

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 1 of 73

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Baby-sitter Ad](#)
- [4- Graduation Cards Ad](#)
- [5- City Council Agenda](#)
- [6- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [7- Brown County Meeting Agenda](#)
- [8- Groton Senior Citizens](#)
- [8- Card Shower for Betty Strom](#)
- [9- Photos from State Wrestling](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: South Dakota Senate declines to put eminent domain restrictions on the ballot](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: South Dakota lawmakers reject longer wait for officials taking private jobs with state contractors](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Protecting the US Senate's home-state prerogative in land use fights is essential for South Dakota](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: School cellphone ban fails in South Dakota legislative committee](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Judge blocks Noem policy limiting congressional visits to immigrant detention facilities](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Death toll for US service members in Iran war rises to 6 as Trump projects weeks of conflict](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: More than 125 groups call on Congress to end carbon sequestration tax credits](#)
- [21- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- Subscription Form](#)
- [28- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [29- News from the Associated Press](#)

Tuesday, March 3

Senior Menu: Kielbasa, mac and cheese, Catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.
School Lunch: Chef salad.
St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
HS Baseball Practice, 6 p.m., HS Gym
Region 1A Boys Basketball. Groton does not play in the first round.
Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym
Biogirls, 3:45 p.m., elementary gym



Wednesday, March 4

Senior Menu: Sheppards pie, lettuce salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Omelet.
School Lunch: Soup, sandwich
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Soup Supper (Sarah Circle hosts), 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.; Lenten Service, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lent Supper, 6 p.m.; Lent Service at St. John's, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton Chamber Meeting, noon, City Hall
Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., elementary gym
6th Grade Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., HS Gym
7th Grade BBB, 6 p.m., Arena

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 2 of 73

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.

Middle East Conflict Widens

President Donald Trump said yesterday the US' war with Iran is expected to continue for four to five weeks and could extend past that point if needed. The statement came as Iran continued to launch retaliatory attacks, including in Israel, and countries hosting US bases like Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE.

Trump outlined four objectives: destroying Iran's missile capabilities, wiping out its navy, preventing access to a nuclear weapon, and removing its ability to fund proxy militias. The administration did not rule out sending ground troops, though Trump later said they would likely not be necessary.

Iran meanwhile continued to launch retaliatory strikes, including sending two warplanes into Qatari airspace, drone attacks against a Saudi oil refinery and the US Embassy in Riyadh, missile strikes in Kuwait and the UAE, and ongoing strikes toward Israel. Israel carried out attacks against Hezbollah in Lebanon after the Iranian-allied militia launched rockets into the country.

Lone Star Primaries

Voters in Texas cast ballots today in a pair of hotly contested primary races, choosing their candidates to face off for a US Senate seat in November. They are the most expensive such races in US history, with more than \$110M spent in total.

For Republicans, incumbent John Cornyn is seeking his fifth term in the seat and has been locked in a combative three-way race with Attorney General Ken Paxton and Rep. Wesley Hunt (TX-38). Paxton, who survived a 2023 impeachment on bribery and corruption charges, enters the day with a four-point lead over Cornyn (40% to 36%). On the Democratic side, Rep. Jasmine Crockett (TX-30) faces state Rep. James Talarico, with each trying to build a multiracial coalition in a state where Democrats haven't defended a statewide office since 1994.

Separately, Rep. Ryan Zinke (R, MT-1) announced he will not run for reelection, citing health issues. He joins a growing list of Republicans retiring before the 2026 midterms.

Concert Colossus in Court

Opening statements begin today in a federal antitrust trial against Live Nation. The Justice Department, 39 states, and the District of Columbia allege the entertainment giant pressured venues and artists into exclusive deals, stifling competition and driving up ticket prices.

Founded in 1996 as a concert promoter and venue operator, Live Nation expanded into ticket sales after a \$2.5B merger with Ticketmaster in 2010. The DOJ approved the deal on the condition that Live Nation not force venues to use its ticketing services—a term officials accuse the company of repeatedly violating. The DOJ claims, for example, that Live Nation diverted tours from New York's Barclays Center after it briefly left Ticketmaster for SeatGeek in 2021. Live Nation denies the accusation.

If the DOJ prevails, consumers may be entitled to damages, and Live Nation and Ticketmaster could be split up. The combined company reported roughly \$25B in revenue last year, hosting about 55,000 events and selling 646 million tickets worldwide.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 3 of 73

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

HBO Max and Paramount+ to merge into a single streaming platform if Paramount Skydance acquires Warner Bros. Discovery; combined platform would have over 200 million direct-to-consumer subscribers.

Team USA announces 72 athletes competing in Paralympic Winter Games; competition begins tomorrow, and the opening ceremony is set for Friday.

Iran's soccer federation casts doubt on national team's participation in 2026 World Cup following recent US-Israeli strikes; Iraq or the United Arab Emirates are poised to replace Iran if it withdraws.

Science & Technology

Apple introduces lower-cost iPhone 17e and faster iPad Air; the tech giant is expected to announce more new products in the coming days.

Skin patch tracks body's immune responses, potentially offering a new method to monitor patients' responses to vaccines, infections, and cancer treatments.

Meteorologists report 50% to 60% chance that El Niño—which pushes global temperatures higher—will form from July onward; last month, the federal government revised how El Niño is classified to reflect warming ocean waters.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.0%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq +0.4%), with S&P 500 falling 1.2% before reversing losses.

European natural gas prices spike 40% as Qatari firm halts production amid Middle East conflict.

US oil prices jump 8% to \$72.50 per barrel, Iranian forces close the Strait of Hormuz.

Elliott Management reveals \$268M position in mortgage-backed assets tied to Market Financial Solutions, the UK-based mortgage lender that declared bankruptcy last week.

Politics & World Affairs

House Oversight Committee releases video of Clintons' testimony last week about interactions with late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

France says it will increase its nuclear arsenal amid global upheaval; the country is the only nuclear-armed EU member, with around 290 warheads.

At least 169 people are reported killed by insurgents earlier this week in South Sudan; country has witnessed uptick in violence since December, when opposition forces seized government outposts.

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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 4 of 73



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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 5 of 73

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

March 3, 2026 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Garbage Hauling Discussion
4. Department Reports
5. Surplus Old Baseball Scoreboard and Allow Baseball Foundation to Sell/Auction to Offset Cost of New Scoreboard
6. Revisit Exterior Painting of City Hall/Wage Memorial Library – Offer from Custer Custom Homes & Renovations, LLC
7. Minutes
8. Bills
9. HR/FO School in Oacoma, SD – June 9th – 12th, 2026 – Douglas Heinrich
10. Reminder: Nominating Petitions for Municipal Election – Due by March 24 at 5:00pm
11. Announcement: SDML District 6 Meeting – Redfield, SD – March 17, 2026, at 6pm
12. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
13. Select Equalization Meeting Date
14. Accept Resignation of Landon Johnson as Electric Lineman
15. Accept Resignation of Jason Wambach as Ward 3 Councilperson
16. Hire Applicants for Summer Employment
17. Adjournment

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 6 of 73

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2-Person: \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
Family: \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

MONTH-TO-MONTH

Student: \$35.15 per month
Single: \$40.48 per month
2-Person: \$59.78 per month
Family: \$72.43 per month
Senior/PT: \$20 per month



Call or Text Paul at 605/397-7460
Call or Text Tina at 605/397-7285

Same rates for several years!

Broton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 7 of 73



**BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
GENERAL MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026, 8:45 A.M.
COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS
COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes.*
4. Second Reading & Possible Adoption of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #321 – Rezone for Kyler & Lia Dinger
5. Dirk Rogers, Highway Dept.
 - a. Set Bid date for Gravel Hot Mix Rentals and Road Oil
 - b. R-O-W for Midco
6. Patty VanMeter, Treasurer
 - a. Tax Deed Properties
7. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of the General Meeting Minutes of February 24, 2026
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>
You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311) - Access Code: **601-168-909** #
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Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at [Commission Meetings | Brown County](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 8 of 73

Groton Senior Citizens

Groton Seniors gathered February 9 for a meeting and cards. President Darlene Fischer opened with allegiance to the flag. Minutes and treasure reports were read and accepted. The meeting was adjourned. Cards were played. The winners of the games 1-Pinochle- Ruby Donovan, 2- Pinochle- Bruce Shilhank, Whist- Elda Stange, Canasta-Pat Larson. Door prizes Julie Shilhanek, Eunice McCollister, Darlene Fischer. Lunch was served after the cards.

Thirteen Groton Seniors met on February 16 to play cards. President Darlene Fischer said the flag pledge, Cards were played, the winners of each game. 1-Pinochle- Ruby Donovan, 2- Pinochle- Don Hoops, Whist- Tony Goldade, Canasta-Pat Larson. Door Prizes- Dick Donovan, Elda Stange. Birthday sung to Tony Goldade and had cake and Ice cream.

Twelve Groton Seniors met February 23 for their potluck dinner. President wasn't there. Ruby Donovan took over and had the flag pledge and table prayer, Bingo was played after dinner. Bev Sombke won blackout .Cards were played after bingo.



BETTY STROM

80th Birthday Card Shower



Help us celebrate this special milestone by showering Betty with birthday cards!

Send Cards To:

Betty Strom

2904 Douglas Ave • Apt 127
Yankton, SD 57078



Englund is state champion at state wrestling, Krueger is runner-up

The South Dakota State Wrestling Tournament floor was packed with action as hundreds of wrestlers competed under the bright lights. For Groton Area, the weekend was highlighted by a state championship from Gavin Englund at 285 pounds, as he captured the heavyweight title with a thrilling tie-breaker victory in the finals. On the girls side, Liza Krueger turned in an outstanding performance at 105 pounds, advancing to the championship match and finishing as state runner-up. Other Tiger wrestlers competing on the state stage included Keegan Kucker (113), Wyatt Hagan (120), Kyson Kucker (126), Donovan Block (157), Walker Zoellner (190) and Layne Johnson (215), each battling through tough brackets as Groton Area proudly represented on the state's biggest mat. (Photo by Ryan Scepaniak)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 10 of 73



In the championship match at 285 pounds, Brandon Englund squared off against Legend Benedict of Winner in a tightly contested battle. After regulation ended deadlocked, Englund prevailed in a tie-breaker, earning a 2-1 TB-1 victory to secure the state title. (Photo by Ryan Scepaniak)



In the title bout, Eliza Krueger faced Jewel Vardsveen of Madison at 105 pounds. Vardsveen secured a 12-3 major decision, placing Krueger as the state runner-up to cap a 45-3 season. (Photo by

Ryan Scepaniak)



Donavan Block (23-16) wrestled at 157 pounds, falling by 11-3 major decision to Caleb Christiansen of Parker. (Photo by

Ryan Scepaniak)



At 113 pounds, Keegan Kucker (11-6) battled back in the consolation round with a 9-6 sudden victory win over Summyt Larson of Bon Homme/Avon. (Photo by

Ryan Scepaniak)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 11 of 73



Wyatt Hagan (36-11) competed at 120 pounds, scoring a 17-0 technical fall over Channing Bartlett of McCook Central/Montrose. (Photo by Ryan Scepaniak)



At 126 pounds, Kyson Kucker (35-11) scored a fall over Levi Tuntland of Canton in 4:11. (Photo by Ryan Scepaniak)



At 190 pounds, Walker Zoellner (27-13) was pinned by Mason Janek of Burke/Gregory in consolation action. (Photo by Ryan Scepaniak)



Layne Johnson (23-11) competed at 215 pounds, falling by fall to Quentin White Mountain of McLaughlin. (Photo by Ryan Scepaniak)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota Senate declines to put eminent domain restrictions on the ballot

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota voters will not be asked to put eminent domain restrictions in the state constitution, the state Senate decided on Monday in Pierre.

Supporters of House Joint Resolution 5001, which failed 14-19, had argued that residents need stronger protections than those found in last year's lawbanning eminent domain for carbon capture pipelines.

Eminent domain is the power to take private property for public use, with just compensation to the landowner. Although eminent domain is often used for water pipelines, electrical transmission lines, and other infrastructure, it's been a divisive issue in South Dakota the last several years because of a proposed multi-state carbon capture pipeline that would pass through the eastern part of the state.

The Resolution would have asked voters to narrow the use of eminent domain. Increases in the tax base, tax revenues, employment, or general economic health would no longer justify its use, and the need for a project would need to be publicly declared before any condemnation proceedings could commence.

Sen. Joy Hohn, R-Hartford, was an outspoken critic of eminent domain use for the carbon capture pipeline, which was proposed by Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions. Hohn supported the ban on eminent domain for carbon pipelines last year, and it was a top issue in her 2024 Senate campaign.

Hohn's property has been condemned twice by companies running pipeline projects through the state, the first being the Dakota Access oil pipeline, the second being Summit.

"Different products, different politics, same reality: private companies pursuing profit were allowed, at least initially, to initiate condemnation proceedings against our land," she said.

Hohn was nonetheless one of 19 senators to vote against the resolution, which had previously passed the House 62-5.

Hohn raised concerns about water and electric utility projects, among others.

"We must assure ourselves that what we propose is the very best we can offer the people of South Dakota," Hohn said, adding, "I am not convinced this is the best we can do."

Sen. Mark Lapka, R-Leola, sponsored the resolution in the Senate. He told lawmakers that case law establishes water and electric projects as a public need.

The five-state pipeline would capture carbon dioxide from ethanol plants in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska and transport it to an underground sequestration site in North Dakota, to capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere. The project has been granted permits in other states, but those have been subjected to legal challenges, and South Dakota regulators have twice denied permits for the project.

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

South Dakota lawmakers reject longer wait for officials taking private jobs with state contractors

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

A bill to require South Dakota officials who award or oversee major state contracts with private companies to wait longer before accepting jobs with those companies was defeated on Monday, per the request of the bill's own House sponsor.

Under current law, such state officers and employees must wait one year.

The bill's defeat came after the speaker of the house amended the bill back to its original form, against the wishes of the senator who introduced it.

A Senate-amended version of the bill would have extended the waiting period to two years for contracts exceeding \$5 million. The bill originally proposed a two-year wait for those involved with contracts of \$1 million or more.

Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, introduced the bill and the amendment that increased the dollar amount needed to trigger its two-year waiting period. The amendment was necessary because the state handles many million-dollar contracts, Reed said, and he did not want the extended wait to apply to routine matters.

The amendment also added a waiver process that would have allowed a governing body to authorize earlier employment in certain cases.

The amended bill passed 34-0. In the House State Affairs committee, House Speaker Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, asked the panel to amend it back to its original form. He said the Senate changes weakened the bill's protections, particularly by adding a waiver option.

Sen. Reed asked committee members to oppose the change. He said the waiver was added to avoid unfairly blocking state employees, especially those early in their careers, from taking private sector jobs unrelated to a contract they touched.

The committee adopted Hansen's amendment on an 8-4 vote, and then voted 11-1 to send the bill to the House floor.

On Monday, Brookings Republican Rep. Mellissa Heermann asked her fellow House members to table the bill, effectively defeating it. They voted 37-28 to do so.

Reed filed the bill in response to South Dakota Searchlight reporting about former state economic development commissioner Steve Westra. A year after leaving state government, Westra took a job with CJ Schwan's. While working for the state, Westra had signed the first pledge of state aid benefiting the construction of the company's \$550 million, 650-employee food production plant in northern Sioux Falls. State aid benefiting the project now totals \$69 million worth of tax rebates, loans, and grants.

Reed has repeatedly noted that Westra followed the law as it stands.

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

COMMENTARY

Protecting the US Senate's home-state prerogative in land use fights is essential for South Dakota

by Brad Johnson

Twenty years ago, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission gave Ellsworth Air Force Base a 12% chance of survival.

Washington technocrats had their charts and "authorities." They didn't have Box Elder on a map and probably couldn't find it if they tried.

Then-freshman Sen. John Thune and then-Gov. Mike Rounds refused to accept that distant bureaucrats

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 14 of 73

understood the strategic value of western South Dakota better than the people who live there. They challenged faulty assumptions, rallied the state and made the case that local knowledge matters.

Today, the B-21 Raider is headed to Ellsworth because they did. It was a master class in defending the Senate's home-state prerogative — the unwritten rule that the senators closest to the ground deserve the greatest deference.

That's why a seemingly distant fight — a mining dispute in Minnesota — should concern South Dakotans.

The Senate is considering using the Congressional Review Act to overturn a site-specific, 20-year mineral withdrawal that prevents mining near the headwaters of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The resolution, House Joint Resolution 140, would nullify a local land use decision over the objections of Minnesota's own senators.

Whatever you think about mining in Minnesota, the procedural move should give us pause.

The Boundary Waters aren't an abstraction to South Dakotans. Many thousands of us, including me, have canoed those cold, clear lakes in search of walleye and northerns, listening to loons echo across the granite shorelines as dusk settles in.

You don't spend a week paddling and portaging through that kind of country without feeling something deeper than recreation. Call it solitude. Call it perspective. Some call it spirituality. Whatever the word, it's real.

South Dakotans know what is at stake when mining is near water.

We're still paying for the toxic legacy of the Gilt Edge Mine in the Black Hills, where acid mine drainage contaminated nearby streams, ruined fishing and left taxpayers funding perpetual water treatment.

Sulfide-ore mining and water are a volatile mix. Pristine granite watersheds, like the Boundary Waters, have zero natural ability to neutralize acid. Like Gilt Edge, it is an irreversible ecological disaster waiting to happen.

But the larger danger isn't environmental. It's institutional.

The Congressional Review Act was designed to repeal sweeping federal regulations. It was not built to micromanage individual land decisions. If the Senate stretches it now to overrule a site-specific action — and does so against the wishes of the home-state delegation — it shatters a tradition that protects small states like ours.

For years, Sens. Thune and Rounds have worked to update the management plan for the Black Hills National Forest — balancing timber harvests, grazing, recreation and wildfire mitigation. It's a collaborative process. It's not perfect. But it is being shaped by South Dakotans for South Dakota.

Now imagine a different Washington in 2029 — a Democratic White House and Congress, urged on by out-of-state advocacy groups that dislike our forest plan. If today's Senate sets the precedent that site-specific land decisions are fair game under the Congressional Review Act — even over home-state objections — a future majority could use that same tool to overturn South Dakota's forest plan with 51 votes.

No filibuster. No 60-vote threshold. No deference to the people who live here.

Worse, the Congressional Review Act's "substantially the same" clause would bar the Forest Service from issuing a similar plan without a new act of Congress. One vote could freeze management of the Black Hills in legal amber. That's not conservation. That's paralysis.

When Thune and Rounds saved Ellsworth in 2005, they sent a message: Washington should listen to the people who know the terrain. That principle shouldn't depend on which party benefits this week.

If the Senate abandons home-state courtesy now, it hands future majorities a ready-made weapon to use against us later.

Sen. Thune, as majority leader, has the authority to decide what comes to the floor. He should protect the home state prerogative. He should keep the Congressional Review Act in its proper lane, and make sure the next time Washington thinks it knows better than South Dakota, our senators still have the standing to say otherwise.

Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.

School cellphone ban fails in South Dakota legislative committee

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A bill to ban cellphone use by public school students during the day narrowly failed in a South Dakota House of Representatives committee Monday.

The Education Committee voted 8-7 to defeat Senate Bill 198. The bill passed the state Senate 19-15 on Feb. 17.

Cellphone use policies should be in the hands of local school boards, opponents argued.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, had the support of the South Dakota Education Association.

"While most school districts do have a cell phone policy, teachers will tell you that enforcement is one of the issues," the association's Sandra Waltman told committee members.

Opposition came from the state Department of Education and representatives from large and small school districts.

Lindsay Fathke, K-12 principal at the Avon School District, said her school requires students to put their phones away in their lockers throughout the day. Students have to ask Fathke for permission to use their phones, and must do so under her supervision.

"Our locally developed expectations that are consistently enforced are working," Fathke said. "This kind of effective, local decision making is effective, and should remain in the hands of the school."

According to a South Dakota Searchlight survey last year, about 60% of districts do not allow cellphones for at least part of the school day. In some schools, students can keep the devices in their backpacks or lockers. About a third of districts remove or lock away high school students' cellphones for at least part of the school day.

Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

Judge blocks Noem policy limiting congressional visits to immigrant detention facilities

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — A federal judge Monday temporarily blocked a Department of Homeland Security policy that instituted a seven-day notice requirement for members of Congress to conduct oversight visits at facilities that hold immigrants, finding it likely violates appropriations law that allows for unannounced visits.

The order from Judge Jia Cobb of the District Court for the District of Columbia rejects initial arguments from the Trump administration that the separate funding stream from the tax cuts and spending package passed last year circumvents a 2019 appropriations law that allows for unannounced oversight visits to those facilities from lawmakers.

Members of Congress sued the government over the policy from Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

"Throughout this litigation, Defendants have emphasized the vast amount of money appropriated to DHS and ICE under the (One Big Beautiful Bill Act). The Court agrees that these funds are indeed staggering," Cobb said. "But the power of the purse rests with Congress, and even a deep-pocketed agency must comply with Congress's restrictions on the permissible uses of appropriated funds."

The Department of Justice appealed the decision shortly after the order was given.

DHS shutdown

Monday's decision came amid a partial government shutdown of DHS over Democrats' concerns about enforcement tactics used by immigration agents following the deaths of two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis.

The group representing the 13 members of Congress who filed suit, Democracy Forward, praised the decision.

"Today's ruling makes it clear that Secretary Noem cannot operate detention facilities in the shadows or silence elected officials who are doing their jobs," Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, said in a statement. "The court has once again affirmed that oversight is not optional, transparency is not negotiable, and human rights do not disappear at the doors of a detention center."

The 13 Democratic members of Congress who sued included: Joe Neguse of Colorado, Adriano Espaillat of New York, Kelly Morrison of Minnesota, Jamie Raskin of Maryland, Robert Garcia of California, J. Luis Correa of California, Jason Crow of Colorado, Veronica Escobar of Texas, Dan Goldman of New York, Jimmy Gomez of California, Raul Ruiz of California, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Norma Torres of California.

This policy is the third from Noem to require members of Congress to notify the agency to conduct an oversight visit. A 2019 appropriations law, referred to as Section 527, allows any member of Congress to carry out an unannounced visit to a federal facility that holds immigrants.

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.

Death toll for US service members in Iran war rises to 6 as Trump projects weeks of conflict

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Monday he expects war with Iran will continue however long it takes to achieve his objectives, which include eliminating the country's missile program, preventing its leaders from building a nuclear weapon and ensuring it cannot fund terrorism.

"Right from the beginning, we projected four to five weeks," he said at a Medal of Honor ceremony in the East Room of the White House. "But we have capability to go far longer than that. We'll do it. Whatever."

His remarks followed an early morning briefing by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, who emphasized to those in attendance the U.S. war on Iran will continue unabated on Trump's terms, with more troops on the way and more casualties expected.

Speaking in public for the first time since the United States and Israel launched a massive attack early Saturday, Hegseth would not specify a timeline or exit strategy for the mission.

"We will finish this on America first conditions of President Trump's choosing, nobody else's, as it should be," Hegseth said.

By 4 p.m. Eastern, U.S. Central Command had updated the death toll of American service members to six, though little detail was provided. Their names, ranks and hometowns have not been disclosed.

Trump mentioned the U.S. military troops who had been killed as a reason to continue with his war.

"Today, we grieve for the ... heroic American service members who have been killed in action, and send our love and support to their families," he said. "In their memory, we continue this mission with ferocious, unyielding resolve to crush the threat this terrorist regime poses to the American people, and a threat, indeed it is."

Trump said the objectives of the conflict with Iran "are clear."

Military forces, he said, will destroy the country's missile capabilities and its navy, prevent it from building a nuclear weapon and block its leaders from sponsoring terrorism.

Trump did not say whether he would seek approval from Congress, which holds the power to declare war under the Constitution. And he did not take questions from reporters as he left the Medal of Honor ceremony about whether he would send U.S. ground troops into Iran.

Hegseth at his briefing commented on the three U.S. service members whose deaths were announced Sunday. The secretary said that "a squirter" — apparently referring to an offensive missile or drone — was not intercepted by air defense systems.

"And in that particular case, (it) happened to hit a tactical operation center that was fortified, but these are powerful weapons," Hegseth told reporters.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 17 of 73

The Associated Press reported Sunday the troops were U.S. Army soldiers deployed to Kuwait.

Congress heads toward war powers votes

Votes are expected this week in both the U.S. Senate and House on war powers resolutions attempting to check Trump's power to engage in armed conflict.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said during an afternoon floor speech that lawmakers need to "pick a side" this week, urging them to reject what he described as "a war of choice, not necessity."

"Donald Trump has just launched America into a full-scale conflict against one of our most fervent adversaries without a plan, without an end game and without authorization from Congress, or even a debate in full view of the American people," he said.

Instead of engaging in "military escapades," Schumer said, Trump should focus on implementing policies that would bring down the cost of living and focus on ensuring Americans have good-paying jobs.

"They don't want a war that leads to lost American lives and that costs billions and billions of taxpayer dollars," he said.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., was much more supportive of Trump's military endeavors, saying the "administration relentlessly pursued a diplomatic solution to the threat posed by Iran," but that country's leaders "refused diplomatic off-ramps."

"Iran has relentlessly pursued the development of its own nuclear program despite repeated violations identified by the international atomic watchdog, the (International Atomic Energy Agency)," Thune said. "Iran is also aggressively growing the range and inventory of its ballistic missiles and launchers, an inventory that is already the largest in the region. Combine that with a navy that aims to threaten a key shipping channel and it is clear that Iran poses a serious risk to America's national security interests as well as those of our allies and partners."

Thune and Schumer both said their prayers were with the families, loved ones and fellow service members of the U.S. troops killed so far in the war.

House war powers vote

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said following a closed-door briefing that he believes the vote on the House floor later this week will fail, allowing Trump to keep pursuing war in Iran.

"I am certainly hopeful and I believe we do have the votes to put it down," he said. "That's going to be a good thing for our country and our security and civility."

Johnson said he doesn't believe that Trump needed to seek congressional authorization to begin the war, arguing that "the president was acting well within his authority" since he believes U.S. military actions were "defensive in nature and design and necessity."

Johnson said that since Israel was going to strike Iran and that intelligence sources believed Iran would have retaliated by striking both Israel and the United States, Trump acted appropriately when he began the war without lawmakers' sign off.

There is a chance that if the war drags on the Trump administration will ask Congress to provide additional funding for military operations, but Johnson said "it will be some time before we can put a final number on it."

Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner, ranking member on the Intelligence Committee, said after the same briefing that there was "no imminent threat to the United States of America by the Iranians.

"There was a threat to Israel. If we equate a threat to Israel as the equivalent of an imminent threat to the United States then we are in uncharted territory."

Rubio: 'Hardest hits are yet to come'

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters on Capitol Hill Monday afternoon that the administration has "complied with the law 100%" in briefing congressional leadership ahead of Saturday's attack, and notifying all of Congress within 48 hours afterward.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 18 of 73

"If they want to take a war powers vote, they can do that. They've done that. They've done that a bunch of times," Rubio said. He added: "There's no law that requires the president to have done anything with regards to this."

The secretary told reporters "there absolutely was an imminent threat" that Iran would attack U.S. troops in the region upon Israel striking Tehran.

"We were not going to sit there and absorb a blow before we responded, because the Department of War assessed that if we did that ... we would suffer more casualties and more deaths," Rubio said.

"We went proactively in a defensive way to prevent them from inflicting higher damage. Had we not done so, there would have been hearings on Capitol Hill about how we knew that this was going to happen and we didn't act preemptively to prevent more casualties," he said as he continued on his way to a classified briefing with the congressional leadership and heads of intelligence committees.

When pressed by a journalist on whether the U.S. was forced to act because of Israel, Rubio said, "no matter what, ultimately, this operation needed to happen."

Rubio said the U.S. focus is narrowly on destroying Iran's current conventional weapons capabilities, which he repeatedly claimed are a "shield where they can hide behind" as they continue to build up a nuclear weapons program.

"I'm not going to give away the details of our tactical efforts, but the hardest hits are yet to come from the US military. The next phase will be even more punishing on Iran than it is right now," Rubio said.

Caine says more troops on the way

Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine, at the briefing with Hegseth, said more U.S. troops and airpower were expected to arrive in the region Monday.

"This is not a single overnight operation. The military objectives that (U.S. Central Command) and the Joint Force have been tasked with will take some time to achieve, and in some cases will be difficult and gritty work. We expect to take additional losses, and as always, we will work to minimize U.S. losses," Caine said.

Hegseth said the mission, dubbed by the administration as Operation Epic Fury, is "laser focused" on eliminating Iran's nuclear ambitions by destroying its offensive missile stockpile and production facilities, as well as its naval and security infrastructure.

"We're hitting them surgically, overwhelmingly, and unapologetically with every passing day. Our capabilities get stronger and Iran's get weaker. We set the terms of this war from start to finish," Hegseth said.

The secretary sidestepped a question on how much of Iran's infrastructure has been destroyed since Saturday. Caine said assessing what remains of Iran's long-range strike capabilities "will take some time."

Trump reiterated that a bombing campaign he initiated earlier this year "obliterated" Iran's nuclear program, though he said the country's leaders, many of whom are now dead, "ignored those warnings and refused to cease their pursuit of nuclear weapons."

"In addition, the regime's conventional ballistic missile program was growing rapidly and dramatically, and this posed a very clear, colossal threat to America and our forces stationed overseas," he said. "The regime already had missiles capable of hitting Europe and our bases, both local and overseas, and would soon have had missiles capable of reaching our beautiful America."

Iranians began rebuilding the facilities bombed by the U.S. and Israel in June, but authorities had blocked international inspectors from assessing the areas, according to a PBS report citing an anonymous U.S. official.

Iran retaliation

The conflict rapidly spread Sunday and into Monday across the Middle East, as Iran launched retaliatory missiles and drones following the targeted fatal strike by Israeli defense forces and U.S. intelligence of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

On Monday, Iran attacked key energy infrastructure, interrupting oil and gas production in Qatar and

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 19 of 73

Saudi Arabia, two of the world's largest suppliers, according to international media outlets.

Gulf nations, usually safe havens and luxury getaways in the volatile region, ground to a halt as strikes and debris from intercepted missiles damaged the United Arab Emirates' Dubai International Airport, one of the world's busiest, and nearby iconic tourist destinations, according to Reuters.

The U.S. State Department issued directives for Americans in the region, including a shelter-in-place order Sunday for all U.S. embassy staff in Qatar as airspace remained closed.

Jets go down over Kuwait, deaths in Iran and Israel

No deaths were reported after three U.S. F-15 fighter jets crashed over Kuwait Monday in an apparent friendly fire incident, according to U.S. Central Command. Video of an apparent U.S. fighter jet falling from the sky circulated on social media Monday.

The fighting spread to Lebanon after Iranian-backed Hezbollah fighters fired rockets into Israel. Israel returned fire, including in Lebanon's capital, Beirut. Several media outlets reported casualties, citing Lebanon's health officials.

Nine people were killed Sunday in central Israel after a missile hit a synagogue bomb shelter, The Associated Press reported.

The death toll across Iran hit at least 555 since the conflict began, according to Iranian Red Crescent Society figures cited by Al Jazeera. Iranian officials attributed more than 150 deaths to a strike Saturday on a school in southern Iran, according to numerous international reports.

Buildup of troops over past month

The administration began amassing thousands of troops, aircraft and naval ships over the past 30 days in the region, including relocating its largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald Ford, from its position in the southern hemisphere where U.S. troops apprehended Venezuela's leader on Jan. 3.

The "rapid buildup," Caine said, included service members from Wisconsin's Army National Guard, which was operating in Kuwait and Iraq, and Air National Guard units from various states, including Vermont and Virginia.

Caine would not answer questions about the total number of U.S. troops involved.

Trump gave the final order for the attack on Friday, just before 4 p.m. Eastern, and joint strikes with Israel's forces commenced overnight Saturday, at 9:45 a.m. Tehran time.

"The president directed, and I quote, 'Operation Epic Fury is approved. No aborts, good luck,'" according to Caine.

Operations centers in Tampa, Florida and at the Pentagon directed strikes on more than 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours, Caine said.

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

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.

More than 125 groups call on Congress to end carbon sequestration tax credits

BY: CAMI KOONS

Environmental and advocacy groups from across the country sent a letter to members of Congress asking for an end to 45Q tax credits which they argue are wasteful and make taxpayers foot the bill for the "extraction of uneconomic oil."

Companies that facilitate the sequestration of carbon dioxide are eligible for 45Q tax credits, which were created with the intent to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere.

Companies can also qualify for the credits if the carbon dioxide is used for enhanced oil recovery — a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 20 of 73

process where the captured CO2 is pumped strategically into the ground near oil wells to help boost the productivity of the wells.

The letter, which was signed by more than 125 environmental and anti-oil groups, said funding enhanced oil recovery through the 45Q tax credit is "fiscally irresponsible and fundamentally at odds with the public interest."

"Not only do these subsidies support uneconomic oil and gas extraction, but they will also perpetuate dangerous pipelines and injection wells that exist within a regulatory regime that is demonstrably incapable of ensuring public safety or fiscal accountability," the letter read.

Proponents of a carbon sequestration pipeline that would stretch through Iowa and parts of Nebraska, Minnesota and potentially into North Dakota and South Dakota, have said access to enhanced oil recovery would provide an additional market for CO2 captured in these states.

The proposed Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline would connect to biofuel refineries across Iowa and transport carbon dioxide from the plants to a sequestration site. By capturing and storing the carbon dioxide that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere, ethanol and biofuel producers could enter the growing ultra-low carbon fuel industry, which they say would in turn boost the agricultural economy.

While other carbon sequestration pipelines are up in running, such as the Tallgrass pipeline in Nebraska, the Summit pipeline has been the subject of political controversy, especially in Iowa, South Dakota and North Dakota.

Bold Alliance and Sierra Club, groups that have opposed the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline project, were original signatories on the letter opposing 45Q.

Paul Blackburn, an attorney and energy policy advisor at Bold Alliance, said in a news release that capturing carbon dioxide for either enhanced oil recovery or to stop climate change is a form of "political scheming to make the rich richer."

"We need real solutions to the challenges faced by everyday Americans — not handouts of taxpayer dollars to oil oligarchs," Blackburn said in a news release.

The letter cites U.S. Department of the Treasury data, that estimates tax expenditures of 45Q will total more than \$43.6 billion from 2024-2034.

"This level of public spending represents a massive transfer of taxpayer dollars to oil and gas companies at a time when families are already struggling with rising costs," the letter reads.

Jim Walsh, the policy director at Food & Water Watch, an environmental group that also signed on to the letter, said the letter shows a "growing, nationwide opposition" to the use of taxpayer dollars to "bankroll" oil companies.

"At a time when families are feeling squeezed, Congress shouldn't be writing blank checks to corporate polluters who are poisoning our water, pushing dangerous infrastructure onto communities, and destroying our climate," Walsh said in a news release.

The letter also holds that the 45Q program has "weak" oversight by federal agencies.

Signatories on the letter ask Congress to "eliminate" the enhanced oil recovery portion of the 45Q tax credit and argue doing so is "necessary" to protect taxpayers, safeguard communities and restore integrity to federal energy and tax policy.

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

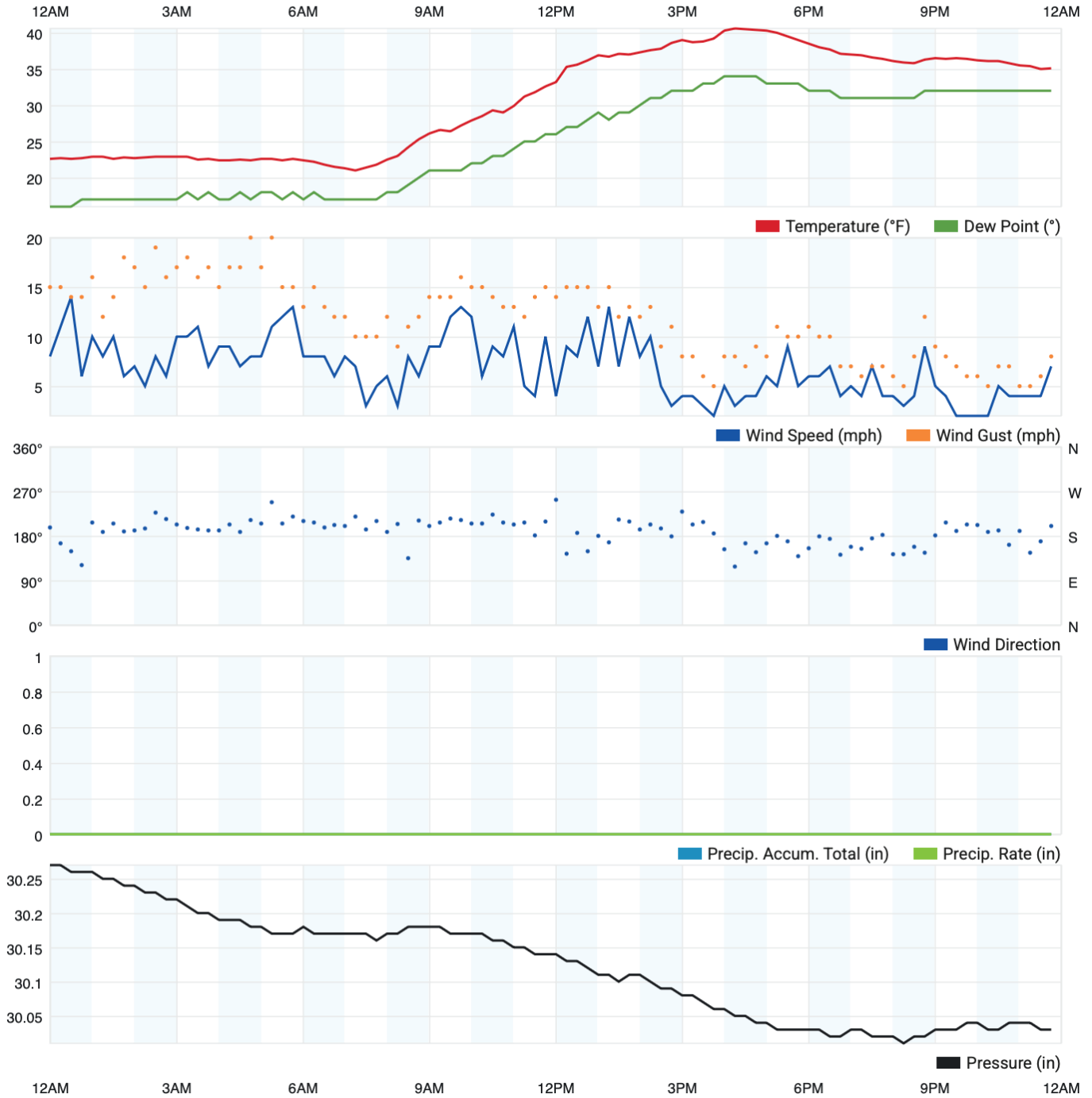
Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 21 of 73






Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

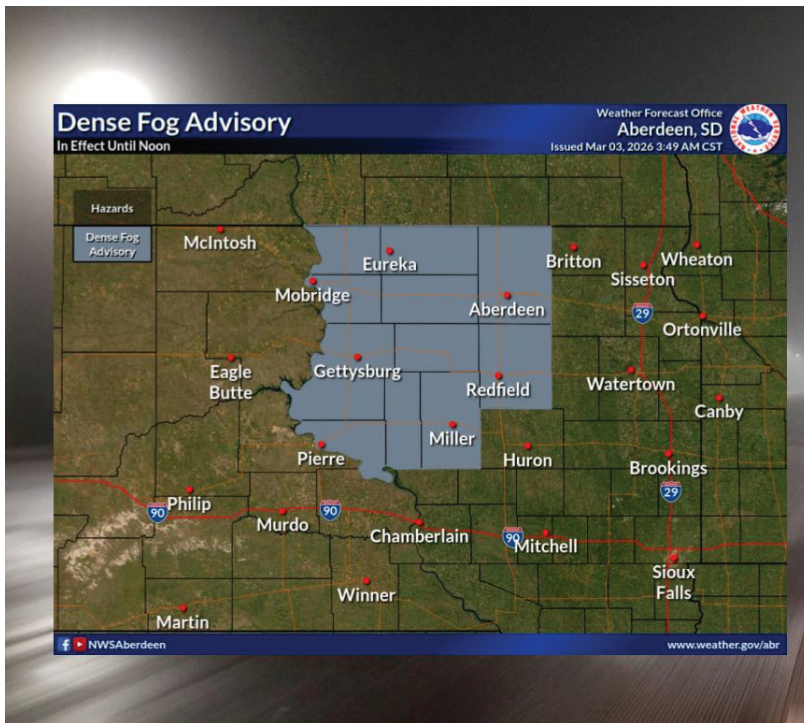
March 2, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 22 of 73

Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
High: 41 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 56 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 60 °F
Areas Fog then Mostly Sunny	Dense Freezing Fog and Dense Fog	Patchy Fog then Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny



Dense Fog This Morning

Dense fog with visibility as low as 1/4 mile will cause rapidly changing road conditions.

Leave extra room between you and the next car. Stay alert to changing driving conditions.



NWS Aberdeen

weather.gov/abr

The melting snow is contributing to some dense fog developing between the Missouri River valley and James valley this morning. Expect visibility of a quarter mile or less at times through the morning. With temperatures below freezing, roads may have patchy ice from the fog.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 23 of 73



Meteorological Winter 2025-2026 Summary

March 2, 2026
10:55 AM

Above Normal Temperature with Below Normal Snowfall For All Locations

	Aberdeen, SD (since 1893)	Pierre, SD (since 1933)	Mobridge, SD (since 1911)	Watertown, SD (since 1898)	Sisseton, SD (since 1932)
Avg Temp (°F)	19.7°	26.9°	23.1°	19.2°	19.4°
Departure	+5.0°	+6°	+6.1°	+4.6°	+3.4°
Rank (if less than 20th)		12th Warmest (Tied)	15th Warmest	19th Warmest	
Precipitation (Liquid/Melted)	1.38"	0.89"	1.29"	1.43"	1.06"
Departure	-0.54"	-0.66"	-0.03"	-0.48"	-0.72"
Snowfall	18.1"	7"	5.7"	18.2"	7.1"
Departure	-2.4"	-10.6"	-11.6"	-6.3"	-13.1"
Rank (if less than 20th)		7th least snowy	10th Least Snowy		9th Least Snowy

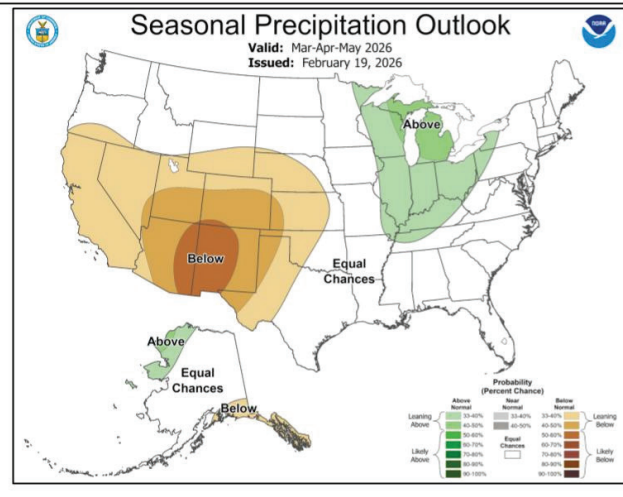
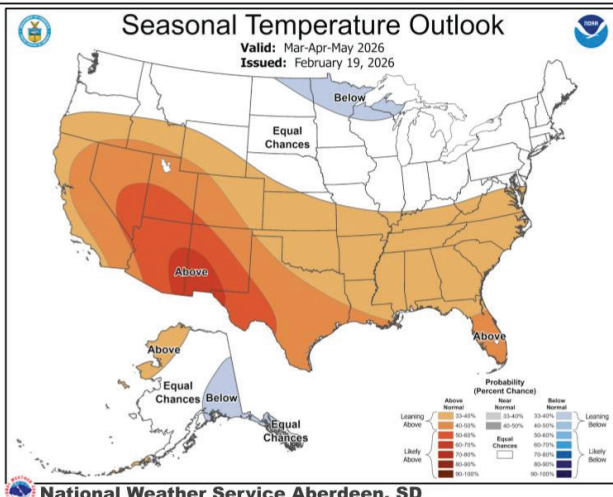


National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Even though we did have a few arctic cold snaps this winter season, the overall temperatures were above normal between December through February. There was also a lack of snowfall as well, with amounts running below normal. Don't worry snow lovers, even though its meteorological spring, we could see some more snow!

Spring 2026 Outlook

The large-scale weather pattern is **equal chances** for both seasonal temperature and precipitation outlook across central and northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Equal chances mean there is no strong climate signal favoring above, below, or near normal conditions. It indicates a 33.3% chance for each category, signifying high uncertainty rather than a guarantee of normal weather.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 24 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 41 °F at 4:15 PM

Low Temp: 21 °F at 7:09 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 4:38 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 72 in 1905

Record Low: -20 in 2019

Average High: 35

Average Low: 13

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.07

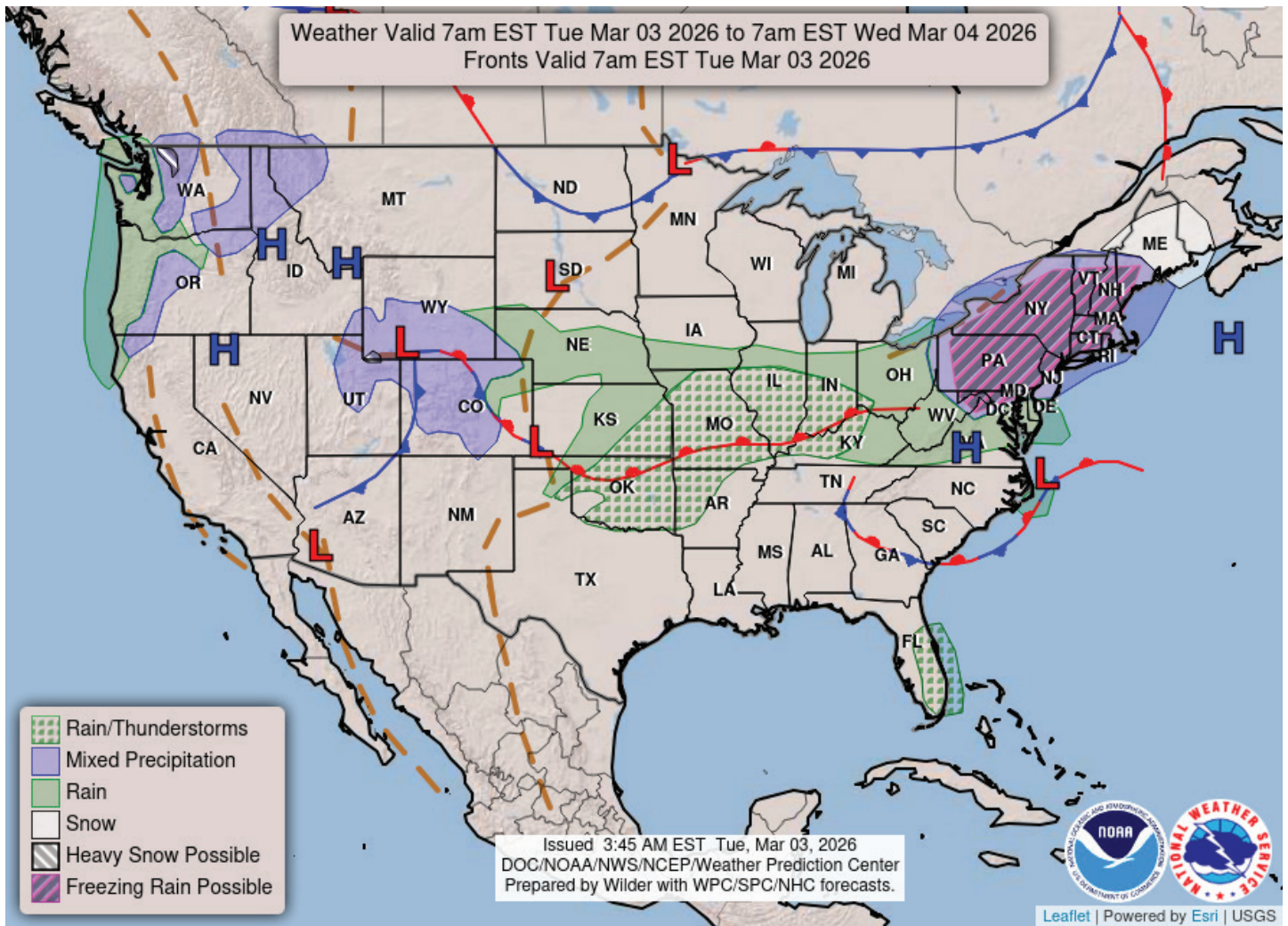
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.24

Precip Year to Date: 1.33

Sunset Tonight: 6.21 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:05 am



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 25 of 73

Today in Weather History

March 3rd, 1994: The melting of a very high snowpack resulted in flooding along the James River and other lowlands and farmland. Widespread problems included damaged roads, washed-out culverts, and flood damage to homes, especially basement flooding.

1966 — A tornado hit Jackson, MS, killing 54 persons. (David Ludlum)

1980 — A coastal storm produced 25 inches of snow at Elizabeth City, NC, and 30 inches at Cape Hatteras NC. At Miami FL the mercury dipped to 32 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1983 — The last of a series of storms to strike the California coast finally came to an end. Waves fifteen to twenty feet high pounded the coast for two days, and in a four day period up to 18 inches of rain drenched the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara area. On the morning of the first, thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes which moved through the Los Angeles area. (Storm Data)

1987 — A storm brought heavy rain and gale force winds to Washington and Oregon. Quillayute WA received 2.67 inches of rain in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 60 mph at Astoria OR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A small but intense low pressure system roared across west central Mississippi at 90 mph early in the morning. A tornado in southern Mississippi picked up an automobile, carried it 150 feet, and tossed it through the brick wall of an unoccupied retirement home. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Wintry weather prevailed from the southern Rockies to the Upper Great Lakes. Neganee MI received 19 inches of snow, and up to 24 inches of snow blanketed Colorado. Blizzard conditions were reported in Minnesota. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — An upper level weather disturbance produced snow in the Colorado Rockies, with eight inches reported at Winter Park, and a storm moving off the Pacific Ocean began to spread rain and snow across the western U.S. March continued to start off like a lamb elsewhere around the country. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 — It was a day of temperature extremes. Miami reached a high temperature of 90 degrees, the earliest observed 90 degree temperature since March 5, 1964. Meanwhile Marquette, MI, dropped to 30 degrees below zero, the lowest temperature ever recorded in the city in March.

Facing Our Fear

Fear is a trap that limits us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Psalms 91:1-10: 1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"

3 For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence.

4 He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

5 You will not be afraid of the terror by night, Or of the arrow that flies by day;

6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.

7 A thousand may fall at your side And ten thousand at your right hand, But it shall not approach you.

8 You will only look on with your eyes And see the recompense of the wicked.

9 For you have made the LORD, my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place.

10 No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent.

Fear can creep into our life without our realizing it. The intrusion can be so subtle, in fact, that we may not recognize how it affects our decision-making, our health, and our spirit.

The fear may seem unimportant at first, but it can begin to interfere with us in many ways. Physically, we may experience tension that keeps us from relaxing and enjoying life. Worry can also cloud our thinking, limiting our ability to think clearly and consider new possibilities.

But the mental paralysis that often accompanies unchecked fear is most dangerous to our spiritual life. Unless it is entrusted to God, a single fear can rule over us, coloring our attitude with a general sense of unease. That can lead to indecisiveness and worry about whether we will make the wrong choice. Then we feel trapped, as we try to avoid doing anything that might add to our anxiety. Consequently, we stop growing as Christians and can also find ourselves hindered in our work and family life.

There are times when we all experience fear. That's part of being human. But if we allow ourselves to be paralyzed by worry, we cannot place complete trust in God and follow Him wholeheartedly (Psalm 27:1). Ask the Lord to reveal places where anxiety is holding you back and to help you address them.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 27 of 73

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paypal.me/paperpaul

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 28 of 73



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.02.26

28 41 42 50 55 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 26 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.27.26

11 18 39 43 67 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$473,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 11 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.02.26

3 8 17 24 34 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$16,790,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 26 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.28.26

10 12 27 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 41 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.02.26

21 28 58 65 67 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 10 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.02.26

2 17 18 38 62 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 10 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 29 of 73

News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Regional First Round=

Class B=

Avon 63, Alcester-Hudson 60, OT

Bennett County 78, Oelrichs 37

Colman-Egan 53, Flandreau Indian 44

Dell Rapids St Mary's 63, Canistota 44

Highmore-Harrold 75, Tiospaye Topa 50

Iroquois-Lake Preston 51, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 48

James Valley Christian School 73, Arlington 42

Mitchell Christian 71, Kimball-White Lake 65

Philip 72, Edgemont 26

Wakpala 64, Sunshine Bible Academy 44

Waverly-South Shore 55, Tiospa Zina 20

Wilmot 53, Langford 50

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

Horses that heal: Equine therapy rising in popularity

By BART PFANKUCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

Bridget Williams gathered a group of children together in her barn to show them how to safely give a horse a treat.

Williams told them not to hold the treat near the horse's mouth because it can't see the snack and could mistakenly bite a finger. Instead, she said, show the horse the treat and then lower it for gentle chomping by the appreciative animal.

The brief lesson was intended to build trust between the humans and the horses that were gathered on a recent Saturday morning in the barn at Red Horse Healing, the equine therapy practice run by Williams on a rural site in Rapid Valley, a neighborhood on the east side of Rapid City.

Animal-assisted psychotherapy is a form of mental and behavioral health treatment that uses horses and other animals to help adults, children and families to heal from trauma, to manage autism or to overcome anxiety, depression, grief or other emotional problems.

The therapy can help anyone but has been particularly effective in aiding Native Americans, who have a deep historical connection to horses as both working animals and companions.

Williams, a licensed professional counselor, has employed horses in her practice for 15 years, the past 10 at Red Horse Healing. She said the treatment works because horses – despite their imposing height and weight over 1,000 pounds – are gentle, intuitive creatures that create a sense of calm comfort and mutual understanding for people suffering from emotional or physical ailments.

"Horses hear what is not spoken," she said. "They help create and maintain non-judgmental relationships."

Rising acceptance as therapy option

In recent years, equine-assisted therapy has become increasingly established as a bonafide therapeutic modality, with certification offered by several U.S. therapy organizations, including the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association.

The modality is supported by the National Association of Social Workers, and some U.S. colleges offer training in the practice, including through a graduate certificate offered at Colorado State University.

In a 2024 article republished by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAM-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 30 of 73

HSA), an agency within the federal government, it was noted that "animal therapy incorporates animals into the therapeutic process, leveraging their presence to improve communication, reduce anxiety, and foster a supportive environment."

Equine-assisted programming is offered at numerous facilities across the state. Several sites are located in Rapid City and across the Black Hills. The therapy is also offered at several East River locations, including at Gentle Spirit sanctuary in Scotland, Helping with Horsepower in Mitchell, HorsePower in Baltic and at McCrossan Boys Ranch in Sioux Falls.

Williams, who currently has about 45 individual clients and also holds group or family therapy sessions with up to eight people several times a week, is expanding her practice with a new facility in Piedmont, just west of Rapid City.

Williams said equine therapy is covered by most health insurers and by Medicaid, the federal insurance program for low-income adults and children, senior citizens, pregnant women and people with disabilities.

Experiencing the 'charisma of the horses' by riding, petting, playing

The use of full-sized or miniature horses in behavioral therapy at Red Horse Healing can include a number of techniques, Williams said.

The horses can simply be present to create a calm, safe space for deep issues to be explored. Clients can pet or ride the horses in the barn as part of connection building. Horses can also be part of activities that build trust and the ability to form relationships.

At the recent group session in February, Williams led a dozen or so children through a four-hour journey of education and exploration with the horses.

During the event sponsored by the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Association, the children met one another and the half-dozen horses present.

They used yoga balls, pool noodles and other toys to create rhythm and movement opportunities to help regulate emotions and better engage with the horses. They developed a bond with the horses that enabled them to share how they felt or express what was bothering them and to then discuss possible solutions or calming techniques.

Michel Melvin of Wounded Knee brought three of her grandchildren to the session to bond with horses and find strength through interaction with Williams and her staff.

Melvin, 69, has been around horses all her life, and her family has raced horses in South Dakota in the past.

"Sometimes kids need more than just one-on-one with a counselor," she said. "They get experience with the power and charisma of the horses."

Not being 'glued onto electronic devices'

Melvin said Williams has a unique skill set that provides a safe setting for adults but especially for children to break through trauma they may be suffering.

"I share a lot of love with my grandchildren, but I think there's a lot of children out there who don't get the love they need," she said. "It's an opportunity for these children to see something more than they usually see in the home setting where they are glued onto electronic devices."

Williams often incorporates elements of Lakota culture into her sessions. She provides placards with Lakota words and their meaning to create connections between clients and their culture. Clients sometimes use non-toxic paints to illustrate the horses, just as Native Americans used to do.

Some therapy horses at Red Horse Healing come from traumatic situations of their own and have been rescued by Williams.

Clients give the horses special names, and the animals are never forced to do anything, such as being haltered or ridden without their full consent.

Treating the horses with respect and individuality enables clients to create a bond all their own with a horse, Williams said. Clients can then tap into the wisdom and intuitive nature of the horses and use them to project their own hidden feelings and problems, which can then be explored with the counselor.

"It's a lot safer for them to say, 'My horse is feeling this way,'" she said. "It allows them to discuss their own feelings more easily."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 31 of 73

Bringing horses into the community

Williams has frequently brought her therapy horses to community events and gatherings to help people find solace.

Her horses have been part of Native American cultural events, such as neighborhood gatherings and day camps at the Lakota Homes and Knollwood neighborhoods in north Rapid City.

At times, Williams has brought horses to events sponsored by the Rapid City Police Department, including at the Star Village community that struggles with poverty and crime.

Tyler Read has seen positive outcomes created by Williams and her therapy horses at some of those events.

Read serves as the community engagement specialist for the Rapid City police and has worked with Williams to help rebuild community pride at neighborhood events.

"They prayed together, they ate together and they got to ride horses together," Read said. "For some, it was an emotional release, and a way to express themselves and let go of some of their hurt."

The equine therapy Williams provided made a noticeable impact on some of the children who attended the day camps and neighborhood outings, Read said. Several children who had impulse control, hyperactivity or anger issues changed their behaviors after riding or painting the horses.

"There's a humbling effect and a reverence you have with the horse," he said. "To be able to ride on something so large, it kind of puts things in perspective and makes you more accountable for your behaviors."

Read said that as a father, he took his daughters to therapy at Red Horse Healing when they were being bullied. Read said he was pleased to see how his children reacted to the horses and the therapy offered by Williams.

"There's a level of honesty you want to keep with a horse and being in awe of nature," he said. "They're very large creatures, and they've got those huge eyes and they're very quiet and it's kind of like they can look into a person's soul."

Read said Williams is providing an important service to individuals and the community at large that cannot be replicated through traditional counseling alone.

"When you see the impact it creates, it's special," he said. "It truly is a beautiful thing."

This story was originally published by South Dakota News Watch and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

Iranian drones hit the US Embassy in Saudi Arabia, while hundreds are reported dead in Iran

By JON GAMBRELL, ELENA BECATOROS and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran struck the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia's capital with a drone early Tuesday as it kept hitting targets around the region, while the United States and Israel pounded Iran with airstrikes in what U.S. President Donald Trump suggested was just the start of a relentless campaign that could last more than a month.

The attack from two drones on the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh caused a "limited fire" and minor damage, according to Saudi Arabia's Defense Ministry, and the embassy urged Americans to avoid the compound. It followed an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, which announced Tuesday it had been closed until further notice. The U.S. State Department also ordered the evacuation of non-emergency personnel and family in Kuwait, as well as Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates as a precaution.

The expanding conflict has so far killed hundreds of people, the vast majority in Iran.

Across Iran's capital, explosions rang out throughout the night into Tuesday, with aircraft heard overhead. It was not immediately clear what had been hit. The United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment site had sustained "some recent damage," though there was "no radiological consequence expected." Natanz earlier came under attack by the U.S. in the 12-day Iran-Israel war in June.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 32 of 73

In Lebanon, Israel launched more strikes on Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militia group. Explosions could be heard and smoke seen in a southern suburb of Beirut. Israel also said its soldiers were "operating in southern Lebanon." Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said the Lebanese army was evacuating some of its positions along the border.

The conflict could have far-reaching consequences

The expansion of Iranian retaliation across the Gulf and the intensity of the Israeli and American attacks, the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the lack of any apparent exit plan portend a possibly prolonged conflict with far-reaching consequences.

Iran has hit many countries deemed safe havens in the Mideast in retaliation for the U.S. and Israeli strikes. Recent targets include two Amazon data centers in the UAE and a drone impact near another in Bahrain that caused damage, the company said Tuesday. Iran has also hit energy facilities in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and attacked several ships in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes, sending global oil and natural gas prices soaring.

"The Strait of Hormuz is closed," declared Iranian Brig. Gen. Ebrahim Jabbari, an adviser to the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, threatening to set fire to any ships attempting to transit. "Don't come to this region."

US citizens urged to leave

The U.S. State Department urged U.S. citizens to leave more than a dozen Middle Eastern countries due to safety risks, as have many other countries, though with much of the airspace closed many remain stranded.

Trump said operations are likely to last four to five weeks but that he was prepared "to go far longer than that." He later added that the U.S. had a "virtually unlimited supply" of munitions and pre-positioned "high grade weaponry."

"Wars can be fought 'forever,' and very successfully, using just these supplies," he wrote on social media.

Hundreds dead in Iran and dozens in Lebanon along with 11 in Israel

The Iranian Red Crescent Society said the U.S.-Israeli operation has killed at least 787 people. In Israel, where several locations were hit by Iranian missiles, 11 people were killed. The semiofficial Tasnim news agency reported airstrikes killed 13 Iranian troops in Kerman, 800 kilometers (500 miles) southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran.

Israel's retaliatory strikes against Hezbollah killed 52 people in Lebanon.

"Military escalation would force more families from their homes and hit civilians hard," said Amy Pope, director general of the International Organization on Migration, calling for the international community to press for de-escalation. "Millions are already displaced in the region."

The U.S. military has confirmed six deaths of American service members. All six were Army soldiers in a logistics unit in Kuwait, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Three people were killed in the UAE, and one each in Kuwait and Bahrain.

The chaos of the conflict became apparent when the U.S. military said Kuwait had "mistakenly shot down" three American fighter jets while Iran was attacking it with aircraft, ballistic missiles and drones. U.S. Central Command said all six pilots ejected safely.

Israel and US target nuclear facilities and missile infrastructure

Iranian state TV said strikes caused two explosions early Tuesday at a broadcasting facility in Tehran, but said no one was injured.

Reza Najafi, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters that airstrikes targeted the Natanz nuclear enrichment site on Sunday.

"Their justification that Iran wants to develop nuclear weapons is simply a big lie," he said.

Israel and the U.S. have not acknowledged strikes at the site, which the U.S. bombed in the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in June. Israel has said it is targeting the "leadership and nuclear infrastructure."

Trump said the military campaign's objectives are to destroy Iran's missile capabilities, wipe out its navy, prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ensure that it cannot continue to support allied groups

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 33 of 73

like Lebanon's Hezbollah, which fired missiles at Israel on Monday.

Iran has said it has not enriched uranium since June, though it has maintained its right to do so and says its nuclear program is peaceful.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu maintained, however, that Iran was rebuilding "new sites, new places" underground for making atomic bombs. He offered no evidence to support his claim.

"We had to take the action now and we did," Netanyahu told Fox News Channel's Hannity.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed limited activity at two nuclear sites in Iran before the war. Analysts said Tehran was likely assessing damage from the 2025 U.S. strikes and possibly salvaging what remained.

Attacks on Iran have drawn in proxy forces from around region

The conflict has also spread to Lebanon, where the Iranian-supported militant group Hezbollah fired missiles at Israel on Monday, prompting Israel to retaliate.

At least 52 people have been killed and 154 wounded, Lebanese authorities said.

Israel hit Beirut with more airstrikes early Tuesday, saying it was targeting "Hezbollah command centers and weapons storage facilities."

Hezbollah also said it launched drones targeting an Israeli air base. The Israeli military said it downed two drones.

An Iranian-linked militant in Iraq has also claimed strikes on U.S. military facilities there. The Israeli military said its troops operating in southern Lebanon were positioned at several points near the border in what it described as a "forward defense posture."

The army said there were no plans to evacuate Israeli residents of border areas.

Netanyahu takes a gamble on American support for Israel with the war against Iran

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

Throughout his political career, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has steered his country along two pillars of foreign policy: an ironclad partnership with the United States and a relentless diplomatic and covert battle against the rulers of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Now, with Israel and the U.S. in a joint war against Iran's leadership, those two strategic paths risk clashing with each other. By enlisting the U.S. in what he views as Israel's existential battle against Iran, Netanyahu is taking a gamble that could open up the relationship to the strain of a war with far-reaching consequences.

To be sure, persuading U.S. President Donald Trump to join the war was a coup for Netanyahu and highlights the strong ties between the two leaders. If they are successful, they could quickly realize their shared goal of toppling the Iranian government and spare the region a protracted conflict.

But if the war drags on, the two allies' ties could again be tested.

"A large part of the American public will view it as the Israeli tail wagging the American dog and that it is dragging the United States to a war in the Middle East that isn't theirs," said Ofer Shelah, a research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, a Tel Aviv, Israel-based think tank. The drop in public support that might unleash "will be very harmful for Israel in the medium and long term," he said.

But, he added, in a nod to the Israeli leader's political ambitions: "Netanyahu is not interested in the medium and long term."

US public opinion has been evolving

For Netanyahu, successfully persuading Trump to strike Iran together is the apex of decades of proximity between the Israeli leader and Washington. Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving leader, speaks flawless English after having spent part of his youth in the U.S. and has always portrayed himself as Israel's bridge to America.

Although he boasts about his tight relationships with multiple American presidents and members of Con-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 34 of 73

gress, Netanyahu over the past two years has seen support for Israel among the American public drop. According to Gallup polling, American sympathies in the Middle East have shifted dramatically toward the Palestinians.

That shift in sentiment has been driven in large part by Democrats. But some Republicans, and even Trump's own backers, have been more outspoken against the diplomatic and financial support the U.S. has continued to grant Israel throughout the past two and a half years, when it has been embroiled in a war on multiple fronts sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks. The devastating images from the war in Gaza deepened Israel's international isolation.

With a new war against Iran — the second in less than a year — Netanyahu is tackling an enemy that he and many Israelis view as an existential threat, citing its support for anti-Israeli militias across the region, its ballistic missile arsenal, and its nuclear program. He has led the crusade against Iran on the world stage for much of his career.

Netanyahu said Sunday in a statement that the U.S. involvement "allows us to do what I have been hoping to do for 40 years — to deliver a crushing blow to the terror regime." Netanyahu's office did not immediately respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

The conflict could spiral

Days into the war, Israel and the U.S. military appear to be working hand in glove to strike targets — from the initial attack that killed top Iranian leaders, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to assaults that allowed the forces free rein in Iranian skies.

But the conflict has already set off aftershocks that could reverberate in the American heartland. At least six U.S. troops have been killed. Travel was disrupted across the region, leaving hundreds of thousands of travelers stranded. Oil prices surged, raising the prospect of costlier gasoline for U.S. drivers as well as increased prices for other goods at a time when people have been stung by a rising cost of living.

Questions remain about the direction and aim of the war. It's unclear whether the air power will be enough to topple Iran's leadership, who or what should replace that leadership, and what role Israel or the U.S. will have in either. Every day presents new potential land mines.

"Many people will blame Israel if things go badly wrong," wrote Nadav Eyal, a commentator with the Israeli Yediot Ahronoth daily newspaper. "Israel cannot afford to lose the American public's support under any circumstances. That is more important than striking any individual military facility."

Still, Aaron David Miller, who served as an adviser on Middle East issues to Democratic and Republican administrations over two decades, said that Netanyahu has little to lose from the war.

With elections scheduled for the fall, Netanyahu can use the war in Iran to divert attention away from the failures of the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks, the worst in Israel's history. Instead, Netanyahu can set himself up as a brave wartime leader who fulfilled a pledge he has made much of his life to confront Iran.

He can say he did so with support from the American president, who Miller said can pull the breaks on the war whenever he pleases.

"If Trump feels as if it's going south, he'll find a way to de-escalate," he said, "and his good friend Benjamin Netanyahu will follow."

Global shares are mostly lower as investors focus on the Iran war's impact on energy supplies

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares mostly declined and oil prices surged Tuesday as investors eyed threats to world energy supplies from the Iran war.

U.S. futures also declined, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 1.5% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1.6%.

In early European trading, France's CAC 40 dropped 2.2% to 8,207.10, while in Germany the DAX sank 2.9% to 23,935.62. Britain's FTSE 100 declined 2.2% to 10,546.30.

In South Korea, a big energy importer, the Kospi plunged 7.2% as markets reopened after a holiday on

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 35 of 73

Monday, closing at 5,791.91.

Benchmark U.S. crude rose \$3.24 to \$74.47 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added \$3.56 to \$81.30 a barrel. Oil prices jumped Monday over worries that the war could clog the global flow of crude.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 sank 3.1% to finish at 56,279.05. Like other resource-poor countries in the region, Japan could be especially hit by the lack of access to the Strait of Hormuz, since much of its oil and natural gas imports are shipped through there.

Analysts say Japan has a sizable stockpile lasting more than 200 days, and so the threat isn't immediate.

Japanese energy stocks plunged, with Eneos Corp. down 3.4% and Idemitsu Kosan down 3.1%. Defense-related issues, which have risen recently on expectations of more military spending by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, sank back as traders sold to lock in gains from the day before. Mitsubishi Heavy plunged 5.3%, and IHI lost 4.9%.

In the rest of the region, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 1.3% to 9,077.30, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.1% to 25,768.08. The Shanghai Composite index lost 1.4% to 4,122.68.

Stocks of airlines, including American Airlines, United and Delta, were some of Monday's biggest losers on Wall Street. Higher oil prices threaten their already big fuel bills, while the fighting in the Middle East also has closed airports and left travelers stranded.

The losses cascaded in Asia, with ANA stock down 3.3%, while Japan Airlines fell 6.4%. Korean Air declined 10.3% and Qantas Airways lost 1.8%.

Despite the retreats in many markets, the reactions to the war have been moderated by the fact that past military conflicts in the Middle East haven't caused long-term declines. For this war to knock down U.S. stocks in a significant and sustained way, the price of oil would perhaps need to jump above \$100 per barrel, according to strategists at Morgan Stanley led by Michael Wilson.

"Since 2000, there have been 22 one-day oil price spikes of more than 10%," said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management. "In other words, energy shocks do not automatically derail equities unless they are severe and sustained. The market is well aware of that playbook."

On Monday, the S&P 500 fell as much as 1.2% but finished with a gain of less than 0.1%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 0.1% and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.4%. Both also recovered from steep early losses.

In currency trading early Tuesday, the U.S. dollar edged up to 157.53 Japanese yen from 157.47 yen. The euro cost \$1.1627, down from \$1.1692.

Dutch museum makes 'needle in a haystack' confirmation of Rembrandt painting

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A painting that was once rejected as a work by Rembrandt van Rijn has now been acknowledged as a work by the Dutch master, thanks to two years of scrutiny in the city where the then-27-year-old artist painted it in 1633, a museum announced Monday.

The Netherlands' national art and history museum, the Rijksmuseum, unveiled the work, "Vision of Zacharias in the Temple," and said painstaking analysis including high-tech scans has confirmed it was painted by Rembrandt after he moved to the capital, Amsterdam.

The painting hasn't been on public display in decades after being bought by a private collector in 1961, a year after it was deemed not to be a Rembrandt, the museum said in a statement. From Wednesday, will go on show among other masterpieces at the Rijksmuseum, where it is on long-term loan.

Director Taco Dibbits said the museum often gets emails from people asking if the painting they own might just be by the Golden Age master.

"We always hope to find a new Rembrandt, but this happens rarely," he told The Associated Press. He said making such a discovery "is just like (finding) a needle in a haystack."

The owner, who has remained anonymous, initially asked the museum only if the painting was Dutch.

"He really didn't know what he had. And then to discover that it's a Rembrandt is something that's amaz-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 36 of 73

ing to experience," Dibbits said.

The painting depicts a biblical story in which high priest Zacharias is visited by the Archangel Gabriel, who tells the priest that he and his wife will have a son: John the Baptist. Zacharias' surprised expression is highlighted by light heralding the arrival of Gabriel, the museum said.

An in-depth study of the work, including macro X-ray fluorescence scans and comparisons with other works by the artist, confirmed Rembrandt painted it, said the museum's curator of 17th century Dutch paintings, Jonathan Bikker.

"So the wood that was used for the panel on which it's painted, that is definitely from a tree that was cut down before 1633, the date on the painting," he said.

"All the pigments, the paint in the painting were used by Rembrandt in other paintings. And the layers of paint and how he painted it, that is also precisely the same as in other works by Rembrandt," he added.

The work joins about 350 known Rembrandt paintings and raised the hope that there may be more.

"We're not actively looking for new paintings by Rembrandt, but I think this gives us hope — not just us, but everyone who's interested in Rembrandt," Bikker said.

Photos from inside Iran as strikes boom across the capital, Tehran, for a third day

By The ASSOCIATED PRESS Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The explosion was so loud and strong, the elderly resident of northern Tehran said she felt it in her heart, describing the U.S.-Israeli airstrikes that boomed across the Iranian capital and raised columns of smoke.

Streets were largely empty in Tehran on Monday, the third day of the U.S.-Israeli bombing campaign. It was a strong contrast to the previous day when Tehran's many highways were jammed with traffic as some left the city, and others rushed to stock up on groceries, fearing a long war.

The resident of north Tehran spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, as did another woman in the capital reached by The Associated Press from outside the country.

"Almost every five hours, large explosions are heard in Tehran and sometimes the building shakes," the woman said. "There are huge plumes of smoke everywhere in Tehran."

On Monday, those who remained in the city largely appeared to stay in their homes. Members of the Revolutionary Guard and the paramilitary Basij had checkpoints on many streets, checking vehicles, as well as gathering in some squares, playing mourning music and nationalist songs, said the woman.

Strikes on Sunday night hit a state TV building, causing heavy damage to the Gandhi Hospital across the street, forcing its evacuation. The façade of the hospital was shattered, and rubble from the walls spilled over hospital beds.

On Sunday, authorities organized mass gatherings in a main Tehran square and elsewhere to mourn Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed early in the U.S.-Israeli strikes.

This is a photo gallery curated by AP photo editors.

Minnesota sues to block Trump administration's withholding of Medicaid funds

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

Minnesota on Monday sued President Donald Trump's administration in an attempt to stop it from withholding \$243 million in Medicaid spending, warning it may have to cut health care for low-income families if the funding is held back.

The lawsuit asked a U.S. court in Minneapolis to issue a temporary restraining order to block the withholding for Medicaid, which is the health care safety net for low-income Americans.

The move came after Vice President JD Vance said last week the administration would "temporarily halt" some Medicaid funding to Minnesota over fraud concerns, as part of what he described as an aggressive

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 37 of 73

crackdown on misuse of public funds.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said his office has a strong track record of fighting Medicaid fraud and has won more than 300 convictions and \$80 million in judgments and restitutions during his time in office.

"Trump's attempts to look like he's fighting fraud only punish the people and families who most need the high-quality, affordable healthcare that all Minnesotans deserve," Ellison said in a statement. "As long as I am attorney general, I will do everything in my power to defend our tax dollars, both from fraudsters and from the Trump administration's cruelty."

The lawsuit names the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as well as Dr. Mehmet Oz, in his official capacity as CMS administrator, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in his official capacity as HHS secretary.

The Department of Health and Human Services, which includes CMS, didn't immediately return messages seeking comment late Monday.

The threatened cuts amount to roughly 7% of Minnesota's quarterly Medicaid funding, Ellison's office said in a news release. Minnesota could be required to significantly cut health care services for low-income families or other government services if the cuts take effect, it said.

Medicaid, which is known as Medical Assistance in Minnesota, provides health insurance to 1.2 million Minnesotans who would otherwise be unable to afford it. A family of four may qualify for Medical Assistance with an income at or under \$42,759, the attorney general's office said.

The lawsuit said the administration violated due process procedures because it was taking hundreds of millions of dollars without proving Minnesota's noncompliance with Medicaid regulations through discovery and an evidentiary hearing.

It alleged the administration failed to provide Minnesota with details about its decision, in violation of federal law. It cited legal precedents, including one that said Congress may impose conditions on states' acceptance of federal funds, but "the conditions must be set out unambiguously."

Minnesota's complaint further charged the administration violated the Constitution because the withholding imposed retroactive conditions on Minnesota's Medicaid funding.

It said withholding the funds was arbitrary, capricious and part of a pattern of political punishment of Minnesota.

The administration said it would hold off on paying \$259.5 million to Minnesota for Medicaid spending in the fourth quarter of 2025. Minnesota's lawsuit challenges the withholding of \$243 million of this money.

Democrats' newfound unity faces a test after US and Israeli strikes on Iran

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For Democrats demoralized at being shut out of power in Washington, the past several months have offered reason for optimism.

A party often beset by ideological division has largely been unified in opposition to President Donald Trump's hardline immigration tactics, particularly after two U.S. citizens were killed in Minneapolis. Heading into a midterm election year in which they are just a few seats shy of reclaiming the U.S. House majority, Democrats have also kept the White House on defense with criticism of Trump's economic policies and ties to Jeffrey Epstein, the convicted sex offender.

But the U.S. and Israeli strikes against Iran could test the durability of that cohesion. Initially, Democrats balanced condemnation of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed over the weekend, with calls for Congress to quickly pass a war powers resolution that would restrain Trump's attack options.

"As soon as our resolution comes to the floor, senators need to pick a side," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said on Monday. "Stand with Americans who don't want war, or stand with Donald Trump as he singlehandedly starts another war."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 38 of 73

Democratic divisions going into war powers vote

But some divisions are surfacing as a handful of Democrats, especially those who are strongly aligned with Israel, express reservations about the war powers measure. Rep. Greg Landsman, D-Ohio, won't back an Iran resolution. Before the strike, Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., also said he would vote no.

Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., who backed a war powers vote tied to Venezuela in January, also has broken with Democrats over the Iranian measure and rejected arguments that the attack was illegal, spurring frustration among some party leaders.

"John Fetterman knows better," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said Monday on CNN.

Republicans are also facing internal dissent. Trump, who did little to prepare Americans for the prospect of such a dramatic conflict, said Monday the operation could last four to five weeks. He hasn't articulated a clear exit strategy and warns that American casualties could mount, which will pose a severe test of voter patience for the conflict.

The war could also lead to rising gas prices and economic volatility that may bolster Democratic arguments that the president is out of touch with the financial realities facing many Americans.

Still, Republicans see an opportunity to portray Democrats as reflexively opposed to Trump.

"For my Democratic colleagues, this is not about what's best for our national security or what's best for protecting the American people," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "This is about how to defeat Donald Trump."

A searing debate among Democrats over Israel

Democrats have undergone a searing internal debate over the party's relationship with Israel in the wake of the war in Gaza. Then-President Joe Biden's loyalty to Israel during the heat of the 2024 campaign was starkly at odds with younger generations outraged by the treatment of Palestinians in Gaza. By the time Kamala Harris rose to the top of the ticket that year, she struggled to win over some younger voters who are critical to Democratic success.

Paco Fabian, the political director for the progressive advocacy group Our Revolution, acknowledged that Democrats "aren't monolithic." But he also suggested a shift was underway, noting the results of a New Jersey special election last month.

During that campaign, the affiliated super PAC of the pro-Israel American Israel Public Affairs committee sought to thwart the moderate candidate, Tom Malinowski, after he questioned unconditional aid to the Israeli government. Those efforts appeared to backfire with the more progressive contender, Analilia Mejia, winning the primary.

"Given what's going on right now, I don't think the moment is doing AIPAC and Israel any favors," Fabian said.

Sympathy toward Israel appears to be shifting. Three years ago, 54% of Americans sympathized more with the Israelis, compared with 31% for the Palestinians, according to Gallup polling released last month. Now, their support is about evenly balanced, with 41% saying their sympathies lie more with the Palestinians, and only 36% saying the same about the Israelis.

Americans' initial reactions to airstrikes also appeared more negative than positive, early polling suggested. About 6 in 10 U.S. adults disapproved of the U.S. decision to take military action in Iran, according to a CNN poll conducted via text message over the weekend. A separate snap poll from The Washington Post conducted via text message on Sunday suggested that about half of those polled opposed the strikes, while 39% were in support. Roughly 1 in 10 were unsure.

Democrats and independents drove much of the disapproval in those early polls, while Republicans were much more supportive.

Elections this week could show impact of attacks

The initial political impact of the attacks in Iran could emerge as soon as Tuesday during the first primary elections of this year's midterm campaign.

In North Carolina, Durham County Commissioner Nida Allam was already going into her bid to unseat two-term Rep. Valerie Foushee with backing from Our Revolution and other top progressives. After receiving support from groups tied to AIPAC during her 2022 campaign, Foushee's campaign rejected such contributions this cycle. Over the weekend, she said she doesn't support "Trump's illegal war with Iran"

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 39 of 73

and would back the war powers resolution.

Still, Allam, who would be the first Muslim elected to Congress from North Carolina, was quick to release a video ahead of Tuesday's vote criticizing Trump for "starting another endless war" and promising to never accept support from "the pro-Israel lobby."

In Texas, home to high-profile Senate primaries on Tuesday, Democratic voters expressed alarm at the attacks.

"It shouldn't have happened," said Charles Padmore, 45, an independent contractor in Houston. "Affordability should be the top priority on Trump's list."

Alex Diaz, 31, a biology high school teacher in Houston, called the bombing of Iran "uncalled for."

"You're trying to start World War III, and we don't need that right now," he said.

The fallout could spread to other contests this month. Ahead of the March 17 primary in Illinois, AIPAC-aligned groups have also criticized Daniel Biss, the Evanston mayor who is aiming to become the Democratic candidate to succeed the retiring Rep. Jan Schakowsky. In an interview, Biss spoke of the "backlash I'm hearing people have against AIPAC, their MAGA-aligned money and their Trump-aligned policy agenda."

Asked about such predictions, Patrick Dorton, a spokesman for AIPAC's affiliated super PAC, said "the key distinction will be between those who recognize that Iran is a murderous regime that tortures women for leaving their hair uncovered, hangs gay people, and executes peaceful democratic protestors, and those who will turn a blind eye to the regime's atrocities."

Calls for a 'united opposition party'

As Congress moves toward a potential war powers vote this week, Biss said there was a need for Democrats to act as a "strong, clear, vocal, united opposition party."

"I also would like to see the Democratic Party united not just on the procedural argument but on the basic acknowledgment that this war is wrong," he added.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, a Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said he was less concerned about party unity than the prospect of achieving a bipartisan vote on the war powers resolution. Three Republicans ultimately backed the Venezuela resolution in January.

"What I want to see happen is the war powers resolution pass," he said. "I'm not focused on what Democrats as a whole do. We're going to have differing opinions among Democrats and among Republicans."

GOP congressman enters Texas primary fighting to keep his job after allegations of an affair

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

Republican U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas sought to fend off a primary challenge Tuesday that comes as he faces calls to resign following allegations of an affair with an aide, who later died after setting herself on fire.

Gonzales, who has said he won't step down, entered the nation's first big primary of 2026 under pressure from fellow House Republicans after published reports last month that alleged to show explicit text messages between him and the former staffer.

The three-term congressman was locked in a rematch against GOP challenger Brandon Herrera, a gun manufacturer and YouTube gun-rights influencer who narrowly lost to Gonzales by less than 400 votes in the 2024 primary.

President Donald Trump endorsed Gonzales in December, and last week, Gonzales was among the Texas Republicans in attendance for Trump's visit along the Texas coast.

"There will be opportunities for all of the details and facts to come out," Gonzales said last week in Washington. "What you've seen is not all the facts."

Gonzales, a father of six, first won his seat in 2020 after retiring from a 20-year career in the U.S. Navy that included time in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His win in 2020 beat back Democratic expectations in the sprawling district along the U.S. border with

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 40 of 73

Mexico that stretches from western San Antonio to El Paso. His victory was fueled in part by Trump's surprisingly strong performance in the heavily Hispanic Rio Grande Valley.

Gonzales said in a recent social media post that he was being blackmailed and then suggested in another post that he is the target of "coordinated political attacks."

The San Antonio Express-News reported that it had obtained text messages in which the former staffer, Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, wrote to a colleague that she had an affair with Gonzales.

The Associated Press has not independently obtained copies of the messages. An attorney for Adrian Aviles, Santos-Aviles' husband, has said the husband found out about the affair before his wife's death.

Santos-Aviles, 35, died in September 2025 after setting herself on fire in the backyard of her Uvalde home. The Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office later ruled her death a suicide.

A mess in Texas? What to watch in Tuesday's primaries

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The 2026 midterm season begins in earnest on Tuesday with two of the nation's most consequential Senate primaries playing out in Texas, a political behemoth that Democrats have been fighting to flip for decades.

Is this the year? Republican leaders in Washington openly fret that a victory by conservative firebrand Ken Paxton over four-term incumbent Sen. John Cornyn would give Democrats a rare shot of winning the seat come November. The contest has already cost Republicans tens of millions of dollars, and there will be much more spent ahead of a May 26 runoff if no one gets 50% in the three-way primary that also includes Rep. Wesley Hunt.

Democrats, meanwhile, are picking between two rising stars with conflicting styles. There's U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett, who made a name for herself through confrontation, and state Rep. James Talarico, a former middle school teacher who is working toward a divinity degree.

Primaries are also taking place in North Carolina and Arkansas. Voting comes just days after President Donald Trump launched a major military campaign against Iran, injecting an urgent foreign policy component in races otherwise focused on domestic issues.

Here's what to watch for on Tuesday.

Is the Democrats' Texas threat for real this time?

Democrats have been raising the prospect of a Texas upset for decades. And yet the party hasn't won a Senate race there since Lloyd Bentsen's reelection in 1988.

Both sides believe this could be the year that things change. But much depends on Tuesday's results.

Some Republican leaders in Washington, including key allies of Trump, warn that a victory by Paxton, who has well-documented personal baggage, would undermine their chances in November. If he's the nominee, the party would need to divert tens of millions of dollars from other states to protect the seat.

Paxton could finish first on Tuesday, although he's not expected to earn the 50% needed to avoid a May 26 runoff election against the second-place finisher. For now, Cornyn is most likely to claim that position, while Hunt has made an aggressive case as well.

The runoff could get even uglier for a party that has already spent more than \$100 million on the nomination fight, making it the most expensive primary in state history.

What kind of fighter do Dems want?

Democrats have a tough choice on their side as they decide what kind of fighter it wants to run against Trump's Republican Party.

Privately, Republicans say they're most worried about Talarico. The 36-year-old Democrat blends progressive politics with biblical fluency in a way that is uncommon among many national Democratic figures.

Talarico denounces "politics as a blood sport" and says people want "a return to more timeless values of sincerity and honesty and compassion and respect."

On the other side is 44-year-old Crockett, a former civil rights attorney who has feuded with Republicans and drawn Trump's scorn. One of her advertisements boasts that she "drives the president crazy." Another

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 41 of 73

has the tagline "Crockett fights for us."

Former Vice President Kamala Harris backed Crockett in a recorded call that went out across the state over the weekend.

"Texas has the chance to send a fighter like Jasmine Crockett to the United States Senate," Harris said. Does war with Iran change anything?

The primary elections come just three days after the U.S., in coordination with Israel, launched a major attack against Iran. Trump has suggested the military campaign could take at least four weeks. At least six U.S. soldiers have already been killed and the president predicts more deaths.

Foreign policy rarely shapes U.S. elections, although the timing of the conflict could certainly help shift voters' attention in primaries that have largely focused on issues at home. Texas, after all, is home to many military families.

The Republican candidates have overwhelmingly aligned themselves with Trump and his "America First" movement. The president's aggressive interventions overseas could complicate that message and force his allies to answer difficult questions.

So far, Cornyn and Paxton have been quick to line up behind Trump. "Hopefully lives will not be lost needlessly, but this always entails risk," Cornyn said Saturday.

What's at stake for Trump?

The president sits at the very center of Tuesday's contests whether he is on the ballot or not.

Trump visited Texas on Friday and dangled a potential endorsement in the Senate race. But on the eve of the primary, he had yet to make a pick.

All of the Republican candidates have worked to convince voters they are aligned with Trump, who remains overwhelmingly popular among the primary electorate. Former Trump campaign chief Chris LaCivita is on the Cornyn payroll as well.

Trump stars in the Democratic primary as well, where Crockett, far more than Talarico, has grown a national brand based on her fierce opposition to Trump.

Depending on Tuesday's results, Texas may play a prominent role in the balance of power in Congress for the last two years of Trump's term. And he certainly doesn't want to be known as the Republican president who presided over Texas' shift blue.

Don't sleep on North Carolina

Texas may dominate the chattering class, but North Carolina may be just as important — if not more — for the makeup of the Senate come November.

Even before Republican Sen. Thom Tillis announced his retirement last June, North Carolina presented Democrats with one of few opportunities to flip a Republican-held seat in an otherwise difficult electoral map.

Former two-term Gov. Roy Cooper is the dominant figure in the six-person Democratic field. The most prominent name in the Republican field is Michael Whatley, the former Republican National Committee chair who has Trump's backing.

A more competitive primary is expected in North Carolina's 4th District, where incumbent Rep. Valerie Foushee, 69, is facing progressive Nida Allam, 32, who has endorsements from Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., among other progressives.

Allam, a county commissioner and the first Muslim woman ever elected to public office in North Carolina, is campaigning on a message of a "brighter future."

Iran attacks threaten US economy with more uncertainty around inflation, growth

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran add yet more question marks around a U.S. economy already buffeted by on-and-off tariffs, weak hiring, and lingering inflationary pressures.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 42 of 73

The war has already raised oil prices and could lift prices at the pump as early as this week, but the ultimate impact on the economy and inflation will depend on the length and severity of the conflict, economists say. Should it wind down in a week or two, its economic effects would be minor and short-lived.

Yet a longer war that pushed oil past \$100 a barrel for an extended period would worsen inflation, at least temporarily, while slowing growth and intensifying Americans' unhappiness with the cost of essentials. After nearly five years of rising prices, concerns around affordability have undercut President Donald Trump's support in polls and bolstered Democrats in recent elections.

For now, the price of a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude rose 6.3% Monday to settle at \$71.23. Brent crude, the international standard, climbed 6.7% to \$77.74 per barrel. An increase at that level, even if sustained, would barely lift inflation, economists said.

"While cost-conscious Americans who are dealing with an affordability crisis will not take this increase lightly, such an increase will not materially affect economic growth," Joe Brusuelas, an economist at RSM, a consulting firm, said.

Stock prices rebounded to show a small gain Monday after initially falling sharply, a sign of optimism that the war will be short-lived.

But a longer-lasting conflict, particularly one that closed down the Strait of Hormuz at the edge of the Persian Gulf, through which roughly 25% of the world's oil passes, could push oil past that \$100 a barrel mark. Gas prices in the U.S. could then reach \$3.50 a gallon, up from just under \$3 on average nationwide on Monday.

Such price jumps would accelerate inflation in the U.S. and slow growth, economists said.

"Markets are right now really under-pricing the tail risk of a sustained engagement and an operation that does not wrap up quickly, restore travel through the Strait of Hormuz and get everything back to de-escalation and normal in a timely manner," said Alex Jacquez, chief of policy and advocacy at the Groundwork Collaborative and an economic adviser to the Biden White House.

Here are some ways the war could affect the economy.

Inflation has lingered even as gas prices have fallen

While some measures of inflation have cooled in recent months, the Federal Reserve's preferred measure has been stuck at about 3% for roughly a year. That is above the central bank's 2% target, and has occurred even as gas prices fell steadily in 2025.

Should gas prices rise significantly, air fares could also rise as airlines face bigger fuel costs. Shipping would also become more expensive, which could add to grocery prices.

Natural gas prices also jumped Monday, as roughly 20% of the world's gas travels through the Strait of Hormuz and a liquid natural gas plant was shut down in Qatar. That could raise heating prices in the U.S. Natural gas has already gotten 10% more expensive in the past year, thanks in part to spiking energy usage by data centers powering AI.

Still, economists noted that the U.S. economy is not as oil-dependent as it has been in the past, with most Americans now working in services, rather than manufacturing.

And other factors may help keep oil price increases relatively limited. Rory Johnston, founder of Commodity Context, an oil analytics firm, pointed out that oil inventories were quite high before the conflict, which helped keep prices in check. That's in sharp contrast to the winter of 2022, he said, when post-COVID supply chain problems had already pushed up oil costs even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused a much bigger spike.

Monday's increase "is a very minor spike relative to" what happened after Russia's invasion, Johnston said.

Businesses may pull back amid uncertainty

If the Iran war drags on for months, it could also torpedo business confidence, which could lead companies to invest and hire less, said Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide Financial.

"When there is an injection of new uncertainty into the business environment ... that's a hit to confidence," she said.

The result could be similar to the impact of Trump's tariffs, which did not raise prices as much as many

economists feared, but did appear to weigh on job gains. Hiring in 2025 was the weakest, outside of a recession, since 2002.

Consumers sour further on economy

Even without a big inflation spike, a major risk for Trump is that Americans sour on his economic leadership. According to surveys, Americans already have a gloomy outlook on the economy, largely because of the lingering effects of the price spikes of the past five years. Trump's attempts to portray the U.S. as in a "golden age" have had little impact on those attitudes.

A protracted conflict in Iran that raised gas prices would likely make it worse, Jacquez said.

"People generally don't think that President Trump is focused on the things that they are focused on," Jacquez added, "and what they want him to be focused on is the price of groceries. What they think he's focused on are things like tariffs and foreign policy."

Texas GOP Sen. Cornyn tries to hold his seat while Democrats Crockett, Talarico face off for Senate

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn is trying to hold on for a fifth term in Tuesday's GOP primary, while Democrats will choose whether to send Rep. Jasmine Crockett or state Rep. James Talarico to a November general election where the party once again hopes it has a chance.

Texas is one of three states kicking off this year's midterm elections, a slate of primaries that come as the U.S. and Israel are at war with Iran. The war, which began over the weekend, has killed at least six U.S. service members, spiraled into a regional confrontation as Iran retaliated and sent oil and natural gas prices soaring. President Donald Trump, who campaigned on an isolationist "America First" agenda and went to war without authorization from Congress, faces mounting questions over its rationale and an exit strategy.

Tuesday also is the final day of voting in North Carolina and Arkansas in primaries that mark the start of the 2026 midterms, as Democrats look to break the GOP's hold on Washington and derail Trump.

Cornyn faces a challenge from MAGA favorite Ken Paxton, the state's attorney general, and Rep. Wesley Hunt in a contest that's expected to advance to a May runoff between the top two vote-getters. The three Republicans have campaigned on their ties to Trump, who has not endorsed in the race.

Crockett and Talarico each argue that they are the stronger general election candidate in a state that backed Trump by almost 14 percentage points in 2024 and where a Democrat hasn't won a statewide race in over 30 years.

Voters also are choosing House candidates using new congressional district boundaries that GOP lawmakers — urged on by Trump — redrew to help elect more Republicans.

Cornyn fights to hold seat, Crockett and Talarico race for Democrats

Cornyn hopes to avoid becoming the first Republican senator in Texas history not to be renominated.

His cool relationship with Trump is part of why Cornyn is vulnerable. He and allied groups have spent \$64 million in television advertising alone since July to try stabilize his support.

Paxton began campaigning in earnest only last month but has made national headlines for filing lawsuits against Democratic initiatives. He has remained popular in Texas despite a 2023 impeachment trial on corruption charges, of which he was acquitted, and accusations of marital infidelity by his wife.

Senate GOP leaders, who are backing Cornyn, worry that Paxton's liabilities would require the party to spend substantially to defend the seat if he is the nominee — money that could be better used elsewhere.

Paxton has run ads touting his support from Turning Point USA, the group founded by the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk, as well as Kirk's praise for Paxton before he was assassinated in September.

Hunt's entry into the race in October made it trickier for any primary candidate to win at least 50%, the threshold needed to avoid a May 26 runoff.

All three Republicans have run ads boasting of their coziness with Trump.

On the Democratic side, the party's first major contest of 2026 offers a choice between stylistic opposites

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 44 of 73

as it hungers for its first Senate win in Texas since 1988.

Talarico, a seminarian who often references the Bible, has held rallies across the state including in heavily Republican areas. Crockett, who has built a national profile for zinger attacks on Republicans, has focused on turning out Black voters in the Dallas and Houston areas.

Talarico had outspent Crockett on television advertising by more than four to one as of late February. He got a burst of attention last month from CBS' decision not to air his interview with late-night host Stephen Colbert. Colbert said the network pulled the interview for fear of running afoul of Trump's FCC. Talarico's campaign announced it raised \$2.5 million in the 24 hours after the interview — which was streamed online — was pulled from TV.

Key House primaries

Texas Republicans' unusual, mid-decade redistricting was aimed at helping Trump's party pick up five Democratic-held seats in an effort to avoid losing control of the House. It set up some intraparty conflicts between Democratic incumbents, and what are expected to be some of November's most competitive races.

In the 34th District, former Rep. Mayra Flores is attempting a comeback. Flores made history in a 2022 special election as the first Republican to win in the Rio Grande Valley in 150 years, but she lost her bid for a full term later that year. She faces Eric Flores, a lawyer endorsed by Trump, for the nomination to run against Democratic Rep. Vicente Gonzalez.

In the 23rd District, Rep. Tony Gonzales is considered vulnerable after fellow Republicans called on him to resign over an affair with a staffer who killed herself. He is being challenged by gun manufacturer and YouTube influencer Brandon Herrera, who calls himself "the AK guy." The district includes Uvalde, site of a deadly 2022 shooting at Robb Elementary School.

Republican Rep. Dan Crenshaw is challenged in the 2nd District by GOP state Rep. Steve Toth, who was endorsed by Sen. Ted Cruz.

Former Major League Baseball star Mark Teixeira is running in District 21, in southwest Texas, for the seat held by Republican Rep. Chip Roy, who is running for state attorney general. Teixeira, a Republican, played for four MLB teams, including the Texas Rangers and the New York Yankees when they won the 2009 World Series.

Democrat Bobby Pulido, a Latin Grammy winner, is running in South Texas' 15th District against physician Ada Cuellar. The nominee will face two-term Republican Rep. Monica De La Cruz.

In the 33rd District, Democratic Rep. Julie Johnson faces former Rep. Colin Allred, a former NFL linebacker and 2024 Senate nominee. Johnson, a first-term congresswoman, is seen as vulnerable partly because Allred previously represented part of the district, which weaves through the Dallas and Fort Worth areas. He also retains a national fundraising network from his Senate campaign.

And Democratic Rep. Al Green also is fighting to stay in office after his Houston-based 9th District was drawn to be lean Republican. Green, 78, is now running in a newly drawn 18th District against Democratic Rep. Christian Menefee, 37, who won a January special election for the current 18th District. The new one includes two-thirds of Green's old district.

Abbott and Hinojosa seem bound to face off for governor, while Roy seeks Paxton's office

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott is running for reelection and faces a likely matchup with Democratic state Rep. Gina Hinojosa.

Four-term U.S. Rep. Chip Roy is seeking the GOP nomination for state attorney general, with Paxton running for Senate. Roy has been a prominent member of the conservative Freedom Caucus.

Lawmakers finally questioned the Clintons about Epstein. They also asked about pizzagate and UFOs

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A House committee investigating Jeffrey Epstein labored for six months to question former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but once they finally had a chance to sit down with some of the highest-ranked officials to ever be deposed by Congress, the ses-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 45 of 73

sions veered off track with a leaked photo, talk of the pizzagate conspiracy theory and questions about disclosing government information on UFOs.

Videos released Monday by the House Oversight Committee of depositions for both Bill and Hillary Clinton from last week showed how overall the former Democratic president distanced himself from Epstein, even as he said it was important for anyone with information about Epstein's abuse to come forward. Hillary Clinton repeatedly told the committee she never even recalled meeting Epstein during hours of questioning that at times became heated.

Lawmakers are trying to meet demands for a reckoning over Epstein, who killed himself in 2019 in New York while facing charges for sex trafficking and abusing underage girls. High-status men around the world have been forced into resignations because of revelations about their relationships with Epstein, but so far there are few signs in the U.S. of serious legal consequences coming.

After the depositions last week, Republicans seem to be moving on from scrutinizing the Clintons for their decades-old connections to Epstein and his former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell.

Hillary Clinton's contentious deposition

The closed-door depositions showed how Republican lawmakers at times seemed not able to resist the spectacle of questioning a couple who for decades led the Democratic Party.

The deposition of Hillary Clinton on Thursday was hardly underway when it was put on pause because Republican Rep. Lauren Boebert had sent a photo of Hillary Clinton at the session to a conservative influencer who posted it online. It violated the committee's protocol for depositions and threatened for a moment to derail the session.

"I am done with this if you guys are doing that," Hillary Clinton said. "You can hold me in contempt from now until the cows come home."

The two sides reached an agreement to continue. But as the afternoon wore on, Hillary Clinton started to lose her patience with Republicans' repeated questions about whether she had any connections to Epstein. "I am so tired of answering that question," she said at one point.

She also sparred with Republican Rep. Nancy Mace when she was asked about her connection to Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. Hillary Clinton had worked with Lutnick in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and became visibly perturbed and pounded her palm on the table as she responded to Mace.

Boebert, R-Colo., also asked Hillary Clinton whether there were emails in the case files on Epstein that referenced pizzagate, which posited that Democratic Party insiders harbored child sex slaves in a Washington pizza parlor.

Hillary Clinton responded by saying, "I can't believe you're even referencing it" and reminding her that the conspiracy theory resulted in a man bringing a gun to a Washington restaurant.

However, Republicans did find some agreement with Hillary Clinton when it came to providing more disclosure on what information the government has gathered on UFOs.

Rep. Eric Burlison, R-Mo., asked the former secretary of state for her opinion on releasing more information, and she agreed that any releases should not include national security information but that "this is an issue of real importance to so many people."

Democrats and Republicans question Bill Clinton

On Friday, Bill Clinton faced searching questions both from Republicans and Democrats about photos of the former president that have been released as part of the case files on Epstein.

The former Democratic president said he first remembered meeting Epstein when he flew aboard the financier's private jet in 2002 for the Clintons' humanitarian work, and they parted ways the year after.

Whether the subject was a note Clinton wrote for Epstein's 50th birthday or their travel together for the Clinton Foundation, he described their relationship as little more than "cordial." Bill Clinton described an arrangement with Epstein where the financier provided his private jet for humanitarian trips in exchange for Clinton discussing politics and economics with him.

Larry Summers, who had worked as treasury secretary in Clinton's administration, helped make that connection, Clinton said. But Clinton said they went separate ways after he sensed that Epstein was not

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 46 of 73

deeply interested in the humanitarian work.

"We were friendly, but I didn't know him well enough to say we were friends," he said.

Epstein visited the White House numerous times during Clinton's presidency, and there are photos of them shaking hands. Clinton told lawmakers he did not recall those interactions.

In response to a Democratic lawmaker's questions about a photo that showed him in a pool with a woman whose face was redacted, the former president said he did not know the woman and did not engage in sexual activity with her.

He said the photo was from a trip to Brunei for charitable work and a number of people in their travel party were swimming. He also said that he was not aware that one young woman who was ostensibly working as a masseuse and gave him a neck massage on one flight was in fact a victim of sexual abuse.

"There's nothing that I saw when I was around him that made me realize he was trafficking women," he told the committee.

He said he had once visited Epstein's townhouse in New York City, but said repeatedly he had never visited Epstein's private island or other properties.

Asked by Republicans whether they had talked about young women or girls together, Clinton responded emphatically: "No."

Clinton acknowledged he maintained a closer relationship with Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's former girlfriend and confidant. But he maintained that was largely because of close mutual connections. He also said "she has to be punished" for her conviction on sex trafficking charges.

What Bill Clinton said about Trump

One line of questioning stirred up curiosity from lawmakers, and that was what Clinton had to say about President Donald Trump. He made clear he believed it was important for anyone, including presidents, to come forward and testify to their knowledge of Epstein.

Clinton also shared how he and Trump had briefly discussed Epstein at a charity golf tournament more than 20 years ago. He said Trump had never "said anything to me to make me think he was involved in anything improper with regard to Epstein," but also remarked that those two men had a falling-out over a real estate deal.

Republican lawmakers left the deposition pointing to Clinton's words and arguing that it showed there is no evidence that Trump ever did anything wrong in his own relationship with Epstein.

Democrats, meanwhile, said Clinton's testimony counters what Trump has said more recently about why he and Epstein had a falling-out. Trump has told reporters they had a disagreement because Epstein had hired people away from Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

China's economic ambitions hit limits to growth as its national congress meets

CHAN HO-HIM and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's progress in building a modern economy, evident in its kung-fu fighting robots and self-parking cars, is hitting limits as a downturn in its housing industry drags on, small businesses suffer and young people struggle to find jobs.

The gap between Chinese leader Xi Jinping's high-tech, artificial intelligence-driven ambitions and the hard realities of slowing growth is the backdrop for the annual meeting of the country's largely ceremonial national legislature, the National People's Congress, which begins Thursday.

During the meetings, which draw about 3,000 deputies to Beijing, top leaders will outline China's annual target for growth and the congress will endorse a five-year blueprint of policy priorities until 2030.

"What we'll see is the trade-off between whether it's going to be industry and tech, or looking after domestic demand," said Alexander Davey, an analyst at the Mercator Institute for China Studies. "These are the two priorities that are juggling for Xi Jinping right now."

China's economy is losing momentum

In a city in southern China's Guangdong, families were cutting back on big purchases during last month's

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 47 of 73

Lunar New Year holidays. Even for auspicious houseplants like orchids, used as a symbol of abundance and prosperity, prices were slashed by as much as 40% from last year.

The penny pinching has small business owners complaining about hard times.

China reported it reached "around 5%" economic growth in 2025, but economists question some official data.

The relatively robust pace of growth was supported by strong manufacturing as exports surged, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff hikes and other disruptions to trade.

"Hitting the 2025 growth target is hardly reassuring as the Chinese economy is losing growth momentum, with rising imbalances and enormous structural problems being papered over by a surge in export-driven growth," Eswar Prasad, a professor of economics and trade policy at Cornell University, told The Associated Press in emailed comments.

Property slump persists

A downturn in China's housing market began several years ago and piecemeal efforts to revive the industry have made only fitful progress. Dozens of property developers defaulted on their debts as authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing. With overall home prices down 20% or more from 2021, a recovery remains elusive.

The meltdown in one of the country's biggest industries eliminated hundreds of thousands of jobs and with 12.7 million graduates entering the job market this year, more than 16% of young Chinese are unemployed. Some just are giving up and opting out of the rat race, or "lying flat."

Families whose main assets are their homes have grown cautious about spending, weakening consumer demand and confounding longstanding efforts to shift the economy to greater reliance on domestic investment.

The congress may bring some fresh moves to beef up social welfare and other support, measures economists say are overdue and necessary for sustained, steady growth.

China sticks to exports

Reliance on exports is what help keeps China's economy buzzing, at least for now. China recorded a \$1.2 trillion trade surplus in 2025, as exports kept its factories humming. Despite the China-U.S. trade war, it has been shipping more to regions including Europe and Latin America. But it's facing pushback from its trading partners.

Under leader Xi, China has prioritized developing advanced technologies such as AI, robotics, computer chips, electric vehicles and renewable energy. Massive state support has companies churning out more EVs, TVs, solar panels and other products than China and its trading partners need.

"To achieve those goals, the government is going to have to continue to provide subsidies and preferential support for high-tech and strategic industries," said Leah Fahy, a China economist at Capital Economics. "(That) will, in turn, continue to fuel overcapacity."

In a recent report, the International Monetary Fund urged China to cut massive state subsidies and other support for industries that many Western countries say give its companies an unfair advantage over foreign rivals. At the same time, social welfare and other areas of the economy lag behind.

The focus on what the ruling Communist Party has dubbed "high quality development" is bound to continue under the five-year plan for 2026-2030 that lawmakers are due to endorse at the congress.

Over the past few decades, China's transformation into a manufacturing superpower was underpinned by booming construction of homes, office buildings, roads, ports and railways. But tech supply chains are narrower, providing fewer jobs. So the trickle down effect is much weaker, said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING Bank.

"If anything, the more successful the so-called future industries become, the more they will draw resources away from the traditional sectors that still provide the bulk of employment and livelihoods for most people," said Henry Gao, a professor of law at Singapore Management University.

Xi is expected to consolidate more power

The annual congress is an impressive show. Thousands of delegates fill the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing. A military band performs and delegates from various ethnic groups attend in traditional

clothing.

For all the pomp, the meeting is largely a set piece. The congress lasts only one week and its near-unanimous votes on the final day formalize decisions made ahead of time by party leaders. It's a show of unity reaffirming the policies and direction they have set.

Increasingly that leadership has centered on one person, Xi, who has consolidated power since taking the helm in 2012. Now 72, he is one of modern China's most powerful leaders. Some analysts think Xi will emulate Mao Zedong, the revolutionary leader who founded communist China, and rule for life.

Annual reports presented at the congress are replete with references to the party's crucial role, "with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core."

Xi's military purge is under the spotlight

After ascending to power, Xi doubled down on longstanding anti-corruption campaigns, forcing many officials to step down to face investigation and prosecution, including top military brass.

Days before the congress opened, the national legislature removed nine military officers from its ranks, widening a years long military purge. Last month, Gen. Zhang Youxia, the highest ranking military member just below Xi, was ousted over suspected disciplinary violations.

Xi's actions may weaken China's military readiness in coming years, but he is also ensuring the force would be more politically reliable in the longer run, a report by Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank suggested.

The anti-corruption drives have eradicated potential political rivals, and his iron grasp on power makes it much less likely other officials will challenge his vision to build China into a self-sufficient tech leader and 21st-century global power.

Savannah Guthrie returns to her mother's home in first sighting there since disappearance

By The Associated Press undefined

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie and her sister returned to their mother's home outside Tucson on Monday in their first sighting at the house since Nancy Guthrie went missing a month ago.

In video captured by NewsNation and FOX News Digital, the NBC anchor, her sister Annie Guthrie and brother-in-law Tommaso Cioni can be seen walking arm-in-arm down the driveway, placing down yellow flowers and embracing each other in a tearful scene.

The makeshift tribute at the edge of the property includes flowers, yellow ribbons, crosses, prayers, a sign that read "Let Nancy Come Home" and a statuette of an angel.

Later on Monday, Savannah Guthrie posted a photo of flowers at the tribute.

"we feel the love and prayers from our neighbors, from the Tucson community and from around the country," Guthrie wrote, ending the sentence with a heart emoji. "please don't stop praying and hoping with us. bring her home."

Nancy Guthrie's children have previously appeared in videos in which they pleaded for their mother's return, most recently with a social media posting from Savannah Guthrie in which she said the family was offering a \$1 million reward for information leading to the recovery of their mother.

Nancy Guthrie was last seen at her home Jan. 31 and was reported missing the following day. Authorities believe the 84-year-old was kidnapped, abducted or otherwise taken against her will.

Drops of her blood were found on the front porch. The FBI released surveillance footage on Feb. 10 that showed a masked man at Guthrie's doorstep the night she disappeared. Authorities otherwise have released little evidence publicly.

Last week, FOX News Digital reported that a Ring camera about 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) from Guthrie's home had captured 12 vehicles passing around the time she went missing.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department declined to say whether any of the passing vehicles in the videos

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 49 of 73

were found to have been involved in Guthrie's disappearance. The agency said investigators are reviewing hundreds of hours of surveillance footage.

Nancy Guthrie's home has been turned back over to her family. "No trespassing" signs have been posted on the property.

As Mideast conflict widens, US says attacks on Iran will last weeks and intensify

By JON GAMBRELL, MELANIE LIDMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Israeli and U.S. airstrikes pounded Iran in an escalating campaign that U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday would likely take several weeks. Tehran and its allies retaliated across the region, striking Israel and a variety of targets inside Gulf states, including energy facilities in Qatar and the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia.

The intensity of the attacks, the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the lack of any apparent exit plan set the stage for a prolonged conflict with far-reaching consequences. Places deemed safe havens in the Mideast like Dubai have seen incoming fire; energy prices shot up; and U.S. allies pledged to help stop Iranian missiles and drones.

Trump said operations are likely to last four to five weeks but that he was prepared "to go far longer than that."

As the conflict spiraled, the State Department urged U.S. citizens to leave more than a dozen Middle Eastern countries due to safety risks.

"The hardest hits are yet to come from the U.S. military," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters before briefing members of Congress about the Iran operation.

Trump said the military campaign's objectives are to destroy Iran's missile capabilities, wipe out its navy, prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ensure that it cannot continue to support allied groups like Lebanon's Hezbollah, which fired missiles at Israel on Monday.

Iran has said it has not enriched uranium since June, though it has maintained its right to do so and says its nuclear program is peaceful.

As several airstrikes hit Iran's capital, Tehran, the top security official Ali Larijani vowed on X: "We will not negotiate with the United States."

Iran expands attacks across the region

World markets were rattled as the fighting expanded across a region vital to energy supplies.

Saudi Arabia said early Tuesday that the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh came under attack from two drones, causing a "limited fire" and minor damage. On Monday, the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait was struck.

Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura oil refinery also came under attack from drones, but its defenses downed the aircraft, a military spokesman told the state-run Saudi Press Agency. The refinery has a capacity of over half a million barrels of crude oil a day.

The refinery attack "marks a significant escalation, with Gulf energy infrastructure now squarely in Iran's sights," said Torbjorn Soltvedt, an analyst at the risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

After two of its facilities were struck, QatarEnergy said it would stop producing liquefied natural gas indefinitely, taking one of the world's top suppliers off the market. European natural gas prices surged by 40% in response.

Several ships have been attacked in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes and where Iran has threatened attacks.

Iran says nuclear site was targeted

Reza Najafi, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters that airstrikes targeted the Natanz nuclear enrichment site Sunday.

"Their justification that Iran wants to develop nuclear weapons is simply a big lie," he said.

Israel and the U.S. have not acknowledged strikes at the site, which the U.S. bombed in the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in June.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 50 of 73

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Iran was rebuilding “new sites, new places” underground for making atomic bombs in an interview broadcast late Monday on Fox News Channel’s Hannity.

“We had to take the action now and we did,” said Netanyahu, who offered no evidence to support his claim.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed limited activity at two nuclear sites in Iran before the war. Analysts said Tehran was likely assessing damage from the 2025 U.S. strikes and possibly salvaging what remained.

The death toll grew on all sides

The Iranian Red Crescent Society said the U.S.-Israeli operation has killed at least 555 people. In Israel, where several locations were hit by Iranian missiles, 11 people were killed. Israel’s retaliatory strikes against Hezbollah killed dozens of people in Lebanon.

The U.S. military announced that two previously unaccounted for American service members have been confirmed dead, bringing the total to six. All six were Army soldiers and part of the same logistics unit in Kuwait, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Three people were reported killed in the United Arab Emirates, and one each in Kuwait and Bahrain.

Iran’s top diplomat on Monday shared an aerial photo showing rows of graves that he said were for more than 160 girls killed during a U.S.-Israeli strike on an elementary school in Minab. “Their bodies were torn to shreds,” Abbas Araghchi, the country’s foreign minister, said on X.

In Israel, three young siblings killed by an Iranian strike were being laid to rest at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem on Monday night.

The chaos of the conflict became apparent when the U.S. military said Kuwait had “mistakenly shot down” three American fighter jets while Iran was attacking it with aircraft, ballistic missiles and drones. U.S. Central Command said all six pilots ejected safely.

Hezbollah fires on Israel, prompting massive response

Hezbollah said it fired missiles on Israel on Monday, the first time in more than a year the militant group has claimed an attack. There were no reports of injuries or damage.

Israel retaliated with strikes on Lebanon. The country’s Health Ministry reported at least 52 people were killed and 154 wounded in overnight strikes in the Beirut suburbs and southern Lebanon.

An Israeli military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin, said Israel is keeping “all options on the table,” including a potential ground invasion of Lebanon.

The Israeli military said it launched strikes targeting branches of al-Qard al-Hasan, a charity operating outside the Lebanese financial system that Israel says is used to fund Hezbollah’s military wing.

Israel also struck a building housing Al-Manar channel studios in Beirut’s southern suburbs following an evacuation warning, the channel said. No details on casualties were available.

No end in sight to the US-Israeli campaign

The U.S. military, which has used B-2 stealth bombers to strike Iran’s ballistic missile facilities, said Monday that it had taken out 11 Iranian warships. Trump has said the Iranian navy’s headquarters had been “largely destroyed.”

While Danny Danon, the Israeli ambassador to the U.N., said the conflict would continue “as long as it takes,” Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters Monday that the U.S. is not engaged in a nation-building effort, saying, “This is not Iraq. This is not endless.”

Trump sought to more clearly define the administration’s objectives on Monday following an earlier statement — as the attack was unfolding Saturday — in which he listed various grievances dating to Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution and urged Iranians to “take over” their government.

There have been no signs yet of any such uprising.

Trump has also signaled an openness to dialogue with Iran’s new leadership, which could be chosen soon.

Tehran’s streets are deserted

Tehran’s streets have been largely deserted with people sheltering during airstrikes. The paramilitary

Basij force, which has played a central role in crushing recent nationwide protests, set up checkpoints across the city, witnesses said.

In the northern Iranian city of Babol, a student, speaking anonymously over concerns of retribution, told the AP that armed riot police were on the streets Saturday night and into the early hours of Sunday after the death of Khamenei.

"We don't know whether to be happy about the elimination of the criminals who oppress us or to remain silent in the face of the U.S. and Israel's war against the country and its interests and the terror that is taking place," he said.

What to know about the deadly shooting at a Texas bar and the gunman

By JIM VERTUNO and AUDREY McAVOY undefined

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A gunman in Texas opened fire on a crowded bar in Austin's busy nightlife district over the weekend before being fatally shot by police in an attack that authorities were investigating as a potential act of terrorism.

The shooting early Sunday killed three people and wounded more than a dozen others. The suspect was wearing clothes with an Iranian flag design and the words "Property of Allah," a law enforcement official told The Associated Press.

The mass shooting happened after the U.S. and Israel launched an attack on Iran. The FBI and Austin police said they were still looking into the motive behind the shooting, which sent people in the bar and surrounding streets scrambling for cover.

Here's what to know about the shooting:

Suspect fired first shots, parked, then fired again

Police said the gunman drove past Buford's Backyard Beer Garden before circling back and firing the first shots from his SUV at people on the sidewalk and inside the bar early Sunday.

Some college students dove for cover while others were motionless inside the bar and across the street next to a food truck, trying to understand what was happening.

The shooting stopped for a moment. The police chief said the suspect parked, got out with a rifle and began shooting at others before officers rushed to the intersection and shot him.

Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis identified two victims as 21-year-old Savitha Shan and 19-year-old Ryder Harrington. Austin Police announced Monday evening that 30-year-old Jorge Pederson had died from his injuries.

Harrington joined the Beta Theta Pi fraternity at Texas Tech University in 2024, the fraternity said in an Instagram post. Shan's LinkedIn profile listed her as a dual-degree student majoring in management information systems and economics at the University of Texas.

University president says shooting affected students

The bar is on Sixth Street, a nightlife destination filled with bars and music clubs near the flagship campus of the University of Texas system. The school is one of the nation's largest universities with 55,000 enrolled students.

Nathan Comeaux, a 22-year-old senior, spent the evening there with friends and said the bar was "full of college students, probably mostly UT kids, shoulder to shoulder, hundreds just enjoying their nights."

Some of those affected included "members of our Longhorn family," University President Jim Davis said, using the name of the school's mascot.

Police taped off several square blocks around Sixth Street after the shooting. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agents and other federal investigators joined local police at the scene.

Shooter was originally from Senegal and legally bought weapons

Both the FBI and police in Austin said Monday that it's too soon to identify the motive.

Police identified the gunman as 53-year-old Ndiaga Diagne. The gunman legally bought the pistol and rifle he used in the attack several years ago in San Antonio, the police chief said.

Diagne was originally from Senegal, according to multiple people briefed on the investigation who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the investigation.

He first entered the U.S in 2000 on a B-2 tourist visa, becoming a lawful permanent resident six years later after marrying a U.S. citizen, according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Associated Press reporters on Monday were unable to reach Diagne's family members in the Austin area or his ex-wife, who recently was listed as living near San Antonio. A person who answered the door at a house listed for his ex-wife declined to comment and told a reporter to talk with investigators.

Police responded within one minute

The entertainment district has a heavy police presence on weekends, and officers were able to confront the gunman within a minute of the first call for help, the police chief said.

Austin Mayor Kirk Watson praised the fast response by police and rescuers.

"They definitely saved lives," he said.

Comeaux, the UT Austin senior, filmed the suspect as he walked toward Buford's with his gun pointed at officers, and officers fired at him.

"The shooter was walking towards where I was and towards where the bar was, where there could have been 10 times as much damage if he'd gone back to the bar where hundreds of students were hiding," Comeaux said. "So I'm just very grateful for the heroic police officers who were able to stop the suspect."

Minnesota launches investigation that could bring charges against federal immigration officers

By SARAH RAZA and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

A Minnesota prosecutor announced an investigation Monday that may lead to charges against federal officers, including Border Patrol official Greg Bovino, for misconduct during an immigration enforcement crackdown.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said in a news conference that her office is already looking into 17 cases, including one where Bovino threw a smoke canister at protesters on Jan. 21. Another on Jan. 7 involved federal officers making an arrest outside a high school and deploying chemical irritants while students and staff were in the area.

"Make no mistake, we are not afraid of the legal fight, and we are committed to doing this correctly," Moriarty said. "Operation Metro Surge caused immeasurable harm to our community."

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees immigration enforcement, responded in a statement Monday night that such enforcement is a federal responsibility and states cannot prosecute federal officers.

"What these States are trying to do is unlawful, and they know it," the statement said. "Federal officials acting in the course of their duties are immune from liability under state law."

The statement added that local officials should instead consider how their actions have endangered federal law enforcement officers.

A message to Bovino seeking his response was not immediately returned.

Bovino, who emerged as a key figure in the Trump administration's immigration enforcement operations, is known for bringing aggressive tactics to crackdowns in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago and Los Angeles. In Chicago, federal officers frequently deployed chemical irritants as crowd control measures in residential neighborhoods, and a judge ordered Bovino to wear a body camera and appear in court daily to answer questions about the crackdown. That order was overturned before his first mandated appearance.

Officers at times took a forceful approach to corralling protesters in Minneapolis-St. Paul and detained numerous people blowing whistles and recording arrests.

Bovino was eventually removed from his leading role in the Minnesota effort after federal officers fatally shot 37-year-old mother Renee Good and 37-year-old nurse Alex Pretti on different days in January, leading to nationwide demonstrations and criticisms of DHS use-of-force policies.

Moriarty's office has set up an online portal where photos, videos and eyewitness accounts from any

point during Operation Metro Surge can be uploaded.

The Trump administration has defended federal officers, but Moriarty is making clear that her office is "collecting evidence about all sorts of possible crimes," said Rachel Moran, a professor of criminal law and policing at University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis.

In cases where officers unjustifiably used chemical weapons, threw people to the ground or smashed car windows, Moran said as examples, prosecutors may be investigating assault or property damage.

"These would be situations where the state has to determine: Is there evidence that agents acted unlawfully and outside the scope of their authorized duties?" Moran said. "I think agents did illegal things here. I watched it."

Though federal officers conducted immigration enforcement throughout the Twin Cities, Moriarty's investigation will only focus on incidents in Hennepin county, which includes Minneapolis and many of its suburbs.

Her office is also investigating the deaths of Good and Pretti, and she is "confident" they will be able to pursue charges. She said Monday that her office is prepared to sue the federal government to get the evidence she has requested for the investigations if she does not hear from them by Tuesday.

"The question is, should we charge in federal court? Do we expect the federal government to obstruct us? I would say they're already doing that," Moriarty said.

The Department of Justice opened a civil rights inquiry into Pretti's death, but said it saw no reason for a civil rights investigation of Good's death. The Federal Bureau of Investigations barred state investigators from accessing evidence in her case.

The DOJ and FBI did not immediately return requests for comment.

While Moriarty addressed the challenges her office would face in bringing charges against federal agents, she said they are committed to transparency and accountability.

Mark Osler, who served as director of the criminal division for a year under Moriarty in 2023 and 2024, said regardless of whether there are charges, he thinks the public can look forward to more clarity.

"One of the most important roles that prosecution has ... is truth-telling, is to bring to the surface what actually happened at a given time," said Osler, who is currently a law professor at University of St. Thomas. "We'll all know more than just what we saw in those initial videos by the time she's done. I'm confident of that."

Gunman was not on the FBI's radar before he opened fire on a crowded Texas bar, authorities say

By JIM VERTUNO and LEKAN OYEKANAMI Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The gunman who opened fire outside a crowded Texas bar and killed three people in an attack that wounded more than a dozen had not been on the radar of authorities, federal and local investigators said Monday.

The FBI and police in Austin said it's too soon to identify the motive behind the mass shooting early Sunday that the FBI has said is being investigated as a potential act of terrorism, coming after the U.S. and Israel launched an attack on Iran.

"Our ultimate goal in everything we do is to determine the motive," Alex Doran, the acting agent in charge of the FBI's San Antonio office, said during a news conference.

Police shot and killed the gunman, whom they identified as 53-year-old Ndiaga Diagne. He was wearing clothes with an Iranian flag design and bearing the words "Property of Allah" during the attack, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press.

Investigators are poring over thousands of hours of video and police said there are more than 150 witnesses to interview.

"We are still in the early hours of this investigation," said Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis.

The gunman legally bought the weapons used in the attack several years ago in San Antonio, Davis said. More information about the suspect along with body camera footage from the officers could be released

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 54 of 73

later this week, Davis said.

Shooting victims include college students

Police identified the victims as 21-year-old Savitha Shan, 19-year-old Ryder Harrington and 30-year-old Jorge Pederson.

Harrington joined the Beta Theta Pi fraternity at Texas Tech University in 2024, the fraternity said in an Instagram post.

"Ryder had a rare ability to truly enjoy life to make people laugh, to make moments feel bigger, and to make ordinary days unforgettable," the fraternity said. "If anyone embodied what it meant to live fully and love deeply, it was Ryder."

Texas Tech said in a statement that Harrington had been enrolled as recently as the fall 2025 semester, but was not taking classes this semester.

"Our thoughts are with Ryder's family, friends, and all those affected by this devastating situation," the statement said.

Shan's LinkedIn profile listed her as a dual-degree student majoring in management information systems and economics at the University of Texas at Austin.

University President Jim Davis said her death was "devastating" and that several other students were wounded in the attack.

"Some of these are very serious and we are hoping for the best outcomes, while others are on the path to recovery," he said in a statement. "I have met with many of these families and will continue to pray for them."

Austin Police announced Monday evening that Pederson had died from his injuries.

Official says the gunman came to the US in 2000

The gunman in the attack was originally from Senegal, according to multiple people briefed on the investigation who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the investigation.

Diagne first entered the U.S in 2000 on a B-2 tourist visa and became a lawful permanent resident six years later after marrying a U.S. citizen, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Associated Press reporters on Monday were unable to reach Diagne's family members in the Austin area or his former wife, who recently was listed as living near San Antonio. A person who answered the door at a house listed for his ex-wife declined to comment and told a reporter to talk with investigators.

Shots stopped for a moment before erupting again

The shooting began outside Buford's Backyard Beer Garden along Sixth Street, a nightlife destination filled with bars and music clubs close to the University of Texas at Austin.

The gunman drove past the bar, which was packed with students, before circling back and firing the first shots from his SUV at people on the sidewalk and inside the bar, police said.

Inside the bar and across the street next to a food truck, some students dove for cover while others were motionless, trying to understand what was happening.

The shooting stopped for a moment.

The suspect parked, got out with a rifle and began shooting at others before officers rushed to the intersection and shot him, the police chief said.

The FBI said just hours after the shooting that they found "indicators" on the gunman and in his vehicle leading them to look into the possibility of terrorism.

Supreme Court blocks law against schools outing transgender students to their parents in California

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court cleared the way Monday for California schools to tell parents if their children identify as transgender without getting the student's approval, granting an emergency appeal from a conservative legal group.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 55 of 73

The order blocks for now a state law that bans automatic parental notification requirements if students change their pronouns or gender expression at school.

The split decision comes after religious parents and educators challenged California school policies aimed at preventing schools from outing students to their families. Two sets of Catholic parents represented by the Thomas More Society say it caused schools to mislead them and secretly facilitate the children's social transition despite their objections.

California, on the other hand, argued that students have the right to privacy about their gender expression, especially if they fear rejection from their families. The state said that school policies and state law are aimed at striking a balance with parents' rights.

The high court majority, though, sided with the parents and reinstated a lower-court order blocking the law and school policies while the case continues to play out.

"The parents who assert a free exercise claim have sincere religious beliefs about sex and gender, and they feel a religious obligation to raise their children in accordance with those beliefs. California's policies violate those beliefs," and burden the free exercise of religion, the majority wrote in an unsigned order.

The court's three liberal justices publicly dissented, saying the case is still working its way through lower courts and there was no need to step in now. "If nothing else, this Court owes it to a sovereign State to avoid throwing over its policies in a slapdash way, if the Court can provide normal procedures. And throwing over a State's policy is what the Court does today," Justice Elena Kagan wrote.

Conservative Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas, meanwhile, noted they would have gone further and granted teachers' appeal to lift restrictions for them.

The Thomas More Society called the decision "the most significant parental rights ruling in a generation."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office defended the law, saying teachers should be focused on instruction, not required "to be gender cops."

The order "undermines student privacy and the ability to learn in a safe and supportive classroom, free from discrimination based on gender identity," said Marissa Saldivar, a spokesperson for the Democratic governor.

The Supreme Court has ruled for religious plaintiffs in other recent cases, including allowing parents to pull their children from public-school lessons if they object to storybooks with LGBTQ+ characters.

The California order comes months after the court upheld state bans on gender-identity-related health-care for minors. The justices also seem to be leaning toward allowing states to ban transgender athletes from playing on girls sports teams.

School policies for transgender students, meanwhile, have also been on the court's radar in other cases.

The court rebuffed another similar case out of Wisconsin in December, but three conservative justices indicated they would have heard the case. Justice Samuel Alito called the school policies "an issue of great and growing national importance."

The justices have been weighing whether to hear arguments in cases out of states like Massachusetts and Florida filed by other parents who say schools facilitated social transition without informing them.

The Trump administration, meanwhile, found in January that California's policies violated parents' right to access their children's education records. The Justice Department also sued after determining the states' transgender athlete policies violate federal civil rights law.

Hegseth insists the Iran conflict is 'not endless' while warning more casualties are likely

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth spoke Monday to widening concerns that the U.S.-Israeli strikes in Iran could spiral into a protracted regional conflict by declaring: "This is not Iraq. This is not endless," even as he warned that more American casualties are likely in the weeks ahead.

While the Trump administration has cited Iran's nuclear ambitions as the chief concern to be addressed, officials increasingly are pointing to the threat from Iran's ballistic missiles as a key reason to launch the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 56 of 73

attacks as well as an opportunity to take out the government's leadership and the sense that negotiations around the nuclear program have stalled.

Trump said Monday that Iran's conventional missile program "was growing rapidly and dramatically, and this posed a very clear, colossal threat to America and our forces stationed overseas."

Hegseth said at a separate press conference with Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the operation had a "decisive mission" to eliminate the threat of Iranian ballistic missiles, destroy the country's navy and ensure "no nukes."

Trump, Hegseth and Caine have not suggested any exit plan or offered signs that the conflict would end anytime soon as the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei cast doubt on the future of the Islamic Republic and hurtled the region into broader instability. Caine said the biggest U.S. military buildup in the Middle East in decades would only grow because the commander in the region "will receive additional forces even today."

"This is not a so-called regime-change war, but the regime sure did change, and the world is better off for it," Hegseth said.

Trump, however, in video statements released after the strikes began, urged the Iranian people "to take back your country."

More American troop casualties expected

The conflict has spilled into the wider region, with Iran and its allied armed groups launching missiles at Israel, Arab states and U.S. military targets in the Middle East.

Six American troops have been killed, with Trump, Hegseth and Caine predicting more casualties. All were Army soldiers and part of the same logistics unit in Kuwait, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

When asked about the six deaths Monday, Hegseth said an Iranian weapon made it past allied air defenses "and, in that particular case, happened to hit a tactical operations center that was fortified."

Eighteen American service members also have been seriously wounded, said Capt. Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command.

The latest sign of the escalating upheaval came when, the U.S. military said, ally Kuwait "mistakenly shot down" three American fighter jets during a combat mission as Iranian aircraft, ballistic missiles and drones were attacking. U.S. Central Command said all six pilots ejected safely from the American F-15E Strike Eagles and were in stable condition.

Asked if there are boots on the ground now in Iran, Hegseth said, "No, but we're not going to go into the exercise of what we will or will not do."

He said it was "foolishness" to expect U.S. officials to say publicly "here's exactly how far we'll go."

Trump told the New York Post on Monday that he wasn't ruling out U.S. forces in Iran if "they were necessary." He noted, "I don't have the yips with respect to boots on the ground."

At the White House, Trump said the mission was expected to take four to five weeks but "we have the capability to go far longer than that."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters at the Capitol that the U.S. "will do this as long as it takes to achieve" its objectives and warned that "the hardest hits are yet to come from the U.S. military."

Hegseth also dismissed questions about the time frame and said Trump had "latitude" to decide how long it would take. "Four weeks, two weeks, six weeks," he said. "It could move up. It could move back."

Pentagon gives justification for strikes

In laying out a case for the strikes, Hegseth did not point to any imminent nuclear threat from Iran and said again that strikes by the U.S. and Israel last June "obliterated their nuclear program to rubble."

Instead, Hegseth pointed to threats from other weaponry that justified the operation: "Iran was building powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions."

He added: "Our bases, our people, our allies, all in their crosshairs. Iran had a conventional gun to our head as they tried to lie their way to a nuclear bomb."

Hegseth said that during negotiations leading up to the attack, Iranian officials were "stalling" despite having "every chance to make a peaceful and sensible deal."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 57 of 73

He also justified the operation by describing Iran's government as having started the conflict from its inception, declaring that for 47 years it has "waged a savage, one-sided war against America."

In a private briefing Sunday, Trump administration officials told congressional staffers that U.S. intelligence did not suggest Iran was preparing to launch a preemptive strike against the U.S., three people familiar with the briefings said.

Trump, a Republican, had said the objective of the mission was to eliminate "imminent threats from the Iranian regime." And senior Trump administration officials, who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, told reporters Saturday that there were indicators that the Iranians could launch a preemptive attack.

Military doesn't specify Iran's nuclear sites as targets

As with the attack that dropped massive bunker-buster bombs on Iranian nuclear facilities last year, Caine said the military used B-2 stealth bombers in the new operation with a 37-hour round trip.

He said the penetrating bombs were dropped on Iranian underground facilities" but did not specify that they were nuclear facilities. Nuclear sites were not among the types of targets on a list released over the weekend by U.S. Central Command.

The administration says Israel and the U.S. have bombed Iranian missile sites and targeted its navy, claiming to have destroyed its headquarters and multiple warships.

Caine on Monday referenced the use of cyber technologies, saying the U.S. "effectively disrupted communications and sensor networks" that left "the adversary without the ability to coordinate or respond effectively."

Without giving specifics, Caine said the military "delivered synchronized and layered effects designed to disrupt, degrade, deny and destroy Iran's ability to conduct and sustained combat operations on the U.S. side."

Caine said Trump gave the go-ahead order for the strikes at 3:38 p.m. EST on Friday. That meant the president gave the green light when he was aboard Air Force One heading to Texas with Republican Sens. Ted Cruz and John Cornyn and actor Dennis Quaid.

A Christmas rifle, possible warning signs and 41 seconds of gunfire: Jurors weigh Colin Gray's fate

By JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The Georgia father of an accused school shooter could have prevented an attack that left two students and two teachers dead and many others wounded at a school northeast of Atlanta in 2024, a prosecutor said in her closing argument.

"After seeing sign after sign of his son's deteriorating mental state, his violence, his school shooter obsession, the defendant had sufficient warning that his son was a bomb just waiting to go off," Barrow County Assistant District Attorney Patricia Brooks told jurors. "And instead of disarming him, he gave him the detonator."

Jimmy Berry, a lawyer for the father, Colin Gray, agreed that what the dad knew ahead of time was of paramount importance in the case.

"That's real important because that really is the key to this case, is what did he know?," he said. "Did he know that Colt would do this?"

Gray's son, Colt Gray, is accused of bringing a rifle his father had given him for Christmas to his school and killing two students and two teachers and wounding many others.

In his closing argument, the defense lawyer held up a picture of Colt Gray, and said "this is the person who went into the high school and shot and killed four people he didn't even know and injured scores of others."

"This is the person who needs to be punished," he said. "He made a conscious decision to do this, a secretive decision."

The trial began three weeks ago with jury selection. Deliberations are expected Tuesday morning.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 58 of 73

Trial looks at parent's accountability

The trial is one of the latest cases in which parents are being put on trial after their children are accused in fatal shootings, defense lawyers called Colin Gray to the witness stand. He testified Friday that he gave his son a rifle as a Christmas present in hopes of bonding with the boy over hunting and outings at the gun range.

Prosecutors say he should be held accountable for giving his son the weapon despite alleged threats and warning signs that the boy was mentally unstable.

Colt Gray was 14 at the time of the Sept. 4, 2024, shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northeast of Atlanta. He faces 55 counts, including murder, in the deaths of four people and 25 counts of aggravated assault.

The father faces 29 counts, including two counts of second-degree murder and two counts of involuntary manslaughter.

Both sides use images to make their case in closing arguments

Brooks showed photos of teachers and students closing classroom doors to protect the students and comforting teenagers wounded during 41 seconds of gunfire.

"Those 41 seconds forever altered the lives of the students of Apalachee High School, their parents and everyone in this community," she said.

But the defense lawyer urged jurors to rely on facts, and not emotion in reaching their verdict. He contends that no one could have foreseen the shooting ahead of time.

"Who would be able to foresee that a 14 year old is going to take a rifle, as big as it is, as heavy as it is, and stick it in a book bag, get on a bus, come to school, walk down the hall, go to class, put it down on the floor and not one single person sees it," Berry said. "How foreseeable is that?"

Prosecutors say that's exactly what happened, and they played surveillance video in the trial they say shows Colt Gray getting on a school bus with a backpack that concealed the rifle.

In the video, he is seen entering the school with the backpack. He walks down several hallways past dozens of students and some employees who don't take notice of the large size of the pack. He then begins classes, and later that morning spends several minutes in a bathroom moments before the shooting.

In dramatic testimony as the trial opened last month, several students testified in court about being shot during their algebra class. They recounted through tears seeing a classmate in a pool of blood, then seeing blood on their own bodies and fearing they might die.

There also has been testimony about what prosecutors describe as a "shrine" to a Florida school shooter that Colt Gray kept on a wall next to his computer at home.

He had an interest in Nikolas Cruz, convicted of the 2018 shooting that left 14 students and three staff members dead at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, his mother, Marcee Gray, testified this week.

Marcee Gray testified at Colin Gray's trial that she urged her husband to lock up the guns so that their son could not access them. But in the days before the school shooting, their son kept the gun in his bedroom, witnesses testified at the father's trial.

The parents were separated for much of the time leading up to the shooting, and Marcee Gray was not charged with any crimes.

Duke extends No. 1 record in AP Top 25 as Michigan State, Nebraska and Texas Tech crash top 10

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

Duke is No. 1 in The Associated Press men's college basketball poll for the second straight week, extending its all-time record with the program's 149th appearance in the top spot.

The Blue Devils received 55 of 59 first-place votes in Monday's poll following lopsided wins over Notre Dame and then-No. 11 Virginia last week.

No. 2 Arizona received four first-place votes after clinching a share of the Big 12 regular-season title with

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 59 of 73

Saturday's 84-61 win over No. 14 Kansas. Michigan, UConn and Florida rounded out the top five.

Duke (27-2) has been dominant defensively since losing to rival North Carolina on Feb. 7, holding its last six opponents to an average of 57 points per game.

The Blue Devils opened the week by handing Notre Dame its worst home loss since 1898 with a 100-56 win. Duke then turned its showdown with Virginia into another rout, crushing the Cavaliers 77-51 on Saturday to clinch the top seed for the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament.

NET vs. AP Top 25

The latest NET rankings mirror the AP Top 25 with Duke on top, but the rest of the top 10 differed.

The NET, which the NCAA uses to help select its tournament field, had Michigan at No. 2, one ahead of Arizona, with Florida at No. 4.

Illinois is No. 11 in the AP poll, but is all the way up to No. 5 in the NET. No. 12 Gonzaga is seven spots better in the NET and No. 4 UConn is four places lower at No. 8.

Houston is No. 7 in both rankings, but the NET has No. 15 Purdue at No. 9 in its rankings and No. 6 Iowa State at No. 10.

Rising and falling

No. 10 Texas Tech had the biggest jump of the week, climbing six places with wins over Cincinnati and at Iowa State last week.

No. 8 Michigan State moved up five places following its 76-74 win over Purdue on Thursday and Sunday's 13-point win over Indiana. Fellow Big Ten school Nebraska climbed three spots to No. 9 little more than a month after reaching a program-best No. 5.

No. 19 Miami (Ohio), Division I's only remaining undefeated team, climbed two spots for its highest ranking since reaching No. 12 in 1952-53.

No. 15 Purdue had the biggest drop of the week, losing seven places following losses to Michigan State and Ohio State.

No. 12 Gonzaga lost three places following its 70-59 loss to rival Saint Mary's.

In and out

By beating Gonzaga, Saint Mary's earned a share of the West Coast Conference regular-season title and moved into the AP Top 25 for the first time this season at No. 21.

No. 22 Miami is ranked for the first time since 2023 following wins over Florida State and Boston College.

BYU dropped out of the poll from No. 19 with three losses in four games since sharpshooting guard Richie Saunders went down with a season-ending knee injury.

Louisville's losses to North Carolina and Clemson last week knocked the Cardinals out of the poll from No. 25.

Conference watch

The Big 12 is tied with the Big Ten and Southeastern conferences for the most ranked teams at five following BYU's departure. The ACC is next with four teams, followed by the Big East and West Coast conferences with two each. The Mid-American Conference and Atlantic 10 each have one ranked team.

FACT FOCUS: Misrepresented images spread after US and Israel strike Iran

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

As the U.S. and Israel continued to strike Iran on Monday following a major attack over the weekend that killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, misrepresented images related to the war spread widely online.

They presented years-old footage as current, falsely claimed that U.S. military vehicles had been destroyed and erroneously claimed to show casualties of the war.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: An image shows Khamenei's body under a pile of rubble.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 60 of 73

THE FACTS: This is false. It was created with AI. Google's Gemini app detected SynthID, a digital watermarking tool for identifying content that has been generated or altered with AI, in the image. This means it was created or edited, either entirely or in part, by Google's AI models.

In the image, a body whose face is blurred is trapped beneath rubble while four men wearing hard hats and safety vests shine flashlights onto the area and work on clearing the debris. Small fires burn in the background.

Iranian state media confirmed early Sunday that Khamenei had been killed in Saturday's attack by the U.S. and Israel. A photo of his body has not been publicly released.

CLAIM: Images show the USS Abraham Lincoln sinking or otherwise damaged after an Iranian ballistic missile strike.

THE FACTS: U.S. Central Command said in an X post that the warship, one of two aircraft carriers the U.S. military has deployed to the region, "was not hit" and that "the missiles didn't even come close." The post, which went up after Iranian leadership claimed the ship was struck in the attack, adds that it is continuing to launch aircraft.

Many images said to show the aftermath of a strike on the USS Abraham Lincoln are years-old. For example, an image of a ship sinking into the ocean with a helicopter hovering above has appeared online since at least 2021. A video of a ship engulfed in flames and billowing smoke appeared in a Facebook post from June 2025.

CLAIM: A video shows the downing of a U.S. fighter jet in Iran.

THE FACTS: This is false. It is from a military-themed video game.

The video spreading online shows a missile speeding toward a fighter jet, which performs dramatic evasive maneuvers. There is a loud bang at the end of the video and the aircraft heads toward the ground.

But a YouTube channel dedicated to military video game simulations originally posted the clip in November 2025. A caption on the clip states that "all scenes are captured in-game for entertainment and learning purposes only." The aircraft is identified as an F-4 Phantom II.

Three U.S. fighter jets, all of them F-15E Strike Eagles, were mistakenly downed in Kuwait — not Iran — by friendly Kuwaiti fire on Monday, according to the U.S. military. Iranian state television claimed that Iran had targeted one of the planes that crashed.

CLAIM: A video shows U.S. soldiers returning home in coffins from the Iran war.

THE FACTS: This is false. It shows the dignified transfer of U.S. Army servicemembers who died in Iraq in Operation New Dawn. The transfer took place on June 8, 2011, at Dover Air Force Base.

The original video was posted to YouTube by a photographer and U.S. Marine Corps veteran who fought in the Vietnam War.

There are a number of indications that the YouTube video matches the clip currently spreading online. For example, about one minute and 57 seconds into the video, a plane taxis in the background. Additionally, the front of a blue vehicle is visible throughout most of the video in the bottom right corner.

US stocks erase sharp losses, while oil prices leap on worries about Iran war

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices leaped Monday on worries that war with Iran could clog the global flow of crude and make inflation even worse. U.S. stocks, meanwhile, swung from sharp losses to a tiny gain.

Crude prices jumped more than 6%, which will likely mean higher prices soon at gasoline pumps. That would hurt not only U.S. households, whose spending makes up the bulk of the U.S. economy, but also businesses with big fuel bills.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 61 of 73

The S&P 500 fell as much as 1.2% at the start of trading, and cruise lines and airlines led the way lower. But U.S. stocks quickly erased those losses, in part because past military conflicts haven't usually created sustained drops for the market, and the index finished the day with a gain of less than 0.1%.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 73 points, or 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.4%. Both also came back from steep early losses.

Prices for natural gas remained higher, meanwhile, which could raise heating bills for the remainder of the winter, after a major supplier of liquefied natural gas to Europe said it would stop production because of the war. Gold climbed 1.2% as investors looked for safer things to own and as U.S. officials tried to persuade the world that this war will not last forever.

"This is not Iraq," U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Monday. "This is not endless."

Typically, Treasury yields also fall in the bond market when investors are feeling nervous. But yields instead climbed, in part because higher oil prices will put upward pressure on inflation, which is already worse than nearly everyone would like. That could tie the Federal Reserve's hands and keep it from cutting interest rates.

Lower interest rates can boost the economy and job market, but they also worsen inflation. Higher rates can do the opposite.

Past military conflicts in the Middle East have not caused long-term drops for markets. For this war to knock down U.S. stocks in a significant and sustained way, the price of oil would perhaps need to jump above \$100 per barrel, according to strategists at Morgan Stanley led by Michael Wilson.

Oil prices are still well below that level, even with Monday's jump. The price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude rose 6.3% to settle at \$71.23. Brent crude, the international standard, climbed 6.7% to \$77.74 per barrel.

That helped the U.S. stock market pare some of its steep, opening loss. Morgan Stanley also said the S&P 500 has climbed an average of 2%, 6% and 8% in the one, six and 12 months following "geopolitical risk events" historically. That's going back to the Korean War, which began in 1950, and the 1956 Suez crisis.

At this moment, though, fear is still running through markets.

Stocks of airlines were some of Monday's sharpest losers. Not only do higher oil prices threaten their already big fuel bills, the fighting in the Middle East also closed airports and left travelers stranded.

American Airlines lost 4.2%, United Airlines fell 2.9% and Delta Air Lines sank 2.2%.

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings dropped even more, 10.6%. It needs customers to have plenty of cash to spend after paying for gasoline and other essentials.

The cruise operator also reported weaker revenue for its latest quarter than analysts expected, though its profit was better. Its forecast for profit this upcoming fiscal year was also lower than analysts expected.

Stocks in the housing industry struggled as higher Treasury yields could translate into more expensive mortgage rates. Homebuilder D.R. Horton lost 3.7%, and Builder FirstSource sank 4.7%.

Helping the U.S. stock market to bounce back from its early losses were oil companies, which benefited from the rising price of crude. Exxon Mobil climbed 1.1%, and Marathon Petroleum rose 5.9%.

Companies that make equipment for the military also strengthened. Northrop Grumman climbed 5.9%, and RTX rallied 4.7%.

Palantir Technologies, whose software helps global defense agencies and other customers, jumped 5.8% for one of the biggest gains in the S&P 500.

Big Tech stocks also helped support the market. Nvidia rose 2.9% and was the strongest single force pushing the S&P 500 higher.

All told, the S&P 500 added 2.74 points to 6,881.62. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 73.14 to 48,904.78, and the Nasdaq composite rose 80.65 to 22,748.86.

In stock markets abroad, indexes sank across much of Europe and Asia. Germany's DAX lost 2.6%, France's CAC 40 fell 2.2% and Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 2.1% for some of the world's larger losses.

Stocks in Shanghai were an outlier and rose 0.5%.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.04% from 3.97% late Friday. A report

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 62 of 73

showing growth for U.S. manufacturing was better last month than economists expected also helped to lift yields.

In Their Words: How Trump's and his administration's statements on Iran evolved and conflicted

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, BEN FINLEY and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump ordered strikes on Iran last summer, he and his administration repeatedly declared that the attacks had obliterated the Middle Eastern country's nuclear program and set back its ability to make a nuclear weapon for years.

In the immediate runup to Saturday's strikes with Israel on Iran, however, Trump and members of his administration began issuing more urgent warnings about Iran's nuclear ambitions. It was among the shifting — and often openly contradictory — messages sent on Iran.

After widespread protests erupted in Iran in January, for example, Trump repeatedly threatened military strikes — only to back off after he said he was assured Tehran had halted killing protesters and not carried out planned executions — except international observers say the death toll from a crackdown over the protests exceeded 7,000. At the same time, following years of scoffing at, and openly campaigning against, the idea that previous conservatives administrations had been advocates for “regime change” missions, Trump seemed to change his mind and warm to the idea.

In the aftermath of Saturday's attacks, the president and other officials have offered multiple reasons they said the latest strikes on Iran were necessary — some of which conflict with what they said over the past eight months.

After the strikes last summer

—“THE NUCLEAR SITES IN IRAN ARE COMPLETELY DESTROYED!” — Trump in a June 24, 2025, post on Truth Social.

—“Based on everything we have seen — and I've seen it all — our bombing campaign obliterated Iran's ability to create nuclear weapons.” — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to CNN in a June 25, 2025, story

—“The precision strikes perfectly hit their targets and destroyed Iran's nuclear facilities, resulting in the total obliteration of Iran's ability to create a nuclear weapon.” — The White House in a June 25, 2025, press release.

—“That is a false story and it's one that really shouldn't be re-reported.” — Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a June 25, 2025, interview with Politico commenting on news reports that a U.S. intelligence report suggested Iran's nuclear program had only been set back a few months.

—“They've been trying it for 25 years. The last thing they're going to do is nuclear. We had to hit them, though. They were close to getting a nuclear bomb. Absolutely.” — Trump to Fox News on June 30, 2025.

—“All three nuclear sites in Iran were completely destroyed and/or OBLITERATED. It would take years to bring them back into service and, if Iran wanted to do so, they would be much better off starting anew, in three different locations, prior to those sites being obliterated, should they decide to do so.” — Trump in a July 19, 2025, post on Truth Social.

—“They've rejected every opportunity to renounce their nuclear ambitions, and we can't take it anymore.” — Trump during his Feb. 24 State of the Union.

“They have to say ‘we're not going to have a nuclear weapon, and they just can't quite get there,’” Trump on Feb. 27, 2026, telling reporters while visiting Texas that he wasn't happy with the negotiations with Iran.

Regime change in Iran

—“It's not politically correct to use the term, ‘Regime Change,’ but if the current Iranian Regime is unable to MAKE IRAN GREAT AGAIN, why wouldn't there be a Regime change??? MIGA!!!” — Trump in a June 22, 2025 post on Truth Social, modifying his political campaign slogan to signify “Make Iran Great Again.”

—“Our view has been very clear that we don't want to regime change. We do not want to protract this or build this out any more than it's already been built out. We want to end their nuclear program, and then we want to talk to the Iranians about a long-term settlement here. We believe very strongly that

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 63 of 73

there are two pathways. There's a pathway where Iran continues to fund terrorism, continues to try to build a nuclear program, attacks American troops. That's the bad pathway for Iran, and it will be met with overwhelming force." — Vice President JD Vance to NBC News on June 22, 2025.

—"I SAVED HIM FROM A VERY UGLY AND IGNOMINIOUS DEATH, and he does not have to say, 'THANK YOU, PRESIDENT TRUMP!'" — Trump on June 27, 2025, on Truth Social, after saying that he knew exactly where Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was sheltered during the June strikes. Khamenei was killed in Saturday's strikes.

—"Seems like that would be the best thing that could happen. For 47 years, they've been talking and talking and talking. In the meantime, we've lost a lot of lives while they talk. Legs blown off, arms blown off, faces blown off." — Trump to reporters on Feb. 13 when asked about regime change.

—"There might be, and there might not be." — Trump on Friday to reporters when asked if using the military right now could mean regime change. He added: "It would be nice if we could do it without, but sometimes you have to do it with."

—"He was unable to avoid our Intelligence and Highly Sophisticated Tracking Systems and, working closely with Israel, there was not a thing he, or the other leaders that have been killed along with him, could do. This is the single greatest chance for the Iranian people to take back their Country." in a Feb. 28 Truth Social post that implied that taking out Khamenei and regime change was the goal of the latest strikes.

—"Our objective is to defend the American people by eliminating imminent threats from the Iranian regime, a vicious group of very hard, terrible people." — Trump in a video message on Feb. 28.

—"I call upon all Iranian patriots who yearn for freedom to seize this moment—to be brave, be bold, be heroic, and take back your country." — Trump in a video statement on Sunday in which he also urged members of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and military police to lay down their arms.

—"This is not a so-called regime change war, but the regime sure did change." — Hegseth at a March 2 briefing with reporters at the Pentagon.

The threat of ballistic missiles

—"Iran possesses a very large number of ballistic missiles, particularly short range ballistic missiles, that threaten the United States and our bases in the region, and our partners in the region, and all of our bases in the U.A.E. and Qatar and Bahrain." — Secretary of State Marco Rubio to reporters on Feb. 25.

—"The regime already had missiles capable of hitting Europe and our bases — both local and overseas — and would soon have had missiles capable of reaching our beautiful America." — Trump during a Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House on March 2.

—Iran "was building powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions." — Hegseth during the Monday Pentagon briefing.

Protecting the lives of protesters

—"If Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go." — Trump on Truth Social Jan. 2.

—"Iran is looking at FREEDOM, perhaps like never before. The USA stands ready to help!!!" — Trump on Truth Social on Jan. 10.

—"Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING — TAKE OVER YOUR INSTITUTIONS!!! Save the names of the killers and abusers. They will pay a big price. I have cancelled all meetings with Iranian Officials until the senseless killing of protesters STOPS. HELP IS ON ITS WAY. MIGA!!!" — Trump on Truth Social on Jan. 13.

—"We've been told that the killing in Iran is stopping — it's stopped, it's stopping. And there's no plan for executions, or an execution, or executions — so I've been told that on good authority." — Trump on Jan. 14 at the White House.

—"You had yesterday scheduled over 800 hangings. They didn't hang anyone. They canceled the hangings. That had a big impact." — Trump to reporters while leaving the White House on Jan. 16.

—"This was our last, best chance to strike — what we're doing right now — and eliminate the intolerable threats posed by this sick and sinister regime. And they are indeed sick and sinister." — Trump, striking an entirely different tone at the Medal of Honor ceremony Monday. He also said he'd come to the conclusion:

"You can't deal with these people. You got to do it the right way."

FBI joins Cincinnati police search for suspect after 9 wounded in nightclub shooting

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and PATRICK AFTOORA-ORSAGOS Associated Press
COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Federal authorities joined local police Monday in the search for a suspect in a weekend nightclub shooting in Cincinnati that wounded nine people.

The nine were hospitalized with non-life threatening injuries after shots rang out around 1 a.m. Sunday inside the music venue Riverfront Live. Interim Cincinnati Police Chief Adam Hennie said all the victims were in stable condition.

The FBI was working with the Cincinnati Police Department on the investigation, said spokesperson Todd Lindgren, and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives offered a \$5,000 reward for information identifying a suspect.

Though it occurred almost simultaneously to a deadly bar shooting in Austin, Texas, which is being investigated as a potential act of terrorism, authorities in Ohio have not provided any details about a motive in the Cincinnati shooting.

Bill Halusek, spokesperson for the Cincinnati ATF, said that at this time, the Cincinnati shooting is not suspected to be an act of terrorism.

Anton Canady was at Riverfront Live when he said he heard "commotion" that sounded like a fight. He said music continued to play and shortly after, he heard gunshots. That's when he and his girlfriend, Brandi Willis, began running for the exit.

Canady said Willis fell while trying to escape and to avoid her being trampled, he laid on top of her to protect her.

"I don't think it was like they was doing it purposely or intentionally, I just think nobody wanted to die in there," he said.

The 40-year-old Cincinnati resident spoke to The Associated Press from a hospital in Cincinnati while he waited for Willis to receive more medical attention for injuries she suffered during their attempted exit. Canady said his legs were cut and bruised.

When he finally exited the venue, he learned one of the people shot was his cousin.

"I hurried up, found something out of the car that was next to us. And I tied her wounds up so we can get that pressure. And we try to do the next step, which is call 911 and get her the attention she needed," he said.

Canady said he spoke to his cousin on the phone Monday and she is "doing good" but is "in shock."

Jermaine Tandy, also known as DJ Fresh, was hosting a birthday celebration at the venue, according to a post on his Facebook page. Management representing DJ Fresh said they were "devastated" by the events that took place during the celebration.

"Our hearts go out to the victims, their families, and everyone impacted by this senseless act of violence," the statement said. "This event was intended to be an opportunity for us to come together and enjoy great music; and have fun celebrating life, it is deeply frustrating that the actions of one individual ruined the evening for so many."

According to the post, the venue owners were responsible for security at the event under the DJ's rental agreement.

Riverfront Live sits along the Ohio River not far from Riverbend Music Center and often draws customers from concertgoers to the much larger outdoor venue, which is closed in winter.

It was rebranded Riverfront Live in 2018 after gaining attention for criminal activity. Portions of the property have also held the names Stage Forty-Three and Inner Circle, but it is best known as the former site of the iconic rock club Annie's, which hosted performances in the 1990s and early 2000s of well-known rock acts.

Federal court rejects Trump administration attempt to slow tariff refund process

By PAUL WISEMAN and MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal court on Monday rejected the Trump administration's attempt to slow the process of refunding billions of dollars' worth of tariffs the Supreme Court struck down as illegal last month.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit started the next phase in the refund process by sending it to a lower court to sort out.

In a court filing Friday, Trump's Justice Department had urged the Federal Circuit to proceed cautiously and hold off for 90 days. But the judges refused.

The Supreme Court ruled Feb. 20 that Trump's sweeping tariffs on most countries in the world were illegal, clearing the way for the importers who paid them to seek refunds.

The government had collected more than \$130 billion from the tariffs by mid-December, and could ultimately be on the hook for refunds worth \$175 billion, according to calculations by the Penn Wharton Budget Model.

But the Supreme Court offered no guidance on refunds; its decision did not even mention them. Now the U.S. Court of International Trade in New York will decide how the complicated refund process should proceed.

"I would expect the Court of International Trade to quickly issue an order requesting a status update from the government on their plans with respect to refunds (or expedited briefing)," said trade lawyer Ryan Majerus, a partner at King & Spalding and a former U.S. trade official. "I expect the court to take an aggressive posture, asking the government to justify how they intend to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling."

Siddhartha Rao, a partner at law firm Hoguet Newman Regal & Kenney, said he has been getting a lot of calls from clients with questions.

"We are somewhat in uncharted territory," he said.

The Trump administration has been reaching for new tariffs to replace the ones the Supreme Court struck down.

One question, he said, is how the government might actually pay for these refunds.

"Everyone is sort of cognizant of the fact that it's not like there's over a hundred billion dollars sitting in, you know, in a room somewhere to just cut checks," Rao said. "So, you know, this is a Treasury problem, and it may very well be that the administration is reimposing tariffs for the reasons that it's cited ... it's important for strategic trade agreements and for bargaining power and all of that. But it also might be that they need to raise revenue to pay out refunds."

Iranian drones buzz across the Persian Gulf after their pivotal use by Russia in Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

The distinctive buzz of Iranian-designed drones has become a familiar sound in Ukraine over the past four years. Now, it's increasingly heard across the Persian Gulf as Tehran strikes back with the cheap but effective weapons following the attack by the U.S. and Israel against Iran.

The Shahed drones have made a transformative impact on modern warfare, with Russia sending swarms of the deadly weapons into the skies above Ukraine on nightly missions.

While ballistic and cruise missiles fly much faster and pack a bigger punch, they cost millions and are available only in limited quantities. A Shahed drone costs only tens of thousands of dollars — a tiny fraction of a ballistic missile.

Available in big numbers, the drones have shown their capability to oversaturate air defenses and inflict painful damage at a very low cost.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 66 of 73

The debut in Ukraine

After Russia's botched attempt to capture the Ukrainian capital after its full-scale invasion with tanks, troops and missiles in February 2022, the fighting has turned into a war of attrition that has been increasingly shaped by drones.

While swarms of small drones have played a decisive role on the battlefield, both Russia and Ukraine also have increasingly relied on longer-range drones to attack deep into each other's territory.

After reaching a deal with Tehran to import Shahed drones early in the war — Shahed means "witness" in Farsi — Russia localized their production. Russian engineers have increased its altitude, made it more jamming-resistant and fitted it with more powerful warheads.

The Russian replica of the Shahed — called "Geran," or "geranium" — has been put in production at a plant in the Russian province of Tatarstan that has exponentially increased output. Since then, Russia has battered Ukraine with hundreds of drones in a single night — more than were used during some entire months in 2024.

By using large numbers in a single attack, Moscow's strategists seek to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses and distract them from engaging more expensive cruise and ballistic missiles that Moscow often uses alongside the drones to hit high-value targets.

And while it flies slow at 180 kph (just over 110 mph), it can range as far as 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) and carry a relatively big load of 40 kilograms (88 pounds) of explosives. Ukrainians have dubbed them "mopeds" for their distinctive buzz.

Ukraine has relied on mobile teams armed with machine guns as a low-cost response to the drones to spare using more-expensive Western-supplied air defense missiles. It also has developed interceptor drones and is working to scale up production, but the steady rise in Russian attacks has strained its defenses.

Attacks in the Gulf and beyond

Following the weekend U.S. and Israeli attacks, Iran has struck Israel and also unleashed a barrage of hundreds of missiles and drones on multiple targets in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

They included U.S. bases, ports, airports, oil facilities and oil tankers, as well as some high-rise buildings.

Officials in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates said Sunday that air defenses had dealt with 165 ballistic missiles, two cruise missiles and more than 540 Iranian drones over two days. While officials said they intercepted all air attacks Saturday, debris from the knocked-down weapons sparked blazes at some of Dubai's most iconic locations.

Some Iranian drones flew as far as a U.K. military base in Cyprus. The runway at the Royal Air Force base in Akrotiri was struck by an Iranian drone Sunday, according to U.K. officials, and sirens blared there again Monday when two more drones heading toward the base were intercepted.

State-of-the-art U.S. and Israeli air defense assets have proven efficient in intercepting most of Iran's ballistic missiles launched at Israel. But the attacks using large numbers of cheap drones hit some softer targets lacking the same level of protection.

Patrick Bury, a professor of security issues at the University of Bath, said drones have transformed warfare, thanks to the combination of "the persistent surveillance and the high-precision strike" coupled with improved targeting systems and artificial intelligence.

He noted the Shahed drones can be easily hidden in the back of a truck.

"What's taken people by surprise ... is the ferocity and the scale with which Iran has retaliated this time," compared with its response to the June 2025 U.S. and Israeli attacks, Bury told The Associated Press. "What the U.S. and the Israelis are hoping, I think, and calculating, that they can degrade that enough to basically then take some of the steam out."

Many observers noted the U.S. and its allies could tap the experience that Ukraine gained in dealing with Russian drone attacks.

"Our military must do more ASAP to institutionalize defensive lessons from Ukraine," said Dara Massicot, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment, posting on X.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 67 of 73

Where things stand after the US and Israeli strikes on Iran

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

The United States and Israel targeted Iran in coordinated attacks over the weekend that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and dozens of other senior figures and kicked off a furious Iranian response that was expanding into a wider regional war.

U.S. President Donald Trump said the campaign could take several weeks. Allies of the U.S. pledged to help stop Iran's missile and drone strikes. The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah claimed strikes on Israel for the first time in more than a year, and Israel fired back.

The first U.S. military deaths have been reported. Other deaths have been confirmed in Israel and Gulf nations, while Iran has said several hundred people have been killed there.

With Khamenei's death, the Islamic Republic must now choose a supreme leader for the first time since 1989. Trump has urged Iranians to seize the moment and overthrow the theocracy that cracked down on nationwide protests earlier this year. There was no sign that was happening.

Around the world, some protested. Others cheered.

The attacks came two days after the latest U.S.-Iran talks aimed at putting controls on Tehran's nuclear program. They echoed the events of last year, when talks were cut short by an Israeli attack that led to a 12-day war and U.S. bombing of Iranian nuclear sites. Washington has claimed that Iran was rebuilding its nuclear program in recent months.

Iran has said it hasn't enriched since June, but it has blocked inspectors with the U.N. nuclear watchdog from visiting the sites America bombed.

Here's where things stand.

Iran

The 86-year-old Khamenei was killed when his compound was bombed Saturday morning. Iran's ballistic missile sites, navy headquarters and warships were attacked as well. Iran said strikes also targeted the Natanz nuclear enrichment site. Israel and the U.S. have not acknowledged strikes at the site, though Israel has said it is targeting the "leadership and nuclear infrastructure."

Khamenei had no designated successor. Iran has set up a three-member leadership council, and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said a new supreme leader would be chosen in "one or two days." On the streets, there have been scattered celebrations over Khamenei's death. Internet restrictions in Iran have complicated efforts to monitor what's happening.

In retaliation, Iran's military has struck Israel, where several people have been killed. Iran has also targeted U.S. bases in the region. The U.S. military said four service members were killed, the first known U.S. casualties. Other Iranian strikes have killed a handful of people in Gulf nations including the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, and hundreds of flights have been affected at some of the world's busiest airports.

What to watch for: further military strikes, the selection of a new supreme leader, and reactions from the Iranian people.

United States

The strikes came after the U.S. built up its biggest military presence in the region in decades. Israeli and U.S. authorities spent weeks tracking the movements of senior Iranian leaders. Trump has said the "heavy and pinpoint bombing" in Iran would continue through the week or longer.

The U.S. has signaled it is willing to talk to Iran's new leaders, eventually. Meanwhile, some leaders in Congress have protested at the launch of the strikes without congressional authorization. Others elsewhere raised legal questions.

What to watch for: further military strikes, effects on U.S. bases and forces, and any diplomacy with Iran's new leadership.

Israel

Israel sees Iran as an existential threat and has long sought to end its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, while also targeting armed allied groups like Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israeli attacks have weakened those groups since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that started the war in Gaza.

Now Israel has pledged "nonstop" strikes and at one point said 100 fighter jets were simultaneously strik-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 68 of 73

ing targets in Tehran. During last year's war, Israel pitched Trump a plan to kill Khamenei. Now they have.

Israelis dashed to shelters for safety, but most of Iran's attacks have been intercepted. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, under international criticism for the war in Gaza, is claiming a win for Israel's security.

But risk remains from Iranian-backed groups like the Houthi rebels in Yemen who have vowed to resume attacks on Red Sea shipping routes and on Israel.

What to watch for: further military strikes, as well as attacks by and against Iranian proxies.

The Middle East and beyond

The current conflict is already far more intense than last year's Israel-Iran war, where the U.S. inserted itself near the end by bombing Iranian nuclear sites and Iran responded with a calculated attack on a U.S. military base in Qatar.

Now, hundreds of Iranian missile and drone strikes have sent people scrambling across Gulf nations that had previously been relatively insulated from the volatility in the region.

The United Arab Emirates said Dubai's main airport had been affected, and tourists and others flinched at the booms of interceptors. Saudi Arabia said it intercepted attacks, and summoned Iran's ambassador. Top diplomats of six Gulf states said they had the "right to self-defense." The Gulf state of Qatar said its air force shot down two Iranian bombers.

Oil prices rose sharply when market trading began Sunday as traders bet that supply from the critical region would slow or stop. Attacks on and near the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical oil choke-point, are also raising concerns about supply.

In response, eight countries that are part of the OPEC+ oil cartel said they would boost production of crude.

And on Monday, the world was learning the first details about any effects on Iran's nuclear program as the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors met on the conflict.

What to watch for: oil prices, details on Iran's nuclear program, and diplomatic efforts.

UConn remains unanimous No. 1 in AP Top 25 heading into postseason; followed by UCLA, South Carolina

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

UConn heads into the postseason undefeated and still the unanimous No. 1 choice in The Associated Press women's basketball Top 25.

The Huskies, who have won 47 consecutive games, are 31-0 this season after routing St. John's at Madison Square Garden on Sunday night. It's the 11th time they've headed to the conference tournament undefeated.

They received all 31 first-place votes in Monday's poll from a national media panel.

The top nine teams remained unchanged this week with UCLA, South Carolina and Texas following the Huskies. Vanderbilt and LSU were next followed by Oklahoma, Michigan and Iowa.

TCU replaced Louisville in the top 10 after the Cardinals lost at Notre Dame on Sunday.

North Carolina made the biggest jump, moving up five spots after knocking off Duke on Sunday. The Tar Heels have won four straight.

In and out

Fairfield entered the poll at No. 25 for the second time in three seasons. The Stags are 25-4 this season and tied with Quinnipiac atop the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference standings. They were ranked for three weeks in March at the end of the 2023-24 season. Alabama, which has dropped five of its last six games, fell out of the rankings.

Conference supremacy

The SEC has the most teams in the Top 25 with eight. The Big Ten is next with seven. The Big 12 has four teams, the Atlantic Coast Conference has three and the Ivy League, MAAC and Big East each have one.

Games of the week

The Power Four conferences tournaments begin with numerous potential Top 25 matchups in the Big

Ten and SEC. If seedings hold, No. 5 Vanderbilt will face fourth-ranked Texas in the semifinals with a potential one-seed in the NCAA Tournament on the line. Texas was fourth and Vanderbilt fifth in the NCAA Top 16 reveal on Sunday.

A look at some of the contenders to be Iran's supreme leader after the killing of Khamenei

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

Iran's leaders are scrambling to replace Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who ruled the country for 37 years before he was killed in the surprise U.S. and Israeli bombardment.

It's only the second time since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that a new supreme leader is being chosen. Potential candidates range from hard-liners committed to confrontation with the West to reformists who seek diplomatic engagement.

The supreme leader has the final say on all major decisions, including war, peace and the country's disputed nuclear program.

In the meantime, a provisional governing council composed of President Masoud Pezeshkian, hard-line judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei and senior Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali Reza Arafī is guiding the country through its biggest crisis in decades. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday that a new supreme leader would be chosen early this week.

The supreme leader is appointed by an 88-member panel called the Assembly of Experts, who by law are supposed to quickly name a successor. The panel consists of Shiite clerics who are popularly elected after their candidacies are approved by the Guardian Council, Iran's constitutional watchdog.

Khamenei had major influence over both clerical bodies, making it unlikely the next leader will mark a radical departure.

Here are the top contenders.

Mojtaba Khamenei

The son of Khamenei, a mid-level Shiite cleric, is widely considered a potential successor. He has strong ties to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard but has never held office. His selection could prove awkward, as the Islamic Republic has long criticized hereditary rule and cast itself as a more just alternative.

Ayatollah Ali Reza Arafī

Arafī is a member of the provisional government council. The senior Shiite cleric was handpicked by Khamenei to be a member of the Guardian Council in 2019, and three years later he was elected to the Assembly of Experts. He leads a network of seminaries.

Hassan Rouhani

Rouhani, a relative moderate, was president of Iran from 2013 to 2021 and reached the landmark nuclear agreement with the Obama administration that U.S. President Donald Trump scrapped during his first term. Rouhani served on the Assembly of Experts until 2024, when he said he was disqualified from running for reelection. Rouhani criticized it as an infringement on Iranians' political participation.

Hassan Khomeini

Khomeini is the most prominent grandson of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He is also seen as a relative moderate, but has never held government office. He currently works at his grandfather's mausoleum in Tehran.

Ayatollah Mohammed Mehdi Mirbagheri

Mirbagheri is a senior cleric popular with hard-liners who serves on the Assembly of Experts.

He was close to the late Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi, a fellow hard-liner who wrote that Iran should not deprive itself of the right to produce "special weapons," a veiled reference to nuclear arms.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mirbagheri denounced the closure of schools as a "conspiracy."

He is currently the head of the Islamic Cultural Center in Qom, the main center for Islamic teaching in Iran.

President of Iran's soccer federation says World Cup participation in US is in doubt

By The Associated Press undefined

The president of Iran's soccer federation says he does not know if the national team can play World Cup matches in the United States following the surprise U.S. and Israeli bombardment of his country.

"What is certain is that after this attack, we cannot be expected to look forward to the World Cup with hope," Mehdi Taj told sports portal Varzesh3 as Iran traded strikes with Israel as part of a widening war prompted by the bombardment.

The U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran continued for a second day on Sunday after the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threw the future of the Islamic Republic into uncertainty and raised the risk of regional instability.

Iran has been drawn in Group G at the World Cup and is scheduled to play in Inglewood, California, against New Zealand on June 15 and Belgium on June 21 before finishing the first round against Egypt in Seattle on June 26.

The U.S. is hosting the tournament with Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19.

Fans from Iran were already banned from entering the U.S. in the first iteration of the travel ban announced by the Trump administration.

FIFA did not immediately reply to an email from The Associated Press over the current situation regarding Iran's participation in the World Cup.

A long way from the war, Iran loses its opening Women's Asian Cup game to South Korea

GOLD COAST, Australia (AP) — Zahra Ghanbari and her Iran team stood while their national anthem played at the Women's Asian Cup soccer tournament on Monday, a long way from the war that started on the weekend with a major attack by Israel and the United States.

Before the opening loss against South Korea, Iran head coach Marziyeh Jafari declined to comment on the military strikes or the death of her country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, saying the squad needed to focus on the tournament.

The mood was mostly sombre during the anthem, although there were some smiles to acknowledge supporters at the Gold Coast stadium. And then it was down to the business of football.

South Korea, runners-up at the 2022 Women's Asian Cup, won 3-0 despite the dogged defense of the Iranians anchored by goalkeeper Maryam Yektaei.

The South Koreans had 20 shots in the first half but only led 1-0 at the break on Choe Yu-ri's goal in the 37th minute. She swooped on the rebound when Jang Sel-gi's angled left-foot shot deflected off the post.

Kim Hye-ri converted from the penalty spot in the 59th minute and Ko Yoo-jin finished off the scoring with a well-timed glancing header in the 75th.

"We definitely could have scored a few more — missed a couple of chances — that's something we'll definitely work on in the upcoming trainings," South Korea substitute Casey Phair said. "But I think it was a really good starting point to start the tournament with three points."

Ghanbari, the captain, was substituted off late in regulation. Her team had only 21% of possession in the game and had just three shots at goal compared with 32 for the South Koreans.

A small pocket of Iran fans chanted and waved red, white and green flags, including the pre-Islamic revolution flag.

One of the Iran team's biggest targets at the tournament is to secure a place in the Women's World Cup next year in Brazil, and that will require at least a quarterfinal run in Australia.

Iran will next play tournament host Australia on Thursday at the same venue on the Gold Coast, a beachside tourist destination in Queensland state.

A tournament record crowd of 44,379 attended the opening game in Perth on Sunday to see hometown

star Sam Kerr score in Australia's 1-0 win over Philippines.

After that win, Kerr acknowledged the difficult circumstances for the Iranian team.

"They're young girls and young footballers ... we'll treat the game like any other game and show the team the utmost respect and prepare properly," Kerr told the tournament's Australian TV broadcaster.

Gaza's ceasefire had some momentum. Now, some fear a new war will distract the world

By WAFAA SHURAF, TOQA EZZIDIN and CARA ANNA Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Some Palestinians say they fear the widening war sparked by U.S. and Israeli attacks against Iran could overshadow the fragile situation in Gaza, just over a week after U.S. President Donald Trump rallied billions of dollars in pledges for the territory's reconstruction and tried to nudge a ceasefire forward.

Residents say they are scared of neglect and deprivation, with Israel in the wake of the weekend strikes closing all crossings into their shattered territory of over 2 million people.

COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing civilian affairs in Gaza, has closed crossings into the territory and frozen the entrance and exit of humanitarian workers because, it says, the crossings cannot be safely operated under fire. It said crossings would reopen as soon as the security situation allows.

It said that Palestinians there have enough food stockpiled, though some organizations warned they could soon run out of supplies.

Palestinians told The Associated Press they were rushing to markets, haunted by memories of painful food scarcity last year under months of Israel's blockade. Part of Gaza, around Gaza City, was found to be in famine.

"When the crossings shut down, everything was suspended from the market," said Osamda Hanoda from Khan Younis. "The prices go up, and people live in misery."

Reports show prices of goods rising sharply

The shaky Israel-Hamas ceasefire had led to more humanitarian aid and other supplies entering Gaza, even as the United Nations and aid partners say more of everything from basic medical supplies to fuel is needed.

Now, Palestinians are hoarding again, with reports of prices rising sharply for basic goods such as bags of flour.

"We are afraid of not finding milk" and diapers for the kids, or food and water, said Hassan Zanoun, who was displaced from Rafah.

It was not clear when any crossing might reopen. Israeli authorities focused on Iran, and citizens dashed repeatedly for shelter as sirens wailed.

Ramadan is disrupted

The war in Gaza began with the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and it's been marked from the start by restrictions on people and supplies being allowed into the territory — and terrified people, including medical evacuees in need of treatment, getting out.

A month ago, Gaza's main Rafah border crossing with the outside world — its only crossing not with Israel — reopened, allowing a small and tightly controlled flow of Palestinian traffic in both directions. No cargo was allowed through.

Now all crossings are closed again in the middle of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, a time of chosen deprivation, evening feasts and prayer. Images have shown Palestinians lined up at long tables in the middle of bombed-out debris.

The strikes on Iran shook that routine.

"All the people rushed to markets, and they all wanted to shop and hide," said Abeer Awwad, who was displaced from Gaza City, as word of the explosions in Tehran began to spread.

Under the Oct. 10 U.S.-brokered ceasefire, the heaviest fighting has subsided, though regular Israeli fire continues in Gaza. The U.N. World Food Program has noted progress in the enclave but said in its latest

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 72 of 73

food security analysis last week that hunger remains.

"Households reported an average of two meals per day in February 2026, compared to one meal in July," it said. "Still, one in five households consumed only one meal daily."

The World Central Kitchen, meanwhile, warned that it would run out of supplies this week if Israel kept the strip's crossings closed.

"We need food deliveries every single day to feed hungry families who are not part of this war," José Andrés, the celebrity chef who founded the organization, said in a social media post.

He said WCK provides 1 million meals a day in Gaza, and that the group and others working in war-torn Gaza need food and other supplies every day.

"We cannot wait ... let the humanitarian trucks go through today!" he said.

A challenge for aid groups and others

Refocusing the world's attention on Gaza is a challenge for aid groups and others as Iran scrambles for new leadership and explosions continue in Tehran, Israel and around the Middle East.

Trump has said bombing in Iran could continue through the week or longer.

It's a dramatic turn from Trump's launch less than two weeks ago of his new Board of Peace, a gathering of world leaders that is aimed at ending the war in Gaza but has ambitions of resolving conflicts elsewhere.

Even with that bump in momentum on Gaza, major challenges remain for the ceasefire. They include disarming Hamas, assembling and deploying an international stabilization force, and getting a newly appointed Palestinian committee meant to govern Gaza into the territory.

As the Middle East turns to another war, some Palestinians see a benefit: Israel's military is distracted.

"The good thing is that the sound of booms and demolitions is rare now near the yellow line," said Ahmed Abu Jahl, of Gaza City, speaking about the line dividing Gaza and marking out roughly half the territory controlled by Israeli forces.

"Even the drones, they are still flying overhead, but their number has gone down."

Today in History: March 3, Rodney King beaten by Los Angeles police

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, March 3, the 62nd day of 2026. There are 303 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 3, 1991, motorist Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers after a high-speed chase in a scene captured on amateur video that sparked public outrage. (The subsequent acquittal of four officers of felony assault and other charges in April 1992 triggered days of rioting and dozens of deaths in Los Angeles.)

Also on this date:

In 1845, Florida became a U.S. state.

In 1849, Congress established the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the act creating the National Academy of Sciences.

In 1931, President Herbert Hoover signed a bill making "The Star-Spangled Banner" the national anthem of the United States.

In 1943, in London's East End, 173 people died in a crush of bodies at the Bethnal Green Tube station, which was being used as a wartime air raid shelter.

In 1945, Allied troops fully secured the Philippine capital of Manila from Japanese forces during World War II after a monthlong battle that destroyed much of the city.

In 1969, Apollo 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a mission to test NASA's lunar module.

In 2005, millionaire adventurer Steve Fossett became the first person to fly a plane around the world solo without stopping or refueling, landing in Salina, Kansas, where he took off 67 hours earlier.

In 2022, OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma reached a nationwide settlement over its role in the opioid crisis, with the Sackler family members who own the company boosting their cash contribution to as much

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 271 ~ 73 of 73

as \$6 billion in a deal intended to stanch a flood of lawsuits.

Today's birthdays: Filmmaker George Miller is 81. Singer Jennifer Warnes is 79. Author Ron Chernow is 77. Football Hall of Famer Randy Gradishar is 74. Musician Robyn Hitchcock is 73. Actor Miranda Richardson is 68. Radio personality Ira Glass is 67. Olympic track and field gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey is 64. Rapper-actor Tone Loc is 60. Hockey Hall of Famer Brian Leetch is 58. Actor Julie Bowen is 56. Actor David Faustino is 52. Actor Jessica Biel is 44. Singer Camila Cabello is 29. NBA forward Jayson Tatum is 28.