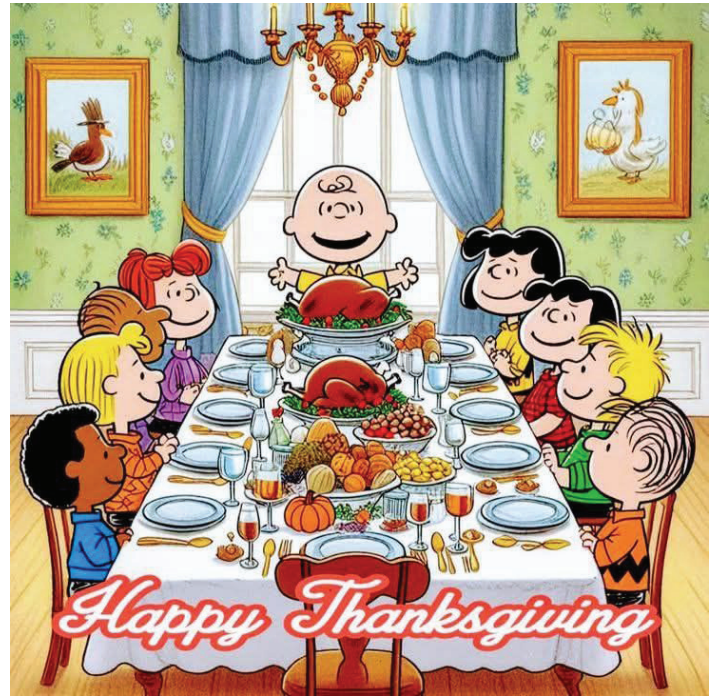


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## Sunday, Nov. 30

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion and baptism, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m. (3rd graders receiving Bibles); at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; No Sunday School.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

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

Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.

4th grade GBB practice, 2 p.m.

1st grade GBB practice, 3:30 p.m.

2nd grade GBB practice, 4 p.m.

Dance Team practice, 5 p.m.

## Thursday, Nov. 27

No Senior Meal

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break

## Friday, Nov. 28

No senior meal.

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break

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

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## Global News Roundup

### United States News

In a shocking incident Wednesday afternoon, two members of the West Virginia National Guard were critically wounded in what officials described as a "targeted ambush" just blocks from the White House in downtown Washington. The shooter, identified as a 29-year-old Afghan national who entered the U.S. under a resettlement program in 2021, is in custody after being wounded in a confrontation with responding troops. Reuters

In response, the administration ordered an additional 500 Guard troops deployed to the capital — on top of the roughly 2,200 already stationed there — and temporarily suspended immigration applications for Afghan nationals pending a full review of vetting procedures. Reuters

On the economic front, data released Wednesday showed a modest drop in new unemployment claims: first-time claims fell by 6,000 to 216,000 for the week ending Nov. 22, coming in below economist forecasts and signaling a still-tight U.S. job market. ABC News

Meanwhile, U.S. stock markets surged for a fourth straight session — the S&P 500 rose 0.7%, along with the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nasdaq Composite — fuelled largely by gains in technology equities. Strong demand for AI-server hardware at firms such as Dell Technologies helped drive investor optimism. Los Angeles Times

### Politics & World Affairs

Globally, the most significant diplomatic development involves the newly revealed 28-point peace plan for the war in Ukraine, backed by the U.S. But according to several sources, the plan's text was initially based on a Russian "non-paper" — a confidential document Moscow circulated to U.S. officials in October. Reuters

The revelation has stirred concern among U.S. allies and Ukrainian officials alike, many of whom view the Russian proposals as non-viable, especially measures calling for territorial concessions by Kyiv. After internal pushback, nine points have reportedly been dropped from the plan — yet the controversy raises questions about U.S. strategy and credibility. Reuters

Meanwhile, in other global hotspots: humanitarian groups continue warning of a mounting crisis in conflict-torn regions of the Middle East, where fragile cease-fire talks have failed to bring stable relief supplies for civilians. And in parts of Africa and Asia, geopolitical tensions remain high as resource disputes, internal unrest, and climate-driven displacement deepen. Global News Discover

### Business & Markets

Markets worldwide responded to signals of U.S. economic resilience with cautious optimism. Tech-driven gains helped U.S. equities rally, though investors remain watchful for possible rate adjustments by the Federal Reserve amid signs of sticky inflation. Los Angeles Times

Across the Atlantic, manufacturing data from parts of Europe showed modest improvement — a welcome sign after months of sluggish output. In Asia, China reportedly injected additional liquidity into its banking system to shore up lending to small- and medium-sized firms — a move that could stabilize markets there and influence global supply chains. Global News Discover

Meanwhile, commodities followed mixed trends. Oil prices held steady on expectations of production limits by major exporters. Agricultural commodity markets, particularly grains, softened modestly, as harvest forecasts in South America improved — potentially easing pressure on global food prices in early 2026. Global News Discover

And in the digital-asset world, Bitcoin experienced renewed volatility over the past 24 hours, fueling fresh debate among U.S. regulators about whether more stringent oversight of cryptocurrency markets is needed. Bloomberg

### Science & Technology

Innovation headlined this week as U.S. scientists unveiled promising advances in energy storage technology. New battery prototypes reportedly offer significantly greater capacity while relying on fewer rare-earth materials — a development that could accelerate domestic electric-vehicle production and reduce dependence on foreign mineral supply chains. Analysts in Washington applauded the milestone as an

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important step toward long-term energy independence.

In space news, the International Space Station crew successfully tested 3-D printing of tools in microgravity — a capability that could revolutionize long-duration missions. A U.S.-based aerospace firm also completed a successful test of a reusable lunar capsule, advancing hopes for renewed lunar missions under the country's broader space agenda.

In healthcare, researchers at major American universities reported promising early results from gene-therapy trials targeting inherited blood disorders. While still experimental, the treatments could offer new hope for patients with limited treatment options today.

## Sports

Although few major games took place in the past 24 hours, teams and leagues are shaping up for a busy holiday-season stretch. U.S. basketball and hockey fans are watching closely as early-season standings begin to reveal unexpected contenders in both the NBA and NHL. College football programs are also locked in as they prepare for conference championships and early-bowl game matchups.

On the global stage, international soccer qualifiers continue, with U.S.-based fans tuning in to watch American players compete abroad — underscoring growing interest stateside in global soccer competitions. Meanwhile, cricket remains a spotlight in South Asia, with several test series underway, continuing to draw attention from American audiences following the sport's gradual rise in U.S. popularity.

## Entertainment & Culture

Hollywood and streaming platforms delivered fresh headlines as a major sci-fi film, released worldwide over the past 24 hours, opened to strong box-office returns — a hopeful sign for U.S. theaters amid ongoing competition from digital streaming. Industry insiders say if momentum holds, this could mark a turning point in post-pandemic cinema attendance.

On an international level, film festival organizers released updated 2025–2026 calendars, signaling a robust season ahead for global cinema and cross-cultural collaboration. The announcements have already stirred interest among U.S. distributors looking to acquire foreign films for domestic release. *Screen Daily*

In the music world, a major global awards ceremony recognized several U.S. artists, while also spotlighting international talent — reflecting increasing cultural exchange in music tastes and industry influence.

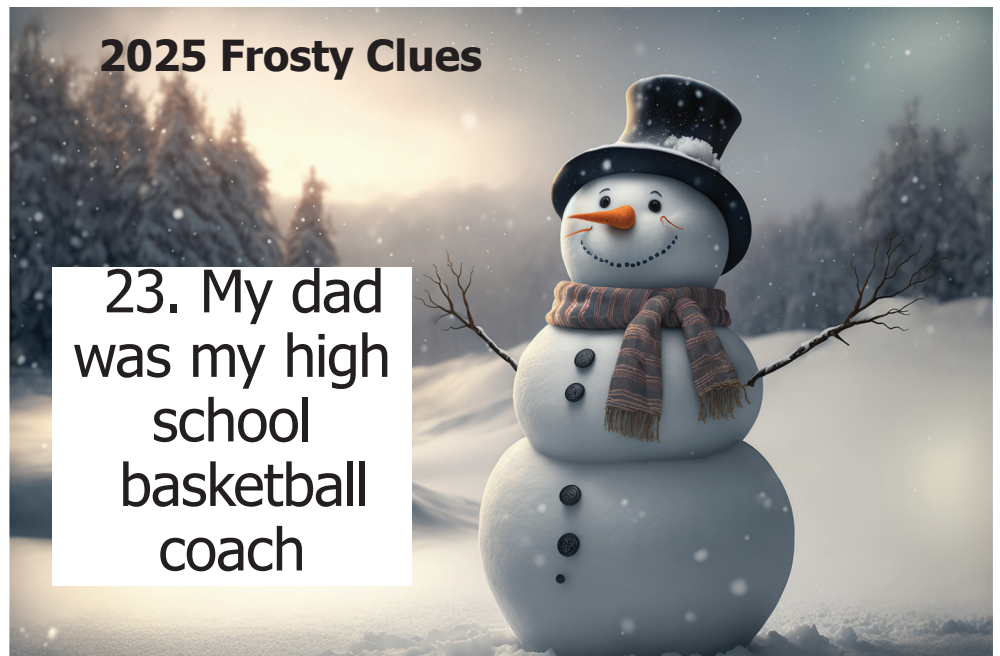
On the literary front, a newly released novel from an American author exploring themes of identity and resilience during global upheaval has surged into bestseller lists overnight — resonating with readers at a time of widespread uncertainty.

## Frosty is Back!!!

Please check the Groton Daily Independent for daily clues as to who the Groton Area Mystery Frosty is. The unveiling of Frosty will take place at the Groton Area Snow Queen Contest on Sunday, November 30th, at 4:00 pm.

## 2025 Frosty Clues

23. My dad was my high school basketball coach



## Wolves Drop Women's NSIC Opener 65-48 to Jimmies

ABERDEEN, S.D. — The Northern State women opened NSIC play Friday night but couldn't overcome a strong second-half push from the University of Jamestown, falling 65-48 at Wachs Arena. The loss moves the Wolves to 3-2 overall and 0-1 in league action.

NSU finished with 48 points, 37 rebounds, 10 assists, eight steals and three blocks, but was hindered by 20 turnovers and tough shooting nights across the lineup. As a team, the Wolves shot 34% from the field, 11.8% from beyond the arc and 58.8% at the line.

Jamestown (3-2, 1-0 NSIC) countered with a balanced and efficient offensive effort, shooting 42.1% overall, 38.9% from three and 76.9% at the stripe.

Northern opened the night with early buckets from Megan Counts and Taylor Tool, and trailed just 18-16 after the first quarter following an Izzy Moore jumper. The second quarter turned into a defensive battle, with both teams scoring just 10 points and shooting under 30%, keeping the Wolves within reach at halftime.

The Wolves briefly grabbed a four-point lead in the third quarter off a Morgan Fiedler basket, but the Jimmies responded to close the period ahead 47-42. Northern struggled to regain momentum in the fourth, managing just six points over the final 10 minutes.

Moore led the Wolves with a standout performance, posting 17 points, seven rebounds, three assists and two steals — leading the team in all four categories. Fiedler added nine points, two steals, a block and an assist. Tool matched Moore's three assists while adding four points, and Telia Graham pulled down seven rebounds.

Jamestown placed four players in double figures: Daviney Dreckman (15), Emily Kurkowski (14), Haidyn Crockett (11) and Samantha Paulsen (10). Paulsen added six rebounds and a game-high four steals.

Up Next: The Northern State women travel to Sioux Falls on Saturday for a 3 p.m. matchup, then continue the road swing Sunday at Southwest Minnesota State with a 1 p.m. tip.

## Northern State Opens NSIC Play With Win Over Jamestown

ABERDEEN, S.D. — The Northern State men's basketball team broke through for its first victory of the season Wednesday night, giving head coach Matt Wilber his inaugural win with the Wolves in a 74-71 decision over the University of Jamestown. Northern led 41-32 at halftime and held off a second-half Jimmies surge in front of a crowd of 1,536 at Wachs Arena.

Five of the seven Wolves who saw the floor reached double figures as NSU shot 39.4% overall and 31.4% from deep, hitting 11 three-pointers. Northern added 42 rebounds, 17 assists, four steals and three blocks while forcing 11 Jamestown turnovers. The Wolves also posted season highs with 22 points in the paint, 21 bench points and 12 fast-break points.

Cameron Mercadel paced Northern with 15 points — all from beyond the arc — while Benjamin Bowen and Marshawn Smith followed with 11 apiece. Smith led the bench effort and shot 5-of-9 from the field. Tobi Obiora and James Glenn each added 10 points, with Glenn distributing a team-best six assists.

Joshua Book controlled the glass with 11 defensive rebounds and added nine points, and Ty Rogers chipped in eight points.

Obiora and Smith were the Wolves' most efficient shooters, going 5-of-8 and 5-of-9 respectively. Bowen narrowly missed a double-double with 11 points and eight rebounds.

Jamestown outrebounded the Wolves 48-42 but could not complete its second-half comeback, falling to 2-3 overall and 0-1 in the NSIC.

### Northern State Statistical Standouts

- Cameron Mercadel: 15 points, 5 rebounds
- Benjamin Bowen: 11 points, 8 rebounds, 2 assists
- Marshawn Smith: 11 points, 4 rebounds
- James Glenn: 10 points, 6 assists, 3 rebounds
- Tobi Obiora: 10 points, 4 rebounds

Up Next: Northern State travels to Chadron State for a non-conference matchup on Saturday, Nov. 29. Tipoff is set for 1 p.m.

## Winter Storm Response Summary – Roberts County

The Roberts County Sheriff's Office is releasing the following summary of emergency response activity related to the winter storm that impacted our region from November 25 into the early morning hours of November 26, 2025. The storm produced white-out conditions, dangerously slick roads, zero-visibility travel, and a significant number of stranded motorists across northeastern South Dakota.

Between 08:00 AM on 11/25/2025 and the morning of 11/26/2025, Roberts County emergency services responded to:

- 139 calls for service

- Approximately 65 vehicle slide-ins

- 2 motor-vehicle accidents with injuries

- 7 reported jackknifed semi-trucks

- A major pile-up affecting an estimated 50+ vehicles near Mile Markers 205–207 at Summit

- A rolled county snowplow reported at 11:05 AM on Mud Lake Road (County Road 19)

- Multiple agencies responded throughout the storm, including:

  - 4 Roberts County Deputies

  - 3 South Dakota Highway Patrol Troopers

  - Multiple assists from our SWO Tribal Police Department

  - 2 Grant County Deputies

  - 4 First Responder Units (Summit, Wilmot, and South Shore, Milbank)

  - 2 ambulance units from Grant-Roberts Ambulance / Milbank

  - 5 towing companies (Fisher's, Cal's, Larson's, Performance, The Shop)

These numbers do not reflect the countless incredible and generous citizens across our area who stepped up to help during the storm—pulling out cars and buses, transporting stranded motorists, and assisting complete strangers.

Their willingness to help their neighbors and visitors was extraordinary. Without them, we would never have been able to keep up with the volume of calls. Our community truly demonstrated the best of South Dakota.

Hazardous conditions, including blowing snow, drifting, and ice-covered roadways, significantly hampered response times. Many stranded motorists required extended wait times due to road blockages and poor visibility.

The Roberts County Sheriff's Office extends its appreciation to all law enforcement, fire, EMS, dispatchers, highway crews, towing services, and community members who worked tirelessly through the storm to assist residents and motorists.

We urge the public to continue monitoring road conditions through SD511 and avoid unnecessary travel as cleanup continues and crews work to restore safe roadways across the region.

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## Thanksgiving Day, 2025, A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

The White House  
Nov. 26, 2025

WASHINGTON, Nov. 26, 2025 /Christian Newswire/ — The White House releases the following from the President of the United States of America:

### BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### A PROCLAMATION

In 1789, just years after America's triumph over tyranny in the Revolutionary War, President George Washington established the first National Day of Thanksgiving, declaring "the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor." Decades later, in the midst of the bloody Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln implored the Nation to join in unity for "a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." In every generation since, this spirit of reverence, trust, and gratitude has preserved our way of life and made America the strongest, greatest, and most resilient Nation the world has ever known.

From the pilgrims who settled our continent and the patriots who won our independence on the battlefield to the pioneers who tamed the west and the warriors who have preserved our freedom in distant lands, the spirit of gratitude and grit embodied by those who celebrated the first Thanksgiving more than 400 years ago have stood at the very heart of what it means to be an American.

This year, God has bestowed abundant blessings all across our land and indeed the entire world. As we give thanks to Him, we continue to advance our Nation through strong leadership and commonsense policy. As a result, the American economy is roaring back, we are making progress on lowering the cost of living, a new era of peace is sweeping around the world, our sovereignty is being swiftly restored, and the American spirit is coming back greater and more powerful than ever before.

As we prepare to celebrate 250 glorious years of American independence, this Thanksgiving, we summon the faith, resolve, and unflinching fortitude of the giants of American history who came before us. We vow to build a future that echoes their sacrifice. Above all, we offer our endless gratitude to Almighty God for His love, grace, and infinite blessings.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 27, 2025, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage all Americans to gather, in homes and places of worship, to offer a prayer of thanks to God for our many blessings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fiftieth.

DONALD J. TRUMP



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Overall cost of Thanksgiving meal 5% lower than last year

**But some popular sides, like vegetables and dairy products, cost more**

**BY: CAMI KOONS**

The cost of a classic Thanksgiving dinner set for 10 people, at \$55.18, is 5% less than the cost in 2024, annual data from the American Farm Bureau Federation shows.

While key meal items like turkey and dinner rolls decreased in price this year, fresh vegetables and Thanksgiving dairy products are substantially more expensive.

Overall, the report found the cost of the meal is still higher than it was in 2020, when the meal cost \$46.90.

Farm Bureau said the table items with price increases reflect some of the hardships that farmers faced this year.

Christopher Pudenz, Iowa Farm Bureau's research and economics manager, said declining prices for some Thanksgiving staples is good for consumers, but profitability "continues to be a challenge" for farmers in 2025.

"Iowa farmers face historically low crop prices, high input costs and tight margins, yet they remain resilient and committed to doing what they do best—caring for their land, practicing good stewardship and raising healthy animals to provide abundant, affordable food for families here at home and across the country," Pudenz said in a statement.



**The American Farm Bureau Federation report for 2025 shows Thanksgiving meal costs are down 5% from 2024.**

(Photo by Karsan Turner for Iowa Capital Dispatch)

### Turkey

While turkey is typically the star of the show – and the top billed item on the table – turkey represented just 39% of the cost of the Thanksgiving meal this year, which Farm Bureau said is the lowest share of the meal cost since 2000. On average, the bureau said the bird accounts for 43% of the total receipt.

This year the average 16-pound turkey cost \$21.50, or \$1.34 per pound, which is more than 16% less than the average turkey cost last year.

While the price has declined, popularity has not. A consumer survey from the National Turkey Federation found that 87% of Americans who celebrate Thanksgiving plan to serve turkey. The majority, 74%, serve

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the whole bird at the holiday and 65% choose to roast their turkey in the oven.

The overall size of the turkey flock, according to USDA data, has declined. Farm Bureau said these flock sizes reflect the impact the highly pathogenic avian influenza has had on the industry. Since 2022, according to Farm Bureau, close to 19 million turkeys have been impacted by the bird flu.

Iowa has only had one reported outbreak of the flu this fall – at a turkey farm in Calhoun County.

## And the fixins

Sweet potatoes, vegetable trays with carrots and celery, frozen peas, milk and whipping cream all increased in price this year.

Cranberries, stuffing and rolls, however, decreased slightly in price for the 2025 meal.

A 3-pound bag of sweet potatoes averaged \$4, a 37% increase from the year prior, according to the report.

Farm Bureau said natural disasters, like hurricanes in North Carolina — the nation's largest producer of sweet potatoes — partially contributed to the increase in cost.

Produce costs have also increased in the country due to labor shortages, increased labor costs and supply chain or transportation setbacks, according to Farm Bureau.

## Group blames tariffs

The campaign Tariffs Cost US blamed tariffs for the increase in cost, citing farmer statements that have said increasing input costs have led them to hike local produce costs.

The organization also launched an ad campaign, ahead of Black Friday and holiday shopping, pinning tariffs for higher price tags. According to the group, local businesses are especially feeling the added costs and hoping the busy shopping season will keep them in the black.

Rachel Lutz, owner of the Peacock Room in Detroit, said a \$700 shipment of jewelry recently came with the added cost of \$100 tariff. She worries the added fees will force more small businesses to close.

"That adds up fast and is unsustainable in the long run," Lutz said in a news release with Tariffs Cost US. "It has been heartbreaking to wake up so many mornings and see yet another family-owned business closing in our community because they cannot absorb these costs."

Local business owners in Iowa have also expressed concerns about the impact tariffs will have on holiday shopping and their overall margins.

## At the farmers' table

While consumer prices fluctuate from year to year, farmers continue to earn just a small percentage. USDA data shows farmers receive less than 16 cents for every dollar spent on food in the U.S.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, in a news release Monday, reminded Iowans of the role farmers play in the Thanksgiving meal.

"As we gather this week with our family and friends, I invite everyone to pause for a moment and give thanks for Iowa's hardworking farm families who produce the delicious Thanksgiving meals on our tables," Naig said.

National Farmers Union's annual "Farmer's Share of the Food Dollar" report shows farmers receive "only pennies on the dollar" for the typical Thanksgiving fare.

The report shows farmers earn the least amount, 6 cents or 1.3% of the price, on a 12-ounce box of stuffing. Producers also score just 6 cents per pound, or 2.4% of the sale price of turkey.

Farmers who sell turkeys direct to consumers and with free-range or organic traits earn more per dollar, but also charge more, between \$5 and \$7 per pound.

Cranberry and green producers receive the highest percentage of the Thanksgiving food dollar for their commodities at nearly 32% and nearly 25% respectively.

Farmers Union President Rob Larew, in a news release, said there is "continuous inequality" in the food system.

"Every Thanksgiving, the numbers tell the same story: farmers aren't asking for a bigger slice of pie, just a fair one," Larew said. "It's long past time to fix a food system that works for corporations but not for the families who grow and consume our food."

*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.*

## State apologizes, but can't explain missing evidence in prison overdose case

**Inmate, now serving 7-10 years, could face life if convicted of drug distribution**

**BY: JOHN HULT**

SIOUX FALLS — A prosecutor apologized this week for the state's failure to preserve evidence in a case involving an overdose death in a state prison.

The state of South Dakota wants to convict the inmate charged with providing the drugs, Manarion Fuse, of a crime that could keep him behind bars for the rest of his life.

Fuse is accused of giving drugs to Anthony Richards, who died of a drug overdose in February at the South Dakota State Penitentiary's Jameson Annex. Fuse, who appeared in court via video link on Tuesday, maintains his innocence.

During the hearing, Assistant Attorney General Ryan McFall told Minnehaha County Judge Jon Sogn that the state never measured the quantity of the drug present in Richards' system before it concluded that he'd died by overdosing on it.

The prosecutor also admitted, with an apology to the judge, that it no longer has videos of the visits where Fuse was allegedly given the drugs he was later indicted for distributing inside the prison.

"It was supposed to have been preserved," McFall said of the video evidence, adding, "There is not a good answer as to why it was not."



**Inmates in the East Hall of the South Dakota State Penitentiary on July 8, 2025.** (Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Corrections)

### **Case the first of several tied to 'K2'**

Fuse's case is among several tied to an uptick in the circulation of synthetic drugs, referred to colloquially as "K2," inside South Dakota's prisons.

Seven people are believed to have died of overdoses this year in the state's custody. K2 is suspected

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or confirmed as a cause of death in at least five of them, starting with Richards, who died on Feb. 6 at the age of 20.

Fuse, 22, went to prison last year for the unlawful discharge of a firearm. He's serving a 10-year sentence, with three years suspended. Given his prior convictions, he could be sentenced to life if he's found guilty of distributing a substance resulting in death.

Questions key to Fuse's defense involve the drug's concentration in Richards' body and the source of the K2. Fuse contends the drugs came from other inmates or Department of Corrections staff members.

Fuse's court-appointed attorney, Minnehaha County Deputy Public Defender Kylie Beck, said Tuesday that her client "is adamant that he is not the person who provided the drugs" that killed Richards.

## Video visits

The state has alleged that family and friends gave Fuse the K2 during visits, Beck told the judge.

Beck said she expected the state to be able to prove as much with videos of those visits, which she's asked to review. In response, McFall said he also expected the videos to be preserved, but that there's little he can do about it now.

"They do not exist at this time, and cannot be provided," he said.

The Department of Corrections did not respond to a South Dakota Searchlight request for comment on the videos.

On the issue of testing for the amount of K2 in Richards' system, Beck said the reports she received indicate only that the drug was present.

"I believe quantity is critical if the allegation involves an overdose in which a person was killed," Beck said.

McFall said no such "quantitative" tests were performed at the time of Richards' autopsy, repeating a line he'd use several times during the half-hour hearing:

"We've turned over what we have."

## Inmate points finger at staff

Beck has twice requested reports about six current or former state employees who worked inside the prison "regarding their possible involvement and/or knowledge" of the drug distribution tied to Richards' death.

Beck was given reports showing that those staff members responded to the Richards overdose, but said Tuesday she was looking for reports that might support her client's contention that they were known to be "dirty" staff.

At least one of the staff members no longer works for the state, according to South Dakota Searchlight reviews of the state's salary database.

McFall said the state had provided all the incident-related reports that mention the staff members. He's not aware of any reports accusing the staff of drug-related misbehavior, and said he's "not aware of any authority" that would grant Fuse access to any reports on those staffers beyond those created in relation to Richards' death.

But, he added, "to my knowledge at this time, no reports investigating those individuals exist."

Judge Sogn told Beck there's no way he can order the release of reports that don't exist, but said the state must produce them if they emerge.

## Phone calls, inmate safety checks

Beck also wanted to know the dates attached to "about 20" recorded phone calls placed by other inmates on Fuse's unit in the run-up to Richards' death.

Beck said she needs to know the dates to determine if any talk about drugs captured on those calls can offer insight on the source of the drugs circulating at the time.

McFall said the dates were not part of a "bevy of answers" delivered in October from the state. At this point, he said, the case's lead investigator is out on maternity leave and might not be able to help for a

few weeks.

Judge Sogn told McFall the information ought to come earlier than that.

"There has to be at least one person at the penitentiary" who can provide the dates and times for the calls, Sogn said.

The judge also told McFall to seek out more details about the cell checks performed on the day of Richards' death. Thus far, Beck said, she's received information on how often cells ought to be checked, but no records to show that those checks took place — or didn't — on the day Richards died.

The judge gave the state until mid-December to deliver the remainder of deliverable evidence to Fuse's attorney. The case is scheduled for trial on the week of Jan. 26.

*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.*

## Two National Guard members from West Virginia wounded in 'targeted' shooting in D.C.

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Two National Guard members from West Virginia were in critical condition Wednesday evening after being shot near the White House in Washington, D.C., officials said.

FBI Director Kash Patel, a Metropolitan Police Department leader and Mayor Muriel Bowser emphasized during a press conference the investigation was in the preliminary stages, but said the shooting was "targeted" and that one suspect, who was also shot, was in custody.

"At approximately 2:15 this afternoon, members of the D.C. National Guard were on high visibility patrols in the area of 17th and I Street Northwest when a suspect came around the corner, raised his arm with a firearm and discharged at the National Guard members," MPD Executive Assistant Chief Jeffery Carroll said.

"There were other (National Guard) members that were in the area. They were able to, after some back and forth ... subdue the individual and bring them into custody," Carroll added. "Within moments, members of law enforcement in the area were also able to assist and bring that individual into custody."

The Department of Homeland Security in a press release late Wednesday identified the suspect as an Afghan national who entered the U.S. in September 2021. Numerous news reports gave his name as Rahmanullah Lakanwal. The Associated Press, citing a law enforcement official not authorized to speak publicly, reported the suspect sustained "injuries that are not believed to be life-threatening."

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services posted late Wednesday that "Effective immediately, process-



**Members of law enforcement and National Guard soldiers respond to a shooting of two National Guard members on Nov. 26, 2025, in Washington, D.C.** (Photo by Andrew Leyden/Getty Images)

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ing of all immigration requests relating to Afghan nationals is stopped indefinitely pending further review of security and vetting protocols.”

Carroll said there were no other suspects at the time of the press conference, in the early evening, and that law enforcement officials had reviewed video footage from the area where the shooting took place.

“It appears, like I said, to be a lone gunman that raised the firearm and ambushed these members of the National Guard, and he was quickly taken into custody by other National Guard members and law enforcement members,” he said.

The guardsmen were armed, but Carroll said investigators had not yet determined if they shot back or how the suspect, whom he did not name, was shot.

“At this point, we’re still investigating exactly who shot the individual. It’s not clear at this time,” he said.

Officials were also not yet sure “what kind of weapon” the suspect used during the shooting, which Carroll said “happened right in front of the Metro, although there is no indication that the perpetrator was on the Metro.” The Metro is the district’s public transit system.

Bowser reiterated during the press conference that the two National Guard members were in critical condition and referred to the shooting as “targeted.”

## Trump delivers remarks

President Donald Trump delivered brief remarks Wednesday night from Florida, condemning the “monstrous, ambush-style attack.”

Trump praised his deployment of guard troops to the district as “part of the most successful public safety and national security mission in the history of our nation’s capital.”

“This heinous assault was an act of evil, an act of hatred and an act of terror. It was a crime against our entire nation. It was a crime against humanity. The hearts of all Americans tonight are with those two members of the West Virginia National Guard and their families,” Trump said in a recorded video message posted on his social media platform, Truth Social, around 9:20 p.m. Eastern.

Trump said “based on the best available information” the suspect is from Afghanistan, which he called “a hellhole on Earth” and that he had been “flown in” by former President Joe Biden.

Trump said his administration will “re-examine every single alien who has entered our country from Afghanistan under Biden.”

Biden established a program to bring Afghans who assisted American troops during two decades of war to the United States after his administration withdrew troops in August 2021.

## FBI and partners to lead investigation

Patel said the investigation will be treated as an assault on a federal law enforcement officer.

“The FBI will lead out on that mission with our interagency partners to include the Department of Homeland Security, Secret Service, ATF, DEA, and we’re thankful for the mayor’s assistance in this matter,” Patel said. “The Metropolitan Police Department and their skills in investigating homicides and gun shootings in this city is exceptional.

“We will work together collaboratively, because this is a matter of national security, because it’s a matter of pride.”

West Virginia Gov. Patrick Morrisey wrote on social media before the press conference that the guard members had died, though he later posted he was hearing “conflicting reports about the condition of our two Guard members and will provide additional updates once we receive more complete information.”

“Our prayers are with these brave service members, their families, and the entire Guard community,” he added.

Trump was briefed on the shooting and was “actively monitoring this tragic situation,” according to a statement Wednesday afternoon from White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt. The shooting happened just one day before Thanksgiving.

Trump posted on social media that both guardsmen were “critically wounded” and taken to two separate

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hospitals. The shooter, he added, was "also severely wounded, but regardless, will pay a very steep price."

Trump mobilized 800 National Guard members to the district in August, on the grounds of a "crime emergency," despite a nearly 30-year low in violent crime in the city.

Some of the guard troops were instructed they would be carrying service weapons while deployed in the district, according to an Aug. 17 report in the Wall Street Journal.

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth told reporters Wednesday the administration will send an additional 500 National Guard troops to the district.

"This will only stiffen our resolve to ensure that we make Washington DC safe and beautiful," Hegseth said.

The White House was placed on lockdown for a period due to the shooting, according to a White House official. Trump and first lady Melania Trump were not present at the time of the shooting.

Last week, a District of Columbia federal judge found the Trump administration's deployment of the National Guard in the city illegal. However, Judge Jia Cobb paused her order for three weeks to give the Trump administration time to remove the guard members along with appealing her ruling.

More than 2,000 members of the guard have remained in the district, and are expected to stay until the end of February, according to Cobb's order.

The Trump administration on Wednesday asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in an emergency motion to intervene.

When Trump mobilized the Guard, he also federalized the district's police force for 30 days. While the federalization of the police force expired, Trump has kept the National Guard in the district.

Since then, Republican governors have agreed to send their own Guard members to the district, from Louisiana, Ohio, South Carolina and West Virginia, among others.

## Lawmakers react

Members of Congress responded to the initial reports of the shooting with prayers and gratitude for the service members.

"Praying for the National Guard members wounded in this horrific shooting," U.S. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., wrote on social media. "Thankful for the brave law enforcement officers and first responders who swiftly apprehended a suspect. There is no place for violence in America."

Sen. Joni Ernst, an Iowa Republican and retired lieutenant colonel in the Iowa National Guard, called for prayers for the victims.

"Join me in praying for the two National Guardsmen shot in D.C. and their families," she said. "Our men and women in uniform truly put their lives on the line to keep us safe and deserve our greatest respect."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., wrote he was "closely monitoring the situation and am praying for the wounded National Guardsmen and their families."

"My heart breaks for the victims of this horrific shooting in Washington DC near the White House," Schumer wrote. "I thank all the first responders for their quick action to capture the suspect."

Speaking in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Vice President JD Vance, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, said the attack was "a somber reminder."

"Our soldiers are the sword and the shield of the United States of America," he said. "And as a person who goes into work every single day in that building and knows that there are a lot of people who wear the uniform of the United States Army, let me just say very personally thank them for what they're doing."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., wrote that his "thoughts and prayers are with the National Guardsmen who were attacked this afternoon. I urge you to keep them in your prayers too."

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., wrote the "National Guard has done heroic work this year working around the clock to make our nation's capital safe again. We are forever grateful for the swift actions of law enforcement and for all those who risk their own lives to protect everyone else."

*Jacob Fischler and Leann Ray 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.*

*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.*

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

## Georgia election interference case against Trump and his allies is dismissed

BY: ROSS WILLIAMS

A Fulton County judge has dismissed the case against President Donald Trump and a group of alleged co-conspirators accused of attempting to overturn the 2020 presidential election in Georgia.

Judge Scott McAfee's dismissal marks the end of the last criminal case facing Trump related to that year's election. Peter J. Skandalakis, executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, requested the dismissal after concluding the case belonged in federal court.

Skandalakis named himself prosecutor in the case this month after he said he could not find another attorney willing to take the case from embattled Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis.

A Fulton County grand jury indicted Trump and 18 co-defendants in 2023, but Willis was removed from the case in 2024 amid questions of a conflict of interest stemming from a romantic relationship with Nathan Wade, a special prosecutor she hired for the case.

Four of the alleged co-conspirators pleaded guilty and agreed to testify against Trump and the other defendants.

Skandalakis did not express sympathy with the view, still espoused by Trump and allies, that the 2020 election had been stolen or rigged.

"Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, millions of citizens and hundreds of politicians continued to make unsubstantiated claims of election fraud," he wrote. "In response, the Secretary of State undertook extensive audits to verify the vote count and demonstrate that no substantial voter fraud had occurred. Yet, despite these efforts and the evidence confirming a fair election, many individuals continue to believe—and may never be convinced otherwise—that the 2020 presidential election was stolen."



**President Donald Trump speaks at a rally in Zebulon, Georgia in 2024.** Ross Williams/Georgia Recorder

### Trump and the phone call

In a Wednesday motion asking McAfee to drop the charges, Skandalakis called the case unprecedented and noted that bringing a sitting president to trial in Georgia is unrealistic.

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"The case is now nearly five years removed from President Trump's phone call with the Secretary of State, and two years have passed since the Grand Jury returned charges against President Trump and the eighteen other defendants," Skandalakis wrote.

A recording of a phone call with Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in January 2021 captured Trump pressing Georgia's top election official to "find" enough votes to secure a Trump victory in Georgia.

"There is no realistic prospect that a sitting President will be compelled to appear in Georgia to stand trial on the allegations in this indictment," Skandalakis continued. "Donald J. Trump's current term as President of the United States of America does not expire until January 20, 2029; by that point, eight years will have elapsed since the phone call at issue."

Skandalakis said that even if Trump were to face trial immediately after leaving office, arguments over presidential immunity alone would tie the case up for months or years, with no guarantee the state would ultimately prevail.

Skandalakis called the phone call "concerning," but he said it is not a smoking gun, arguing that reasonable minds could disagree on whether Trump was calling on Raffensperger to create fictitious votes or investigate fraud that Trump sincerely but incorrectly believed was real.

"When multiple interpretations are equally plausible, the accused is entitled to the benefit of the doubt and should not be presumed to have acted criminally," Skandalakis found.

Skandalakis did not state whether or not he believes Trump committed crimes in his efforts to overturn the election, but he said Georgia was not the best venue to determine that.

"Elections, particularly presidential elections, are intensely contested events," Skandalakis wrote. "All too frequently, some campaign staffers, attorneys, and supporters genuinely believe that the nation's future is at stake if the opposing candidate prevails. Political rhetoric to mobilize voters serves a purpose, but the efforts by President Trump and his legal advisors to obstruct the counting of electoral votes on January 6th lie at the core of this case. This is also why Special Counsel Jack Smith's federal investigation and prosecution would have been the most appropriate avenue to determine whether the actions of those involved were crimes that could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

U.S. Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith dropped that federal election interference case as well as a case alleging Trump mishandled classified documents after the president's 2024 re-election because he concluded it would be illegal to continue prosecuting him after taking office.

Trump's attorney, Steve Sadow, celebrated the decision to dismiss Fulton County's case Wednesday.

"The political persecution of President Trump by disqualified DA Fani Willis is finally over. This case should never have been brought. A fair and impartial prosecutor has put an end to this lawfare," Sadow said.

The Fulton County District Attorney's office did not immediately return a request for comment Wednesday.

## **The other defendants**

Skandalakis said he considered severing the other defendants from the case and prosecuting them separately from Trump, but concluded that would be "both illogical and unduly burdensome and costly for the State and for Fulton County."

The alleged conspiracy included a wide range of acts, from a meeting of "alternate" electors who met at the state Capitol with plans to certify a false Trump victory, a harassment campaign against Fulton County election worker Ruby Freeman and the breach of elections systems in Coffee County.

Skandalakis said his examination of the case suggested the alternate GOP electors did not have criminal intent to overturn the election. He had already come to a similar conclusion last year about then-state Sen. Burt Jones, who is now lieutenant governor, after his case was splintered off.

"They genuinely and sincerely believed that their actions were a lawful component of the election contest process. Thus, I find no criminal intent concerning the meeting of the Republican Electors and their plan to preserve an election challenge by casting their ballots for President Trump," Skandalakis wrote.

With regards to the Coffee County breach, Skandalakis noted that attorney Sidney Powell and bail

bondsman Scott Hall, who he called “the primary architect of the scheme” and “a principal accomplice” were among the defendants who pleaded guilty, and Skandalakis argued that pursuing charges against small-fry defendants like former election supervisor Misty Hampton and Coffee County GOP Cathy Latham chair would not be in the state’s interest.

Skandalakis called Freeman, the Fulton County poll worker who faced harassment and intimidation, “a genuinely sympathetic figure in this matter.” But he said the defendants accused of harming her did not do so in Fulton County and that the alleged crimes against her should be prosecuted in neighboring Cobb County, where Freeman lived at the time.

Because of a measure passed this year, the defendants in the case may be able to force Fulton County to cover their legal costs. The new law allows criminal defendants to recoup their legal costs if the prosecuting attorney in their case is disqualified for personal or professional misconduct.

## Reaction

Josh McKoon. Ross Williams/Georgia Recorder

The dismissal could prove a divisive conversation topic across Georgia Thanksgiving tables. Reaction to the news was split along party lines, with Republicans expressing gratitude for the decision and Democrats calling it an outrage.

“Today, as Chairman of the Georgia Republican Party, my heart swells with profound relief, unyielding gratitude, and a fierce sense of vindication for our brave patriots who have endured this dark chapter far too long,” said Georgia GOP chair Josh McKoon in a statement. “Pete Skandalakis, Executive Director of the Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council of Georgia, has done what justice demanded: dismissing this sham, politically weaponized criminal case against President Donald J. Trump, (former) Georgia GOP Chairman David Shafer, and our steadfast contingent of 2020 Presidential Electors.”

Georgia Democratic chair Charlie Bailey had the polar opposite view.

“The dismissal of this case is a travesty and a slap in the face to Georgia voters,” Bailey wrote in a statement. “Donald Trump and eighteen others, including sitting State Senator Shawn Still, were indicted by a grand jury for attempting to illegally overturn our state’s election. Multiple of their co-defendants pled guilty. This misguided decision denies the people of Georgia the accountability they deserve for Trump and his cronies’ attempt to subvert their votes and silence their voices.”

*This story was originally produced by Georgia Recorder, 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.*

*Before joining the Georgia Recorder, Ross Williams covered local and state government for the Marietta Daily Journal. His work earned recognition from the Georgia Associated Press Media Editors and the Georgia Press Association, including beat reporting, business writing and non-deadline reporting.*

## Temporary protections for 330,000 Haitian immigrants slated to end, Noem announces

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced Wednesday the end of temporary protected status for roughly 330,000 nationals from Haiti by February, opening them up to deportations.

In her reasoning, Noem said extending temporary protected status to Haitians would be “contrary to the national interest of the United States” and will end on Feb. 3.

TPS is granted to nationals who hail from countries deemed too dangerous for a return, due to violence or major natural disasters.

While TPS was granted to Haitians due to the 2010 earthquake, conditions in the country have worsened amid rising gang violence since 2021.



**Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem at a Nashville press conference on July 18, 2025, to discuss arrests of immigrants during recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement sweeps.** (Photo

by John Partipilo/Tennessee Lookout)

"Moreover, even if the Department found that there existed conditions that were extraordinary and temporary that prevented Haitian nationals ...from returning in safety, termination of Temporary Protected Status of Haiti is still required because it is contrary to the national interest of the United States to permit Haitian nationals ... to remain temporarily in the United States," according to the notice in the Federal Register.

The notice is meant to comply with a court order earlier this year that barred DHS from ending TPS for nationals from Haiti until protections were set to expire February.

States with large Haitian immigrant populations include Florida, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, according to the Migration Policy Institute, a think tank that studies global migration.

Noem, who stated in her confirmation hearing that she planned to curtail TPS renewals, has moved to end protections for nationals from Afghanistan, Camer-

oon, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Syria and Venezuela.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

## Noem ordered deportation flights to El Salvador after judicial halt, DOJ tells court

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The Department of Justice acknowledged in a court filing that Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem made the call to continue removals of Venezuelans to a brutal Salvadoran prison, despite a federal judge's order to stop the deportations.

The Tuesday filing noted that Noem was advised by top officials at the Justice Department she did not need to comply with the March 15 judicial order to halt the deportations because it had been issued after the flights took off. The Venezuelan nationals were deported under an obscure wartime law called the Alien Enemies Act.

"After receiving that legal advice, Secretary Noem directed that the AEA detainees who had been removed from the United States before the Court's order could be transferred to the custody of El Salvador," according to the DOJ filing. "That decision was lawful and was consistent with a reasonable interpretation of the Court's order."

Noem's decision sent 137 Venezuelan men to a mega-prison for months until the Venezuelan government could broker a prison swap with El Salvador and the United States to have the men returned.

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**Prisoners look out of their cell as Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem tours the Terrorist Confinement Center, or CECOT, in Tecoluca, El Salvador, on March 26, 2025.** (Photo by Alex

Brandon-Pool/Getty Images)

tion officials involved in authorizing the Venezuelans' removals.

Last week, Boasberg ordered the administration to submit filings on how to proceed with the contempt inquiry.

"I certainly intend to find out what happened that day," Boasberg said last week.

Tuesday's filing argued that contempt proceedings are not needed and that "the Government maintains that its actions did not violate the Court's order."

The ACLU, which is representing the deported men, in its filing on the contempt issue urged Boasberg to request testimony from nine current and former officials from the Homeland Security and Justice departments.

The ACLU also said the government should identify "all individuals involved in the decision... regardless of whether they were the ultimate decision-maker or had direct input into the decision, as well as all those with knowledge of the decision-making process."

Once those people had been identified, Boasberg could determine in what order testimony should be gathered.

*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.*

In an emergency March 15 order, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg said the planes carrying the Venezuelans had to return to the United States.

They did not have the opportunity to challenge their removal, which was a violation of their due process rights, the American Civil Liberties Union has argued in its case against the Trump administration.

Tuesday's filing represents a shift in legal strategy from the administration, which had initially argued that because Boasberg's order was verbal and not written, his temporary restraining order carried no weight.

## Contempt probe

The filing comes after Boasberg resumed a contempt investigation to identify the Trump administra-

## Former federal worker struggles to find a job, support her family in workforce reduction aftermath

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Caitlynn Belliveau made a comfortable salary as a human resources specialist at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Sioux Falls — enough to support her four children and husband as the sole income earner and make the mortgage payments on their Worthing house.

But when the Trump administration offered her a buyout — officially called a deferred resignation — she took it, receiving four months of paid leave in exchange for quitting her job. She feared she could lose her job abruptly later if she didn't accept.

After those payments stopped, Belliveau applied for food assistance.

She finally started work as an educational support professional for the Sioux Falls School District this month after over a dozen interviews in the last three months went nowhere in what she called a "hellscape of a job market." More than a million workers

have been laid off across the country this year, according to outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas, making this year the worst for layoff notices since 2009.

Within that number are the roughly 154,000 federal employees who took deferred resignations offered by the Trump administration earlier this year as a way to reduce the size of the federal workforce. Office of Personnel Management Director Scott Kupor told Fox Business in August he expects the total decrease in the federal workforce to reach more than 300,000 eventually.

While Belliveau is working in the school district, she's also working toward her second master's degree in teaching (her first master's was in higher education administration) in hopes of improving her prospects. She's considering moving out of the state or country in hopes of finding better employment.

The 38-year-old is struggling to figure out the best path forward to support her family.

"Federal workers have families and mortgages and need to eat and pay bills," she said.

While the Trump administration has described its actions as dismantling bureaucracy, Belliveau disputes that characterization.

"We're not dismantling bureaucracy," she said. "We're laying people off. No other company could lay off hundreds of thousands of people without the public being up in arms. It's crazy to me that this is being celebrated or something they're proud about."

The Trump administration's cuts and layoffs "waged war on federal employees," she said, and will hurt taxpayers.

"The bureaucracy will remain, but there will be fewer people who know how to navigate that bureaucracy," Belliveau said.



**Caitlynn Belliveau worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Sioux Falls until she accepted a buyout as part of the Trump administration's reduction of the federal workforce.** (Photo by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Belliveau had planned to retire from her federal career. She is a subject matter expert on employee and labor relations. Getting rid of people like her opens up agencies to liability, she said, since it takes years to become an expert on such "incredibly complicated and delicate" subjects.

"You have supervisors who are used to having someone like myself saying, 'You can't do that because of this law, regulation or section in a master agreement,'" Belliveau said. "It will cost us more."

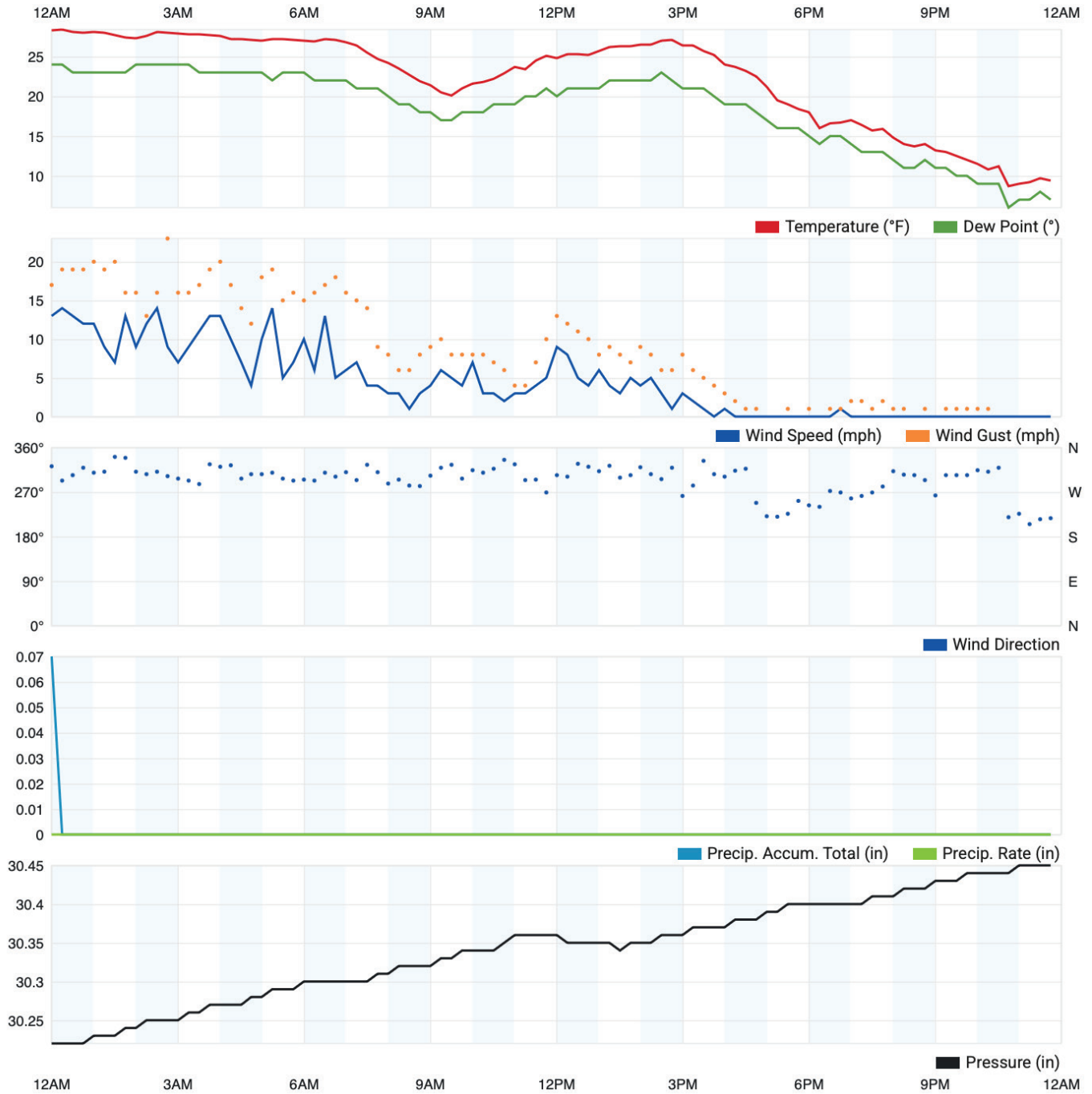
*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

November 26, 2025



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Thanksgiving  
Day



High: 16 °F

Decreasing  
Clouds

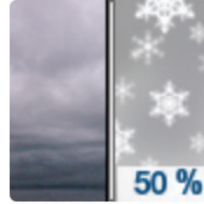
Tonight



Low: 5 °F

Increasing  
Clouds

Friday



High: 22 °F

Cloudy then  
Chance Snow

Friday Night



Low: 14 °F

Snow

Saturday



High: 20 °F

Chance Snow  
then Slight  
Chance Snow

## Cold Snap Details



Thursday



**Highs:**  
17 - 34  
**Lows:**  
6 to 17

Friday



**Highs:**  
20 - 36  
**Lows:**  
6 to 18

Saturday



**Highs:**  
19 - 22  
**Lows:**  
13 to 17

Sunday



**Highs:**  
7 - 20  
**Lows:**  
-3 to 6

Monday



**Highs:**  
13 - 29  
**Lows:**  
-8 to 5

The five day forecast features increasingly colder temperatures with wind chills Sunday and Monday below zero. We are also tracking a late week system that could bring snow to the region. Travel plans? Stay weather aware if you are headed out particularly Friday/Saturday!

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## Snowfall Potential

November 26, 2025  
2:31 PM

As system gets closer, more details become available

### Key Messages

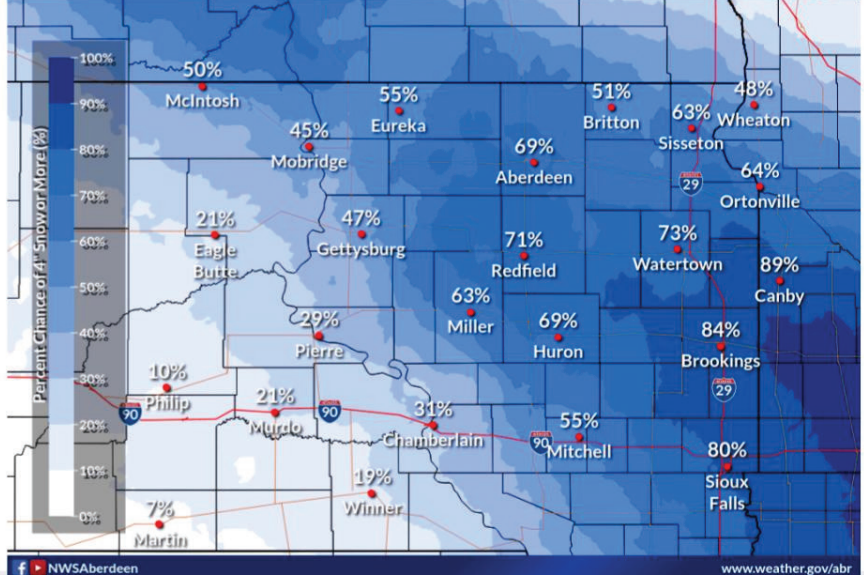
#### Snowfall

- Probability of snowfall exceeding 4" Friday morning through Saturday evening
- Exact timing details available as system gets closer

### Percent Chance of 4" Snow or More

Valid Fri 6:00AM through Sat 6:00PM CST

Weather Forecast Office  
Aberdeen, SD  
Issued Nov 26, 2025 1:31 PM CST



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

With the next snowfall, we can expect more light fluffy snow in comparison to Tuesday's wet slop. Winds will be less intense, but snow will also be easier to blow around. As the system gets closer, we'll see whether winds and blowing snow could be more of an issue but for now it doesn't appear to be so.



## Next System - Friday/Saturday

November 26, 2025  
2:46 PM

Be Weather Aware Especially if you are Traveling this Weekend!

### Key Messages

#### Timing

- Snow moves in midday Friday
- 'Heaviest' snow Friday evening through Saturday morning
- Snow departs midday/afternoon Saturday

#### Snow/Winds

- Light fluffy snow
- Less Intense winds
  - 20 - 30 mph
  - Less blowing/driftng this time

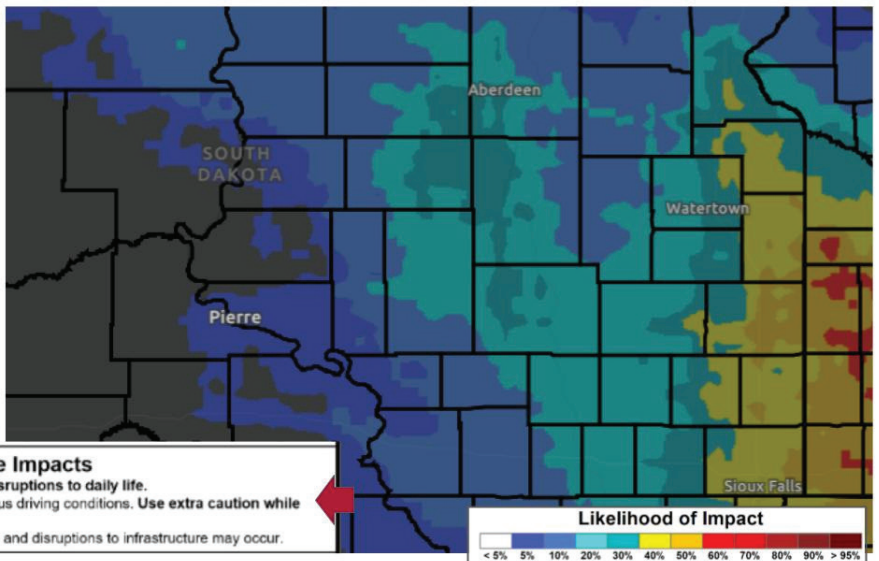
#### NEW What Has Changed

- Initial Issuance

#### Next Scheduled Update

- Thursday Morning

### Probability of 'Moderate' Impacts



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

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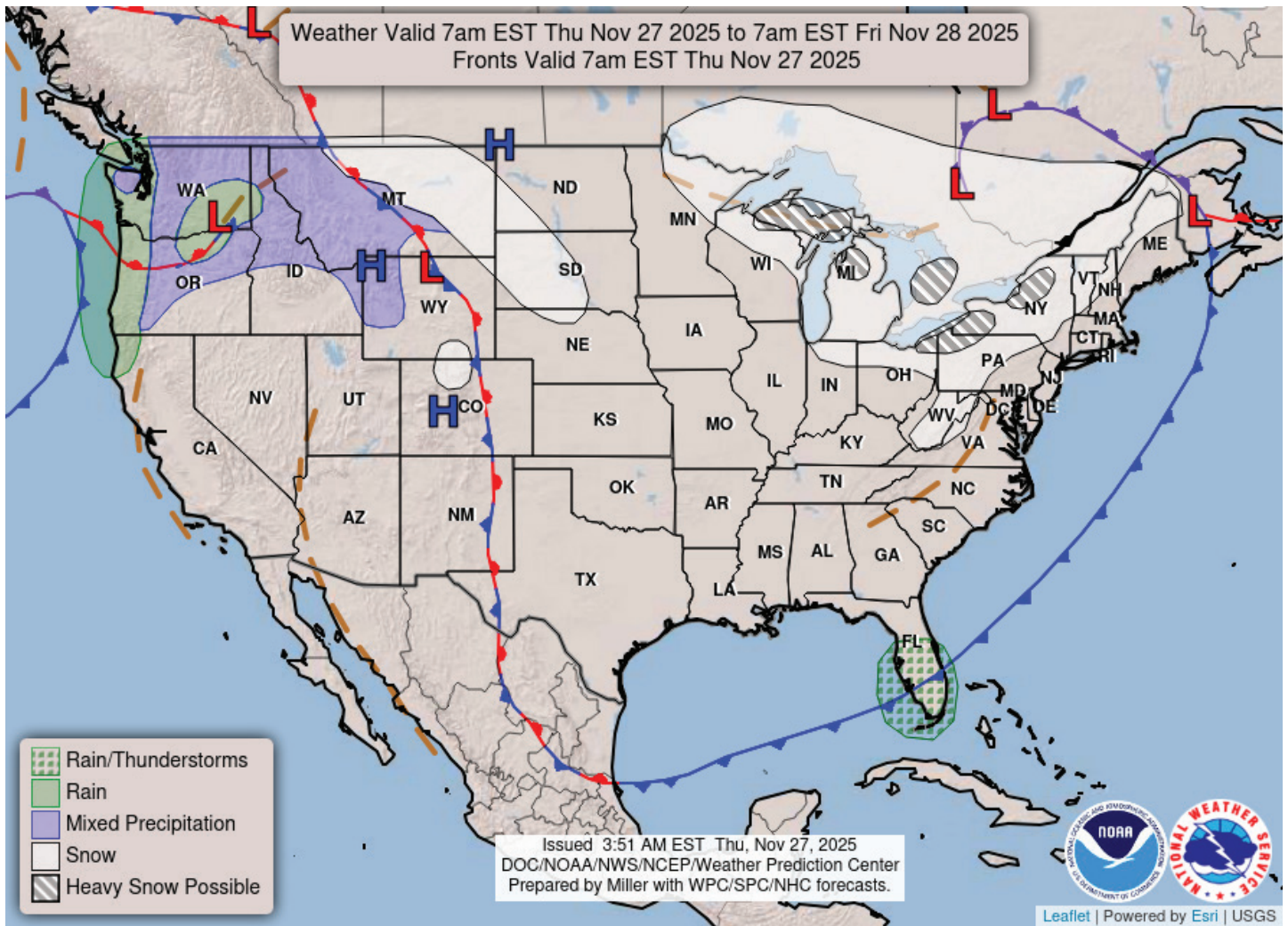
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 37 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Low Temp: 28 °F at 8:07 PM**  
**Wind: 27 mph at 12:49 PM**  
**Precip: : Total Precip from last storm: 1.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 70 in 1914  
Record Low: -18 in 1985  
Average High: 37  
Average Low: 15  
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.68  
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.00  
Average Precip to date: 21.15  
Precip Year to Date: 24.51  
Sunset Tonight: 4:53 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:48 am



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## Today in Weather History

November 27, 1960: An ice storm occurred from 40 miles on either side of a line from Pipestone to Brainerd, Minnesota. Power and communication lines were downed, leaving at least 22 communities isolated. Ice coating reported ranged from one half to three fourth of an inch at Lake Benton. Heavy snow fell in eastern North Dakota with blizzard conditions throughout the state. In South Dakota, this storm began as freezing rain on the 27th and remained largely as such in the southeast quarter of the state. The remainder of the experienced blizzard conditions with 5 to 10 inches of snow and winds gusting to 30 to 60 mph. These horrible caused extensive closing of schools and businesses, blocked highways, and disrupted telephone and power services. Slippery highways caused many auto accidents. Some loss of livestock was reported, such as 1,000 turkeys in Gettysburg. Restoration of telephone service alone was estimated to have cost \$210,000 and required up to three days after the storm.

November 27, 1983: A weekend storm that began with light snow on the 26th continued to gather strength, culminating in a blizzard that was accompanied by thunder and lightning during the evening hours on the 27th. The heaviest snowfall occurred from Marshall County SSE to Gregory County in South Dakota, with the heaviest snow falling as thunder snow showers. Snow amounts ranged from 4 to 18 inches. Strong winds up to 50 mph created near zero visibilities and difficult driving conditions as numerous roads drifted shut with up to eight-foot drifts. Numerous accidents ensued, with many people forced to stay overnight in their stranded vehicles. Airlines were forced to cancel all flights as airports were closed into midday on the 28th. Almost all schools and businesses were closed on the 28th and even on the 29th in many areas. Storm total snowfall amounts included 8 inches at Clark; 7 inches at Artichoke Lake, Bryant 1NE, Clear Lake, Victor 4 NNE, and Browns Valley; 6 inches at Wheaton, Wilmot, and Harrold 12 SSW; 5 inches at Kennebec, Sisseton, and Mellette 4W; 4 inches at Watertown, Highmore 1W, Murdo, Redfield, Waubay, Ashton 2S, and Britton; and 3 inches at Aberdeen, Castlewood, Columbia 8N, Onida 4NW, and Pierre.

November 27, 1994: Low pressure developed over eastern Colorado late Saturday the 26th and strengthened over Kansas early on the 27th. By late in the day on the 27th, the low pressure system had developed into the first winter storm for Minnesota. By the early morning hours of the 28th, a swath of snow in excess of 6 inches had blanketed much of southwest through central into northeast Minnesota.

Snowfalls of 6 inches or more occurred south of a line from Gunflint Lake in Cook County to near Ortonville in Big Stone County and along and north of a line from near Blue Earth in Faribault county to Red Wing in Goodhue county. The snow closed the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport for a short time on the 27th, and contributed to hundreds of accidents and at least three fatalities. The greatest snowfall was 14.1 inches in Duluth. In addition, very strong east winds gusted over 50 mph in Duluth causing blizzard conditions. The high winds brought waves in excess of 16 feet crashing against the Lake Superior shoreline in Duluth, covering the Duluth Canal Park Lake Walk with extensive debris. A buildup of ice and snow in combination with strong winds resulted in numerous downed power lines in southeast Minnesota. Widespread heavy snow fell over mostly the eastern half of South Dakota on November 27-28. Peak accumulations were 10 inches at Sioux Falls and 9 inches at Howard and near Canton. Damage resulted mainly from numerous minor traffic accidents. Storm snowfall amounts in this area included 8 inches at Eureka; 7 inches at Victor 4NNE, Leola, Onaka 2N, Roscoe, Faulkton, Columbia 8N, Aberdeen, and Selby; 6 inches at Redfield, Mellette 4W, Bryant 1NE, Blunt, Wheaton, and Raymond 3NE; 5 inches at Pollock, Miller, Milbank 2SSW, Ipswich, Harrold 12SSW, Eagle Butte, Clark, Artichoke Lake, and Onida 4NW; 4 inches at Mobridge, Timber Lake, McIntosh 6SE, Conde, Clear Lake, Pierre, and Ashton 2S; 3 inches at Sisseton, Webster, Waubay, Summit 1W, Presho 7NW, Kennebec, Highmore 1W, Gann Valley 4NW, Castlewood, Browns Valley, Watertown, and Wilmot.

November 27, 1701: Anders Celsius, the astronomer who invented the Celsius, often called the centigrade thermometer scale was born on this date.

November 27, 1898: A powerful storm, known as the "Portland Gale" impacted the coastal areas of New England on November 26 - 27, 1898. The storm formed when two areas of low pressures merged off the coast of New Jersey and traveled up the east coast. This storm produced hurricane force winds in Nantucket and sank more than 150 boats and ships.

## When Storms Come

### How do you respond when facing challenges?.

Matthew 14:22-33: Jesus Walks on the Water

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Storms are inevitable. In nature, powerful tempests leave a changed landscape behind them. Similarly, challenging circumstances can alter the topography of our life.

When difficulties arise, how do you respond? Do you say to the Lord, "I am doing what You asked, so why is this happening?" Such thinking assumes that being in the center of God's will exempts us from problems. In Matthew 14, we learn that Jesus instructed the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the opposite shore. While they were obeying Him, high winds and waves developed. Storms can arise even when we are exactly where God wants us to be (John 16:33).

Another question we sometimes ask is, "Father, what have I done wrong?" God does use trials to correct us, but not all situations come from our mistakes. He may allow troubles to perfect us—that is, to mature us and grow us into Christ's likeness.

God uses different things to train and equip us, because He wants each of His children to become a strong, vital servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Realize that nothing can happen to a believer unless God allows it. Instead of keeping our head bent low against the struggles of life, let's look up to the Lord and seek His purposes in our challenges.

*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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## Upcoming Groton Events

- 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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.25.25

11 15 31 32 59 18

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$80,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 29 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.25

7 19 25 26 28 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$8,120,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 14 Hrs 44 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.25

8 12 15 23 43 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 59 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.25

1 8 11 17 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$102,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 14 Hrs 59 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.25

6 19 28 39 53 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 28 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.25

7 8 15 19 28 3

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$719,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 28 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **UC Irvine beats South Dakota State 64-52 in Cancun**

By The Associated Press undefined  
CANCUN, Mexico (AP) — Jurian Dixon scored 13 points as UC Irvine beat South Dakota State 64-52 on Wednesday in the Cancun Challenge.  
Andre Henry added 11 points for the Anteaters (4-4). Kyle Evans had 10 points.  
Trey Buchanan finished with 12 points and two steals for the Jackrabbits (4-4). Jaden Jackson and Joe Saylor added eight points apiece for South Dakota State.

### **Pope Leo XIV visits Turkey in his first foreign trip, highlighting religious and political ties**

By NICOLE WINFIELD, SERRA YEDIKARDES and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press  
ANKARA (AP) — Pope Leo XIV arrived in Turkey on Thursday on his first foreign trip, fulfilling Pope Francis' plans to mark an important Christian anniversary and bring a message of peace to the region at a crucial time in efforts to end the war in Ukraine and ease Mideast tensions.

Leo was welcomed on the tarmac of Ankara's Esenboga Airport by a military guard of honor. Strolling along a turquoise carpet, he shook hands with Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, other officials and senior church figures from Turkey.

Later, he had a meeting planned with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and a speech to the country's diplomatic corps. He'll then move late Thursday on to Istanbul for three days of ecumenical and interfaith meetings that will be followed by the Lebanese leg of his trip.

Speaking to reporters on board his plane, Leo acknowledged the historic nature of his first foreign trip and said he has been looking forward to it because of what it means for Christians and for peace in the world.

Leo said he knows the visit to commemorate a key ecumenical anniversary was important for Christians. But he said he hoped his broader message of peace would resonate worldwide.

"We hope to also announce, transmit and proclaim how important peace is throughout the world. And to invite all people to come together to search for greater unity, greater harmony, and to look for the ways that all men and women can truly be brothers and sisters in spite of differences, in spite of different religions, in spite of different beliefs."

Leo's visit comes as Turkey, a country of more than 85 million predominantly Sunni Muslims, has cast itself as a key intermediary in peace negotiations for the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

Ankara has hosted rounds of low-level talks between Russia and Ukraine and has offered to take part in the stabilization force in Gaza to help uphold the fragile ceasefire, engagements Leo may applaud in his arrival speech.

#### Reaction in Turkey

Turkey's growing military weight, as NATO's largest army after the U.S., has been drawing Western leaders closer to Erdogan even as critics warn of his crackdown on the country's main opposition party.

Though support for Palestinians and an end to the war in Ukraine is widespread in Turkey, for Turks who face an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, owing to market turmoil induced by shake-ups in domestic politics, international politics is a secondary concern.

That could explain why Leo's visit has largely escaped the attention of many in Turkey, at least outside the country's small Christian community.

"I didn't know he was coming. He is welcome," said Sukran Celebi. "It would be good if he called for peace in the world, but I don't think it will change anything."

Some said they thought the visit by history's first American pope was about advancing the interests of the United States, or perhaps to press for the reopening of a Greek Orthodox religious seminary that has

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become a focal point in the push for religious freedoms in Turkey.

"If the pope is visiting, that means America wants something from Turkey," said Metin Erdem, a musical instruments shop owner in the touristic Galata district of Istanbul.

Historic anniversary

The main impetus for Leo to travel to Turkey is to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, Christianity's first ecumenical council.

Leo will pray with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, at the site of the A.D. 325 gathering in today's Iznik in northwestern Turkey, and sign a joint declaration in a visible sign of Christian unity.

Eastern and Western churches were united until the Great Schism of 1054, a divide precipitated largely by disagreements over the primacy of the pope.

While the visit is timed for the important Catholic-Orthodox anniversary, it will also allow Leo to reinforce the church's relations with Muslims. Leo is due to visit the Blue Mosque and preside over an interfaith meeting in Istanbul.

Asgin Tunca, a Blue Mosque imam who will be receiving the pope, said the visit would help advance Christian-Muslim ties and dispel popular prejudices about Islam.

"We want to reflect that image by showing the beauty of our religion through our hospitality — that is God's command," Tunca said.

Religious freedom in Turkey

Since coming to power in 2002, Erdogan's government has enacted reforms to improve the rights of religious groups, including opening places of worship and returning property that were confiscated.

Still, some Christian groups face legal and bureaucratic problems when trying to register churches, according to a U.S. State Department report on religious freedoms.

The Catholic Church, which counts around 33,000 members in Turkey, has no formal legal recognition in the country "and this is the source of many problems," said the Rev. Paolo Pugliese, superior of the Capuchin Catholic friars in Turkey.

"But the Catholic Church enjoys a rather notable importance because we have an international profile ... and we have the pope holding our backs," he said.

Possible tensions

One of the more delicate moments of Leo's visit will come Sunday, when he visits the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Istanbul. The cathedral has hosted all popes who have visited Turkey since Paul VI, with the exception of Francis who visited Turkey in 2014 when its patriarch was sick.

Francis visited him at the hospital, and a few months later he greatly angered Turkey in 2015 when he declared that the slaughter of Armenians by Ottoman Turks was "the first genocide of the 20th century." Turkey, which has long denied a genocide took place, recalled its ambassador to the Holy See in protest.

Leo has tended to be far more prudent than Francis in his public comments, and using such terms on Turkish soil would spark a diplomatic incident. But the Vatican is also navigating a difficult moment in its ties with Armenia, after its interfaith overtures to Azerbaijan have been criticized.

## Kremlin confirms US envoy will visit as talks on ending war in Ukraine gain momentum

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and SAM MCNEIL Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A senior Kremlin official confirmed Wednesday that U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff is set to visit Moscow next week as efforts pick up speed to find a consensus on ending the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign affairs adviser, insisted that Kremlin officials haven't officially received the initial U.S. peace proposal, although they have acknowledged that they have seen a copy obtained through back channels. Representatives of the United States, Russia and Ukraine held talks earlier this week in the United Arab Emirates.

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"Contact is ongoing, including via telephone, but no one has yet sat down at a roundtable and discussed this point by point. That hasn't happened," Ushakov told Russian state media.

Ukrainian officials didn't confirm whether U.S. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, who in recent weeks has played a high-profile role in the peace efforts, would be in Kyiv in the coming days, as U.S. President Donald Trump indicated Tuesday.

Russia cautious on peace prospects

Trump's plan for ending the war became public last week, setting off diplomatic maneuvering. The initial version appeared heavily slanted toward Russian demands for halting Moscow's invasion of its neighbor.

After weekend talks in Geneva between U.S. and Ukrainian officials, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the plan could be "workable," although key points remain unresolved. A Ukrainian official said Zelenskyy hoped to meet with Trump in the coming days.

Witkoff's role in the peace efforts came under a renewed spotlight Tuesday when a report indicated that he coached Ushakov, the Putin aide, on how Russia's leader should pitch Trump on the Ukraine peace plan.

Trump described Witkoff's reported approach to the Russians in the call as "standard" negotiating procedure.

"He's got to sell this to Ukraine. He's got to sell Ukraine to Russia," Trump told reporters Tuesday night. "That's what a deal maker does."

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that he "wouldn't exaggerate (the) significance" of the leaked call, Russian state news outlet Tass reported.

However, "it's clear that there will be a very large number of people in various countries, including the United States, who will try to disrupt these efforts toward peace," Peskov said from Kyrgyzstan, where Putin traveled this week.

Asked whether a peace agreement is closer than ever, Peskov told reporters, "It's a little too early to say that," according to Tass.

Russian drones hit a Ukrainian university dorm

The southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia came under a large Russian drone attack overnight, damaging more than 50 residential buildings, including a university dormitory filled with people, the head of the regional military administration, Ivan Fedorov, said Wednesday.

The attack wounded at least 19 people, he said.

Russian air defenses, meanwhile, downed 33 Ukrainian drones overnight over various Russian regions and the Black Sea, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Ukrainian forces struck a manufacturing plant in Cheboksary, western Russia, that produces equipment and components for cruise and ballistic missiles, Ukraine's General Staff said Wednesday.

Europe wants to be heard

European countries, which are alarmed by Russia's aggression and see their own future at stake in negotiations over Ukraine, are fighting to make their voices heard in the talks as Washington takes the lead.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Wednesday that Europe wants the war to end as quickly as possible.

"But an agreement negotiated by great powers without the approval of the Ukrainians and without the approval of the Europeans won't be a basis for a real, sustainable peace in Ukraine," Merz told lawmakers in Berlin. "Europe is not a plaything, but a sovereign actor for its own interests and values."

The head of the European Union's executive, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, was upbeat about recent developments, saying there is "an opportunity here to make real progress" toward peace.

She insisted that any settlement must include future security guarantees for Ukraine. At the same time, she said a deal can't contain limitations on Ukraine's armed forces or block its path to NATO membership. Those limits were part of the initial proposal.

"There can be no limitations on Ukraine's armed forces that would leave the country vulnerable to future attacks," she said during a speech at the European Parliament. "This is as much about deterrence as it is about Europe's security, because Ukraine's security is Europe's security."

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Kaja Kallas, the EU's top diplomat, expressed doubt about Russia's willingness to engage in peace talks. "Right now, we see zero indication that Russia is ready for a ceasefire. Russia is not winding down its military machine, but ramping it up," Kallas said after a meeting of foreign ministers of the 27 EU nations in Brussels.

Additional pressure on Russia, such as more economic sanctions and seizing Moscow's frozen assets, is needed to push Moscow to the negotiation table, she told a news conference: "We still need to get from a situation where Russia pretends to negotiate to a situation where they need to negotiate."

## Israel returns 15 more Palestinian bodies to Gaza as first phase of ceasefire nears end

By WAFAA SHURAF, JULIA FRANKEL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel handed over the bodies of 15 Palestinians on Wednesday, a day after Hamas returned the remains of an Israeli hostage. This is the latest exchange as part of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire reached last month, whose first phase is winding down even as violence continues in Palestinian territories.

The remains of two hostages, one Israeli and a Thai national who were abducted in the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel that ignited the war, are still to be returned.

Hamas said it's committed to handing them over even though the recovery is made difficult by widespread destruction in Gaza, while Israel has accused the militants of stalling after the last living hostages were released on Oct. 13 during the most urgent phase of the ceasefire.

Turkish, Qatari and Egyptian mediators met in Cairo on Tuesday to discuss the second phase of the ceasefire.

That is expected to include deploying an armed International Stabilization Force, tasked with ensuring the disarmament of Hamas, a key demand of Israel, and developing an international body to govern Gaza and oversee reconstruction.

But major questions hang over nearly every part of the plan and the time frame for implementation of the fragile ceasefire that has held despite accusations of violations by both sides.

Separately, Israel's military said Wednesday that it conducted airstrikes and a "broad counterterrorism operation" in the northern part of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. It said the operation followed the killing of "three terrorists who took part in terror attacks against IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians."

Palestinian bodies returned and hostage remains identified

According to the ceasefire, Israel has agreed to return 15 Palestinian bodies for each hostage recovered. So far, 345 bodies have been returned, said the Gaza Health Ministry. It is unclear if they were people killed in Israel during the Oct. 7 attack, Palestinian detainees who died in Israeli custody or bodies taken from Gaza by Israeli troops during the war.

Meanwhile, Israel mourned the latest hostage to be returned by the Palestinian militants, Dror Or. Israel's military said Or and his wife, Yonat Or, were killed by militants who overran their community of Kibbutz Be'eri on Oct. 7, 2023.

Before they were killed, the couple evacuated two of their children, Alma and Noam, from their burning house through a window, said the Hostages Families Forum. The children were abducted by the militants and released in a hostage deal in November 2023.

The forum remembered Or as a devoted father and talented cheesemaker who spent years working at the Be'eri dairy, eventually managing it.

In total, Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people across southern Israel and abducted 251 to Gaza in their attack.

More shootings in Gaza, military and health officials say

Israeli troops opened fire Wednesday on a group of people in central Gaza, killing a Palestinian man and wounding at least two others, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the casualties.

Israel's military said it did not have enough information about the incident to comment.

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Also Wednesday, the military said its troops targeted a group of six militants in the southern city of Rafah, killing one. The military statement said that the militants had "most likely emerged from the underground terror infrastructure in the area." Troops then searched a nearby building, killing three more and apprehending two, it said.

Later on Wednesday, the military said troops had killed two "terrorists" – one a member of Islamic Jihad – who had approached the IDF in two separate incidents in southern Gaza.

The Gaza Health Ministry said at least 69,775 Palestinians have been killed — 345 Palestinians since the ceasefire — and 170,863 injured in Israel's offensive in Gaza. It does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures, but has said women and children make up a majority of those killed. The ministry is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by independent experts.

Unrest continues in the West Bank

An Israeli military operation took place on Wednesday in the governorate of Tubas in the West Bank.

Gov. Ahmad Al-Asaad said the operation involved Apache helicopters and military vehicles, saying Tubas was essentially "cut off" by Israeli troops.

"This military operation is a prelude to annexation, and since the early hours of the morning, we have activated the central emergency committee to respond to the citizens' distress call in the Tubas Governorate," he said.

The IDF said its operation — which included the Air Force striking "to isolate and contain the area" — was a response to "attempts to establish terrorist strongholds and construction of terror infrastructures in the area."

Last week, Israel's prime minister met with top security officials to discuss a rising tide of Israeli settler violence in the West Bank, which Israel captured alongside Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 war and Palestinians see as central to a future state.

A few days earlier, Palestinian attackers stabbed an Israeli to death and wounded three more before being shot down by troops in the latest violence to rock the occupied territory.

Officials have warned that the unrest could spill over and undermine the fragile truce in Gaza.

Turkish, Qatari and Egyptian officials meet on ceasefire

Turkey's intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin met in Cairo on Tuesday with Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and Egypt's intelligence chief Hasan Reshat to discuss advancing to the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, a Turkish security official said.

The talks also centered on intensifying joint efforts with the United States to strengthen the truce, according to the official who requested anonymity in line with Turkish regulations.

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with a long experience in U.N. peacekeeping missions, is among the countries the U.S. has discussed the ISF plan with, in addition to Azerbaijan, Egypt and Qatar.

On Tuesday, Gen. Agus Subianto, Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, said they're "in the selection phase for the peacekeeping force."

Pope Leo XIV to visit the region

On Thursday, Pope Leo XIV is expected to take his first foreign trip, traveling first to various sites in Turkey and then to Beirut, Lebanon. Israel struck Lebanon's capital on Sunday, killing Hezbollah's chief of staff Haytham Tabtabai and warning the Iran-backed militant group not to rearm and rebuild.

## **Afghan national in custody after shooting of 2 National Guard members near White House**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Afghan national has been accused of shooting two West Virginia National Guard members just blocks from the White House in a brazen act of violence at a time when the presence of

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troops in the nation's capital and other cities around the country has become a political flashpoint.

FBI Director Kash Patel and Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said the guard members were hospitalized in critical condition after Wednesday afternoon's shooting. West Virginia Gov. Patrick Morrisey had walked back his statement Wednesday announcing the troops had died, saying he received "conflicting reports" about their condition.

The rare shooting of National Guard members on American soil, on the day before Thanksgiving, comes amid court fights and a broader public policy debate about the Trump administration's use of the military to combat what officials cast as an out-of-control crime problem.

The Trump administration quickly ordered 500 more National Guard members to Washington.

The suspect who was in custody also was shot and had wounds that were not believed to be life-threatening, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

The 29-year-old suspect, an Afghan national, entered the U.S. in 2021 through Operation Allies Welcome, a Biden administration program that evacuated and resettled tens of thousands of Afghans after the U.S. withdrawal from the country, officials said.

The initiative brought roughly 76,000 people to the U.S., many of whom had worked alongside U.S. troops and diplomats as interpreters and translators. It has since faced intense scrutiny from Trump and his allies, congressional Republicans and some government watchdogs over gaps in the vetting process and the speed of admissions, even as advocates say it offered a lifeline to people at risk of Taliban reprisals.

The suspect, who has been living in Washington state, has been identified by law enforcement officials as Rahmanullah Lakanwal, but authorities were still working to fully confirm his background, two law enforcement officials and a person familiar with the matter said. The people could not discuss details of an ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Lakamal arrived in Bellingham, Washington, about 79 miles (127 kilometers) north of Seattle, with his wife and five children, said his former landlord Kristina Widman.

Wednesday night, in a video message released on social media, President Donald Trump called for the reinvestigation of all Afghan refugees who entered under the Biden administration.

"If they can't love our country, we don't want them," he said, adding that the shooting was "a crime against our entire nation."

Jeffery Carroll, an executive assistant D.C. police chief, said investigators had no information on a motive. He said the assailant "came around the corner" and immediately started firing at the troops, citing video reviewed by investigators.

"This was a targeted shooting," Bowser said.

Troops held down the shooter

The shooting happened roughly two blocks northwest of the White House near a metro station. Hearing gunfire, other troops in the area ran over and held down the gunman after he was shot, Carroll said.

"It appears to be a lone gunman that raised a firearm and ambushed these members of the National Guard," Carroll said, adding that it was not clear whether one of the guard members or a law enforcement officer shot the suspect.

"At this point we have no other suspects," Carroll said at a news conference.

At least one of the guard members exchanged gunfire with the shooter, said another law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Social media video shared in the immediate aftermath showed first responders performing CPR on one of the troops and treating the other on a sidewalk covered in broken glass.

Witnesses saw people fleeing

Michael Ryan was just across the street when he heard loud bangs and started running with others. When he later came back, he told AP he saw a person pinned to the ground as people shouted "stay down," and, nearby, National Guard troops hugged each other.

"It's just a terrible situation to see," Ryan said.

Emma McDonald, who exited a metro station just after the shots were fired, said she and a friend

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sought safety with others in a cafe. McDonald told AP that minutes later she saw first responders rolling a stretcher carrying a National Guard member whose head was covered in blood.

Police tape cordoned off the scene, and fire and police vehicle lights flashed and helicopter blades thudded overhead. Agents from the Secret Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were there, and National Guard troops stood sentry nearby. At least one helicopter landed on the National Mall.

"I think it's a somber reminder that soldiers, whether they're active duty, reserve or National Guard, our soldiers are the sword and the shield of the United States of America," Vice President JD Vance said in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where he delivered a Thanksgiving message to troops.

Gen. Steven Nordhaus, chief of the National Guard Bureau, scrapped plans to spend the holiday with troops at Guantanamo Bay in order to travel to D.C. and be with guard members there instead.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll said on social media that he visited the wounded National Guard members in the hospital and that his "heart breaks for them."

Troops deployed to DC under emergency order

Trump issued an emergency order in August that federalized the local police force and sent in National Guard troops from eight states and the District of Columbia. The order expired a month later, but the troops remained.

Nearly 2,200 troops currently are assigned to the joint task force operating in the city, according to the government's latest update.

Last week a federal judge ordered an end to the deployment, but she also put her order on hold for 21 days to allow the administration time to either remove the troops or appeal.

The guard members have patrolled neighborhoods, train stations and other locations, participated in highway checkpoints and been assigned to pick up trash and guard sports events.

More than 300 West Virginia National Guard members were deployed in August. About 160 of them volunteered last week to extend their deployment until the end of the year, while the others returned home just over a week ago.

## **Soldiers in Guinea-Bissau appear on state television saying they have seized power**

By ASSANA SAMBU and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

BISSAU, Guinea-Bissau (AP) — Soldiers in Guinea-Bissau appeared on state television Wednesday saying they have seized power in the country, following reports of gunshots near the presidential palace, three days after national elections. The president told French media he had been deposed and arrested.

It is the latest of several coups in recent years in West Africa.

"The High Military Command for the re-establishment of national and public order decides to immediately depose the president of the republic, to suspend, until new orders, all of the institutions of the republic of Guinea-Bissau," spokesperson Dinis N'Tchama said in a statement.

He said they acted in response to the "discovery of an ongoing plan" that he said aimed to destabilize the country by attempting to "manipulate electoral results."

The "scheme was set up by some national politicians with the participation of a well-known drug lord, and domestic and foreign nationals," N'Tchama asserted, and gave no details.

The soldiers said they were immediately suspending the electoral process and the activities of media outlets, as well as closing all borders.

Guinea-Bissau has seen four coups and numerous attempted ones since independence, including one reported last month. The country also has emerged as a hub for drug trafficking between Latin America and Europe.

The presidential and legislative elections were held Sunday. Incumbent President Umaro Sissoco Embaló and opposition candidate Fernando Dias each claimed victory Tuesday, even though official provisional results were not expected until Thursday.

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How the coup unfolded

Gunfire was heard midday Wednesday near the presidential palace. An Associated Press journalist saw roads leading to the palace closed off, with checkpoints manned by heavily armed and masked soldiers.

An official from the presidential palace said a group of armed men tried to attack the building, leading to an exchange of gunfire with guards. Another official from the Interior Ministry said they also heard gunshots near the National Electoral Commission nearby. The two spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to speak publicly on the matter.

A key member of an international election observer group said the election commission chief was arrested and the commission office was sealed off by the military.

"The president has been speaking to people saying he's being held by the military," the observer group staffer told the AP. They spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not allowed to speak publicly on the matter.

French news outlet Jeune Afrique quoted Embaló as saying he was arrested in what he called a coup led by the army chief of staff. He said he was not subjected to violence.

"I have been deposed," Embaló told French television network France 24.

Embaló had faced a legitimacy crisis, with the opposition saying his tenure had long expired and that they did not recognize him as president.

Guinea-Bissau's constitution sets the presidential term at five years. Embaló first came to power in February 2020. The opposition says his term should have ended on Feb. 27 of this year, but the Supreme Court ruled it should run until Sept. 4.

The presidential election, however, was delayed until this month.

Soldiers arrested Embaló's rival Fernando Dias as well as Domingos Simões Pereira, the leader of the main opposition African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, the party said in a statement on Facebook on Wednesday.

A former prime minister, Domingos Simões Pereira was seen as Embaló's main challenger, before he and his party were barred from the election after authorities said they failed to submit their application early. He later endorsed Dias for the election.

Bodies demand return to constitutional rule

A U.N. official said Wednesday that the world body was following the situation in Guinea-Bissau "with deep concern."

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres "appeals to all national stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law," Stéphane Dujarric, his spokesperson, told reporters.

In a joint statement, the election observation missions of the African Union and of the regional bloc known as ECOWAS, denounced a "blatant attempt to disrupt the democratic process" and called for a return to the "constitutional order."

It also urged the immediate release of detained election officials.

The civil society coalition Popular Front accused Embaló and the army of staging a "simulated coup" to block the release of election results and cling on to power.

"This maneuver aims to prevent the publication of the electoral results scheduled for tomorrow, Nov. 27," the group said in a statement on Wednesday. It claimed that Embaló plans to name a new president and interim prime minister, then call fresh elections in which he intends to run again.

West Africa has seen a wave of coups since 2020. Three landlocked nations in the region, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, are now ruled by military leaders who have taken power by force, on the pledge of providing more security to citizens against an insurgency by armed groups.

In neighboring Guinea, Gen. Mamadi Doumbouya, the junta leader, overthrew the president in 2021, chastising the previous government for breaking promises while promising to rid the country of bad governance and corruption.

In Gabon, mutinous soldiers took power in 2023, shortly after the president was declared the winner of the election from which international observers, for the first time, had been barred. In April, coup leader Gen. Brice Oligui Nguema was elected president.

## Trump says lax migration policies are top national security threat after National Guard members shot

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Wednesday's "heinous assault" on two National Guard members near the White House proves that lax migration policies are "the single greatest national security threat facing our nation."

"No country can tolerate such a risk to our very survival," he said.

Trump's remarks, released in a video on social media, underscores his intention to reshape the country's immigration system and increase scrutiny of migrants who are already here. With aggressive deportation efforts already underway, his response to the shooting showed that his focus will not waver.

The suspect in the shooting is believed to be an Afghan national, according to Trump and two law enforcement officials. He entered the United States in September 2021, after the chaotic collapse of the government in Kabul, when Americans were frantically evacuating people as the Taliban took control.

The 29-year-old suspect was part of Operation Allies Welcome, the Biden-era program that resettled tens of thousands of Afghans after the U.S. withdrawal from the country, officials said. The initiative brought roughly 76,000 Afghans to the United States, many of whom had worked alongside American troops and diplomats as interpreters and translators.

It has since faced intense scrutiny from Trump and his allies, congressional Republicans and some government watchdogs over gaps in the vetting process and the speed of admissions, even as advocates say it offered a lifeline to people at risk of Taliban reprisals.

Trump described Afghanistan as "a hellhole on earth," and he said his administration would review everyone who entered from the country under President Joe Biden — a measure his administration had already been planning before the incident.

During his remarks, Trump also swung his focus to Minnesota, where he complained about "hundreds of thousands of Somalians" who are "ripping apart that once-great state."

Minnesota has the country's largest Somali community, roughly 87,000 people. Many came as refugees over the years.

The reference to immigrants with no connection to Wednesday's developments was a reminder of the scope of Trump's ambitions to rein in migration.

Administration officials have been ramping up deportations of people in the country illegally, as well as clamping down on refugee admissions. The focus has involved the realignment of resources at federal agencies, stirring concern about potentially undermining other law enforcement priorities.

However, Trump's remarks were a signal that scrutiny of migrants and the nation's borders will only increase. He said he wants to remove anyone "who does not belong here or does not add benefit to our country."

"If they can't love our country, we don't want them," Trump added.

Afterward, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services announced it would indefinitely stop processing all immigration requests for Afghan nationals pending a review of security and vetting protocols.

Supporters of Afghan evacuees said they feared that people who escaped danger from the Taliban would now face renewed suspicion and scrutiny.

"I don't want people to leverage this tragedy into a political ploy," said Shawn VanDiver, president of #AfghanEvac.

He said Wednesday's shooting should not shed a negative light on the tens of thousands of Afghan nationals who have gone through the various legal pathways to resettling in the U.S. and those who await in the pipeline.

Under Operation Allies Welcome, tens of thousands of Afghans were first brought to U.S. military bases around the country, where they completed immigration processing and medical evaluations before settling into the country. Four years later, there are still scores of Afghans who were evacuated at transit points

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in the Middle East and Europe as part of the program.

Those in countries like Qatar and Albania, who have undergone the rigorous process, have been left in limbo since Trump entered his second term and paused the program as part of his series of executive actions cracking down on immigration.

Vice President JD Vance, writing on social media, criticized Biden for "opening the floodgate to unvetted Afghan refugees," adding that "they shouldn't have been in our country."

"Already some voices in corporate media chirp that our immigration policies are too harsh," he said. "Tonight is a reminder of why they're wrong."

## 2 National Guard members shot in an ambush attack just blocks from the White House

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and GARY FIELDS The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two West Virginia National Guard members who deployed to the nation's capital were shot Wednesday afternoon just blocks from the White House in a brazen act of violence that the mayor described as a targeted attack.

FBI Director Kash Patel and Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said they were hospitalized in critical condition.

The rare shooting of National Guard members, on the day before Thanksgiving, comes as the presence of the troops in the nation's capital and other cities around the country has been a flashpoint issue for months, fueling court fights and a broader public policy debate about the Trump administration's use of the military to combat what officials cast as an out-of-control crime problem.

A suspect who was in custody also was shot and had wounds that were not believed to be life-threatening, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

The 29-year-old suspect, an Afghan national, entered the U.S. in 2021 through Operation Allies Welcome, a Biden administration program that evacuated and resettled tens of thousands of Afghans after the U.S. withdrawal from the country, officials said.

The initiative brought roughly 76,000 people to the U.S., many of whom had worked alongside U.S. troops and diplomats as interpreters and translators. It has since faced intense scrutiny from Trump and his allies, congressional Republicans and some government watchdogs over gaps in the vetting process and the speed of admissions, even as advocates say it offered a lifeline to people at risk of Taliban reprisals.

The suspect, who has been living in Washington state, has been identified by law enforcement officials as Rahmanullah Lakanwal, but authorities were still working to fully confirm his background, two law enforcement officials and a person familiar with the matter said. The people could not discuss details of an ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Lakamal arrived in Bellingham, Washington, about 79 miles (127.1 kilometers) north of Seattle, with his wife and five children, said his former landlord Kristina Widman.

Wednesday night, in a video message released on social media, President Donald Trump called for the reinvestigation of all Afghan refugees who entered under the Biden administration.

"If they can't love our country, we don't want them," he said, adding that the shooting was "a crime against our entire nation."

Jeffery Carroll, an executive assistant D.C. police chief, said investigators had no information on a motive. He said the assailant "came around the corner" and immediately started firing at the troops, citing video reviewed by investigators.

"This was a targeted shooting," Bowser said.

West Virginia Gov. Patrick Morrisey initially said the troops had died, but he later walked that statement back to say his office was "receiving conflicting reports" about their condition.

The Trump administration quickly ordered 500 more National Guard members to Washington. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Trump asked him to send the troops.

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Nearly 2,200 troops currently are assigned to the joint task force operating in the city, according to the government's latest update.

Troops held down the shooter

The shooting happened roughly two blocks northwest of the White House near a metro station. Hearing gunfire, other troops in the area ran over and held down the gunman after he was shot, Carroll said.

"It appears to be a lone gunman that raised a firearm and ambushed these members of the National Guard," Carroll said, adding that it was not clear whether one of the guard members or a law enforcement officer shot the suspect.

"At this point we have no other suspects," Carroll said at a news conference.

At least one of the guard members exchanged gunfire with the shooter, said another law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Social media video shared in the immediate aftermath showed first responders performing CPR on one of the troops and treating the other on a glass-covered sidewalk.

Witnesses saw people fleeing

Stacy Walters said she was in a car when she heard two gunshots and saw people running. Almost instantly, law enforcement swarmed the area. "It's such a beautiful day. Who would do this? And we're getting ready for the holidays?"

Emma McDonald, who exited a metro station just after the shots were fired, said she and a friend sought safety with others in a cafe. McDonald told AP that minutes later she saw first responders rolling a stretcher carrying a National Guard member whose head was covered in blood.

Police tape cordoned off the scene, and fire and police vehicle lights flashed and helicopter blades thudded overhead. Agents from the Secret Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were there, and National Guard troops stood sentry nearby. At least one helicopter landed on the National Mall.

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More than 300 West Virginia National Guard members were deployed in August. About 160 of them volunteered last week to extend their deployment until the end of the year, while the others returned home just over a week ago.

## Bangkok court issues an arrest warrant for Thai co-owner of Miss Universe pageant

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in Thailand said Wednesday that it has issued an arrest warrant for a co-owner of the Miss Universe Organization in connection with a fraud case.

Jakkaphong “Anne” Jakrajutatip was charged with fraud then released on bail in 2023. She failed to appear as required in a Bangkok court on Tuesday. Since she did not notify the court about her absence, she was deemed to be a flight risk, according to a statement from the Bangkok South District Court.

The court rescheduled the hearing for Dec. 26.

According to the court’s statement, Jakkaphong and her company, JKN Global Group Public Co. Ltd., were sued for allegedly defrauding Raweewat Maschamadol in selling him the company’s corporate bonds in 2023. Raweewat says the investment caused him to lose 30 million baht (\$930,362).

Financially troubled JKN defaulted on payments to investors beginning in 2023 and began debt rehabilitation procedures with the Central Bankruptcy Court in 2024. The company says it has debts totaling about 3 billion baht (\$93 million).

JKN acquired the rights to the Miss Universe pageant from IMG Worldwide LLC in 2022. In 2023, it sold 50% of its Miss Universe shares to Legacy Holding Group USA, which is owned by a Mexican businessman, Raúl Rocha Cantú.

In an unrelated case in Mexico, federal prosecutors announced Wednesday that Rocha Cantú has been under investigation since November 2024 for alleged organized crime activity, including drug and arms trafficking, as well as fuel theft.

The Attorney General’s Office said in a statement that Raúl “R” was the target of the investigation. A federal agent who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the investigation confirmed that was Rocha Cantú.

The Miss Universe Organization did not respond to a request for comment.

Earlier this month, a federal judge in Mexico approved 13 arrest orders against targets in the case. The federal agent would not confirm or deny whether an order was issued for Rocha Cantú.

Jakkaphong resigned from all of the company’s positions in June after being accused by Thailand’s Securities and Exchange Commission of falsifying the company’s 2023 financial statements. She remains its largest shareholder.

Her whereabouts remain unclear. She did not appear at the 74th Miss Universe competition, which was held in Bangkok earlier this month.

This year’s competition was marred by various problems, including a sharp-tongued scolding by a Thai organizer of Fátima Bosch Fernández of Mexico, who was crowned Miss Universe 2025 on Nov. 19. Two judges reportedly dropped out, with one suggesting that there was an element of rigging to the contest. Separately, Thai police investigated allegations that publicity for the event included illegal promotion of online casinos.

On Monday, JKN denied rumors that Jakkaphong had liquidated the company’s assets and fled the country, but there has been no immediate reaction regarding the arrest warrant. She could not be reached for comment.

Jakkaphong is a well-known celebrity in Thailand who has starred in reality shows and is outspoken about her identity as a transgender woman.

## A welcome form of inflation: Balloons take shape for Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade

By JOSEPH B. FREDERICK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Giant balloons got into shape Wednesday for the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade as crews inflated the giant characters on the streets of New York City.

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The parade kicks off Thursday morning, with dozens of huge balloons set to take to the skies. Floats, entertainers, marching bands and more will grace the streets.

About 100 balloon technicians and volunteers worked Wednesday to puff up dozens of characters. It takes about eight hours to ready them all, said Kathleen Wright, who oversees production operations for Macy's Studios.

The process might be gradual, but Ethan Otieno was excited to see it.

"I think it's very cool to watch them be inflated and try to guess the characters," the tourist from Texas said while watching with relatives.

Otieno's favorite balloon? Smokey Bear.

The parade is scheduled to start at 8:30 a.m. EST, rain or shine. It runs from Manhattan's Upper West Side to Macy's Herald Square flagship store on 34th Street.

Officials are watching the weather, since the forecast as of Wednesday evening calls for a somewhat gusty day. For safety reasons, New York City law prohibits Macy's from flying the full-size balloons if sustained winds exceed 23 mph (37 kph) or wind gusts are over 35 mph (56 kph). Weather has grounded the balloons only once, in 1971, but they also sometimes have soared lower than usual because of wind.

Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said at a news conference that authorities would decide Thursday morning whether any balloon adjustments are needed.

New balloons in this year's lineup include Buzz Lightyear, Pac-Man, Mario from Super Mario Brothers and a 32-foot-tall (9.8-meter) balloon onion carriage featuring eight characters from the world of "Shrek."

"It's a lot of those really nostalgic and familiar characters, everybody's favorites," Wright said. There are also new balloons derived from characters in this year's Netflix hit "KPop Demon Hunters."

New floats this year include a Pop Mart entry, with the ubiquitous figure Labubu, as well as Skullpanda, Peach Riot, Dimoo, Molly, Duckoo and Mokoko.

A star-studded lineup of performers — including Cynthia Erivo, Conan Gray, Lainey Wilson and Audrey Nuna, EJAE and Rei Ami of HUNTR/X, the fictional girl group at the heart of "KPop Demon Hunters" — will be sprinkled throughout the show, along with a slew of marching bands, Broadway cast members and others. As is traditional, the Radio City Rockettes are expected.

## 3 arrested in Hong Kong, as a high-rise fire leaves at least 44 dead and 279 reported missing

By CHAN HO-HIM and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's deadliest fire in decades burned through the night, leaving at least 44 people dead and 279 reported missing with rescuers still pulling residents from blazing high-rise apartment buildings into the morning.

Police had arrested three men on suspicion of manslaughter in connection with fire which began Wednesday afternoon in a housing complex in Tai Po district, a suburb in the New Territories. By Thursday morning local time, the fire was yet to be put out and rescues continued.

Hundreds of residents were evacuated as the fire spread across seven of the eight towers in the Wang Fuk Court complex, as bright flames and smoke shot out of windows.

Forty of the 44 fatalities were declared dead at the scene, officials said. At least 62 others were injured, many suffering from burn and inhalation injuries.

Authorities suspected some materials on the exterior walls of the high-rise buildings did not meet fire resistance standards, as the rapid spread of the fire was unusual.

Police also said they found Styrofoam materials -- that are highly flammable -- outside the windows on each floor near the lift lobby of the one unaffected tower, believed to be installed by a construction company.

"We have reason to believe that those in charge of the construction company were grossly negligent," said Eileen Chung, a senior superintendent of police. The three men arrested, aged 52 to 68, are the directors and an engineering consultant of the firm.

The fire at four of the buildings was "coming under control" by Thursday morning, according to the Fire

Services Department.

Officials said the fire started on the external scaffolding of one of the buildings, a 32-story tower, and later spread to inside the building and then to nearby buildings, likely aided by windy conditions.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Wednesday expressed condolences to the firefighter who died and extended sympathies to the families of the victims, according to state broadcaster CCTV. He also urged efforts to minimize casualties and losses.

John Lee, the city's chief executive, said the government will prioritize the disaster and halt public efforts for the Dec. 7 elections for the Legislative Council, the city's legislature. He didn't say if the elections could be delayed but said decisions would come "a few days later."

The housing complex consisted of eight buildings with almost 2,000 apartments housing about 4,800 residents, including many elderly people. It was built in the 1980s and had recently been undergoing a major renovation.

Fire chiefs said high temperatures at the scene made it difficult for crews to mount rescue operations. A column of flames and thick smoke rose as the blaze spread quickly on bamboo scaffolding and construction netting that had been set up around the exterior of the buildings. About 900 people were evacuated to temporary shelters.

Authorities said that hundreds of firefighters, police officers and paramedics were deployed. Firefighters aimed water at the intense flames from high up on ladder trucks.

The blaze, which started mid-afternoon, was upgraded to a level 5 alarm — the highest level of severity — as night fell. Authorities said that conditions remained very challenging for firefighters.

"Debris and scaffolding of the affected buildings (is) falling down," said Derek Armstrong Chan, deputy director of Fire Service operations. "The temperature inside the buildings concerned is very high. It's difficult for us to enter the building and go upstairs to conduct firefighting and rescue operations." The fire department said it received "numerous" calls requesting assistance.

Firefighters deployed more than 200 fire vehicles and about 100 ambulances to the scene.

A 37-year-old firefighter was among the dead, while another firefighter received treatment for heat exhaustion, said Director of Fire Services Andy Yeung.

District officials in Tai Po have opened temporary shelters for people left homeless by the fire.

"I've given up thinking about my property," a resident who only provided her surname, Wu, told local TV station TVB. "Watching it burn like that was really frustrating."

Tai Po is a suburban area in the New Territories, in the northern part of Hong Kong and near the border with the mainland Chinese city of Shenzhen.

Bamboo scaffolding is a common sight in Hong Kong at building construction and renovation projects, though the government said earlier this year that it would start phasing it out for public projects because of safety concerns.

The fire is the deadliest in Hong Kong in decades. In November 1996, 41 people died in a commercial building in Kowloon in a level 5 fire that lasted for around 20 hours.

## **Trump sent National Guard troops to Washington in August. Some are armed. Some have cleaned parks**

By The Associated Press undefined

The two members of the West Virginia National Guard who were shot in Washington on Wednesday were among more than 2,000 troops deployed to the nation's capital as part of President Donald Trump's crime-fighting mission that involved taking over the local police department. The president quickly ordered 500 more National Guard members to the city after the shooting.

The members were shot about two blocks from the White House. Officials said they were hospitalized in critical condition. Washington's mayor said they were victims of a "targeted shooting."

Here's a look at the National Guard's presence in Washington:

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Trump declared a public safety emergency but officials say crime was already falling

Trump launched the deployment on Aug. 11 when he declared a public safety emergency and said his administration also would be removing homeless encampments.

He said he aimed to reduce crime. But the city's attorney general said violent crime in the district reached 30-year lows last year and was down an additional 26% this year.

West Virginia among several states with guardsmen in the district

There were 2,188 troops assigned to the joint task force that took over the city's policing, according to the government's latest update.

As of early November, the D.C. National Guard had the largest number on the ground with 949. West Virginia was next with 416 guardsmen.

Last week, at least 160 West Virginia troops volunteered to extend their deployment to Dec. 31. The others returned to West Virginia on Nov. 17.

Other states with forces in Washington early this month were Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

Officials with several of the states told The Associated Press they planned to end their deployments by Nov. 30 but indicated that also depended on whether they received orders to extend their stay.

The D.C. National Guard has had their deployment order renewed through the end of February.

Military presence and landscaping

Some troops have been armed and provided a military presence in public spaces, especially in federal parks, subway stations and Union Station. Others have done yard work, removed graffiti and cleaned parks.

In early October, the joint task force said troops cleared 1,150 bags of trash, spread 1,045 cubic yards (0.8 cubic meters) of mulch, removed 50 truckloads of plant waste, cleared 7.9 miles (12.7 kilometers) of roadway, painted 270 feet (82 meters) of fencing and pruned 400 trees.

Since then, most task force daily updates offered only new troop figures and no summaries of beautification efforts.

Their presence has unnerved some residents, who see it as presidential overreach on law enforcement. Others say they approve, particularly of a contingent of National Guard troops focused on community improvement efforts.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, a Democrat whose city budget and laws are determined by Congress, has walked a fine line between appeasing Trump and pushing back on the deployment. She has acknowledged that the campaign has helped push down crime, while arguing that the out-of-state National Guard deployment has not been "an efficient use of those resources."

Carrying handguns and rifles

Some National Guard troops have been armed since late August.

The military said some units on certain missions would have handguns and others would have rifles. These missions would include units on patrol throughout the capital.

All units with firearms were trained and operating under strict rules for use of force, the military said.

The joint task force said the military's rules allowed force to be used "only as a last resort and solely in response to an imminent threat of death or serious bodily harm." It said troops were committed to protecting "the safety and wellbeing" of Washington's residents.

Court battles

On Nov. 20, a federal judge ordered the Trump administration to end the deployment, saying it illegally intruded on local officials' authority to direct law enforcement in the district. U.S. District Judge Jia Cobb put her order on hold for 21 days to allow for an appeal.

The District of Columbia had challenged the deployment, saying it was an illegal use of the military for domestic law enforcement. The lawsuit said it violated Washington's Home Rule Act, signed by President Richard Nixon in 1973, and wrongly asserted federal control over units from other states.

Cobb found that while the president does have authority to protect federal functions and property, he can't unilaterally deploy the D.C. National Guard to help with crime control as he sees fit or call in troops from other states.

## Wisconsin seeks to block Morgan Geyser's conditional release after escape from group home

By SCOTT BAUER and TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

WAUKESHA, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin authorities have asked a state court to revoke the conditional release of Morgan Geyser, the woman who in 2014 almost killed her sixth grade classmate in the name of horror villain Slender Man and escaped from a group home earlier this week.

A Waukesha County Circuit Court judge agreed on Wednesday to seal the petition filed by the Department of Corrections late Tuesday seeking to revoke Geyser's conditional release. A Waukesha County judge earlier this year approved releasing Geyser from a state mental institution to live in a group home.

Geyser cut off her GPS monitoring bracelet on Saturday night and fled the group home in Madison, Wisconsin, with a 43-year-old companion, authorities said. Geyser was found by police outside of Chicago on Sunday night, about 170 miles (274 kilometers) from Madison.

Geyser did not fight her extradition to Wisconsin in a Chicago court appearance Tuesday. Online records show she had been brought back to Wisconsin and was being held in the Waukesha County jail late Wednesday.

Geyser's attorney, Tony Cotton, did not respond to an email Wednesday seeking comment on the state's request to revoke her release.

The judge set a motion hearing for Dec. 22.

If Geyser's conditional release is revoked, she could be sent back to the mental institution where she spent most of the past eight years. She also could face new charges in connection with her escape.

Geyser's companion has been charged with trespassing and obstruction, but The Associated Press isn't naming the companion because the person hasn't been charged with aiding Geyser's escape. The AP's attempts to contact that person have been unsuccessful.

The companion did call WKOW-TV on Monday, however, saying the two became friends at church and had seen each other daily for the past month. Geyser decided to flee because she was afraid her group home would no longer allow them to see each other, the person said.

"She ran because of me," the friend told the television station.

Geyser and her companion took a bus overnight into Illinois, the friend said.

Geyser and her friend, Anissa Weier, lured one of their classmates, Payton Leutner, to a Waukesha park in 2014. Geyser stabbed Leutner 19 times, narrowly missing her heart, while Weier cheered her on. All three girls were 12 years old at the time. Leutner barely survived.

Geyser and Weier later told investigators they attacked Leutner in hopes of impressing Slender Man and becoming his servants. They said they were afraid Slender Man would hurt their families if they didn't carry out the attack.

Slender Man was created online by Eric Knudson in 2009 as a mysterious figure photo-edited into everyday images of children at play. He grew into a popular boogeyman, appearing in video games, online stories and a 2018 movie.

Both Geyser and Weier were ultimately committed to a state mental institution — Geyser for 40 years and Weier for 25. Wisconsin law allows people committed to state institutions to petition for release. Weier earned conditional release in 2021. Geyser, now 23, won conditional release in September after four requests and was placed in the group home.

State health officials tried to block her release in March, telling the judge that Geyser didn't volunteer to her therapy team that she had read "Rent Boy," a novel about murder and selling organs on the black market. They also alleged that she has been communicating with a man who collects murder memorabilia, and has sent him her own sketch of a decapitated body and a postcard saying she wants to be intimate with him.

The judge concluded that Geyser wasn't trying to hide anything and proceeded with her release, which was finalized in September.

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## U.S. stocks rise as Wall Street's winning streak grows to four days

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

U.S. stocks closed broadly higher Wednesday, extending Wall Street's recent winning streak to a fourth straight day.

The S&P 500 rose 0.7%, the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.7% and the Nasdaq composite added 0.8%.

Solid gains for technology companies led the rally, although the gains were widespread, with most of the sectors in the benchmark S&P 500 index finishing higher. Gainers also outnumbered decliners by more than 2 to 1 on the New York Stock Exchange.

U.S. markets have a shortened trading week due to the Thanksgiving holiday, closing on Thursday and opening for shorter hours on Friday.

The market's recent rebound, fueled by investor hopes for another Federal Reserve interest rate cut in December, has helped erase most of the major indexes' losses following a bout of selling earlier this month.

"It's a tech-driven, buy-the-bounce kind of response to the very swift sell-off that we saw," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA. "Investors are of the mind that this pullback has run its course and that it's going to lead to a December dash to the finish line."

Dell Technologies climbed 5.8% after saying it has received record orders for its artificial intelligence servers. Dell and other technology companies had fallen earlier in the month as investors worried the prices for their stocks had gotten too frothy amid the frenzy over AI. Nvidia, the market's most valuable company, rose 1.4%.

Among other tech winners was Microsoft, which rose 1.8% and Broadcom, which added 3.3%.

Financial sector stocks also helped lift the market. Robinhood Markets jumped 10.9% for the biggest gain among S&P 500 companies after the trading platform said it plans to roll out a futures and derivatives exchange next year to expand its predictions market business.

Urban Outfitters joined a host of other retailers this week in reporting earnings that exceeded Wall Street forecasts, and its shares jumped 13.5%.

Petco surged 14.5% a day after the pet supply chain delivered mixed quarterly results but raised its fiscal year earnings outlook.

On the downside, shares of Deere dropped 5.7% after the farm equipment company issued a downbeat forecast, citing pressure from tariffs.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 3.99% and the yield on the 2-year Treasury rose to 3.48%.

Stocks have been rallying as comments from Federal Reserve officials have given traders more confidence the central bank will again cut interest rates at its meeting in December. Traders are betting on a nearly 83% probability that the Fed will cut next month, according to data from CME Group.

The central bank, which has already cut rates twice this year in hopes of shoring up the slowing job market, is facing an increasingly difficult decision on interest rates as inflation rises and the job market slows. Cutting interest rates further could help support the economy as employment weakens, but it could also fuel inflation. The latest round of corporate earnings reports was mostly positive, but economic data has been mixed.

Economic data released this week shows Americans bought less from U.S. retailers in September than economists expected and are growing more anxious about the economy. The Fed and Wall Street are also playing catch-up with government reports on the economy suspended during the government shutdown.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 46.73 points to 6,812.61. The Dow gained 314.67 points to 47,427.12, and the Nasdaq added 189.10 points to close at 23,214.69.

In international markets, shares in Europe and Asia advanced. Germany's DAX gained 1.1% while the CAC 40 in Paris rose 0.9%. In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 1.9% in a broad rally that encompassed major exporters and technology shares.

## Georgia case against Trump dropped, ending efforts to punish president over 2020 election aftermath

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A judge on Wednesday dismissed the Georgia election interference case against President Donald Trump and others after the prosecutor who took over the case said he would not pursue the charges, ending the last effort to punish the president in the courts for his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Pete Skandalakis, executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, took over the case earlier this month from Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who was removed over an "appearance of impropriety" created by a romantic relationship with the special prosecutor she chose to lead the case.

After Skandalakis' filing, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee issued an order dismissing the case in its entirety.

The case began nearly five years ago, when Willis made public her intent to investigate whether illegal attempts were made to influence the state's 2020 election. That included a Jan. 2, 2021, phone call in which Trump was recorded urging Georgia's secretary of state to help find the votes needed to overturn his loss in the critical swing state.

It was the most wide-ranging of four criminal cases brought against Trump in 2023. The resources and manpower required to pursue such a sprawling case made it unsurprising that other prosecutors declined to take it on after Willis' removal.

The latest criminal case against Trump to unravel

The abandonment of the Georgia case is the latest reflection of how Trump has emerged largely unscathed from a spate of prosecutions that once threatened his political career and personal liberty.

Former Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith, who had charged Trump with conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 election and hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, dropped both cases after Trump won the White House last year. Smith cited longstanding Justice Department policy against the indictment of a sitting president.

And though Trump was convicted of felony charges in New York in connection with hush money payments during the 2016 election, he was sentenced in January to an unconditional discharge, leaving his conviction intact but sparing him any punishment.

It was unlikely that legal action against Trump could have moved forward while he is president. But 14 other defendants still faced charges, including former New York mayor and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani and former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows.

Steve Sadow, Trump's lead attorney in Georgia, applauded the dismissal: "The political persecution of President Trump by disqualified DA Fani Willis is finally over. This case should never have been brought. A fair and impartial prosecutor has put an end to this lawfare."

Trump celebrated the news in a lengthy social media post, saying, "LAW and JUSTICE have prevailed in the Great State of Georgia, as the corrupt Fani Willis Witch Hunt against me, and other Great American Patriots, has been DISMISSED in its entirety."

The Associated Press has reached out to a spokesperson for Willis seeking comment.

"The strongest and most prosecutable case against those seeking to overturn the 2020 Presidential election results and prevent the certification of those votes was the one investigated and indicted by Special Counsel Jack Smith," Skandalakis wrote in his court filing Wednesday.

He added that the criminal conduct alleged in the Georgia indictment "was conceived in Washington, D.C., not the State of Georgia. The federal government is the appropriate venue for this prosecution, not the State of Georgia."

Skandalakis' review of the case

Skandalakis said he undertook the review of the case "with an understanding of the grave seriousness with which many citizens view the events discussed in this case. I share their concerns and acknowledge the impact that my decision will have."

He said the indictment "alleges a compelling set of acts" that, if proven beyond a reasonable doubt, "would establish a conspiracy undertaken by multiple individuals" working to overturn the 2020 presidential election. In his filing, he walked through the different parts of the case to explain why he didn't pursue them.

Among the obstacles he cited are the "complexity of the legal issues at hand" in prosecuting Trump, saying that even if everything was decided in prosecutors' favor, "bringing this case before a jury in 2029, 2030, or even 2031 would be nothing short of a remarkable feat."

Skandalakis wrote that he considered separating the other remaining defendants and trying them separately. But he noted that Trump is the lead defendant and "bears the responsibility for any conspiracy" that could be proven. Holding separate trials for the others would be "illogical and unduly burdensome and costly."

Why a new prosecutor took over the Georgia case

After the Georgia Supreme Court in September declined to hear Willis' appeal of her disqualification, it fell to the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council to find a new prosecutor. After several other prosecutors declined to take the case, Skandalakis appointed himself.

Skandalakis has led the small, nonpartisan council since 2018, and previously spent about 25 years as the elected district attorney for the Coweta Judicial Circuit, southwest of Atlanta. He noted in Wednesday's filing that he has run for office as both a Democrat and a Republican.

How the Georgia case fell apart

Willis, an elected Democrat, announced the indictment against Trump and 18 others in August 2023, using the state's anti-racketeering law to allege a wide-ranging conspiracy to illegally overturn Trump's narrow loss in Georgia. Four people pleaded guilty in the months that followed after reaching deals with prosecutors.

Defense attorneys sought Willis' removal after one revealed in January 2024 that Willis had a romantic relationship with Nathan Wade, the special prosecutor she hired to lead the case. Willis and Wade disputed allegations that their relationship created a conflict of interest.

The judge rebuked Willis for a "tremendous lapse in judgment" but found no disqualifying conflict of interest, ruling she could stay on the case if Wade resigned, which he did hours later.

Defense attorneys appealed, and the Georgia Court of Appeals removed Willis from the case in December 2024. The state Supreme Court declined to hear Willis' appeal.

## Government push to unseal court records offers clues about what could be in the Epstein files

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As the Justice Department gets ready to release its files on sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and his longtime confidant Ghislaine Maxwell, a court battle over sealed documents in Maxwell's criminal case is offering clues about what could be in those files.

Government lawyers asked a judge on Wednesday to allow the release of a wide range of records from Maxwell's case, including search warrants, financial records, survivor interview notes, electronic device data and material from earlier Epstein investigations in Florida.

Those records, among others, are subject to secrecy orders that the Justice Department wants lifted as it works to comply with a new law mandating the public release of Epstein and Maxwell investigative materials.

The Epstein Files Transparency Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump last week.

The Justice Department submitted the list a day after U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer in New York ordered the government to specify what materials it plans to publicly release from Maxwell's case.

The government said it is conferring with survivors and their lawyers and that it will redact records to ensure protection of survivors' identities and prevent the dissemination of sexualized images.

"In summary, the Government is in the process of identifying potentially responsive materials" that are

required to be disclosed under the law, "categorizing them and processing them for review," the department said.

The four-page filing bears the names of the U.S. attorney in Manhattan, Jay Clayton, along with Attorney General Pam Bondi and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche.

Also Wednesday, a judge weighing a similar request for materials from Epstein's 2019 sex trafficking case gave the department until Monday to provide detailed descriptions the records it wants made public. U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman said he will review the material in private before deciding.

In August, Berman and Engelmayer denied the department's requests to unseal grand jury transcripts and other material from Epstein and Maxwell's cases, ruling that such disclosures are rarely, if ever, allowed.

The department asked the judges this week to reconsider, arguing in court filings that the new law requires the government to "publish the grand jury and discovery materials" from the cases. The law requires the release of Epstein-related files in a searchable format by Dec. 19.

Epstein was a millionaire money manager known for socializing with celebrities, politicians and other powerful men. He killed himself in jail a month after his 2019 arrest. Maxwell was convicted in 2021 of sex trafficking for luring teenage girls to be sexually abused by Epstein. She is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

In initial filings this week, the Justice Department characterized the material it wants unsealed in broad terms, describing it as "grand jury transcripts and exhibits." Engelmayer ordered the government to file a letter describing the materials "in sufficient detail to meaningfully inform victims" what it plans to make public.

Engelmayer did not preside over Maxwell's trial, but was assigned to the case after the trial judge, Alison J. Nathan, was elevated to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Tens of thousands of pages of records pertaining to Epstein and Maxwell have already been released over the years, including through civil lawsuits, public disclosures and Freedom of Information Act requests.

In its filing Wednesday, the Justice Department listed 18 categories of material that it is seeking to release from Maxwell's case, including reports, photographs, videos and other materials from police in Palm Beach, Florida, and the U.S. attorney's office there, both of which investigated Epstein in the mid-2000s.

Last year, a Florida judge ordered the release of about 150 pages of transcripts from a state grand jury that investigated Epstein in 2006. Last week, citing the new law, the Justice Department moved to unseal transcripts from a federal grand jury that also investigated Epstein.

That investigation ended in 2008 with a then-secret arrangement that allowed Epstein to avoid federal charges by pleading guilty to a state prostitution charge. He served 13 months in a jail work-release program. The request to unseal the transcripts is pending.

## **Gratitude and doubt: The effects of the shutdown linger as families prepare for Thanksgiving**

By ADAM GELLER AP National Writer

She had it figured down to the last dollar. The looming insurance payment, balanced against the hard-earned paycheck. The cost of keeping her children fed, covered mostly with government SNAP assistance. And when Shelby Williams reviewed the family budget for November, she told herself that this month would truly be one for giving thanks.

After living with her parents for more than two years, Williams and her two children were finally moving into an apartment of their own in her hometown of Reeds Spring, Missouri. They would celebrate with a Thanksgiving meal made by the kids, the grandparents joining them at the table.

The funds for the needed groceries were all lined up — until the federal government shut down on Oct. 1.

Now Washington is running again. But as Americans prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, the relieved gratitude of families in Williams' community, and the many others still recovering from the suspension of government paychecks and food assistance during the 43-day shutdown, is tempered by lingering stress

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and economic insecurity.

"I'm thankful for my children and my job, and I'm thankful for SNAP because it supplies food," said Williams, 32, who works as a paraprofessional in an elementary school. "But ... with the way the world is, with the financial strain, it is hard to be thankful."

The anxiety stirred by the shutdown persists in the lines at food pantries in this southwestern Missouri county and echoes through households nationwide.

Dealing with the shutdown's fallout

In South Florida, Darlene Castillo is still struggling to prop up her family's fragile finances after working without pay for seven weeks at the U.S. Customs Service.

To get by, she lined up at a mobile food bank, a first for her. She held off paying bills and canceled subscriptions. Family members sent money, and when one extended an invitation for Thanksgiving, she and her husband gratefully accepted, knowing that they'd be hard-pressed to host the holiday meal.

"It's a thankful time," Castillo said last week. "I'll bring a dish because hopefully this week we'll get paid. And then we'll worry about Jan. 30."

That's when the funds just approved by Congress to reopen the government are set to run out, threatening yet another shutdown.

In New Jersey, Kelvin McNeil is equally mindful that restored Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits could again be taken away.

During the shutdown, McNeil said he got by on the modest stipend he receives as a trainee in a culinary program run by the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. But attending classes meant missing the hours food pantries were open. His wife, who is disabled and counts on him to bring home SNAP-funded groceries, grew distraught.

"If it was any longer, I don't know what I would've done," said McNeil, whose relief is compounded by news that after months of radiation treatment, his prostate cancer is in remission. "I got a lot to be thankful for right now."

Community support for stretched resources

In Williams' Missouri community, a haven for retirees on modest fixed incomes, the lapse in SNAP funds has added to the pressures on families who stretch to buy daily necessities.

In early November, a startling 428 families lined up at a drive-through food pantry run by Carrie Padilla and church volunteers, in a county with about 32,000 residents. About 12% of households in the county rely on SNAP benefits, but it is closer to 17% in rural areas.

Though SNAP has been restored, many families registering for a Christmas toy drive run by Padilla's nonprofit indicate that they are entering the holiday season without enough food.

"Almost everybody is antsy," Padilla said. "Just because the government reopened, it doesn't mean that somebody has waved a wand and suddenly everything's all hunky-dory."

That uncertainty has figured into Shirley Mease's planning, as she prepares to host a free Thanksgiving feast at Reeds Spring High School. Mease and her family anticipate serving and delivering 700 meals, up from about 625 last year, to account for food insecurity worsened by the shutdown.

"I know (SNAP) is back in working order, but it will take time for that to really help people out," said Mease, 73, a semi-retired school cafeteria worker who has been providing the feast since 2009, drawing on community donations and volunteers.

"Especially in this area, the food banks are being hit very hard, so I just feel like this is a time to step it up a little bit," she said.

Feeling the pressure without SNAP

The pressure of trying to get through November without SNAP weighed on Williams in the weeks leading up to the holiday.

She had planned the move to the new apartment for months, carefully balancing income and expenses to account for the \$600 rent. The math worked thanks in no small part to \$450 in monthly benefits her family receives from SNAP. That covers their food bill after the two free meals served each school day.

As the shutdown stretched on, the Trump administration announced it would suspend November SNAP payments, despite judges' orders to use available emergency funds. With her move days away, Williams started November with just \$25 left in her SNAP account.

She used the funds to buy bread, peanut butter, jelly and milk, and a friend with chickens gave her eggs. The fixings lasted through four nights of sandwich dinners. Then her parents stepped in to help.

Williams tried to keep her stress hidden from her 11-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter. But it was hard to avoid tearing up or getting angry.

"What bills do I not pay so I can feed my children, because that's the priority," she said.

Faced with a difficult choice

There were other factors to consider, too. Williams said she loves her job, working with students in a special education classroom. In her off-hours she is studying to become a teacher, a pursuit that required taking out a student loan.

The suspension of SNAP confronted her with a difficult choice. She knew she could earn more at Walmart than doing the classroom job she treasures.

"But then I'm giving up a part of my dream," she said.

It never came to that. Three days after the shutdown ended, Missouri officials sent \$217 to Williams' SNAP account, just under half what she receives in an ordinary month.

That helped refill her family's refrigerator, but it was not enough to afford the luxury of a Thanksgiving celebration. Williams held off paying a bill for car insurance, due at month's end, reserving the money in case it was needed for food.

Then, last Friday morning, the remainder of the SNAP funds for November showed up in Williams' account. Finally, she could exhale. She paid the insurance bill. Then she treated her children to ice cream.

The anxiety that had weighed on Williams for weeks lingered. But it was still November and her family had so much to be thankful for.

## Trump administration says lower prices for 15 Medicare drugs will save taxpayers billions

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pharmaceutical companies have agreed to slash the Medicare prices for 15 prescription drugs after months of negotiations, reductions that are expected to produce billions in savings for taxpayers and older adults, the Trump administration said.

But the net prices it unveiled for a 30-day supply of each drug are not what Medicare recipients will pay at their pharmacy counters, since those final amounts will depend on each individual's plan and how much they spend on prescriptions in a given year.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. touted the deals as part of the administration's efforts to address affordability concerns among Americans. The Medicare drug negotiation program that made them possible is mandated by law and began under President Joe Biden's administration.

"President Trump directed us to stop at nothing to lower health care costs for the American people," Kennedy said in a statement Tuesday evening. "As we work to Make America Healthy Again, we will use every tool at our disposal to deliver affordable health care to seniors."

The announcement marks the completion of a second round of negotiations under a 2022 law that allows Medicare to haggle over the price it pays on the most popular and expensive prescription drugs used by older Americans, bringing the total number of negotiated drug prices to 25. The new round of negotiated prices will go into effect in 2027. Reduced prices for the inaugural round of 10 drugs negotiated by the Biden administration last year will go into effect in January.

Price negotiations apply to drugs treating diabetes, asthma, cancers and more

The latest negotiated prices apply to some of the prescription medications on which Medicare spends the most money, including the massively popular GLP-1 weight-loss and diabetes drugs Ozempic, Rybelsus and Wegovy. Some of the other drugs involved in the negotiations include Trelegy Ellipta, which treats

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asthma; Otezla, a psoriatic arthritis drug; and various drugs that treat diabetes, irritable bowel syndrome and different forms of cancer.

Dr. Mehmet Oz, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator, said the administration delivered "substantially better outcomes for taxpayers and seniors in the Medicare Part D program" than the previous year's deals.

Under the first round of Medicare price negotiations, the Biden administration said the program would have saved about \$6 billion on net covered prescription drug costs, or about 22%, if it had been in effect the previous year. The Trump administration said its latest round would have saved the government about \$8.5 billion in net spending, or 36%, if it had been in effect last year.

It's unclear exactly how much money the newly announced deals could save Medicare beneficiaries when they are buying prescription drugs at the pharmacy because those costs are determined by various individual factors.

A new rule that kicked off this year also caps out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries at \$2,000, giving some relief to older adults affected by high-cost prescriptions. The administration said estimated out-of-pocket savings for Medicare beneficiaries with drug plans is about \$685 million.

Spencer Perlman, director of health care research at Veda Partners, said the Trump administration's improved outcomes probably resulted from the mix of drugs being negotiated and lessons learned from the first year of negotiations.

Net drug prices are proprietary, he said, but "if we take the administration at their word, I think it demonstrates that they have secured meaningful price concessions for seniors, meaning the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program is working as intended."

Medicare recipients can't get GLP-1 drugs for obesity, but the administration is making changes

The GLP-1 weight-loss drugs that were part of the negotiations have been especially scrutinized for their high out-of-pocket costs. Yet it's still unclear to what extent Medicare beneficiaries who want to use the drugs to treat obesity will be able to do so.

Medicare has long been prohibited from paying for weight-loss treatments, but a separate deal recently announced between the Trump administration and two pharmaceutical companies included plans for a pilot program that will expand coverage for the drugs to additional high-risk obese and overweight people.

The Trump administration this year has also negotiated several unrelated deals with drug companies to lower the cost of their products for the wider population.

Pharmaceutical companies, meanwhile, have sued over the Medicare drug negotiations enabled by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act and remain opposed to them.

"Whether it is the IRA or MFN, government price setting for medicines is the wrong policy for America," Alex Schriver, senior vice president of public affairs at the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA, said in a statement. "These flawed policies also threaten future medical innovation by siphoning \$300 billion from biopharmaceutical research, undermining the American economy and our ability to compete globally."

Next year, Medicare will negotiate prices for another round of 15 drugs, including physician-administered drugs for the first time.

## Under glare of world's media, Pope Leo XIV to visit Turkey and Lebanon on first foreign trip

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV is embarking on his first foreign trip, a pilgrimage to Turkey and Lebanon that would be delicate under any circumstances but is even more fraught given Mideast tensions and the media glare that will document history's first American pope on the road.

Leo is fulfilling a trip Pope Francis planned to make, to mark an important anniversary with the Orthodox church in Turkey. In Lebanon, he'll try to boost a long-suffering Christian community as well as Lebanese of all faiths who are still demanding justice over the 2020 Beirut port blast.

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Leo, who spent 12 years as superior of his Augustinian religious order and two decades as a missionary in Peru, says he loves to travel. And in recent weeks, he has shown both diplomatic and linguistic dexterity in answering questions on the fly from reporters.

The trip is being covered closely by U.S. media, with all major U.S. networks — ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox as well as CNN and the BBC — inside Leo's traveling pool, following his speeches, homilies and prayers at a crucial moment in negotiations to end Russia's war in Ukraine and maintain a cease-fire in Gaza.

Vatican correspondents plus Lebanese and Turkish media round out the papal press corps of about 80 journalists, with an ample waitlist of reporters who applied to be on the papal plane but were denied a seat because of limited space.

"Anytime the pope travels, it's a big deal," said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York.

But an American pope on his first foreign trip is an even bigger deal, she said, especially in the saturated American media ecosystem where Leo has emerged as something of a foil to the Trump administration and its crackdown on immigrants.

"He is still driving coverage here because of his engagement with one of the most important issues we're facing, which is migration," said Kim Daniels, director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University. Because of that, "I think this trip will drive attention again to the peripheries and to the vulnerable."

Significantly, Leo plans to deliver all his remarks in Turkey in English, and English and French in Lebanon, casting aside the Italian lingua franca of the Vatican in favor of languages that are more widely understood.

All eyes will be on Leo's in-flight press conference Dec. 2 returning to Rome. These encounters provided many of Francis' headline-grabbing quips during his 12-year papacy, starting with his first in 2013 when he famously said "Who am I to judge" about a purportedly gay priest.

Leo has shown himself to be far more prudent and diplomatic than his predecessor. But "maybe he'll do something crazy like a 'Who am I to judge?'" said Imperatori-Lee.

An important moment in Catholic-Orthodox relations

The main impetus for traveling to Turkey, the first stop in the Nov. 27-Dec. 2 trip, is to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, Christianity's first ecumenical council.

Leo will pray with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, at the site of the 325 AD gathering — today's Iznik — and sign a joint declaration in a visible sign of Christian unity.

Eastern and Western churches were united until the Great Schism of 1054, a divide precipitated largely by disagreements over the primacy of the pope.

"We all understand that 1,000 years of division has inflicted a deep wound that cannot be healed easily," Bartholomew told the respected Greek daily Kathimerini recently. "We have an obligation, however, to strive to heal that wound, mend the injuries, bridge the distances and restore unity."

A chance to speak about Mideast peace

The visit will also offer Leo several occasions to speak about regional tensions overall, Catholic-Muslim relations and Christians' dwindling presence in the Middle East.

Clergy in the region say the Vatican's strong support for Palestinians in Gaza during the Israel-Hamas war, first under Francis and now Leo, has bolstered the church's credibility among ordinary Muslims.

"In a moment when many Western powers hesitated on the question of Gaza, Francis — and then Leo — was very strong. He didn't go to Gaza but everything he could have said it seems he said," said the Rev. Paolo Pugliese, superior of the Capuchin friars in Turkey.

The regional conflicts have not abated, however: Israel fired an airstrike on Lebanon's capital on Sunday that killed Hezbollah's chief of staff and four others.

Security expected to be tight

The strike only reinforced security concerns that often accompany pope trips. But organizers insisted Leo would be safe.

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"It happened, but it doesn't affect the places or where the pope is going," said Bishop George Bacouni, archbishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Beirut.

The Vatican said no extra security measures had been taken, though spokesman Matteo Bruni declined to say whether Leo's cars and popemobiles were bullet-proofed.

Significantly, Leo will not visit Lebanon's south, battered by last year's war between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and the site of intensified Israeli strikes in recent weeks. Christian groups in southern Lebanon had lobbied for the pope to visit the area and circulated a new petition just this week.

At most Leo might be bothered in Beirut by Israeli drones that fly overhead, organizers said.

A prayer at the port blast site

The highlight of the Lebanese visit comes on Leo's last day, Dec. 2, when he spends time in silent prayer at the site of the Aug. 4, 2020, Beirut port blast.

The explosion tore through the Lebanese capital, killing at least 218 people, wounding more than 6,000 and devastating large swaths of Beirut. Sparked when hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate detonated in a warehouse, the blast caused billions of dollars in damage.

Lebanese citizens were enraged by the blast, which appeared to be the result of government negligence, coming on top of an economic crisis spurred by decades of corruption and financial crimes. But an investigation has repeatedly stalled, and five years on, no official has been convicted.

There are hopes among Lebanese that Leo will demand accountability from Lebanon's political class, and insist that there can be no peace without truth and justice.

Such an appeal "could shake up our various political leaders, because we continue to live under the pressure of a social crisis, an economic crisis, in a country where the various leaders hear neither the cry of the poor, nor the cry of the unfortunate, nor the cry of citizens," said Monsignor Cesar Essayan, apostolic vicar of Beirut for Latin rite Catholics.

Another important moment will come when Leo meets with young Lebanese. He is expected to give them words of encouragement, amid the decades-long flight of Lebanese abroad, while also acknowledging their disillusionment over the failures of adults.

"Many families feel that they are surviving the day by day with really very little visibility on the future," said Marielle Boutros, project coordinator in Lebanon for Aid to the Church in Need, the Catholic charity. "So this visit of His Holiness, it's not simply symbolic. It is a really concrete sign that Lebanon is not forgotten."

## Pushing an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, Trump looks to his Gaza ceasefire playbook

By LAURIE KELLMAN, SAM McNEIL and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — President Donald Trump's efforts to broker an end to the Russia-Ukraine war closely mirrors the tactics he used to end two years of fighting between Israel and Hamas: bold terms that favor one side, deadlines for the combatants and vague outlines for what comes next. The details — enforcing the terms, guaranteeing security, who pays for rebuilding — matter less.

"You know what the deadline is to me? When it's over." Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One Tuesday.

The formula has worked so far in the tense Middle East, though its long-term viability remains in question. Trump got his moment to claim credit for "peace" in the region from the podium of the Israeli parliament. Even there, he made clear that next on his priority list was resolving the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II.

"Maybe we set out like a 20-point peace proposal, just like we did in Gaza," U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff told Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser in a phone call the day after Trump's speech, on Oct. 14. A recording of that call leaked to Bloomberg News.

They did just that, issuing a 28-point plan heavily tilted toward Russia's interests that set off alarms in Europe, which had not been consulted. Trump insisted Ukraine had until Nov. 27 — Thanksgiving in the U.S. — to accept it.

But by Tuesday, Trump had eased off the hard deadline. It seemed clear, even to Trump, that the Israel-

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Gaza model doesn't fully apply in Russia and Ukraine as long as Putin refuses to be flattered, pushed or otherwise moved to take the first step of a ceasefire, as Israel and Hamas consented for different reasons on Oct. 9. Making the point, Putin launched waves of bombings on Ukraine Tuesday and Wednesday even as American negotiators renewed Trump's push to end the war.

"I thought (a Russia-Ukraine deal) would have been an easier one, but I think we're making progress," Trump said during the annual White House turkey pardon to mark the Thanksgiving holiday. Hours later, he told reporters that the 28-point plan actually "was not a plan, just a concept."

The president's goal may not be a formal, long-lasting peace treaty, one expert said.

"Trump's approach emphasizes the proclamation of a ceasefire, not its observance," Mariia Zolkina, a political analyst at the Kyiv-based Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, wrote on Liga.net, a Ukrainian news outlet, adding: "Donald Trump is not interested in whether the ceasefire will be sustainable."

Trump's approach toward 'peace' bears similarities to the tactics and style he used in the Israel-Gaza talks. Fresh off the Gaza deal and coveting the Nobel Peace Prize, Trump named his next priority before he'd even left the Israeli Knesset.

"If you don't mind, Steve, let's focus on Russia first, All right?" Trump said, turning to Witkoff.

Where the Gaza ceasefire agreement had 20 points, the Russia-Ukraine proposal would start with 28 items and include more detail on who would pay for reconstruction. They envision "peace" boards headed by the president to lead and administer the aftermath. Both lack detail on incentives for complying and enforcement. And both depend on a ceasefire.

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive of the Brussels-based European Policy Centre think tank, said the proposals for Gaza and Ukraine show a kind of "naivete by believing that by intervening at that level, by imposing your will on something like this, that you will reach some form of long-term conclusion."

He said both proposals reflect Trump's political and personal self-interest.

"In the end, the focus is solely on what Trump thinks he will get out of this in terms of reputation and money," Zuleeg said.

Each Trump administration plan to end the wars heavily favor one side.

The Trump plan for Gaza leans to Israeli terms. It makes disarming Hamas a central condition for any progress in rebuilding the devastated territory. It also lays out no strict timetable for a full Israeli troop withdrawal, making it conditional on deployment of an international security force.

For Russia and Ukraine, Witkoff looked to open peace plan talks with terms skewing toward Russia. He quietly hosted Kirill Dmitriev, a close ally of Putin's, for talks in south Florida to help launch the plan that opened talks in Geneva, according to a senior administration official and a U.S. official familiar with the matter who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The White House insists that the plan was U.S.-authored with input from both the Ukrainians and Russians.

But that's where the similarities end. The differences are buy-in — and Putin

The draft that was formally presented to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy decidedly favored the Russians, with no European input. In contrast, the Gaza ceasefire talks got buy-in from Egypt, Qatari, Jordanian, Saudi and other regional powers.

The 28-point Russia-Ukraine plan called for Ukraine to give up land in the industrial Donbas region that the Russians currently don't control and dramatically shrink the size of its military. It also effectively gave Russia oversight of both NATO and EU expansion. The draft has narrowed by a few points since it was first presented, and Trump is sending his envoys on a bit of shuttle diplomacy to "sell it," as he said. He said Witkoff will visit Moscow next week — perhaps joined by his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who was also involved in the Gaza plan. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll will meet with the Ukrainians.

European leaders worried that Trump is leaving them out of high-level discussions and vulnerable to Russian aggression.

"He appears perfectly ready to sacrifice Ukraine's security and Europe's in the process," Hannah Neumann, a German member of the European Parliament, said of Trump on Tuesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu resisted Trump's pressure to agree to a ceasefire, for a time. But Putin refuses to concede anything on Ukraine.

He's appeared to be considering the matter, notably when Trump rolled out a red carpet for the Russian leader at a summer summit in Alaska — an old front line of the Cold War. Trump left without an agreement from Putin to end the bloodshed. The Russian leader walked off with long-sought recognition on the world stage.

To the horror of Ukraine and the vexation of Trump, Putin has stood firm.

As the envoys flew home from Geneva last week without any agreement, the White House scrambled to explain. One U.S. official argued that the 28-page plan, which calls on Ukraine to cede the Donbas region and bar Ukraine from joining NATO, represents considerable concessions from Putin because he would be agreeing to give up on his claim, once and for all, that all of Ukraine should be part of Russia.

Putin, the official noted, has long grumbled that the West doesn't respect Russia's position in the global world order. The official added that the Trump White House in its approach is not affirming Putin's position but trying to reflect the Russian perspective is given its due in the emerging peace plan.

It's not for the administration to judge Putin's positions, the official said, but it does have "to understand them if we want to get to a deal."

## Scientists capture the crackling sounds of what they believe is lightning on Mars

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Scientists have detected what they believe to be lightning on Mars by eavesdropping on the whirling wind recorded by NASA's Perseverance rover.

The crackling of electrical discharges was captured by a microphone on the rover, a French-led team reported Wednesday.

The researchers documented 55 instances of what they call "mini lightning" over two Martian years, primarily during dust storms and dust devils. Almost all occurred on the windiest Martian sols, or days, during dust storms and dust devils.

Just inches (centimeters) in size, the electrical arcs occurred within 6 feet (2 meters) of the microphone perched atop the rover's tall mast, part of a system for examining Martian rocks via camera and lasers. Sparks from the electrical discharges — akin to static electricity here on Earth — are clearly audible amid the noisy wind gusts and dust particles smacking the microphone.

Scientists have been looking for electrical activity and lightning at Mars for half a century, said the study's lead author Baptiste Chide, of the Institute for Research in Astrophysics and Planetology in Toulouse.

"It opens a completely new field of investigation for Mars science," Chide said, citing the possible chemical effects from electrical discharges. "It's like finding a missing piece of the puzzle."

The evidence is strong and persuasive, but it's based on a single instrument that was meant to record the rover zapping rocks with lasers, not lightning blasts, said Cardiff University's Daniel Mitchard, who was not involved in the study. What's more, he noted in an article accompanying the study in the journal *Nature*, the electrical discharges were heard — not seen.

"It really is a chance discovery to hear something else going on nearby, and everything points to this being Martian lightning," Mitchard said in an email. But until new instruments are sent to verify the findings, "I think there will still be a debate from some scientists as to whether this really was lightning."

Lightning has already been confirmed on Jupiter and Saturn, and Mars has long been suspected of having it too.

To find it, Chide and his team analyzed 28 hours of Perseverance recordings, documenting episodes of "mini lightning" based on acoustic and electric signals.

Electrical discharges generated by the fast-moving dust devils lasted just a few seconds, while those spawned by dust storms lingered as long as 30 minutes.

"It's like a thunderstorm on Earth, but barely visible with a naked eye and with plenty of faint zaps," Chide said in an email. He noted that the thin, carbon dioxide-rich Martian atmosphere absorbs much of the sound, making some of the zaps barely perceptible.

Mars' atmosphere is more prone than Earth's to electrical discharging and sparking through contact among grains of dust and sand, according to Chide.

"The current evidence suggests it is extremely unlikely that the first person to walk on Mars could, as they plant a flag on the surface, be struck down by a bolt of lightning," Mitchard wrote in *Nature*. But the "small and frequent static-like discharges could prove problematic for sensitive equipment."

These aren't the first Mars sounds transmitted by Perseverance. Earthlings have listened in to the rover's wheels crunching over the Martian surface and the whirring blades of its no-longer-flying helicopter sidekick, Ingenuity.

Perseverance has been scouring a dry river delta at Mars since 2021, collecting samples of rock for possible signs of ancient microscopic life. NASA plans to return these core samples to Earth for laboratory analysis, but the delivery is on indefinite hold as the space agency pursues cheaper options.

## **Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro begins 27-year prison sentence for coup attempt**

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday started his 27-year prison sentence for leading a coup attempt, to the surprise of many in the South American nation who doubted he would ever end up behind bars.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has overseen the case, ruled Bolsonaro will remain in custody after being preemptively arrested on Saturday.

Supporters and detractors of the embattled leader gathered outside the federal police headquarters after the order was issued, some calling for Bolsonaro's release and others toasting to his imprisonment.

The far-right leader had been under house arrest since August and was taken in on Saturday after trying to break his ankle monitor. Bolsonaro blamed "hallucinations", a claim that de Moraes dismissed in his preemptive arrest order.

Bolsonaro will not have any contact with the few other inmates at the federal police headquarters. His 12-square-meter room has a bed, a private bathroom, air conditioning, a TV set and a desk, according to federal police. He will have free access to his doctors and lawyers, but others will have to get their access approved by the Supreme Court.

Exhausted appeals

De Moraes determined on Tuesday that Bolsonaro's defense had exhausted all appeals of his conviction. His lawyers disagree and promise to keep filing requests for house arrest due to the former leader's poor health. The Supreme Court justice has already ruled against it, but that decision could be revised if circumstances change.

"There is no legal possibility of any other appeal," de Moraes said in his decision.

Brazil's criminal law also could have allowed the 70-year-old to be transferred to a local penitentiary or to a prison room in a military facility in the capital Brasilia.

The former president and several of his allies were convicted by a panel of Supreme Court justices for attempting to overthrow Brazil's democracy following his 2022 election defeat.

The plot included plans to kill President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and Justice de Moraes. The plan also involved encouraging an insurrection in early 2023.

The former president was also found guilty of charges including leading an armed criminal organization and attempting the violent abolition of the democratic rule of law.

Bolsonaro has always denied wrongdoing.

Champagne and tears

Outside the federal police building, about a dozen Bolsonaro supporters dressed in yellow and green of the Brazilian flag cried foul and asked Congress to pass a bill to give the former president and his allies some kind of amnesty. Some chose to insult de Moraes, the media and Lula supporters. A few still pleaded for help from U.S. President Donald Trump against Brazil's left.

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"I am outraged. This is the best president of my life, my friend. This is a great injustice," said Elaine Leandro, 61, a hard core Bolsonaro supporter who says she will come to the federal police headquarters every day until he is released. "I hate you, Alexandre de Moraes. You deserve hell."

Sao Paulo city councilor Keit Lima, 34, had very different feelings. She brought champagne and shared it with other Black women who had come from a march in Brasilia to celebrate Bolsonaro's imprisonment. "Today we can breath and continue fighting for our democracy," Lima said. "Our democracy is young, but we want it to live long."

In other Brazilian cities, supporters prayed for the former president while detractors celebrated.

Other convictions

Two others convicted, Augusto Heleno and Paulo Sérgio Nogueira, both Army generals, were sent to a military facility in Brasilia to start serving their sentences. Former Justice Minister Anderson Torres is now imprisoned at the Papuda penitentiary, also in Brazil's capital.

Adm. Almir Garnier will serve his term at Navy facilities in Brasilia.

Bolsonaro's running mate and former Defense Minister Walter Braga Netto, another army general, will remain in prison at a military facility in Rio de Janeiro.

De Moraes also confirmed that lawmaker and former head of Brazil's intelligence agency Alexandre Ramagem is on the loose in the United States.

The judge also ordered lower house Speaker Hugo Motta to strip Ramagem of his seat.

Motta has the power to put a possible amnesty for Bolsonaro to a vote, though party leaders have said in recent months that it is very unlikely because it would be struck down later by the Supreme Court if approved.

Bolsonaro remains a key figure in Brazilian politics, despite being ineligible to run for office until at least until 2030 after a separate ruling by Brazil's top electoral court. The first day of his prison sentence should mark an extension of that deadline to 2033.

Polls show he would be a competitive candidate in next year's vote if allowed to run.

US tensions

The former president is an ally of Trump, who has called the trial of the former Brazilian leader a "witch hunt." Bolsonaro was mentioned in a July order by the U.S. administration to raise tariffs on several Brazilian exports by 50%.

Relations between the two countries have improved since, with Lula and Trump meeting in Malaysia at the ASEAN summit in October. Most of those higher tariffs have been dropped.

The U.S. also imposed sanctions on de Moraes and other Brazilian officials.

The measures in support of Bolsonaro did not have their desired effect and the trial proceeded nevertheless. Lula's popularity was boosted by the perception that he was defending Brazilian sovereignty.

Bolsonaro is not the first former president to spend time behind bars. His predecessor Michel Temer (2016-2018) and his successor Lula have also been to prison. Fernando Collor de Mello, who governed between 1990 and 1992, is currently under house arrest due to a corruption conviction.

Bolsonaro is the first to be convicted of attempting a coup.

## **Sellers in other countries struggle to maintain US customers as holiday shopping season starts**

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — At Fleece & Harmony, a woolen mill and yarn shop in bucolic Belfast, Prince Edward Island, in Canada, owner Kim Doherty used to be able to send yarn skeins to U.S. customers across the border with little fanfare.

The yarn orders usually met an import tax exemption for packages valued at under \$800, meaning it could be imported tariff-free and avoid the customs process.

But ever since the Trump administration eliminated the exemption as of Aug. 29, the cost to send yarn to U.S. customers has skyrocketed. The bill for a \$21 ball of yarn now includes \$12 to \$15 in brokerage fees

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that her shipper UPS charges, plus state taxes and a 6.5% tariff, all of which almost doubles her costs.

"We had orders that have reached the customers and they're in shock about the fact that they have to pay," she said. "And it's amazing how many people really didn't know what the impact was going to be."

Getting rid of the so-called de minimis exemption was meant to curb drug trafficking and stop low-quality goods from discount sellers like Temu and Shein flooding the U.S. market.

But as the all-important annual holiday shopping season kicks off, it is putting a crimp on small businesses and shoppers now facing higher costs.

Chad Lundquist in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, ordered fragrance oil from a site called Oil Perfumery in October, but he didn't realize the business was based in Toronto, Canada. His total was \$35.75, which included an \$8 standard shipping fee. But when his package arrived, he was hit with a \$10.80 tariff bill from FedEx.

"It wasn't worth the \$10 tariff for a \$27 purchase," Lundquist said. Oil Perfumery did not respond to a request for comment.

He's not the only skittish shopper. Three months after the exemption ended, sellers abroad are reporting drastic declines in U.S. sales. Some are paying the duties themselves instead of passing them to consumers. They are also trying to focus on domestic customers to replace U.S. ones and adjusting product lineups to feature best selling items to try to goose sales.

Martha Keith, founder of British stationery brand Martha Brook, which is based in London with a small office in Melbourne, Australia, said U.S. sales from her Etsy store — her main e-commerce channel in addition to her own website — were up 50% for the year before the exemption ended. But sales fell dramatically when the tariffs hit, and continue to drop even though she's paying the import taxes and customs fees herself so customers aren't impacted. Sales are down about 30% year-over-year.

"The issue seems to be in customer confidence hitting the desire to order from businesses outside of the U.S., because of confusion about how the tariffs will affect them," Keith said.

She's also in a bind because she sold a £109 (\$144) stationery advent calendar to about 344 U.S. customers ahead of the tariffs, and had to ship them under the tariffs. Shipping and tariffs cost her an additional £5750 (\$7590) to cover shipping the advent calendars already sold.

"The whole thing has been a bit of a nightmare for businesses like ours, and such a huge shame, as the U.S. market was such a valuable growth area for us, particularly through Etsy," she said.

The timing was particularly bad for Sue Bacarro, who along with her sister co-owns Digi Wildflowers, an Etsy shop that sells embroidered baby blankets, gifts and custom quilts for wedding and anniversaries, located across the border from Detroit in Windsor, Ontario.

Before the announcement of the removal of the de minimis exemption, they placed a large inventory order to prepare for the holiday season and early 2026 demand. But when the de minimis exemption ended, "inventory wasn't moving as expected, and we suspected customers were hesitant to purchase due to potential duty charges," Bacarro said.

Sales — 70% of which come from Americans — finally started to rebound when Digi Wildflowers prominently added a banner on its site that said, "U.S. Import Duties On Us."

"Heading into this holiday season, we're keeping that message front and center through banners, social media, and direct communication," said Bacarro, who is also expanding their product line.

But not all businesses can — or want to — pick up the tariff tab.

Kim Doherty, who runs the woolen mill on Prince Edward Island, doesn't plan to pay the tariff and fees for her customers.

"I'm not in a position as a small business owner to do that. The profit margins are already rather thin," said Doherty, adding that "on principle," she shouldn't have to do it.

Right now, her shipments to U.S. customers are about 10% of what they were. Instead, she's working on expanding her fiber offerings to Canadian customers at her brick-and-mortar store and fiber festivals.

"We'll see what happens," she said. "I'm pretty sure that my U.S. customers were shopping and not even thinking about it, but now they'll be evaluating the purchases that they're making, knowing that they are going to have the extra fees on top of whatever they see."

Some Etsy businesses have been stymied by international postal services temporarily halting deliveries

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to the U.S. because of the confusion around the ending of de minimis.

Selene Pierangelini's business, Apricot Rain Creations, based in Brisbane, Australia, which sells crystals, candles, and spiritual wellness products on Etsy, depended on the Australia Post to get deliveries to U.S. customers. More than three-fourths of her customer base comes from the U.S. Australia Post suspended service to the U.S. for about a month, resuming on Sept. 22.

She temporarily switched to FedEx and UPS — private shippers that are more expensive than Australia Post. Since it resumed, Australia Post is working with Zonos, a provider of cross-border shipping technology, to offer a shipping calculator that lets her prepay duties and fees. They themselves charge a fee of \$1.69 plus 10% of the total duty fee.

So far, the items she ships from Australia have been tariffed at a 10% rate, the baseline tariff for the country. She increased her shipping costs to help cover the expense. It is manageable, but tricky, she said.

"You don't really know how much (the cost) is going to be until the package clears custom in the U.S., and you get an invoice which is automatically paid out of your account," she said.

And her sales have not recovered. Before the tariffs, her U.S. sales were about 85% of her total sales, and now they're around 35%. She's hopeful people are just holding off until Black Friday and Cyber Monday holiday sales.

In the meantime, she has restarted sales to Europe, which she had paused in 2024 due to increased regulations. And she's launched a Facebook marketing campaign and is exploring print-on-demand services from U.S.-based providers for production and fulfillment.

"This situation highlights how fragile small businesses can be when dependent on one market," Pierangelini said. "While it has been a shock, it's also pushed me to diversify — something that will hopefully make my business stronger and more resilient in the long run."

## France's top court upholds Sarkozy's conviction for illegal campaign financing in 2012

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's top court on Wednesday upheld Nicolas Sarkozy's conviction for illegal campaign financing of his 2012 reelection bid, in another blow to the former president's legacy and reputation.

The decision by the Court of Cassation makes definitive Sarkozy's conviction to a year in prison, half of it suspended, for fraudulently overspending on the failed campaign.

Under French law the sentence can be served at home, monitored with an electronic bracelet or other requirements set by a judge.

The decision comes just two weeks after Sarkozy's release from prison pending an appeal in another campaign financing case. Sarkozy, 70, was incarcerated for 20 days in Paris' La Santé prison, after judges convicted him of scheming to get secret financing from Libya in his winning campaign for the French presidency in 2007. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Here's what to know about Wednesday's decision and other legal proceedings involving Sarkozy.

Ruling's meaning

A Paris court in 2021 and an appeals court in 2024 convicted Sarkozy of illegal campaign financing in 2012. He's accused of having spent almost twice the maximum legal amount of 22.5 million euros (\$25.5 million) on the reelection bid that he lost to François Hollande, a socialist.

Sarkozy's conviction is now considered definitive by French law, with no further appeal possible.

France's top court isn't reexamining the entire case, but instead is verifying that the law and proceedings' rules were properly applied.

The Court of Cassation said in a statement Wednesday that it "upholds the appeals' court decision convicting a presidential candidate, his campaign manager and two directors of the political party supporting him for illegal campaign financing."

Libya case

Sarkozy's appeal trial in the Libya case is scheduled to run from March 16 to June 3.

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In September, a Paris court found him guilty of criminal association in a plot from 2005 to 2007, when he served as interior minister, to finance his winning presidential campaign with funds from Libya in exchange for diplomatic favors. It sentenced him to five years in prison.

Sarkozy was cleared of three other charges, including passive corruption, illegal campaign financing and concealing the embezzlement of public funds.

The court found that two of Sarkozy's closest associates held secret meetings in 2005 with Abdullah al-Senoussi, the brother-in-law and intelligence chief of longtime Libyan ruler Moammar Gadhafi.

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

Prison memoir

Sarkozy is publishing a book on Dec. 10 about his recent time behind bars, titled "Diary of a Prisoner."

He described prison as "a nightmare."

"I had never imagined I would experience prison at 70. This ordeal was imposed on me, and I lived through it. It's hard, very hard," Sarkozy said during a court hearing on his release.

In a post on X, he said that "the noise is, unfortunately, constant" and that "the inner life of man becomes stronger in prison."

Witness tampering

French investigative judges filed preliminary charges in 2023 against Sarkozy for his alleged involvement in a possible attempt to clear him in the Libya financing case by pressuring a witness.

In 2016, French-Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine said that he had delivered suitcases filled with cash from Tripoli to France's Interior Ministry under Sarkozy. He later retracted his statement.

Financial prosecutors said that Sarkozy is suspected of "benefiting from corruptly influencing a witness," in reference to Takieddine.

Sarkozy's wife, former supermodel Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, was given preliminary charges in July 2024 for alleged involvement in efforts to pressure Takieddine. Bruni-Sarkozy was placed under judicial supervision, which includes a ban on contact with all those involved in the proceedings except for her husband.

Investigative magistrates still have to decide whether they send the couple to trial on these charges.

Takieddine died in September in Beirut.

Previous conviction

Sarkozy's criminal records already register a definitive conviction for corruption and influence peddling while he was the country's head of state.

Last year, the Court of Cassation upheld an appeals court decision that had found Sarkozy guilty of trying to bribe a magistrate in exchange for information about legal proceedings in which he was involved. The case was revealed through wiretapped phone conversations during the Libya financing investigation.

Sarkozy was sentenced to a year in prison, but he was entitled to be detained at home with an electronic bracelet. He was granted conditional release in May because of his age, which allowed him to remove the electronic tag after just over three months.

He was stripped of his Legion of Honor medal, France's highest distinction, following his conviction in that case.

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## Today in History: November 27

### Harvey Milk and George Moscone fatally shot

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Nov. 27, the 331st day of 2025. There are 34 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 27, 1978, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone (mah-SKOH'-nee) and city supervisor and gay rights activist Harvey Milk were fatally shot inside City Hall by former Supervisor Dan White.

Also on this date:

In 1895, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel signed his will and testament establishing the Nobel Prizes, bequeathing most of his fortune for annual prizes honoring outstanding achievements in peace, physics, chemistry, literature, and physiology or medicine. (The prize in economic sciences was added in the 1960s).

In 1924, Macy's first Thanksgiving Day parade — billed as a "Christmas Parade" — took place in New York.

In 1934, bank robber and "Public Enemy No. 1" Lester Joseph Gillis, better known as George "Baby Face" Nelson, was killed in a gunbattle with FBI agents in Barrington, Illinois.

In 1970, Pope Paul VI, visiting the Philippines, was slightly wounded at the Manila airport by a dagger-wielding Bolivian painter disguised as a priest.

In 2003, President George W. Bush flew to Iraq under extraordinary secrecy and security to spend Thanksgiving Day with U.S. troops and thank them for "defending the American people from danger."

In 2015, a gunman attacked a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado, killing three people and injuring nine. (The prosecution of suspect Robert Lewis Dear stalled in the courts after he was repeatedly found mentally incompetent to stand trial.)

Today's Birthdays: Fashion designer Manolo Blahnik is 83. Film director Kathryn Bigelow is 74. Science educator and TV host Bill Nye (aka the Science Guy) is 70. Author and diplomat Caroline Kennedy is 68. Actor Robin Givens is 61. Actor Michael Vartan is 57. Baseball Hall of Famer Iván Rodríguez is 54. Actor Kirk Acevedo is 54. Rapper Twista is 52. Actor Jaleel White is 49. Actor Lashana Lynch is 38.