

Groton Daily Independent

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Fri., Dec. 5

Senior Menu: Parmesan chicken, creamy noodles, California blend, fruit.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, cooked carrots.

Girls Wrestling at Watertown, 4 p.m.

Tour of Tress at City Hall, 3:30 p.m.



Sat., Dec. 6

Boys Wrestling at Clark/Willow Lake, 9 a.m.

Girls Top of the Rock Wrestling at Dell Rapids, 9 a.m.

HOSA Remembrance Dinner, 2 p.m.

Olive Grove Holiday Party, 6 p.m.

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1440

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

Jan. 6 Pipe Bomber

Federal agents yesterday arrested Brian Cole Jr., a 30-year-old Virginia resident, on charges related to the use of an explosive device. He is suspected of planting two pipe bombs outside the Republican and Democratic National Committee headquarters the night before the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the US Capitol.

The arrest marks a breakthrough in a nearly five-year probe that puzzled investigators and fueled conspiracy theories. The bombs—viable devices about a foot long and filled with gunpowder and metal—were placed between 7:30 and 8:30 pm on Jan. 5. They never detonated and were discovered roughly 15 hours later, as the Capitol riot unfolded, diverting some law enforcement resources.

Officials say the investigation involved reviewing tens of thousands of video files, over a thousand interviews, hundreds of tips, cell tower data, and subpoenas to tech companies. Investigators also traced purchases of bomb components and flagged the suspect's distinctive Nike Air Max Speed Turf shoes. A motive has not yet been released.

Amazon Eyes Deliveries

Amazon is considering launching a competitor to the US Postal Service, according to the Washington Post, owned by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. The revelation comes as negotiations between the two reportedly stagnated over their multibillion-dollar partnership, set to expire Oct. 1, 2026.

Amazon has an extensive logistics network, delivering over 9 billion same- or next-day items last year and 6.3 billion parcels total, second only to the Postal Service's 6.9 billion. However, the company often relies on the Postal Service—and private carriers UPS and FedEx—for the so-called "last mile," getting products to customers' doorsteps. The USPS is the only delivery service reaching nearly 167 million US addresses, including post office boxes.

The two entered a partnership in 2013, bringing the USPS a cash influx: \$6B this year, accounting for 7.5% of the Postal Service's total revenue. President Donald Trump's effort to privatize the USPS is reportedly a sticking point in the negotiations.

Black Death Eruption

Volcanic activity in the mid-14th century may have sparked a climate shock, paving the way for Europe's Black Death pandemic, according to new clues preserved in tree rings.

Scientists have widely accepted that the bacterium behind the bubonic plague originated from Central Asian wild rodents. But why the plague reached and spread so quickly through Europe—where it killed millions of people in the late 1340s and early 1350s, with mortality rates approaching 60% in some regions—has been less clear. Now, an analysis of tree rings has revealed that the summers before the pandemic were atypically cold, and historical records describe unusual cloudiness and dark lunar eclipses. Taken together, the evidence suggests ash and gases from an unidentified eruption—or eruptions—blocked sunlight, cooling temperatures, and triggering crop failures. Italian city-states likely traded across the Black Sea to avert famine, unwittingly bringing plague-carrying fleas home.

Researchers say the discovery underscores how climate change and globalization can increase the risk of zoonotic diseases.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

2026 FIFA World Cup final draw begins at noon ET in Washington, DC's Kennedy Center; live coverage begins at 11:30 am ET on Fox.

Ralph Lauren unveils Team USA uniforms for 2026 Milan-Cortina Olympics and Paralympics.

Public broadcasters from Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Slovenia announce they will boycott 2026 Eurovision Song Contest over Israel's participation.

New "Men in Black" film in development at Sony Pictures, with "Bad Boys for Life" Chris Bremner set to write the script.

Science & Technology

CDC vaccine advisory panel to vote today on hepatitis B vaccines after yesterday's scheduled vote was postponed; vote originally delayed in September.

Scientists identify previously unknown organization patterns in a brain region critical to learning and memory, offering insights into why some cells are more vulnerable to conditions like Alzheimer's and epilepsy.

Researchers discover a robust population of critically endangered Sumatran tigers in Indonesian forest, signaling that habitat conservation efforts are working.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +0.2%) as investors await latest inflation data today.

US weekly jobless claims fall to 191,000 for week ending Nov. 29, the lowest since September 2022.

Layoffs top 1.1 million for the year so far, the most since 2020, new report finds.

World's billionaires rise to record 2,919 people, with collective wealth of nearly \$16T; 91 became billionaires through inheritance.

Legal AI startup Harvey raises \$160M at \$8B valuation, more than double its valuation in February.

Politics & World Affairs

The Supreme Court clears the way for Texas to use newly redistricted map for the 2026 midterm elections as litigation continues in the lower courts; new map could potentially deliver as many as five seats to Republican candidates.

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo sign US-mediated peace deal despite ongoing clashes in eastern Congo.

Vatican commission finds women should not be ordained as deacons—ministers who can preside over weddings, baptisms, and funerals.

CHRISTMAS TOUR OF TREES

Vote for your favorite Christmas Tree
displayed at the Wage Memorial
Library AND participate in the
Christmas Coloring Contest!

The tree with the most votes wins \$50
in Groton Chamber Bucks!

FREE FAMILY
FUN EVENT!

5
DEC

3:30PM
TO
5:30pm

Snacks and Beverages will be provided!

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Northern Dropped by UMary 81-63

BISMARCK, N.D. – Northern State could not keep pace on the road Thursday night, falling 81-63 to a sharp-shooting UMary squad and marking the Wolves' third loss of the season. Despite several standout individual performances, the Marauders controlled the tempo throughout, gradually widening the gap each quarter to improve to 8-2 on the year. Northern slipped to 4-3 overall.

The Wolves finished with 63 points, 29 rebounds, 12 assists, eight steals and two blocks, shooting 41.9 percent from the floor, 23.1 percent from three and 50 percent at the line.

How It Happened

Northern State hung tough early, keeping the opening quarter within reach before trailing 18-14 after the first 10 minutes. Junior Megan Counts put the Wolves on the board with a layup for the game's first basket, ultimately finishing with 13 points, three rebounds and two assists.

UMary maintained its momentum from there, edging the Wolves in every quarter. Northern's best stretch came in the third, where the offense posted a game-high 18 points, but the Marauders responded with balance across all four periods, using frames of 19, 19 and 25 points to steadily pull away.

The night also featured a breakout performance from senior Izzy Moore, who delivered one of the finest games of her career. Moore poured in a career-high 22 points, grabbed a career-high eight rebounds, and collected a career-best six steals while adding five assists. She shot efficiently as well, hitting 8-of-16 from the field, both of her three-point attempts and 4-of-6 from the line.

Fellow guard Reagan Rus turned in a career night of her own, scoring 15 points—the second-highest total for Northern—and shooting a blistering 70 percent from the floor. Rus also added four rebounds and two steals in the effort.

UMary countered with strong performances across its lineup. The Marauders' lowest-scoring quarter was their first, yet they still managed to build rhythm and consistency as the game progressed. Eden Fridley led UMary with 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists, while teammate Allison Undlin provided 16 points on an efficient 8-of-11 shooting.

Northern Statistical Standouts

Izzy Moore: 22 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists, 6 steals

Reagan Rus: 15 points, 4 rebounds, 2 steals

Megan Counts: 13 points, 3 rebounds, 2 assists

Up Next

Northern State returns home Saturday, hosting Minot State at Wachs Arena. Tipoff is scheduled for 6 p.m.

Groton Angel Tree Reminder

The Angel tree gifts are due on Tuesday., December 10th.

There are a few cards left on the City Hall Tree.

Thank you for your support of the Angel Tree.

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Long-Range Buckets Lead Northern State Past UMary

BISMARCK, N.D. – Northern State found its rhythm from deep and never let go, pulling away late to secure an 87-68 road victory over the University of Mary on Thursday night. The win marked the Wolves' second straight NSIC triumph, powered by one of their most efficient offensive performances of the season.

Northern shot 47 percent from the floor and a blistering 45.5 percent from beyond the arc, dropping 15 three-pointers to set the tone in front of a crowd of 237. The victory lifted the Wolves to 2-5 overall and 2-0 in conference play.

How It Happened

The Wolves controlled both halves, scoring 41 points before the break and 46 more in the second frame. Ball movement was a key factor throughout, as Northern dished out a season-high 27 assists and generated 27 points off the bench. They added 34 rebounds, six steals, one block, and went 10-of-12 at the free-throw line.

Five Wolves reached double figures, beginning with James Glenn, who delivered a game-high 22 points. Glenn caught fire from long range, hitting 6-of-10 from three while adding five assists and four rebounds.

Off the bench, Simon Akena produced a major spark with a season-best 16 points on 6-of-9 shooting. Benjamin Bowen followed with 12 points at a 62.5 percent clip, collecting four rebounds, four steals, and two assists.

Both Joshua Book and Nelson Reynolds finished with 11 points. Book anchored the Wolves at the glass with nine rebounds and distributed a team-best seven assists. Reynolds contributed five assists — a career high — while shooting 50 percent from three.

In the frontcourt, Marshawn Smith turned in another steady performance with eight points and eight rebounds in his third start of the season. Late in the contest, Cameron Mercadel closed the door on any UMary comeback hopes by scoring the Wolves' final seven points.

The Marauders fell to 2-5 overall and 1-1 in the NSIC.

Northern State Statistical Standouts

James Glenn: 22 points, 60% from three, 5 assists, 4 rebounds

Simon Akena: 16 points, 66.7% FG, 1 rebound, 1 assist, 1 block

Benjamin Bowen: 12 points, 62.5% FG, 4 rebounds, 4 steals, 2 assists

Joshua Book: 11 points, 9 rebounds, 7 assists

Nelson Reynolds: 11 points, 50% from three, 5 assists

Up Next

Northern State returns to the Barnett Center on Saturday, hosting Minot State in a 4 p.m. matchup against the Beavers.



**ELDA STANGE'S
102nd BIRTHDAY
is on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025.**
Please join us in helping her celebrate her
special day by sending her a card at:
**PO Box 305
405 N. 3rd Street
Groton, SD 57445**



What can \$20 get you?



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Senior Citizens

or anyone using physical therapy
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15 N Main - Ste. 101

Open 24/7

GDI Living  Fitness

Call/Text Paul at 605/397-7460

Call/Text Tina at 605/397-7285

for details



Annual Membership Rates

Student is \$29.82 per month or \$255.60 per year
Single is \$35.15 per month or \$319.50 per year
2-Person is \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
Family is \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

Month-to-Month Rates

Student is \$35.15 per month
Single is \$40.48 per month
2-Person is \$59.78 per month
Family is \$72.43 per month

**While many other rates have gone up, ours has not.
Same rates for several years!**

9th Annual Holiday Party Live and Silent Auctions Olive Grove Golf Clubhouse

Groton, SD

Sat., Dec. 6

Holiday Party:
6 p.m. to close
A variety of snacks
served

**Come on out for a fun
evening and support
your local golf course**



**Silent
Auction
Basket Items**

Bidding closes
at 9 p.m.
Live Auction
begins at
9 p.m.

Proceeds raised for maintenance
of course and clubhouse!



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

New prison's programs will reduce state's world-leading rate of incarcerated women, official says

BY: SETH TUPPER

RAPID CITY — No other place in the world incarcerates women at a higher rate than South Dakota, according to research by a prison-focused nonprofit, and the construction of a second women's prison in the state could be viewed as a continuation of that trend.

The new leader of the state's prison system said Thursday it's the start of a turnaround.

"It's not going to show overnight," said Nick Lamb, "but it will show in a few years. You'll see a substantial decrease."

The staff and space devoted to programming in the Rapid City women's prison will help inmates turn their lives around, Lamb said. A task force on rehabilitation appointed by the governor is also developing ideas to help people stay out of trouble after their release.

Lamb began working as secretary of the Department of Corrections last month after his appointment by Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden. Lamb succeeded Kellie Wasko, who resigned after three and a half years in the job.

During a press conference at the construction site of the new women's prison in northeast Rapid City, South Dakota Searchlight asked Lamb and Rhoden about a September report by the Prison Policy Initiative. It said South Dakota incarcerates 338 of every 100,000 women in the state, which is the highest rate in the nation and would be the highest in the world if South Dakota was a country.

Lamb's prediction that the rate will come down was the only response to the question. Neither he nor Rhoden disputed the report's findings.

In prepared remarks, Rhoden said 51% of imprisoned women in South Dakota have drug convictions, and more than 90% have substance use disorders. He was referring to incarcerated women in Pierre, where the state has a women's prison that will continue to operate and a minimum-security facility that will close after the Rapid City prison opens. The state also contracts for extra space in the Hughes County Jail. The combined female inmate population among those three locations was 543 as of Thursday.

The Rapid City prison, designed for minimum and medium-security inmates, will house up to 300 women. "This is an area we have to do better," Rhoden said, "and this facility will allow us to."

The state is paying \$87 million to construct the Rapid City prison, which is scheduled to open in July. Rhoden is asking lawmakers to budget \$13 million for its first year of operations, plus \$2.4 million in one-time funding for staff training.

The facility will need 139 employees, including 96 for security, 23 for health care and 20 for education, programming and administration.

One of the buildings on the campus will have space for services including a kitchen and laundry, and programming including behavioral health services, classes and spiritual activities. There are three housing units, plus a unit containing 12 beds for mothers with babies. Another building will house administrators and a visitation area.

Meanwhile, the state is preparing to build a \$650 million men's prison in northeast Sioux Falls. It will replace the oldest parts of the Sioux Falls penitentiary, which dates to 1881.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

North Dakota carbon storage ruling adds uncertainty, energy industry says

BY: JEFF BEACH AND JACOB ORLEDGE

A court's finding that a North Dakota law affecting underground storage of carbon dioxide is unconstitutional creates doubt for the energy industry, representatives said Wednesday.

A district court judge on Tuesday ruled in favor of the Northwest Landowners Association in its suit against the North Dakota Industrial Commission, which approved a permit for underground storage for carbon pipeline developer Summit Carbon Solutions.

The landowner group successfully challenged a law that can force landowners to allow storage beneath their property. Northeast Judicial District Judge Anthony Swain Benson ruled the law allows a government-authorized taking of property without an avenue for "just" compensation determined by a jury.

Summit's project would transport greenhouse gas emissions from ethanol plants in five states, including Tharaldson Ethanol near Casselton, to the sequestration site.

The lawsuit isn't specific to Summit, but seems likely to have implications for the project.

In a statement, Summit Carbon Solutions said it is reviewing the court decision and evaluating its options.

Summit said the North Dakota storage area "remains an important long-term asset for the project and our partners, including the State of North Dakota, our ethanol plant customers, and the communities we serve."

The ruling also could impact the coal and oil and gas industries.

Jonathan Fortner is the president and CEO of the Lignite Energy Council, a leading coal group in North Dakota.

"The district court's decision creates new uncertainty for carbon capture projects at a time when reliable, affordable electricity is more important than ever," Fortner said in a statement. "When projects stall, the impacts are not abstract. They show up in grid reliability, electricity bills, and the loss of high-paying, local careers."

Minnkota Power Cooperative has been working to develop Project Tundra, which would capture carbon from a coal-fired power plant near Center for underground storage.

The Energy and Environmental Research Center in Grand Forks, has worked on both the Summit and Minnkota projects.

"It puts a shadow on projects and the projects underway," John Harju, EERC's vice president for strategic partnerships said of the ruling Wednesday.

The law that was challenged requires landowners to allow carbon dioxide storage beneath their property if at least 60% of the affected landowners agree to the project.

About 92% of landowners in Summit's storage area in Oliver, Mercer and Morton counties had chosen to participate in the project when the Industrial Commission approved the storage permit last year.

The Dakota Resource Council, an environment group, said the ruling strengthens the position of landowners.

"We see it as a major win for family farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners who have been standing up to CO2 pipelines and storage projects," the group said in an email.

Owen Anderson, an energy law scholar who began his career in North Dakota, was surprised by the decision. He's not aware of any courts in other states that have reached a similar conclusion and said the decision, if upheld, opens the door to challenges of other pore space uses such as saltwater disposal, which could impact the oil and gas industry.

"I would assume the state would appeal this," Anderson said. "It's a key case, no question about that."

North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley said Tuesday his office was still evaluating next steps.

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National leader

North Dakota has been a leader in carbon capture and storage. It was the first state to be granted primacy in permitting Class VI injection wells, the kind of well needed for CO2 storage. Previously, all permitting had been done at the federal level.

North Dakota has two ethanol plants injecting carbon underground, Gevo's site near Richardton, formerly Red Trail Energy, and Blue Flint Ethanol at Underwood.

A representative of Colorado-based Gevo said the company is glad to work with the local community and landowners.

"We believe in fair compensation for our landowner partners and this has not been an issue for us in Richardton, nor do we expect it to be an issue in the future," Gevo said in a statement.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative also operates a carbon storage operation at the Great Plains Synfuels Plant near Beulah.

Representatives from Minnkota did not respond to requests for comment Wednesday. Basin Electric did not provide a statement Wednesday. An official with Blue Flint declined to comment.

Legislature's role

The decision creates uncertainty around how carbon capture projects could move forward and whether the Legislature will need to take further action.

Sen. Dale Patten, R-Watford City, is one of the legislative branch's biggest proponents of carbon sequestration. He's not sure what the next step will be if the district court ruling isn't overturned.

"If the Supreme Court upholds the decision, what would be the alternative language that we could use?" Patten said. "I don't know."

Pore space, unlike surface land, cannot be fenced off. Carbon dioxide injected into underground pore space will migrate horizontally without regard for property lines on the surface.

"This concept lets a small minority of pore space owners, even just one owner, dictate to the majority of owners — the majority have property rights as well," Ron Ness, president of the North Dakota Petroleum Council, said in a statement Wednesday.

Patten fears the court's decision will prevent landowners from realizing the value of their pore space.

"You cannot realize that value individually very effectively," Patten said. "You have to realize it collectively."

Troy Coons, chair of the Northwest Landowners Association that challenged the law in court, said a company could use good business practices and work with landowners to lease 100% of the pore space in a project area. If it is a public utility using the pore space for a public use, and they can't lease 100% of the pore space, they have the option to use eminent domain.

He does not think the Legislature should step in again.

"I say they need to stay out of it," Coons said. "They seem to have a real hard time allowing the organic, natural path of business to happen."

He and the association's attorney, Derrick Braaten, pointed out oil and gas companies in the Bakken routinely manage to work with landowners every day.

"It's possible," Braaten said. "It's been done and it is being done."

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

North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach is based in the Fargo area. His interests include agriculture, renewable energy and rural issues.

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

Dozens of cities and states, including SD, raise minimum wages in 2026 amid federal inaction

The rate will hit \$15 per hour in dozens of localities, though the federal minimum wage remains \$7.25 per hour

BY: KEVIN HARDY

The minimum wage for workers will increase in 19 states and 49 cities and counties next month, with the wage floor reaching \$15 per hour in dozens of localities, a new report found.

Though the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour has not increased since 2009, many state and local governments continue to increase minimums through legislation or scheduled increases tied to inflation.

An annual report from the National Employment Law Project, a nonprofit advocating for workers' rights, found that 88 jurisdictions will raise their minimum wages by the end of 2026.

In January, Nebraska's minimum wage will increase from \$13.50 to \$15 per hour, while Rhode Island will see an increase from \$15 to \$16 per hour.

All workers in Denver will see the minimum wage increase from \$18.81 to \$19.29 in January and the minimum in Flagstaff, Arizona, will increase from \$17.85 to \$18.35 per hour.

The increases come as rising costs of housing, food and utilities are pinching more workers across the country, said Yannet Lathrop, senior researcher and policy analyst at the National Employment Law Project who authored the report. Those costs are particularly challenging for lower-income workers, who are most likely to be affected by minimum wage changes.

"They are really struggling right now," she said. "These wages basically mitigate the effects of inflation, the effects of the rising cost of living, and the difficulties so many people are having paying for basics, for food, for housing, for medicine — just the basics of life."

Lathrop said research increasingly finds that higher wages improve educational outcomes, mental and physical health.

"Things that are going to benefit not just the workers, but also the communities and society as a whole," she said. "I think that's an important thing to keep in mind."

Inflation has significantly eroded the buying power of the federal minimum wage since 2009.

Advocates say raising the wage floor helps low-wage workers cover the rising cost of essentials and boosts the economy by putting more money into the pockets of people who are likely to spend it. But many employers, especially small businesses, argue that raising the minimum wage forces them to cut workers or raise prices.

In Rhode Island, lawmakers this year proposed legislation that would raise the minimum wage \$1 per year, culminating with a \$20 per hour minimum in 2030. But backlash from business groups and economic uncertainty led the Democratic sponsor to successfully push for a "more measured approach" that includes hikes for the next two years rather than five, reaching a \$17 hourly minimum by 2027.

That compromise didn't persuade Republican opponents, who said even the more modest minimum wage change will force layoffs and consumer price hikes.

"The real minimum wage is \$0," said state House Minority Whip David Place, according to the Rhode Island Current. "That's what they make when they get fired because business can't afford to keep them."

The minimum wage remains stagnant at \$7.25 in 20 states, according to the National Employment Law Project. Those are primarily conservative-led states including Alabama, Iowa, Texas and Wyoming.

Last year, Missouri voters approved a ballot measure ensuring paid sick leave and boosting the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, with future increases tied to inflation.

But Republican lawmakers took aim at the changes in Jefferson City this year.

In a move Democrats called "absolute disdain" for workers, GOP lawmakers passed a bill repealing the paid sick leave provision and nixing the annual minimum wage increases tied to inflation. Missouri's current \$13.75 minimum wage will still rise to \$15 next month but is no longer subject to future increases.

"Today, we are protecting the people who make Missouri work—families, job creators, and small busi-

ness owners—by cutting taxes, rolling back overreach, and eliminating costly mandates,” Republican Gov. Mike Kehoe said in a July statement when he signed the bill into law.

The minimum wage for non-tipped employees in South Dakota will increase from \$11.50 per hour to \$11.85 per hour on Jan. 1, according to the state Department of Labor and Regulation.

The minimum wage in the state is adjusted annually based on increases in the cost of living, as measured by the consumer price index published by the U.S. Department of Labor. South Dakota implements the annual increase due to a citizen-initiated ballot measure passed by voters in 2014.

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org.

Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

U.S. work authorizations for legal immigrants slashed from 5 years to 18 months

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration Thursday announced new restrictions for immigrants, reducing the work authorization periods from five years to 18 months, the latest crackdown on legal immigration.

The new policy follows the shooting of two West Virginia National Guard members by an Afghan national granted asylum earlier this year.

The shift will not only affect hundreds of thousands of immigrants, but the shortened period for work authorization could create massive backlogs at the agency responsible for processing legal immigration requests, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

“Reducing the maximum validity period for employment authorization will ensure that those seeking to work in the United States do not threaten public safety or promote harmful anti-American ideologies,” USCIS Director Joseph Edlow said in a statement.

“After the attack on National Guard service members in our nation’s capital by an alien who was admitted into this country by the previous administration, it’s even more clear that USCIS must conduct frequent vetting of aliens,” he continued.

Immigrants affected by the new changes include refugees; those granted asylum; those with a withholding of removal; those with pending applications for asylum or withholding of removal; those adjusting their status, for example by gaining a green card; and those who fall under the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997.

That act applies to certain Nicaraguans, Cubans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, nationals of former Soviet bloc countries and their dependents who in the 1990s had applied for asylum and were systematically denied.

Additionally, USCIS fees for applying for permits and other paperwork increased as a result of the massive tax and spending passage that Republicans passed over the summer and President Donald Trump signed into law. For initial employment authorization, fees are now \$550 and \$275 to renew.

Following the shooting, U.S. Army Spc. Sarah Beckstrom, 20, died. A second guard member, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, 24, remains critically wounded but hospitalized in stable condition.

In response, the Trump administration has ramped up its crackdown on legal immigration and highlighted the need for its mass deportation campaign. The suspect, Rahmanullah Lakanwal, pleaded not guilty to several charges in court on Tuesday.

This week, all immigration applications from 19 countries listed on Trump’s “high-risk” countries or travel ban from earlier this year, were paused — a move that freezes processing for green card holders and citizenship applications.

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.

Signalgate report says Hegseth created a risk to national security with cellphone messages

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth violated official policy when he used the publicly available Signal app to message about military plans from his personal cell phone, including imminent bombings in Yemen, according to a report released Thursday by the Pentagon's own watchdog.

The Defense Department Inspector General's 84-page report concluded Hegseth sent information about the "strike times of manned U.S. aircraft over hostile territory over an unapproved, unsecure network approximately 2 to 4 hours before the execution of those strikes."

"Although the Secretary wrote in his July 25 statement to the DoD OIG that 'there were no details that would endanger our troops or the mission,' if this information had fallen into the hands of U.S. adversaries, Houthi forces might have been able to counter U.S. forces or reposition personnel and assets to avoid planned U.S. strikes," the report states. "Even though these events did not ultimately occur, the Secretary's actions created a risk to operational security that could have resulted in failed U.S. mission objectives and potential harm to U.S. pilots."

Members of Congress from both political parties requested the Defense Department Inspector General look into Hegseth's use of Signal after a journalist at The Atlantic was inadvertently added to a group chat of national security officials planning the bombing in Yemen. Editor-in-Chief Jeffrey Goldberg later published a series of stories detailing the messages.

Acting Defense Department Inspector General Steven A. Stebbins released a memo in April announcing he had opened an investigation into the matter.

GOP wants more Pentagon tech, Dems want Hegseth gone

Members of Congress' reaction to the report was mixed, with Republicans suggesting more technology is needed for the Pentagon, while Democrats called for Hegseth to resign.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Roger Wicker, R-Miss., issued a statement saying the report shows Hegseth "acted within his authority to communicate the information in question to other cabinet level officials."

"It is also clear to me that our senior leaders need more tools available to them to communicate classified information in real time and a variety of environments," Wicker added. "I think we have some work to do in providing those tools to our national security leaders."

Senate Armed Services Committee ranking member Jack Reed, D-R.I., said in a statement the report confirms "that Secretary Hegseth violated military regulations and continues to show reckless disregard for the safety of American servicemembers."

"For months, Secretary Hegseth has attempted to mislead Congress and the American people, claiming repeatedly that no classified information was involved," Reed said. "The Inspector General has now definitively cast doubt on those false assurances."

Reed added that Hegseth should "explain himself to Congress, the public, and the servicemembers he leads. The men and women of our armed forces deserve leadership they can trust with their lives."

Hegseth refuses to give cell phone to investigators

The Inspector General report said Hegseth declined to sit for an interview with the Defense Department's oversight agency, that he refused to hand over his personal cell phone to investigators and that he didn't retain some of the messages in accordance with federal recordkeeping requirements.

Officials working for Hegseth shared copies of the Signal chat with the inspector general, but those were incomplete since the app's auto-delete feature was on at the time. Signal users can adjust that for different lengths of time or turn it off completely.

Hegseth was in the Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, or SCIF, in his home the morning

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and early afternoon of March 15 to monitor "the operation against the Houthis," according to the report.

Two aides who were with Hegseth at the time told investigators he used "secure, classified" systems to communicate with United States Central Command officials "during the planning and execution of the strikes against Houthi targets that day and reviewed information related to the strikes."

"In the SCIF, the Secretary had access to multiple means of secure communication that allowed him to provide the necessary operational details and updates to non-DoD government officials on the Signal group chat," the report states.

The group chat about the Yemen bombing that accidentally included a journalist wasn't the only one Hegseth used to communicate about official Pentagon business from his personal phone.

Eight officials within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Office of the Chief Information Officer told investigators that Hegseth created "multiple Signal group chats in which the Secretary and others allegedly discussed official DoD business and nonpublic information."

"One of the officials we spoke with stated that the Secretary posted the same sensitive operational information concerning the Houthi attack plans on the 'Defense Team Huddle' group chat," the report states, later adding Hegseth declined to provide any information about that chat.

The Inspector General opted not to make any recommendations about the use of Signal in the report, since "records management issues arising from the use of Signal and other commercially available messaging applications are a DoD-wide issue."

A previous inspector general report also called on the department to "improve training for DoD senior officials on compliance with records retention laws and policies."

Alabama's Rogers says mission not compromised

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Ala., wrote in a statement that it is "important to remember that this was a successful operation that took out a dangerous target with no harm to U.S. troops. It's clear that the discussion on Signal didn't compromise the mission."

"During the past few administrations, the use of Signal for communication between government officials has grown, so I appreciate the comprehensive work by the IG to develop recommendations on how to improve and secure communications," Rogers said. "I encourage the Administration to follow these recommendations, and I look forward to discussions with the Pentagon on how to implement them."

House Armed Services Committee ranking member Adam Smith, D-Wash., called the report "a damning review of an incompetent secretary of defense who is profoundly incapable of the job and clearly has no respect for or comprehension of what is required to safeguard our service members."

"It confirms staggering violations of policy – namely that unsecured platforms were used by the secretary to boast about sensitive operational details that could have jeopardized both the mission and, more importantly, the lives of American service members tasked with carrying out Operation Rough Rider," Smith said.

'A fireable offense for anyone else in the Department of Defense'

Senate Defense Appropriations subcommittee ranking member Chris Coons, D-Del., said in a statement the report "concluded that Secretary Hegseth violated DOD procedure and put service members' lives at risk with his reckless mishandling of sensitive information."

"In March, I led a group of senators in pressing the Trump administration to investigate this blatant misconduct. Any service member who acted with such disregard for our national security would be dismissed, at the very least," Coons said. "Our nation's highest ranking defense official should not be held to a lower standard than the men and women he oversees. For the good of our nation, I once again call on Secretary Hegseth to resign."

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence ranking member Jim Himes, D-Conn., said in a statement the report "confirms what I feared when this Signal thread became public: We are fortunate that the mission was not compromised and that servicemembers were not put at needless risk thanks to Secretary Hegseth's reckless treatment of classified information."

"Pete Hegseth's behavior and lack of judgment would be a fireable offense for anyone else in the Department of Defense," Himes said. "What's more, his refusal to sit for an interview with the Inspector General or submit his device for examination is yet another example of his failure to take responsibility for his actions."

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.

Health subsidies would continue for 3 years under Dem bill to be voted on in US Senate

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer announced Thursday the chamber will vote next week to extend enhanced tax credits for three years for people who purchase their health insurance from the Affordable Care Act marketplace, though the plan seems unlikely to get the bipartisan support needed to advance.

While it would typically be difficult for the minority leader to schedule a floor vote, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., agreed that Democrats could bring up a health care bill of their choosing in exchange for voting to end the government shutdown.

Schumer told reporters in recent days to "stay tuned" for details about the legislation while maintaining all Senate Democrats were united around the proposal. The three-year plan he previewed during his floor speech appears identical to one House Democratic leaders have been pressing for in that chamber.

"Any Republican who claims to care about premium increases on January 1 has only one realistic path, and that's to support our bill for a simple, clean, three-year extension," Schumer said. "If Republicans block our bill, there's no going back. We won't get another chance to halt these premium spikes before they kick in at the start of the new year."

The vote will take place next Thursday, Schumer said.

Clock ticking on solution

Health care costs have surged to the forefront of the national conversation in recent months, with both Democrats and Republicans in Congress pledging to find solutions. Both agree much more time is needed to make larger, structural changes.

The Senate committee in charge of health care policy held a hearing Wednesday where senators began to coalesce around extending the enhanced tax credits beyond the end-of-December sunset date. But a bipartisan bill has not yet been introduced in that chamber on that subject.

Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Bill Cassidy, R-La., said just after the hearing wrapped up there will likely be a GOP bill, or even a bipartisan one, to counter Schumer's bill.

"Yeah, absolutely," Cassidy said. "I'd like to have a plan that both sides can vote for. But there will be a Republican plan if I have anything to do with it."

Congress has an especially brief time frame to find a short-term resolution on the expiring tax credits, which would lead the cost of ACA marketplace plans to rise by hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Open enrollment for ACA marketplace plans ends at different times throughout the country, with some states finishing on Dec. 15. Residents of other states are able to sign up through varying dates in January, but with their coverage starting later in the year. Lawmakers are set to leave Capitol Hill on Dec. 19 for their winter holiday break.

A poll released Thursday by the nonpartisan health organization KFF showed nearly 60% of ACA marketplace enrollees could not cover the costs of a \$300 annual increase in their premiums, while an additional 20% said they couldn't afford a \$1,000 jump in prices per year.

Gottheimer, Kiggans unveil House bipartisan bill

At the same time Schumer was speaking on the Senate floor, a bipartisan group of House lawmakers, led by New Jersey Democratic Rep. Josh Gottheimer and Virginia Republican Rep. Jen Kiggans, introduced a bill they said could address some of the short-term issues facing ACA enrollees.

"Although we may have different opinions over the long-term solutions for reforming marketplace health care or if there are even better and cheaper options for publicly available health insurance, we agree on the many aspects of the short-term solutions," Kiggans said.

The legislation — which needs to pass a floor vote, make it through the Senate and garner President Donald Trump's signature — would extend the enhanced ACA marketplace tax credits with new income caps, "guardrails for waste, fraud and abuse" and an overhaul of the pharmacy benefit manager, or PBM, system, Kiggans said.

The bipartisan group of representatives would then move on to the second part of their plan, not included in the bill, where they would try to make more structural changes to the entire country's health care system.

Those bills, Kiggans said, would address hospital billing transparency, implement Health Savings Accounts and advance the Give Kids a Chance Act "to accelerate pediatric cancer treatments and expand access to life-saving therapies for children battling rare diseases."

Gottheimer said the group wants House leaders to put their bill up for a vote before members leave town for the two-week, end-of-year break.

"In the last month, families have seen their health insurance premiums surge as they've shopped for insurance during open enrollment because enhanced premium tax credits are set to expire, as we all know, at the end of the year," Gottheimer said. "In fact, because of this, for millions of families on the ACA, their health premiums will rise an average of 26% next year.

"In Jersey, where we live, it could be even rougher with a 175% increase. That's \$20,000 for a family of four. And that's why we're all here together to try to solve this problem, do something about it, and avoid a massive new tax on hard-working families," he said.

Senators don't see future in bipartisan House bill

Schumer and other Senate Democrats didn't appear to take the bipartisan House plan seriously when pressed about it during an early afternoon press conference, asking reporters in the room whether Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., would actually put it on the floor for a vote.

"As for whatever House proposals there are, we'll always look at something, but I don't even see 15 Republicans supporting it right now," Schumer said. "Sure an individual or two or three people can say this or that. It's not going to solve the problem."

Schumer maintained Senate Democrats' three-year extension, which does not come with income caps or other changes to the tax credits proposed by centrist Republicans, is the best path forward.

He appeared frustrated when reporters asked him why he didn't include changes that could have swayed at least some GOP senators to vote for the bill.

Schumer said it wasn't worth it for Democrats to put together a bill that a few Republicans might support when he doesn't expect Speaker Johnson to put the bill on the floor in that chamber given strong opposition to the enhanced tax credits by "half his caucus."

"Come on," he said. "The fault is there, not with us."

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.

Most ACA marketplace users can't afford potential increases, poll shows

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — Americans who purchase their health insurance through the Affordable Care Act marketplace are bracing for a steep rise in costs next year that many say they will not be able to afford, according to a poll released Thursday by the nonpartisan health organization KFF.

Nearly 60% of enrollees surveyed could not cover the costs of a \$300 annual increase in their premiums, while an additional 20% said they couldn't afford a \$1,000 jump in prices per year.

About 90% of those polled said it would be somewhat or very difficult to afford health insurance within their budget if they could no longer purchase a plan through the ACA marketplace.

The spike in prices is predominantly due to the end-of-year expiration date for enhanced tax credits for ACA marketplace plans. Republicans in Congress have so far declined to extend the subsidies, while Democrats shut down the government in an unsuccessful attempt to continue the credits.

While increases would vary considerably based on location, income and plan type, a Sept. 30 KFF analysis projected individuals' annual premiums would rise between around \$350 and more than \$1,800.

Open enrollment for ACA marketplace plans ends at different times throughout the country, with some states finishing on Dec. 15. Residents of other states are able to sign up through varying dates in January, but with their coverage starting later in the year. That doesn't give Congress much time to broker a deal before the ability to purchase a plan for next year closes.

No progress on negotiations

The Senate is expected to vote next week on a Democratic bill to extend the subsidies, though that legislation appears unlikely to get the 60 votes needed to advance in the Republican-controlled chamber.

The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing this week to explore short- and long-term options to bring down health care costs, but senators on that panel didn't reach a clear consensus.

KFF President and CEO Drew Altman said in a statement the "poll shows the range of problems Marketplace enrollees will face if the enhanced tax credits are not extended in some form, and those problems will be the poster child of the struggles Americans are having with health care costs in the midterms if Republicans and Democrats cannot resolve their differences."

The KFF poll showed only 9% of marketplace enrollees have a lot of confidence that Republicans in Congress will address rising health insurance costs, with 24% saying they had some confidence, 25% saying they didn't have much confidence and 42% responding they had no confidence in GOP lawmakers on that particular issue.

Blame falls to Trump

ACA marketplace enrollees would predominantly fault President Donald Trump if their overall health care costs, including premiums, co-pays and deductibles, were to increase by \$1,000 next year, though Republicans and Democrats in Congress would share nearly as much blame, the survey found.

Thirty-seven percent would place the responsibility with Trump, while 33% would cite GOP lawmakers and 29% would fault Democrats with the rising costs.

Those numbers fluctuate significantly depending on a person's political affiliation, with 65% of Republicans saying they would blame Democrats, while 20% would credit Republicans in Congress and 14% would fault Trump.

Forty-four percent of people who identified as independents said they would blame Trump, while 32% said they would cite Republicans in Congress and 23% said they would fault Democrats.

Among Democrats, 49% would blame Trump, 46% would credit congressional Republicans, with the remainder would fault members of their own party.

KFF conducted the survey of 1,350 people between Nov. 7-15. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points for the full sample, with a plus or minus 6 percentage points margin of error for political party affiliation questions.

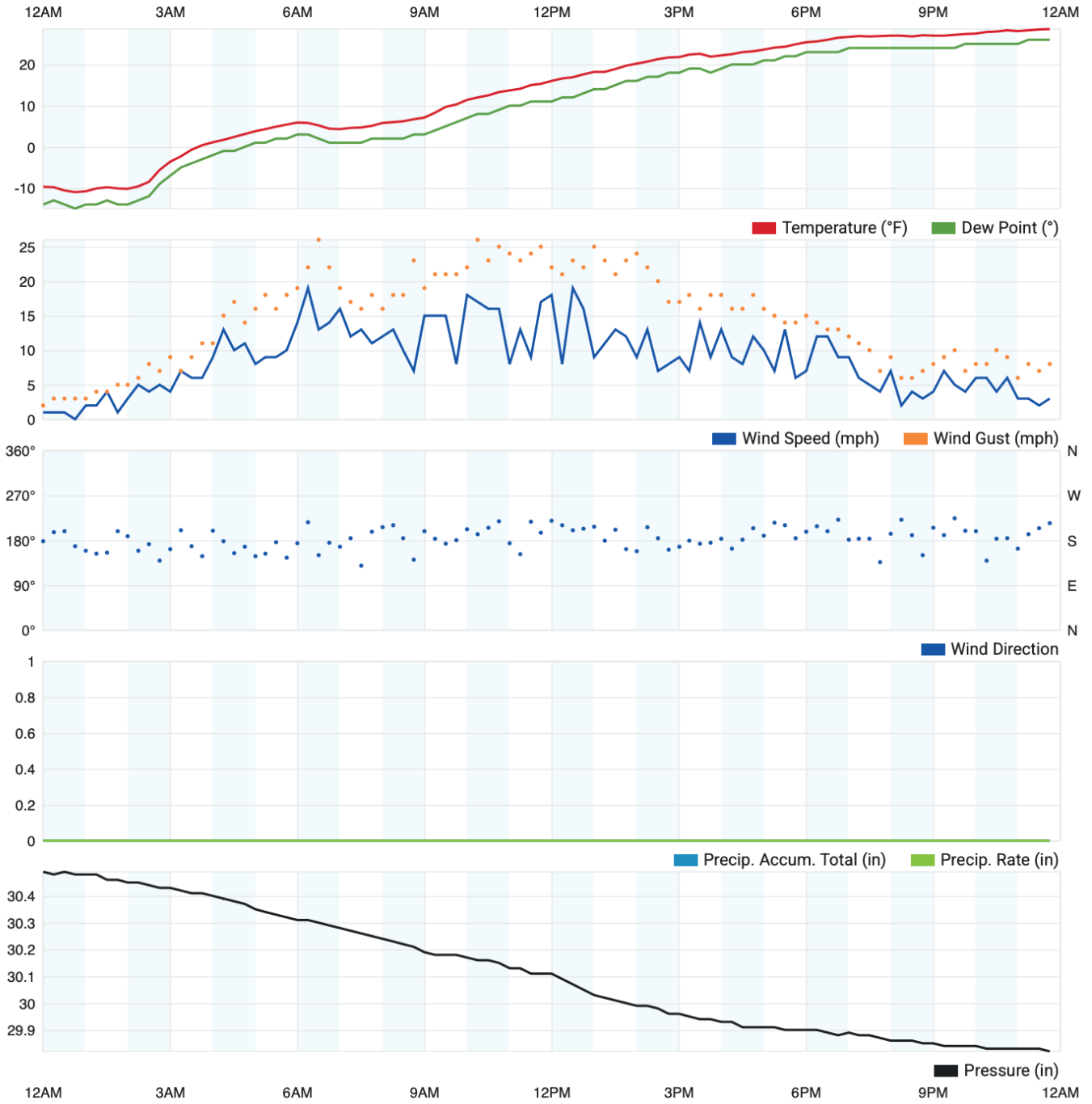
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

December 4, 2025



Broton Daily Independent

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Friday

Friday Night

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



40 %

High: 32 °F ↓↓

Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy



Low: 8 °F

Mostly Cloudy



70 %

High: 16 °F

Snow Likely



Low: -5 °F

Mostly Cloudy



20 %

High: 10 °F

Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow



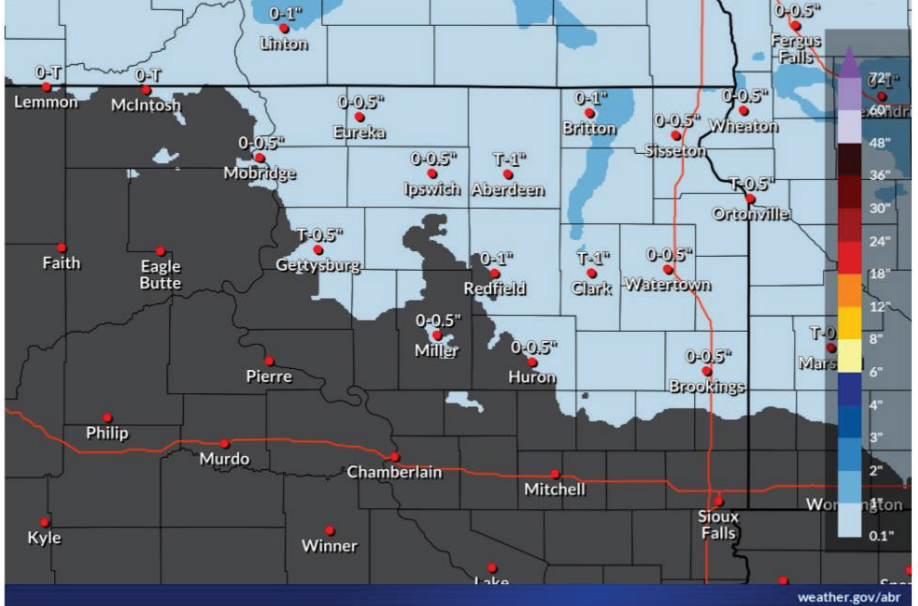
Light Snow Potential Today

December 5, 2025
3:41 AM

Expected Snowfall: Official NWS Forecast

Valid 12 AM Fri Dec 5, 2025 through 12 AM Sat Dec 6, 2025

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Dec 05, 2025 3:21 AM CST



Key Messages

- First clipper low tracking across the region today.
- Up to 1 inch of new snow accumulation mainly across northeast SD into west central MN.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A round of snow continues through today, tracking southeast across eastern SD into western MN. Up to an inch of new snow is expected.

Groton Daily Independent

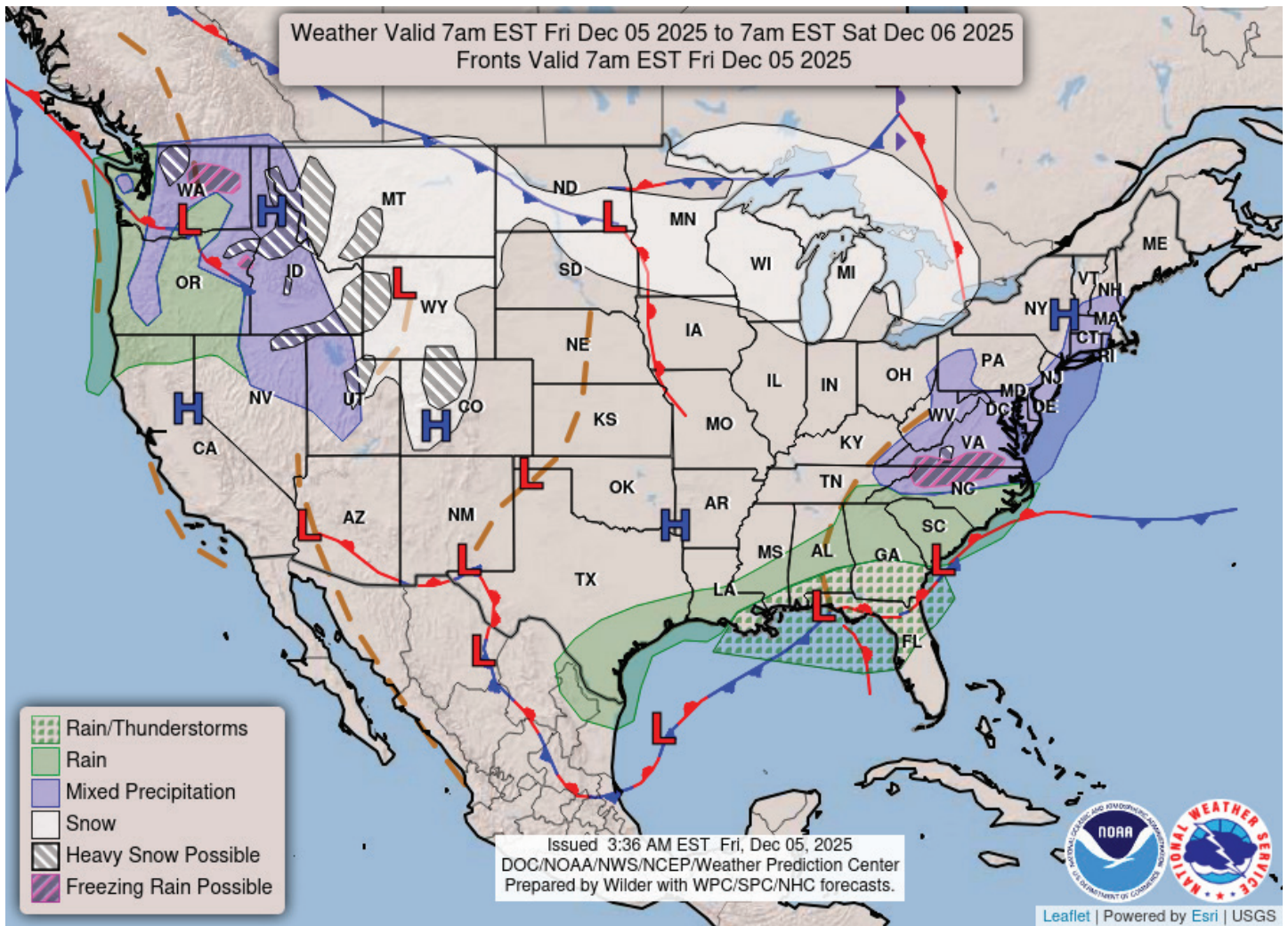
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 28 °F at 11:29 PM
Low Temp: -11 °F at 12:41 AM
Wind: 29 mph at 10:02 AM
Precip: 0.00 1" of snow this morning

Today's Info

Record High: 57 in 1939
Record Low: -25 in 2005
Average High: 33
Average Low: 11
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.10
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.31
Precip Year to Date: 24.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:50 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:56 am



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Today in Weather History

December 5, 1960: A storm dropped snow on the entire region from the morning of the 4th to the late afternoon of the 5th, with the highest amounts in the western, central and north central parts of South Dakota. Five to 10 inches of snow fell in these areas. The snow, blown by winds of 30 to 40 mph, caused extensive drifting of streets and highways. A brief period of freezing rain preceded the snow and added to hazardous driving conditions on roads. Schools were closed for one to two days, with 27 towns reporting closed schools in the Aberdeen area alone. Telephone and power disruption was widespread in central and north central counties of the state, as poles and wires were broken by a combination of ice, snow, and the wind. The storm produced mostly rain in the extreme eastern counties of South Dakota into west central Minnesota, with a narrow band of freezing rain preceding light snow immediately to the west. No serious automobile accidents or property damage was reported in this area of freezing rain and light snow.

December 5, 1976: Cold Canadian air moved across South Dakota during the day on Sunday, December 5th. High winds gusted to 63 mph at Philip and 55 mph at Rapid City. One to two inches of snow fell over all of South Dakota; however, many counties in the southeast, south central, and east-central parts of the state received amounts varying from three to five inches. After this storm, nighttime temperatures fell to below zero. Snowfall amounts included 2 inches at Pierre, Aberdeen, and Watertown; and 3 inches at Redfield and Clear Lake.

December 5, 1886: A southern storm dumped heavy snow up into far southwest Virginia. The storm dumped 11 inches in Montgomery Alabama and 22.5 inches in Knoxville, TN. It also dropped 25 inches in Rome, Georgia, and 26 inches in Ashville, North Carolina.

1941 - The temperature at Enosburg Falls soared to 72 degrees to establish a state record for Vermont for the month of December. (The Weather Channel)

December 5, 1953: A tornado outbreak occurred over northeastern Louisiana, southeastern Arkansas, and western Mississippi on this day. At least four confirmed tornadoes touched down. The strongest tornado was rated F5 as it destroyed the town of Vicksburg, Mississippi. This tornado first touched down just west of the Mississippi River in East Madison Parish in Louisiana. The tornado crossed the Mississippi River and tore through the downtown area of Vicksburg. On the ground for seven miles, this tornado caused 38 deaths, 270 injuries, and cost an estimated \$25 million in damages in 1953. Estimated cost adjusted for inflation in 2013 Dollars would be over \$200 million. The NWS Office in Jackson, Mississippi has an interactive track map of this event which includes photos and personal accounts.

1987 - Heavy snow blanketed parts of the north central U.S., and freezing drizzle produced a coat of ice up to half an inch thick in northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. Snowfall totals ranged up to seven inches at Grand Rapids MN, and 12 inches at Seney MI. High winds in the north central U.S. gusted to 63 mph at Pellston MI, and reached 70 mph at Makinaw Bridge MI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - There was only a "flurry" of activity, as for much of the nation winter remained on hold. The cold and snow of winter was primarily confined to the northeastern U.S. Five cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Norfolk NE with a reading of 65 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A warm Pacific storm system brought high winds and heavy rain to western Washington and western Oregon. Up to ten inches of rain deluged the western slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range in Washington State over a three day period, and 500 persons had to be evacuated due to flooding along the Skagit River. Up to five inches of rain drenched northwest Oregon, and winds gusted to 71 mph at Netarts. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major winter storm impacted parts of the Mid-Atlantic and northeastern United States during the 5th-7th. Snowfall accumulations of one to two feet were common across areas of Pennsylvania northward into New England. Boston, MA received 16.2 inches while Providence, RI had the greatest single snowstorm on record with 17 inches, beating the previous record of 12 inches set December 5-6, 1981. Boston's Logan International Airport was closed briefly on the 7th as heavy snowfall made regular airport operations impossible (AFP).



Daily Devotion

Consequences of Unforgiveness Is there anyone you need to forgive today?

Hebrews 12:14-15: Warning and Encouragement

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Scripture tells us the importance of pardoning those who have offended us. Why? Because unforgiveness ...

Harms our interactions. Have you ever tried to maintain a relationship with someone who is steeped in bitterness? You can't because that person is fixated on unhealthy negative feelings.

Hinders our prayer life. Unforgiveness is sin, and unconfessed sin creates "static" in our relationship with God. So we should forgive others before prayer or worship (Matthew 5:23-24).

Damages our witness. The highlight of your testimony is salvation—namely, that Jesus forgave your sins and saved you from their eternal consequences. How can you share this if the person you're talking to can't see a hint of forgiveness in your own life?

Thwarts our spiritual growth. God will not bless sinful actions. So if you are living mired in unforgiveness, you cannot expect Him to shower you with His blessings. By persisting in disobedience, you disrupt intimate fellowship with the Lord and put yourself at risk of spiritual stagnation.

Is there anyone you need to forgive? Don't let another day pass without extending grace to him or her. It is more important than you know.

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:
12.02.25

17 25 26 53 60 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.03.25

14 19 27 30 41 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$8,570,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 28 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.04.25

1 10 21 35 47 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 43 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.03.25

4 13 18 25 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$111,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 43 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.03.25

9 31 35 37 58 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 12 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.03.25

1 14 20 46 51 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$820,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 12 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Marshall, Minn. 59, Harding County 44
Wall 54, Newell 31

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

Police recover a swallowed Fabergé pendant after a 6-day wait for it to reappear

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand Police said Friday they have recovered a James Bond-inspired Fabergé pendant after six days of closely watching the man accused of swallowing the jewelry in an Auckland store.

They said the pendant was recovered Thursday night after it exited the suspect's gastrointestinal tract naturally without medical intervention.

The limited-edition, Fabergé egg pendant was inspired by the 1983 James Bond film "Octopussy," in which a jewel-smuggling operation involves a fake Fabergé egg.

A less glamorous photo supplied by New Zealand's police Friday showed a gloved hand holding the recovered pendant and its long, gold chain with an intact price tag showing the jewelry's 33,000 New Zealand dollar (\$19,000) value.

The man was arrested inside Partridge Jewelers in Auckland on Nov. 28 shortly after the alleged theft.

He made a court appearance Nov. 29, when he didn't enter a plea to a charge of theft. Since then, he's been in police custody and officers had been stationed round the clock with the man to wait for the evidence to reemerge.

The 32-year-old man has not been publicly named. He is due to appear in Auckland District Court on Monday and will remain in police custody until then.

"Given this man is in Police custody, we have a duty of care to continue monitoring him given the circumstances of what has occurred," Inspector Grae Anderson said in a statement Wednesday.

The store's website says the egg, one of only 50 made, was crafted from gold, painted with green enamel and encrusted with 183 diamonds and two sapphires. The pendant is 8.4 centimeters (3.3 inches) tall and is mounted on a stand.

"The egg opens to reveal an 18ct yellow gold octopus nestled inside, adorned with white diamond suckers and black diamond eyes," an item description said. "The octopus surprise pays homage to the eponymous antagonist at the center of the 'Octopussy' film."

Putin says there are points he can't agree to in the US proposal to end Russia's war in Ukraine

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

Russian President Vladimir Putin says some proposals in a U.S. plan to end the war in Ukraine are unacceptable to the Kremlin, indicating in comments published Thursday that any deal is still some ways off.

U.S. President Donald Trump has set in motion the most intense diplomatic push to stop the fighting since Russia launched the full-scale invasion of its neighbor nearly four years ago. But the effort has once again run into demands that are hard to reconcile, especially over whether Ukraine must give up land to Russia and how it can be kept safe from any future aggression by Moscow.

Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and son-in-law Jared Kushner planned to meet later Thursday with

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the Ukrainian delegation led by Rustem Umerov following the Americans' discussions with Putin at the Kremlin, but there was no immediate confirmation whether that meeting took place.

The meeting at the Shell Bay Club, a golf property developed by Witkoff in Hallandale Beach, was tentatively set to begin at 5 p.m. EST, according to an official familiar with the logistics. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly because the meeting has not yet been formally announced and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Putin said his five-hour talks Tuesday with Witkoff and Kushner were "necessary" and "useful," but also "difficult work," and some proposals were unacceptable.

Speaking to the India Today television channel before he landed Thursday in New Delhi for a state visit, Putin said the American proposals discussed at the Kremlin meeting were based on earlier discussions between Russia and the U.S., including his meeting with Trump in Alaska in August, but also included new elements.

"We had to go through practically every point, which is why it took so much time," he said. "It was a meaningful, highly specific and substantive conversation. Sometimes we said, 'Yes, we can discuss this, but with that one we cannot agree.'"

Trump said Wednesday that Witkoff and Kushner came away from the marathon session confident that Putin wants to find an end to the war. "Their impression was very strongly that he'd like to make a deal," he added.

Putin said the initial U.S. 28-point peace proposal was trimmed to 27 points and split into four packages. He refused to elaborate on what Russia could accept or reject, and none of the other officials involved offered details of the talks.

The Russian leader praised Trump's peace efforts, noting that "achieving consensus among conflicting parties is no easy task."

"To say now what exactly doesn't suit us or where we could possibly agree seems premature, since it might disrupt the very mode of operation that President Trump is trying to establish," Putin said.

He emphasized that Russia will fulfill the goals it set and take all of the eastern Donetsk region. "All this boils down to one thing: Either we take back these territories by force, or eventually Ukrainian troops withdraw," he said.

European leaders, left on the sidelines by Washington as U.S. officials engage directly with Moscow and Kyiv, have accused Putin of feigning interest in Trump's peace drive.

French President Emmanuel Macron met in Beijing with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, seeking to involve him in pressuring Russia toward a ceasefire. Xi, whose country has provided strong diplomatic support for Putin, did not say respond to France's call, but said that "China supports all efforts that work towards peace."

Russian barrages of civilian areas of Ukraine continued overnight into Thursday. A missile struck Kryvyi Rih on Wednesday night, wounding six people, including a 3-year-old girl, according to city administration head Oleksandr Vilkul.

The attack on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown damaged more than 40 residential buildings, a school and domestic gas pipes, Vilkul said.

A 6-year-old girl died in the southern city of Kherson after Russian artillery shelling wounded her the previous day, regional military administration chief Oleksandr Prokudin wrote on Telegram.

The Kherson Thermal Power Plant, which provides heat for over 40,000 residents, shut down Thursday after Russia pounded it with drones and artillery for several days, he said.

Authorities planned emergency meetings to find alternate sources of heating, he said. Until then, tents were erected across the city where residents could warm up and charge electronic devices.

Russia also struck Odesa with drones, wounding six people, while civilian and energy infrastructure was damaged, said Oleh Kiper, head of the regional military administration.

Overall, Russia fired two ballistic missiles and 138 drones at Ukraine overnight, officials said.

Meanwhile, in the Russia-occupied part of the Kherson region, two men were killed by a Ukrainian drone strike on their vehicle Thursday, Moscow-installed regional leader Vladimir Saldo said. A 68-year-old woman was also wounded in the attack, he said.

Grand jury rejects new mortgage fraud indictment against New York Attorney General Letitia James

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and OLIVIA DIAZ Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — The Justice Department failed Thursday to secure a new indictment against New York Attorney General Letitia James after a judge dismissed the previous mortgage fraud prosecution encouraged by President Donald Trump, according to people familiar with the matter.

Prosecutors went back to a grand jury in Virginia after a judge's ruling halting the prosecution of James and another longtime Trump foe, former FBI Director James Comey, on the grounds that the U.S. attorney who presented the cases was illegally appointed. But grand jurors rejected prosecutors' request to bring charges.

It's the latest setback for the Justice Department in its bid to prosecute the frequent political target of the Republican president.

Prosecutors are expected to try again for an indictment, according to one person familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the case.

James was initially charged with bank fraud and making false statements to a financial institution in connection with a home purchase in Norfolk, Virginia, in 2020. Lindsey Halligan, a former White House aide and Trump lawyer, personally presented the case to the grand jury in October after being installed as U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia amid pressure from Trump to charge Comey and James.

James has denied any wrongdoing and accused the administration of using the justice system to seek revenge against Trump's political opponents. In a statement Thursday, James said: "It is time for this unchecked weaponization of our justice system to stop."

"This should be the end of this case," her attorney, Abbe Lowell, said in a statement. "If they continue, undeterred by a court ruling and a grand jury's rejection of the charges, it will be a shocking assault on the rule of law and a devastating blow to the integrity of our justice system."

The allegations related to James' purchase of a modest house in Norfolk, where she has family. During the sale, she signed a standard document called a "second home rider" in which she agreed to keep the property primarily for her "personal use and enjoyment for at least one year," unless the lender agreed otherwise.

Rather than using the home as a second residence, James rented it out to a family of three, allowing her to obtain favorable loan terms not available for investment properties, prosecutors alleged.

It's the latest example of pushback by grand jurors since the beginning of the second Trump administration. It's so unusual for grand jurors to refuse to return an indictment that it was once said that prosecutors could persuade a grand jury to "indict a ham sandwich." But the Justice Department has faced setbacks in front of grand juries in several recent cases.

Even if the charges against James are resurrected, the Justice Department could face obstacles in securing a conviction against James.

James' lawyers separately argued the case was a vindictive prosecution brought to punish the Trump critic who spent years investigating and suing the Republican president and won a staggering judgment in a lawsuit alleging he defrauded banks by overstating the value of his real estate holdings on financial statements. The fine was later tossed out by a higher court, but both sides are appealing.

The defense had also alleged "outrageous government conduct" preceding her indictment, which the defense argued warrants the case's dismissal. The judge hadn't ruled on the defense's arguments on those matters before dismissing the case last month over the appointment of Lindsey Halligan as U.S. attorney.

U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie took issue with the mechanism the Trump administration employed to appoint Halligan to lead one of the Justice Department's most elite and important offices.

Halligan was named as a replacement for Erik Siebert, a veteran prosecutor in the office and interim U.S. attorney who resigned in September amid Trump administration pressure to file charges against both Comey and James.

The following night, Trump said he would be nominating Halligan to the role of interim U.S. attorney and publicly implored Attorney General Pam Bondi to take action against his political opponents, saying in a Truth Social post that, "We can't delay any longer, it's killing our reputation and credibility" and "JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!"

Comey was indicted three days after Halligan was sworn in by Bondi, and James was charged two weeks after that.

The Justice Department had defended Halligan's appointment but has also revealed that Bondi had given Halligan a separate position of "Special Attorney," presumably as a way to protect the indictments from the possibility of collapse. But Currie said such a retroactive designation could not save the cases.

Admiral says there was no 'kill them all' order in boat attack, but video alarms lawmakers

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Navy admiral commanding the U.S. military strikes on an alleged drug boat in the Caribbean told lawmakers Thursday that there was no "kill them all" order from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, but a stark video of the attack left grave questions as Congress scrutinizes the campaign that killed two survivors.

Adm. Frank "Mitch" Bradley appeared for a series of closed-door classified briefings at the Capitol as lawmakers conduct an investigation after a report that he ordered the follow-on attack that killed the survivors to comply with Hegseth's demands. Legal experts have said such a strike could be a violation of the laws of military warfare.

"Bradley was very clear that he was given no such order, to give no quarter or to kill them all," said Sen. Tom Cotton, who heads the Senate Intelligence Committee, as he exited a classified briefing.

While Cotton, R-Ark., defended the attack, Democrats who were also briefed and saw video of the survivors being killed questioned the Trump administration's rationale and said the incident was deeply concerning.

"The order was basically: Destroy the drugs, kill the 11 people on the boat," said Washington Rep. Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee.

Smith, who is demanding further investigation, said the survivors were "basically two shirtless people clinging to the bow of a capsized and inoperable boat, drifting in the water — until the missiles come and kill them."

The classified sessions with Bradley, alongside the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine, provided fresh information at a crucial moment as Hegseth's leadership comes under scrutiny. But they did little to resolve growing questions about the legal basis for President Donald Trump's extraordinary campaign to use war powers against suspected drug smugglers. So far more than 80 people have been killed in some 20 strikes.

Late Thursday, U.S. Southern Command announced it had conducted another strike against a small boat in the eastern Pacific Ocean following a pause of almost three weeks. There were four casualties, according to the social media post.

Lawmakers have not yet specifically authorized the use of military force against the alleged drug boats, and the Republican-controlled Congress has turned back attempts to put a check on Trump's power to engage in the missile campaign, which Hegseth has vowed will continue. Several Democrats have called for Hegseth to resign.

Congressional investigation gets underway

Lawmakers want a full accounting of the Sept. 2 strike, which was the first in what has become a monthslong series of U.S. military attacks on vessels near Venezuela believed to be ferrying drugs. The Washington Post had reported that Bradley ordered the follow-on attack on the survivors.

But lawmakers who lead the House and Senate's national security committees in Congress came away with different descriptions of what the two survivors were doing when they were killed.

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Cotton said he saw them "trying to flip a boat loaded with drugs bound for United States back over so they could stay in the fight."

He said there were "several minutes" between the first and second attacks, which consisted of four missile strikes. He said it was "gratifying" that the U.S. military was taking "the battle" to cartels.

But Connecticut Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said, "what I saw in that room was one of the most troubling things I've seen in my time in public service."

"You have two individuals in clear distress, without any means of locomotion, with a destroyed vessel," he said, and who "were killed by the United States."

The survivors did not issue any distress call or other communications, though lawmakers were told it appeared the people had a hand raised, "waving" at one point during the attacks, Smith said.

Smith acknowledged there was likely cocaine on the boat, but he objects to the Republican administration's rationale for continued attacks on alleged drug runners who may or may not be heading to the United States. "That's really the core of the problem with all of this," he said. "That incredibly broad definition, I think, is what sets in motion all of these problems about using lethal force and using the military."

Who is Adm. Bradley?

At the time of the attack, Bradley was the commander of Joint Special Operations Command, overseeing coordinated operations between the military's elite special operations units out of Fort Bragg in North Carolina. About a month after the strike, he was promoted to commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.

His military career, spanning more than three decades, was mostly spent serving in the elite Navy SEALs and commanding joint operations. He was among the first special forces officers to deploy to Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 attacks. His latest promotion to admiral was approved by unanimous voice vote in the Senate this year, and Democratic and Republican senators praised his record.

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., has described Bradley as among those who are "rock solid" and "the most extraordinary people that have ever served in the military."

But lawmakers like Tillis have also made it clear they expect a reckoning if it is found that survivors were targeted. "Anybody in the chain of command that was responsible for it, that had vision of it, needs to be held accountable," he said.

What else are lawmakers seeking?

Underpinning Trump's campaign against suspected traffickers is his argument that drug cartels amount to armed combatants because their cargo poses a threat to American lives.

Democrats are demanding the release of the full video of the Sept. 2 attack, as well as written records of the orders and any directives about the mission from Hegseth. None of the written orders or audio of verbal commands was shared with the lawmakers.

A White House Office of Legal Counsel memo providing a rationale for the strikes was dated after the fact, on Sept. 5. That memo remains undisclosed, and Democrats want it released.

Obtaining further information, though, will largely depend on action from Republican lawmakers, who have majority control of the committees, a potentially painful prospect for them if it puts them at odds with the president.

Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said that he and the Senate Armed Services Committee chair, GOP Sen. Roger Wicker, have formally requested the executive orders authorizing the operations and the complete videos from the strikes, among other items. The Trump administration has repeatedly denied their requests for basic information about the operation, Reed said.

Republican lawmakers who are close to Trump have largely stood by Hegseth and the administration's decision to conduct the strikes.

Elsewhere, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and others see the U.S. military operation as part of an effort to prompt a government change in the South American country. Maduro on Wednesday acknowledged speaking last month by phone with Trump, who confirmed the call days earlier.

Tennessee special election shows the power of partisan gerrymandering as Trump pushes for more of it

By JONATHAN MATTISE and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — As a leader of the College Democrats at Vanderbilt University, Luci Wingo knew the odds of a Democrat winning one of Nashville's three U.S. House seats weren't great. Yet her hope grew as the party mounted an aggressive campaign for its candidate, Aftyn Behn, in a special election to replace a Republican who had resigned.

In the end, high Democratic enthusiasm and millions of dollars in spending weren't enough. Republican Matt Van Epps won Tuesday's vote by 9 percentage points — a closer margin than the district's last election, yet still a victory for the GOP that seemed all but certain based on how the district was drawn. Republicans had split the unified Democratic stronghold of Nashville into three GOP-leaning districts after the last census.

As states wage a mid-decade redistricting battle initiated by President Donald Trump, Tennessee's special election illustrates the power of manipulative mapmaking and provides a window into what lies ahead in the states that are rushing to redraw their congressional maps for next year's midterm elections.

Such gerrymandering can help parties in power maintain and even expand their majorities, but it's also a source of frustration and anger for voters in the minority party who lose the chance to be represented by someone of their choice.

"It's a hard battle to fight because it's so intentional, it's so in your face — and it's hard to not just want to get frustrated and kind of give up," said Wingo, a college sophomore who grew up in Nashville.

She said she's become accustomed to what she called "purposeful pessimism."

"We don't try to get our hopes up too much, because we kind of know the outcomes," she said, adding that Behn's campaign nevertheless created a surge of enthusiasm among local Democrats.

For Republicans, the Nashville gerrymander worked

Nashville had been represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper for 20 years when the Republican-controlled state General Assembly decided in 2022 to use the latest census data to carve up the city in a quest to flip his seat to Republicans.

Some parts of Nashville were placed in two sprawling rural districts to the east and west, both represented by Republicans. The portion retaining Cooper's district number was redrawn to twist southward into another rural Republican-leaning area.

Cooper, a moderate-leaning lawmaker, decided not to seek reelection that year, and Republicans won all three seats by comfortable margins.

Republicans carried all three districts again last year. They won by 17 percentage points in Cooper's former 5th District, by nearly 22 points in the westward 7th District — which includes downtown Nashville, well-known historically Black areas and major universities — and by 36 points in the eastward 6th District.

Van Epps' special election victory this week in the 7th Congressional District was close enough to encourage Democrats looking for momentum ahead of next year's midterms. But it also showcased how the district remains reliably Republican thanks to the recent redrawing of its boundaries.

"In this case, gerrymandering worked," said John McGlennon, a longtime professor of government at the College of William & Mary in Virginia. "But it may be at the price of seats in other places in Tennessee and around the country."

Kevin Mittelmeier, who says he's in the political middle, cast his ballot for Behn. He said voters' voices won't have much meaning as long as the districts remain the same.

"I can just see from the outside looking in, unbiased, it's actually frustrating how it's being controlled, and how it's being dealt with, and how people of Nashville's opinions really are taken away," he said.

For some voters, the split-up districts remain confusing. Maggie Tekeli brought three young children to the polls planning to vote for Behn, only to learn her Nashville home wasn't in the 7th District.

"It's just discouraging from a democratic process standpoint," she said.

Gerrymandering is spreading in the states

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What Republican mapmakers did to Nashville, they now are looking to replicate in other states as Trump pushes for mid-decade redistricting, which he hopes will lead to his party maintaining its majority in the U.S. House next year.

In Texas, the first to answer Trump's call, Republican lawmakers redrew congressional district boundaries in Dallas, Fort Worth and their suburbs to extend a Democratic seat into a Republican region far outside the metro area.

In Missouri, Republican officials approved a new U.S. House map that shaves off portions of a Democratic-held seat in Kansas City into two rural Republican-held districts and stretches the remainder of the seat eastward into another predominantly Republican area.

Officials in North Carolina and Ohio also approved new U.S. House maps intended to boost Republican chances of winning additional seats.

Democrats countered with their own gerrymandering in California. Voters in November approved a new Democratic-drawn congressional map that merges farming and ranching areas favoring Republicans with some of the state's wealthiest and most liberal coastal communities.

Some residents in each of those states expressed concern about being adequately represented under the new districts. But that didn't deter the politicians from drawing the maps because the stakes are so high. Democrats need a net gain of just three seats in next year's midterms to win control of the U.S. House and break a Republican grip on power that has enabled Trump to advance his agenda.

Indianapolis could become another Nashville

The splintering of Nashville from one Democratic congressional district into three that favor Republicans is a mirror of what's being debated by Republicans in Indiana, which could be the next state to act on partisan redistricting.

Republicans currently hold seven of the state's nine U.S. House seats. But a proposal in the Republican-led state General Assembly would give the GOP a shot at winning all nine seats.

Under the plan, a congressional district for the state's largest city, Indianapolis, would be split up and grafted onto four Republican-leaning districts. The district has been represented for the past 17 years by Democratic Rep. André Carson, the state's lone Black member of Congress.

His district would be stretched southeast to the border with Kentucky and Ohio, combining residents of the state's largest city with those in its least populated county. Another district would span westward to the Illinois border.

During a public hearing this week, Democratic state Rep. Robin Shackleford warned colleagues that the redrawn congressional districts would "be crippling" for her Indianapolis constituents.

"These maps crack apart historic Black neighborhoods, weakening our voting power and silencing the voices of the very people who are already fighting the hardest for economic stability, safer streets, better schools and access to affordable health care," she said.

Yet the revised districts, if approved, appear likely to accomplish their purpose of boosting Republican representation in Congress.

Laura Merrifield Wilson, a political scientist at the University of Indianapolis, said she had no doubt that there will be enough Republicans in the newly drawn congressional districts to overwhelm the Democratic vote in future elections.

But she added: "When you're connecting some of Indianapolis to some of those very rural areas, both groups are ultimately going to lose out."

Supreme Court allows Texas to use a congressional map favorable to Republicans in 2026

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided Supreme Court on Thursday came to the rescue of Texas Republicans, allowing next year's elections to be held under the state's congressional redistricting plan favorable to the GOP and pushed by President Donald Trump despite a lower-court ruling that the map likely discriminates

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on the basis of race.

With conservative justices in the majority, the court acted on an emergency request from Texas for quick action because qualifying in the new districts already has begun, with primary elections in March.

The Supreme Court's order puts the 2-1 ruling blocking the map on hold at least until after the high court issues a final decision in the case. Justice Samuel Alito had previously temporarily blocked the order while the full court considered the Texas appeal.

The justices cast doubt on the lower-court finding that race played a role in the new map, saying in an unsigned statement that Texas lawmakers had "avowedly partisan goals."

In dissent, Justice Elena Kagan wrote for the three liberal justices that her colleagues should not have intervened at this point. Doing so, she wrote, "ensures that many Texas citizens, for no good reason, will be placed in electoral districts because of their race. And that result, as this Court has pronounced year in and year out, is a violation of the Constitution."

The high court's vote "is a green light for there to be even more re-redistricting, and a strong message to lower courts to butt out," Richard Hasen, an election law expert at the University of California at Los Angeles law school, wrote on the Election Law Blog.

The justices have blocked past lower-court rulings in congressional redistricting cases, most recently in Alabama and Louisiana, that came several months before elections.

The Texas congressional map enacted last summer at Trump's urging was engineered to give Republicans five additional House seats.

The effort to preserve a slim Republican majority in the House in next year's elections touched off a nationwide redistricting battle.

Texas was the first state to meet Trump's demands in what has become an expanding national battle over redistricting. Republicans drew the state's new map to give the GOP five additional seats, and Missouri and North Carolina followed with new maps adding an additional Republican seat each. To counter those moves, California voters approved a ballot initiative to give Democrats an additional five seats there.

The redrawn maps are facing court challenges in California and Missouri. A three-judge panel allowed the new North Carolina map to be used in the 2026 elections.

The Trump administration is suing to block the new California maps, but it called for the Supreme Court to keep the redrawn Texas districts in place.

The justices are separately considering a case from Louisiana that could further limit race-based districts under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. It's unclear how the current round of redistricting would be affected by the outcome in the Louisiana case.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said the Supreme Court's order "defended Texas's fundamental right to draw a map that ensures we are represented by Republicans." He called the redistricting law "the Big Beautiful Map."

"Texas is paving the way as we take our country back, district by district, state by state," Paxton said in a statement. "This map reflects the political climate of our state and is a massive win for Texas and every conservative who is tired of watching the left try to upend the political system with bogus lawsuits."

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issued a statement saying: "We won! Texas is officially — and legally — more red."

Democratic National Committee chairman Ken Martin said in a statement that the court's decision "to allow Texas Republicans' rigged, racially gerrymandered maps to go into effect is wrong — both morally and legally. Once again, the Supreme Court gave Trump exactly what he wanted: a rigged map to help Republicans avoid accountability in the midterms for turning their backs on the American people."

In the Texas case, U.S. District Judges Jeffrey V. Brown and David Guaderrama concluded that the redistricting plan likely dilutes the political power of Black and Latino voters in violation of the Constitution. Trump appointed Brown in his first term while President Barack Obama, a Democrat, appointed Guaderrama.

"To be sure, politics played a role in drawing the 2025 Map," Brown wrote. "But it was much more than just politics. Substantial evidence shows that Texas racially gerrymandered the 2025 Map."

The majority opinion provoked a vituperative dissent from Judge Jerry Smith, an appeals court judge on the panel.

Smith accused Brown of “pernicious judicial misbehavior” for not giving Smith sufficient time before issuing the majority opinion. Smith, an appointee of President Ronald Reagan, a Republican, also disagreed strenuously with the substance of the opinion, saying it would be a candidate for the “Nobel Prize for Fiction,” if there were such an award.

“The main winners from Judge Brown’s opinion are George Soros and Gavin Newsom,” Smith wrote, referring to the liberal megadonor and California’s Democratic governor. “The obvious losers are the People of Texas and the Rule of Law.”

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi hailed Thursday’s Supreme Court stay, posting on X, “Federal courts have no right to interfere with a State’s decision to redraw legislative maps for partisan reasons.”

The new map eliminated five of the state’s nine “coalition” districts, where no minority group has a majority but together they outnumber non-Hispanic white voters. The total number of congressional districts in which minorities make up a majority of voting-age citizens dropped from 16 to 14.

Yet Republicans argued the map is better for minority voters. There’s a new, eighth Hispanic-majority district, and two Black-majority districts instead of none.

But critics consider that the Hispanic or Black majority in each district is so slim that white voters, who tend to turn out in larger percentages, will control election results.

Police video shows Luigi Mangione said he didn’t want to talk. They kept asking questions

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Minutes after police approached Luigi Mangione in a Pennsylvania McDonald’s, he told an officer he didn’t want to talk, according to video and testimony at a court hearing Thursday for the man charged with killing UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson.

Although Mangione signaled he wasn’t interested in speaking, police continued asking questions, and he continued answering, video showed. Nearly 20 minutes passed before police informed him of his right to remain silent.

The exchanges have been scrutinized this week at a lengthy New York court hearing as Mangione’s lawyers try to keep some key evidence from being presented at his murder trial, including his statements to police and a gun and diary officers say they found in his backpack when he was arrested Dec. 9, 2024, in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Mangione’s lawyers argue that his statements aren’t fair game for trial because officers asked questions before reading his rights. The defense says the contents of his backpack should be excluded because police didn’t get a warrant before searching it.

The standards surrounding police questioning and searches are complicated and often argued over once cases get to court. However the issues are ultimately resolved in Mangione’s case, the hearing is giving the public an extensive preview of some testimony, video, 911 audio and other records.

Hearing coincides with anniversary

Mangione has pleaded not guilty to state and federal murder charges. The hearing, which started Monday and could extend to next week, applies only to the state case.

As Mangione sat in a Manhattan court on Thursday’s anniversary of the killing, UnitedHealthcare lowered the flags at its campuses in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, Minnesota, in Thompson’s memory. Employees were encouraged to engage in volunteering.

The 27-year-old Mangione, meanwhile, appeared to follow the court proceedings intently, at times leaning over the defense table to scrutinize papers or take notes. He briefly looked down as Altoona Police Officer Tyler Frye was asked about a strip-search of Mangione after his arrest. Under the department’s policy, that search wasn’t recorded.

‘I don’t know what you guys are up to’

Five days after Thompson was gunned down, Altoona police were tipped that someone at the McDon-

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ald's resembled the much-publicized suspect in the killing. But Frye and Officer Joseph Detwiler initially approached Mangione with a low-key tone, saying only that someone had said he looked "suspicious." Asked for his ID, he gave a phony New Jersey driver's license with a fake name, according to prosecutors.

Moments later, after frisking Mangione, Detwiler stepped away to communicate with dispatchers about the license, leaving the rookie Frye by Mangione's table. Frye asked him, "What's going on?" and what had brought him to Altoona.

"I don't know what you guys are up to. I'm just going to wait," Mangione answered, and he inquired what was afoot.

After repeating the claim that someone was suspicious of Mangione, Frye asked: "You don't want to talk to me or anything?"

Mangione indicated that he didn't, shaking his head. But he continued to answer other questions asked by the officers, and also posed a few of his own.

"Can I ask why there's so many cops here?" he asked shortly before being informed he was being arrested on a forgery charge related to his false ID. Roughly a dozen officers had converged on the restaurant, and Mangione had been told he was being investigated and had been handcuffed and read his rights.

When he was arrested, an officer asked whether there was anything in the backpack that police needed to know about.

"I'm going to remain silent," Mangione replied.

Police went on to search the bag. They also searched Mangione's pockets, finding objects including a pocket knife — which he alerted them to — and what appeared to be a neatly written to-do list. Entries for the previous day ranged from "digital cam" to "hot meal and water bottles" to "trash bag(s)."

Among the items for the day of his arrest: "survival kit."

What's at stake?

The evidence is key to prosecutors' case. They have said the 9 mm handgun found in the backpack matches the firearm used in the killing, that writings in the notebook laid out Mangione's disdain for health insurers and ideas about killing a CEO at an investor conference, and that he gave police the same fake name that the alleged gunman used at a New York hostel days before the shooting.

Thompson, 50, was shot from behind as he walked to an investor conference. He became UnitedHealthcare's CEO in 2021 and had worked within parent UnitedHealth Group Inc. for 20 years.

Manhattan prosecutors haven't yet detailed their arguments for allowing the disputed evidence. Federal prosecutors have maintained that the backpack search was justified to ensure there was nothing dangerous inside, and that Mangione's statements to officers were voluntary and made before he was under arrest.

At least 4 countries pull out of 2026 Eurovision contest as Israel's participation sows discord

By JAMEY KEATEN and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Public broadcasters in Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and Slovenia on Thursday pulled out of next year's Eurovision Song Contest after organizers decided to allow Israel to compete, putting political discord on center stage over a usually joyful celebration of music.

The walkouts came after the general assembly of the European Broadcasting Union — a group of public broadcasters from 56 countries that runs the glitzy annual event — met to discuss concerns about Israel's participation, which some countries oppose over its conduct of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

At the meeting, EBU members voted to adopt tougher contest voting rules in response to allegations that Israel manipulated the vote in favor of their contestants, but took no action to exclude any broadcaster from the competition.

The feel-good pop music gala that draws more than 100 million viewers every year has been roiled by the war in Gaza for the past two years, stirring protests outside the venues and forcing organizers to clamp down on political flag-waving.

"It's a historic moment for the European Broadcasting Union. This is certainly one of the most serious

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crises that the organization has ever faced," said Eurovision expert Dean Vuletic. "Next year, we're going to see the biggest political boycott of Eurovision ever."

Vuletic, author of "Postwar Europe and the Eurovision Song Contest," predicted "tense" weeks and months ahead as other countries contemplate joining the walkout and protests set to overshadow the contest's 70th anniversary in Vienna next May.

A report on the website of Icelandic broadcaster RUV said its chiefs would meet next Wednesday to discuss whether Iceland would take part: Its board last week recommended that Israel be barred from the event in the Austrian capital.

The broadcasting union said it was aware that four broadcasters — RTVE in Spain, AVROTROS in the Netherlands, RTE in Ireland and Slovenia's RTVSLO — had publicly said they would not take part.

A final list of participating countries will be announced by Christmas, EBU said.

Controversy over Israel

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said on social platform X that he was "pleased" Israel will again take part, and hoped "the competition will remain one that champions culture, music, friendship between nations and cross-border cultural understanding."

"Thank you to all our friends who stood up for Israel's right to continue to contribute and compete at Eurovision," he added.

Austria, which is set to host the competition after Viennese singer JJ won this year with "Wasted Love," supported Israel's participation. Germany, too, supported Israel along with countries like Switzerland and Luxembourg, Vuletic said.

AVROTROS, the Dutch broadcaster, said the participation of Israel "is no longer compatible with the responsibility we bear as a public broadcaster."

Spain's RTVE said the situation in Gaza — despite the recent ceasefire — and "Israel's use of the contest for political purposes, make it increasingly difficult to maintain Eurovision as a neutral cultural event."

RTE said Ireland's participation "remains unconscionable given the appalling loss of lives in Gaza" and the humanitarian crisis there.

Some broadcasters — which run their country's news programs and wanted Israel kept out — cited killings of journalists in the conflict in Gaza and Israel's continued policy of denying international journalists access to the territory.

Israeli broadcaster KAN's chief executive Golan Yochpaz questioned whether EBU members are "willing to be part of a step that harms freedom of creation and freedom of expression."

KAN officials said the Israeli broadcaster was not involved in any prohibited campaign intended to influence the results of the latest song contest in Basel, Switzerland last May — when Israel's Yuval Raphael placed second.

Divided over politics

The contest pits acts from dozens of nations against one another for Europe's musical crown. It strives to put pop before politics, but has repeatedly been embroiled in world events. Russia was expelled in 2022 after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The war in Gaza has been its biggest challenge, with pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrating against Israel outside the last two Eurovision contests in Basel, Switzerland, in May and Malmo, Sweden, in 2024.

Opponents of Israel's participation cite the war in Gaza, which has left more than 70,000 people dead, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which operates under the Hamas-run government and whose detailed records are viewed as generally reliable by the international community.

Israel's government has repeatedly defended its campaign as a response to the attack by Hamas-led militants that started the war on Oct. 7, 2023. The militants killed around 1,200 people — mostly civilians — in the attack and took 251 hostage.

A number of experts, including those commissioned by a U.N. body, have said that Israel's offensive in Gaza amounts to genocide, a claim that Israel — home to many Holocaust survivors and their relatives — has vigorously denied.

A boycott by some European broadcasters could have implications for viewership and money at a time when many broadcasters are under financial pressure from government funding cuts and the advent of social media.

The pullouts include some big names in the Eurovision world. Spain is one of the "Big Five" large-market countries that contribute the most to the contest. Ireland has won seven times, a record it shares with Sweden.

The controversy over Israel's 2026 participation also threatens to overshadow the return next year of three countries — Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania — after periods of absence because of financial and artistic reasons.

"Next year's edition is certainly going to be one of the most politicized ever," Vuletic said. "It's the 70th anniversary. It was meant to be a big celebration, a big party, but it's going to be shrouded in political controversy yet again."

Man accused of planting pipe bombs before Jan. 6 Capitol attack is charged with explosives offenses

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI on Thursday arrested a man accused of placing two pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic national parties in Washington on the eve of the U.S. Capitol attack, an abrupt breakthrough in an investigation that for years flummoxed law enforcement and spawned conspiracy theories about Jan. 6, 2021.

The arrest marks the first time investigators have publicly identified a suspect in an act that has been an enduring mystery for nearly five years in the shadow of the violent Capitol insurrection.

The suspect was identified as Brian J. Cole Jr., 30, of Woodbridge, Virginia, but key questions remain unanswered after his arrest on explosives charges, including a possible motive and what connection if any the act had to the assault on the Capitol the following day by supporters of President Donald Trump.

Law enforcement officials reviewed credit card purchases of pipe bomb components, cellphone tower data and a license plate reader to zero in on Cole, according to an FBI affidavit filed in the case. The FBI and Justice Department declined to elaborate on what led them to the suspect, but characterized his arrest as the result of a reinvigorated investigation during the Trump administration and credited a fresh analysis of already-collected evidence and data.

"Let me be clear: There was no new tip. There was no new witness. Just good, diligent police work and prosecutorial work," Attorney General Pam Bondi said at a news conference.

Calls to relatives of Cole listed in public records were not immediately returned Thursday. Hours after Cole was taken into custody, unmarked law enforcement vehicles lined the cul-de-sac where Cole's home is while FBI agents helped shoo away onlookers. Authorities were seen entering the house and examining the trunk of a car nearby.

FBI says the bombs could have killed people

The pipe bombs were placed on the evening of Jan. 5, 2021, near the offices of the Democratic and Republican national committees. Nobody was hurt before the bombs were rendered safe, but the FBI has said both devices could have been lethal.

In the years since, investigators have sought the public's help in identifying a shadowy subject seen on surveillance camera even as they struggled to determine answers to basic questions, including the person's gender and motive and whether the act had a clear connection to the riot at the Capitol a day later, when supporters of Trump stormed the building in a bid to halt the certification of the Republican's 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Seeking a breakthrough, the FBI last January publicized additional information about the investigation, including an estimate that the suspect was about 5 feet, 7 inches tall, as well as previously unreleased video of the suspect placing one of the bombs.

The bureau had for years struggled to pinpoint a suspect despite hundreds of tips, a review of tens of

thousands of video files and a significant number of interviews.

Lack of evidence spawns conspiracy theories

In the absence of harder evidence, Republican lawmakers and right-wing media outlets promoted conspiracy theories about the pipe bombs. House Republicans also criticized security lapses, questioning how law enforcement failed to detect the bombs for 17 hours.

One particularly vocal commentator was Dan Bongino, the current FBI deputy director who, before being tapped for the job this year, was a popular conservative podcaster. He floated the possibility last year that the act was an "inside job" and that the truth was being shielded behind a "massive cover-up."

But since joining the bureau, he and Director Kash Patel have described the investigation as a top priority for the FBI. In a long Nov. 13 post on X, Bongino wrote that the FBI had brought in new personnel to examine the case and "dramatically increased investigative resources" along with the public reward for information "to utilize crowd-sourcing leads."

"You're not going to walk into our capital city, put down two explosive devices and walk off into the sunset," Bongino said at Thursday's news conference.

The reinvigorated investigative focus on the pipe bombs came even as the Trump administration has been engaged in a much broader effort to rewrite the history of the events of Jan. 6, including through Trump's pardons on his first day back in office of the rioters who stormed the Capitol — even those who violently attacked police with poles and other makeshift weapons.

Investigators hunt for clues

Though Patel said the FBI in the prior administration had "refused and failed" to sift through each piece of data in the case, agents for years had conducted a sprawling investigation.

Surveillance video taken the night before the riot showed the suspect spending close to an hour moving through the surrounding blocks, pausing on a park bench, cutting through an alley and stopping again as a dog walker passed.

Agents paired their video review with a broad sweep of digital records. They gathered cell tower data showing which phones were active in the neighborhood at the time and issued subpoenas to several tech companies, including Google, for location information. Investigators also analyzed credit card transactions from hobby shops and major retailers to identify customers who had purchased components resembling those used in the two explosive devices

The FBI affidavit filed in connection with the arrest lays out a series of evidentiary clues that investigators pieced together to arrive at Cole, who lives with his mother and other family members in a five-bedroom house on a quiet cul-de-sac in Woodbridge, Virginia, about 30 miles south of the Capitol building.

Using information from his bank account and credit cards, authorities discovered he purchased materials in 2019 and 2020 consistent with those used to make the pipe bombs, according to court papers. That included galvanized pipes and white kitchen-style timers, according to the affidavit. The purchases continued even after the devices were placed.

Authorities also obtained records showing Cole's cellphone was near the RNC and DNC on the day the pipe bombs were placed, the affidavit says.

In addition, the FBI says, Cole's Nissan Sentra was captured driving past a license plate reader on the evening of Jan. 5, 2021, less than a half-mile from where the person who placed the devices was first spotted on foot around 7:34 p.m. that night.

NFL mandates playing surfaces for all stadiums meet new standards by 2028 to enhance player safety

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

The playing surfaces at every NFL stadium will have to meet new enhanced standards set through lab and field testing by the start of the 2028 season.

NFL field director Nick Pappas detailed the plans for a program on Thursday that will provide each team

“a library of approved and accredited NFL fields” before the start of next season. Any new field will immediately have to meet those standards and all teams will have two years to achieve the standards, whether they use a grass or synthetic surface or a hybrid.

Most artificial surfaces are replaced every two or three years, Pappas said. Natural fields can be replaced several times a season.

Pappas said the fields will have undergone extensive testing and been approved by a joint committee with the NFLPA.

“It’s sort of a red, yellow, green effect, where we’re obviously trying to phase out fields that we have determined to be less ideal than newer fields coming into the industry,” he said. “This is a big step for us. This is something that I think has been a great outcome from the Joint Surfaces Committee of the work, the deployment and development of devices determining the appropriate metrics, and ultimately providing us with a way to substantiate the quality of fields more so than we ever have in the past.”

Pappas said fields have been tested in labs and on site using two main tools. One is called the BEAST, which is a traction testing device that replicates the movements of an NFL player. The other is called the STRIKE Impact Tester, which helps determine the firmness of each field.

The goal of the league is to find fields that are as consistent as possible across all 30 NFL stadiums, as well as at each stadium throughout the season. Pappas said the “key pillars” for a field are optimized playability, reducing injury risk and player feedback.

The NFL has no plans to require natural grass fields across the league. The league’s chief medical officer, Dr. Allen Sills, said there are no “statistically significant differences” in lower extremity injuries or concussions that can be attributed to the type of playing surface or a specific surface, despite widespread preferences by players for grass fields and complaints about surfaces such as the one at MetLife Stadium, where the New York Giants and Jets play.

“The surface is only one driver of these lower extremity injuries,” Sills said. “There are a lot of other factors, including player load and previous history and fatigue and positional adaptability and cleats that are worn. So surfaces are a component, but it is a complex equation, and so I’m excited about where we are in the work because I think we’ll get away from a very crude measurement of artificial here and the grass here, and now we can say for any individual surface, let’s look at the biophysical properties of that surface. How might those correlate with injury? And then, obviously, how do we optimize them?”

Pappas also shared plans for the Super Bowl to be held on Feb. 8 at the San Francisco 49ers’ home at Levi’s Stadium in Santa Clara, California. The field has been growing at a sod farm about two hours east of the Bay Area, with Pappas making several visits over the past 18 months to monitor the field.

The league will plan to install the field around the third week in January — or later if the 49ers could be hosting playoff games.

A brown pelican ‘feeding frenzy’ is an encouraging sign for the often-struggling large seabirds

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

MORRO BAY, Calif. (AP) — On a jagged coastline in Central California, brown pelicans gather on rock promontories, packed in like edgy commuters as they take flight to feed on a vast school of fish just offshore. The water churns in whitecaps as the big-billed birds plunge beneath the surface in search of northern anchovies, Pacific sardines and mackerel.

If awkward and wobbly in appearance on land, they are graceful once airborne. The signature pouch dangling beneath the lower bill can scoop up to 3 gallons of water with every dip into the ocean — the largest pouch of any bird in the world.

It is what scientists call a “feeding frenzy.” And it is an encouraging sign for a bird that has struggled in recent years with a warming ocean, inconsistent breeding patterns and toxic algae blooms in Southern California.

"I would say the populations are somewhat stable, but some events are concerning," says marine ornithologist Tammy Russell, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, San Diego, Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The gorging seabirds are a "good sign for the marine environment," Russell said.

On this warm, clear day, thousands of birds have populated the nearby beaches and cliffs, drawn by the abundant food. Cormorants and gulls mix with the pelicans. The incessant roar of the waves and the chorus of bird cries are all that can be heard on this jutting jawbone of coast.

The bird's range along the Pacific coast extends from British Columbia, Canada, into Mexico. In their struggle for survival, Russell notes that the California brown pelican was once on the federal endangered species list, after a sharp population decline was attributed to the pesticide DDT, which causes eggshell thinning. The population recovered, and the bird was removed from the list in 2009, though it still faces multiple challenges.

They are large birds, with adults weighing about 8 pounds with a wingspan of nearly 7 feet. And because they are big, they need large volumes of fish each day, their favorite food.

"When they don't get that, they can crash pretty quickly," Russell noted.

If the water warms, fish can move into deeper, colder water, making it more difficult for the birds to feed. Last year, scores of sick and starving pelicans were found in coastal California communities, and many others died. Wildlife authorities were baffled in 2022 when large numbers of California brown pelicans were found sick and dying.

Earlier this year, a toxic algae bloom poisoned pelicans and other marine animals along the coast.

Scientists are still learning how the birds react to changes in their environment, Russell said. They are now using electronic leg bands to follow the birds in their travels.

As the big birds gradually head south to islands off the California coast or Mexico to breed, "it's encouraging to see a group of pelicans feeding and doing well," Russell said.

Immigration crackdown in New Orleans has a target of 5,000 arrests. Is that possible?

By JACK BROOK and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Trump administration officials overseeing the immigration crackdown launched this week in New Orleans are aiming to make 5,000 arrests, a target that some city leaders who oppose the operation say is unrealistic and would require detaining more than just violent offenders.

It's an ambitious goal that would surpass the number of arrests during a two-month enforcement blitz this fall around Chicago, a region with a much bigger immigrant population than New Orleans. Records tracking the first weeks of the Chicago operation also showed most arrestees didn't have a violent criminal record.

In Los Angeles — the first major battleground in President Donald Trump's aggressive immigration plan — roughly 5,000 people were arrested over the summer in an area where about a third of LA County's roughly 10 million residents are foreign-born.

"There is no rational basis that a sweep of New Orleans, or the surrounding parishes, would ever yield anywhere near 5,000 criminals, let alone ones that are considered 'violent' by any definition," New Orleans City Council President J.P. Morrell said Thursday.

Census Bureau figures show the New Orleans metro area had a foreign-born population of almost 100,000 residents last year, and that just under 60% were not U.S. citizens.

"The amount of violent crime attributed to illegal immigrants is negligible," Morrell said, pointing out that crime in New Orleans is at historic lows.

Violent crimes, including murders, rapes and robberies, have fallen by 12% through October compared to a year ago, from a total of 2,167 violent crimes to 1,897 this year, according to New Orleans police statistics.

A flood of messages about arrests

Federal agents in marked and unmarked vehicles began spreading out across New Orleans and its suburbs Wednesday, making arrests in home improvement store parking lots and patrolling neighborhoods

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with large immigrant populations.

Alejandra Vasquez, who runs a social media page in New Orleans that reports the whereabouts of federal agents, said she has received a flood of messages, photos and video since the operations began.

"My heart is so broken," Vasquez said. "They came here to take criminals and they are taking our working people. They are not here doing what they are supposed to do. They are taking families."

Several hundred agents from Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement are participating in the two-month operation dubbed "Catahoula Crunch."

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, who is from Louisiana, is among the state's Republicans supporting the crackdown. "Democrats' sanctuary city policies have failed — making our American communities dangerous. The people of our GREAT city deserve better, and help is now on the ground," Johnson posted on social media.

Operation is being met with resistance

About two dozen protesters were removed from a New Orleans City Council meeting Thursday after chants of "Shame" broke out. Police officers ordered protesters to leave the building, with some pushed or physically carried out by officers.

Planning documents obtained last month by The Associated Press show the crackdown is intended to cover southeast Louisiana and into Mississippi.

Homeland Security Department spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said agents are going after immigrants who were released after arrests for violent crimes.

"In just 24 hours on the ground, our law enforcement officers have arrested violent criminals with rap sheets that include homicide, kidnapping, child abuse, robbery, theft, and assault," McLaughlin said Thursday in a statement. Border Patrol and immigration officials have not responded to requests for details, including how many have been arrested so far.

She told CNN on Wednesday that "we will continue whether that will be 5,000 arrests or beyond."

Immigration arrests go beyond violent criminals

To come close to reaching their target numbers in New Orleans, immigrant rights group fear federal agents will set their sights on a much broader group.

New Orleans City councilmember Lesli Harris said "there are nowhere near 5,000 violent offenders in our region" whom Border Patrol could arrest.

"What we're seeing instead are mothers, teenagers, and workers being detained during routine check-ins, from their homes and places of work," Harris said. "Immigration violations are civil matters, not criminal offenses, and sweeping up thousands of residents who pose no threat will destabilize families, harm our economy."

During the "Operation Midway Blitz" crackdown in Chicago that began in September, federal immigration agents arrested more than 4,000 people across the city and its many suburbs, dipping into Indiana.

Homeland Security officials heralded efforts to nab violent criminals, posting dozens of pictures on social media of people appearing to have criminal histories and lacking legal permission to be in the U.S. But public records tracking the first weeks of the Chicago push show most arrestees didn't have a violent criminal record.

Of roughly 1,900 people arrested in the Chicago area from early September through the middle of October — the latest data available — nearly 300 or about 15% had criminal convictions on their records, according to ICE arrest data from the University of California Berkeley Deportation Data Project analyzed by The Associated Press.

The vast majority of those convictions were for traffic offenses, misdemeanors or nonviolent felonies, the data showed.

New Orleans, whose international flavor comes from its long history of French, Spanish, African and Native American cultures, has seen a new wave of immigrants from places in Central and South America and Asia.

Across all of Louisiana, there were more than 145,000 foreign-born noncitizens, according to the Census Bureau. While those numbers don't break down how many residents of the state were in the country il-

legally, the Pew Research Center estimated the number at 110,000 people in 2023.

Takeaways from the Navy's investigations into 4 mishaps during Houthi campaign

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy on Thursday released investigative reports into four mishaps that all involve the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman while it was dispatched to counterattacks on shipping by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The four reports cover a friendly fire incident in December 2024 that saw the cruiser USS Gettysburg shoot at two fighter jets from the Truman, downing one, as well as the carrier's collision with a merchant vessel and the loss of two more jets to mishaps earlier this year.

Taken together, the reports paint a picture of an aircraft carrier that was not only beset by regular missile attacks that stressed the crew but other operational demands that put pressure on top leaders.

Here's a closer look at the findings for each of the mishaps:

Navy ship firing on US fighter jets

The Truman conducted its first defensive strike against Houthi positions and aircraft on Dec. 22, 2024, and other ships in the strike group spent several hours defending themselves against Houthi-launched anti-ship cruise missiles and attack drones.

The USS Gettysburg, one of the ships in the strike group, mistook several F/A-18F fighter jets from the carrier for more Houthi missiles and fired at two of them. The heavily redacted report largely faulted the sailors in the Gettysburg's combat information center for being poorly trained and overly relying on technology.

The troops from one jet ejected before the missile struck, while the ship stopped the second missile shortly before impact.

Colliding with a merchant vessel

Months later, in February, sailors aboard the ship told investigators that they were feeling the strain of "a pressurized schedule and a culture of 'just get it done.'"

As the ship prepared to head back to the Red Sea following a port visit, it had to sail through the highly trafficked waters just outside the Suez Canal. Running behind schedule, an officer who was navigating drove the massive aircraft carrier at a speed that it would have needed almost a mile and a half to come to a stop after halting the engines. Investigators later said the speed was unsafe.

As a merchant ship moved into a collision path with the carrier, the officer in charge did not take enough action to move out of danger, the report found, listing his actions as the top cause for the collision.

Investigators also faulted other more senior officers on the ship, including the commander and the ship's navigator, for not fully realizing the risks of the maneuvers required of the transit.

A Navy jet falls overboard

Once the ship was back in the Red Sea, crew stress did not abate. Capt. Christopher Hill, told investigators that the crew had been conducting combat operations and "flying everyday with little exception" since March 15.

The report said the ship was experiencing "a myriad of drone and cruise missile attacks, numerous combat operations, additional mishaps, and deployment extensions," which drove up stress and took time away from regular maintenance and upkeep of the ship and equipment.

Amid one attack in April, the ship's bridge ordered a sharp turn to avoid an incoming Houthi missile, while sailors in the carrier's hangers were moving aircraft around ahead of the next day's operations.

Procedures called for the hangar doors to be shut, but a F/A-18F fighter jet was in the way.

As the sailors began moving the jet, officers began a set of sharp turns but failed to let sailors in the hangar know. As the Truman began to tilt under the turn, the jet began to slip.

The sailors moving the jet later told investigators that as the plane slipped off the deck and into the ocean, its landing wheels were freely rolling despite the sailor inside the plane "actively attempting to brake."

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Contributing was the fact that the deck was far dirtier and more slippery than normal partly, because "high operational tempo of combat flight operations impeded the regular 10-day scrubs" that were needed.

Ultimately, the investigation said that with the jet underwater, it was impossible to know for sure why its brakes didn't engage but they recommend stripping the sailor responsible for applying the brakes of his qualifications because that service member "demonstrated deficiencies in required knowledge and system understanding."

Cable breaks that's meant to stop jet from falling overboard

In the final mishap, another F/A-18F fighter jet went overboard while trying to land on the Truman in May 2025. The investigation found that a cable designed to bring the 50,000-pound jet to a halt in just a few hundred feet snapped mid-landing.

The subsequent investigation revealed that poor maintenance on the equipment meant that the system of cables that connected the wires on the flight deck to the braking hydraulics below deck was missing a part responsible for keeping a massive connecting pin in place and immobile.

With that missing, the investigators found that the connecting pin slowly moved out of place over at least 50 landings until it finally failed and sheared off.

After reading the investigation, the commander of Truman's strike group at the time, Rear Adm. Sean Bailey, said that not only was "this mishap was entirely preventable" but that "the hard reality is that multiple individuals at all levels of leadership were complicit" in allowing the maintenance of the arresting gear "to degrade to the level of abject failure."

Investigators, however, also noted that "maintenance support personnel struggled to balance maintenance requirements with operational requirements" and that "multiple personnel identified operational tempo as one of the most significant challenges" for sailors tasked with maintaining the equipment.

Wall Street inches closer to its all-time high

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market held near its records in a quiet day of trading on Thursday, continuing its relatively calm run following weeks of sharp and scary swings.

The S&P 500 inched up by 0.1% and is just 0.5% below its all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 31 points, or 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.2%.

Dollar General helped lead the market and rallied 14% after reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. More customers shopped at its stores, and it also squeezed more profit out of each \$1 in sales that it made.

Hormel rose 3.8% after likewise reporting a better profit than expected, thanks in part to strength for its Planters nuts and Jennie-O turkey offerings. It also gave a forecasted range for profit in the upcoming year whose midpoint was above analysts' forecasts.

Salesforce, meanwhile, climbed 3.7% after swinging between gains and losses earlier in the morning. It delivered a better profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected, though its revenue fell just short.

CEO Marc Benioff extolled how Salesforce is "uniquely positioned for this new era" of artificial-intelligence technology, even if worries continue that all the world's spending on AI may not end up worth it.

Besides such worries about potential overinvestment in AI, concerns about what the Federal Reserve will do with interest rates had sent U.S. stocks on sharp swings since it set its all-time high in late October.

After some back and forth, the general expectation on Wall Street is now that the Fed will indeed cut its main interest rate next week in hopes of shoring up the slowing job market. If it does, that would be the third such cut this year.

Investors love lower interest rates because they boost prices for investments and can juice the economy. The downside is that they can worsen inflation, which is stubbornly remaining above the Fed's 2% target.

But Treasury yields ticked higher Thursday following another rise for Japanese government bonds. Expectations for a coming Fed cut to rates also took a very slight hit after reports suggested the U.S. job market may be a bit better than expected.

One report said fewer U.S. workers filed for unemployment last week. The number was the lowest in

more than three years.

A separate report said that the number of layoffs announced last month fell by more than half from October's surge. It still was above year-ago levels, though, according to outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

While better-than-expected data on layoffs is of course good news for U.S. workers, it could also indicate the job market doesn't need as much help from lower interest rates.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.10% from 4.06% late Wednesday. While the move was relatively modest, increases in yields can discourage some buyers from buying stocks and other investments instead of bonds.

Among the stocks falling on Wall Street was Kroger, which dropped 4.6%. The grocer reported weaker revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected, though its profit beat forecasts. It also lowered the top end of its forecasted range for an important measure of revenue this year, while raising the bottom end by less.

Snowflake sank 11.4% despite topping analysts' expectations for profit and revenue in the latest quarter. Analysts at UBS said the company's stock may be feeling a letdown after excitement grew so much after it blew past expectations in the quarter just before. Growth in product revenue also decelerated a bit in the latest quarter.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 7.40 points to 6,857.12. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 31.96 to 47,850.94, and the Nasdaq composite gained 51.04 to 23,505.14.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose modestly in Europe following a mixed finish in Asia.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index jumped 2.3%, while South Korea's Kospi slipped 0.2%.

A single hostage remains in Gaza after identification of Thai worker's remains

By AUDREY HOROWITZ, SAMY MAGDY and TOQA EZZIDIN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Remains that militants in Gaza handed to Israel were those of Thai agricultural worker Sudthisak Rinthalak, Israeli and Thai officials said Thursday. The confirmation brought the first phase of Gaza's tenuous 8-week-old ceasefire a step closer to completion, with one more hostage's remains still to be returned.

The subsequent phases under a U.S.-drafted, U.N.-backed plan for Gaza remain deeply uncertain. There has been no word on how provisions for Hamas' disarmament will be carried out, or how a planned international administration and security force will be established.

Both Israel and Hamas accuse each other of violating the truce since it began Oct. 10. Israeli airstrikes and shootings during the ceasefire have killed some 366 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Israel says Hamas has carried out attacks on its soldiers. Around half the devastated Gaza Strip remains under Israeli military control, with most of the population of some 2 million displaced from their homes and dependent on international aid.

In a sign for the potential for turmoil, the leader of an Israeli-backed Palestinian militia, Yasser Abu Shabab, was shot to death during a dispute with another family in southern Gaza, his militia said Thursday. The killing could be a setback for Israeli efforts to prop up its own alternative to Hamas in Gaza.

The Popular Forces is one of several armed Palestinian groups supported by Israel and operating in Israeli-controlled zones. The groups tout themselves as anti-Hamas nationalist forces but have been denounced by many Palestinians, including Abu Shabab's family, as tools of the Israeli military.

Returning hostages' remains

Sudthisak, whose remains were handed over by militants on Wednesday, had been employed at Kibbutz Be'eri in southern Israel.

Thais make up a large part of Israel's agricultural workforce. They were the largest group of foreigners to be taken captive by militants in the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel.

The 42-year-old Sudthisak was killed when the militants stormed into Kibbutz Be'eri, one of the hardest-

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hit communities in the attack, and his body taken by the militant group Islamic Jihad, according to the Israeli military.

In the attack, Militants killed around 1,200 people and took more than 250 others hostage, triggering Israel's campaign in Gaza, which has killed more than 70,100 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The ministry, which operates under the Hamas-run government, is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by the international community.

Thai Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nikordej Balankura said Sudthisak's family has been notified and thanked the Israeli government for assistance that led to the release of all 31 Thai hostages. Of those, 28 were returned alive and three dead. In addition to the hostages, 46 Thais have been killed in the war, according to the ministry,

Israeli Ran Gvili is now the last hostage whose remains have yet to be returned. Gvili was an Israeli police officer who was killed at Kibbutz Alumim as he fought to protect residents and save Israelis fleeing gunmen at the nearby Nova music festival.

Since ceasefire began, 20 living hostages and the remains of 27 others have been returned to Israel. In exchange, Israel has released the bodies of hundreds of Palestinians to Gaza. Most remain unidentified.

Militia leader killed

Details of the killing of Abu Shabab were not immediately known. The Popular Forces said he suffered a gunshot wound while mediating a dispute among members of the Abu Suneima clan, which is based in the far south of Gaza.

In a Facebook post, the group underlined that he was not killed in clashes with Hamas.

At least two members of the Abu Suneima clan – a pair of brothers -- were also killed in the dispute, according to a statement by the clan's head, Attiya Awda Abu Suneima. He praised the clan members who killed Abu Shabab for "unwavering courage and resolve in the face of injustice and treachery" – but provided no details on what happened.

He warned that remaining member of Abu Shabab's group, "which has strayed from the values of our people, will face a severe reckoning."

There was no immediate Israeli comment on Abu Shabab's death.

Abu Shabab was the most prominent of the Palestinian militia leaders that Israel has said it is backing to oppose Hamas. Before the war, he had been involved in smuggling cigarettes and drugs from Egypt, according to two members of his extended family, one of whom was once part of his group.

During the war, his militia became notorious for robbing U.N. aid trucks. It also deployed near Israeli troop positions in military-controlled territory, particularly along routes that Palestinians took to reach food distribution sites.

In its announcement of Abu Shabab's death, the Popular Forces vowed to "continue on the path until terrorism is eliminated from Gaza's soil."

Other Palestinians celebrated his death. The Higher Council for Tribal Affairs, a body representing Gaza's powerful clans, said his end was "expected for someone who chose to abandon his people ... and sided with the enemy."

Israel's long-term intentions for Abu Shabab's group and other militias have never been clear.

But the fighters' role could grow if the ceasefire plan stalls and Israel keeps its hold on territory in Gaza. Under the U.N.-backed plan, an international security force is to deploy in Gaza to keep security and ensure Hamas disarmament while an international administration headed by U.S. President Donald Trump governs the territory. But no firm plans have been announced on implementing any of the provisions.

Israel strikes southern Lebanon

Separately, Israel carried out a string of airstrikes on Thursday in several villages of southern Lebanon, targeting what the military said were weapons storehouses of the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group. There was no report of casualties from the strikes, which came after the military issued warnings to residents to evacuate areas around the targets.

Israel accuses Hezbollah of continuing to hold onto its weapons and rebuilding its arsenal in violation of

a year-old ceasefire. Hezbollah has refused to give up its weapons as long as Israel continues to occupy several hills along the border and carries out almost daily strikes.

Strike kills a family in Gaza

In southern Gaza, an Israeli airstrike on a tent encampment housing displaced Palestinians late Wednesday killed five people from a single family, including two children, according to the Kuwait Specialty Hospital, where the bodies were taken. It said another 32 people were wounded.

Israel said it launched an airstrike targeting a Hamas militant in retaliation for an attack earlier in the day that wounded five Israeli soldiers. The military said militants emerged from a tunnel and attacked Israeli troops in the Israeli-controlled part of southern Gaza.

Relatives of the dead Palestinians wept over their loved ones' being transported in white body bags through the city of Khan Younis on Thursday.

Aisha Abu Jazar, a woman living near the five family members who were killed, said she was shocked to hear "unusually intense fire" by Israelis overnight.

"They fired a missile at a tent made of cloth, plastic, and wood. The children were asleep. What did the children do to deserve being torn apart in their sleep? What did they do to deserve this?" she said.

"We were supposed to be in a ceasefire," she added.

Hegseth put troops at risk by sharing sensitive plans on personal phone, Pentagon watchdog finds

By DAVID KLEPPER, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth put U.S. troops at risk by sharing sensitive plans about an upcoming military strike in Yemen on his personal phone, according to a Pentagon inspector general's report made public Thursday that criticized the use of unapproved messaging apps and devices across the Defense Department.

Hegseth had the authority to declassify the material he shared with others in a Signal chat, the watchdog found. But it said the release of sensitive details about the strike on Houthi militants violated internal Pentagon rules about handling sensitive information that could put service members or their missions in danger.

The report noted that the information that Hegseth sent — the quantity and strike times of manned U.S. aircraft over hostile territory about two hours to four hours before those strikes — "created a risk to operational security that could have resulted in failed U.S. mission objectives and potential harm to U.S. pilots."

"If this information had fallen into the hands of U.S. adversaries, Houthi forces might have been able to counter U.S. forces or reposition personnel and assets to avoid planned U.S. strikes," the report said.

Hegseth's use of the app came to light when a journalist, Jeffrey Goldberg of The Atlantic, was inadvertently added to a Signal text chain by then-national security adviser Mike Waltz. Hegseth also created another Signal chat with 13 people, including his wife and brother, where he shared similar details of the same strike.

The report's nuanced findings — that Hegseth's actions put troops at risk but that he had the right to declassify the material — are not likely to relieve the pressure on the former Fox News Channel host.

He also is facing scrutiny on Capitol Hill over a news report that a follow-up strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the Caribbean Sea in September killed survivors after Hegseth had issued a verbal order to "kill everybody." A Navy admiral who oversaw the operation disputed in a closed-door meeting with lawmakers Thursday that Hegseth gave such an order.

Hegseth wrote on social media about the inspector general's report: "No classified information. Total exoneration. Case closed. Houthis bombed into submission." It comes after Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson this summer called the investigation "a witch hunt and a total sham and being conducted in bad faith."

Watchdog weighs in on Hegseth's use of personal device

Hegseth's Signal messages included particulars about the timing and location of the attack as well as

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the types of weapons and aircraft to be used. He later said the information he shared was "informal, unclassified."

The report noted that while Hegseth had the power to declassify the material in his position as defense secretary, Pentagon policy prohibits the use of personal devices or nonapproved commercial apps such as Signal to transmit "nonpublic or classified" material.

Signal uses end-to-end encryption to secure direct messages and group chats. This safeguard has made Signal an increasingly popular option for many people, not just national security officials.

Signal is considered more secure than other messaging, but it is not foolproof. Those using the service — and their devices — are vulnerable to phishing or other digital attacks based on impersonation. As Hegseth's use of Signal shows, there are no controls on who can be added to group chats or what kind of sensitive material can be sent.

Hegseth rebuffed interview from investigators

The defense secretary declined to be interviewed for the watchdog's review. In a one-page statement to the inspector general, Hegseth said he had the authority to declassify the information he was sharing on Signal and that there "was nothing classified in this text."

"There were no locations or targets identified," he wrote. "There were no details that would endanger our troops or the mission."

Hegseth said he was only sharing "an unclassified summary" of operations and that the full details of what was happening were shared separately on a secure network used by the military.

The information he shared on Signal was limited to the "overt actions" of U.S. forces, which he said "would be readily apparent to any observer in the area."

The revelations are drawing close scrutiny. Democratic lawmakers and a small number of Republicans said Hegseth's posting of the information to the Signal chats before the military jets had reached their targets potentially put those pilots' lives at risk.

Lawmakers also noted that if lower-ranking members of the military had acted similarly, they would have been fired or severely disciplined for failing to maintain operational security.

Improper use of personal devices called a department-wide issue

The inspector general's office recommended better training on information security for Department of Defense employees. It also noted several earlier instances when personnel used personal devices or unapproved apps for government business, and said that was one reason its recommendations were not focused on Hegseth's actions alone.

"We are not making any recommendations in this report related to the Secretary's use of Signal to send sensitive nonpublic information because it represented only one instance of an identified, DoD-wide issue," the investigators wrote.

In one example, investigators found that in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, some defense officials used personal phones or laptops or nonapproved video conferencing systems because the department did not have policies to support remote work.

The use of nonapproved devices and apps can also make it harder for officials to retain government records in compliance with the law, the report noted.

Congressional reaction breaks along party lines

The Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who had requested the investigation earlier this year, offered notably diverging takeaways from the report.

Republican Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the chairman, said in a statement that it's "clear from the reports that the Secretary acted within his authority to communicate the information in question to other cabinet level officials."

But Wicker said senior leaders also need more tools to share classified information "in real time and a variety of environments."

"I think we have some work to do in providing those tools to our national security leaders," Wicker said.

Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the committee's top Democrat, said Hegseth violated military regula-

tions and showed "reckless disregard for the safety American servicemembers."

"These were precise strike timings and locations that, had they fallen into enemy hands, could have enabled the Houthis to target American pilots," Reed said in a statement, adding that anyone else would have faced "severe consequences, including potential prosecution."

The last hostage in Gaza was captured while fighting to save a kibbutz

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — There were hundreds, then dozens, and then just a few. Now there's one Israeli hostage left in Gaza: Ran Gvili.

Gvili, a 24-year-old police officer known affectionately as "Rani," was killed while fighting Hamas militants during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. After a series of ceasefire-mandated exchanges of hostages for Palestinians held by Israel, Gvili's body still has not been recovered.

His remains are somewhere in Gaza. On Thursday, as Israel woke to the news that remains militants returned the previous day belonged to another hostage, the country mourned Gvili as a hero who died fighting to save a kibbutz that was not his own.

"The first to go, the last to leave," his mother, Talik Gvili, wrote on Facebook Thursday. "We won't stop until you come back."

'The Shield of Alumim'

At the entrance to Kibbutz Alumim, one of the many border villages militants attacked on Oct. 7, there is a sign emblazoned with a photo of Gvili smiling in his uniform, his name beneath it.

"He fought a heroic battle, saving the lives of the kibbutz members," the sign says. "Since then he has been known as 'Rani, the Shield of Alumim.'"

Unlike those from other Israeli kibbutzim targeted that day, the residents of Alumim survived. They credit that to men like Gvili, who joined a group of emergency response team members, soldiers and police officers who fended off waves of intruding militants.

Migrant workers on the kibbutz, however, met a different fate. Left exposed in agricultural areas outside the kibbutz's defensive perimeter, 22 foreign nationals were killed, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

Gvili died fighting in battle

On the morning of Oct. 7, Gvili was at home, his younger sister Shira Gvili said in an interview with the AP. He had been on medical leave from his elite police unit for a broken shoulder.

Still, when he heard that gunmen were attacking panicked partygoers at the site of the Nova Music Festival, he headed straight for the venue grounds, along with other men from the unit.

Nova later became the site of the largest civilian massacre in Israeli history, when the militants killed at least 364 people and took more than 40 hostage.

Gvili and the other officers never made it there, his sister said. Instead, they encountered the militants at Kibbutz Alumim.

Sgt. Richard Schechtman, a fellow police officer who also fought in the battle, said that Gvili appeared to immediately know what to do.

"Rani was at the head of the team — because that's who he was," Schechtman was quoted as telling the Israeli news site Ynet. "Rani and I were standing on the road. I saw the terrorists, but I hesitated because it was the first time in my life I'd ever seen a terrorist face-to-face, and I had a moment of, 'Wait, what am I seeing?' Then Rani pulled the pin and opened fire — and the whole team followed him."

At one point in battle, Gvili ran to the western flank of the kibbutz to fight militants arriving in trucks, said his mother, who has spoken with others who fought with him that day. That's where he was injured in the leg.

"He radioed his team to warn that more vehicles carrying terrorists were approaching," his mother said in an interview with Ynet. "He opened fire, and they came at him. He fought them alone, injured in both

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his leg and arm, and he took down those monsters.”

Israel’s military says Gvili’s body was abducted to Gaza by the militants soon after. The military confirmed his death, based on an intelligence assessment, four months later.

Last step in first phase of ceasefire

The return of Gvili’s remains would mark the completion of the first phase of U.S. President Donald Trump’s 20-point ceasefire plan. The first phase also calls for the release of thousands of Palestinians from Israel, both alive and dead, and an increase of aid shipments into war-ravaged Gaza.

The next phases of the ceasefire agreement will be much more complicated to fulfill. Key elements include deploying an international force to secure Gaza, disarming Hamas, and forming a temporary Palestinian government to run day to day affairs under the supervision of an international board led by Trump.

Family worries Gvili’s remains will not come back

Gvili’s family — which includes his brother, Omri — is holding out hope they’ll receive the remains soon. “We see all the other families whose sons came back and we see in their eyes that they have relief,” his sister said. “This is why it’s so important. Because we want to move on with our with our life and just remember Rani.”

Gvili was a hero, but he was more than that, his sister recalled: He was protective and goofy; he occasionally told bad jokes that everyone laughed at; he loved playing guitar and singing ‘The House of the Rising Sun’; and he had a tattoo on his leg of his dog, Luna, who the family now cares for.

Both his mother, Talik, and father, Itzik Gvili, say they fear a worst-case scenario of the type experienced by families of Israeli soldiers Hadar Goldin or Ron Arad.

Goldin was killed in Gaza in 2014. His body was only returned to Israel about a month ago as part of the ceasefire. Arad was abducted in Lebanon in 1988 after ejecting from his aircraft. He’s never been found.

“We pray, of course, that he will not be another Ron Arad or (Hadar) Goldin,” Itzik Gvili told Kan News. “That we don’t drag it out for many more years.”

“As far as I am concerned, until Ran comes back, he is alive,” the father said. “I have nothing else to hope for.”

A county jail in Arkansas produces hundreds of ICE arrests under a program surging across the US

By RYAN J. FOLEY and JULIO CORTEZ Associated Press

ROGERS, Ark. (AP) — She was already separated from her husband, the family breadwinner and father of her two youngest children, and had lost the home they shared in Arkansas.

Then Cristina Osornio was ensnared by the nation’s rapidly expanding immigration enforcement crackdown just months after her husband was deported to Mexico. Following a traffic stop in Benton County, in the state’s northwest corner, she was jailed for several days on an Immigration and Customs Enforcement hold, records show, even though she is a legal permanent U.S. resident and the mother of six children.

Best known as home to Walmart headquarters, the county and the wider region have emerged as a little-known hot spot in the Trump administration’s crackdown, according to an Associated Press review of ICE arrest data, jail records, police reports and interviews with residents, immigration lawyers and watchdogs.

The county offers a window into what the future may hold in places where local and state law enforcement authorities cooperate broadly with ICE, as the Department of Homeland Security offers financial incentives in exchange for help making arrests.

The partnership in Arkansas has led to the detention and deportation of some violent criminals but also repeatedly turned misdemeanor arrests into the first steps toward deportations, records show. The arrests have split apart families, sparked protests and spread fear through the immigrant community, including people born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Marshall Islands.

“Nobody is safe at this point because they are targeting you because of your skin color,” said Osornio, 35, who was born in Mexico but has lived in the U.S. since she was 3 months old.

Her odyssey began in September, when an officer in the city of Rogers cited her for driving without

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insurance and with a suspended license, body cam video shows. She was arrested on a warrant for missing a court appearance in a misdemeanor case and taken to the Benton County Jail, where an ICE hold was placed on her.

After four days behind bars, she said she was released without explanation. She called it a "very scary" experience that exacerbated her health conditions.

Benton County offers the kind of help ICE wants nationwide

More than 450 people were arrested by ICE at the Benton County Jail from Jan. 1 through Oct. 15, according to ICE arrest data from the University of California Berkeley Deportation Data Project analyzed by AP. That's more than 1.5 arrests per day in the county of roughly 300,000 people.

Most of the arrests were made through the county's so-called 287(g) agreement, named for a section of immigration law, that allows deputies to question people who are booked into the jail about their immigration status. In fact, the county's program accounted for more than 4% of roughly 7,000 arrests nationwide that were attributed to similar programs during the first 9 1/2 months of this year, according to the data.

Under the program, deputies alert ICE to inmates suspected of being in the country illegally, who are usually held without bond and eventually transferred into ICE custody. After a couple of days, they are often moved to the neighboring Washington County Detention Center in Fayetteville, which has long held detainees for ICE, before they are taken to detention centers in Louisiana and potentially deported.

ICE now has more than 1,180 cooperation agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies, up from 135 at the start of the new administration, and it has offered federal payments to cover the costs of training, equipment and salaries in some circumstances. Arrests under the programs have surged in recent months as more agencies get started, ICE data shows.

The growth has been particularly pronounced in Republican-led states such as Florida, where new laws encourage or require such cooperation. Earlier this year, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed a law requiring all county sheriffs to cooperate with ICE through either a 287(g) program at the jail or a program in which they serve ICE warrants to expedite detentions and removals.

ICE arrests have surged in Benton County this year

Benton County's partnership with ICE has been controversial off and on since its inception nearly 20 years ago.

ICE data shows arrests have shot up this year in the county, a Trump stronghold in a heavily Republican state that has a large foreign-born population compared with other parts of Arkansas.

About half of those arrested by ICE through the program have been convicted of crimes, while the other half have charges pending, according to the data. But the severity of the charges ranges widely.

Jail records show those on recent ICE holds include people charged with forgery, sexual assault, drug trafficking, theft and public intoxication. Offenses related to domestic violence and unsafe driving are among the most common.

Local observers say they have tracked an uptick in people facing ICE detention after traffic stops involving violations such as driving without a license.

"It just feels more aggressive. We're seeing people detained more frequently on extremely minor charges," said Nathan Bogart, an immigration attorney. "They've kind of just been let off the leash now."

County officials were unwilling to talk about their partnership with ICE. County Judge Barry Moehring, the county's chief executive who oversees public safety, referred questions to the sheriff's office.

Sheriff Shawn Holloway, who has championed the program since his election in 2015, did not respond to several interview requests. The sheriff's office spokesperson referred questions to ICE.

A routine traffic stop turns into an ICE hold

Body cam video shows that police officer Myles Tucker pulled Osornio over on Sept. 15 in a quiet neighborhood of Rogers as she drove to a bank to get change for her job at the retail chain Five Below.

Tucker said he stopped Osornio because a check of her license plate number indicated that her auto insurance was unconfirmed, and he thought she made a suspicious turn after seeing police.

In addition to issuing tickets for lacking insurance and driving with a suspended license, the officer learned

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she had a warrant for failing to appear for a misdemeanor domestic violence case. That case stemmed from a 2023 incident in which she argued and fought with her husband.

Osornio disputed that she missed a court hearing. She told the officer that her husband had been deported and that she needed to arrange child care for her children.

During the drive to the jail, Tucker played upbeat Christian-themed music in his patrol vehicle.

He turned down the music to ask Osornio where she was born, saying the information would be required at the jail. "I ask the question because I have to put it on the form, not because I'm trying to get you in trouble," he said.

Osornio said she was baffled about why she was placed on an ICE hold. She offered to show her residency and Social Security cards, but jail staff told her she would have to meet with an immigration agent in a few days. She said that never happened and instead she was told the hold was "lifted."

Neither a jail spokesperson nor ICE responded to questions about the matter.

Cpl. Don Lisi, spokesperson for the Rogers Police Department, said his agency has "nothing to do with" the county's ICE partnership.

But jail records show dozens of the department's recent arrests have turned into ICE detentions once suspects are booked. Advocates for immigrants allege the department and others nearby engage in racial profiling in traffic stops.

Afraid of racial profiling, local residents take precautions

In interviews, nonwhite residents said they were afraid to drive in northwest Arkansas regardless of whether they had legal status. Some said they leave home only to go to work, have groceries and food delivered rather than eating out, and avoid other activities.

"This is a kind of jail, one would say," said Ernesto, 73, a school custodian born in Venezuela, from his apartment filled with Christmas decorations. He spoke on the condition that only his first name be used to avoid retaliation.

One of Ernesto's adult daughters was recently stripped of her asylum status, and his temporary legal status also recently expired. He recently witnessed authorities "taking away people" from a traffic stop.

"Don't just pull over people because they're Latino or a foreigner," he said. "I hope that all this is over soon, that the state of Arkansas sees who are the immigrants that are doing good here."

Rogers-based attorney Lilia Pacheco said she started practicing law in the area during the first Trump administration, and "it's day and night between the first administration as far as enforcement." She said Benton County authorities have taken their cooperation with ICE to new heights, stepping up traffic stops, assisting with arrests and welcoming undercover agents.

"We're seeing that shift here, and I think that's given a rise to the arrests and operations in the area," she said. "It looks like their relationship is a lot closer than what we anticipated that it would be."

Pacheco said her husband was recently pulled over in Rogers while taking their daughter to school when he was driving the speed limit and could not understand why. The officer asked for his driver's license, and he was let go without a ticket, she said.

The family has since installed a dashboard camera in their car so that they can record any future interactions with police after the Supreme Court decision that allowed ICE to racially profile, she said.

Pacheco said many who live in the area are from the state of Guanajuato in Mexico, and fear deportation because of a rise in violence linked to drug cartels. Those from El Salvador fear prolonged detention in their country, which has swept up innocent people in its crackdown on gangs, she said.

After husband's deportation, family has struggled

Osornio said she has been with her husband, Edwin Sanchez-Mendoza, for eight years. They got together a couple of years after he illegally crossed the border from Mexico when he was in his late teens.

They have two children together, a 5-year-old boy and 3-year-old girl. She said her husband worked in construction, and his salary paid the rent and bills in the home they shared in Bentonville.

Court records show Sanchez-Mendoza was arrested on misdemeanor charges in September 2024 after he was accused of striking one of his teenage stepsons.

Sanchez-Mendoza told police he was restraining the stepson in self-defense and believed the teen called

police to scare him since he was not in the country legally. A Bentonville officer wrote in a report that the sheriff's office should check "the legality of Edwin's nationality status."

Sanchez-Mendoza was placed on a hold for ICE at the Benton County Jail. The charges were dropped after ICE transferred him elsewhere in January 2025.

Ultimately, Osornio said her husband ended up at an ICE detention facility in Louisiana, where he found the conditions unbearable. He agreed to be deported and was flown last spring to Mexico, where he has since moved back to his rural hometown and helps on the family farm.

His absence has been devastating financially and emotionally, Osornio said. When they drive past construction sites, their young daughter says, "Look, Mom, Daddy's working there," she said.

The family could no longer afford their house. Osornio got the retail job but has struggled to pay for the apartment where they moved and their bills. She's getting help from a local advocacy organization and asking for help on GoFundMe.

She suffers from high blood pressure and said she suffered a stroke days after her release from jail.

Osornio said Sanchez-Mendoza wants her to move to Mexico, and she and the kids visited him in May. But she's agonizing over the decision, saying she fears it would put her children in danger of cartel violence and that she knows the U.S. as home.

She's anxiously waiting for her new permanent residency card to arrive after receiving a temporary extension earlier this year.

"Obviously over there it's the cartels. But here now the scare is with immigration. Now we don't know even if we are safe here anymore," she said. "Ever since that happened to me, I don't go anywhere. I don't go out of my house."

US prioritizes visas for fans traveling for the World Cup, Olympics and other events

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has instructed U.S. embassies and consulates around the world to prioritize visa applications from foreigners wishing to visit the United States to either invest in America or attend the 2026 World Cup, 2028 Olympics and other major sporting events.

At the same time, the administration has added new criteria for highly skilled foreign workers seeking a particular visa. The new rules would deny entry to those deemed to have directed or participated in the censorship of American citizens on social media through content moderation initiatives that have sprung up throughout Europe and elsewhere to combat extremist speech.

In a series of cables sent this week to all U.S. diplomatic missions that were obtained by The Associated Press, the State Department said visa applications for businesspeople considering "significant investments" in the United States should be at the top of the list for consideration along with applications from those wanting to travel "for major sporting events which showcase American excellence."

It is the latest effort by President Donald Trump's administration to crack down on migrants and visitors entering the U.S. But with major sports events planned in the United States, the administration is looking to ensure that fans are able to attend those competitions. The policies are getting heightened attention ahead of Friday's World Cup draw.

Focusing on foreign sports fans

As part of a broader initiative to control the entry of foreigners into the U.S., the State Department has said all those who require visas to enter the country would need to submit to an in-person interview and screening to vet them for potential national security risks.

This has led to lengthy wait times at many embassies and consulates for interviews to apply for what are known as "B1" and "B2" visas despite a surge in consular staffing.

Last month, Trump announced a new initiative, dubbed "FIFA Pass," for foreigners traveling to the U.S. for the World Cup that will allow them to get interviews for visas more quickly. Nonetheless, he still encouraged them to apply for their visas "right away."

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Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the administration had dispatched more than 400 additional consular officers around the world to handle the demand for visas for the World Cup and that in about 80% of the globe, travelers to the U.S. can get a visa appointment within 60 days — something reflected in the cable.

The new steps in the cable this week go beyond the FIFA Pass initiative to expedite applications for those looking to travel to the United States for the Olympics and other major sports events.

Posts “should ensure sufficient appointment capacity to accommodate spectators and other fans traveling for events surrounding the (World Cup) tournament,” said one of the two cables sent Tuesday. “These should take priority over all other B1/B2 applications, except those related to American re-industrialization.”

Others to be prioritized include foreign diplomats, government officials traveling on official business, temporary agricultural workers, religious workers, physicians and nurses, and students attending academic institutions with less than 15% foreign enrollment.

“Posts should ensure that applicants of higher ranked groups get priority over applicants and lower rank groups, regardless of demand by lower ranked applicants,” the cable said. “Posts may significantly reduce the number of appointment slots available to lower rank groups in order to accommodate demand from higher rank groups.”

New visa guidelines for highly skilled workers

A second cable sent Tuesday to all embassies and consulates set out new criteria for considering H-1B visa applications, instructing diplomats to “be on the lookout” for those who may have been or are “responsible for or complicit in the censorship of Americans” online and elsewhere.

Those visas allow American companies to bring in people with technical skills that are hard to find in the United States, and President Donald Trump has said he would slap a \$100,000 annual fee on them.

The department said evidence of this could lead to visa denial. It defined such information as having “adopting global content moderation policies inconsistent with freedom of expression, complying with global content moderation or censorship demands from a foreign entity and providing access to private data on American citizens in connection with content moderation.”

Proof of this could be obtained from an applicant’s resume, employment history, social media profiles and posts, and public statements or writings, the cable said, adding that the State Department was developing tools to make it easier and quicker to conduct these screenings.

It noted that all visa applicants are subject to these criteria, but that H-1B applicants should be looked at most closely “as many work or have worked in the tech sector, including in social media or financial services companies involved in the suppression of protected expression.”

“You must thoroughly explore their employment histories to ensure no participation in such activities,” the cable said, adding that “if you uncover evidence and applicant was responsible for or complicit in censorship or attempted censorship of protected expression in the United States you should pursue a finding that the applicant is ineligible” for a visa.

Where the blame will fall if ACA subsidies expire, according to a new poll

By ALI SWENSON, LINLEY SANDERS and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fifty-two-year-old Dinam Bigny sank into debt and had to get a roommate this year, in part because of health insurance premiums that cost him nearly \$900 per month.

Next year, those monthly fees will rise by \$200 — a significant enough increase that the program manager in Aldie, Virginia, has resigned himself to finding cheaper coverage.

“I won’t be able to pay it, because I really drained out any savings that I have right now,” he said. “Emergency fund is still draining out — that’s the scary part.”

Bigny is among the many Americans dependent on Affordable Care Act marketplace health insurance plans who are already struggling with the high cost of health care, according to a new survey from the health care research nonprofit KFF.

Most of the more than 1,300 enrollees surveyed in early November say they anticipate that their health

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costs will be impacted next year if Congress doesn't extend expiring COVID-era tax credits that help more than 90% of enrollees pay for health insurance premiums, per KFF. The possibility of an extension looks increasingly unlikely.

The enhanced premium tax credits set to expire at the end of this year have been at the center of recent tensions in Congress, with Democrats calling for a straight extension and several Republican lawmakers vehemently opposed to the idea. Their inability to agree on a path forward fueled a record 43-day government shutdown earlier this fall.

President Donald Trump and some Republicans in Congress have circulated proposals in recent weeks to offer a short-term extension or reform the Affordable Care Act, but no plan has emerged as a clear winner. Meanwhile, the window for Americans to shop for next year's plans is well underway with less than a month to go until the subsidies expire.

KFF's poll reveals that marketplace enrollees — most of whom say they would be directly impacted by the subsidies expiring — overwhelmingly support an extension. The survey found this group is more likely to blame Trump and Republicans in Congress than Democrats if the tax credits are left to expire.

Enrollees already find it challenging to afford health expenses

The expiration of the tax credits — which a separate KFF analysis found will more than double monthly payments for the average subsidized enrollee — comes as Americans are already overwhelmed by high health expenses, the poll shows.

About 6 in 10 Affordable Care Act enrollees find it "somewhat" or "very" difficult to afford out-of-pocket costs for medical care, such as deductibles and copays. That exceeds the roughly half of enrollees who find it challenging to afford health insurance premiums. Most also say they could not afford a \$300 per year increase in their health insurance costs without significantly disrupting their household finances.

Cynthia Cox, a vice president of KFF who leads the organization's ACA research, said the population of Americans on Affordable Care Act health insurance includes some high-earning entrepreneurs and small business owners, but the bulk of enrollees are lower-income and therefore vulnerable to even small increases in health costs.

"These are often going to be people who are living paycheck to paycheck, who have volatile or unpredictable incomes as well," she said. "Increases that many of them are facing are going to be some sort of financial hardship for them."

Most enrollees see cost increases on the horizon

Slightly more than half of Affordable Care Act marketplace enrollees believe their health insurance costs will increase "a lot more than usual" next year, according to the poll. About another 4 in 10 anticipate increases that will be "a little more than usual" or "about the same as usual."

Larry Griffin, a 56-year-old investment banker and financial adviser in Paso Robles, California, already pays \$920 a month for his gold-level health plan through the state's insurance marketplace. He says that price will go up to about \$1,400 a month next year — alongside jumps in copays and his annual out-of-pocket maximum.

He's concerned the increases will affect his ability to save money for his upcoming retirement, but with the recent amputation of his left leg below the knee, as well as other health issues, he said he can't risk going off health insurance or downgrading his plan.

Griffin is among the roughly three-quarters of marketplace enrollees who say health insurance is "very important" for their ability to access the health care they need.

"I'm not going to say that I can't manage it, I can, but it's just another one of those things," he said. "Here's, you know, knock number 5,000 against me after all of the other things I've had to deal with."

Patricia Roberts, 52, a full-time caregiver for her daughter in Auburn, Alabama, received a notice saying her monthly health insurance premiums would rise from around \$800 a month to \$1,100 a month next year — but she was later notified the monthly cost would actually be more than \$1,400, prompting her to look for a downgraded plan.

She said her friends across the border in Georgia are staring down doubling monthly fees next year.

"I don't know how people are going to live, with it already being a struggle just to pay for food and all the other things," Roberts said.

Support for an extension stretches across political parties

The poll shows allowing the enhanced tax credits to expire would be overwhelmingly unpopular with current marketplace enrollees.

Support for continuing the tax credits extends across party lines. Nearly all Democrats and about 8 in 10 independents who are enrolled in marketplace plans say the credits should be extended, as do about 7 in 10 Republicans. Support is similarly high among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who support the MAGA movement, and those who don't.

Yvette Laugier, 56, a Republican in Chicago, said while her income is too high to qualify her for the enhanced premium tax credits, she supports extending them temporarily with additional fraud protections to give lower-income enrollees more time to consider their options.

Among those who think Congress should extend the credits, about 4 in 10 say Trump would deserve "most of the blame" if they were allowed to expire and roughly one-third say that about Republicans in Congress. Democrats in Congress are much less likely to receive blame: only 23% of enrollees say they would deserve the bulk of responsibility.

Bigny, in Virginia, said the blame should be split between both Democrats and Republicans. But he has hope they can come to a compromise and potentially a temporary extension in the coming weeks.

"They should just sit and really look for what's best for American people overall," he said.

Kennedy's vaccine advisory committee delays vote on hepatitis B shots for newborns

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

A federal vaccine advisory committee on Thursday voted to delay a decision on whether newborns should still get the hepatitis B vaccine on the day they're born.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, meeting in Atlanta, voted to delay the decision until Friday after committee members voiced confusion about voting language — and some voiced concern about taking such a step.

For decades, the government has advised that all babies be vaccinated against the liver infection right after birth. The shots are widely considered to be a public health success for preventing thousands of illnesses.

But U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s committee is considering whether to recommend the birth dose only for babies whose mothers test positive, which would mark a return to a public health strategy that was abandoned more than three decades ago. For other babies, it will be up to the parents and their doctors to decide if a birth dose is appropriate.

Committee member Vicky Pebsworth said a work group was tasked in September with evaluating whether a birth dose is necessary when mothers tested negative for hepatitis B.

"We need to address stakeholder and parent dissatisfaction" with the current recommendation, she said.

The committee makes recommendations to the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on how already approved vaccines should be used. CDC directors almost always adopted the committee's recommendations, which were widely heeded by doctors and guide vaccination programs. But the agency currently has no director, leaving acting director Jim O'Neill to decide.

Kennedy, a leading anti-vaccine activist before he became the nation's top health official, fired the entire 17-member panel earlier this year and replaced it with a group that includes several anti-vaccine voices.

The panel has made several decisions that angered major medical groups.

At a June meeting, it recommended that a preservative called thimerosal be removed from doses of flu vaccine even though some members acknowledged there was no proof it was causing harm.

In September, it recommended new restrictions on a combination shot that protects against chickenpox, measles, mumps and rubella. The panel also took the unprecedented step of not recommending COVID-19 vaccinations, even for high-risk populations such as seniors, and instead making it a matter of personal

choice.

Several doctors groups said the changes were not based on good evidence, and advised doctors and patients to follow guidance that was previously in place.

They renewed some of that criticism. Dr. Jason M. Goldman, president of the American College of Physicians, commented during the meeting, calling it "political theater" and adding that "you are basing this on concerns of individuals who don't want the vaccine."

Some committee members argued that safety studies in the past were limited and it's possible that larger additional studies could uncover a problem with the birth dose. But two other committee members — Dr. Joseph Hibbeln and Dr. Cody Meissner — saw no documented evidence of harm from the birth doses and wondered whether the concern behind the discussion is just, as Hibbeln said, "speculation."

Hepatitis B is a serious liver infection that, for most people, lasts less than six months. But for some, especially infants and children, it can become a long-lasting problem that can lead to liver failure, liver cancer and scarring called cirrhosis.

In adults, the virus is spread through sex or through sharing needles during injection drug use.

But it can also be passed from an infected mother to a baby. As many as 90% of infants who contract hepatitis B go on to have chronic infections, meaning their immune systems don't completely clear the virus.

In 1991, the committee recommended an initial dose of hepatitis B vaccine at birth. Over about 30 years, cases among children fell from about 18,000 per year to about 2,200.

But members of Kennedy's committee have voiced discomfort with vaccinating all newborns.

Cynthia Nevison, an autism and environmental researcher, presented at the meeting. Nevison has written opinion pieces published by Children's Health Defense, an anti-vaccine advocacy organization Kennedy previously led. She also co-authored a 2021 article in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders that the publication retracted after concerns were raised about the paper's methodology and about non-disclosed ties between the authors and anti-vaccine groups.

Another presenter was Mark Blaxill, a co-author of the retracted paper, who spoke about vaccine safety.

In the past, committee meetings have relied on presentations by the CDC scientists involved in tracking vaccine-preventable diseases and assessing vaccine safety. The agenda for this meeting listed no CDC scientists, but rather featured a prolonged public airing of anti-vaccine theories that most scientists have deemed as discredited.

Kennedy is a lawyer by training. Aaron Siri, a lawyer who worked with Kennedy on vaccine litigation, is listed as a presenter on Friday on the topic of the immunization schedule for U.S. children.

U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Louisiana Republican who is a doctor, on Thursday posted on social media; "The ACIP is totally discredited. They are not protecting children."

The current guidance advises a dose within 24 hours of birth for all medically stable infants who weigh at least 4.4 pounds (2 kilograms), plus follow-up shots to be given at about 1 month and 6 months. The committee is expected to vote on language that says when a family decides not to get a birth dose, then the vaccination series should begin when the child is 2 months old.

Putin arrives in New Delhi on a state visit aimed at bolstering Russia-India ties

By RAJESH ROY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin landed in India Thursday on a state visit aimed at bolstering bilateral and economic ties between the two countries.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the Russian leader at an airport in New Delhi, giving a bear hug and a tight handshake with the gusto of an old friend.

Modi will host Putin for a private dinner Thursday night at his decked-up official residence.

On Friday, the two leaders will hold talks as part of the 23rd India-Russia Summit and discuss deepening economic cooperation, mainly in defense, energy and the mobility of skilled labor.

Putin's visit comes at a sensitive time in global politics when there is a renewed push by the U.S. on a

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peace deal to bring the Russia-Ukraine war to an end. The visit will test New Delhi's efforts to balance relations with Moscow and Washington as the nearly four-year war in Ukraine grinds on.

Critics say while India has historically maintained deep ties with Russia. Putin's visit could ruffle feathers among anti-Moscow nations and potentially jeopardize New Delhi's negotiations for major trade agreements with the European Union and the United States, deals seen as critical for boosting India's exports.

Putin last visited India in 2021. Modi was in Moscow last year, and the two leaders briefly met in September in China during a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit.

'India is a great power'

Before his visit, Putin told India Today — an Indian media group — in an interview that Russia had plans to cooperate with India in "the most important areas: cutting-edge technology, space exploration and nuclear energy," Russian state news agency Tass reported.

Putin acknowledged that heavy sanctions on Russia's economy caused "certain difficulties," but said that there were solutions and that countries that tried to hinder third-country trade would "ultimately suffer losses themselves."

"India is a great power, not a British colony. And everyone will have to accept that," Putin was quoted as saying by Tass.

Putin referred to Modi as a friend.

Boosting trade

Bilateral trade stood at \$68.7 billion in the last fiscal year that ended in March, according to Indian government data. The two countries are looking to reach \$100 billion by 2030. At present, trade is heavily skewed in favor of Russia with deep deficits for India.

India's exports stood at a marginal \$4.88 billion, while imports were at \$63.84 billion, largely led by inbound shipments of Russian crude.

Indian officials said that New Delhi was working with Moscow to bridge the deficit and boost exports across sectors, including marine products, agriculture, automobiles and pharmaceuticals.

Multiple agreements were expected Friday in shipping, health care, fertilizers, connectivity and labor mobility — which would give impetus to both relations and trade, they said.

Defense cooperation

Russia continues to be India's biggest supplier of military hardware, despite New Delhi trying to diversify its purchases from other countries over the past few years.

Hours before the Russian President landed, his Defense Minister Andrei Belousov co-chaired an inter-governmental commission on military and technical cooperation with Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh.

A readout from the Indian defense ministry said that Singh stressed new opportunities to enhance collaboration with Russia across niche technologies while Belousov offered support to help New Delhi become self-reliant in defense production.

Defense cooperation is expected to be at the core of the discussion when Putin and Modi hold talks.

India is expected to push Russia for faster delivery of two further S-400 surface-to-air missile systems, after receiving three under a 2018 deal worth about \$5.4 billion. The delay has been tied to supply chain disruptions linked to the war in Ukraine.

Indian authorities are also exploring the possibility of acquiring additional S-400 units or an upgraded variant, though no contract or announcement is expected during Putin's visit.

Indian defense planners say the S-400 proved effective during a brief military standoff with Pakistan in May.

Talks are also expected on upgrading India's Russian-made Su-30MKI fighter jets and accelerating deliveries of critical military hardware, as well as improving coordination on joint exercises and disaster relief.

Moscow is keen on selling its stealth fighter jet Su-57 to India, but New Delhi has kept its options open to other foreign suppliers as well.

US sanctions

Washington has been critical of India buying discounted Russian oil, which it says helps finance Moscow's

war machine. In August, U.S. President Donald Trump imposed additional 25% tariffs on Indian imports, raising the total duties to 50% in retaliation.

India has defended its imports as essential for meeting the growing energy needs of its 1.4 billion people. The matter is expected to come up for detailed discussion.

In October, the U.S. sanctioned two of Moscow's biggest oil producers, in a move aimed at forcing countries like India to cut down on imports.

Indian officials say New Delhi has always abided by international sanctions and will do so in the case of Russian oil purchase too. However, options remain open to source from entities that aren't in the sanction net yet.

Praveen Donthi, senior analyst for India at International Crisis Group, said that the summit would offer opportunities for India and Russia to reaffirm their relationship amid intense pressure from Trump, who imposed steep tariffs to punish New Delhi for importing Russian oil.

"While this pressure has succeeded in getting New Delhi to reduce its crude oil imports from Russia, it will continue to uphold defense with Moscow, especially amid tensions with China and Pakistan," Donthi said.

Trump to visit Pennsylvania to highlight efforts to curb inflation as high prices squeeze Americans

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump plans to travel to Pennsylvania on Tuesday to highlight his efforts to reduce inflation even as fears mount about a worsening job market and amid signs that Americans are still feeling squeezed by high prices.

A White House official said Trump would be making the trip to discuss ending the inflation crisis that he says was inherited from his predecessor, Joe Biden. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the trip has not been formally announced. It was not immediately clear where in Pennsylvania Trump would be visiting.

Last month's off-year elections showed a shift away from Republicans as public concerns about affordability persist. White House officials said afterward that Trump — who has done relatively few events domestically — would put a greater emphasis on talking directly to the public about his economic policies.

The president has said that any affordability worries are part of a Democratic "hoax" and that people simply need to hear his perspective to change their minds — an approach also embraced by Biden, who in early 2024 went to the Pennsylvania borough of Emmaus to take credit for economic improvements after inflation spiked in 2022.

The trip hints the dilemma faced by Trump. He wants to take credit for rewiring the U.S. economy with his large tariff hikes and extension of income tax cuts, but he also continues to blame Biden for the increase nationwide in inflation rates that occurred this year during his own presidency. Overall, inflation is tracking at 3% annually, up from 2.3% in April when Trump rolled out a sweeping set of import taxes.

"We fixed inflation, and we fixed almost everything," Trump said at Tuesday's Cabinet meeting. He called affordability "a hoax" that was "started by the Democrats who caused the problem of pricing."

Trump won Pennsylvania narrowly last year with 50.4%, besting Democrat Kamala Harris by roughly 120,000 votes. The win was part of a broader sweep in battleground states that helped return him to the White House after his 2020 loss.

AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of voters in the 2024 election, found that 7 in 10 Pennsylvania voters were "very concerned" about the cost of food and groceries. Roughly half expressed the same degree of worry over health care costs and the price of gasoline.

While Trump can point to a decline in gasoline prices, he's now facing inflationary pressures on utilities and a massive increase in insurance premiums for people who get their health care through the Affordable Care Act.

Pennsylvanians who buy their own health insurance coverage are likely to see their costs increase on

average by 21.5% because of the expiration of tax credits tied to the Affordable Care Act, the state said in October.

Pennsylvania has yet to see the boom that Trump promised would instantly happen with his return to the White House.

The state has largely preserved its Biden era job growth under Trump, but its unemployment rate has risen to 4% from 3.6% over the past 12 months, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There has been an increase of roughly 24,000 people who say they're unemployed.

Annual inflation in the Philadelphia area is 3.3%, roughly the same as last year.

The Philadelphia Federal Reserve's Beige Book in November documented an economy in decline, saying that hiring has flattened, warehouse workers are getting fewer hours on the job, inflationary pressures are coming from tariffs and sales of existing homes are decreasing. Separately, the regional Fed branch's manufacturing survey last month showed that factory activity weakened.

The news outlet Axios first reported Trump's plans to travel to Pennsylvania.

How one Arkansas county helps ICE make hundreds of arrests and spreads fear among immigrants

By RYAN J. FOLEY and JULIO CORTEZ Associated Press

ROGERS, Ark. (AP) — Northwest Arkansas has emerged as a hot spot in the Trump administration's crackdown on illegal immigration, the result of one county's partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and aggressive traffic stops by police.

The region offers a window into what the future may hold in places where law enforcement agencies cooperate broadly with ICE, as the Department of Homeland Security offers financial incentives in exchange for help making arrests.

The Associated Press reviewed ICE arrest data, law enforcement records and interviewed local residents. Here are some takeaways from that reporting.

Benton County has helped arrest hundreds for ICE

More than 450 people were arrested by ICE at the Benton County Jail from Jan. 1 through Oct. 15, according to ICE arrest data from the University of California Berkeley Deportation Data Project analyzed by AP. That's more than 1.5 arrests per day in the county of roughly 300,000 people.

Most of the arrests were made through the county's so-called 287(g) agreement, named for a section of immigration law, that allows deputies to question people who are booked into the jail about their immigration status. In fact, the county's program accounted for more than 4% of roughly 7,000 arrests nationwide that were attributed to similar programs during the first 9 1/2 months of this year, according to the data.

Under the program, deputies alert ICE to inmates suspected of being in the country illegally. They are usually held without bond and eventually transferred into ICE custody. They are typically moved to the neighboring Washington County Detention Center in Fayetteville and then taken to detention centers in Louisiana for potential deportation.

Those turned over to ICE were charged with a range of offenses

About half of those arrested by ICE through the program in Benton County had been convicted of crimes, while the other half had charges pending, according to the data. But the severity of the charges varied widely.

Jail records show those on recent ICE holds include people who had been arrested on forgery, sexual assault, drug trafficking, theft and public intoxication charges.

Offenses related to domestic violence and unsafe driving were among the most common.

Local observers say they have tracked an uptick in people facing ICE detention after traffic stops involving violations such as driving without a license.

The program produces uneven criminal accountability. Charges are often dropped before defendants are convicted or sentenced so they can face deportation proceedings.

Similar partnerships are rapidly expanding nationwide

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ICE now has more than 1,180 cooperation agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies, up from 135 at the start of the new administration. It has offered payments to cover costs of training, equipment and salaries in some circumstances.

Arrests under the programs have surged in recent months as more agencies get started, ICE data shows.

The growth has been particularly pronounced in Republican-led states such as Florida, where new laws encourage or require such cooperation.

Earlier this year, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed a law requiring county sheriffs to cooperate with ICE through either a 287(g) program at the jail or a program in which they serve ICE warrants to expedite detentions and removals.

Immigrants say they are afraid of racial profiling

Residents born in other countries said they were afraid to drive in northwest Arkansas regardless of whether they had legal status.

Some said they leave home only to go to work, have groceries and food delivered rather than eat out, and avoid leisure activities.

One 73-year-old man born in Venezuela said that his apartment "is a kind of jail," because he fears getting arrested and deported when he ventures out.

The area includes communities of people born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Marshall Islands.

One woman was held for ICE after her husband was deported

A Rogers police officer pulled over 35-year-old Cristina Osornio in September and cited her for driving without insurance and a suspended license. She was running an errand for her job at the time.

The officer found Osornio had a warrant for missing a court appearance in a misdemeanor case, and took her to the Benton County Jail.

She was jailed for four days on an ICE hold, records show, even though she is a permanent legal resident who has lived in the U.S. since she was 3 months old. Osornio said the detention was "very scary" and that she was released without explanation.

Her husband, who had entered the country illegally, had a different outcome.

Records show he was arrested in a misdemeanor domestic violence case last year and put on an ICE hold at the jail. He was transferred into ICE custody in January and has since been deported to Mexico.

Osornio said that being separated from her husband has been devastating financially and emotionally. The family lost their home, and their two young children miss their father, she said.

Decades-old palm trees in Rio de Janeiro flower for the first — and only — time

By ELÉONORE HUGHES and LUCAS DUMPHREYS Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Towering talipot palms in a Rio de Janeiro park are flowering for the first and only time in their lives, decades after famed Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx introduced them in the 1960s.

Towards the end of its life — which can span between 40 and 80 years — the palm tree sends up a central plume crowded with millions of small, creamy-white blossoms that rise high above its fan-shaped leaves.

The rare phenomenon that ties past to present has sparked the curiosity of passersby in Flamengo Park who stop, crane their necks to admire them and take photos.

Vinicius Vanni, a 42-year-old civil engineer, was even hoping to collect seedlings and plant them.

"I probably won't see them flower, but they'll be there for future generations," he said from Flamengo Park, which hugs a nearby beach and offers a spectacular view of Sugarloaf Mountain.

Originating from southern India and Sri Lanka, the talipot palm can reach up to 30 meters (98 feet) in height and produce around 25 million flowers when it blossoms, using energy accumulated over decades.

If the flowers are pollinated, they produce fruits that can become seedlings.

In addition to Flamengo Park, the talipot palms can be found in Rio's Botanical Garden, where they are also flowering.

That's because they were brought across from southern Asia together, have the same metabolism and have been exposed to the same Brazilian rhythm of daylight, according to Aline Saavedra, a biologist at Rio de Janeiro State University.

Saavedra said that environmental laws strictly regulate transporting species native from another continent, although talipot palms are not invasive due to their slow development.

The interest the phenomenon has generated is positive and could encourage a sense of belonging for human beings to preserve rather than destroy the environment, according to Saavedra.

"This palm species gives us a reflection on temporality, because it has roughly the same lifespan as a human being," said Saavedra. "Marx also wanted to convey a poetic perspective."

What to know about the International Criminal Court as annual meeting lays out challenges

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The mood is grim in The Hague as hundreds of diplomats, lawyers and activists gather this week for the annual meeting of the International Criminal Court to discuss unprecedented challenges including U.S. sanctions, Russian arrest warrants and worries over the court's future.

During her opening address Monday, the court's president, Judge Tomoko Akane, told delegations from 125 member states that the institution remains defiant.

"We never accept any kind of pressure," Akane said.

But with no prosecutor at the helm, multiple staff members under sanction and countries pulling out, many outside the meeting are wondering how the court will survive.

The Assembly of States parties is under way

The ICC was established in 2002 as the world's permanent court of last resort to prosecute suspects accused of the most heinous atrocities: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

The court's oversight body, the Assembly of States Parties, is holding its 24th annual meeting, which is scheduled to continue through Saturday. Delegates will approve the court's yearly budget and debate proposals related to the institution's functions.

At the meeting held in a theater and conference center that will soon host a performance of The Nutcracker ballet, court officials are seeking to obtain commitments from member nations for 195 million euros (\$227 million) to fund operations next year.

Trump sanctions are having an impact

Nine staff members, including six judges and the court's chief prosecutor, have been sanctioned by U.S. President Donald Trump for pursuing investigations into U.S. and Israeli officials. The U.S. is among the powerful nations that are not members of the court, along with Israel, Russia and China.

The U.S. sanctions have taken a toll on the court's work across a broad array of investigations at a time when the institution is juggling ever more demands on its resources.

They have "cast an odd shadow over the event," Human Rights First Director Adam Keith told The Associated Press.

Two U.S.-based human rights groups pulled out of events, concerned about possible sanctions violations. Another organization, the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights, kept U.S. staff out of meetings where any of the sanctioned staff were present.

Prosecutor's misconduct case overshadows business

An item not on the agenda but widely discussed in the hallways is the ongoing investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct by the court's chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, who has temporarily stepped down while a United Nations watchdog conducts an external probe.

However, the report has yet to be filed a year after the allegations against Khan were submitted.

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After repeated delays, the report is scheduled to be finalized at the end of the year, according to senior diplomatic sources who are not authorized to speak on the record. A panel of judges appointed by the Assembly of States Parties will then have at least 30 days to evaluate its contents and make recommendations.

"I am well aware that states have been frustrated with the length of this process," assembly President Päivi Kaukoranta said in her opening address Monday.

Support ebbing among some member states

Since last year's meeting, four countries have said they will pull out of the court.

Hungary refused to arrest Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu despite an ICC arrest warrant in April before announcing its intention to withdraw from court membership.

In September, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger also said they would leave but have not yet formalized their departures.

In January, Italy, where the court's foundational treaty, the Rome Statute, was signed in 2001, sent a wanted Libya warlord home rather than turning him over to the ICC.

The court has no police force and relies on cooperation from member states to arrest suspects and send them to The Hague to face justice.

New trials are on the horizon

The courtrooms have seen a spike in activity.

At the start of 2025, the court was in the final stages of the only remaining item on the docket: the trial of Central African Republic militia commander Mahamat Said Abdel Kani, who is charged with multiple counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

As the year draws to a close, the court has taken custody of two more suspects. In March, former Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte was sent to the ICC on a warrant accusing him of crimes against humanity for deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he oversaw while in office.

On Monday, Germany handed over Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri, who was arrested in July and accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes while serving as a senior commander in a Tripoli prison.

Today in History: December 5, Nelson Mandela dies at 95

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Dec. 5, the 339th day of 2025. There are 26 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 5, 2013, Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who became South Africa's first Black president, died at age 95.

Also on this date:

In 1848, in an address to Congress, President James K. Polk sparked the Gold Rush of '49 by confirming that gold had been discovered in California.

In 1933, Prohibition came to an end as Utah became the 36th state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the 18th Amendment.

In 1952, the Great Smog of London descended on the British capital; the unusually thick fog, which contained toxic pollutants, lasted five days and was blamed for causing thousands of deaths.

In 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged to form the AFL-CIO under its first president, George Meany.

In 1994, Republicans chose Newt Gingrich to be the first GOP speaker of the House in four decades.

In 2008, O.J. Simpson was sentenced to up to 33 years in prison after being convicted of 12 criminal charges in connection with a 2007 confrontation with sports memorabilia dealers in a Las Vegas hotel. (Simpson was released on parole after serving nine years; he died in 2024).

In 2009, a jury in Perugia, Italy, convicted American student Amanda Knox and her Italian ex-boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, of murdering Knox's British roommate, Meredith Kercher, and sentenced them to long prison terms. (After a series of back-and-forth rulings, Knox and Sollecito were definitively acquitted in 2015 by Italy's highest court.)

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In 2017, Democratic Congressman John Conyers of Michigan resigned from Congress after a nearly 53-year career, becoming the first Capitol Hill politician to lose his job amid sexual misconduct allegations sweeping the nation's workplaces; Conyers denied wrongdoing.

In 2023, Peru's constitutional court ordered a humanitarian release for imprisoned former President Alberto Fujimori, who was serving a 25-year sentence in connection with the death squad slayings of 25 Peruvians in the 1990s. (Fujimori died in September 2024 at age 86.)

Today's Birthdays: Author Calvin Trillin is 90. Opera singer Jose Carreras is 79. Musician Jim Messina is 78. Golf Hall of Famer Lanny Wadkins is 76. Football Hall of Famer Art Monk is 68. Rock singer-musician John Rzeznik (REZ'-nihk) (The Goo Goo Dolls) is 60. Country singer Gary Allan is 58. Comedian-actor Margaret Cho is 57. Actor Paula Patton is 50. Singer-songwriter Keri Hilson is 43. Actor and stock car driver Frankie Muniz is 40. Singer-songwriter Conan Gray is 27.