the line between criticism of Israel and antisemitism.

Recorded antisemitic incidents in the U.K. have risen sharply since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and Israel's ensuing campaign against Hamas in Gaza, according to Community Security Trust, a charity that provides advice and protection for British Jews.

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Your phone rings, and it's a number from Sweden. Do you answer? A Nobel Prize winner didn't

By STEFANIE DAZIO and ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — For some Nobel Prize winners this year, the news came with a knock at the door before dawn. For others, it was a long-awaited phone call honoring a discovery made decades ago.

One of the medicine prize winners, meanwhile, was on vacation in Yellowstone National Park without cellular service. It would be hours before he found out.

The Nobel Prizes are considered among the world's most prestigious honors for achievements in medicine, physics, chemistry, literature, economics and peace. The winners join the pantheon of Nobel laureates, from Albert Einstein to Mother Teresa.

Sometimes, the award is anticipated. Potential winners plan tentative news conferences or, in the western U.S., wait up all night for the news.

While some prizes might feature household names — such as 2009 peace prize winner then-U.S. President Barack Obama or 2016 literature laureate and singer-songwriter Bob Dylan — the natural science categories typically go to people whose names the general public doesn't know, for decades-old research.

Five of this year's nine science winners were in the U.S. when the news broke. Some were fast asleep.

Two winners in Japan, seven hours ahead of Stockholm, were awake and working when the call came from a Swedish number. One thought it was a telemarketer.

Wednesday's chemistry prize was the first time this year that the Nobel committee reached all three winners ahead of the formal announcement.

Here's how some of this year's winners found out:

A knock at the door

When Associated Press photographer Lindsey Wasson knocked on the door of Mary E. Brunkow's Seattle home around 4 a.m. local time Monday, it was the scientist's dog who woke up first. Zelda's barking roused Brunkow's husband, Ross Colquhoun.

"I don't think he really knew what I was there for," Wasson said. "And I said, 'You know, sir, I think your wife just won the Nobel Prize.'"

Wasson's photographs captured Colquhoun waking up Brunkow and telling her the life-changing news: She was among three winners sharing the 2025 medicine prize.

"Don't be ridiculous," she told her husband.

But it was true. The trio had, in research dating back two decades, uncovered a key pathway the body uses to keep the immune system in check, called peripheral immune tolerance. Experts called the findings critical to understanding autoimmune diseases such as Type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

The following day, AP photographers Mark J. Terrill and Damian Dovarganes headed to Santa Barbara, California, to find physicist John Martinis before the sun rose. His wife, Jean, answered the door and told them to come back later: Martinis needed to sleep.

"For many years, we would stay up on the night the physics award was announced," she told the photographers. "At some point we just decided, that's nuts. We'll figure it out if it's happening, but let's just get our sleep."

She added, laughing: "I was trying to think how I can introduce this. Like, 'Do you think you should plan a trip to Sweden?'"

She finally woke her husband up just before 6 a.m. local time (1300 GMT), telling him only that the AP wanted an interview.

"I kind of knew that the Nobel Prize announcements was this week, so I kind of put two and two together," Martinis said later. "I opened my computer and looked under the Nobel Prize 2025 and saw my picture along with Michel Devoret and John Clarke. So I was kind of in shock."

The trio won the physics prize for their research on the weird world of subatomic quantum tunneling that advances the power of everyday digital communications and computing.

Martinis will get that trip to Sweden. The Dec. 10 award ceremony is in Stockholm.

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A hike interrupted

Everyone but Fred Ramsdell seemed to know he had just won the Nobel Prize in medicine.

Ramsdell was away on a backpacking trip Monday, driving through Yellowstone National Park with his wife and two dogs, Larkin and Megan. He kept his cellphone in airplane mode as he often does on family trips.

As they drove through a small town hours later, his wife started screaming as notifications flooded her phone. She told him he'd just won the Nobel Prize in medicine alongside Brunkow and Shimon Sakaguchi.

"I said, 'No, I didn't,'" Ramsdell told the AP in an interview the following day from his car. "She said, 'Yes, you did. I have 200 text messages that say you won the Nobel Prize.'"

Later Monday, Ramsdell drove to a Montana hotel to connect to Wi-Fi and call friends and colleagues. He didn't speak with the Nobel committee to get their congratulations until midnight.

He said he was stunned and awed to receive the recognition. But he has no plans to change his phone habits, which he says are important for work-life balance.

A phone call from Sweden

The Nobel Committee calls the winners shortly before the formal announcement is made. Some ignore the Swedish number — like Brunkow, who assumed the pre-dawn call was spam.

When his phone rang Wednesday, chemistry winner Susumu Kitagawa was skeptical. He said he answered "rather bluntly, thinking it must be yet one of those telemarketing calls I'm getting a lot recently."

The Nobel announcements continue with the literature prize Thursday. Will that winner pick up the phone?

Trump's \$100,000 H-1B visa fee threatens rural schools and hospitals reliant on immigrant workers

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — When Rob Coverdale started his job in 2023 as superintendent of the K-12 Crow Creek Tribal School in South Dakota, there were 15 unfilled teaching positions.

Within nine months, he had filled those vacancies with Filipino teachers, the majority of whom arrived on the H-1B, a visa for skilled workers in specialty occupations.

"We've hired the H-1B teachers because we quite simply didn't have other applicants for those positions," Coverdale said. "So they're certainly not taking jobs from Americans. They're filling jobs that otherwise just simply we would not get filled."

Now a new \$100,000 fee for H-1B visa applications spells trouble for those like Coverdale in rural parts of the country who rely on immigrants to fill vacancies in skilled professions like education and health care.

The Trump administration announced the fee on Sept. 19, arguing that employers were replacing American workers with cheaper talent from overseas. Since then, the White House has said the fee won't apply to existing visa holders and offered a form to request exemptions from the charge.

H-1Bs are primarily associated with tech workers from India. Big tech companies are the biggest user of the visa, and nearly three-quarters of those approved are from India. But there are critical workers, like teachers and doctors, who fall outside that category.

Over the last decade, the U.S. has faced a shortage in those and other sectors. One in eight public school positions are vacant or filled by uncertified teachers, and the American Medical Association projects a shortage of 87,000 physicians in the next decade. The shortages are often worse in small, rural communities that struggle to fill jobs due to lower wages and often lack basic necessities like shopping and home rental options.

H-1B and J-1 visas provide communities an option to hire immigrants with advanced training and certification. The J-1s are short-term visas for cultural exchange programs that aren't subject to the new fee but, unlike the H-1B, don't offer a pathway to permanent residency.

While large companies may be able to absorb the new fee, that's not an option for most rural communities, said Melissa Sadorf, executive director of the National Rural Education Association.

"It really is potentially the cost of the salary and benefits of one teacher, maybe even two, depending on the state," she said. "Attaching that price tag to a single hire, it just simply puts that position out of

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reach for rural budgets.”

A coalition of health care providers, religious groups and educators filed a lawsuit on Friday to stop the H-1B fee, saying it would harm hospitals, churches, schools and industries that rely on the visa. The Department of Homeland Security declined to comment and referred a query to its website.

Filling classrooms where Americans won't go

Coverdale said spots like Stephan, where Crow Creek is based, struggle to attract workers in part because of their isolation. Stephan is nearly an hour's drive from the nearest Walmart or any place that sells clothes, he said.

“The more remote you are, the more challenging it is for your staff members to get to your school and serve your kids,” he said.

Among Coverdale's hires is Mary Joy Ponce-Torres, who had 24 years of teaching experience in the Philippines and now teaches history at Crow Creek. It was a cultural adjustment, but Ponce-Torres said she's made friends and Stephan is now a second home.

“I came from a private school,” she said. “When I came here, I saw it was more like a rural area ... but maybe I was also looking for the same vibe, the same atmosphere where I can just take my time, take things in a much slower pace.”

Many immigrants like Ponce-Torres leave their family behind to pursue the experience and higher wages that a U.S. job can provide.

Sean Rickert, superintendent of the Pima Unified School District in Pima, Arizona, said he would stop seeking H-1B teachers if the new fee is imposed. “I just plain don't have the money,” he said.

Though schools can also use J-1 visas to bring in immigrant teachers, it increases turnover because it is shorter term.

“It's so important that we find permanent people, people who can buy homes, who can become part of our community,” said George Shipley, superintendent at Bison Schools in the town of Bison, South Dakota. “So the H-1B opens that possibility. It is super important, in my opinion, to actually transition from the J-1 visas to the H-1B.”

Without enough staff, schools may hire uncertified teachers, combine classes, increase caseloads for special education managers or drop some course offerings. Shipley said any future shortage of teachers in Bison would force some classes to move online.

The rural reliance on immigrant teachers is concentrated on harder-to-fill specialties, Sadorf said.

“It's a lot more difficult to find a high school advanced math teacher that's qualified than it is to fill a second or third grade elementary class position,” she said.

Closing gaps in the nation's doctor shortage

The fee could be a “huge problem” for health care, said Bobby Mukkamala, president of the American Medical Association and a doctor in Flint, Michigan. Without enough doctors, patients will have to drive farther and wait longer for care.

One-quarter of the nation's physicians are international medical graduates, according to the AMA.

“It's just going to be terrible for the physician shortage, particularly in rural areas,” said Mukkamala, whose parents came to the U.S. as international medical graduates. “The people that do graduate from here, who want to practice medicine, obviously have a choice and they're going to pick Detroit, they're going to pick Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco. ... This is kind of where everybody goes.”

Leading medical societies have called on the Trump administration and lawmakers to grant exemptions from the fee to immigrant health care workers.

“Given the staffing and financial challenges our hospitals are already facing, the increased petition fees outlined in the September 19 Proclamation would likely prevent many of them from continuing to recruit essential health care staff and could force a reduction in the services they are able to provide,” the American Hospital Association said in a statement.

Allison Roberts, vice president of human resources at Prairie Lakes Healthcare System in Watertown, South Dakota, said the change could be dire for health care in rural America.

“If we end up not being exempt, the variation between what it is now and that \$100,000 fee is going to

really take your smaller, rural health care institutions out of the picture," she said.

Buildings are turning to 'ice batteries' for sustainable air conditioning

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY Associated Press

Every night some 74,000 gallons (280,000 liters) of water are frozen at Norton Audubon Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. The hospital used to get all of its air conditioning from a conventional system found in most U.S. buildings, but now 27 tanks of ice sustain a network of cold-water pipes keeping operating rooms at safe temperatures and patients comfortable.

This type of thermal energy storage, also known as ice batteries, is being added to buildings in the U.S. for its ability to provide cool air without releasing planet-warming emissions. These systems cut electricity usage and lower the strain on the grid. With rising temperatures and the growing demand for electricity in the U.S., ice thermal energy storage offers a sustainable option for cooling buildings.

Trane Technologies, a company that makes heating and cooling equipment, says it has seen a growing demand for this technology over the past few years. Its ice batteries are mostly used in schools as well as commercial and government buildings. Nostromo Energy, another company that makes ice batteries, is pursuing customers among energy-intensive data centers that have high cooling demands. Smaller systems are also made for homes by companies such as Ice Energy.

Tanks of ice thaw to create air conditioning

Ice thermal energy storage technology varies between manufacturers, but each follows a similar concept: At night when electricity from the grid is at its cheapest, water is frozen into ice that thaws the next day to cool the building. The ice chills water that is circulating through pipes in the building, absorbing heat from the rooms and creating a cooling effect. Air cooled by the system is then pushed through vents.

Norton Audubon Hospital uses a Trane ice battery system. Trane said its ice batteries are often used alongside traditional air conditioning, and the ice-based cooling is used to lower energy costs during peak demand times. The traditional AC components are typically left in place or downsized when ice batteries are added.

The stored ice doesn't require energy to thaw, which reduces the strain on the grid and minimizes the building's electricity usage, ultimately lowering monthly bills.

"Storing energy for further uses is where we're going with the future of the grid," said Ted Tiffany, senior technical lead at the Building Decarbonization Coalition. He said access to air conditioning is a major public health need that is being exacerbated by a warming planet, and ice batteries are a sustainable way to address health risks associated with extreme heat.

Energy costs at Norton Audubon were \$278,000 lower for the first year the ice battery system was in operation after it was installed 2018. The hospital estimates that the system and other energy-saving measures have saved it nearly \$4 million since 2016.

"The technology has been awesome for us," said Anthony Mathis, a Norton Healthcare executive who oversees sustainability. He said he receives inquiries from other building operators about the technology and thinks more facilities will adopt it as awareness grows.

Using ice to meet growing energy demands

Experts on sustainable energy say ice thermal energy storage is among the options commercial buildings can use to reduce electricity demand or store excess energy. Some commercial buildings use lithium batteries, which can store excess solar or wind energy that are available intermittently.

Dustin Mulvaney, environmental studies professor at San Jose State University, said ice batteries are a sensible option for health care settings and senior homes because lithium batteries can pose a fire risk.

Manufacturers also see opportunities in data centers, which are increasing in number to support artificial intelligence and have high energy and cooling needs. A December report from the Department of Energy found that data centers consumed more than 4% of the electricity in the country in 2023 and that number

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could grow up to 12% by 2028.

"Data centers are very energy-hungry and about 30% to 40% of their energy use is for cooling ... that's where a solution like ours could really help," said Yoram Ashery, CEO of Nostromo Energy.

Nostromo Energy said it is discussing deals to install its systems with several large data center operators, but declined to provide further details. Its ice battery technology is also used at the Beverly Hilton hotel in California.

California is currently the biggest market for this technology because the grid there uses a lot of solar power during the day but switches to polluting energy sources such as natural gas after the sun sets. Ice batteries can be used for air conditioning in the late afternoon and evening instead of drawing from the grid.

"A lot of utilities are really interested in this type of load-shifting technology," said Joe Raasch, chief operating officer at Ice Energy, another ice thermal energy storage company. He said summer is typically the most expensive time for utilities to operate because of the air conditioning demand.

"It's really great technology that the grid really needs because so much of the future electric load is driven by cooling," said Raasch.

Israeli military intercepts another flotilla heading to Gaza and detains scores of activists

By MELANIE LIDMAN and RENATA BRITO Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The Israeli military intercepted a nine-boat flotilla trying to break Israel's naval blockade of Gaza early Wednesday in the Mediterranean Sea and detained scores of activists on board, the flotilla organizers and the Israeli Foreign Ministry said.

The ministry said the 145 activists taking part in the Freedom Flotilla Coalition & Thousand Madleens to Gaza, were in good health and were being brought to shore in Israel for processing before they are deported.

The interception came after nearly 450 activists from a previous, high-profile flotilla — including European lawmakers and climate activist Greta Thunberg — were intercepted on more than 40 boats last week trying to reach Gaza with a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid.

While most of the activists of the Global Sumud Flotilla have been deported, six of them — from Norway, Morocco and Spain — remain detained in Israel, lawyers representing them said late Tuesday.

The latest flotilla trying to reach Gaza

The organizers of this latest flotilla decried the new detentions on Wednesday as "arbitrary and unlawful."

The activists on board the nine-vessel group included doctors, at least one member of the European parliament and several national lawmakers from Turkey, Denmark, France and Belgium.

A passenger list posted on the flotilla's website also shows two Israeli citizens were on board their largest boat, the Conscience.

The flotilla was carrying some food and medical aid destined for Gaza hospitals.

"Another futile attempt to breach the legal naval blockade and enter a combat zone ended in nothing," the Foreign Ministry wrote on X.

Organizers said the fleet was intercepted around 120 nautical miles off the coast of Gaza. Cameras aboard the vessels, one large passenger ship and eight smaller sailboats, broadcast the interceptions live.

The boats could be seen being approached by fast-moving ships and then boarded by Israeli troops, who then cut off the broadcast. Activists also said an Israeli helicopter flew over them. No injuries were reported.

Israeli interceptions spark condemnation

Turkey strongly condemned and called Israel's latest interception in international waters an "act of piracy." Its Foreign Ministry said Wednesday it was a serious violation of international law and accused Israel of escalating tensions and undermining peace efforts.

Turkey has launched diplomatic efforts to secure the immediate release and safe return of its citizens

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and was coordinating with other countries regarding the status of other activists, the statement said.

The interceptions last week of the Global Sumud Flotilla drew widespread condemnation and sparked large protests in several major cities and a one-day strike across Italy.

Some of the deported activists had described mistreatment at the hands of Israeli guards, claims that Israel denies.

Late on Tuesday, dozens of parliamentarians from Turkey and European countries — including Cyprus, Belgium, Spain and Italy — issued a joint statement condemning Israel's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla and demanded the immediate release of the remaining detained activists.

The statement described the convoy as peaceful and a civilian initiative, and appealed for upholding international law.

The flotillas to Gaza came amid surging criticism of Israel's conduct in Gaza, where its offensive in the war against Hamas has laid waste wide swaths of territory and killed tens of thousands of people.

Negotiations underway in Egypt

Also Wednesday, Israel and Hamas resumed indirect negotiations in the Egyptian resort of Sharm Al-Sheikh, along with high-level leaders from international delegations, including the United States, Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey.

The war was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. The militants killed some 1,200 people that day, while 251 others were abducted. Forty-eight hostages are still held in Gaza — around 20 believed to be alive.

Israel's ensuing campaign has killed more than 67,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its toll. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and whose figures are viewed by experts as the most reliable estimate, has said women and children make up around half the dead.

Israel has maintained varying degrees of blockade on the Gaza Strip since Hamas seized power in the coastal territory in 2007, saying it is necessary to contain the militant group. Critics deride the policy as collective punishment.

After the war started, Israel tightened the blockade but eased up later under U.S. pressure. In March, it sealed the territory off from all food, medicine and other goods for 2 ½ months, contributing to Gaza's slide into famine.

Flotilla activists say they want to break Israel's blockade and establish a humanitarian corridor by sea, given the little aid that reaches Gaza by land. They have vowed to try again.

Today in History: October 9, Barack Obama wins Nobel Peace Prize

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Oct. 9, the 282nd day of 2025. There are 83 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 9, 2009, President Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize for what the Norwegian Nobel Committee called "his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."

Also on this date:

In 1910, a coal dust explosion at the Starkville Mine in Colorado left 56 miners dead.

In 1962, Uganda won independence from British rule.

In 1963, a mega-tsunami triggered by a landslide at Vajont Dam in northern Italy destroyed villages and caused approximately 2,000 deaths.

In 1967, Marxist revolutionary guerrilla leader Che Guevara, 39, was executed by the Bolivian army a day after his capture.

In 1985, Strawberry Fields in New York's Central Park, a memorial to former Beatle John Lennon, was dedicated.

In 1992, the highly visible Peekskill Meteorite streaked through Earth's atmosphere for hundreds of miles

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over the U.S. Northeast before a small chunk of it crashed into the trunk of a parked car in Peekskill, New York. The car, a bright red 1980 Chevrolet Malibu, later went on exhibition at several museums worldwide.

In 2010, a drill broke through into an underground chamber where 33 Chilean miners had been trapped for more than two months.

In 2012, former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was sentenced in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, to 30 to 60 years in prison following his conviction on 45 counts of sexual abuse of boys.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Nona Hendryx is 81. Musician Jackson Browne is 77. Actor Robert Wuhl is 74. TV personality Sharon Osbourne is 73. Actor Tony Shalhoub is 72. Actor Scott Bakula is 71. Actor-TV host John O'Hurley is 71. Football Hall of Famer Mike Singletary is 67. Jazz musician Kenny Garrett is 65. Film director Guillermo del Toro is 61. Singer PJ Harvey is 56. Film director Steve McQueen ("12 Years a Slave") is 56. Golf Hall of Famer Annika Sorenstam is 55. Musician Sean Lennon is 50. Actor Brandon Routh is 46. Author-TV presenter Marie Kondo is 41. Comedian Melissa Villasenor is 38. Actor Tyler James Williams is 33. NFL tight end George Kittle is 32. Country singer Scotty McCreery (TV: "American Idol") is 32. Model Bella Hadid is 29. Actor Jharrel Jerome is 28. Tennis player Ben Shelton is 23.