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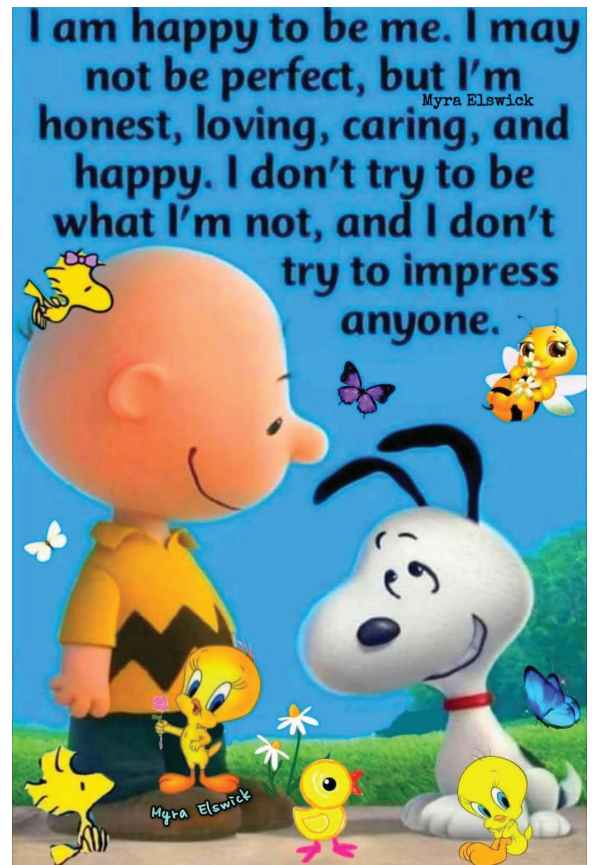
Wednesday, March 4

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

Thursday, March 5

Senior Menu: Hot beef combos, mashed potatoes, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuit.

School Lunch: Chicken tacos, refried beans.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

2nd Grade BB, 5 p.m., elementary gym

4th Grade BB, 6 p.m., HS Gym

GBB SoDak 16

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

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1440

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

US Embassies Close

The US shut embassies in three Gulf countries—Beirut, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia—yesterday amid the ongoing war with Iran. The US State Department encouraged Americans in 14 countries, including nonessential staff in six Gulf embassies, to depart immediately.

The update came as President Donald Trump said US munitions were in hefty supply, potentially allowing the war to continue indefinitely, up from his projected timeline of four to five weeks. Israel, meanwhile, sent ground troops into southern Lebanon after Hezbollah launched rockets in response to US and Israeli strikes in Iran. (Hezbollah, an Iranian-allied militia, pledges allegiance to the country's supreme leader.

Israel has said it destroyed at least 70 of Hezbollah's weapons storage facilities as of this writing and also claims to have killed the group's intelligence chief, among over 50 people reportedly killed. Separately, the Iranian Red Crescent reported a death count of 787 yesterday from the US and Israeli strikes in Iran.

The conflict sent oil prices up as high as 15% as of this writing.

Georgia Father Convicted

Colin Gray, the father of a teenager accused of killing four people at a Georgia high school in 2024, was convicted yesterday of 27 counts, including second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter. He faces up to 180 years in prison.

Prosecutors said Gray gave his son a semiautomatic rifle and ammunition as a Christmas gift in 2023, ignoring warnings about the teen's mental health and fixation on school shootings and failing to secure the weapon. His son, then 14, allegedly carried the rifle onto a school bus in a book bag before opening fire on Sept. 4, 2024, killing students Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, and teachers Richard Aspinwall and Cristina Irimie, and wounding nine others. His son is awaiting trial.

The news marks the first US conviction of an alleged school shooter's parent for murder. A Michigan couple previously received involuntary manslaughter sentences, while parents in Wisconsin and Texas face related felony charges.

Injectable 'Satellite' Livers

Engineers have developed an injectable liver cell mixture that can temporarily take over for a failing liver, according to a study published yesterday. The breakthrough could revolutionize long-term liver disease treatment and extend how long patients are able to wait for a donor organ.

Tests on mice showed how the liver cell mixture forms connections with nearby blood vessels when injected into fat tissue, forming a sort of satellite liver. Over time, blood vessels began to grow around the satellite liver, supplying the injected liver cells with the nutrients they needed to perform basic functions throughout the entire eight-week study. When operating optimally, the human liver plays a role in about 500 essential functions, such as removing bacteria from the bloodstream and metabolizing drugs.

The study comes as hospitals grapple with a shortage of organ donors. Roughly 20% of Americans waiting for a liver transplant die each year; currently, over 10,000 patients are on the waitlist.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Game of Thrones" movie is in development with Warner Bros. "House of Cards" showrunner and "Andor" screenwriter Beau Willimon.

The Guess Who's founding guitarist Randy Bachman and singer-keyboardist Burton Cummings announce first US tour in over two decades, nearly two years after regaining band name and property in copyright lawsuit.

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Christina Applegate, 54, publishes memoir "You With the Sad Eyes," reflecting on acting career and battles with abuse, breast cancer, and multiple sclerosis.

Bad Bunny's Super Bowl performance amassed nearly 4.2 billion views across platforms within 24 hours, a new global viewership record.

Science & Technology

Martian microorganisms tucked inside asteroid debris can likely survive interplanetary travel, scientists conclude after testing a comparable Chilean desert bacterium under extreme conditions.

Macaque monkey species with higher social tolerance have a larger amygdala—a brain structure responsible for social and emotional processing; finding differs from previous studies that primarily link the amygdala to aggressive behaviors.

Google to release Chrome web browser update every two weeks starting in September as competition stiffens with AI-powered browsers from OpenAI, Perplexity, and others; updates are currently released every four weeks.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.9%, Dow -0.8%, Nasdaq -1.0%) as concerns about the US' war with Iran persist.

Target shares close up 6.8% after posting better-than-expected fourth quarter earnings and announcing positive February year-over-year sales.

Pinterest shares rise 9.3% after activist investor Elliott Investment Management boosts stake by \$1B to help fund \$3.5B share buyback.

Intel board chair Frank Yeary to retire in May after serving on board since 2009 and as chair since 2023; tech executive Craig Barratt named next chair.

Politics & World Affairs

Incumbent Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) head to May runoff in Texas' Republican Senate primary; Rep. Jasmine Crockett (D, TX-30) and state Rep. James Talarico (D) locked in tight race for Democratic nomination as of this writing.

Small plane makes emergency landing in New York's Hudson River after reporting engine issues; pilot and passenger swim through icy water to safety, are hospitalized with minor injuries.

Clashes continue between Afghanistan and Pakistan; Pakistan claims death toll surpasses 60 people as of this writing, most of them Afghan soldiers; Afghanistan denies these numbers, and claims they killed four Pakistani soldiers.

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2025-2026 NEC Boys Basketball All-Conference Teams



Athlete	YR	School	PPG	RPG	APG	SPG	BLK	FG%	3FG%	FT%	
Jackson Wadsworth	SR	Hamlin	20.9	5.2	4.2	1.8	-	55.9%	43.8%	85.5%	1st Team
Sully Felberg	SO	Clark/Willow Lake	15.6	7	2.2	1	22	51%	30%	78%	
Boden Stevenson	JR	Hamlin	17.2	6	5.1	1.6	-	51.6%	39.2%	45%	
Karson Zak	SO	Groton Area	13.4	4.6	4.9	1.8	6	54%	38%	72%	
Ryder Johnson	SR	Groton Area	16.4	5.7	2.9	0.6	4	47%	30%	71%	
Chris Bevers	JR	Clark/Willow Lake	14.3	6	2	2.6	4	47%	33%	69%	2nd Team
Emmerson Larson	SR	Clark/Willow Lake	11.7	4.2	1.5	2.6	5	58%	39%	68%	
Keegen Tracy	SR	Groton Area	11.3	2.9	3	1.2	2	52%	38%	70%	
Derrick Flute	SO	Sisseton	15.1	6.3	1.3	0.8	14	43%	30%	63%	
Gage Sippel	SR	Groton Area	10.7	7.5	1.2	0.5	38	63%	-	67%	
Sam Rick	JR	Milbank	12.9	4.2	2.1	0.8	0	42.1%	35.3%	58.8%	3rd Team
Bo Begeman	JR	Clark/Willow Lake	9.2	6.3	1.6	1.1	15	41%	20%	64%	
Troy Jenson	SR	Deuel	14.5	4.5	2.3	1.9	4	41%	30.7%	73.2%	
Matt Mount	SR	Webster Area	13.8	4	1.4	1.2	3	37.8%	28.4%	66.7%	
Lincoln Holscher	SO	Milbank	12	6	1.2	0.9	14	47.2%	38.1%	62.2%	

2025-2026 NEC Player of the Year: Jackson Wadsworth, Hamlin

Conde National League

March 3 Team Standings: Stooges 30, Cubs 26, Pirates 23, Mets 22, Giants 22, Braves 21

Men's High Games: Dalton Locke 186, Chad Furney 182, Austin Schuelke 175

Men's High Series: Dalton Locke 467, Chad Furney 460, Butch Farmen 458

Women's High Games: Sam Bahr 184, Michelle Johnson 177, Vickie Kramp 172

Women's High Series: Sam Bahr 462, Michelle Johnson 458, Suzie Easthouse 454



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2-Person: \$59.78 per month
Family: \$72.43 per month
Senior/PT: \$20 per month



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Groton City Council hears waste complaint, approves summer hired and scoreboard donation

By Elizabeth Varin

The City Council addressed a wide range of issues during its Tuesday meeting, from responding to a resident's complaint involving the city's contracted waste management provider to making key personnel decisions and taking action on several facility-related matters, closing the evening with multiple hires, approvals and accepted resignations.

At the beginning of the meeting, the council heard from the owner of Heartland Waste Management, the company that the city contracts with for waste management service, following behavior by one of its employees that drew a resident complaint.

The complaint centers on an incident in which a worker threw a trash can lid at a home while picking up garbage from the property. Addressing the council, resident Mackenzie Barse said the situation was not isolated, referencing a separate incident in August 2024 when an employee approached her house after getting into a verbal altercation with a co-worker outside the residence.

Kent Mauck, owner of Heartland Waste Management, told council members he had instructed the employee involved in the earlier dispute to apologize to the homeowner, which is why the worker went to the door. He added that the employee involved in the recent lid-throwing incident was reprimanded, but Mauck went back and forth between defending his employees because of what they have to deal with and praising the community for its kindness.

"But if we did something wrong, we don't run from it," he said. "And we did something wrong by throwing that lid."

Council members said the incidents mentioned seemed like isolated situations, but those incidents have caused rifts that have led to Barse not wanting garbage picked up at her house anymore. Mauck said he could tell his crew to bypass the house.

Councilman Mike Shilhanek replied, "I don't think they want it bypassed. They want it done right."

Mauck said he will speak with the employees and told Barse he will reach out in about a week to see how things are going.

Councilman Kevin Nehls told Barse to reach out to the city if something does come up again.

In addition to addressing the waste management complaint, the council moved through a full agenda of personnel and facilities matters Tuesday evening.

Council members approved hiring a swath of seasonal summer recreation employees.

The following people were hired at Tuesday's meeting:

- Kami Lipp and Tricia Keith were hired as co-managers of the swimming pool. Lipp has 15 years of experience and Keith has 14 years of experience.
- Cody Swanson was hired as a lifeguard, 10 years of experience.
- Tanae Lipp was hired as a lifeguard, 8 years of experience.
- Karla Pasteur was hired as a lifeguard, 14 years of experience.
- Gretchen Dinger was hired as a lifeguard, 4 years of experience.
- Avery Crank was hired as a lifeguard, 2 years of experience.
- Talli Wright was hired as a lifeguard, 4 years of experience.
- Abby Fjeldheim was hired as a lifeguard, 1 year of experience.
- Wesley Borg was hired as a lifeguard with no previous experience listed.
- Samuel Crank was hired as a lifeguard, 1 year of experience.
- Hannah Sandness was hired as a lifeguard, 3 years of experience.
- Rylie Rose was hired as a lifeguard, 1 year of experience.
- Carly Gilbert was hired as a lifeguard, 3 years of experience.
- Kinsley Rowen was hired as a lifeguard, 1 year of experience.
- Sydney Locke was hired as a lifeguard, 1 year of experience.

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- Ashlynn Warrington was hired as a lifeguard, 2 years of experience.
- Laila Roberts was hired as a lifeguard, 3 years of experience
- Jerica Locke was hired as a lifeguard, 3 years of experience.
- Kelli Hanson was hired as a lifeguard, 14 years of experience.
- Rylen Ekern was hired as a lifeguard, with no previous experience listed.
- Libby Cole was hired as a lifeguard, 1 year of experience.
- Jayden Schwan was hired as a lifeguard, 3 years of experience.

The council told city staff to reach out to swimming pool manager applicant Katherine Hansen to offer a position of lifeguard.

The council also hired a handful for baseball/softball work.

- Kyle Gerlach was hired as 14U Legion coach, 1 year of experience.
- Amanda Bisbee was hired as both U18 and U14 softball coach.
- Reilly Ketterling was hired as U12 softball coach, 3 years of experience.
- Sydney Kurtz was hired as U10 softball coach, as well as day softball coach
- Lincoln Krause was hired as day baseball coach.
- Gavin Englund was hired as
- Nicholas Groeblichhoff was hired as groundskeeper.
- Alex Abeln was hired as groundskeeper.
- Donavn Block was hired as groundskeeper.
- Braeden Flihs was hired as a groundskeeper.
- Lincoln Krause was hired as a gatekeeper.
- Troy Lindberg was hired as a groundskeeper.
- Amelia Ewalt was hired as a gatekeeper.
- Tenley Frost was hired as a gatekeeper.

The council held off on hiring a junior legion coach. The council also asked staff offer the U8 softball coach position to day softball coach applicant Neely Althoff.

The final hires for the summer include Aaron Severson (hired as a public works caretaker/park caretaker), Brian Gravatt as a cemetery caretaker, and Dustin Cooper as a part-time cemetery caretaker.

Council approves donation of old scoreboard

The council approved donating the city's old baseball scoreboard to the Groton baseball/softball foundation. Foundation representatives plan to use the existing board to help offset the cost of installing a new scoreboard at the field.

Council members also revisited a bid to repaint the exterior of City Hall/ Wage Memorial Library but ultimately chose to hold off on taking action.

The council reviewed a third bid from Custer Custom Homes. The business owner said he is willing to take a financial hit in order to get his name out around the region, Douglas Heinrich, city finance officer, said. The previous bid totaled \$44,000, but the business owner dropped the bid to \$21,000.

Council members hesitated over the latest bid.

Councilman Brian Bahr questioned the big drop in bid price. He doesn't think the city needs to take action right now, adding council members would reach out should they have any other questions.

The meeting concluded with the council accepting resignations of Landon Johnson, electric lineman, as well as Councilman Jason Wambach, who is moving to Aberdeen.

- Darrell Hillestad told the council about recent work at the airport north of town. The old concession stand that used to sit at the baseball/softball complex was moved out there late last year, and work has been continuing to improve the facility. Hillestad said he would like to have a council meeting up there in April to show them what has been done out there so far. Hillestad also told the council about an upcoming fundraiser/raffle set to take place April 4 at the Legion.



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<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota governor to decide on abortion ban exceptions, prenatal development education

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

The South Dakota Senate passed bills addressing abortion and required education in prenatal development for K-12 students on Tuesday. The bills will now head to the governor's desk.

House Bill 1257 would spell out that several pregnancy-related treatments are not abortions, including treatment to resolve a miscarriage, treatment or removal of an ectopic pregnancy, removal of a deceased unborn child, and medical treatment that unintentionally results in the loss of the pregnancy.

The bill is a response to what supporters call "misinformation" about what is allowed under South Dakota's abortion ban. South Dakota lawmakers adopted a trigger ban in 2005 that took effect in 2022, after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Abortions are prohibited "unless there is appropriate and reasonable medical judgment that performance of an abortion is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant female."

Some abortion rights advocates have since said the wording of the exception could discourage doctors from administering necessary care for pregnancy complications.

In 2024, the South Dakota Legislature passed, and former Gov. Kristi Noem signed, a law to require the state Department of Health to create a video clarifying the state's abortion ban exception and how it should be applied. That video did little to quell concerns from abortion rights advocates, who described it as ambiguous and not legally binding.

Sen. Tamara Grove, R-Lower Brule, called HB 1257 a "clarity bill."

"Let's end some of this misinformation so South Dakota women know that they can be provided for and cared for in case of a miscarriage," Grove said.

No other lawmakers spoke in support or against the legislation on the Senate floor. Opponents earlier in the legislative session included the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, South Dakota chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the South Dakota State Medical Association. The bill passed with a 31-2 vote.

The other bill that passed the Senate on Tuesday was House Bill 1313, which would require the state's public schools to show students "age-appropriate and research-based" videos about prenatal development. The bill passed in a 31-3 vote.

The videos must be at least three minutes long and cannot include information from groups that perform or promote abortion, or are affiliated with a group that does so. Opposition to the bill earlier in the legislative session included advocates from the South Dakota Education Association, School Administrators of South Dakota and the South Dakota chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

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 block 'rights of a parent' measure

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A bill on parental rights failed in the House of Representatives Tuesday over concerns about health care and child abuse.

Lawmakers voted 35-30 Monday to defeat the bill, and a reconsideration attempt failed Tuesday. The state Senate passed the bill 19-15 last month.

The legislation, brought by Sen. Tamara Grove, R-Lower Brule, would have codified a parent's right to "direct the upbringing" and "moral and religious training" of their child.

Rep. John Hughes, R-Sioux Falls, was among the bill's supporters in the House of Representatives.

"The problem today is that we have medicine and education that is postured to divide the child from the parents," said Hughes. "I think it's time that we provide that the law requires otherwise."

Opponents raised concerns about protecting abusive and neglectful parents and inadvertently criminalizing coaches and teachers.

Parents' rights might override concerns voiced by a mandatory reporter, Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt said, in reference to people professions such as teaching who are required by law to report abuse. Families sometimes frequently move to conceal abuse, Rehfeldt said.

"If there's any doubt in any of our minds that this bill passage would enable a parent to put that abuse on their child," she said, "we can't pass it."

One provision would have required "consent before any state agency or political subdivision of this state makes a video or audio recording of the minor child," with exceptions for legal processes and public spaces.

The section doesn't account for teachers who lead remote learning sessions or assign video or audio projects, or for coaches who use video to track athletes' progress, said Rep. John Shubeck, R-Beresford.

"It just concerns me that well-meaning teachers will get in trouble," Shubeck said. "I like giving the parents the ability to monitor what their kids are being taught, I'm just concerned about myself and others getting inadvertently swept up into breaking the law."

Representatives with the Department of Social Services, Attorney General's Office and South Dakota State Medical Association were among the more than a dozen opponents to the bill in a House committee last week.

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.

'Carbon is dead,' along with the bill to make carbon pipelines file an environmental study

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

A panel of South Dakota senators defeated a state lawmaker's second attempt to require environmental impact studies for carbon dioxide pipelines.

Sioux Falls Republican Rep. John Hughes' first attempt last year failed in the House on a 37-32 vote. This year's version, House Bill 1173, cleared the House 44-22 last month.

The Senate Commerce and Energy Committee dashed Hughes' hopes for a Senate floor vote with a 5-3 vote to defeat the bill on Tuesday.

The bill is one of many filed in recent years in response to a proposal from Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions to build a five-state pipeline through eastern South Dakota. The project would capture carbon dioxide from ethanol plants and sequester it underground in North Dakota to capitalize on federal tax credits that incentivize the prevention of heat-trapping emissions from entering the atmosphere.

Hughes argued that an environmental impact statement is a more accessible way to learn how a project might affect the environment than can be found in other public filings from the Public Utilities Commission,

providing needed transparency.

"When you're not allowed to look under the bed, you assume a monster's under there," Hughes said.

Opponents argued that the bill was unnecessary.

Last year, lawmakers and Gov. Larry Rhoden adopted a law banning carbon pipelines from using eminent domain, a legal process for obtaining land access when landowners are unwilling to grant it. That law, alongside fierce continued opposition from many landowners, has led some to conclude the Summit pipeline won't be built through the state.

"Carbon is dead" in South Dakota, electric utility lobbyist Steve Willard told the committee.

Opponents also said state regulators' current process is already robust and transparent. They noted that the commission can already choose to require an environmental impact statement.

The "simple answer" on whether an environmental impact statement would make a difference in the regulatory process was "no," Public Utilities Commissioner Chris Nelson said.

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.

South Dakota lawmakers defeat app store age verification proposal

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

A state Senate panel has declined to advance a bill that would have required mobile app stores operating in South Dakota to use age verification to restrict app downloads by minors.

House Bill 1275 passed the House of Representatives on a 50-17 vote last month but was defeated in the Senate State Affairs Committee, 5-4. Had it passed, mobile app stores would have been required to verify a person's age, get parental approval for app downloads by minors, and to list age ratings for apps.

Sioux Falls Republican Sen. Sue Peterson is one of the bill's sponsors.

"Kids cannot sign contracts," Peterson said. "This is how we operate in the real world, and we should operate that way in the digital world as well."

The bill's supporters said digital stores are a gateway to the harmful content minors may find on apps. The stores typically already have the customer credit card information needed to verify that a person is 18 or older, the bill's supporters argued, making them better positioned to regulate access than app developers.

Supporters included Family Voice Action, the South Dakota Attorney General's office, Concerned Women for America, and the South Dakota Catholic Conference.

But, app stores already offer extensive parental control features, said Doug Abraham, a lobbyist for The App Association. He also said the bill makes app stores liable for the harm done by apps.

That argument resonated for Senate Majority Leader Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre.

"If an app developer or a website is producing things that are harmful to children, then they ought to be the ones verifying the age and making sure that it's not being provided to children," Mehlhaff said.

Mehlhaff was part of a 2024 Study Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Regulation of Internet Access by Minors. The group voted to draft legislation that would have required app stores to take "commercially reasonable and technically feasible steps" to determine or estimate a user's age and to require those younger than 16 to get a parent's permission before downloading apps to mobile devices. The group ultimately scrapped the proposal in favor of a bill requiring pornographic websites to verify users' ages.

That bill was passed last year and signed into law by Gov. Larry Rhoden.

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

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Midterm elections kick off, with primaries in Texas, North Carolina, Arkansas

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

Voting concludes Tuesday in the first primaries of the 2026 midterm elections in Arkansas, North Carolina and Texas.

The results will provide a glimpse into voters' mood as the primary season opens and give a sense of what type of candidate appeals to each party's base. Crucially, the rapid succession of primary contests through September determines who will battle to control Congress in the last two years of the presidency of Donald Trump, whose figure casts a large shadow over Tuesday's races.

Republicans now control the U.S. Senate with 53 seats. Republican senators in each of the three states holding primaries Tuesday show three different approaches to navigating Washington in the age of Trump:

Tom Cotton of Arkansas is a stalwart Trump defender whom the president has endorsed. Cotton is expected to easily win his primary in a state the Republican is projected to carry in November.

Texas' John Cornyn has amassed a Trump-friendly voting record, but the former state Supreme Court justice's style evokes a pre-Trump establishment Republican. He is locked in a tight race with state Attorney General Ken Paxton, a brash culture warrior more in line with Trump's MAGA movement.

And in North Carolina, Thom Tillis is retiring rather than seeking reelection after opposing Trump on key legislation and nominees. Former state Republican Chair Michael Whatley is likely to take Tillis' spot as the GOP candidate in a general election toss-up race that Democrats see as a must-win to have any chance of winning the Senate majority.

Establishment vs. MAGA in Texas GOP race

In Texas, spirited races for each party's nominee for a U.S. Senate seat chart different possibilities for November. Cornyn and Paxton are likely headed for a May runoff, with a third candidate, U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt, polling in the low double digits.

Trump visited Texas on Friday but has not made an endorsement in the race, which some see as another front in the internal GOP struggle between MAGA acolytes and establishment figures.

"You're definitely seeing, I think, the last gasp battle for Texas Republican establishment figures," University of Houston political scientist Brandon Rottinghaus told States Newsroom in a phone interview. "John Cornyn is among the last of those, and if he doesn't survive, then it's a very strong signal that the party shifted in a very different direction."

Cornyn, the former No. 2 Republican in the Senate, is seeking his fifth term. He made a bid in 2024 to replace Kentucky's Mitch McConnell as party leader in the chamber, but finished as the runner-up to John Thune of South Dakota.

The pugilistic Paxton, who was impeached on bribery charges and has dealt with accusations of infidelity during a messy public divorce, represents a more Trump-aligned candidate. Democrats and Cornyn-aligned groups believe his scandals could hurt his chances in the general election, but the Republican base may be more likely to turn out for him.

"Paxton is vulnerable because of his ethical conundrums, but John Cornyn doesn't exactly inspire either Republicans or independents to rush out and vote," Rottinghaus said. "These are just sort of all the liabilities that are baked into candidates, and voters will have to make a choice about what they're willing to trade off."

Competition drives turnout for Texas Dems

Democrats need to net four seats nationally to flip the Senate. Though Texas will be a difficult win for Democrats, who have not prevailed in a statewide race since 1994, it is improbable that they can regain the Senate majority without victory in the Lone Star State.

Two Democrats with widely different styles, U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett and state Rep. James Talarico, have both raised enough money to mount credible campaigns while capturing national attention.

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The race between Crockett, a combative attorney, and Talarico, a milder former teacher, has broken turnout records during early voting.

That can partly be attributed to the party faithful's intense opposition to Trump, but it is more likely due to the perception that the contest is a close one.

The race between Crockett, a Black woman, and Talarico, a white man, has turned somewhat ugly in the closing weeks, exposing racial divides in the party.

But voter dissatisfaction with unified GOP control in Washington, D.C., could make either candidate competitive in the general election, especially if Texas Republicans choose the further right candidate, Democratic strategist Rodell Mollineau said.

"Should voters cast out John Cornyn, Democrats have a shot there," Mollineau, a co-founder and partner with D.C.-based strategy firm Rokk Solutions, said. "It's a credible shot. It's not a guarantee. It's not a slam dunk. But I think that there's a window and there's an opening, given the mood of the country, the state of the economy."

North Carolina and Arkansas

The primary for North Carolina's U.S. Senate seat, held by the retiring Tillis, likely will be far less explosive than in Texas.

Former Gov. Roy Cooper is a near-lock to be the Democratic nominee.

Whatley, who was endorsed by Trump and Thune and has raised more than the rest of the Republican field combined with \$5.2 million, is seen as the frontrunner on the Republican side. Don Brown, a former U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General officer, raised the second-most among Republicans with \$146,000.

In Arkansas, Cotton is expected to coast to victory in the Republican primary. He will face the winner of the Democratic contest between Lewisville Mayor Ethan Dunbar and farmer Hallie Shoffner.

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

Reduced-price school meal funding heads to South Dakota Senate

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — South Dakota families who qualify for reduced-price school meals could get those meals for free if the state Senate backs and Gov. Larry Rhoden signs a bill endorsed by a panel of lawmakers Tuesday.

The Senate Education Committee voted 5-2 to advance House Bill 1082. The bill passed the House of Representatives 46-20.

If the bill becomes law, school districts could no longer charge students for breakfast or lunch if their families qualify for reduced-price meals under federal income guidelines. The state's Department of Education would reimburse districts for the money they currently charge for reduced-price meals.

"We mandate attendance in our schools, and we fund every other component of the education system, because we recognize that learning requires basic conditions," said bill sponsor Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls. "Nutrition during the school day is one of those conditions."

Students in the reduced-price program currently pay 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch. The rest of the cost is covered by the federal government, which also covers the cost of free meals for students whose families meet stricter income limits.

More than a third of the state's public school students receive free or reduced-price school meals, according to the South Dakota Department of Education.

"There are bills every year that come before us to ask for more money than for more books or better curriculum or better schools or whatever," said Sen. Stephanie Sauder, R-Bryant. "This is so basic."

Supporters of the bill said students can feel distracted when they're hungry throughout the school day, or may feel embarrassed when there isn't enough money in their lunch account to cover a meal.

Some families incur debt throughout a school year, said Coy Sasse, the chief financial officer for Rapid City Area Schools. His district sent some of those debts to collections, but the debts aren't always paid.

"You all have the opportunity not only to serve the students of our state and provide for a basic human need that allows them to maximize their educational experience," he told the committee, "but also provide a layer of revenue and financial stability for districts in a very challenging economic environment."

Sen. Lauren Nelson, R-Yankton, cast one of the two votes against the bill. She said community partners can step in to cover unpaid balances on reduced price-school meals.

"Get out there and find those stakeholders in your community who have the resources to provide the funding to do this," Nelson said.

Wittman has proposed similar legislation for the past three years, including bills targeted specifically for students who are on reduced-price meal plans in 2024 and 2025. In 2023, she pushed to make school lunches free for all students in the state, which would have been a nearly \$40 million funding increase for the Department of Education.

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.

Iran war drives gas price uncertainty ahead of busy summer season

BY: DAVID LIGHTMAN

The national average price of a gallon of regular gasoline topped \$3 Tuesday for the first time this year, and is expected to keep going up.

The average price Tuesday was \$3.11, up about 11 cents from Monday, according to AAA.

"The pump reaction is not only underway — it's accelerating," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy, which tracks prices.

Increases were already on tap even before Saturday's U.S.-Israel strikes at Iran, as warmer weather usually means more demand and refiners start producing a summer-blend product.

But the attack adds new, powerful momentum to the price surge. The war makes it tough to forecast how long any increases will last or how big they could be. Recent experience does offer some hope that any big spike won't last.

"While oil markets continue to react to potential tensions in the Middle East, history has shown that the price increases are temporary and quickly fall back," said Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist and principal at the consulting firm RSM US, on his Real Economy Blog.

President Donald Trump, speaking at a news conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Tuesday, sought to justify the strikes and said any price hikes would be temporary.

"People felt it's something that had to be done," he said. "So if we have a little high oil prices for a little while, but as soon as this ends, those prices are going to drop, I believe, lower than even before."

Immediate market reaction

The market reaction to the Iran war so far has been swift.

Brent crude oil, considered the global standard, topped \$80 a barrel early Monday, up from the low 70s last week.

Some analysts saw prices having the potential to go as high as \$100 a barrel.

"The forecasts are wide-ranging from over \$100/barrel to lower prices this week on new Iraqi oil hitting the market," said Matt McCall, founder of NXT Wave Research, an investment and market analysis firm, in a tweet. "I see a spike to start the week...and then it depends on the longevity of the war. A quick war and oil does not stay elevated. What is almost certain is volatility."

The surge in oil prices fueled an overall slide in U.S. stock markets Tuesday, with the Dow Jones Industrial

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Average down nearly 2% around midday.

Prices up across states

The increases were felt in state after state Tuesday, according to the AAA gasoline price survey. The nation's lowest gasoline prices tend to be in the South, from roughly Mississippi to Texas. The price of a gallon of regular in Oklahoma, the least expensive of any state, was \$2.62 Tuesday, up from about \$2.47 Monday.

Other changes in the lowest price states:

Mississippi: \$2.64 Tuesday, \$2.55 Monday.

Kansas: \$2.70 Tuesday, \$2.57 Monday.

Arkansas: \$2.70 Tuesday, \$2.61 Monday.

Louisiana: \$2.72 Tuesday, \$2.58 Monday.

Tennessee: \$2.72 Tuesday, \$2.61 Monday.

Kentucky: \$2.73 Tuesday, \$2.63 Monday.

Texas: \$2.74 Tuesday, \$2.62 Monday.

The highest-priced gasoline tended to be in Western states. California has in recent years topped the price chart, and did again Tuesday at \$4.67 per gallon, up about 1.7 cents a gallon from Monday.

California's higher prices are the result of several special factors. It has tough environmental standards, and the state has more trouble compensating for refinery shutdown from interstate pipelines.

It's more difficult for California to make up refinery shortages from interstate pipelines because of its location.

Other Western states have localized reasons prices stay high, and they tended to be less volatile because of the strikes. Some of the higher state averages Tuesday:

Hawaii: \$4.40 Tuesday, \$4.38 Monday.

Washington: \$4.38 Tuesday, \$4.37 Monday.

Oregon: \$3.95 Tuesday, \$3.92 Monday.

Nevada: \$3.73 Tuesday, \$3.70 Monday.

Future prices uncertain

The future path of prices depends on some huge unknowns. The biggest could involve the fate of the Strait of Hormuz, where the Iranians can exercise control. One-fifth of the world's oil passed through there in 2024, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The strait is "one of the world's most important oil chokepoints," EIA said. Iranian officials said Tuesday the strait is closed, CNBC reported.

Most Iranian oil goes to China. Canada is the top importer of U.S. oil, followed by Mexico and Saudi Arabia, according to EIA. The U.S. sells more oil than it imports.

A prolonged change in Strait of Hormuz activity, or even the threat of change, is arguably already affecting oil prices.

"Even without a sustained blockade, the new risk of closure is already changing behavior," De Haan said. He listed ship rerouting, war-risk insurance premiums going up and "freight markets bracing for significant cost increases."

Bottom line, he said: "Most drivers should prepare for gradual increases this week."

David Lightman has been a reporter or editor for more than 50 years. He's worked for the Hagerstown (Md.) Morning Herald, Riverside (Calif.) Press Enterprise, and then 10 years at the Baltimore Evening Sun, covering local news and, for six years, state government and the legislature. He spent 23 years as the Hartford Courant's Washington Bureau Chief, and 18 years at McClatchy's Washington bureau, where he covered the White House and Congress. He also served as regional editor, supervising the bureau's seven regional reporters. He was president of Washington's Gridiron Club in 2018 and won the David Lynch award for regional reporting in 2007.

Tillis, more Republicans unload on Noem over Minneapolis operation, FEMA delays

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Republicans on the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee mounted unusually blunt criticisms of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem during a tense five-hour hearing Tuesday, with North Carolina's Thom Tillis threatening to obstruct the chamber's business if Noem did not answer questions from his office about immigration enforcement.

Tillis even revisited a book written by Noem in which she famously detailed shooting a pet dog as well as a goat, comparing her actions in that instance with drawing too-hasty conclusions in the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens by immigration agents in Minneapolis.

The oversight hearing was Noem's first appearance on Capitol Hill since the months-long immigration enforcement surge in Minneapolis, during which agents of her department killed the two citizens and the surge was later scaled back amidst a national uproar.

Tillis, a Republican who is retiring rather than seeking reelection this year, focused his critique on Noem's handling of immigration, while other GOP members raised separate concerns. At times, he raised his voice.

"We expect exceptional leadership and you've demonstrated anything but that," Tillis said. "What we've seen is a disaster under your leadership. What we've seen is innocent people getting detained that turn out are American citizens."

He castigated Noem for not admitting her mistake in labeling Renee Good, a poet and mother of three, and Alex Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse, as domestic terrorists. Good and Pretti both died in January from gunshots fired by federal immigration agents.

Tillis called for Noem's resignation, and threatened that if she did not answer multiple questions submitted by his office, he would hold up en bloc nominations that come to the floor and deny quorum in Senate committees. Tillis' absence from committee markups could grind those panels' work to a halt, pausing nominations and party line bills.

Democrats on the panel questioned Noem about the Minneapolis operation, racial profiling by immigration officers that has led to the arrests of U.S. citizens, and whether immigration agents will be at polling locations in the midterm elections.

Noem largely stood by her decisions, and, when she was grilled by senators about the aggressive tactics by her immigration agent, she pivoted to the families behind her, known as angel families, who have had loved ones killed by an immigrant in the country without legal authorization.

"These poor angel families behind me will never have their children again, that's one of my motivations every day," Noem said.

Republicans John Kennedy of Louisiana and Josh Hawley of Missouri quizzed Noem on a \$220 million advertising contract and the slow response from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for reimbursements and disaster assistance.

The dog and the goat

Tillis did not ask Noem any questions. Instead, for his full 10 minutes allocated for questions, he said he was giving her a "performance review," during which he expressed multiple frustrations.

He criticized her handling of the operation in Minnesota.

"The fact that you can't admit to a mistake, which looks like, under investigation, is going to prove that Miss Good and Mr. Pretti probably should not have been shot in the face and in the back," Tillis said.

After Pretti's death, President Donald Trump instructed Tom Homan, the White House border czar who reports directly to the president and operates outside of DHS' chain of command, to take over operations in Minneapolis.

Tillis told Noem that he read her book, in which she details how she shot and killed a 14-month-old dog named Cricket for bad behavior. She also revealed she killed a goat for similar reasons.

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"You decided to kill that dog because you had not invested the appropriate time and training, and then you have the audacity to go into a book and say it's a leadership lesson about tough choices," Tillis said. He also took issue with the goat.

"If you don't castrate a goat, they behave badly," he said.

Research indicates that neutering a goat can lead to lower testosterone levels and mellow out an aggressive goat.

"My point is, those are bad decisions made in the heat of the moment, not unlike what happened up in Minneapolis," he said, referring to how quick Noem was to label Pretti and Good as domestic terrorists.

Slow FEMA relief

Tillis pointed to how a policy Noem started at FEMA, in which she must personally approve any contract that is more than \$100,000, has led to delay in his state that is still reeling from Hurricane Helene in 2024.

"This is what incompetent FEMA leadership looks like," he said. "People are hurting in western North Carolina from the most significant storm they've ever experienced."

Tillis said Noem had "failed at FEMA" and that he believes she is violating the Homeland Security Act of 2002 that he said "expressly prohibits the secretary of Homeland Security from restricting or diverting FEMA resources from the agency's mission."

Hawley also brought up an issue with FEMA.

He said following multiple deadly tornadoes in his state, FEMA was helping fund debris removal. Local officials have estimated roughly 10,000 homes qualify for the removal aid, but "some of the conditions that have been placed on the funds by FEMA mean that only (100) or 200 homes out of those 10,000 can actually get access to FEMA debris removal funds."

Noem said she would work with his office to address that issue.

Advertising contract

Kennedy questioned Noem about her decision to award a no-bid contract for her ad campaign that costs \$220 million. A ProPublica investigation found that Noem awarded the contract to the husband of former DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin.

"Look, we all have friends who are qualified, I'm not quibbling with that," Kennedy said. "It troubles me, ... a quarter of a billion dollars in taxpayer money when we're scratching for every penny and we're fighting over rescission packages, I just can't agree with."

Noem said she was not involved in approving the contract.

'They should be alive today'

Minnesota Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar slammed Noem for the aggressive immigration enforcement operation in her state.

"Two of my constituents, Renee Good and Alex Pretti were killed," she said. "They should be alive today."

Klobuchar asked Noem how many federal immigration officers are still in Minneapolis. The Trump administration sent more than 2,000 agents, dwarfing the city's local police force that stands at roughly 600 officers.

Noem said about 650 immigration agents are still in the city.

Klobuchar told Noem that she spoke to the parents of Pretti.

"When I spoke to Alex's parents, they told me that you calling him a domestic terrorist... (was) one of the most hurtful things they could ever imagine was said by you about their son," Klobuchar said.

She asked Noem if she wanted to apologize to Pretti's parents for calling him a domestic terrorist.

"I did not call him a domestic terrorist, I said it appeared to be an incident of domestic terrorism," Noem said.

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Shutdown and Iran questions

Tuesday was day 17 of a partial shutdown of DHS. Senate Democrats forced the shutdown after the shootings of Good and Pretti.

The department is also now dealing with additional cybersecurity and counterterrorism risks after President Donald Trump ordered airstrikes on Iran.

Though Congress has not passed a fiscal 2026 funding bill for DHS, the department has a separate funding stream, from the tax cuts and spending package Republicans passed last year, to continue immigration enforcement. Nearly all of the department is considered essential, so its employees are continuing to work, some without pay.

In the days following the Trump administration's decision to launch an attack on Iran, senators pressed Noem on what security preparations the agency is taking amid the shutdown.

Judiciary Committee Chair Chuck Grassley of Iowa said he was concerned about potential terrorism due to the war in Iran. He asked Noem how she was vetting immigrants and intercepting potential acts of terrorism.

Noem blamed the Biden administration for concerns of terrorism and said the agency was re-vetting all refugees and Afghan allies who fled to the U.S. after the Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"We are re-vetting some of the individuals and some of the programs that we may have concerns about, looking at social media, also going through those interviews that are necessary for some of our programs that the Biden administration abused and perverted under their time," Noem said.

Republican of South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham asked Noem if she thought the threat level to the U.S. was up or down when it came to terrorism from Iran.

Noem said it was up.

Graham has been vocal in his push for the ousting of the current Iranian government.

"We're engaged in military action against the mothership of terrorism, Iran, which I hope will sink pretty soon," Graham said.

Alabama Sen. Katie Britt, the top Republican on the appropriations panel that funds DHS, asked Noem what the implications of her agency being shut down are.

Britt raised concern about the shooting in Austin, Texas, over the weekend that is being investigated as a possible act of terrorism.

"We're continuing to do that work and will every single day, but we need funding to make sure that all of our law enforcement agencies have the tools they (need) to bring them to justice," Noem said.

Elections

Ahead of November's midterm elections, Democrats have raised concerns the administration would send immigration officers to polling locations.

Noem said Tuesday that elections were up to the states to run, but was evasive when asked to rule out sending DHS agents to monitor polling places.

Sen. Chris Coons asked Noem if she would issue a directive telling ICE agents to not be at election sites.

Noem didn't answer the Delaware Democrat's question but asked, "Do you plan on illegal aliens voting in our elections?"

It's already illegal for a noncitizen to vote in a federal election and has only rarely happened.

Trump is pushing for Congress to pass a law to require proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

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.

Trump: 'I might have forced Israel's hand' in launching Iran war

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he "might have forced Israel's hand" in launching the war on Iran that has already cost the lives of six American troops.

Trump's statement came less than a day after Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters the United States joined the campaign to protect American troops after Israel's planned strike.

"We were having negotiations with these lunatics, and it was my opinion that they were going to attack first," Trump told reporters. "... and I didn't want that to happen. So if anything, I might have forced Israel's hand, but Israel was ready, and we were ready, and we've had a very, very powerful impact, because virtually everything they have has been knocked out."

Trump made the comments prior to a bilateral White House meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz as lawmakers on Capitol Hill scrambled to understand the sudden war.

Merz said Germany is "on the same page in terms of getting this terrible regime in Tehran away" — though administration officials have maintained the conflict is not about regime change, but rather about destroying Iran's conventional missile stockpiles and production, and thwarting any nuclear ambitions.

Iran has launched numerous missiles and drones since the killing Saturday of its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The strikes have caused damage across the Middle East, including to the U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia Tuesday, The Associated Press reported.

During a previously scheduled hearing Tuesday to question Undersecretary of Defense Policy Elbridge Colby on the administration's national defense strategy, Senate Democrats pressed for the justification for war with Iran.

Sen. Angus King, an independent of Maine who caucuses with Democrats, homed in on Rubio's statements Monday that the U.S. joined the war to preempt retaliatory attacks on American troops in the region, following Israel's planned strikes on Iran's leadership compound. Earlier, administration officials said U.S. intelligence was heavily involved in planning Israel's offensive.

"I find it very disturbing that we're committing this nation to war based upon a decision by ... a staunch ally, and I'm a supporter of Israel," King said. "I don't think anybody should drive our decision to go to war, but the interest of the United States."

"The president made our decision," Colby replied.

GOP falls in line

Congress, meanwhile, is poised to vote this week on a War Powers Act resolution that has drawn limited Republican support to stop Trump's unilateral military actions in Iran without congressional authorization.

Lawmakers are largely split along party lines in their support for the military action, with Republicans falling in line behind Trump.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., told reporters Monday the measure will likely fail in the House. Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., is the lone Republican sponsor of the House version of the legislation.

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., defended the administration's initiation of war in Iran and chastised "grandstanding" allegations that Trump broke the law in not first seeking congressional authorization.

"This is the first president in seven presidencies that actually did something about the thorn that constantly came after us. And now you criticize him, you say it's illegal. It's not," Mullin said Tuesday during the Senate Committee on Armed Services hearing.

"How about we say, 'thank you, Mr. President, for finally getting rid of this nuisance, this murderer, this sponsor of terror,'" Mullin said.

Virginia's Kaine says GOP 'nervous about voting for a war'

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., lead sponsor of the Senate's War Powers Act bill, criticized Mullin for suggesting "that the angst on this side of the aisle is because we don't like President Trump."

"He has misstated that concern. I think I can speak for most of my colleagues who have concerns, and

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say our concern is this, have we learned nothing from 25 years of war in the Middle East?" Kaine said.

Kaine said during a brief interview that Republicans who support Trump's war in Iran should put an Authorization for the Use of Military Force, or AUMF, on the floor to formally give it Congress' stamp of approval.

"And the fact that there has been a reluctance to put AUMFs on the table tells me that while Republicans don't want to be contrary to the president, they're also nervous about voting for a war," Kaine said. "If you're nervous about voting for the war, well then, think what that says to the troops who are risking their lives. That anxiety should lead you to question whether it's a good idea or not."

Kaine said the 2001 AUMF, which Congress wrote somewhat broadly following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and is still in effect, doesn't cover Trump's military actions in Iran.

"The president has not cited that," he said. "And we all agree that Iran was not covered by the '01 AUMF. It was meant to cover non-state terrorist groups, not sovereign nations."

Lawmakers were set to receive closed-door briefings on the war from administration officials later Tuesday.

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Pentagon IDs four US soldiers killed in Iran drone strike, all assigned to Iowa unit

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

The U.S. Defense Department on Tuesday named four of the six U.S. soldiers killed by an Iranian drone strike, the first U.S. casualties of the war with Iran that President Donald Trump launched over the weekend.

Army Reserve soldiers Capt. Cody A. Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Florida; Sgt. 1st Class Noah L. Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Nebraska; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole M. Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minnesota; and Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa, died March 1, a Pentagon statement said.

All were assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command in Des Moines. They were killed during a March 1 drone attack on a commercial port in Kuwait, a U.S. ally.

The Defense Department has not released the names of the two other soldiers killed in the strike. The incident remains under investigation, the statement said.

The Pentagon did not mention Iran, but said the soldiers were supporting Operation Epic Fury, the administration's name for the operation.

Trump and Cabinet officials have struggled since Saturday to articulate a cohesive rationale for the strikes, which U.S. forces conducted with Israel.

Trump said Tuesday he "forced Israel's hand" to launch the joint attack, contradicting Secretary of State Marco Rubio's explanation a day earlier that the U.S. joined an Israeli operation.

The incident marks the second time in a matter of months that Iowa service members have been killed in the Middle East.

A lone gunman associated with ISIS killed two Iowa National Guard members, Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard of Marshalltown and Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar of Des Moines, in Syria in December.

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

House committee decides not to ask voters to legalize mobile sports betting

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A committee of state representatives rejected a measure that would have asked South Dakota voters to approve sports betting and use the resulting tax revenue to fund property tax relief.

Rep. Greg Jamison, R-Sioux Falls, carried Senate Joint Resolution 504 in the House of Representatives. Had it passed both chambers, the question of legalized sports betting would've appeared on the general election ballot Nov. 3.

Voters amended the state constitution in 2020 to legalize sports betting only in Deadwood and tribal casinos in South Dakota.

It is legal statewide in Wyoming and Iowa, among other states, and sports-betting smartphone apps and websites have proliferated nationwide.

"This mobile sports wagering is currently occurring in our state," Jamison said. "It's just either getting done illegally or across or near an imaginary line in the dirt."

Opponents worry that gambling addiction, which can occur alongside depression and substance abuse, would force the state to pay more for social programs.

"We give you some property tax relief paid for by gambling addicts, but the promise is illusory," said Michael Pauley of the South Dakota Catholic Conference. "In the long run, the gambling addiction is going to cost society more money than we gain."

The committee voted 11-2 to defeat the resolution. The Senate had passed it 23-10 last month.

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.

Digital currency regulation bills head to South Dakota governor's desk

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER AND JOHN HULT

PIERRE — Two bills to regulate digital currency in South Dakota are on their way to Gov. Larry Rhoden's desk after supportive votes in both chambers of the legislature.

One bill is meant to curb scams involving digital currency kiosks; the other would define cryptocurrency as a seizable asset.

U.S. citizens lost \$9.3 billion in crypto assets in 2025, Attorney General Marty Jackley told lawmakers in the House Judiciary Committee in support of the latter bill. South Dakotans were scammed out of \$13.8 million in digital currency that year, he said.

The asset bill was presented on Jackley's behalf as part of his 2026 legislative package. His office supported the kiosks bill, whose prime sponsors are Brandon Republican Sen. Steve Kolbeck and Pierre Republican Rep. Mike Weisgram.

Millions lost through digital kiosks

South Dakotans lost over \$500,000 in 2025 in connection to scams involving cryptocurrency kiosks, Clark Police Chief Jeremy Wellnitz told members of the House Commerce and Energy Committee on Monday. Across the county, the kiosks were involved in \$333 million in losses.

The kiosks are physical machines where customers can buy or sell cryptocurrency with cash. They have become a "common tool" for scammers, he said, as did several other law enforcement officials from across the state. Scammers will connect with victims through social media, text message or phone call and con-

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since the victim they need to take out cash from their bank account and send it to the scammer's "digital wallet" through a digital currency kiosk.

Senate Bill 98 would require digital kiosk operators to be licensed with the state, Weisgram said. It would also require operators to set \$1,000 daily transaction limits to "prevent significant financial losses," print paper receipts for customers, explain terms and conditions before a transaction, disclose fees and transaction rates, and refund victims of fraud.

South Dakota already licenses 10 operators in the state, said Bret Afdahl, director of the South Dakota Division of Banking with the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation. There are 172 kiosks throughout South Dakota, he said, primarily in urban areas.

He told lawmakers that cryptocurrency kiosk companies have filed 158 currency transaction reports involving more than \$10,000 in cash in South Dakota in the last two years. The companies filed seven reports for suspected fraud or money laundering during that timeframe.

"We really need to flip the incentive structure here with these kiosks right now," Afdahl said. "These kiosk providers profit from every dollar that comes in, whether it's a legitimate transaction or not, and we need to incentivize them to prevent these frauds from occurring."

Supporters of the bill included representatives for banking, law enforcement and consumer protection organizations. Cryptocurrency industry representatives spoke against it.

Clara Wulfsen, with CoinFlip, told lawmakers the company supports most of the bill, and said the company's current practices to address fraudulent activity are in line with the proposed regulations. She said a \$1,000 daily limit would be too restrictive.

The bill passed out of the committee on Monday on a 10-2 vote. It passed on the House floor 59-7 on Tuesday.

Crypto asset forfeiture

Another bill on cryptocurrency, in its case when linked to criminal investigations, earned the support of every member of the House Judiciary Committee on Monday.

Senate Bill 43 would amend state law on asset forfeiture to define cryptocurrency as a seizable asset.

Forfeiture is a process by which law enforcement investigating alleged criminal activity can take money or property thought to be linked to that activity from a person, before that person is convicted of a crime. Police commonly seize cash in cases of suspected drug dealing, or seize vehicles allegedly used to transport narcotics or other illicit materials.

Current law lets police take any tangible asset, which Jackley said arguably exempts digital money.

"This bill provides some legitimacy for cryptocurrency," Jackley said. "I think the time for that has come."

Drug dealers and human traffickers regularly use cryptocurrency, Jackley said, with \$2.3 billion in crypto used in the drug trade in 2024.

The committee passed SB 43 on an 11-0 vote on Monday. It passed on the House floor on Tuesday as part of the chamber's consent calendar, a grouping of bills voted on in bulk unless a member requests debate.

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.

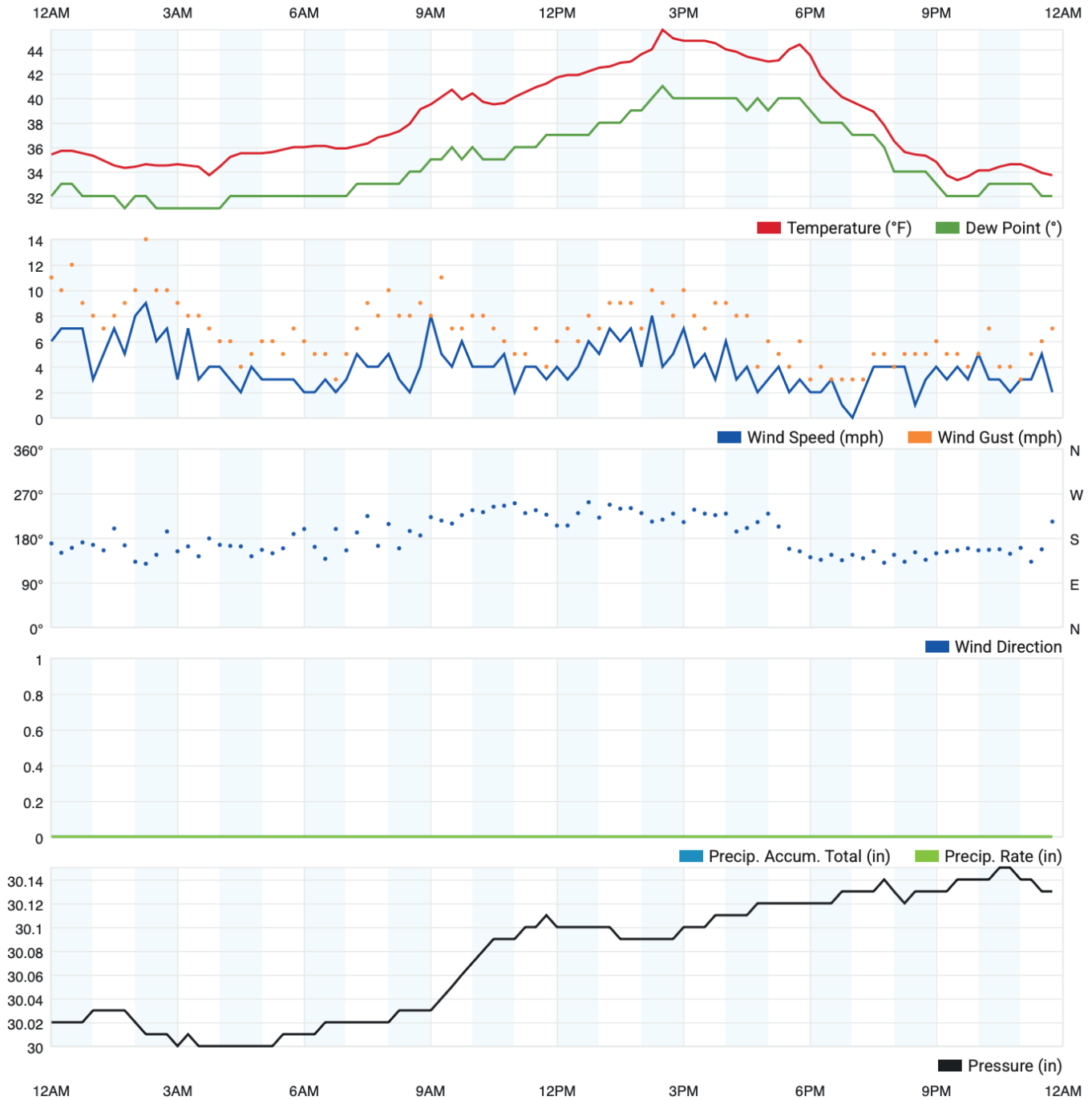
John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

March 3, 2026



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Today



High: 55 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 30 °F

Patchy Fog

Thursday



High: 59 °F

Partly Sunny
then Mostly
Cloudy and
Breezy

Thursday
Night



Low: 29 °F

Chance Rain

Friday



High: 37 °F

Chance Snow
and Breezy

Today



Highs

50 to 65°

Winds: S 10-20 mph

Tonight



28 -38°

SE 5-10 mph

Thursday



56-70°

S 15-25 mph

weather.gov/abr

March 4, 2026 3:36 AM

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

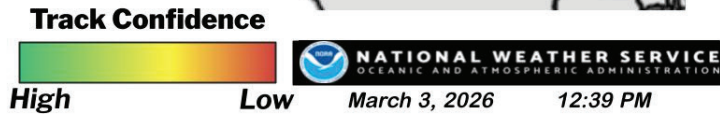
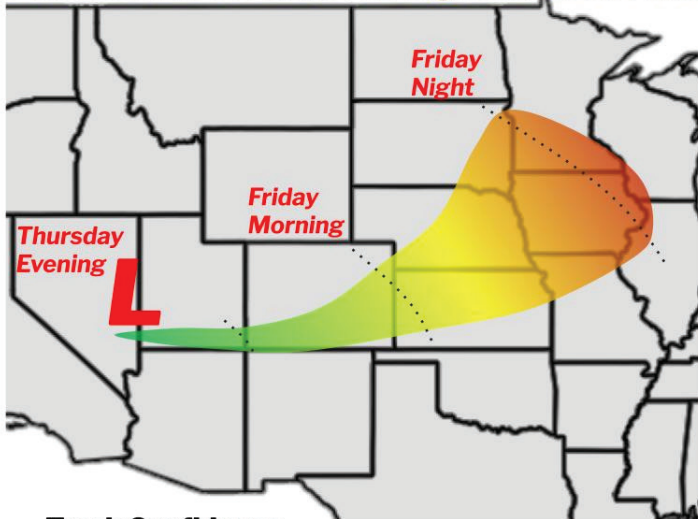


High temperatures today and Thursday will warm into the 50s and 60s, with the warmest over central South Dakota. These temperatures are 15 to 25 degrees above average for this time of year.

Spring Storm System

****Tuesday Update****

Potential Mix of Rain/Freezing Rain/Snow Friday



What We Know Already...

→ Moisture moving into the region Friday

What Has Changed....

- Potential for mix (rain/freezing rain/snow)
- Trends toward a better organized system
- More models depicting this system = **INCREASED forecast CONFIDENCE**

What Is Still Unknown....

- Where/When precipitation transitions are most likely to take place
- How much freezing rain & snow to expect
- Overall how impactful will this system be

What's Actions Should I Take

- Travel plans Friday/Saturday in north central/central & northeast SD/western MN? Stay Tuned For Updates!

We're still monitoring a system for late in the work week, which has the potential to bring a mix to the region. It will still take time to better refine who will get what, however there is the potential for impacts to travel Friday into early Saturday and thus we do not want you to get caught off guard.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 46 °F at 2:31 PM

Low Temp: 33 °F at 9:27 PM

Wind: 14 mph at 2:09 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 73 in 1905

Record Low: -23 in 1917

Average High: 35

Average Low: 14

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.10

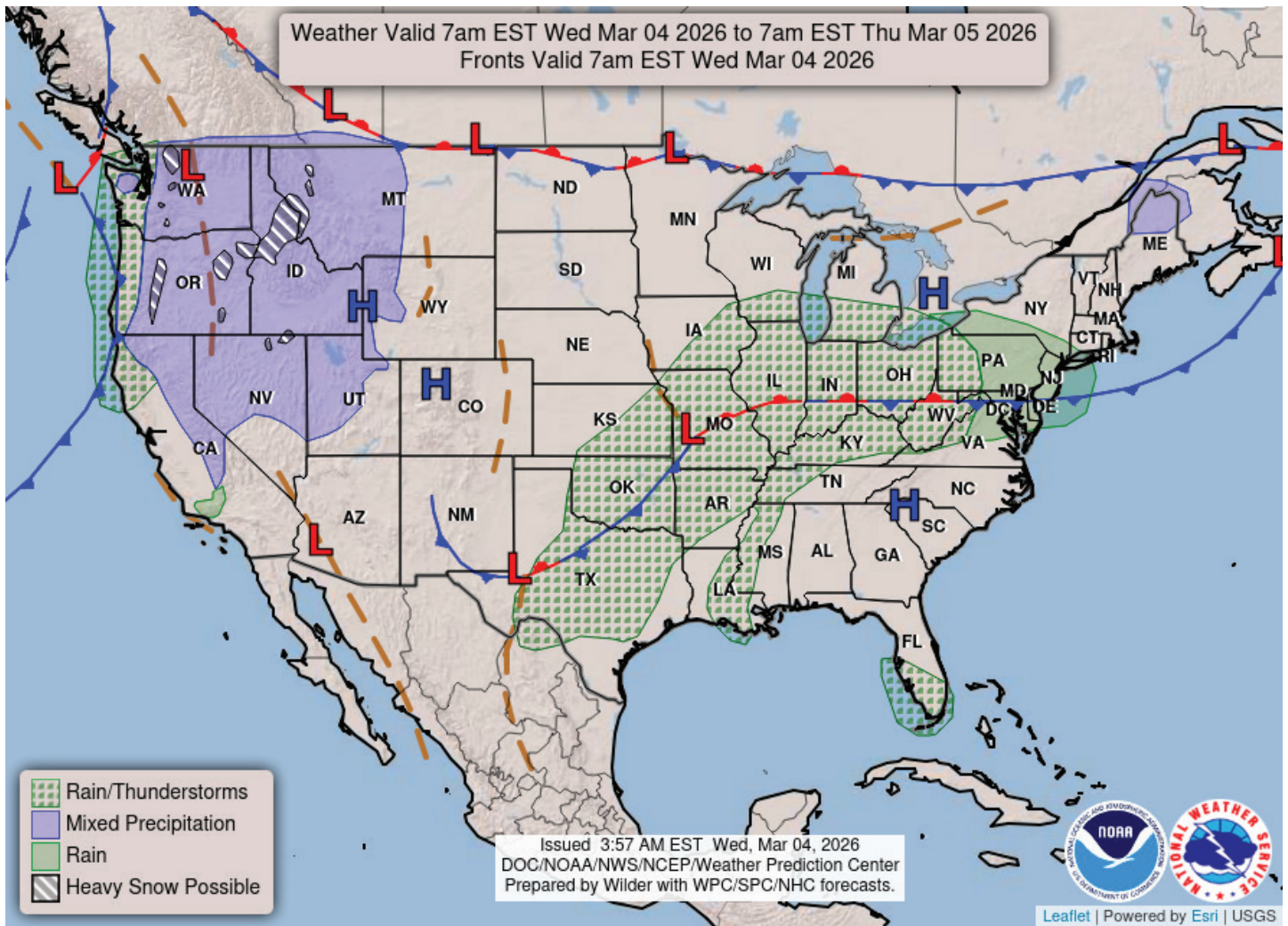
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.27

Precip Year to Date: 1.33

Sunset Tonight: 6.23 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:03 am



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Today in Weather History

March 3-4th, 1994: Two to five inches of snow fell across northeast and part of central South Dakota from the 3rd into the 4th. This new snowfall, combined with the already deep and expansive snowpack and 20 to 40 mph winds, brought widespread blowing and drifting snow. Visibilities were reduced to near zero at times, making travel treacherous. Snowdrifts blocked many roads. Many schools, as well as several highways, were closed. Several vehicles became stuck and had to be pulled out. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches at Clear Lake, Britton, Waubay, and Wilmot and 5 inches at Onida, Blunt, Highmore, Miller, and Milbank.

1909 — Though fair weather was forecast, President Taft was inaugurated amidst a furious storm. About ten inches of wet snow disrupted travel and communications. The storm drew much criticism against the U.S. Weather Bureau. (David Ludlum)

1953 — Snow was reported on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. (The Weather Channel)

1966 — A severe blizzard raged across Minnesota and North Dakota. The blizzard lasted four days producing up to 35 inches of snow, and wind gusting to 100 mph produced snow drifts 30 to 40 feet high. Bismarck ND reported zero visibility for 11 hours. Traffic was paralyzed for three days. (2nd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Rain and high winds prevailed in the northwestern U.S. A wind gust to 69 mph at Klamath Falls OR was their highest in 25 years, and winds at the Ashland Ranger Station in the Siskiyou Mountains of northern California reached 85 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Snow and freezing rain made travel hazardous in Ohio and Indiana. A six car pile-up resulted near Columbus OH, with seven injuries reported. Up to two inches of ice glazed central Indiana. Up to ten inches of snow blanketed northern Ohio. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Lower Mississippi Valley. A strong (F-3) tornado injured five persons near Brownsville MS, and killed seven cows and two hogs in one pasture. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Canton MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — A Pacific cold front working its way across the western U.S. produced heavy snow over parts of Idaho, Nevada and Utah. Up to eleven inches of snow blanketed the valleys of northwest Utah, while 12 to 25 inches fell across the mountains of northern Utah. Up to six inches of snow blanketed the valleys of east central Nevada, while more than a foot of snow was reported in the high elevations. In Idaho, 6 to 8 inches of snow was reported around Aberdeen and American Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 — An F0 tornado 2 miles north of Muldrow breaks a record stretch of days without a reported tornado, 292 days.

2008 — Only two days after reaching 78 degrees, St. Louis receives nearly a foot of snow in seven hours, the biggest snowstorm in 15 years.

How to Handle Our Fear

When we take our fears to God, He will set us free.

Isaiah 41:10-13: 10 `Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

11 ``Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish.

12 ``You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them, Those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent.

13 ``For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, `Do not fear, I will help you.'

At some point, everyone experiences anxiety, but the good news is that we don't have to become imprisoned by it. Christians have tools and a Helper to break that kind of bondage.

To confront and overcome our fear, we must first acknowledge its presence. After admitting to being afraid, it's important to identify the nature of our worry. Sometimes we feel anxious without knowing exactly why, but the Holy Spirit can reveal what is holding us in chains.

The next step is to begin the process of defeating anxiety's hold on us. And there's no better tool for breaking chains than the "sword of the Spirit"—the Bible (Ephesians 6:17). God's Word speaks to many specific fears. For practical help, use a concordance to find verses that address your particular concerns.

When you feel anxious, pray Isaiah 41:10 back to God and say, "Here's the promise You made, and I believe it because You never lie. So I will trust You to work in this situation." Trusting the Lord is the best way to be freed from fear. Yes, our emotions are powerful, but we shouldn't allow them to run our life. Instead, we can trust God's many promises and know that we are safe in His loving care.

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

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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.03.26

9 10 13 25 54 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 18 Hrs 4 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.03.26

7 21 53 54 62 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$496,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 49 Mins 37 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: 17 Hrs 4 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.28.26

10 12 27 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 19 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: 17 Hrs 48 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: 17 Hrs 48 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Region Quarterfinal=

Class A=

Baltic 51, Tri-Valley 45

Britton-Hecla 59, Aberdeen Roncalli 54

Chamberlain 58, Miller 49, OT

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 86, Crow Creek Tribal School 23

Dakota Valley 62, Beresford 57

Dell Rapids 62, Madison 61

Elkton-Lake Benton 67, Great Plains Lutheran 29

Flandreau 71, Garretson 66

Hamlin 73, Florence-Henry 33

Hill City 60, Hot Springs 20

Lead-Deadwood 69, Custer 51

Lennox 78, Canton 40

Little Wound 68, Todd County 53

Milbank 48, Sisseton 45

Mobridge-Pollock 63, Platte-Geddes 56

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 55, Hanson 48

Parker/Marion 68, Scotland/Menno 53

Pine Ridge 108, Lakota Tech 30

Rapid City Christian 56, Belle Fourche 28

Sioux Valley 59, Deuel 44

Vermillion 74, Elk Point-Jefferson 37

Wagner 77, Bon Homme 42

Webster 85, Redfield 64

Winner 46, St. Francis Indian 27

Class B=

Aberdeen Christian 58, Waverly-South Shore 47

Andes Central/Dakota Christian 68, Marty 67

Bridgewater-Emery 71, Colman-Egan 55

Castlewood 70, James Valley Christian School 51

Centerville 68, Irene-Wakonda 51

Corsica/Stickney 42, Gregory 41

DeSmet 84, Iroquois-Lake Preston 52

Deubrook 55, Estelline-Hendricks 51

Dupree 99, Takini 21

Ethan 62, Chester 48

Faith 61, McLaughlin 53

Faulkton 67, North Central 44

Freeman 66, Gayville-Volin High School 42

Gettysburg 74, Herried-Selby 48

Harding County 45, Lemmon High School 39

Ipswich 57, Wakpala 39

Kadoka 69, Bennett County 58

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Leola-Frederick High School 60, Wilmot 48
Lower Brule 68, Burke 50
Lyman 65, Mitchell Christian 29
New Underwood 83, Crazy Horse 46
Parkston 57, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 39
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 43, Dell Rapids St Mary's 31
Sioux Falls Lutheran 60, Howard 48
Sully Buttes 68, Highmore-Harrold 34
Timber Lake 49, Bison 21
Viborg-Hurley 59, Avon 39
Wall 87, Philip 54
Warner 66, Northwestern 57, OT
Waubay/Summit 51, Hitchcock-Tulare 36
Wessington Springs 71, Wolsey-Wessington 40
White River 68, Jones County 58

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

A property tax revolt spreads across states, but election-year cuts hit opposition

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — More and more states are examining plans to cut property taxes during what's an election year for governors and legislators in most states. But some states' tax-cutting zeal is hitting political resistance to slashing local government and public school funding.

National experts say it's a property tax revolt — comparing it to earlier backlashes, including the one that led to California's Proposition 13, a 1978 initiative that limited property tax rates and how much local governments could increase property valuations on homes for tax purposes. Like then, rising home values have driven higher property tax bills.

"The overwhelming trend across the states is relief for residential property owners," said Manish Bhatt of the Tax Foundation, a Washington, D.C., group that studies taxes.

New proposals have been debated in recent weeks to cut taxes in Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wisconsin. In some of those states, the debate is likely to play out for months.

While political pressure from angry homeowners is likely to keep some legislatures on track to cut property taxes, efforts to eliminate property taxes on a homeowner's primary residence face a difficult path.

Elimination may not be realistic

In Georgia on Tuesday, a state constitutional amendment that could have cut property taxes for homeowners by 75% or more failed when all but one Democrat voted against it. Because such amendments in Georgia require a two-thirds vote by legislators, the plan backed by Republican state House Speaker Jon Burns needed at least 21 Democratic votes.

The Georgia bill could be revived, but House Republicans said they would also begin looking at more limited ways to provide property tax relief that wouldn't require a constitutional amendment.

In Florida, House lawmakers passed a proposed state constitutional amendment to phase out property taxes for nonschool purposes over 10 years. The proposal, which would cost an estimated \$13 billion in forgone revenue, awaits Senate action. But a key state senator has signaled that his chamber is unlikely to agree, instead saying senators favor something less generous and more tailored to the needs of individual counties. Lawmakers have said it may take a special session to reach a deal.

Thomas Brosy, a senior research associate at the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, said eliminating property taxes is "very unlikely to happen."

"Completely slashing them is really unrealistic, since it really is the largest source of on revenues for

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most local governments in the United States," Brosy said.

Georgia falls back from total elimination

Even the plan rejected Tuesday in Georgia was a step back from the original plan to phase out homeowner property taxes by 2032. Tuesday's version would have cut, but not necessarily eliminated, property taxes on a primary residence, while encouraging local governments and schools to instead rely on sales taxes to fund operations. It would also have raised taxes on sales of computers to data centers to offset some revenue losses.

State House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Shaw Blackmon said the measure would have provided "dramatic savings for homeowners."

"We've all received emails from constituents worried their skyrocketing property tax will force them from their homes," he said in a debate on Tuesday.

But state House Democratic Minority Leader Carolyn Hugley called the bill an election-year "exercise in cold, hard politics." She and other Democrats said that in many cases, local governments wouldn't be legally able to raise sales taxes enough to offset the billions in property taxes that would be lost.

"The math's just not math-ing. It just does not add up," Hugley said. "And this is not a responsible thing to do."

Sales tax shifts

Other states are looking at shifting from property taxes to sales taxes as well. South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden proposes letting counties impose a half-percent sales tax and devoting the proceeds to property tax credits for homeowners. Last week, Rhoden, a Republican, launched a website estimating how much homeowners would save annually on property taxes, ranging from \$428 to \$1,227. However, it doesn't count how much people would pay from increased sales taxes.

In Michigan, Republican state House Speaker Matt Hall last week proposed raising taxes on currently untaxed services and using the money to erase the state's share of property taxes, the state real estate transfer tax and Michigan's personal property tax. Any agreement may not come until lawmakers finalize the state budget in the fall.

One issue with a shift to sales taxes is that it may shift the tax burden from richer to poorer people, Brosy with the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center said.

"They try to get it to the next best thing or the next available thing, which is the sales tax, which in itself is a lot more regressive and tends to fall a lot more on lower-income families compared to the property tax," he said.

Another issue with shifting to sales taxes is that some local governments have few sources of retail sales to tax.

"Not all locations have the same opportunities to replace that revenue," Bhatt of the Tax Foundation said. "And that often is missed in the discussions."

Israel targets Iran's security forces and leadership as Iran presses attacks across the region

By JON GAMBRELL, DAVID RISING and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States and Israel hit Iran's capital and other cities in multiple airstrikes on Wednesday, the fifth day of the war with Iran. Israel targeted the Iranian leadership and security forces as the Islamic Republic responded with missile barrages and drone attacks on Israel and across the region.

Tehran residents woke to the sound of dawn blasts, and Iranian state television showed the ruins of building in the center of the capital. The Shiite seminary city of Qom and multiple other cities were targeted.

With fighter jets roaring overhead, those still in Tehran looked anxiously to the skies. One man, who ran a clothing shop, said he didn't know what to do.

"If I leave the city, how am I supposed to earn money and survive?" said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing reprisals. "I just hope the Arabs do not get involved. If they do, their missiles

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won't be as precise as these."

The Israeli military said one of its F-35 stealth fighter jets shot down a piloted Iranian Air Force YAK-130 fighter over Tehran on Wednesday. It also said Israeli air defenses had been activated to intercept Iranian missiles fired at targets around the country, with explosions heard around Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, an Iranian naval frigate was reported in distress off the coast of Sri Lanka, prompting authorities there to respond and rescue 32 people, Sri Lankan Health Ministry official Anil Jasinghe said. It was not immediately clear what happened to the ship or how many people were on board.

US Embassies and oil in the crosshairs

With Iran's stranglehold on tanker movement through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which about a fifth of the world's oil is shipped, Brent crude prices hit \$84 a barrel, up more than 15% since the start of the conflict and at its highest price since July 2024. Global stock markets have been hammered over worries that the spike in oil prices may grind down the world economy and sap corporate profits.

The American Embassy in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Consulate in the United Arab Emirates came under drone attacks Tuesday, and the U.S. State Department said Wednesday it had authorized non-emergency government personnel to evacuate the kingdom.

U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of U.S. Central Command, said Iran has launched more than 500 ballistic missiles and 2,000 drones so far. He described the American strikes in the opening hours of the campaign as "nearly double the scale" of the initial attacks during the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

"We've already struck nearly 2,000 targets, with more than 2,000 munitions. We have severely degraded Iran's air defenses and destroyed hundreds of Iran's ballistic missiles, launchers and drones," Cooper said in a prerecorded message shared online Wednesday.

Five days into a war that U.S. President Donald Trump suggested could last a month or longer, nearly 800 people have been killed in Iran, including some Trump said he had considered as possible future leaders of the country.

Both sides are unrelenting in attacks

Air sirens sounded in the morning across the island kingdom of Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, and Qatar's Ministry of Defense said Iran launched two ballistic missiles against it. One hit Al-Udeid Qatari Base but didn't cause casualties.

Lebanon was hit in multiple strikes, where Israel said it is retaliating against Hezbollah militants after the Iran-backed group fired on Israel. Lebanon's state-run media said at least five people were killed in an Israeli strike at a residential complex in the city of Baalbeck. More than 50 people have been killed in Lebanon and more than 300 wounded, according to the Health Ministry.

Iranian-linked militant groups in Iraq have also been launching attacks, with Saraya Awliya al-Dam claiming responsibility for a drone attack Wednesday on Jordan. The Shiite militia group one of several operating in Iraq, and claimed responsibility for attacks in the past days on American targets in Baghdad and the northern Iraqi city Irbil.

Iran has fired regular salvos of missiles and drones at Israel, though most of the incoming fire has been intercepted. Eleven people in Israel have been killed since the conflict began.

The spiraling nature of the war raised questions about when and how it would end.

Trump's administration has offered various objectives, including destroying Iran's missile capabilities, wiping out its navy, preventing it from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ensuring it cannot continue to support allied armed groups.

Israel presses attacks on Iranian security forces and leadership

While the initial U.S.-Israeli strikes killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Trump urged Iranians to overthrow their government, senior administration officials have since said regime change was not the goal.

Trump on Tuesday seemed to downplay the chances of the war ending Iran's theocratic rule, saying that "someone from within" the Iranian regime might be the best choice to take power once the U.S.-Israel

campaign is finished.

Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, said Wednesday on X that whoever Iran picks as the country's next supreme leader, he will be "a target for elimination."

The Israeli military also said it hit buildings in Tehran associated with the Basij, the all-volunteer force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard that conducted the bloody crackdown on protesters in January that killed thousands and saw tens of thousands detained in the country.

Iran's judiciary chief, Gholam Hosseini Mohseni Ejehei, on Wednesday threatened anyone who supports the U.S.-Israeli campaign.

"Those who say or do anything in line with the will of America and the Zionist regime are on the enemy's side and must be dealt with on revolutionary, Islamic principles and in accordance with the time of war," he said on Iranian state television.

Iran's leaders are scrambling to replace Khamenei, who ruled the country for 37 years. It's only the second time since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that a new supreme leader is being chosen. Among those who are considered as possible candidates is Mojtaba Khamenei, a son of the late ayatollah.

Israeli military spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said the military struck a building in the Iranian city of Qom Tuesday where clerics were expected to meet to discuss selecting a new supreme leader. He said the army was still assessing whether anyone was hit.

The semiofficial Fars and Tasnim news agencies, both believed to be close to the Guard, linked the building to Iran's Assembly of Experts and said Wednesday there was no meeting there at the time of the attack. Fars said that the assembly was meeting remotely, without elaborating.

Hundreds have died, including children

The U.S.-Israeli strikes have killed at least 787 people in Iran, according to the Red Crescent Society.

Kuwait, which had previously reported a single death, said Wednesday that an 11-year-old girl was killed by falling shrapnel as Kuwaiti forces were intercepting "hostile aerial targets." In addition, three people were killed in the United Arab Emirates and one in Bahrain.

Six U.S. Army Reserve soldiers were killed by a drone strike Sunday on a command center in Port Shaiba, Kuwait.

Spain's Sánchez stands firm on opposition to war in Iran despite Trump's trade threat

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez once again criticized the U.S. and Israel's military actions in Iran, standing firm Wednesday against fresh trade threats from Washington and warning that the Iran war risked "playing Russian roulette" with millions of lives.

President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to end U.S. trade with Spain because of Spain's refusal to allow the U.S. to use joint military bases in the country in its attacks on Iran.

"We are not going to be complicit in something that is bad for the world and is also contrary to our values and interests, just out of fear of reprisals from someone," Sánchez said in a televised address.

It's not clear how Trump would cut off trade with Spain, a European Union member. The EU negotiates trade on behalf of all its 27 members.

Despite Spain's refusal, Trump on Tuesday said "we could use their base if we want," referencing two military bases in southern Spain that the U.S. and Spain share, but which remain under Spanish command. "We could just fly in and use it," Trump said. "Nobody's going to tell us not to use it, but we don't have to."

Tuesday's threats from Washington were just the latest instance of the U.S. president wielding the threat of tariffs or trade embargoes as punishment. The U.S. Supreme Court last month struck down Trump's far-reaching global tariffs, saying emergency powers do not allow the president to unilaterally impose sweeping tariffs.

However, Trump maintains that the court allows him to instead impose full-scale embargoes on other

nations of his choosing.

Spain's position on Iran conflict marks the latest flare-up in its relationship with the Trump administration. Spain was also an outspoken critic of Israel's war in Gaza.

Sánchez has called the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran an "unjustifiable" and "dangerous" military intervention.

On Wednesday, the Spanish leader also referenced the Iraq war and its negative consequences in terms of generating more jihadi extremism.

"In short, the position of the government of Spain can be summarized in four words," Sánchez said. "No to the war."

A son of Iran's late supreme leader is a possible candidate to replace his father as war rages

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Mojtaba Khamenei, a son of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has long been considered a contender to the post of the country's next paramount ruler — even before an Israeli strike killed his father at the start of the war last week and despite the fact he's has never been elected or appointed to a government position.

A secretive figure within the Islamic Republic, Mojtaba Khamenei has not been seen publicly since Saturday, when the Israeli airstrike targeting the supreme leader's offices killed his 86-year-old father. Also killed were the younger Khamenei's wife, Zahra Haddad Adel, who came from a family long associated with the country's theocracy.

Khamenei is believed to still be alive and has likely has gone into hiding as American and Israeli airstrikes continue to pound Iran, though state-run Iranian media have not reported on his whereabouts.

Profile of Khamenei's son rises after airstrike

Mojtaba Khamenei's name continues to circulate as a possible candidate to replace his father, something that had been criticized in the past as potentially creating a theocratic version of Iran's former hereditary monarchy.

But now with his father and wife considered by hard-liners as martyrs in the war against America and Israel, Khamenei's stock likely has risen with the aging clerics of the 88-seat Assembly of Experts who will select the country's next supreme leader.

Whoever becomes the leader will gain control of an Iranian military now at war and a stockpile of highly enriched uranium that could be used to build a nuclear weapon — should he choose to decree it.

Khamenei had occupied a similar role to that of Ahmad Khomeini, a son of Iran's first Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini — "a combination of aide-de-camp, confidant, gatekeeper and power broker," according to United Against Nuclear Iran, a U.S.-based pressure group.

Born into dissent

Born in 1969 in the city of Mashhad, some 10 years before the 1979 Islamic Revolution that would sweep Iran, Khamenei grew up as his father agitated against Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran.

An official biography on Ali Khamenei's life recounts one moment when the shah's secret police, the SAVAK, broke into their home and beat the cleric. Woken up after, Mojtaba and the rest of Khamenei's children were told their father was going on vacation.

"But I told them, 'There is no need to lie.' I told them the truth," the elder Khamenei was quoted as saying.

After the fall of the shah, Khamenei's family moved to Tehran, Iran's capital. Khamenei would go on to fight in the Iran-Iraq war with the Habib ibn Mazahir Battalion, a division of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard that would see several of its members ascend to powerful intelligence positions within the force — likely with the backing of the Khamenei family.

His father became supreme leader in 1989 — and soon Mojtaba Khamenei and his family had access to the billions of dollars and business assets spread across Iran's many bonyads, or foundations funded from state industries and other wealth once held by the shah.

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Power rises with his father's

His own power rose alongside his father's, working within his offices in downtown Tehran. U.S. diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks in the late 2000s began referring to the younger Khamenei as "the power behind the robes." One recounted an allegation that Khamenei actually tapped his own father's phone, served as his "principal gatekeeper" and had been forming his own power base within the country.

Khamenei "is widely viewed within the regime as a capable and forceful leader and manager who may someday succeed to at least a share of national leadership; his father may also see him in that light," a 2008 cable read, also noting his lack of theological qualifications and age.

"Mojtaba is, however, due to his skills, wealth, and unmatched alliances, reportedly seen by a number of regime insiders as a plausible candidate for shared leadership of Iran upon his father's demise, whether that demise is soon or years in the future," it said.

Khamenei has worked closely with Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, both with commanders of its expeditionary Quds Force and its all-volunteer Basij that violently suppressed nationwide protests in January, the U.S. Treasury has said.

The United States sanctioned him in 2019 during the first term of U.S. President Donald Trump over working to "advance his father's destabilizing regional ambitions and oppressive domestic objectives."

That includes allegations that Khamenei from behind the scenes supported the election of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 and his disputed re-election in 2009 that sparked the Green Movement protests.

Mahdi Karroubi, who was a presidential candidate in 2005 and 2009, denounced Khamenei as "a master's son" and alleged he interfered in both votes. His father reportedly at the time said Khamenei was "a master himself, not a master's son."

Powers of supreme leader at stake

There has been only one other transfer of power in the office of supreme leader of Iran, the paramount decision-maker since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died at age 86 after being the figurehead of the revolution and leading Iran through its eight-year war with Iraq.

Now the new leader will come on board after the 12-day war with Israel and as a U.S.-Israeli war with Iran is seeking to eliminate Iran's nuclear threat and military power, hoping also the Iranian people will rise up against the Iranian theocracy.

The supreme leader is at the heart of Iran's complex power-sharing Shiite theocracy and has final say over all matters of state. He also serves as the commander-in-chief of the country's military and the Guard, a paramilitary force that the United States designated a terrorist organization in 2019, and which his father empowered during his rule.

The Guard, which has led the self-described "Axis of Resistance," a series of militant groups and allies across the Middle East meant to counter the U.S. and Israel, also has extensive wealth and holdings in Iran. It also controls the country's ballistic missile arsenal.

Markets in Europe gain while Asian shares swoon as the war with Iran widens and oil surges higher

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — European shares opened higher on Wednesday after another day of sell-offs in Asia, where South Korea's benchmark plunged more than 12%.

U.S. futures were 0.3% lower.

Oil prices climbed more than 3% as the United States and Israel war with Iran entered its fifth day, with Israel targeting the Iranian leadership and security forces and the Islamic Republic hitting back with missile barrages and drone attacks across the region.

Worries over the war, which U.S. President Donald Trump has suggested could last a month or longer, have hammered world markets, spooking investors who fear more spikes for oil prices may grind down the global economy and sap corporate profits.

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"I think the Iran situation is getting out of hand, and I think that U.S. President Donald Trump miscalculated enormously," said Francis Lun, CEO of Venturesmart Asia. "The situation is very grim."

Still, sentiment appeared to steady early Wednesday in Europe, where Germany's DAX edged 0.2% higher to 23,851.86. In Paris, the CAC 40 was nearly unchanged at 8,105.25. Britain's FTSE 100 edged 0.1% lower to 10,470.00.

In Asia, South Korea's Kospi led the regional losses as energy security concerns eclipsed optimism over the boost computer chipmakers like Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix have been getting from expanding use of artificial intelligence.

The Kospi sank 12.1% to 5,093.54. Samsung's shares dropped 11.7%, while SK Hynix gave back 9.6%.

The Korea Exchange temporarily halted trading for the Kospi index, while a circuit breaker was also triggered on the tech-oriented Kosdaq after it fell by more than 8%. It later dropped nearly 14%.

South Korea's stock market has been one of the world's best performers this year, but its economy depends heavily on trade and fuel imports, that are threatened with disruptions to traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow gateway to the Persian Gulf through which roughly a fifth of globally traded oil passes.

Trump announced Tuesday that he had ordered the U.S. Development Finance Corp. to provide political risk insurance and guarantees for financial security of all maritime trade.

"If necessary, the United States Navy will begin escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, as soon as possible," Trump said in a message posted by the White House on X.

Still, the price of U.S. benchmark crude oil climbed more than 3.5%, to \$77.18 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gained 3.7% to \$84.38 per barrel. Its price has jumped about 15% since the war began.

"Trump's assurances of the US underwrite shipping insurance against Middle East conflict risks and even U.S. naval escorts only mitigate, but do not eliminate, enduring upside risks to oil prices," Mizuho Bank said in a commentary.

The increased insurance costs filtering through to shipping would ultimately cost an extra \$5 to \$15 a barrel, it said, adding that the "war premium' remains firmly intact."

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 shed 3.6% to 54,245.54. Like South Korea and Taiwan, Japan depends heavily on imports of oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf.

Elsewhere in Asia, the Hang Seng in Hong Kong fell 2% to 25,249.48 and the Shanghai Composite index shed 1% to 4,082.47.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 declined 1.9% to 8,901.20.

Taiwan's Taiex lost 4.4% and shares in Bangkok sank 6%.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 finished with a loss of 0.9% after dropping as much as 2.5% on concerns over the war's damage to the economy. The Dow Jones Industrial Average pared its loss to 0.8% and the Nasdaq composite fell 1%.

Some analysts say stocks could rebound if the war ends soon. If it drags on, higher inflation partly due to rising energy prices could tie the Federal Reserve's hands and keep it from cutting interest rates.

For now, one of the most evident impacts on the economy has been a surge in gasoline prices.

While drivers in Europe and some Asian cities waited in line to fill their tanks with fuel, as a net oil exporter the U.S. does not face a shortage. But prices are still influenced by global market trends.

In the U.S., a gallon of regular was selling for \$3.11 on average, up 11 cents, according to motor club AAA, surprising some drivers at the pump. Gasoline prices were already rising before the U.S. launched strikes on Iran as refiners were switching over to summer blends of fuel.

In other dealings early Wednesday, the dollar fell to 157.46 Japanese yen from 157.74 yen. The euro slipped to \$1.1604 from \$1.1612.

The price of gold rose 1.2%, while silver gained 2.6%.

Talarico wins Texas Senate Democratic nomination while Cornyn and Paxton head to Republican runoff

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — State Rep. James Talarico topped Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett in an expensive and fiercely contested Texas Senate Democratic primary that once again has the party dreaming of a big upset in November.

Who Talarico will face depends on a May runoff between longtime Republican Sen. John Cornyn and MAGA favorite Ken Paxton — a race expected to get increasingly nasty over coming months and could hinge on whether or not President Donald Trump offers an endorsement.

Texas, along with North Carolina and Arkansas, on Tuesday kicked off midterm elections with control of Congress at stake and against the backdrop of the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran.

No Democrat has won a statewide race in the reliably Republican state in over 30 years, but in a statement after his victory, Talarico proclaimed “We’re about to take back Texas.”

Crockett’s campaign said she planned to sue over voting issues in Dallas and she spoke only briefly on Tuesday night to warn that “people have been disenfranchised.”

Republicans head to round 2

Cornyn, meanwhile, is seeking a fifth term but is facing a tough challenge from Paxton, the state attorney general. Cornyn hopes to avoid becoming the first Republican senator in Texas history to seek reelection and not be renominated.

The GOP contest also featured U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt, who finished a distant third and conceded. But him making it a three-way race made it tougher for any candidate to reach the 50% vote threshold needed to win the nomination outright and avoid the May 26 runoff.

All three campaigned on their ties to Trump, who did not make an endorsement in the race. Now both Cornyn and Paxton will again fiercely compete to curry the president’s favor.

Cornyn was facing a tough enough battle that he didn’t hold an election night party. Instead, in comments to reporters in Austin, he sought to make the case that a runoff win by Paxton would leave “a dead weight at the top of the ticket for Republicans.”

“I’ve worked for decades to build the Republican Party, both here in Texas and nationally,” Cornyn said. “I refuse to allow a flawed, self-centered and shameless candidate like Ken Paxton to risk everything we’ve worked so hard to build over these many years.”

Addressing supporters in Dallas, Paxton made a point of saying he felt like he had during a recent trip to Mar-a-Lago, Trump’s Florida estate. He also proclaimed: “We proved something they’ll never understand in Washington.”

“Texas is not for sale,” he said.

Cornyn’s cool relationship with Trump is part of what made him vulnerable. He and allied groups spent at least \$64 million in television advertising alone since July to try stabilize his support.

Paxton, who began campaigning in earnest only last month, has made national headlines for filing lawsuits against Democratic initiatives. He 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 make it harder to defend the seat if he is the nominee — and require significant spending that could be better used elsewhere.

Confusion at some polling places

In the Democratic campaign, Crockett and Talarico each argued that they would be the stronger general election candidate in a state that backed Trump by almost 14 percentage points in 2024.

Voting was extended in Dallas County and Williamson County, outside Austin, after voters reported being turned away and directed to different voting precincts because of new primary rules. Paxton’s office later challenged a decision keeping the polls open longer, and the state Supreme Court ruled that ballots cast by people not in line by 7 p.m. should be separated from others.

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It was not immediately clear how the court's action would be carried out or how many eligible ballots remained to be counted in Dallas County, Crockett's home base. Crockett said she would seek legal action after voting was concluded.

And in Harris County, which includes Houston, a spokesperson said that as of 10 p.m. there were still voters at 20 centers.

Democratic race featured clash of styles

Crockett and Talarico waged a spirited race as Democrats look for their first Senate win in Texas since 1988.

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

"We are not just trying to win an election," a jubilant Talarico told supporters in Austin before the race was called. "We are trying to fundamentally change our politics. And it's working."

Dallas voter Tanu Sani said she cast her ballot for Talarico because he "really spoke to me in the way he tries to unify."

Tomas Sanchez, a voter in Dallas County, said he supported Crockett because "she cares about immigrants, she cares about the American people in a way that a lot of the Republicans have proven they haven't."

Talarico outspent Crockett on television advertising by more than four to one as of late February. He got a burst of attention — and campaign contributions — last month from CBS' decision not to air his interview with late-night host Stephen Colbert, who said the network pulled the interview for fear of angering Trump's FCC.

Other key primaries

Texas' races also featured new congressional district boundaries that GOP lawmakers — urged on by Trump — redrew to help elect more Republicans. The result matched several Democratic incumbents in primary fights and set up new general election battlegrounds.

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

Incumbent Republican Rep. Dan Crenshaw lost his primary to state Rep. Steve Toth, who was endorsed by Sen. Ted Cruz.

Another incumbent GOP incumbent, Rep. Tony Gonzales, was considered vulnerable after an alleged affair with a staffer who killed herself. He was challenged by gun manufacturer and YouTube influencer Brandon Herrera, who calls himself "the AK guy." The two will head to a runoff in a district that includes Uvalde, site of a deadly 2022 shooting at Robb Elementary School.

Former Major League Baseball star Mark Teixeira clinched the Republican primary to succeed GOP Chip Roy in southwest Texas.

Democrat Bobby Pulido, a Latin Grammy winner, won his party's primary in South Texas against physician Ada Cuellar. Pulido will face two-term Republican Rep. Monica De La Cruz.

In suburban Dallas, Democratic Rep. Julie Johnson was facing former Rep. Colin Allred, a former NFL linebacker and 2024 Senate nominee.

Democratic Rep. Al Green was fighting to stay in office after his Houston-based district was drawn to lean Republican. Green, 78, ran in a newly drawn district against Democratic Rep. Christian Menefee, 37, who won a January special election for the current 18th District.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott easily won his primary and will face Democratic state Rep. Gina Hinojosa. Roy advanced to a primary runoff with Mayes Middleton for attorney general.

China to unveil priorities for coming 5 years at major annual political meeting

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's ceremonial legislature is set to meet Thursday, where it will unveil the country's policy direction and economic goals for the coming years.

The meeting is held in Beijing, where the National People's Congress and its advisory body gather. The National People's Congress will ratify new laws decided by China's Communist Party leadership. While the near-3,000-member body technically votes, the vote is always almost unanimous.

Also meeting is the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory body composed of elite members of Chinese society, from business people to athletes. They also include representatives from China's minority groups, but the body has little power on issues of public policy.

The gathering is called the Two Sessions. The political meetings have changed under President Xi Jinping, with tighter scripts and less scope for debate.

"A long, long time ago, it was a venue for policy deliberation," and even controversial things, said Alfred Wu, a professor of public policy at the National University of Singapore. "Now it's very much become a showcase, propaganda."

Economy is front and center

The National People's Congress is when the Chinese premier announces the country's GDP target and other economic targets for the year.

This year, observers are also waiting for details for the 15th five-year plan, of which the government had revealed a draft in October. It is expected to be focused on building tech prowess and self-sufficiency.

China issues five-year plans to direct its economy, a legacy of its historical approach when it had a planned economy.

The Chinese economy remains sluggish, with high youth unemployment, weak housing prices and sagging domestic consumption. It also faces a trade war with the U.S., which has leveraged tariffs on all Chinese goods.

Lou Qinjian, the spokesperson for this year's National People's Congress, said Wednesday that the government would maintain its efforts to improve living standards and boost consumption. Those would include raising incomes and improving the education, child care, elderly care and health care systems so "consumers will feel freer to spend," he said at press conference.

Experts have said China will have to strike a tough balance between its goals of boosting its tech manufacturing, such as in robotics, renewable energy and AI, and boosting domestic consumption as many ordinary people are feeling the pinch. Tech supply chains are narrow and the trickle-down effect is less pronounced.

China is likely to drop its headline growth target to a record low, predicted Neil Thomas and Lobsang Tsering, policy experts at the Asia Society. It will be significant as a step in a "shift from high-speed to high-quality growth," they wrote.

A push for ethnic assimilation

The National People's Congress is also expected to ratify a new law governing China's ethnic minorities. While a final draft has not been released, experts say the latest public draft focused on assimilation, reducing autonomy for the country's minority groups.

Lou said the legislation fosters "a stronger sense of community among all ethnic groups in the Chinese nation" and outlines steps to promote interaction, exchange and integration.

"Once enacted, we will work to implement it thoroughly and advance Chinese-style modernization through the great unity of the Chinese nation," he said.

Lou highlighted the Communist Party's push for unity several times during the press conference and credited past five-year plans with delivering not only rapid economic growth but also long-term stability, a major concern of party leaders.

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Personnel movements are not expected

China's legislature dismissed 19 members last week, after a highly publicized removal of two of the country's most senior generals in January.

Now, only one member remains of the powerful Central Military Commission, which controls the military, but policy experts say they do not expect any personnel announcements in the upcoming Two Sessions. Observers like to closely watch attendance for any signs of possible purges, however.

Xi Jinping has removed possibly up to 100 senior officials in the People's Liberation Army in the past four years, according to the Center for Strategic Studies, with the most prominent being General Zhang Youxia in January.

Yet, there is likely no great rush from the leadership to find a replacement.

"I don't think they're particularly worried about this," said Wu of National University Singapore. For example, he said, Wang Yi became foreign minister again after stepping down from the job initially because of the high-profile removal of Qin Gang, previously his replacement.

US soldiers who died in Iran war remembered as devoted parents and reservists

By HANNAH FINGERHUT, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Amor was just days away from returning home to her husband and two children when a drone strike at a command center in Kuwait killed her and five other U.S. service members.

"She was almost home," her husband, Joey Amor, said from their home in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, on Tuesday. "You don't go to Kuwait thinking something's going to happen, and for her to be one of the first — it hurts."

Amor was one of four U.S. soldiers killed in the Iran war on Sunday and identified Tuesday by the Pentagon; two soldiers haven't yet been publicly identified. The members of the Army Reserve worked in logistics and kept troops supplied with food and equipment.

They died just one day after the U.S. and Israel launched its military campaign against Iran. Iran responded by launching missiles and drones against Israel and several Gulf Arab states that host U.S. armed forces.

Those killed also included Capt. Cody Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Florida; Sgt. 1st Class Noah Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Nebraska; and Sgt. Declan Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa, who was posthumously promoted from specialist. No other names were released.

"These men and women all bravely volunteered to defend our country, and their sacrifice will never be forgotten," Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll said.

All were assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command, which provides food, fuel, water and ammunition, transport equipment and supplies.

"Sadly, there will likely be more, before it ends. That's the way it is," President Donald Trump said of deaths.

One of the youngest in his class

Coady had just told his father last week that he had been recommended for a promotion from specialist to sergeant, a rank he received posthumously.

He was one of the youngest people in his class but seemed to impress his instructors, his father Andrew Coady said Tuesday.

"He was very good at what he did," he said.

Coady trained as an information technology specialist with the Army Reserves and was studying cybersecurity at Drake University in Des Moines. He was taking online classes while in Kuwait and wanted to become an officer.

"I still don't fully think it's real," his sister Keira Coady said. "I just remember all of our conversations about what he was going to do when he came back."

A mother of two who loved gardening

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Amor, 39, was an avid gardener who enjoyed making salsa from the peppers and tomatoes in her garden with her son, a senior in high school. She also enjoyed rollerblading and bicycling with her fourth-grade daughter.

A week before the drone attack, Amor was moved off-base to a shipping container-style building that had no defenses, Joey Amor said.

"They were dispersing because they were in fear that the base they were on was going to get attacked and they felt it was safer in smaller groups in separate places," he said.

He last spoke to her about two hours before she was killed. He said she was working long shifts and they had been messaging about her tripping and falling the night before.

"She just never responded in the morning," he said.

A calling to serve his country

Khork was very patriotic and drawn from a young age to serving the U.S., his family said in a statement Tuesday.

He enlisted in the Army Reserve and joined Florida Southern College's ROTC program.

"That commitment helped shape the course of his life and reflected the deep sense of duty that was always at the core of who he was," said his mother, Donna Burhans, father, James Khork, and stepmother, Stacey Khork, in a statement.

Khork also loved history and had a degree in political science.

His family described him as "the life of the party, known for his infectious spirit, generous heart, and deep care for those who served alongside him and for everyone blessed to know him."

One of Khork's friends, Abbas Jaffer, posted on Facebook on Monday that he had lost the best person he had ever known.

"My best friend, best man, and brother gave his life defending our country overseas," Jaffer said. Khork and Jaffer had been friends for more than 16 years.

A loving father and husband

Tietjens lived with his family in the Washington Terrace mobile home park in the Omaha suburb of Bellevue, Nebraska. He was married with a son, according to a Facebook page.

Tietjens earned a black belt in Philippine Combatives and Taekwondo and was "an instructor who gave his time, discipline, and leadership to others," the Philippine Martial Arts Alliance said in a Facebook post.

On the mat and as a soldier, "he carried the same values: honor, discipline, service, and commitment to others," the organization said.

Nebraska Gov. Gov. Pillen paid tribute to the family Tuesday.

"Noah stepped up to serve and defend the American people from foreign enemies around the world — a sacrifice we must never forget," he wrote.

"We are holding the Tietjens family close in our hearts during this unbelievably difficult time and will keep them in our prayers," he said.

Change in primary voting rules leads to confusion in 2 Texas counties as voters are turned away

By SARA CLINE, ALI SWENSON and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

A rule change for primary voting in two Texas counties created mass confusion Tuesday that eventually led to a state Supreme Court ruling, threats of more legal action and the potential that an untold number of voters could find themselves disenfranchised.

The chaos had the most direct potential impact on the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate. The county with the greatest number of affected voters includes Dallas and is the home base for Rep. Jasmine Crockett, an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump who was in a tight race with state lawmaker James Talarico.

Crockett told supporters Tuesday night that the race can't be settled without the results from Dallas County.

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"I can tell you, people were disenfranchised," she said.

The unfolding chaos — first over the new voting rules, and then over the court decisions and whether late ballots would be counted — stemmed from a change by local Republicans that is unique to Texas' primary system, but also hinted at the type of uncertainty that many have feared lies ahead for November's midterm elections.

A Republican change to the primaries leads to 'severe' confusion

The problems in Texas began when voters in two counties — Dallas and Williamson, north of Austin — were turned away at polling locations and directed to different precincts after a recent change in how the primary is conducted.

In Dallas County, a judge ordered polls to remain open for two hours past the scheduled 7 p.m. closing time, citing "voter confusion so severe" that it caused the website of the county election office to crash. The judge was acting on a petition filed by the local Democratic Party in a heavily left-leaning county. Democrats in Williamson said they succeeded in getting two precincts to stay open late.

Later in the evening, the Texas Supreme Court acted on requests by the Texas attorney general's office and stayed both decisions. Its brief orders said ballots cast by voters in both counties who were not in line by the 7 p.m. scheduled close of polls should be separated. The number of ballots affected could not immediately be determined.

Renea Hicks, a longtime Texas appellate lawyer, said the Supreme Court's action was preliminary and does not say whether the ballots will eventually be counted. That's something the court will have to sort out in the coming days, he said.

"That doesn't mean 'throw them away.' It doesn't mean they won't count," he said. "We don't know what it means."

In both counties, voters had been allowed to cast their ballot anywhere in their county for years. But for this primary, the local Republican parties opted against countywide voting. State law says both major parties have to agree to the countywide system for it to be in effect.

That meant that on Tuesday all voters could cast ballots only at their assigned precinct.

Voters separated by party

Both Crockett and Talarico denounced the effect of the change on voters, with Crockett saying it was an "effort to suppress the vote." Talarico's campaign aid it was "deeply concerned" about the reports of voters showing up at polling locations and being sent elsewhere. He told supporters later that evening, as ballots were still being tallied, that every vote must be counted.

Adding to the confusion was the fact that voting locations also might be specific to someone's party affiliation, said Nic Solorzano, a spokesperson for the Dallas County Elections Department.

"We're seeing a lot of people that are going to their vote centers that they usually go to ... and not realizing they can't do that anymore. They have to go to their precinct-based location," he said.

The extensions in Dallas applied only to Democratic voting precincts. Voting also was extended for an hour in El Paso County after problems with voter check-in systems earlier in the day.

Attempt to inform voters

Texas was one of three states kicking off the 2026 midterm elections Tuesday, along with North Carolina and Arkansas. Voting otherwise went fairly smoothly, except for a problem with electronic poll books in one rural North Carolina county that prompted the state elections board to delay the release of statewide results by an hour.

Tomas Sanchez, a student at Dallas College, was among those who showed up at a voting location on campus to cast his ballot in Texas' Democratic primary. But he was under a "mistaken impression" and told that he needed to vote at his assigned precinct, a location about 6 miles (about 10 kilometers) away and closer to his neighborhood.

"This is something that we were really concerned about, honestly," Solorzano said. He added that after nearly seven years of voters being able to cast their ballots anywhere in the county, "then we kind of had to retool our entire operation to go back to precinct-based voting for Election Day."

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The county elections department has been putting up signs, running ads and sending text messages and mailers to make people aware of the change. On Election Day former poll workers were stationed outside voting locations with tablets to help people find the correct place to cast their ballot.

Voters turned away by the hundreds

While Solorzano said his department was not keeping track of how many people were been turned away, local Democrats said the number was significant.

Brenda Allen, executive director of the Dallas Democratic Party, said her offices were swamped by hundreds of calls from voters of both parties trying to find their precincts. She noted that congressional districts in the county also were remapped in Texas' mid-decade redistricting and that new precinct lines were only finalized in December, leaving little time to inform voters.

"Lots of reports of people being turned away, hundreds of people unable to vote. Both parties are affected by this," Allen said. "It's not great."

In Williamson County, the local Democratic Party headquarters was slammed by calls, executive director Madison Dickinson said.

"We're having significant problems with the precinct-level voting," she said, adding that, like in Dallas, even Republicans were confused by the change and were calling the Democratic Party for help.

Republicans were less vocal about the changes online, although the Dallas County Republican Party posted a link showing voters where to find their assigned polling places. The Williamson County Republican Party did not respond to a request for comment.

Congress taking first votes on Iran war as debate rages about US goals

By STEPHEN GROVES, LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Senate is headed towards a vote Wednesday on President Donald Trump's decision to embark on a war against Iran, an extraordinary test in Congress for a conflict that has rapidly spread across the Middle East with no clear U.S. exit strategy.

The legislation, known as a war powers resolution, gives lawmakers an opportunity to demand congressional approval before any further attacks are carried out. The Senate resolution and a similar bill being voted on in the House later this week face unlikely paths through the Republican-controlled Congress and would almost certainly be vetoed by Trump even if they were to pass.

Nonetheless, the votes marked a weighty moment for lawmakers. Their decisions on the five-day-old war — which Trump entered without congressional approval — could determine the fates of U.S. military members, countless other lives and the future of the region.

"Wars without clear objectives do not remain small. They get bigger, bloodier, longer and more expensive," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer at a news conference Tuesday. "This is not a necessary war. It's a war of choice."

Trump administration scrambles for congressional support

After launching a surprise attack against Iran on Saturday, Trump has scrambled to win support for a conflict that Americans of all political persuasions were already wary of entering. Trump administration officials have been a frequent presence on Capitol Hill this week as they try to reassure lawmakers that they have the situation under control.

"We are not going to put American troops in harm's way," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in a raucous news conference at the Capitol Tuesday.

But six U.S. military members were killed over the weekend in a drone strike in Kuwait.

Trump has also not ruled out deploying U.S. ground troops. He has said he is hoping to end the bombing campaign within a few weeks, but his goals for the war have shifted from regime change to stopping Iran from developing nuclear capabilities to crippling its navy and missile programs.

"I think they are achieving great success with what they've done so far," Senate Majority Leader John Thune said Tuesday, adding that what happens next in the country will be "largely up to the Iranian people."

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Almost all Republican senators were readying to vote Wednesday against the war powers resolution to halt military action, but a number still expressed hesitation at the idea of deploying troops on the ground in Iran.

"I don't think the American people want to see troops on the ground," said Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., as he exited a classified briefing Tuesday. He added that Trump administration officials "left open that possibility," but it wasn't an option they were emphasizing.

Lawmakers to go on record

The votes in Congress this week represented potentially consequential markers of just where lawmakers stand on the war as they look ahead to midterm elections and the consequences of the conflict.

"Nobody gets to hide and give the president an easy pass or an end-run around the Constitution," said Sen. Tim Kaine, the Virginia Democrat leading the war powers resolution. "Everybody's got to declare whether they're for this war or against it."

Republican leaders have successfully, though narrowly, defeated a series of war powers resolutions pertaining to several other conflicts that Trump has entered or threatened to enter. This one, however, is different.

Unlike Trump's military campaigns against alleged drug boats or even Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, the attack on Iran represents an open-ended conflict that is already ricocheting across the region. For Republicans who are used to operating in a political party dominated by Trump and his promises of keeping the U.S. out of foreign entanglements, the moment represented a bit of whiplash.

"War is ugly, it always has been ugly, but we're taking out a regime that has been trying to attack us for quite some time," said Sen. Markwayne Mullin, an Oklahoma Republican.

Meanwhile, Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican who has long pushed Trump to engage overseas, argued that the widening conflict represented an opportunity for Arab and European countries to join in the fight against Iran and the militant groups it supports.

"I don't mind people being on record as to whether or not they think this is a good idea," he told reporters, but also argued that too much power over the military was ceded to Congress in the War Powers Act, which mandates that presidents must withdraw troops from a conflict within 90 days if there is no congressional authorization.

House vote looms

On the other side of the Capitol, House leaders were also readying for an intense debate over the war followed by a vote Thursday.

"I do believe we have the votes to defeat it, I certainly hope we do," House Speaker Mike Johnson said after an all-member briefing on Tuesday night.

Meanwhile, House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said he expected a strong showing from Democrats in favor of the war powers resolution.

As lawmakers emerged from a closed-door briefing Tuesday night, Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, implored the Trump administration to "come to Congress" and speak directly to the American people about the rationale for the war.

His voice filled with emotion as he said, "Our young men and women's lives are on the line."

Elon Musk to take stand in Twitter shareholder trial accusing him of deflating stock before purchase

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Elon Musk is expected to take the stand in a shareholder trial on Wednesday in San Francisco, where he's accused of making false and misleading statements that drove down Twitter's stock price before he bought the social media platform for \$44 billion in 2022.

The lawsuit was filed in October 2022 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California on behalf of Twitter shareholders who sold the stock between May 13 and Oct. 4, 2022, a few weeks before Musk's purchase of Twitter was finalized. It claims Musk violated federal securities laws by making false,

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public statements that “were carefully calculated to drive down the price of Twitter stock.”

The billionaire Tesla CEO reached a deal to buy Twitter and take it private in April 2022. On May 13, however, he declared his plan “temporarily on hold” and said he needs to pinpoint the number of spam and fake accounts on the platform. Twitter’s stock tumbled as a result. A few days later, he tweeted that the deal “cannot go forward” and claimed that almost 20% of Twitter accounts were “fake,” according to the lawsuit.

Musk’s May 13 tweet — “Twitter deal temporarily on hold pending details supporting calculation that spam/fake accounts do indeed represent less than 5% of users” — was “false because the buyout was not, in fact, ‘temporarily on hold,’” the lawsuit says. That’s because Twitter did not agree to put the deal on hold, and there was nothing in the merger agreement the two parties signed that allowed Musk to put it on hold, according to the lawsuit.

In the following weeks, Musk continued to try to delay or get out of the deal, which the lawsuit claims he did in the form of false, disparaging statements about Twitter’s business that drove the San Francisco company’s stock down sharply.

In July 2022, Musk doubled down on the bots issue and said he would abandon his offer to buy Twitter after the company failed to provide enough information about the number of fake accounts. That’s even though the lawsuit notes that Musk waived due diligence for his “take it or leave it” offer to buy Twitter. That means he waived his right to look at the company’s nonpublic finances.

The stock closed at \$36.81 on July 8, when Musk tweeted he was abandoning the deal over the fake accounts issue. That’s 32% below Musk’s offer price of \$54.20 per share.

“To try to renegotiate the price or delay the merger, Musk made materially false and misleading statements and omissions, and engaged in a scheme to deceive the market, all in violation of the law,” the lawsuit says.

The problem of bots and fake accounts on Twitter wasn’t new. The company had paid \$809.5 million in 2021 to settle claims it was overstating its growth rate and monthly user figures. Twitter also disclosed its bot estimates to the Securities and Exchange Commission for years, while also cautioning that its estimate might be too low.

Twitter sued Musk to force him to complete the deal, and Musk countersued. On Oct. 4, Musk offered to go through with his original proposal to buy Twitter for \$44 billion, which Twitter accepted. The deal closed later that month. In the ensuing months, Musk slashed the company’s workforce, gutted its trust and safety team and rolled back content moderation policies. In July 2023, he renamed Twitter as X.

This isn’t the first time that Musk has been dragged into court to defend himself against allegations of duping investors with his social media posts. Three years ago, Musk spent about eight hours testifying in a San Francisco federal trial about his plans to buy Tesla — the electric automaker that he still runs as publicly traded company — for \$420 per share in a proposed 2018 deal that never materialized. A nine-member jury absolved Musk of wrongdoing in that case.

Lock step no more: Iran war shows cracks in Trump’s conservative media support

By DAVID BAUDER, MEG KINNARD and ALI SWENSON Associated Press Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — For President Donald Trump, some of the sharpest criticism he’s faced in the early days of the Iran war has come from once-loyal media figures far more accustomed to singing his praises.

Tucker Carlson, Megyn Kelly and Matt Walsh are among those to express discontent. It’s been noticed in the White House, which has been playing defense on social media and in interviews.

To be sure, these critics are the minority of the media MAGAsphere, where Fox News’ biggest stars remain cheerleaders. But their words illustrate conservative media’s influence and how valuable it is to Trump when all runs as a well-oiled machine — and, by contrast, how much of a problem it can be if it fractures.

Much of the criticism has centered on Israel’s influence on Trump’s decision to go to war. Carlson, the former Fox News star who has built his own independent operation, told ABC News over the weekend that

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the attack was “absolutely disgusting and evil.”

“It’s hard to say this, but the United States didn’t make the decision here,” Carlson said on his podcast, citing the Israeli prime minister. “Benjamin Netanyahu did.”

‘No one should have to die for a foreign country’

Kelly, another former Fox anchor gone indie, said about American casualties on her show that “no one should have to die for a foreign country. I don’t think those service members died for the United States. I think they died for Iran or Israel.”

Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s remarks prior to a Capitol Hill briefing were a flashpoint. Rubio said that Trump had given the go-ahead for the operation knowing that Israel was prepared to strike and he feared retaliation from Iran against U.S. bases in the region.

“We knew that if we didn’t preemptively go after them, before they launched those attacks, we would suffer higher casualties,” Rubio said. House Speaker Mike Johnson said that if the administration had not acted, lawmakers would have wondered why.

Walsh, a Daily Wire host, wrote on X that Rubio was “flat out telling us that we’re in a war with Iran because Israel forced our hand. This is basically the worst possible thing he could have said.”

Trump told journalist Rachael Bade in an interview that he did not believe that the opinions of Carlson and Kelly are shared by his base of supporters. “I think that MAGA is Trump,” he said. “MAGA’s not the other two.”

Former U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has fashioned herself as an influencer and media figure since bitterly breaking with Trump, said on Kelly’s podcast that she was furious over the U.S. military action. “Make America Great Again,” Greene says, “was supposed to be America first, not Israel first.”

Will Trump supporters return to the fold?

Trump is probably right to think that most of his supporters will return to the fold if they’re unhappy with the Iran attack, said Jason Zengerle, author of “Hated By All the Right People: Tucker Carlson and the Unraveling of the Conservative Mind.” Given the consistency of his views on the topic, Carlson is probably the most important of Trump’s conservative critics, Zengerle said.

“If the war does go badly, I think it strengthens the hand of someone like Tucker,” he said. “All of this is a debate about what happens after Trump is gone anyway.”

There have been cracks in Trump’s conservative media support prior to Iran, notably with the vast and sprawling narratives around the Epstein report. But this week’s criticism unleashed some startling internal vitriol. Ben Shapiro of “The Daily Wire” called Kelly “wildly inconsistent” and a coward. Elisabeth Hasselbeck denounced Kelly for her suggestion that American servicemen died for Israel. “How dare you?” Hasselbeck said Tuesday on “The View.”

Fox News’ Sean Hannity said that Carlson was “not the person I knew when he was at Fox.” Kelly denounced Hannity as a supplicant who “would never say anything other than to puff Donald Trump up.”

It’s worth remembering that most of what readers and viewers are seeing in conservative media supports Trump. Howard Polskin, publisher of The Righting newsletter, estimated Tuesday that about 95% of what he’s monitored on websites is behind the president. “Trump Stands Tall on Iran,” headlined The American Spectator.

The most popular personalities on Fox News — still the top dog among conservatives — continue to be supportive. Hannity, Brian Kilmeade and Mark Levin were among the most vociferous leading up to the attack and after. “The president has shown more courage and this Pentagon, Pete Hegseth’s Pentagon, has executed brilliantly once again,” said Kilmeade, the “Fox & Friends” co-host.

“I think that MAGA gives him the benefit of the doubt, no question about it,” Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary during the early part of Trump’s first term, said on his podcast Tuesday. “I think he’s built up a ton of credibility with the base. ... Look, you’ve got PTSD from a lot of our former leaders between Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, who only know forever wars, and so I get it. But this president has proven now twice that he knows what he’s doing.”

Criticism of war rollout draws specific White House rebuke

The podcast influencers who helped to drive many young men into Trump’s camp during the 2024 cam-

paign have been largely quiet so far.

Some of Walsh's criticism this week appeared to sting so much that it drew a specific rebuke from White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt.

"So far we've heard that although we killed the whole Iranian regime, this was not a regime change war," Walsh wrote on Monday. "And although we obliterated their nuclear program, we had to do this because of their nuclear program. And although Iran was not planning any attacks on the U.S., they also might have been, depending on who you ask. And although we are not fighting this war to free the Iranian people, they are now free, or might be, depending on who seizes power, and we have no idea who that will be. The messaging on this thing is, to put it mildly, confused."

Leavitt posted a lengthy response on X explaining Trump's rationale. "Simply put," she wrote, "the terrorist Iranian regime would not say yes to peace."

'It's too warm': Greenland's fishermen are under threat from climate change

By EMMA BURROWS, KWIYEON HA and EVGENIY MALOLETKA Associated Press

ILULISSAT, Greenland (AP) — Fisherman Helgi Áargil no longer knows what to expect on Greenland's fjords, where he spends up to five days at a time on his boat with his dog, Molly, and the ever-changing northern lights in the sky as company.

Last year, his boat got stuck in ice that broke off the nearby glacier. This year, it's been very wet instead. His income is just as unpredictable. An outing could bring him around 100,000 Danish kroner (about \$15,700), or nothing at all.

The Arctic's rapidly changing climate is bringing more questions for Greenland, the semiautonomous territory of Denmark that's been shaken by U.S. President Donald Trump's interest in owning it.

While Trump's approach to Greenland has shifted, the world has been unable to slow the effects of climate change. The Arctic is warming faster than any other region in the world, driven by the burning of oil, gas and coal.

What that means for the fishing industry that largely drives Greenland's economy is unknown. Fishing accounts for up to 95% of exports, many to the territory's biggest market, China, along with the United States, Japan and Europe.

Disappearing sea ice

Wrapped in a wool sweater against the freezing wind, Áargil explained how he fishes for halibut and cod. Other top catches are shrimp and snow crab, which including legs can reach more than a meter (3 feet) in length.

Traditional ice fishermen who make up half the local industry are seeing the most dramatic changes to the way they fish.

"My father was fishing from the sea ice" one and a half meters (almost 5 feet) thick, recalled Karl Sandgreen, head of the Icefjord Center that documents climate change in the region and is based in the town of Ilulissat.

That sea ice started disappearing around 1997, Sandgreen said, and fishermen who drilled through the ice to fish increasingly started to fish by boat instead. The use of boats allows fishermen to reach larger areas, but that can come with extra costs and pollution that that accelerates warming.

Fishing has shaped Greenland's communities. The harbor where fishermen return to sell their catch is at the heart of every town or village. Before heading out, some fishermen pick up boxes from the island's fishing companies to pack their catch which, in the capital of Nuuk, is winched from the boat to the fish factory.

Toke Binzer, the chief executive of the island's single biggest employer, Royal Greenland, said he is increasingly worried about a future with greatly diminished sea ice. That could push traditional fishermen toward larger communities and into the ranks of commercial fishing.

The challenge now is how to support traditional fishermen when there is sometimes "too much ice to

sail, too little to go out on," Binzer said. Already, that unpredictability has caused a "huge" problem.

Royal Greenland already loans fishermen money to buy a boat, which they repay from selling their catch, Binzer said.

If everyone turns to fishing from boats, that could help economically but lead to overfishing, said Boris Worm, an expert in marine biodiversity at Dalhousie University in Canada.

In Greenland, there are already signs of too much fishing close to shore as halibut are getting smaller, Binzer said. Worm agreed, calling it a classic sign of overfishing as the bigger fish are caught and the smaller, younger ones are left.

That problem could worsen as the retreating ice makes fish more accessible. Fish stocks could rise as the warmer weather causes increased rain and melting ice to bring more nutrients for plankton, which the fish feed on, Worm said.

He warned, however, that the fish may not behave as "predictably," as in the past, perhaps by seeking new food sources if they can no longer feed on the algae which grows under the sea ice.

Few options beyond fishing

On his boat near Nuuk, Aargil considered another challenge: Warm weather is making some fish harder to catch as they go deeper in search of colder waters.

"It's too warm," he said, looking at the hills around the fjord. "I don't know where the fish is going, but there's not so much."

Options beyond fishing remain few in Greenland. Tourism is increasing but far from making up a significant part of the economy.

Tradition, too, is at the heart of worries about climate change. Already, dog sleds have been confined to land when there is no sea ice.

"It's really important for many Greenlanders to have the ability to go out and sail," said Ken Jakobsen, the manager at Royal Greenland's factory in Nuuk. Fishing is the "most important" thing.

In the capital alone, he said, there are more than 1,000 boats in the harbor during summer — in a territory where the total population is little over 50,000.

Explosions sound in the Iranian capital as war with US and Israel enters a fifth day

By JON GAMBRELL, ELENA BECATOROS and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Explosions sounded in Iran's capital city Wednesday as its war with the U.S. and Israel entered a fifth day following earlier strikes on an Iranian nuclear site and retaliatory strikes by the Islamic Republic across the Gulf region.

Iranian state television reported explosions around Tehran as dawn broke. Meanwhile, Israel said its air defenses were activated due to incoming missile fire from Iran.

Five days into a war that U.S. President Donald Trump suggested would last several weeks or longer, nearly 800 people have been killed in Iran, including some Trump said he had considered as possible future leaders of the country.

Explosions also hit Lebanon, where Israel said it is retaliating against Hezbollah militants. Lebanon's state-run media reported that at least four people were killed in an Israeli strike that hit a residential complex in the city of Baalbeck.

A day earlier, Israel launched airstrikes against Iranian missile launchers and a nuclear research site, and Iran struck back against Israel and others, targeting U.S. embassies and disrupting energy supplies and travel.

The American embassy in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. consulate in the United Arab Emirates came under drone attacks. Iran has fired dozens of ballistic missiles at Israel, though most of the incoming fire has been intercepted. Eleven people in Israel have been killed since the conflict began.

In other developments, the Pentagon identified four U.S. Army Reserve soldiers who were killed in a

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drone strike Sunday at a command center in Kuwait. The strike also killed two other service members.

The spiraling nature of the war raised questions about when and how it would end.

Trump's administration has offered various objectives, including destroying Iran's missile capabilities, wiping out its navy, preventing it from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ensuring it cannot continue to support allied armed groups.

While the initial U.S.-Israeli strikes killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Trump urged Iranians to overthrow their government, senior administration officials have since said regime change was not the goal.

Trump on Tuesday seemed to downplay the chances of the war ending Iran's theocratic rule, saying that "someone from within" the Iranian regime might be the best choice to take power once the U.S.-Israel campaign is finished.

Trump says people the US had in mind to lead Iran are dead

Speaking Tuesday from the Oval Office, Trump said Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's toppled shah, is not someone that his administration has considered in depth to take over.

As far as possible leaders inside Iran, "the people we had in mind are dead," Trump said.

"I guess the worst case would be do this, and then somebody takes over who's as bad as the previous person, right? That could happen," Trump said. "We don't want that to happen."

Iran's leaders are scrambling to replace Khamenei, who ruled the country for 37 years. 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.

Israel and US strike nuclear facilities and other targets

Adm. Brad Cooper, the top U.S. military commander in the Middle East, said American forces have struck nearly 2,000 targets in Iran since the war began. In a video posted Tuesday on X, Cooper said the U.S. has "severely degraded Iran's air defenses" and taken out hundreds of ballistic missiles, launchers and drones.

"We've just begun," Cooper said.

Satellite images published Tuesday by Colorado-based company Vantor showed the domed roof of Iran's presidential complex in Tehran had been destroyed, supporting Israel's claim of an overnight strike. Iran did not acknowledge the damage or report any casualties.

Israeli military spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said the Israeli military struck a building in the Iranian city of Qom where clerics were expected to meet to discuss selecting a new supreme leader. He said the army was still assessing whether anyone was hit.

The Israeli military said it also conducted airstrikes on Iranian sites that produce and store ballistic missiles, and that it destroyed what it called Iran's secret, underground nuclear headquarters. Without providing evidence, it said the site was used for research "to develop a key component for nuclear weapons."

There was no immediate public comment from the U.S. or Iran about the site Israel named.

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.

Iran hits US Embassy in Riyadh and Washington pulls out staff

An attack from two drones on the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh caused a "limited fire," according to the Saudi Arabian Defense Ministry, and the embassy urged Americans to avoid the compound.

An Iranian drone struck a parking lot outside the U.S. consulate in Dubai, sparking a small fire, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in Washington. He said all personnel were accounted for.

U.S. embassies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Lebanon said they were closed to the public.

The U.S. State Department ordered the evacuation of non-emergency personnel and family in Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. And U.S. citizens were urged to leave more than a dozen Middle Eastern countries, though many were stranded because of airspace closures.

The State Department said Tuesday it's preparing military and charter flights for Americans wanting to leave the Middle East. Other countries were arranging flights for their citizens.

Hundreds have died, including children

The U.S.-Israeli strikes have killed at least 787 people in Iran, according to the Red Crescent Society. In Lebanon, where Israel launched retaliatory strikes on the Iranian-supported militant group Hezbollah, 50 people were killed, including seven children, Lebanon's health ministry said.

Kuwait, which had previously reported a single death, said Wednesday that an 11-year-old girl was killed by falling shrapnel as Kuwaiti forces were intercepting "hostile aerial targets." In addition, three people were killed in the United Arab Emirates and one in Bahrain.

The U.S. military has confirmed six deaths of American service members.

Four of the Americans killed were identified as Capt. Cody A. Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Florida; Sgt. 1st Class Noah L. Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Nebraska; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole M. Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minnesota; and Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa, who received a posthumous promotion in rank. They were assigned to the Iowa-based 103rd Sustainment Command.

Pentagon dispute bolsters Anthropic reputation but raises questions about AI readiness in military

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Anthropic's moral stand on U.S. military use of artificial intelligence is reshaping the competition between leading AI companies but also exposing a growing awareness that maybe chatbots just aren't capable enough for acts of war.

Anthropic's chatbot Claude, for the first time, outpaced rival ChatGPT in phone app downloads in the United States this week, a signal of growing interest from consumers siding with Anthropic in its standoff with the Pentagon, according to market research firm Sensor Tower.

The Trump administration on Friday ordered government agencies to stop using Claude and designated it a supply chain risk after Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei refused to bend his company's ethical safeguards preventing the technology from being applied to autonomous weapons and domestic mass surveillance. Anthropic has said it will challenge the Pentagon in court once it receives formal notice of the penalties.

And while many military and human rights experts have applauded Amodei for standing up for ethical principles, some are also frustrated by years of AI industry marketing that persuaded the government to apply the technology to high-stakes tasks.

"He caused this mess," said Missy Cummings, a former Navy fighter pilot who now directs the robotics and automation center at George Mason University. "They were the No. 1 company to push ridiculous hype over the capabilities of these technologies. And now, all of a sudden, they want to be for real. They want to tell people, 'Oh, wait a minute. We really shouldn't be using these technologies in weapons.'"

Anthropic didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. The Defense Department declined to comment on whether it is still using Claude, including in the Iran war, citing operational security.

Cummings published a paper at a top AI conference in December arguing that government agencies should prohibit the use of generative AI "to control, direct, guide or govern any weapon." Not because AI is so smart that it could go rogue, but because the large language models behind chatbots like Claude make too many mistakes — called hallucinations or confabulations — and are "inherently unreliable and not appropriate in environments that could result in the loss of life."

"You're going to kill noncombatants," Cummings said in an interview Tuesday with The Associated Press. "You're going to kill your own troops. I'm not clear whether the military truly understands the limitations."

Amodei sought to emphasize those limitations in defending Anthropic's ethical stance last week, arguing that "frontier AI systems are simply not reliable enough to power fully autonomous weapons. We will not knowingly provide a product that puts America's warfighters and civilians at risk."

Anthropic, until recently, was the only one of its peers to have approval for use in classified military systems, where it has partnered with data analysis company Palantir and other defense contractors. President Donald Trump said Friday, around the same time he was approving Saturday's military strikes on Iran, that the Pentagon would have six months to phase out Anthropic's military applications.

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Cummings, a former Palantir adviser, said it's possible that Claude has already been used in military strike planning.

"I just fundamentally hope that there were humans in the loop," she said. "A human has to babysit these technologies very closely. You can use them to do these things, but you need to verify, verify, verify."

She said that's a contrast to the messaging from AI companies that have suggested that their technology is evolving to the point where it is "almost sentient."

"If there's culpability here, I'd say half is Anthropic's for driving the hype and half is the Department of War's fault for firing all the people that would have otherwise advised them against stupid uses of technology," Cummings said.

One social media commentator this week described Anthropic's government problems as a "Hype Tax" — a message that was reposted by President Donald Trump's top AI adviser, David Sacks, a frequent critic of the company.

And while it has caused legal hassles that could jeopardize Anthropic's business partnerships with other military contractors, it has also bolstered its reputation as a safety-minded AI developer.

"It's applaudable that a company stood up to the government in order to maintain what it felt were its ethics and were its business choices, even in the face of these potentially crippling policy responses," said Jennifer Huddleston, a senior fellow at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute.

Consumers have already spoken, leading to a surge of Claude downloads that made it the most popular iPhone app starting on Saturday and for all phone systems in the U.S. on Monday, according to Sensor Tower. That's come at the expense of OpenAI's ChatGPT, which saw its consumer reputation damaged when it announced a Friday deal with the Pentagon to effectively replace Anthropic with ChatGPT in classified environments.

In the Apple store, the number of 1-star reviews — the worst rating — of ChatGPT grew by 775% on Saturday and continued to grow early this week, reflecting a backlash that forced OpenAI to do damage control.

"We shouldn't have rushed to get this out on Friday," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said in a social media post Monday. "The issues are super complex, and demand clear communication. We were genuinely trying to de-escalate things and avoid a much worse outcome, but I think it just looked opportunistic and sloppy."

Altman gathered employees for an "all-hands" meeting on Tuesday to discuss next steps.

"There are many things the technology just isn't ready for, and many areas we don't yet understand the tradeoffs required for safety," Altman said on X. "We will work through these, slowly, with the (Pentagon), with technical safeguards and other methods."

Anxious travelers scramble as Iran war strands hundreds of thousands across the Middle East

By RIO YAMAT, STEFANIE DAZIO and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

Frustrated and anxious travelers searched Tuesday for any way out of the Middle East and beyond as the widening Iran war choked off commercial air traffic through the region for a fourth straight day, stranding hundreds of thousands of people.

What began Saturday with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran quickly rippled far beyond the immediate conflict zone. With airspace closed or heavily restricted across much of the Gulf, passengers have been stranded not only in the region but also in cities far from the fighting after their connecting flights were canceled.

"They say 'Get out,' but how do you expect us to get out when airspaces are closed?" said Odies Turner, a 32-year-old chef from Dallas who was stuck in Doha, Qatar. "They just have been canceling every flight. I want to go home."

The U.S. told American citizens to leave more than a dozen countries in the region right away using any available commercial transportation. The countries include Iran and Israel, as well as Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

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But commercial options remained limited.

More than 19,000 of the roughly 51,600 flights scheduled into and out of the Middle East between the start of the war and Friday have been canceled, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

Governments explore repatriation flights

The U.S. State Department said Tuesday it was "actively securing" military and charter aircraft to fly Americans out of the region. It said it was in contact with nearly 3,000 citizens seeking assistance or information.

"We know that we're going to be able to help them," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters Tuesday, while cautioning that "it's going to take a little time because we don't control the airspace closures."

Rubio urged stranded Americans to contact the State Department: "We need to know who you are."

Earlier in the day, U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee said the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem was "not in a position at this time to evacuate or directly assist Americans in departing Israel." He provided information "as a courtesy to those wishing to leave" about an Israeli government shuttle bus to Egypt that Americans could try "as you make your own security plans."

Israel's airspace has been closed since Saturday, although some land crossings remain open.

El Al, Israel's flag carrier, said it was launching a large-scale "recovery operation." Transportation Minister Miri Regev said Ben-Gurion Airport is preparing to gradually reopen for limited incoming flights starting early Thursday.

Under the plan, one passenger flight per hour will be allowed in the first 24 hours — totaling about 5,000 people — with more possible depending on security conditions. It is unclear whether only Israelis will be permitted on the flights, and no commercial departures leaving Israel have been approved.

Australia said a commercial flight from Dubai to Sydney was scheduled Wednesday to start repatriating 24,000 Australians stranded in the UAE.

"This is a consular crisis that dwarfs any that Australia has had to deal with in terms of numbers of people," Foreign Minister Penny Wong told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Waiting and watching

Across the Middle East, travelers waited in terminals and hotels, or stayed inside because of airstrikes. Some cruise passengers were unable to disembark or reroute because ships could not sail through the Strait of Hormuz.

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Anxious travelers scramble as Iran war strands hundreds of thousands across the Middle East

By RIO YAMAT, STEFANIE DAZIO and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

Frustrated and anxious travelers searched Tuesday for any way out of the Middle East and beyond as the widening Iran war choked off commercial air traffic through the region for a fourth straight day, stranding hundreds of thousands of people.

What began Saturday with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran quickly rippled far beyond the immediate conflict zone. With airspace closed or heavily restricted across much of the Gulf, passengers have been stranded not only in the region but also in cities far from the fighting after their connecting flights were canceled.

"They say 'Get out,' but how do you expect us to get out when airspaces are closed?" said Odies Turner, a 32-year-old chef from Dallas who was stuck in Doha, Qatar. "They just have been canceling every flight. I want to go home."

The U.S. told American citizens to leave more than a dozen countries in the region right away using any available commercial transportation. The countries include Iran and Israel, as well as Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

But commercial options remained limited.

More than 19,000 of the roughly 51,600 flights scheduled into and out of the Middle East between the start of the war and Friday have been canceled, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

Governments explore repatriation flights

The U.S. State Department said Tuesday it was "actively securing" military and charter aircraft to fly Americans out of the region. It said it was in contact with nearly 3,000 citizens seeking assistance or information.

"We know that we're going to be able to help them," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters Tuesday, while cautioning that "it's going to take a little time because we don't control the airspace closures."

Rubio urged stranded Americans to contact the State Department: "We need to know who you are."

Earlier in the day, U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee said the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem was "not in a position at this time to evacuate or directly assist Americans in departing Israel." He provided information "as a courtesy to those wishing to leave" about an Israeli government shuttle bus to Egypt that Americans

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could try "as you make your own security plans."

Israel's airspace has been closed since Saturday, although some land crossings remain open.

El Al, Israel's flag carrier, said it was launching a large-scale "recovery operation." Transportation Minister Miri Regev said Ben-Gurion Airport is preparing to gradually reopen for limited incoming flights starting early Thursday.

Under the plan, one passenger flight per hour will be allowed in the first 24 hours — totaling about 5,000 people — with more possible depending on security conditions. It is unclear whether only Israelis will be permitted on the flights, and no commercial departures leaving Israel have been approved.

Australia said a commercial flight from Dubai to Sydney was scheduled Wednesday to start repatriating 24,000 Australians stranded in the UAE.

"This is a consular crisis that dwarfs any that Australia has had to deal with in terms of numbers of people," Foreign Minister Penny Wong told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

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A trial seeks to tie Iranian paramilitary to alleged assassination plot in US

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — While the U.S. fights a widening war in Iran, American prosecutors are airing claims that Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard was entangled in a foiled 2024 assassination plot that eyed then-candidate Donald Trump as a possible target.

The alleged scheme is at the center of a criminal trial that started in a federal court in New York last

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week, days before the Mideast combat that now looms in the background.

"This trial is happening in interesting times," Judge Eric Komitee told lawyers this week in the case of Asif Merchant, a Pakistani national accused of trying to hire hit men to kill a U.S. politician. Merchant didn't name a target but searched online for Trump rally locations, according to prosecutors, who introduced evidence Tuesday that Merchant's laptop contained photos of both Trump and then-President Joe Biden at a time when they were rivals for the presidency.

An FBI agent testified Tuesday that Merchant told her he had a Revolutionary Guard "handler" and believed the handler would help bankroll the plan. Merchant's lawyer suggested the purported statements might not be accurate.

Merchant, 47, has pleaded not guilty to attempted terrorism and other charges. His attorneys say prosecutors are trying to wedge evidence into a narrative that doesn't fit.

Merchant's ties to Iran

Merchant has children in Iran and has traveled there. His lawyers have portrayed his trips as religious pilgrimages and family time. But federal authorities have long suggested that he had ties to Iran's theocratic government.

When Merchant was indicted in 2024, then-FBI Director Christopher Wray said the case was "straight out of the Iranian regime's playbook." Then-Attorney General Merrick Garland portrayed it as an example of "Iran's lethal plotting against Americans."

In court Tuesday, an FBI agent opened a window — though a narrow, constrained one — on the government's basis for pointing a finger at Tehran.

It stems from what Merchant allegedly told agents in a July 2024 interview. The session wasn't recorded, and the agents' report on it is sealed. Only a few questions about it were allowed in court.

According to agent Jacqueline Smith, Merchant said one of his cousins introduced him to a Revolutionary Guard handler at some point in Iran. Formally called the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the force has been prominent in Iran under the country's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the U.S.-Israeli attack this weekend. The U.S. deems the Revolutionary Guard a "foreign terrorist organization."

Merchant said he expected his handler would reimburse \$5,000 that Merchant had gotten from his cousin and had given to the supposed hit men, who actually were undercover FBI agents, Smith told jurors. She said Merchant also relayed some advice from the handler: "If he noticed he was being surveilled, he should act normal."

Defense lawyer Avraham Moskowitz underscored that the interview wasn't recorded, and he described the agents' report as "someone's impression of what was said."

"I disagree with that characterization," Smith said, but acknowledged the sealed document wasn't a verbatim account.

The interview was what's known as a proffer session, generally a time when defendants or suspects and their lawyers explore the possibility of cooperating with authorities. Moskowitz noted, while jurors weren't in the room, that proffers can produce a mix of things "that may be true and other things that are said that may not be true."

While getting only a glimpse of that interview, jurors have seen and heard recordings of Merchant interacting with undercover FBI agents and with an acquaintance who flagged him to the agency in the first place.

A recorded talk about a killing

In one June 2024 recording that was played in court this week, Merchant told the undercover agents that he and associates in Pakistan were looking for people to steal documents, create protests at political events, "and the last thing is: Maybe you can, say, kill someone."

"The third thing you wanted, like, that could be a big deal," one of the agents observed. He dangled the possibility that "you want somebody's wife killed?"

"No, no.... maybe it's some political person, maybe some other person," said Merchant, who later explained that he didn't yet know exactly whom.

"Wow," the agent said, adding: "That's gonna cost."

About a week later, Merchant was recorded meeting the agents at a Manhattan rooftop restaurant and then, in a nearby car, handing them \$5,000 in rolled-up, rubber-banded \$100 bills.

Trump points out alleged Iranian plots

Merchant was arrested in Texas on July 12, 2024, as he was packing to fly back to Pakistan, authorities said in court documents.

A day after Merchant's arrest, a Pennsylvania man made an attempt on Trump's life at a campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania. Officials said it appeared the gunman acted alone but that they had been tracking a threat on Trump's life from Iran, a claim that the Islamic Republic called "unsubstantiated and malicious."

The president alluded to the alleged Iranian plots Sunday as he discussed Khamenei's death.

"I got him before he got me," Trump told ABC News.

Noem defends her portrayal of killed Minneapolis protesters as agitators, in her Senate hearing

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem defended her department's immigration enforcement tactics in front of a Senate committee on Tuesday and pushed back against criticism from Democrats who say she wrongly disparaged two protesters killed by federal officers in Minneapolis earlier this year.

It was Noem's first congressional appearance since the shooting deaths of the two protesters galvanized widespread opposition to how the Trump administration is executing its mass deportation agenda, a centerpiece policy of President Donald Trump's second term. At the time, Noem portrayed the protesters, two U.S. citizens, as agitators, although accounts from local officials and bystander video contradicted assertions from her and other administration officials.

In one exchange, retiring Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina called her leadership a "disaster" and skewered her handling of the immigration crackdown and her management of emergency response.

In the hearing, which stretched nearly five hours, Noem defended her agency's treatment of immigrants caught up in enforcement activities, and blamed activists and others for attacks against officers.

"I want to address the dangerous environment that our ICE officers face on the streets today," Noem said. "They are facing a serious and escalating threat as a result of deliberate mischaracterizations of their heroic work and rhetoric that demonizes our law enforcement."

Since the deaths in Minneapolis, the administration has taken steps meant to tone down tensions, including drawing down the operation there. But the administration has continued pressing restrictions against both legal and illegal immigration, has been buying up warehouses for immigration detention and persisting in federal enforcement in areas around the country. Noem said about 650 investigators remain in Minnesota as part of a broader fraud probe.

The immigration tactics of Noem's department have triggered a clash in Congress over its routine funding, which remains unresolved, although a spending bill passed last year granted it a significant infusion of cash for the Republican administration's mass deportation policy. Noem called the partial shutdown "reckless" and blamed Democrats for a move she said put national security at risk.

Her appearance in front of the Judiciary Committee also comes after a weekend shooting at a bar in Texas that is being investigated as a possible act of terrorism, leading to concerns that the escalating conflict in Iran could have repercussions for security in the U.S.

Noem blames chaotic situation for her characterization of killed protesters

In what was initially billed as an effort to root out fraud in Minnesota, Homeland Security sent hundreds of officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection to the state. They were met by protesters who organized marches, patrolled neighborhoods for ICE activity with whistles and ferried food to immigrants too afraid to leave their homes.

Renee Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, was shot and killed by an ICE officer on Jan. 7, setting off

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intense protests demanding an end to the operation. Then on Jan. 24, Customs and Border Protection officers opened fire on another Minnesota resident, Alex Pretti, who had been filming enforcement operations.

Those deaths led to cries for accountability and transparency. Noem, whose initial comments portrayed both Good and Pretti as the aggressors, has come under withering criticism by Democrats and some Republicans, who have called for her to resign.

Democrats repeatedly questioned Noem about her initial comments and called on her to apologize.

"You and your agency rushed to brand these victims as, quote, domestic terrorists," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top Democrat on the committee. "We have ample video evidence and eyewitness testimony proving you are wrong. Your statements caused immeasurable pain to these families."

Noem said she was relying on information from people on the scene and blamed "violent protesters" for contributing to the chaos officers encountered.

"I was getting reports from the ground from agents at the scene, and I would say that it was a chaotic scene," she said.

After public outrage over the deaths, Trump sent border czar Tom Homan to Minneapolis to take control of operations. Homan has since announced a drawdown of the ICE and CBP officers who had been sent to Minnesota to carry out what had been dubbed Operation Metro Surge, although he's been adamant that the president's mass deportation agenda will continue.

Noem also faced some Republican criticism

Republicans largely kept the focus on the large numbers of migrants who came into the country under former President Joe Biden, portraying Noem as the leader of a cleanup effort of the former administration's mess.

But she did come under some harsh questioning by members of her own party. Tillis, who called on Noem to resign following the shootings in Minneapolis, criticized her for erroneously arresting American citizens, for failures in her disaster recovery agency and for how she shot her own dog.

"What we've seen is a disaster under your leadership, Miss Noem, a disaster," Tillis said. "What we've seen is innocent people getting detained that turn out are American citizens."

Tillis, who has already announced that he is not running for another term., added: "We're beginning to get the American people to think that deporting people is wrong. It's the exact opposite. The way you're going about deporting them is wrong."

Another Republican, Sen. John Kennedy from Louisiana, also pushed her to explain why her department paid more than \$200 million for an ad campaign she appeared in last year encouraging migrants to leave the country voluntarily and questioned whether Trump knew about the price tag ahead of time.

Noem, who is set to appear Wednesday in front of a House committee, defended those ads, saying they were effective and went through the regular department bidding process.

"Well, they were effective in your name recognition," Kennedy said.

High-tech snowplows and AI help cities clean up from big storms

By JEFF McMURRAY Associated Press

Residents of Syracuse, New York — America's snowiest city — once barraged a service hotline with street neglect complaints during blizzards, even if plows had passed two hours earlier but the work was hidden by fresh snow.

Now public trust seems to be rising as Syracuse and other cities across the U.S. integrate upgrades such as video monitoring, GPS mapping and artificial intelligence into snow operations that once relied almost entirely on manual planning.

Syracuse was one of the first to revamp the way it deploys its snowplows, and complaint calls have dropped by 30% under the new system, said Conor Muldoon, the city's chief innovation officer.

"People will look out their window and say, 'Hey, you guys are doing a terrible job,'" Muldoon said. "And we can point to a public map and say, 'Here's all the breadcrumbs for when that plow was there.'"

Snowier than usual in the US snow capital

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Each winter, Syracuse averages 126 inches (3.2 meters) of snow, more than any other U.S. city of at least 100,000 people. Even before the blizzard that pounded the Northeast last week, the city had already surpassed its typical average due to a record 2-foot (60-centimeter) accumulation on one day in late December.

With a goal of clearing every street within 24 hours after a storm, Syracuse partnered in 2021 with San Francisco-based Samsara to put live GPS tracking and dashcams on city fleet vehicles including snowplows. Integrated with GIS mapping software, the system allows officials to monitor live video and plow locations in real time.

While residents can't access live feeds, they can view a public map that updates every 5 minutes to show which roads have been cleared.

Samsara started incorporating AI into its products in 2019. This winter, for the first time, it has provided customers with footage from other cameras within its large network, helping officials better understand conditions on a street even when no worker is there.

Kiren Sekar, the company's chief product officer, cited an example of needing to dispatch the closest plow for a snow emergency in Plainwell, Michigan.

"Rather than having to sift through a list of vehicles, it can actually figure this out: 'We've got Trevor in vehicle 203, 15 minutes away,'" Sekar said.

New York City's approach

Samsara partners with communities of various sizes to upgrade their snowplow systems, but the nation's largest city — New York City — developed its own.

Its tracking program known as BladeRunner monitors snow removal equipment (including garbage trucks with plows attached) while a human in a command center — not AI — analyzes the GPS data. The city is exploring AI in the future to process the thousands of 311 calls and online service requests it can get in a single day.

The other way the big city's approach differs from its upstate neighbor of Syracuse is that each plow runs a specific route during storms, ensuring main and side streets get essentially the same treatment.

"So what it does is allow equity," said Joshua Goodman, deputy commissioner at the city's Department of Sanitation.

Typically 99% of the city's roads will be plowed within the first four hours after a moderate snowfall under ideal conditions, but Goodman said it didn't quite meet that mark during last week's historic storm.

Cutting costs and insurance claims

With U.S. cities and states spending upward of \$4 billion each year on snow operations, the new technology also helps assure roads aren't overplowed or oversalted, which can cause environmental damage.

Fayetteville, Arkansas, launched a public-facing snow removal map for the first time this winter. It reported improvements in plowing time, labor costs and fuel savings, despite enduring about double the snow from a year ago.

"This is the first year some roads have ever been treated or plowed, and that goes right back to being able to see where we need to go and if we've been there," said Ross Jackson Jr., the city's fleet operations manager.

The township of Edison, New Jersey, reduced its spending on salt and brine by 35% and its insurance payouts by 60%, thanks to video that helped prove plow drivers usually weren't at fault when the vehicles collided with another motorist's car.

Video installed on snowplows in Iowa helped demonstrate that all but one of 12 snowplow accidents in a single day were the other driver's fault, said Craig Bargfrede, the state's winter operations administrator.

"How can you not see this big orange truck with flashing lights ahead of you?" he said. "Boom, they just drive right into us."

Kalamazoo County was the first county in Michigan to employ turn-by-turn navigation to dispatch snowplows during a storm. Rusty McClain, assistant general superintendent of its Road Commission, called it a huge improvement in efficiency.

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"The old-school way of doing it, that bird's eye view of where everyone needs to go to plow, was just in a large book with paper maps," McClain said. "You'd have to pull over, find the page you're looking for, call somebody on the phone and ask if they have plowed that area."

An Oscar race that looked like a runaway may be a close call, after all

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Who says to beware the Ides of March?

A March 15 Academy Awards may feel late. By then, it will be almost a year since "Sinners" sunk its teeth into moviegoers last April. Some nominees have been on the campaign trail since the Cannes Film Festival in May.

But the upside of a prolonged Oscar race has meant some unexpected late drama. Think about the same movies long enough, and minds can change. For months, Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" sailed through awards season, picking up prize after prize. But the wins for "Sinners" and Michael B. Jordan at Sunday's Actor Awards — along with some other recent developments — have given the Oscar race what Smoke or Stack might call fresh blood.

An Academy Awards that had looked like a runaway might be a close call, after all. With Oscar voting ending Thursday, let's survey the top categories

Best Picture

WHERE THINGS STAND

"One Battle After Another" has won at the Golden Globes, the BAFTAs, the Producers Guild and the Directors Guild. But its nearly unblemished record was shaken up at Sunday's Actor Awards (formerly the SAG Awards), where "Sinners" took the top prize. You'd have to have quite a few rounds at the "Sinners" juke joint to convince yourself that anything else has much of a chance.

WHAT HAS THE EDGE

The tea leaves are strongest for Anderson's "One Battle After Another." The Producers Guild, which uses a preferential ballot like the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences does, is among the most predictive of bellwethers. Their winners have matched the last five years and in eight of the last 10 years.

The actors guild best ensemble prize, on the other hand, has a shaky track record. In the last 31 years, the SAG winner has matched the Oscar champ only 15 times. The win for "Sinners," though, came right in the midst of Oscar voting. It was a good time to show out. So this race feels close to a coin flip, with a Warner Bros. movie on both sides. The awards season resume makes "One Battle After Another" the front-runner. But "Sinners," even with a record-setting 16 Oscar nominations, gets to play the underdog.

Best Actor

WHERE THINGS STAND

This has been one of the most competitive and hard-to-call races of the season. Look at Leonardo DiCaprio. He gives one of the best performances of his career, in the best picture favorite, and he's still a long shot. Instead, Timothée Chalamet was widely perceived as in the lead after early wins at the Globes and the Critics Choice Awards for his frenetic performance in "Marty Supreme." But the BAFTAs muddied the waters (Robert Aramayo, not in the Oscar mix, was the unexpected winner). And "Sinners" star Michael B. Jordan, much to his surprise, won at the Actor Awards.

WHO HAS THE EDGE

Chalamet's maybe meta campaign, full of swagger and braggadocio, rubbed some voters the wrong way. At the same time, many in the academy felt the 30-year-old should have won last year, for his Bob Dylan in "A Complete Unknown" — a year when he won with the actors guild but lost to Adrien Brody ("The Brutalist") at the Oscars. Chalamet will hope the reverse happens this year. But the academy is notoriously resistant to rewarding young stars. Jordan, 39, isn't much older. But it now suddenly feels like his moment.

Best Actress

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WHERE THINGS STAND

Since the fall festival launch of "Hamnet," Jessie Buckley has been the favorite. She's won at the Globes, the BAFTAs and the Actor Awards. Her closest competition is probably Rose Byrne, who won at the Globes in the comedy/musical category for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You."

WHO HAS THE EDGE

This one's easy. Fortunes have fluctuated in most of the top categories, but Buckley has been entrenched as the front-runner for months.

Best Supporting Actor

WHERE THINGS STAND

Sean Penn, a two-time Oscar winner, has done nearly no campaigning, yet he finds himself the favorite after winning at the Actor Awards and the BAFTAs. But several other nominees remain in the mix. Stellan Skarsgård ("Sentimental Value") won at the Globes and is the kind of widely-liked veteran actor the academy likes to reward. But so is Delroy Lindo ("Sinners"), who was a surprise Oscar nominee. In the eyes of many, Lindo has quickly joined the contenders.

WHO HAS THE EDGE

Penn's recent wins put him clearly in the lead, and he might stay there. But this remains a category rife with possibilities. The academy's strong international leanings should help Skarsgård. And it wasn't an accident that when "Sinners" won best ensemble at the Actor Awards, Lindo gave the acceptance speech.

Best Supporting Actress

WHERE THINGS STAND

This category has been all over the map. Teyana Taylor ("One Battle After Another") won at the Globes. Wunmi Mosaku ("Sinners") won at the BAFTAs. And Amy Madigan ("Weapons") won at both the Actor Awards and the Critics Choice Awards.

WHO HAS THE EDGE

Any of those three could win. Two of them — Taylor and Mosaku — have the benefit of co-starring in films the academy obviously loves. "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" have 29 nominations between them, while "Weapons" has only the one. Yet the 75-year-old Madigan, another celebrated character actor who's been great for decades, has the momentum thanks to her charming Actors Award speech.

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

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Oil prices jumped Tuesday for the second straight day and gas prices moved higher in the United States, underscoring the threat of rising inflation posed by the Iran war.

Coming after nearly five years of elevated costs, even a modest pickup in prices could further sour many Americans on the economy and heighten the affordability concerns that have become a top political issue.

On Tuesday, U.S. oil prices rose more than 5% to \$75.22 a barrel in afternoon trading. Gas prices jumped 11 cents to \$3.11 a gallon on average nationwide, according to AAA.

A key issue, economists say, is how long the conflict lasts and whether shipping routes, such as the Strait of Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, is closed. About one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas is shipped through the Strait. Even a war of a few weeks might not push up inflation or weaken the economy very long. But should it last for a few months, inflation would likely worsen — perhaps topping 3% for the first time since early 2024.

Here are some ways the war could worsen 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 increase as airlines face bigger fuel costs. Ship-

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ping would also become more expensive, which could add to grocery prices. Oil is also used in chemicals and plastics and in many industrial processes, so higher prices could spread.

Natural gas prices have also risen sharply, after a liquid natural gas plant was shut down in Qatar. That could raise electricity 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.

President Donald Trump on Tuesday acknowledged that oil and gas prices have risen as the U.S. remains engaged in the ongoing Middle East conflict, but he argued that prices would drop once the war ends.

"We have a little high oil prices for a little while, but as soon as this ends, those prices are going to drop, I believe, lower than even before," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

For every \$10 increase in the price of a barrel of oil, economists estimate that U.S. gas prices would rise about 25 cents. Should prices top \$100 a barrel, gas would move closer to \$3.50 a gallon or higher.

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, said Alex Jacquez, chief of policy and advocacy at the Groundwork Collaborative and an economic adviser to the Biden White House.

"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."

Interest rates could also rise

With inflation potentially headed higher, the Federal Reserve could further delay any additional interest rate cuts. The Fed cut its key rate three times last year, but kept them unchanged in January, despite Trump's repeated demands to cut them further. When the Fed reduces its rate, over time it can lower consumer borrowing costs for things like mortgages and auto loans.

On Tuesday, Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said that before the Iran war he had supported at least one interest rate cut this year as inflation slowly cooled. But now he isn't so sure.

"With the geopolitical events that we talked about, I just need to see," he said at the Bloomberg Invest conference in New York City, referring to the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran. "We need to get a lot more data in." Kashkari is one of 12 voting members of the Fed's rate-setting committee.

Financial markets have forecast two rate cuts this year, according to futures prices, and Trump has loudly demanded many more reductions. But the odds of those two cuts occurring this year have fallen since

the Iran war began.

Country by country, here's how the unfolding war is affecting the Middle East

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The unfolding war in the Middle East has ricocheted across the region, with nearly every country sustaining damage from missile hits or shrapnel, many reporting casualties, and key embassies, economic engines and passageways closing down.

Foreign governments are urging their citizens to leave on any available commercial flight as Gulf airspaces largely close, cruise ships can't pass through the Strait of Hormuz, and major airlines cancel flights. The U.S. State Department says it has evacuated nonemergency personnel and families in six nations, adding the United Arab Emirates to its list on Tuesday. It also has advised citizens from 14 countries to leave. Governments from Russia to Germany and France also scrambled to run repatriation flights.

Here's a country-by-country breakdown of the impact of the war so far.

All airspace information is from the real-time flight-tracking service Flightradar 24, as of Tuesday, or national authorities.

Iran

Damage and casualties: Iran has by far the highest reported death toll of countries in the region. The Iranian Red Crescent Society said the U.S.-Israeli operation has killed at least 787 people. That includes more than 160 the state-run IRNA news agency says were killed by a strike on an elementary school in Minab. Israel says it was not involved in the incident. When asked by reporters about it, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he did not have details but that the U.S. would not deliberately target a school.

U.S.-Israeli strikes have targeted nuclear infrastructure, missile launchers, government buildings in Tehran and leadership compounds, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other top military officials. Satellite images of Iran's Natanz nuclear facility taken Monday show several damaged buildings, compared with imagery from the previous day, along with additional damage across the facility's complex.

Airspace: Closed.

Israel and the Palestinian territories

Damage and casualties: Several locations have been hit by Iranian missiles, killing 11 people. The extent of damage to Israeli military bases and other sensitive locations is unknown; the military does not reveal that information.

Airspace: Closed for commercial flights.

Lebanon

Damage and casualties: 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," and sent ground troops into southern Lebanon border areas. Hezbollah also said it launched drones targeting an Israeli air base. The Israeli military said it downed two drones.

Israel and Hezbollah fought a war for more than a year, ending with a November 2024 ceasefire that left the militant group greatly weakened.

The U.S. Embassy in Lebanon said Tuesday it was closing to the public until further notice.

Airspace: Lebanon's airspace is not fully closed. Flights are coming and going, but many airlines have canceled flights.

Saudi Arabia

Damage and casualties: Iran struck the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia's capital early Tuesday. 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.

Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura oil refinery also came under attack from drones, but its defenses downed the

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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.

Airspace: Partially closed in the area bordering Iraq and the Persian Gulf.

Kuwait

Damage and casualties: On Monday, the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait was struck. On Tuesday, it announced it was closing to the public until further notice.

Six U.S. soldiers in a logistics unit were killed by a strike in Kuwait, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Kuwaiti Health Ministry said Sunday that one person was killed and 32 injured in an Iranian strike, all migrant workers from unnamed countries.

Airspace: Closed

United Arab Emirates

Damage and casualties: Three people were killed in the UAE — foreign workers from Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The city of Dubai, with a global reputation as the safest place in the Middle East and a hub for global investment, has sustained damage to its international airport and, according to CENTCOM, hotels along its coastline. Iran also targeted two Amazon data centers in the UAE, the company said Tuesday.

Airspace: Closed for commercial flights. Some evacuation flights began Monday.

Egypt

Damage and casualties: The ripple effects of the war have hit Egypt's struggling economy, as global shipping firms decided to reroute vessel fleets away from the Suez Canal. The canal, which connects the Mediterranean and Red Seas, is a major source of foreign currency for the cash-strapped country.

Airspace: Commercial flights are leaving the country, though there have been cancellations, and most countries are recommending residents travel through Taba and Sharm al-Sheikh instead of Cairo.

Jordan

Damage and casualties: Jordanian police announced Sunday that five people were injured by falling shrapnel after Iranian projectiles were intercepted in the kingdom's airspace.

Airspace: The Jordanian Civil Aviation Authority said the airspace will be closed from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily until further notice.

Qatar

Damage and casualties: Iran has hit energy facilities in Qatar.

Airspace: Closed.

Iraq

Damage and casualties: Strikes on Iranian proxy sites by the U.S. or Israel have killed militia members. Multiple drone and missile attacks have been launched at the U.S. bases and consulate in Irbil, and protesters attempted to storm the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Iraq's Ministry of Oil said Tuesday that it would stop production in a key oil field because of disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, causing crude oil prices to surge worldwide. The ministry cited a shortage of tankers entering the Gulf, forcing them to "stop production and pumping" from the southern Rumaila fields near the city of Basra.

Airspace: Closed.

Bahrain

Damage and casualties: Bahrain's Interior Ministry said fire from a strike killed one Asian worker and seriously wounded two others early Monday morning. There was also a drone impact near an Amazon data center, the company said Tuesday.

Airspace: Closed.

Syria

Damage and casualties: Several people, including children, suffered minor injuries in the countryside outside Damascus from Iranian missile debris, Syria's state news agency SANA said. Some areas in Syria's southern provinces also saw missile debris fall from Iranian projectiles fired toward Israel, with no additional injuries or material damage reported, SANA said.

Airspace: Closed.

Oman

Damage and casualties: Oman has been attacked by drones multiple times since the Iran war started. The attacks targeted the country's largest port of Salalah, as well as Duqm port. At least one vessel also was hit off the country's coast.

Airspace: Open, but many commercial flights are canceled.

Iranian strikes on Amazon data centers highlight industry's vulnerability to physical disasters

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Damage to three Amazon Web Services facilities in the Middle East from Iranian drone strikes highlights the rapid growth of data centers in the region, as well as the industry's vulnerability to conflict.

The company's cloud computing division, Amazon Web Services, said late Monday that two data centers in the United Arab Emirates were "directly struck" and another facility in Bahrain was also damaged after a drone landed nearby.

"These strikes have caused structural damage, disrupted power delivery to our infrastructure, and in some cases required fire suppression activities that resulted in additional water damage," AWS said in an update on its online dashboard.

It said by late Tuesday that recovery efforts at the UAE data centers were making progress.

Unlike previous AWS disruptions involving software that resulted in widespread global outages, these attacks involving physical damage appear to have resulted only in localized and limited disruption.

Amazon Web Services hosts many of the world's most-used online services, providing behind-the-scenes cloud computing infrastructure to many government departments, universities and businesses.

The company advised customers using servers in the Middle East to migrate to other regions, and direct online traffic away from the UAE and Bahrain.

"Amazon has generally configured its services so that the loss of a single data center would be relatively unimportant to its operations," said Mike Chapple, an IT professor at the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business.

Other data centers in the same zone can take over, and most of the time this happens seamlessly every day to balance workloads, he said.

"That said, the loss of multiple data centers within an availability zone could cause serious issues, as things could reach a point where there simply isn't enough remaining capacity to handle all the work."

Amazon doesn't typically disclose the exact number of data centers it operates around the world.

It says only that its data centers are clustered in 39 geographic regions, with three such regions in the Middle East, covering the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel.

Each AWS region is split up into at least three data center availability zones, with each zone isolated and physically separated "by a meaningful distance," although they are all within 100 kilometers (60 miles) of each other and connected by "ultra-low-latency networks" that reduce the time lag for data transmission.

AWS says its data centers have redundant water, power, telecom, and internet connections "so we can maintain continuous operations in an emergency."

They also have physical security, but those measures, including security guards, fences, video surveillance and alarm systems, are designed to keep out intruders rather than defend against missile attacks.

Chapple said the attacks are a reminder that cloud computing isn't "magical" and "still requires physical facilities on the ground, which are vulnerable to all sorts of disaster scenarios."

Data centers run by AWS and other operators are massive facilities that are hard to hide, he added.

"Organizations using services from any cloud provider in the Middle East should immediately take steps to shift their computing to other regions," Chapple said.

From Karachi to Beirut, Khamenei's death sends shockwaves across the Shiite world

By ELENA BECATOROS and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in U.S.-Israeli strikes over the weekend did not just shake Iran. It has reverberated across the Shiite Muslim world, raising the specter of a broader backlash in the Middle East and beyond.

For the Muslim world's Shiite minority, 86-year-old Khamenei was more than just Iran's theocratic ruler since 1989. He was also one of their most prominent religious and political figures. His death at the hands of a joint U.S.-Israeli operation has stoked fury across the Shiite world.

"There is reason to be concerned about how Shia minorities across the Middle East, and in particular ... the Shia majority in Iraq might respond to this," said Burcu Ozcelik, senior research fellow for Middle East security at the Royal United Services Institute, or RUSI, a UK-based defense and security think tank.

Shiite Muslims make up around 10% to 15% of the world's Muslim population, concentrated mainly in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Azerbaijan, while there are also significant communities in Pakistan, Lebanon and Yemen.

For Mamoon Shirazi, a Shiite activist in Pakistan's Punjab province, Khamenei "was not only our leader but a leader for all. He raised his voice against oppression. He never bowed to anyone; he spoke the truth and was like a father to us."

Protests erupt

Within hours of Khamenei's death, thousands of infuriated protesters took to the streets in Pakistan. They tried to storm the U.S. Consulate in the southern city of Karachi and clashed with police outside the diplomatic enclave in Islamabad where the U.S. Embassy is located, while also attacking United Nations offices in northern cities. At least 34 people were killed in clashes with security forces. More than 120 were injured.

"If the United States and Israel are not stopped, the entire world will turn into ruins. Peace-loving people must awaken," said Syed Hussain Muqaddasi, head of the Pakistani Shiite political party Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafariya.

In Iraq, demonstrators clashed with police near the U.S. Embassy, while in Lebanon, the Iran-affiliated Hezbollah group fired missiles towards Israel for the first time in over a year. It triggered intense Israeli airstrikes on the country that killed dozens of people. Tens of thousands of people fled their homes in the predominantly Shiite areas of southern and eastern Lebanon as Israel threatened more strikes, called up 100,000 reservists and sent troops into southern Lebanon.

"I think there's a psychological, emotional aspect to the killing of Khamenei and we are very much in the early days of trying to make sense of what that might look like," said Ozcelik of the UK-based think tank.

Frustration at Iran's meddling in other countries

Still, Ozcelik noted the potentially violent backlash could be tempered by growing frustration, even among Shiite populations, at Iran's meddling in other countries' affairs.

Over the last five to 10 years, the young generation in Iraq in particular, she said, has shown resistance to Iran's "overwhelming penetration" of Iraqi domestic affairs, including its security services, judiciary, politics and economy.

Involvement in countries with a significant Shiite population has been a defining feature of Iran's foreign policy for decades. Tehran adopted a strategy of building alliances not only with states, but also with armed groups — the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon, being just two, as well as armed groups in Iraq and Syria.

Its interventions, generally presented as seeking to protect Shiites' interests, often drew criticism of undermining countries' sovereignty and fostering instability. One of the Trump administration's key demands of Iran ahead of this conflict had been that it sever support to proxy groups in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen — a demand Iran rejected.

Given this frustration, Ozcelik suggested there is unlikely to be the "sharp, violent sectarianism that we

saw after 2003," when Iraq descended into a bloody, prolonged period of violence between the formerly dominant Sunni minority and Shiite majority in the wake of the U.S. invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Muslim. The violence spilled across other countries in the region, most notably into the Syrian civil war.

Since then, "the Middle East in many ways has moved on. I think there is a strong urge and desire for de-escalation at this point, particularly in the Gulf," Ozelik said.

Previous prominent targets

Over the past years, the U.S. and Israel have assassinated some of the most prominent figures in the Iran-led regional alliance, including Shiite clerics. It began with the 2020 killing of Iran's Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, along with veteran Iraqi militant Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad.

In September 2024, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, the de-facto head of an Iranian alliance spread across Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon, was killed in a massive Israeli airstrike south of Beirut.

But Khamenei was by far the biggest blow.

"After the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran says it has no red lines left," said Trita Parsi, co-founder and executive vice president of American foreign policy think tank Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

A region in turmoil

Tehran's backlash has brought turmoil across the region.

Hundreds of missiles and drones have flown across the Middle East and as far afield as Cyprus. Usually prosperous and peaceful countries like the United Arab Emirates and Qatar scrambled to shoot down Iranian weaponry as they shut their airspace, grounding commercial flights and stranding hundreds of thousands of passengers.

Many Shiites perceive the strikes against Iran and Khamenei's killing as aimed against their entire community.

"There is targeting of Muslims in general, but the targeting is specifically directed at Shiites," said Nasser Khazal, whose building was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike Tuesday in a suburb of the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

Lebanese political analyst Qassim Qassir said Iran's vehement retaliation is seen as a fight for Shiite survival against the U.S. and Israeli vision for the region.

"There is targeting of the Shiite community and its political and religious leaders, and today it is an existential war, whether in Iran, Lebanon, or Iraq," said Qassir, author of a book about Hezbollah. "The United States and Israel want to impose their project on the region."

War with Iran strains the US-UK relationship as Starmer and Trump disagree

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Keir Starmer has never had a bad word to say in public about Donald Trump.

That is not being reciprocated now as the American president lambasts the British prime minister over his reluctance to join the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran.

"This is not Winston Churchill that we're dealing with," Trump said Tuesday at the White House, blasting Britain's reluctance to let U.S. warplanes use its bases.

The dispute is roiling a relationship that Starmer worked hard to forge, and further straining trans-Atlantic ties frayed by Trump's "America first" foreign policy and transactional approach to international relations.

Britain is in Trump's bad books

"This was the most solid relationship of all. And now we have very strong relationships with other countries in Europe," Trump told British tabloid The Sun in an interview published Tuesday.

"I mean, France has been great. They've all been great," Trump said. "The U.K. has been much different from others."

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"It's very sad to see that the relationship is obviously not what it was," he said.

Starmer initially blocked American planes from using British bases for the attacks on Iran that started on Saturday. He later agreed to let the United States use bases in England and on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to strike Iran's ballistic missiles and their storage sites, but not to hit other targets.

Even after the British base at Akrotiri in Cyprus was hit by an Iran-made drone over the weekend, Starmer said that the United Kingdom "will not join offensive action." He said Tuesday that a Royal Navy destroyer, HMS Dragon, and Wildcat helicopters with counter-drone capabilities were being sent to the region as part of "defensive operations." British forces have also shot down drones in Jordanian and Iraqi airspace, the government said.

Starmer has offered a rare, though implicit, rebuke of the U.S. president, saying Monday that the U.K. government doesn't believe in "regime change from the skies."

"Any U.K. actions must always have a lawful basis and a viable, thought-through plan," Starmer told lawmakers in the House of Commons on Monday.

"President Trump has expressed his disagreement with our decision not to get involved in the initial strikes, but it is my duty to judge what is in Britain's national interest," Starmer added.

The Financial Times called it Starmer's "Love Actually moment" — a reference to the 2003 movie scene in which a British prime minister played by Hugh Grant stands up to a bullying U.S. president played by Billy Bob Thornton.

Friction has grown over Greenland and Diego Garcia

Friction between the two leaders has been building for months. Trump's threat to take over Greenland was denounced by Starmer and other European leaders earlier this year. Recently, Trump has condemned Britain's agreement to hand over the Chagos Islands, home to the Diego Garcia base, to Mauritius, despite his administration earlier backing the deal.

Peter Ricketts, a former head of the U.K. Foreign Office, told The Observer newspaper that under Trump, "the Americans have effectively given up on any effort to be consistent with international law."

That is a red line for the law-abiding Starmer, a barrister and former chief prosecutor for England and Wales.

The spat is a setback for Starmer's efforts to woo Trump since the president's return to office in 2025. The British government rolled out the red carpet to the president for a state visit as the guest of King Charles III, and Starmer consistently has praised Trump's efforts — so far unsuccessful — to broker an end to the Russia-Ukraine war.

The Iran war has also divided European leaders, who fall along a spectrum from condemnation to support.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said that he unreservedly approves of Trump's decision to attack Iran and kill its supreme leader, and called the war crucial for Europe's security.

The U.K., France and Germany jointly said that they weren't involved in the strikes, but were prepared to enable "necessary and proportionate defensive action to destroy Iran's capability to fire missiles and drones at their source."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez condemned the strikes as "unjustifiable" and "dangerous."

Polling suggests many Britons are skeptical of the U.S. justification for war. But politicians to the right of Starmer's Labour Party slammed the prime minister for not joining the offensive. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch said that her party "stands behind America taking this necessary action against state-sponsored terror."

Foreign Office Minister Stephen Doughty denied the U.S.-U.K. "special relationship" was on the ropes.

"Our relationship with the United States is strong," he said Tuesday in the House of Commons. "It has endured, it continues to endure, and it will endure into the future on both the economic and the security fronts."

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

By JIM VERTUNO and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

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 are investigating as a possible 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 are still looking for a motive behind the shooting, which sent people in the bar and surrounding streets scrambling for cover.

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.

Some college students dove for cover while others stayed 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. Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis said the suspect parked, got out with a rifle and fired on others before officers rushed to the intersection and shot him.

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 also 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 the weapons

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

Police said the gunman was 53-year-old Ndiaga Diagne. He legally bought the pistol and rifle he used in the attack several years ago in San Antonio, Davis 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 1 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 of police and emergency workers.

"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."

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 Congress, 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

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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 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 brakes 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."

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 hard-line 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 single-handedly starts another war."

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

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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, Anailia 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" 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."

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"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 protesters, 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."

Today in History: March 4, Abraham Lincoln's final inauguration

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, March 4, the 63rd day of 2026. There are 302 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 4, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated for a second term. With the end of the Civil War in sight, and just six weeks before his assassination, Lincoln declared:

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the fight as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Also on this date:

In 1789, the Constitution of the United States took effect as the first Federal Congress met in New York.

In 1801, Thomas Jefferson became the first president to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C.

In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated for his first term as president; he was the last U.S. president to be inaugurated on this date (subsequent inaugurations have been held on Jan. 20). In his inaugural speech, Roosevelt stated, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

In 1966, John Lennon of The Beatles was quoted in the London Evening Standard as saying, "We're more popular than Jesus now," a comment that caused an angry backlash in the United States.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation on the Iran-Contra affair, acknowledging that his overtures to Iran had "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal.

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that workplace sexual harassment laws are applicable when the offender and victim are of the same sex.

In 2015, the Justice Department cleared Darren Wilson, a white former Ferguson, Missouri, police officer, in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a Black 18-year-old, but also issued a scathing report calling for sweeping changes in city law enforcement practices, which it called discriminatory and unconstitutional.

In 2020, daredevil Nik Wallenda successfully walked across a 1,800-foot tightrope spanning the active Masaya Volcano in Nicaragua, completing the trip across the steel cable in just over 31 minutes.

Today's birthdays: Film director Adrian Lyne is 85. Author James Ellroy is 78. Musician-producer Emilio Estefan is 73. Actor Mykelti (MY'-kul-tee) Williamson is 69. Actor Patricia Heaton is 68. Democratic Sen.

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Tina Smith of Minnesota is 68. Actor Steven Weber is 65. Rock musician Jason Newsted is 63. Author Dav Pilkey is 60. Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma is 58. NBA forward Draymond Green is 36. NFL wide receiver George Pickens is 25. Singer Cameron Winter is 24.