

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 1 of 63

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Baby-sitter Ad](#)
- [4- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [5- Prairie Doc: Meaningful Living in Rural Communities:](#)
- [6- Graduation Cards Ad](#)
- [7- Good Luck at SoDak16](#)
- [8- More than \\$4,000 raised for childhood cancer research during Shave to Save event](#)
- [13- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [14- EarthTalk: Ravaged Forests](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: The impact of federal funding on civil legal aid in South Dakota](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [22- Daily Devotional](#)
- [23- Subscription Form](#)
- [24- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [25- News from the Associated Press](#)

Monday, March 9

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast; Egg bake

School Lunch: Corn dog, chips

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Groton Senior Citizens, 1 p.m., Community Center

1st Grade Boys Basketball Practice, 4:30 p.m., elementary gym

HS Baseball Practice, 6 p.m., HS Gym

Tuesday, March 10

Senior Menu: Pork sandwich, baked beans, tomato spoon salad, fruit.

End of Third Quarter

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Beef and broccoli, rice.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

ACT Testing

HS Baseball Practice, 6 p.m., HS Gym

SoDak16 Boys Basketball: Groton vs. Pine Ridge at Chamberlain, 5:30 p.m.

Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym

Biogirls, 3:45 p.m., elementary gym



Wednesday, March 11

Senior Menu: Chili with beans, winter blend, fruit, cornbread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Mac & Chees, peas.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Soup Supper (Nigeria Circle hosts), 6 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.

Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., elementary gym

6th Grade Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., HS Gym

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 2 of 63

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.

New Iranian Leader

Iran's 88-member Assembly of Experts selected Mojtaba Khamenei as the country's next supreme leader, succeeding his father, Ali Khamenei, who was killed in an Israeli strike last month. Israel and the US have indicated they would not accept Khamenei as leader.

The update comes after Israeli strikes hit Iranian oil depots near Tehran, sending clouds of black smoke over the city. The attacks marked the first on Iran's energy infrastructure in the 10-day war and come as average gas prices in the US are up 14% to \$3.41 per gallon as of this writing, with prices varying by state.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has meanwhile sought to deescalate conflict with the country's Gulf neighbors, though strikes have continued in several countries. The Pentagon has separately confirmed a seventh US service member was killed, one week after being wounded by an Iranian airstrike in Saudi Arabia.

Dog Sled Race Begins

The 54th Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race kicked off yesterday, with hundreds of dogs amassing at the ceremonial start in downtown Anchorage, Alaska, before moving north to the official starting line. Thirty-four mushers will compete, with the race expected to end in mid-March.

The race dates back to 1973, with cofounders Dorothy Page and Joe Redington Sr. seeking to honor the state's mushing tradition. The race also honors Alaska's Iditarod Trail—a 938-mile freight and mail route forged in 1908 that was later instrumental in responding to a diphtheria outbreak. Though the first race (1,000 miles) lasted 20 days, dogs today have become faster, reaching the finish line in Nome in roughly 10 days. There are 12-16 dogs per sled to start, as some dogs exit due to injury; mushers must finish with at least five.

Norwegian billionaire Kjell Rokke will join the fray in this year's race in an honorary expedition capacity. He is contributing to the race's purse, lifting the yield from \$57K to \$80K.

Michigan Tornadoes

At least four people were killed and 12 others wounded after powerful tornadoes touched down in southwest Michigan Friday, the deadliest such storm in the state since 1980. Two others were killed in Oklahoma as severe weather swept across the Plains and Midwest.

The intensity of the storms caught forecasters by surprise. Michigan averages about 15 tornadoes per year; fewer than one occurs in March, and those tend to be relatively weak. An initial assessment placed the strongest of the Michigan tornadoes at EF3, with peak winds of at least 150 mph.

While Michigan sits outside "Tornado Alley"—the central and southeastern US states most prone to twist-ers—recent data suggests tornado activity has shifted eastward over the past few decades.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 3 of 63

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

George Russell wins 2026 Australian Grand Prix for Mercedes in Formula 1 season opener, followed by teammate Kimi Antonelli.

NFL free agency negotiating window begins today at 12 pm ET.

Country Joe McDonald, lead singer and cofounder of the 1960s counterculture band Country Joe and the Fish, dies at age 84.

"Hoppers" earns \$88M globally in opening weekend, best showing for an original animated film and Pixar since "Coco" in 2017.

Science & Technology

OpenAI's head of robotics, Caitlin Kalinowski, resigns, citing the company's recent deal with the Pentagon. FDA vaccine chief, Vinay Prasad, to leave agency for second time since July.

Engineers create first modular robot with "athletic" intelligence; AI-designed configurations let the machines adapt to a variety of environments (More, w/video)

3D-printed "superfoam" absorbs up to 10 times as much energy as conventional padding; may have use in automotive and defense applications.

Business & Markets

US stock markets continue decline Friday (S&P 500 -1.3%, Dow -1.0%, Nasdaq -1.6%) on weak February job numbers, concern over fallout from Iran war.

Media conglomerate Axel Springer to acquire Telegraph Media Group for nearly \$770M.

Investment platform Robinhood debuts publicly listed fund allowing retail investors to buy into a portfolio of privately held startups; shares fall 16% on first day of trading.

Politics & World Affairs

Two reported Islamic State members arrested for throwing explosive device outside New York City's Gracie Mansion amid anti-Islam rally; NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D) was not wounded.

Norwegian police investigate whether an explosion at the US Embassy in Oslo is linked to terrorism; no one was wounded or killed.

Nepali rapper-turned-mayor is expected to become prime minister, with party on track to win a majority in last week's elections.

Need a **Babysitter** or **House Cleaner?**

♥ **Babysitting Available!**

House Cleaning Offered!

Text Jeslyn Kosel at (605)-290-7821

I'm in Groton but am willing to drive to nearby towns!

The advertisement features a colorful illustration of a teddy bear, a baby bottle, and a stack of colorful blocks on the left, and a yellow bucket filled with cleaning supplies like a spray bottle, a broom, and gloves on the right. At the bottom, there is a small house and a red car on a road.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 4 of 63



With the 2025 NFL season officially over, all 32 teams will begin laying the foundation for 2026 and beyond. Some teams have championship aspirations, some teams are hoping to ascend out of the proverbial basement, and some teams will be somewhere between the two. For the Minnesota Vikings, the quest for that ever-elusive Lombardi Trophy begins as it always does, by looking in the rearview mirror.

Today marks the third of four articles that will examine the 2025 roster to reveal which positions and players can be built around, and which need to be upgraded. This week, we break down the front seven of the defense with the defensive line and linebacker groups.

The Vikings made some big changes to the defensive line last offseason, trading away Harrison Phillips and signing Jonathan Allen and Javon Hargrave. The goal was to increase the pressure on opposing quarterbacks, and the two new signings – combined with the emergence of Jalen Redmond – did just that. As a group, the defensive line had 16 sacks and 31 QB hits in 2025, compared to just four sacks and 12 QB hits in 2024.

Unfortunately, because of the shake-up in the front office this offseason and the salary cap issues, the Vikings will reportedly be trading or releasing both Allen and Hargrave. The move is surprising. Both players were priority free agent signings just a year ago, and while they are both in their early 30s, neither showed any sign of slowing down. Not to mention, they have nearly \$28 million in combined dead cap penalties. If Allen and Hargrave are released, the Vikings' defensive line group will consist of Jalen Redmond, Levi Drake Rodriguez, Tyrion Ingram-Dawkins, Taki Taimani, and Elijah Williams. Redmond is clearly a starting caliber player, but the rest all have question marks.

A week ago, I would have told you that the edge rusher group was the strongest group on the roster. Jonathan Greenard, Andrew Van Ginkel, and Dallas Turner are an excellent three-headed pass-rushing monster. However, there are reports that Greenard is unhappy with his current contract, and the team is listening to trade offers. If he is gone, Van Ginkel and Turner are still a solid duo. However, the depth behind them is incredibly thin: Tyler Batty, Chaz Chambliss, and Bo Richter.

The strength of the team is on the verge of being one injury away from a disaster, which is especially concerning because Van Ginkel missed nearly a third of the 2025 season due to injury.

The inside linebacker position is in even worse shape than the edge rushers and the defensive line. As of right now, the only LB on the 2026 roster is Blake Cashman, who is a solid starter but is often injured (he's never played a full season since being drafted in 2019). Eric Wilson signed a one-year deal last offseason to add depth at the position, but he ended up starting 16 games and is now a free agent. Ivan Pace Jr. turned heads in 2023 as an undrafted free agent, but his playing time has diminished every year since, and he's also a free agent.

The Vikings better hope the offense can score 30 points per game, because as it sits right now, this defense is going to be problematic in 2026.

Meaningful Living in Rural Communities: Pathways to Productive Aging

By: **Whitney Lucas Molitor, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L, BCG** and **Allison Naber, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L**

Living in rural communities offers unique opportunities to promote successful aging. Incorporating a purposeful lifestyle, developing social connections and engaging in daily physical activity is essential to achieving positive health outcomes and quality of life.

Finding purpose includes exploring the activities you already engage in and being open to new possibilities. Engaging in motivating activities provides a framework for a purposeful life. The selected activities can promote health, foster a sense of identity and give a sense of purpose in life while aligning with personal values and interests. While some daily activities are performed without much thought, identifying others may require careful exploration.

In rural communities, consideration of the physical context is also essential. The American Occupational Therapy Association provides a framework that incorporates reflection on personal values, interests and prior life experiences. This approach, along with establishing priorities and goals, can be a valuable way to explore daily activities and create new opportunities for engagement that enhance purpose in daily life. To align life purpose with a rural context, it is essential to incorporate outdoor activities, find creative ways to connect with family and friends and explore opportunities with local groups. Activities can be modified to support evolving interests, abilities and desires.

Establishing and maintaining strong social connections is critical to promoting healthy aging in rural communities. Older adults in rural areas may experience social isolation due to limited opportunities for interaction. This can be due to changes in overall health, technology barriers (limited internet access or limited computer or smartphone skills) or physical barriers (limited community mobility or driving restrictions). Social isolation can pose physical, psychological and behavioral health risks. Engaging in meaningful activities with others can help build relationships, find purpose or fulfillment and develop new hobbies or skills. Educational programs or groups are an excellent way to explore new leisure activities or learn strategies to improve health and well-being. Reaching out to family or friends, visiting your local senior center, attending community events, or joining a club can all provide a sense of connection, purpose and well-being.

In addition to staying socially connected, developing a regular physical activity routine is essential for older rural adults. Adults over 65 should set goals to strengthen their muscles and improve their balance by engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week. Moderate physical activity increases breathing and heart rate, but you should still be able to talk while active. Beneficial activities include brisk walking, dancing, riding a stationary bike or NuStep, using weights or resistive exercise bands, gardening or participating in water aerobics. Consider setting a goal to move your body for 30 minutes each day to reduce sedentary time. Sedentary activities include watching TV, reading, sitting or lying down. Prolonged sedentary behavior increases the risk of poorer health outcomes among older adults. Intentionally participating in meaningful activities throughout the day will reduce time spent sedentary. Reduce sedentary behavior by standing during commercial breaks, walking around your home after a meal or stretching after reading the paper or playing cards. Incorporating the strategies mentioned in this article can promote well-being and enhance quality of life.



Whitney Lucas Molitor, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L, BCG, is department chair and associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of South Dakota. Lucas Molitor is a licensed occupational therapist in Iowa and South Dakota. Her research interests include health promotion and productive aging. Allison Naber, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L, is the academic fieldwork coordinator and an associate professor in The Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of South Dakota. Naber is a licensed occupational therapist in Minnesota and South Dakota. Her research interests include occupational performance and life balance, particularly as they relate to healthy aging. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 6 of 63



GRADUATION CARDS DESIGNED & PRINTED WHILE YOU WAIT!

Have your graduation cards created at the
**Groton
Independent Office**

No ordering online.
No waiting weeks.
No shipping delays.

- ✓ Sit down.
- ✓ Help design it.
- ✓ Approve it on the spot.
- ✓ And walk out with your cards in your hands!

★ **ONLY \$50 FOR 100 CARDS** ★



Text Paul at **605-397-7460**
to set up your appointment today!

Celebrate your senior. Shop local. Get it done the easy way.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 7 of 63



Groton Area Tigers

Standing: Assistant Coach Ryan Tracy, Assistant Coach Jordan Carson, Anthony Tracy, JJ Muller, Ethan Kroll, Jordan Schwan, Jace Johnson, Easton Weber, Ryder Schelle, Asher Johnson, Head Coach Greg Kjellsen

Sitting: Karson Zak, Keegen Tracy, Becker Bosma, Gage Sippel, Ryder Johnson, Logan Warrington, Jayden Schwan (J.Simon Photography)

Good Luck Groton Area Boys at the SoDak16

Groton Area Vs. Pine Ridge

5:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2026, Chamberlain High School

from these GDILIVE.COM sponsors!

BaseKamp Lodge
Bierman Farm Service
Blocker Construction
Dacotah Bank
Farmers Union Coop
Groton Ag Partners
Groton American Legion
Groton Chamber
Groton Dairy Queen
Groton Ford
Hanlon Brothers

John Sieh Agency
Jungle Lanes & Cafe
Ken's Food Fair
Krueger Brothers
Lori's Pharmacy
Poet
S & S Lumber
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
The MeatHouse
Weismantel Insurance Agency

More than \$4,000 raised for childhood cancer research during Shave to Save event

By Elizabeth Varin



Joel Murano, whose son Charlie passed away in December 2023 after a courageous battle with cancer, was a featured speaker at the event. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Clippers buzzed and cheers echoed through the old gym at Groton Area High School on Sunday afternoon as strands of hair drifted to the floor — and by the end of the Groton Fellowship of Christian Students' Shave to Save event, a sizable pile of hair lay on a tarp on stage.

In all, six men had their heads shaved during the event, while nine women and girls had their hair trimmed, helping raise funds for the foundation's mission to support childhood cancer research and families facing a pediatric cancer diagnosis.

Organizers initially set a fundraising goal of \$1,000, but the community exceeded that mark. By the end of the afternoon, more than \$4,000 had been raised.

"I think that it's easy to not care about something until you're personally impacted by it, so for us to take the initiative to support those who are going through it is really important," said Sarah Schuster, one of the organizers and participants, having her hair trimmed at the event. "... Cancer impacts every person. Childhood cancer might not necessarily impact all of us, but the ones who are going through it, they need a lot of support. So I'm really honored to be able to do that for families like the Murano's."

Joel Murano, whose son Charlie passed away in December 2023 after a courageous battle with cancer, was a featured speaker at the event. He talked about one-year-old Charlie's cancer fight and the need for cancer research.

Organizers thanked Murano for speaking at the event, as well as all those who helped make the event a success.

Schuster called out HOSA students who organized activities for kids, the Aldersgate Church praise band, those who had their heads shaved or hair trimmed, the donors, the attendees and the committee members who helped make it all possible.

"We're lucky to live in this community where so many people care," she said.

Though Groton's school colors are black and yellow, the gym was awash in green for the occasion — the signature color of the St. Baldrick's Foundation.

Green balloons framed the St. Baldrick's Foundation banner on stage, participants wore green hair-cutting smocks, and those who had their heads shaved celebrated afterward with accessories, including a green sequined tie, clover-shaped sunglasses and even a headband topped with a shock of fake green hair.

Beyond the festive green decorations, many of those who took part had deeply personal reasons for stepping forward.

John Kroll, who had his head shaved Sunday, said he chose to participate because his family has been affected by cancer. He lost a brother a couple of years ago, and his sister is currently battling cancer.

Kroll said it's important to be involved in things like Sunday's event to get the research out there and to help find a better cure for cancer for kids.

What began as a local fundraiser ultimately became a show of support for children and families facing cancer, with each snip and shaved head contributing to the ongoing work of the St. Baldrick's Foundation to advance childhood cancer research.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 9 of 63



From left: Cathy Pietz shaves Doug Sippel's head, Paityn Craig trims Leah Jone's hair and Casey Johnson trims Tori Schuster's hair during the Shave to Save event Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



From left: Cathy Pietz trims Andi Iverson's hair, Paityn Craig trims Kailynn Gerlach's hair and Casey Johnson trims Tori Schuster's hair during the Shave to Save event Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



From left: Cathy Pietz shaves Jason Hills' head, Paityn Craig shaves John Kroll's head and Casey Johnson shaves Tom Schuster's head during the Shave to Save event Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Cathy Pietz shaves Doug Sippel's head during the Shave to Save event Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 10 of 63



The Aldersgate Church praise band perform during the Shave to Save event Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Mike Imrie has his head shaved by Cathy Pietz during the Shave to Save event on Sunday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



From left: Mike Imrie has his head shaved by Cathy Pietz, Jordan Carson has his head shaved by Paityn Craig and Tom Schuster has his hair shaved by Casey Johnson during the Shave to Save event Sunday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 11 of 63



Jordan Carson has his head shaved by Paityn Craig during the Shave to Save on Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Mike Imrie has his photo taken by Sarah Schuster while Cathy Pietz takes a step back from cutting Imrie's hair during the Shave to Save event on Sunday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Basketball players gathered at the stage to watch as Jordan Carson has his head shaved by Paityn Craig during the Shave to Save on Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 12 of 63



Basketball players gathered at the stage to watch as Jordan Carson has his head shaved by Paityn Craig during the Shave to Save on Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Back row, from left: Jordan Carson, Tom Schuster, Mike Imrie, John Kroll, Jason Hill and Doug Sippel stand on stage after getting their heads shaved at the Fellowship of Christian Student's Shave to Save event Sunday afternoon. Front row, from left: Kailynn Gerlach, Sarah Schuster, Tori Schuster, Andi Iverson, Avery Crank, Leah Jones, MaKenna Krause, Aspen Beto and Kyleigh Kroll had their hair trimmed. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 13 of 63

What can **\$20**
get you?



for
**SENIOR
CITIZENS**

Open 24/7

GDI Living



Fitness

or anyone using physical therapy

15 N Main • Ste. 101

**BEST
RATES
AROUND!**

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

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

MONTH-TO-MONTH

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



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

Same rates for several years!



Ravaged Forests Release Massive CO2 Into Atmosphere by Marium Zahra

Dear EarthTalk: Are some forests starting to release more CO2 into the atmosphere than they are absorbing due to so many dying trees from pest infestation and wildfire?

– F.M., New York, NY

Forests are vital carbon sinks: They absorb more carbon dioxide (CO2) than they emit, playing a crucial role in regulating the climate. Through photosynthesis, trees pull CO2 from the atmosphere and store it in their trunks, branches, leaves and roots. This helps slow climate change by reducing greenhouse gases. But a concerning trend has emerged: Some forests now release more CO2 than they absorb, shifting from carbon sinks to sources. This is being driven by pest infestations, wildfires, and climate change.



Forests aren't always net carbon sinks, especially given the uptick in pest infestations and wildfires which causes them to release otherwise stored CO2. Credit: Roddy Scheer.

Forests naturally fluctuate between absorbing and releasing CO2, but long-term trends matter. "It's natural for forests to cycle through times where they are carbon sinks and then carbon sources," says Tony Vorster, a research scientist at the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory. Rising temperatures exacerbate stressors like pest outbreaks and drought. When trees reach critical temperature thresholds, they release more CO2 than they absorb, increasing warming in a dangerous feedback loop.

Pests and pathogens also pose threats. Infestations and diseases kill trees, reducing CO2 storage. Invasive species worsen the problem, increasing tree vulnerability. "Climate change often makes trees even more susceptible to damage from insects and disease," says Leigh Greenwood, Director of The Nature Conservancy's Forest Pests and Pathogens program. Wildfires also drive forest carbon loss. Severe fires release stored carbon, kill mature trees and limit future carbon sequestration. In some cases, forests transition to shrublands with lower carbon storage. Increased wildfire frequency, fueled by climate change and dry conditions, creates a feedback loop: More fires release more CO2, further warming the planet.

Effective forest management helps. Treatments like prescribed burns and thinning reduce wildfire severity and protect long-term CO2 storage. Ecologically informed treatments prioritize large, healthy trees; biomass utilization converts dead wood into low-carbon products. "A diverse forest that combines small and big trees and species diversity is more resilient," notes Chonggang Xu, a senior scientist at Los Alamos. Strong policies and funding are essential. Increased funding is needed for research, monitoring and sustainable forestry practices. Incentives like Farm Bill programs and public-private partnerships can help. According to the World Resources Institute, fuel treatments and biomass utilization could support 49,000 jobs in rural communities for 20 years..



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

The impact of federal funding on civil legal aid in South Dakota

by Emma Olafson

Every year, millions of Americans face life-altering civil legal crises such as eviction, domestic violence, or losing custody of a child. Despite tireless efforts from South Dakota organizations, 92% of civil legal crises faced by low-income individuals still go unaddressed due to chronic underfunding. Funding from the Legal Services Corporation is essential to South Dakota's legal aid organizations' staying operational and serving the state's most vulnerable residents.

In September, Dakota Plains Legal Services helped a domestic violence survivor obtain a divorce that had been pending for nearly four years. The husband had evaded service, moved out of state, and made it impossible to finalize the divorce. Dakota Plains refiled the case in the wife's current county, located the husband's address, and successfully served him with the necessary papers. Without the help of Dakota Plains, the wife may not have been able to move forward and finally be free from a life-threatening situation.

Cases like this are not uncommon. Family law matters, divorces, custody disputes and protection orders make up most of the work handled by South Dakota's legal aid organizations. In 2024, approximately 57% of East River Legal Services' cases were family law-related, and 25% were housing-related. Approximately 32% of Dakota Plains' cases were family-related and 14% were housing-related. Each one represents a life changed and a barrier to justice overcome.

The importance of legal aid is made stark by the imbalance in eviction cases. Landlords have an attorney in 83% cases. Tenants have legal assistance in 4% of cases. This gap of underrepresented tenants leaves families in demanding situations.

Dakota Plains has helped individuals avoid eviction by contacting their landlords and establishing agreements. Without the assistance of the Dakota Plains staff, these individuals would have faced eviction on their records, making it difficult to put a roof over their family's heads. Federal funding from the Legal Services Corporation is helping South Dakota legal aid organizations keep people and families off the streets and in safe homes.

The Legal Services Corporation is a key national funder of 133 civil legal aid programs. The corporation has been funding these crucial services for low-income Americans since 1974. In South Dakota, the corporation distributes federal support to East River Legal Services and Dakota Plains Legal Services. In 2025, South Dakota received nearly \$2.7 million in civil legal aid funding to be distributed between the two organizations. As a result of this funding, South Dakota legal aid organizations helped over 7,000 people, including children, facing civil legal crises.

A legal needs assessment was conducted in South Dakota, in partnership with East River and Dakota Plains. The study revealed that nearly one in five civil cases between 2018 and 2021 were rejected, leaving people without access to legal help as they navigated the civil court system.

A rejection can take many forms, including not meeting the poverty threshold, insufficient funding, inadequate staff due to funding constraints, and case priority policies. The rejections stem from South Dakota's

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 16 of 63

inability to financially support its legal organizations, leaving our vulnerable population feeling abandoned. The poverty threshold is generally set at around 125% of the poverty line. For a family of four, qualifying for legal aid often means earning less than \$39,000 annually.

Legal Services Corporation funding impacts South Dakotans every day. A Sioux Falls woman had lived in the same apartment for 17 years. She always paid her rent on time and relied on a housing voucher that kept her afloat. She had a medical setback, which caused her to fall behind on rent. Her landlord filed for an eviction. The woman was terrified of losing her home and the voucher that kept a roof over her head. This eviction could have ended both of those.

She reached out to East River Legal Services for help, and an attorney stepped in. The attorney contacted opposing counsel, and both sides reached an agreement. The agreement allowed the landlord to receive payments on a payment plan and to waive all late fees and attorney fees. Thanks to East River Legal Services, the eviction was dismissed. The woman was able to keep her voucher, remain in the home, and avoid the devastating impacts of an eviction.

Although it might seem like a large amount, \$2.7 million in funding is insufficient to meet the legal needs of vulnerable South Dakotans. Increasing federal funding by even 10% nationwide would have a significant impact on South Dakota. The Legal Services Corporation website has created a funding calculator that shows how increased funding can impact your state. In South Dakota, this increase in funding would help roughly 988 more people, solve 742 civil legal problems, provide 246 more individuals with access to legal information and self-help resources, and help 309 more children.

Applications for legal assistance have continued to rise in recent years. East River Legal Services received over 3,000 applications for assistance in 2025. This was an increase in applications over 2024. The people of South Dakota have stepped in to help close the justice gap for their community members, and it is deeply appreciated by those who receive services, but more is needed. Increasing the federal funding is essential to maintain access to justice for vulnerable and underrepresented populations in South Dakota.

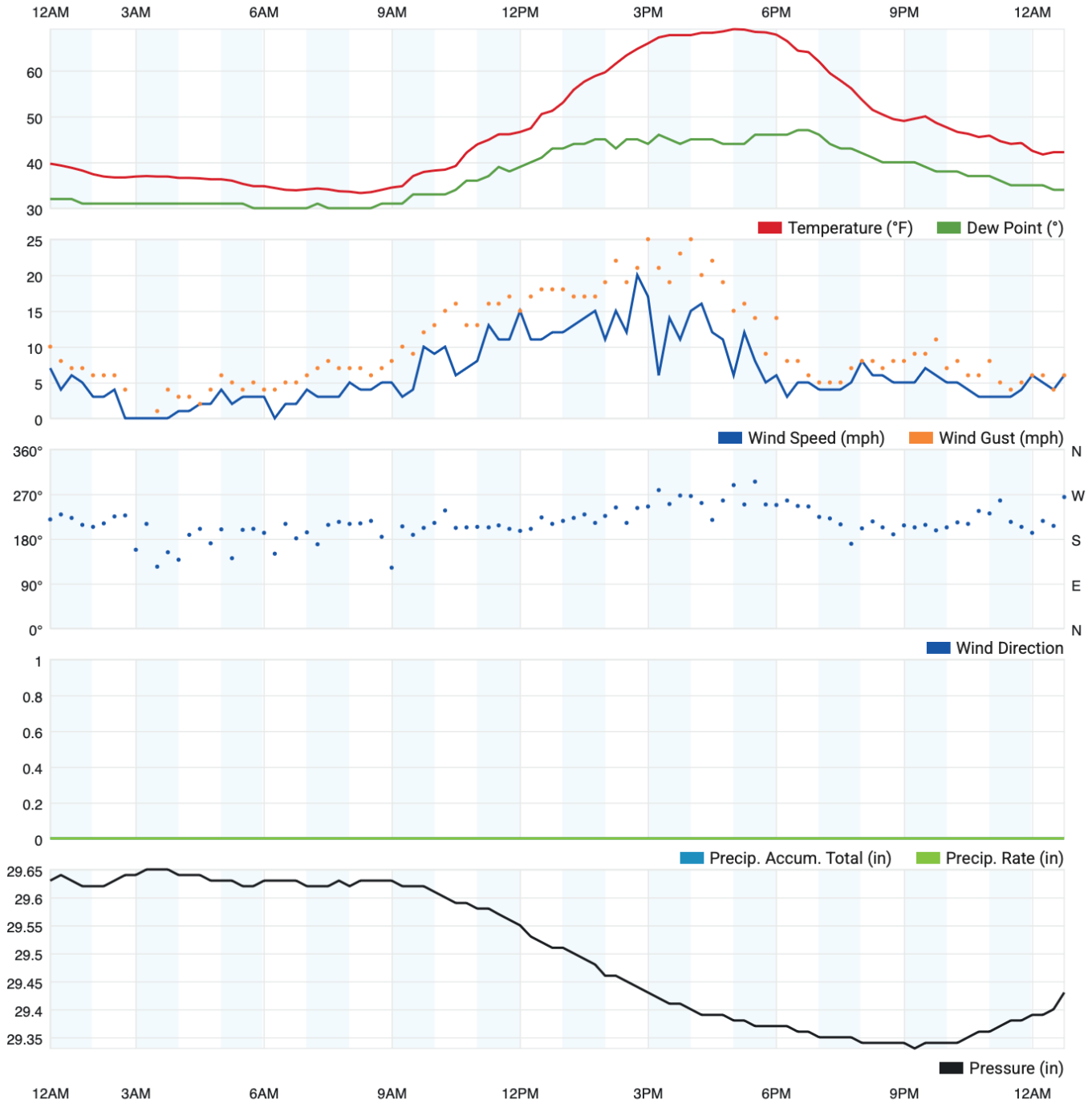
Emma Olafson is a student at the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 17 of 63

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

March 8, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 18 of 63

Today



High: 46 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 24 °F

Snow Likely

Tuesday



High: 37 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Snow

Tuesday Night



Low: 23 °F

Chance Snow

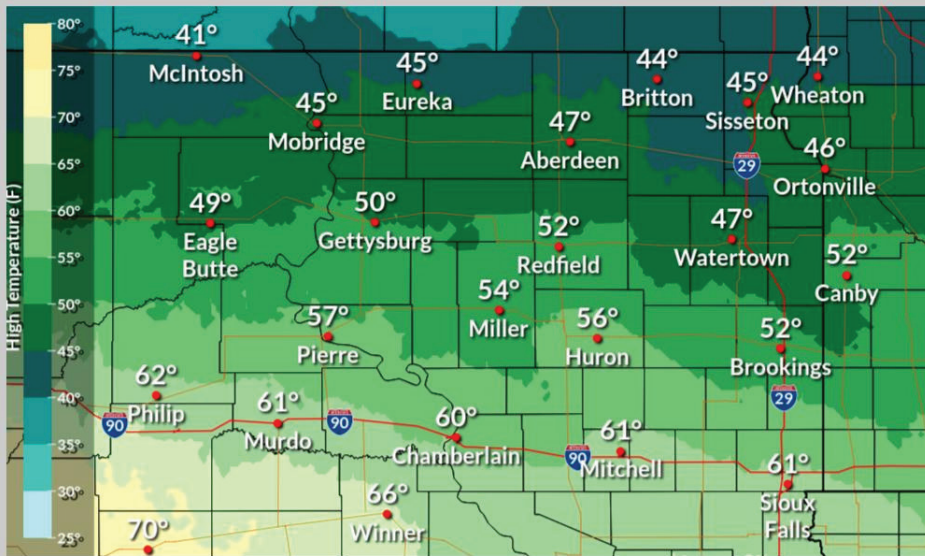
Wednesday



High: 42 °F

Mostly Sunny

Forecast High Temperatures Today



Colder today! Still, temperatures will be 5 to 15° above normal for this time of year



Temperatures will be cooler than the record and near record high temperatures experienced Sunday. Even with cooler air overhead today, temperatures will still be 5 to 15 degrees above normal for this time of year.

Broton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 19 of 63



Expected Snowfall this Evening

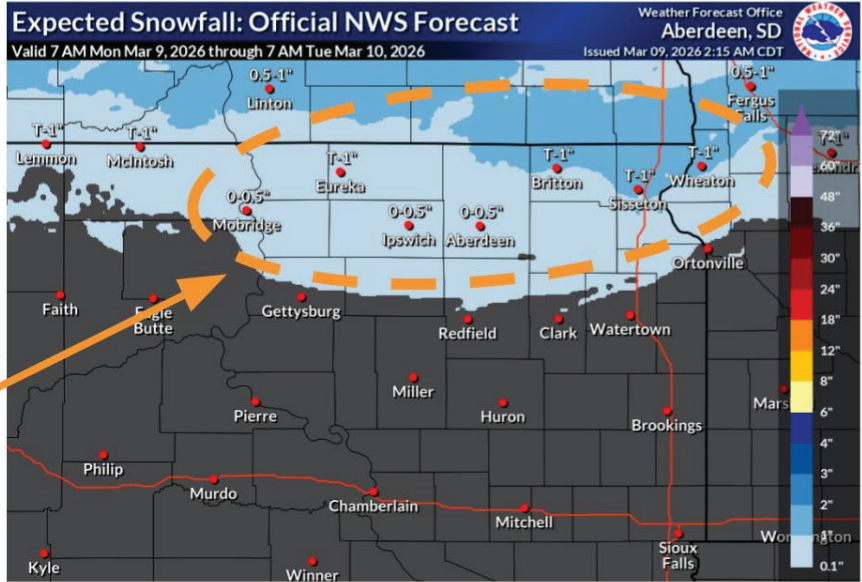
March 9, 2026
3:12 AM

- Band of snow to develop this evening near the North Dakota/South Dakota border
- **Most locations will receive 1" of snow or less**

Confidence: Snow Amounts



- **A localized 2 to 4" of snow is possible** due to the banded nature of this event, with a burst of light/fluffier snow for a couple of hours this evening



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Timing of Snowfall this Evening

March 9, 2026
3:20 AM

Light Snow lingering into the early overnight hours

- Band of snow to develop this evening near the North Dakota/South Dakota border
- Most snow to fall this evening, with lighter snow lingering overnight
- **Most locations across northern South Dakota will receive 1" of snow or less, with a localized 2 to 4" possible**

Weather Forecast

	3/9 Mon							3/10 Tue				
	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am
McIntosh	30%	30%	35%	60%	60%	40%	25%	20%	15%	10%	5%	5%
Wheaton	10%	10%	10%	15%	20%	50%	60%	55%	55%	30%	15%	5%
Britton	15%	15%	20%	25%	55%	70%	70%	60%	50%	25%	10%	10%
Eureka	20%	20%	25%	45%	70%	70%	50%	30%	30%	10%	10%	5%
Sisseton	10%	10%	10%	10%	15%	50%	60%	60%	50%	35%	15%	5%
Mobridge	15%	15%	30%	40%	60%	45%	40%	30%	20%	10%	5%	5%
Aberdeen	10%	10%	15%	20%	35%	70%	60%	40%	35%	20%	10%	5%
Webster	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	35%	60%	55%	45%	35%	20%	20%
Milbank	5%	5%	10%	5%	0%	15%	25%	40%	40%	25%	20%	10%
Gettysburg	5%	5%	25%	30%	45%	40%	30%	20%	15%	10%	5%	5%
Eagle Butte	10%	10%	30%	35%	35%	15%	15%	10%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Watertown	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	10%	25%	40%	35%	25%	20%	15%
Clark	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	20%	35%	40%	30%	25%	15%	10%
Redfield	0%	0%	10%	10%	15%	35%	40%	30%	25%	20%	15%	5%
Miller	0%	0%	10%	10%	15%	20%	20%	20%	10%	5%	5%	0%
Pierre	0%	0%	5%	10%	10%	15%	15%	10%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Murdo	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Chamberlain	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Created: 1 am CDT Mon 3/9/2026. Shows most impactful weather for the period beginning at the time shown. Weather symbols display where Probability of Precipitation ≥ 0%.

- Rain + - Snow +

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 20 of 63

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 4:58 PM (New Record)

Low Temp: 33 °F at 8:23 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 3:51 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 69 in 2025

Record Low: -20 in 1951

Average High: 38

Average Low: 16

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.22

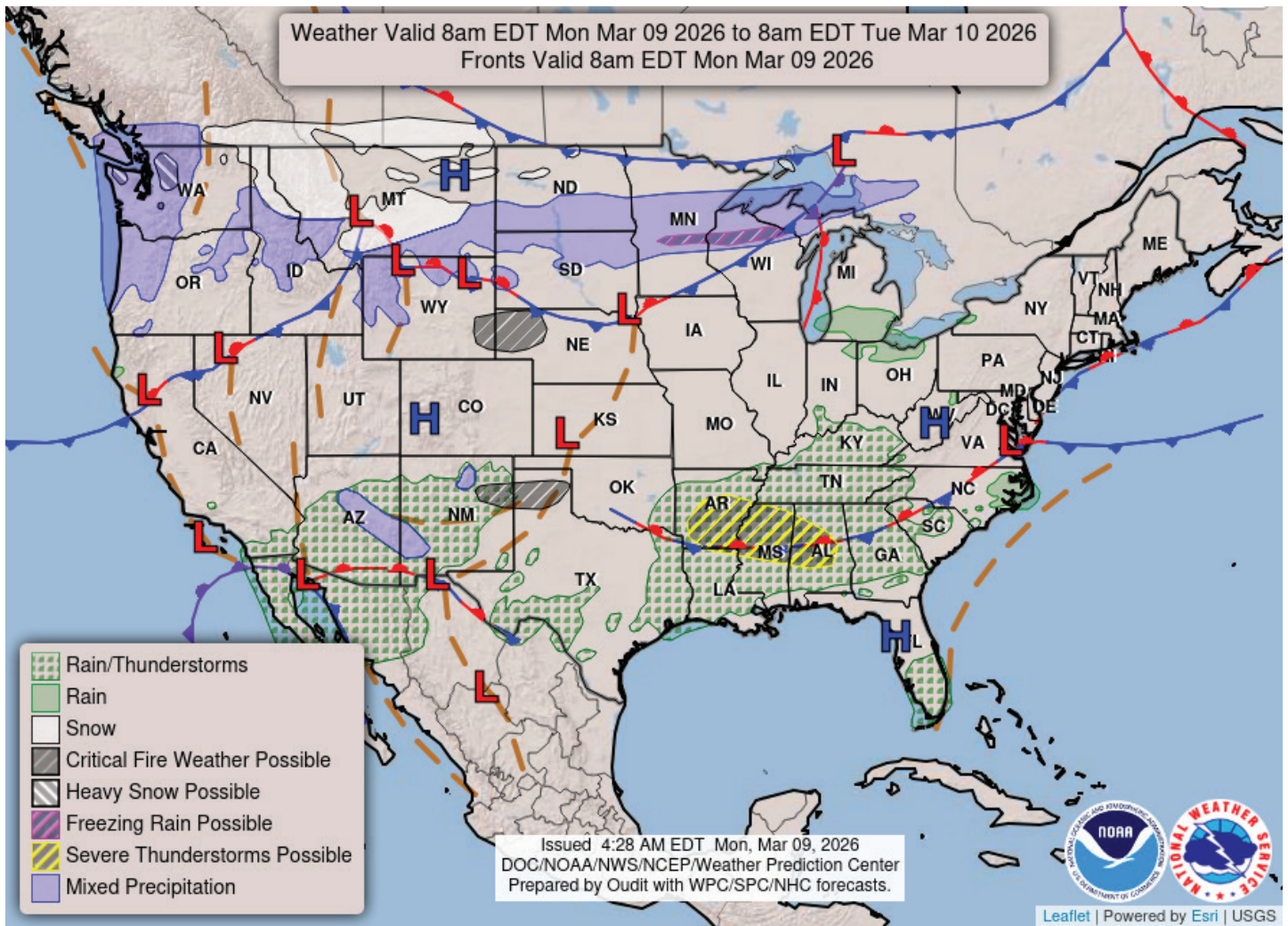
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.39

Precip Year to Date: 1.33

Sunset Tonight: 7.29 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:54 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 21 of 63

Today in Weather History

March 9th, 1993: High winds gusting more than 50 mph moved east across South Dakota behind a strong cold front. Peak wind gusts reported included 62 mph at Pierre and 49 mph at Aberdeen. High winds flipped over a mobile home on top of a car and a utility shed near The Oahe Reservoir. In addition, a semi-tractor trailer was overturned while crossing Ft. Randall Dam. An office trailer was also tipped over at the exact location.

1956 — A whopping 367 inches of snow was measured on the ground at the Ranier Paradise Ranger Station in Washington. The snow depth was a state record and the second highest total of record for the continental U.S. (The Weather Channel)

1960 — A winter storm produced a narrow band of heavy snow from north central Kentucky into Virginia and the mountains of North Carolina. Snowfall amounts ranged from 12 to 24 inches, with drifts up to eleven feet high in western Virginia. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Gale force winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Some places were 50 degrees colder than the previous day. Northeast winds, gusting to 60 mph, produced 8 to 15 foot waves on Lake Michigan causing more than a million dollars damage along the southeastern shoreline of Wisconsin. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A cold front brought high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds in the Las Vegas Valley of Nevada gusted to 70 mph, and one person was injured by a falling tree. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Twenty-two cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. In New Mexico, afternoon highs of 72 at Los Alamos, 76 at Ruidoso, and 79 at Quemado, were records for March. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in West Texas. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 71 mph at Lubbock, and golf ball size hail was reported at several other locations. Strong thunderstorm winds injured two persons north of the town of Canyon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Forward by Faith

Obedience is often uncomfortable, sometimes difficult—but staying the course always leads to blessing.

Genesis 12:4-9: 4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, ``To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

Faith can be dulled when we are focused on our own comfort rather than God’s plan. Abraham did not fall into this trap. He traded the familiar for the unknown and received many blessings.

Living by faith is the correct response when God calls us to move forward—and His call can come at any time, regardless of our age or position. Abraham was 75 when he began his journey, whereas David was still a boy when he was anointed as king (1 Samuel 16:11-13). And Paul, at the height of his power and strength, was en route to arrest Jewish believers in Damascus when he encountered the Lord (Acts 9:1-6).

Following God will also include times of testing. Abraham, like all of us, had some successes and some failures. The initial call to leave his country was met with strong belief and immediate action. As a result, the Lord promised a great blessing for him and his descendants. But a famine brought a different response—a sojourn to Egypt, deception about his relationship with Sarah, and chastisement from Pharaoh. Our response to God matters.

Obedying the Lord can be uncomfortable. But faith will keep us moving forward in obedience. It helps us stay the course and experience the blessings found in a relationship with Christ.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 23 of 63

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

- All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax
- Black & White \$52.00/year
 - Colored \$80.00/year
 - Colored \$49.00/6 months
 - E-Weekly* \$35.00/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City _____
State, Zip Code _____
E-mail _____
Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent
P.O. Box 34
Groton, SD 57445-0034
or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$16.00
- 3 Months..... \$28.00
- 6 Months..... \$38.00
- 9 Months..... \$52.00
- 12 Months \$60.00

Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City _____
State, Zip Code _____
Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____
Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 24 of 63



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.08.26

1 31 32 45 52 5

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 32 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.06.26

8 19 26 38 42 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$533,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 18 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.07.26

6 8 17 18 45 5

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$17,620,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 33 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.07.26

1 2 6 22 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 48 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.07.26

21 34 46 53 56 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 17 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.07.26

17 18 30 50 68 24

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$46,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 17 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Wheeler-Thomas leads North Dakota State over North Dakota 70-62 in Summit League title game

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Damari Wheeler-Thomas scored 19 points to lead top-seeded North Dakota State to a 70-62 victory over North Dakota on Sunday night, winning the Summit League Championship and earning an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament for the Bison.

Wheeler-Thomas made 8 of 16 shots with two 3-pointers for the Bison (27-7), who have made four previous trips to the NCAA Tournament, most recently in 2019. He added six rebounds. Tay Smith scored 13 points off the bench and Andy Stefonowicz totaled 11 points and six rebounds.

Greyson Uelmen scored 24 to pace the third-seeded Fighting Hawks (18-17), whose only tournament appearance at the Division I level came in 2017. Uelmen sank 7 of 11 shots with two 3-pointers and made all eight of his free throws. Zach Kraft scored 19.

Smith hit a 3-pointer and Treyson Anderson scored on a tip-in to cap a 13-2 run as North Dakota State took a 15-9 lead in the first 8:19. Smith connected three more times from beyond the arc and the Bison built a 38-30 advantage in a first half that saw four ties and three lead changes.

Eli King had back-to-back baskets and Garrett Anderson added a layup in a 6-2 spurt to pull North Dakota within 41-36 four minutes into the second half.

Anderson answered with a layup and North Dakota State maintained a three-possession lead until Kraft had a layup and Uelmen added two free throws to cut it to 63-59 with 1:34 remaining.

Noah Feddersen buried a 3-pointer to spark a 7-0 spurt and the Bison prevailed.

North Dakota State won both regular-season matchups by a combined 50 points.

Brooklyn Meyer scores 26 points and South Dakota State women win yet another Summit League title

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Brooklyn Meyer had 26 points to go with nine rebounds and second-seeded South Dakota State claimed another Summit League championship, defeating top-seed North Dakota State 64-51 on Sunday.

The Jackrabbits improved to 13-2 in Summit League title games and will play in the NCAA Tournament for the 14th time, all since 2009.

South Dakota State took the lead for good with about 3 1/2 minutes left in the third quarter. The Jackrabbits built a seven-point lead early in the fourth quarter but a 3-pointer from Molly Lenz got the Bison within 48-44 with seven minutes remaining. However, North Dakota State made only two field goals the rest of the game.

Playing with the lead in the fourth quarter, the Jackrabbits made 14 of 16 free throws with eight of the makes coming in the final minute. SDSU made 21 of 29 free throws for the game, compared to just 5 of 9 for North Dakota State.

Avery Koenen led North Dakota State (28-4) with 12 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists. Lenz also scored 12 and Karrington Asp had 10 points off the bench.

Hadley Thul had 10 points for South Dakota State (27-6).

An 11-3 run over a six-minute stretch of the second quarter helped the Jackrabbits build a 27-18 lead. North Dakota State regrouped and Marisa Frost's buzzer-beating 3-pointer got the Bison within 31-27 at halftime.

After the Bison took what would be their last lead at 36-34 midway through the third quarter, South Dakota State scored the next eight points for a 42-36 lead.

North Dakota State has not appeared in the NCAA Tournament at the Division I level but is a five-time Division II national champion.

Up next

NCAA Tournament decisions are due on Selection Sunday, March 15.

Glasgow building fire closes Scotland's busiest train station and disrupts rail services

LONDON (AP) — A major fire in the heart of Glasgow crippled Scottish train services Monday as firefighters worked to douse the blaze that destroyed a four-story building near Scotland's busiest railway station.

Glasgow Central Station was closed and all travel to, from and through the station was expected to be disrupted, according to rail operators. There was no estimate when the station would reopen.

The fire broke out Sunday afternoon in a vape shop on Union Street, next to the station. Flames engulfed the building, filling the frames of windows and shooting from the dome-capped roof.

The building, which dates to 1851, collapsed as it burned through the night, leaving only the facade standing.

Paul Sweeney, a member of the Scottish Parliament, likened it to the remains left after the Nazi bombing of Britain in 1940-41.

"It's been completely wiped out, destroyed," Sweeney told the BBC. "The building is a gutted shell. It looks like something out of the Blitz."

There were no injuries reported, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said.

People standing behind a police roadblock said they were shocked to see the ruins.

"It's just so sad," Emma Reid said. "It's such an iconic building."

A cafe, fish and chip shop and hair salon were among the businesses wrecked by the fire.

"We are absolutely devastated to confirm that the shop has sadly been destroyed in the fire," Sexy Coffee said on Instagram, though it vowed to rebuild.

Iran names former supreme leader's son to succeed him as war sends oil prices soaring

By JON GAMBRELL, DAVID RISING and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran named Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, a son of the country's late supreme leader, the Islamic Republic's next ruler on Monday, putting a hard-line cleric in charge as the war spreading across the Middle East sent oil prices skyrocketing with Iran launching new attacks on regional energy infrastructure.

With Iran's theocracy under assault by the United States and Israel for more than a week, the country's Assembly of Experts chose the secretive, 56-year-old cleric with close ties to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard as the new supreme leader. The Guard has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states since the younger Khamenei's father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed Feb. 28 during the war's opening salvo.

Iran's stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz has also all but stopped tankers from using the shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman through which a fifth of the world's oil is carried. Brent crude oil, the international standard, surged to nearly \$120 a barrel on Monday, about 65% higher than when the war started, before retreating slightly.

As global economic concerns grew, U.S. President Donald Trump downplayed the spike in prices.

"Short term oil prices, which will drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iran nuclear threat is over, is a very small price to pay for U.S.A., and World, Safety and Peace," Trump wrote on social media.

Iran has targeted Israel and American bases in the region since the start of the war. On Monday, a man was killed in central Israel in a missile strike, raising the country's death toll in the war to 11.

As Iran continued to hit regional energy infrastructure, a fire broke out Monday at an oil facility that was attacked in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates. Bahrain's only oil refinery was apparently also hit and Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted several drones attacking its Shaybah oil field.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 27 of 63

Israel, meantime, claimed strikes on targets in Iran's city of Isfahan, saying it hit command centers for the Revolutionary Guard and its volunteer Basij force, as well as a rocket engine production facility and missile launch sites. There was no immediate confirmation from Iran.

In Israel, sirens blared multiple times across the country as Iran's drones and missiles were unrelenting. A woman was wounded by debris in central Israel.

New Iranian leader seen as even more hard-line than his father

The younger Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since the war started, was long considered a potential successor — even before the Israeli strike killed his father. His wife, Zahra Haddad Adel, was killed in the same Israeli strike that killed the 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Political figures within Iran have criticized handing over the supreme leader's title based on heredity, thereby creating a clerical version of the rule of the shah, who was toppled during the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But top clerics in the Assembly of Experts likely wanted the younger Khamenei to prosecute the war.

Khamenei, who is seen as even more hard-line than his late father, will now be in charge of Iran's armed forces and any decision about Tehran's nuclear program.

While the country's key nuclear sites are in tatters after the U.S. bombed them during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, there's still highly enriched uranium in Iran that's a technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Khamenei could choose to do what his father never did — build a nuclear bomb.

Israel has already described him as a potential target, while Trump had called him "unacceptable."

"We want someone that will bring harmony and peace to Iran," Trump had said.

Both the Revolutionary Guard and the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah issued statements in support of Khamenei.

Top Iranian security official Ali Larijani, speaking to Iranian state television, praised the Assembly of Experts for "courageously" convening even as airstrikes continued in Tehran. He said the younger Khamenei had been trained by his father and "can handle this situation."

Regional anger grows as energy infrastructure is hit and oil prices spike

Saudi Arabia lashed out at Iran following a thwarted drone attack on its massive Shaybah oil field, saying Tehran would be the "biggest loser" if it continues to attack Arab states.

The Foreign Ministry said Iranian attacks mean "further escalation which will have grave impact on the relations, currently and in the future."

In addition to energy facilities in the UAE, authorities there said the capital of Abu Dhabi was targeted by Iranian missiles and two were hurt by shrapnel from interceptions.

Iran attacked Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, where it hit a residential area wounding 32 people, including several children, according to authorities. Another attack appeared to have started a fire at Bahrain's only oil refinery, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air.

Bahrain has also accused Iran of damaging one of its desalination plants, though its electricity and water authority said supplies remained online. Desalination plants supply water to millions of residents in the region and thousands of stranded travelers, raising new fears of catastrophic risks in parched desert nations.

On Monday, Bahrain's state oil company declared force majeure for its oil shipments, the state-run Bahrain News Agency reported, a legal maneuver releasing a company of its contractual obligations because of extraordinary circumstances. It insisted that local demand could still be met.

In Iraq, air defenses downed a drone as it attacked a U.S. military compound inside the Baghdad International Airport, a security source told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. No injuries or damage was reported. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack but Pro-Iranian Iraqi militias have previously targeted the base.

Elsewhere, the U.S. military said a service member died of injuries from an Iranian attack on troops in Saudi Arabia on March 1. Seven U.S. soldiers have now been killed.

The U.S. State Department early Monday ordered nonessential personnel and families of all staff to leave Saudi Arabia following the escalation in attacks.

Eight other U.S. diplomatic missions have ordered all but key staff to leave: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 28 of 63

Lebanon, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the consulate in Karachi, Pakistan.

Israel launches new strikes on Lebanon

Smoke billowed over Beirut after Israel carried out airstrikes on its southern suburbs Monday.

Ahead of the strikes, the Israeli army said it would operate against targets associated with the Hezbollah-linked financial institution al-Qard Al-Hasan — which Israel said finances the militant group — and repeated its warning to residents of Beirut's southern suburbs to flee.

The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, at least 397 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, according to officials. Another person died in Israel of an asthma attack on her way to a shelter. Israel reported its first soldier deaths on Sunday, saying two were killed in southern Lebanon, where its military is fighting Hezbollah.

Crude oil prices spike near \$120 a barrel as the Iran war impedes production and shipping

By ALEX VEIGA and ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Oil prices spiked near \$120 per barrel before falling back Monday as the Iran war intensified, threatening production and shipping in the Middle East and pummeling financial markets.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, surged to \$119.50 per barrel early in the day but later was trading near \$105 per barrel.

West Texas Intermediate, the light, sweet crude oil produced in the United States, spiked at \$119.48 per barrel but fell back to \$102 per barrel.

The war's toll on civilian targets grew as Bahrain accused Iran of striking a desalination plant vital to drinking water supplies. Bahrain's national oil company declared force majeure for its shipments after an Iranian attack set its refinery ablaze. The legal maneuver releases the company of contractual obligations because of extraordinary circumstances.

Oil depots in Tehran smoldered following overnight strikes by Israel.

Oil prices have surged as the war, now in its second week, ensnares countries and places that are critical to the production and movement of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf.

Prices moderated after the Financial Times reported that some members of the Group of Seven industrial nations were considering releases of strategic oil reserves to alleviate pressure on the markets. The unconfirmed report cited unnamed people familiar with the talks.

On Saturday, President Donald Trump downplayed the idea of turning to America's Strategic Petroleum Reserve, saying U.S. supplies were ample and prices would soon fall.

Roughly 15 million barrels of crude oil — about 20% of the world's oil — typically are shipped every day through the Strait of Hormuz, according to independent research firm Rystad Energy. The threat of Iranian missile and drone attacks has all but stopped tankers carrying oil and gas from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Iran from traveling through the strait, which is bordered in the north by Iran.

Iraq, Kuwait and the UAE have cut oil production as storage tanks fill due to the reduced ability to export crude. Iran, Israel and the United States also have attacked oil and gas facilities since the war started, worsening supply concerns.

The surge in costs for oil and natural gas is pushing fuel prices higher, cascading through other industries and jolting Asian economies that are especially vulnerable due to the region's heavy reliance on imports from the Middle East.

Iran exports roughly 1.6 million barrels of oil a day, mostly to China, which has called for an immediate end to the fighting. Beijing may need to look elsewhere for supply if Iran's exports are disrupted, another factor that could increase energy prices.

"All parties have their responsibility to ensure stable and smooth energy supplies," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said in a briefing Monday. "China will take necessary measures to safeguard its own energy security."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 29 of 63

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung warned Monday of strict penalties for refiners and gas stations caught hoarding or colluding on prices, saying it would be wise to find alternatives to supplies that must travel through the Strait of Hormuz.

Across Southeast Asia, the spike in prices has led to long lines outside filling stations.

"Higher oil and gas prices will affect everyone and our economy," said Le Van Tu, who was waiting outside a gas station in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi. "All activities, including those using petrol based transportation will be affected."

The last time Brent and U.S. crude futures traded near the current level was in 2022, after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Higher energy costs push inflation higher, straining household budgets and denting the consumer spending that is a main driver of many big economies. Those worries have spilled into financial markets, pulling share prices sharply lower.

In the U.S., the average price of a gallon of regular gasoline rose to \$3.48 as of early Monday, up nearly 50 cents from a week earlier, according to AAA motor club. Diesel was selling for about \$4.66 a gallon, a weekly increase of more than 80 cents.

If oil prices stay above \$100 per barrel, some analysts and investors say it could be too much for the global economy to withstand.

The price of natural gas in the U.S. also has climbed during the war, though not by as much as oil. It was selling for about \$3.34 per 1,000 cubic feet early Monday. That's up from Friday's closing price of \$3.19.

World shares tumble as Iran war pushes crude prices over \$110 a barrel

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — World shares tumbled on Monday, with Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index plunging more than 5%, after oil prices spiked at nearly \$120 a barrel, casting a shadow over economies heavily dependent on imports of oil and gas from the Middle East.

The futures for the S&P 500, Nasdaq composite index and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were trading more than 1% lower after dropping more than 2% late Sunday.

A Chinese special envoy to the Middle East, Zhai Jun, called for an end to the attacks and said strikes on non-military targets and civilians should be condemned. Meanwhile, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung warned against hoarding, panic buying and collusion between refiners and gas stations.

"Please respond proactively to the growing volatility in the financial and foreign exchange markets, which are the lifeblood of our economy," Lee said. He said the government would cap fuel prices.

Oil prices rocketed higher after both sides in the war struck new targets over the weekend, including civilian ones. Bahrain accused Iran of hitting one of the desalination plants that are crucial for drinking water in Gulf countries. Its national oil company declared force majeure after the country's sole oil refinery was attacked. Israel struck oil depots in Tehran, sending up thick smoke and causing environmental alerts.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX dropped 2.6% to 22,983.67 and the CAC 40 in Paris lost 2.7% to 7,779.46. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 1.9% to 10,089.05. The only market to show gains was in oil exporter Norway, where its benchmark edged 0.1% higher.

During Asian trading, Japan's Nikkei 225 plunged more than 7% early in the day but regained some of those losses to close 5.2% lower at 52,728.72. South Korea's Kospi sank 6% to 5,251.87.

Chinese markets, which tend to be less affected by global trends, saw more moderate losses. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1.4% to 25,408.46 and the Shanghai Composite index lost 0.7% to 4,096.60.

Taiwan's benchmark dived 4.4% and India's Sensex lost 2.3%. Other regional markets also swooned.

As of 0900 GMT, the price for a barrel of Brent crude was \$106.61 a barrel. U.S. benchmark crude rose to \$103.20. Both were about 15% above their closing prices Friday.

Crude prices have spiked to their highest levels in at least 14 years as the war, now in its second week,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 30 of 63

ensnares countries and places that are critical to the production and movement of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf. . They last rose above \$100 shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

"The market woke up to the sound every macro trader dreads. The oil alarm bell. And this time it was not a polite chime. It was a fire siren," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

Surging oil and gas prices, if they persist, could ripple across the globe, further complicating matters for countries still adjusting to higher tariffs on exports to the United States under President Donald Trump.

Senior officials of Southeast Asian countries were meeting this week in Manila, the Philippines, where they were expected to discuss ways to counter the shock from higher energy costs.

"Oil prices will reach a peak at some point -- maybe they already have, maybe there's more to come -- but they are likely to fluctuate at elevated levels for weeks, perhaps months," Ipek Ozkardeskaya of Swissquote said in a commentary. "Eventually -- even if the war persists -- energy prices will likely come down. But during this period, high energy prices will revive inflation globally and weigh notably on growth."

On Friday, the S&P 500 dropped 1.3% after a report showed U.S. employers cut more jobs last month than they created and after oil prices shot above \$90 per barrel. The combination of a weak economy and high inflation is a worst-case scenario for investors because the Federal Reserve has no good tool to fix both problems at the same time.

The Dow plunged as many as 945 points before finishing with a loss of 453, or 0.9%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.6%.

Early Monday, the U.S. dollar, which retains its status as a safe haven for investors bracing against uncertainty, gained against other major currencies. It was trading at 158.55 Japanese yen, up from 158.09 yen late Friday. The euro rose to \$1.1539, up from \$1.1556.

Human Rights Watch accuses Israel of using white phosphorus in southern Lebanese town

Associated Press undefined

BEIRUT (AP) — The human rights group Human Rights Watch said in a report Monday that the Israeli military "unlawfully" hit a village in southern Lebanon with shells containing white phosphorus, a controversial incendiary munition.

Through geolocating and verifying seven images, Human Rights Watch said Israel fired white phosphorus using artillery at residential areas in the southern Lebanese village of Yohmor. It happened hours after the Israeli military warned the residents of the village and dozens of others in southern Lebanon to evacuate.

Human Rights Watch said it couldn't independently identify if any residents were still in the area or if anyone was harmed.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In the past, it has maintained that it uses white phosphorus as a smoke screen and not to target civilians.

Human rights advocates say the use of white phosphorus is illegal under international law when the white-hot chemical substance is fired into populated areas. It can set buildings on fire and burn human flesh down to the bone. Survivors are at risk of infections and organ or respiratory failure, even if their burns are small.

"The Israeli military's unlawful use of white phosphorus over residential areas is extremely alarming and will have dire consequences for civilians," said Ramzi Kaiss, Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch.

Organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said the munition was used in Israel's last war with Hezbollah, over a year ago, on numerous occasions in southern Lebanon while civilians were still present.

Colombians are electing a new Congress and choosing presidential candidates

By ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombians voted Sunday for a new Congress and to select candidates from three major coalitions in a primary-style contest ahead of a presidential election in May.

The election unfolded under high alert for political violence across the South American country, particularly in rural regions dominated by illegal armed groups.

With over 96% of the polling stations reporting late Sunday night, the political parties receiving the most votes for the Senate were the ruling Historical Pact and the Democratic Center, the main opposition party.

In the House of Representatives, the Democratic Center received the most votes, followed by traditional parties such as the Liberal, Conservative and U parties. The Historical Pact came in fifth.

Just hours after polls opened, Colombian Defense Minister Pedro Sánchez asserted that a group of at least 2,400 people “allegedly heading to vote” were detected trying to enter Colombia at an illegal border crossing with Venezuela in Norte de Santander, despite announced border closures during the election process.

“They are doing so illegally,” said the minister, who posted images on his social media account showing people lining up on secondary roads to cross a river to the other side, where several buses were parked. “This is a clear case of a crime being committed,” Sánchez said.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro described the incident as “large-scale fraud” and an “avalanche of illegal voting” as he called on the mayor of Cucuta to act immediately.

“Sixty buses have been detained, and the company responsible for bringing massive numbers of voters from across the border must be investigated immediately,” Petro wrote on X.

Hours later, the defense minister said authorities had responded and that no people remained in that area. Sánchez said officials have opened an investigation into the transportation company, the political advertising used and the alleged suspects who are being identified.

Petro — the nation’s first left-leaning leader — also has cast doubt on the country’s election software, pointing to the 2022 legislative elections, when his Historic Pact movement gained over 390,000 votes following a recount. He attributed this shift to the presence of election observers.

The registrar general, Hernán Penagos, defended the computer systems and explained that they are subject to international audits as he asked citizens to trust the electoral system.

The European Union deployed 40 election observers in early February and said it intended to increase the size of the delegation for Sunday’s congressional vote.

‘Everything is wrong’

Sunday’s election is set to define the political landscape for Colombia’s next head of state.

More than 3,000 candidates vied for 285 legislative positions — 102 in the Senate and 183 in the House of Representatives. There are 41.2 million eligible voters.

Among them was Patricia Mendoza, who voted in northern Bogotá.

“We have to improve; everything is wrong: healthcare, corruption, the economy, and insecurity,” she told The Associated Press.

Petro is ineligible for reelection because the constitution bars a sitting president from running for a consecutive second term.

Under Petro’s government, Congress has become more of a counterweight to his policies, a departure from the past, when the legislature tended to be aligned with the president.

Colombia’s current Congress approved Petro’s pension and labor overhaul, but rejected his proposed health care and tax reforms, and there were often tensions between him and lawmakers.

Meanwhile, the right-wing opposition is looking to reclaim its status as a dominant political force. The Democratic Center, the nation’s primary opposition party, has been influenced by former President Álvaro Uribe, who is mobilizing his base to secure a strong legislative presence ahead of the presidential vote.

Alongside the congressional vote, Colombians voted to choose presidential candidates for the country’s

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 32 of 63

three major political blocs: the center, the center-left and the right. The winners of the three "interparty consultations," similar to American primary elections, will go on to compete in the presidential election, whose first round is set for May 31.

More than 6 million people voted in the presidential primaries that featured 16 candidates.

The right-wing primary garnered the most votes, with more than 82% of the electorate participating, according to the National Registry, which reported over 92% of the votes counted. The winner in that bloc was Paloma Valencia, candidate of the main opposition party, Democratic Center.

Meanwhile, in the center bloc, former Bogota mayor Claudia López won after competing against a relatively unknown lawyer. And in the center-left, the former ambassador to the United Kingdom, Roy Barreras, won. He was competing primarily with former mayor of Medellín, Daniel Quintero.

Lorena Balcazar, a 32-year-old voter, lamented that polarization could influence Sunday's elections: "Many people are dissatisfied with this government; they want to vote for the same people as before, but those same people aren't convincing either."

A high-stakes gamble

Presidential hopefuls have long used the primaries to gauge their support before entering the first round of voting. This strategy proved successful four years ago for Petro, who consolidated his base by winning the left-wing primary alongside Francia Márquez, who became his vice president.

However, the two candidates currently leading in the polls — Iván Cepeda, from Petro's party, and far-right Abelardo de la Espriella — are not participating in the primaries, which are optional.

Political analyst Gabriel Cifuentes said the primaries are a high-stakes gamble for the participants, noting that a victory on Sunday is only meaningful if it demonstrates enough strength to compete with the leading candidates, such as Cepeda and de la Espriella.

"Whether (Paloma) Valencia can become a viable candidate will depend heavily on the vice-presidential running mate she secures, because she needs to take votes away from de la Espriella," Javier Garay, a professor at Externado University of Colombia, told The Associated Press.

US military kills 6 in strike on alleged drug boat in the Eastern Pacific

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said it killed six men Sunday in a strike on an alleged drug-smuggling vessel in the eastern Pacific Ocean as part of the Trump administration's campaign against alleged traffickers.

Sunday's attack brought the death toll to at least 157 people since the Trump administration began targeting those it calls "narcoterrorists" in small vessels in early September.

As with most of the military's statements on the more than 40 known strikes in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, U.S. Southern Command said it targeted alleged drug traffickers along known smuggling routes. The military did not provide evidence that the vessel was ferrying drugs. It posted a video on X that showed a small boat being blown up as it floated on the water.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

In a meeting with Latin American leaders on Saturday, Trump encouraged them to join the U.S. in taking military action against drug-trafficking cartels and transnational gangs, which he said pose an "unacceptable threat" to the region's national security.

To that end, Ecuador and the United States conducted military operations this past week against organized crime groups in the South American country.

With Saturday's gathering, Trump aimed to demonstrate that he remains committed to focusing U.S. foreign policy on the Western Hemisphere, even while waging a war on Iran that has had repercussions across the Middle East.

Critics have questioned the overall legality of the boat strikes as well as their effectiveness, in part be-

cause the fentanyl behind many fatal overdoses is typically trafficked to the U.S. over land from Mexico, where it is produced with chemicals imported from China and India.

The boat strikes also drew intense criticism following the revelation that the military killed survivors of the very first boat attack with a follow-up strike. The Trump administration and many Republican lawmakers said it was legal and necessary, while Democratic lawmakers and legal experts said the killings were murder, if not a war crime.

Europe rallies around Cyprus during Iran war as Macron visits to show support for island

By SYLVIE CORBET and MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron is traveling to Cyprus on Monday, days after dispatching a warship to the east Mediterranean island nation, where a Shahed drone struck a British air base on its southern coast last week during the Iran war.

Macron ordered the French frigate Languedoc to waters off Cyprus to bolster the European Union member country's anti-drone and anti-missiles defenses. The French president also decided to send ground-based anti-drone and anti-missile defenses to the island, which sustained the first drone attack on European territory.

France's Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier is also expected to arrive in the Eastern Mediterranean in the coming days.

Macron will meet with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and Greek Prime Kyriakos Mitsotakis at Cyprus' main air base on its southwestern edge where four Greek air force F-16s have been deployed.

"Together with our European partners, the aim will be to strengthen security around Cyprus and in the Eastern Mediterranean," a statement from Macron's office said.

Macron has been deeply involved in diplomatic talks in recent days to try to avoid further escalation in the Middle East. On Sunday, he had talks with Iranian President Massoud Pezeckian and urged him to stop strikes.

Cyprus government spokesman Constantinos Letymbiotis on Sunday said that the three leaders would assess regional developments and the close coordination on preemptive measures that have been taken. Letymbiotis repeated Cyprus' gratitude for the leaders' quick response to the island's call for assistance.

Last week, Macron ordered France's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to move from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean to help protect allied assets, citing the drone strike on Cyprus. He said that Cyprus was an EU member with which France has recently signed a strategic partnership.

Greece's state-of-the-art Kimon and Psara frigates are already patrolling off Cyprus' southern coast. Warships from Italy, the Netherlands and Spain are expected in the coming days, while U.K. destroyer Dragon will arrive next week.

Despite the military buildup, the three leaders have urged against any expansion of the conflict. Christodoulides repeatedly has underscored that Cyprus won't take part in any military operation.

The Shahed drone caused minor damage to a hangar at the RAF Akrotiri air base minutes after midnight on March 2. No one was injured. Another two drones were intercepted by British Typhoon and F-35 warplanes that were scrambled from the air base shortly after midday that day.

Cyprus officials confirmed last week that the Shahed drone originated from Lebanon and speculation is that it was launched by the Hezbollah militant group, Iran's proxy in the country. Hezbollah's arsenal notably includes exploding drones, similar to the ones used by Iran.

Lebanon's foreign minister, Youssef Rajji, on Sunday condemned the drone attack.

"I called on our Cypriot friends not to confuse the Lebanese state with those acting outside its authority and legal framework," said Rajji, a staunch opponent of Hezbollah.

The Lebanese government has ordered its security agencies to crack down on non-state groups carrying out attacks.

Japan rallies late to beat Australia 4-3, clinches first place in group at World Baseball Classic

By The Associated Press undefined

Defending champion Japan became the first nation to clinch a quarterfinal berth in the World Baseball Classic, then rallied on Masataka Yoshida's two-run homer in the seventh inning to beat Australia 4-3 on Sunday night in Tokyo and assure first place in its first-round group.

Japan advanced earlier Sunday when South Korea lost to Taiwan 5-4 in 10 innings, also at Tokyo Dome. Japan's win clinched first place in Pool C for Shohei Ohtani and the Samurai Warriors (3-0).

After completing the group Tuesday with a game against the Czech Republic (0-3), Japan will travel to Miami for a quarterfinal on March 14. Australia can clinch a quarterfinal spot by beating South Korea (1-2) on Monday.

Japan starter Tomoyuki Sugano pitched four scoreless innings of four-hit ball, and Australia (2-1) went ahead with an unearned run in the sixth against winner Chihiro Sumida. Aaron Whitefield doubled, stole third and came home on catcher Kenya Wakatsuki's throwing error.

Japan had loaded the bases in the fourth when, with Ohtani at the plate, Shugo Maki was picked off second by catcher Robbie Perkins.

Ohtani walked on four pitches from loser Jon Kennedy leading off the seventh, one of 12 walks by Australia pitchers, and Yoshida pulled a low slider into the right-center seats for a 2-1 lead. Yoshida has 19 RBIs in WBC play, third behind a pair of Cubans, Frederick Cepeda (23) and Alfredo Despaigne (21).

Teruaki Sato added an RBI in the eighth against Ky Hampton, who forced in a run with a bases-loaded walk to Seiya Suzuki for a 4-1 lead.

Alex Hall and Rixon Wingrove hit ninth-inning homers off Taisei Ota, who retired Robbie Perkins on a game-ending groundout for his second save.

Dominican Republic hits four homers in 12-1 rout of the Netherlands

At Miami, Juan Soto, Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Junior Caminero and Austin Wells homered as the Dominican Republic routed the Netherlands 12-1 in seven innings to remain unbeaten in Pool D.

The game ended under the mercy rule when Soto's two-run drive in the bottom of the seventh gave the Dominican Republic a double-digit advantage. It was the third game of the tournament that did not go nine innings; Japan beat Taiwan 13-0 and Taiwan routed the Czech Republic 14-0 in Pool C.

The Dominican Republic has outscored its opponents 24-4 through two games at loanDepot Park.

Fernando Tatis Jr. and Ketel Marte had three walks each for the Dominicans. Starting pitcher Luis Severino allowed one run and three hits while striking out five over four innings.

The Dominicans broke it open with a six-run fifth. Caminero hit a three-run homer and Wells added a two-run shot. Marte's sacrifice fly made it 10-1.

Caminero's second homer of the tournament had an exit velocity of 115.8 mph.

The Dominican Republic struck quickly with a two-run first against Arij Fransen, who took the loss. Guerrero hit an RBI single and Marte scored from third on a throwing error by shortstop Xander Bogaerts.

Didi Gregorius narrowed the deficit for the Netherlands (1-2) with his solo homer in the second before Guerrero's two-run drive in the third made it 4-1.

Mexico blows out Brazil 16-0 in six innings

Alejandro Kirk, Jarren Duran, Alek Thomas and Julian Ornelas all homered as Mexico romped to a 16-0 win over Brazil in six innings.

The Pool B game in Houston was halted early because of a WBC mercy rule that ends games if a team is up by 15 or more runs after the fifth.

Mexico also beat Britain 8-2 in its opener Friday and will meet the United States (2-0) on Monday night.

Mexico led by five before a huge fourth inning. Duran drove in two runs with a double before Kirk's three-run homer made it 10-0.

Kirk had an RBI double in Mexico's four-run first. Duran's homer on Eric Pardo's first pitch of the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 35 of 63

second made it 5-0.

Mexico manager Benji Gil pinch-hit for Duran and Kirk along with fellow major leaguers Randy Arozarena and Jonathan Aranda in the fifth with his team up 11-0.

But that didn't stop Mexico from scoring. The team added a run in the fifth before a two-run shot by Thomas pushed the lead to 14-0 with one out in the sixth.

A two-run homer by Ornelas made it 16-0 with two outs to end it and start a huge celebration by the pro-Mexico crowd.

Mexico starter Taijuan Walker struck out three and walked two in 3 1/3 innings. Brazil didn't get a hit until Gabriel Maciel singled off Roel Ramírez with two outs in the fifth.

In the WBC for just the second time and first since 2013, Brazil (0-3) was eliminated from advancing after losing to the U.S. and Italy. The team is 0-6 all-time in the tournament after losing to Japan, Cuba and China in 2013.

Brazil will wrap up pool play Monday against Britain, which also was eliminated Sunday.

Tejada and Bradfield star as Panama holds off Canada 4-3

Rubén Tejada drove in two runs with a pinch-hit single in the sixth inning, sending Panama to its first victory in Pool A.

Enrique Bradfield Jr. had three hits for Panama, including an RBI single. Luis Castillo also had a run-scoring single, and Miguel Cienfuegos pitched 2 1/3 hitless innings in relief for the rain-delayed win.

Panama opened WBC play with tough losses against Cuba on Friday and Puerto Rico on Saturday at Hiram Bithorn Stadium in San Juan. Panama faces winless Colombia in its last group game on Monday.

Abraham Toro hit an RBI double for Canada, which dropped to 1-1. Jameson Taillon pitched 3 2/3 innings of one-run ball.

Helped by errors on first baseman Josh Naylor and losing pitcher James Paxton, Panama scored three unearned runs in the sixth.

With two down and the bases loaded, Tejada hit a soft liner up the middle. Canada shortstop Otto Lopez got to the ball behind the bag, but was unable to make a play. Jose Ramos and Christian Bethancourt scored to give Panama a 3-2 lead.

The speedy Bradfield followed with a bunt single to second, driving in Miguel Amaya.

Canada got one back on Owen Caissie's RBI double in the eighth, but Humberto Mejía fanned pinch-hitter Tyler Black for the final out of the inning.

Following a rain delay, Dario Agrazal struck out two in a scoreless ninth for the save.

Martinez and Arruebarrena homered to send Cuba past Colombia 7-4

Ariel Martinez and Erisbel Arruebarrena homered in a four-run first inning, helping Cuba improve to 2-0 in Pool A.

Yiddi Cappe added a big two-run triple in the sixth. Yoelkis Guibert had two of Cuba's eight hits, and Denny Larrondo pitched two innings for the win at Puerto Rico's Hiram Bithorn Stadium.

Cuba beat Panama 3-1 in its WBC opener Friday. Next up is a showdown with Puerto Rico on Monday night.

Tito Polo drove in two runs for winless Colombia, which faces Panama on Monday. Gio Urshela had a run-scoring single.

Colombia is 2 for 28 with runners in scoring position over its three WBC games. It has left 29 runners on base.

Martinez hit a three-run shot to right on a 2-1 fastball from Luis Patiño. Roel Santos walked and Yoán Moncada was hit by a pitch before Martinez's opposite-field drive.

Arruebarrena made it 4-1 with a one-out solo shot, chasing Patiño.

Colombia trimmed Cuba's lead to 7-4 when Polo was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded in the seventh. But then Luis Romero came in and retired pinch-hitter Daniel Vellojin on a bouncer back to the mound, ending the inning.

Yoan López worked out of a jam in the eighth for Cuba, and Raidel Martinez handled the ninth for his

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 36 of 63

second save.

Fischer and D'Orazio homered to lead Italy over Britain 7-4

Andrew Fischer homered and drove in two runs, and J.J. D'Orazio also went deep to lead Italy over Britain 7-4 in Pool B at Daikin Park in Houston.

Italy improved to 2-0 after winning its opener against Brazil on Saturday, while Britain (0-3) was eliminated. The Brits also lost to Mexico and the United States.

The game was tied at 2 with one out in the fourth when Zach Dezenzo doubled for Italy. There were two outs in the inning when an RBI single by Fischer put the Italians on top. D'Orazio reached on an error before a double by Miles Mastrobuoni sent another run home.

Dante Nori, who homered twice Saturday, added an RBI single to push the lead to 5-2.

Dezenzo walked with one out in the fifth and scored on a triple by Sam Antonacci. A throwing error by Jazz Chisholm Jr. on the play allowed Antonacci to score and put Italy up 7-2.

Nate Eaton's second double opened the eighth and he scored on a single by Chisholm to cut the lead. Britain added a run on a wild pitch later in the inning to make it 7-4.

Eaton hit a leadoff double a day after connecting on Tarik Skubal's first pitch for a home run in the loss to the U.S. Chisholm then singled before stealing second base with one out in the first. There were two outs in the inning when Dylan DeLucia threw consecutive wild pitches to let two runners score and give Britain an early lead.

Fischer cut the lead to 2-1 when he opened the Italy third with a home run. D'Orazio followed with his home run to right-center to tie it.

Mendlinger's three hits help Israel to 5-0 win over Nicaragua

Noah Mendlinger had three hits and an RBI as Israel beat Nicaragua 5-0 in Miami.

Baltimore Orioles right-hander Dean Kremer threw 4 1/3 innings in his start for Israel, which improved to 1-1 in Pool D. Kremer allowed two hits and struck out four.

Nicaragua dropped to 0-3 and became the first team in the pool to be eliminated. The Nicaraguans remain winless in tournament history after they went 0-4 in their debut in 2023.

Zach Levenson's two-run single and RBI singles from Cole Carrigg and Harrison Bader in the fifth made it 5-0.

Four Israel relievers followed Kremer and kept Nicaragua hitless the rest of the way. Tommy Kahnle closed with a perfect ninth.

Mendlinger gave Israel an early advantage with his RBI single in the second.

Mark Vientos singled and Omar Mendoza walked against Kremer to start the fifth. Kremer then ended his 63-pitch outing by striking out Juan Montes.

Josh Mallitz relieved Kremer and, after walking Melvin Novoa, retired Freddy Zamora on a double-play grounder.

Nicaragua starter Carlos Rodriguez gave up one run and four hits in four innings.

Taiwan beats South Korea 5-4 in 10 innings

Kun-Yu Chiang bunted home Chieh-Hsien Chen with the go-ahead run in the top of the 10th for Taiwan, which completed group play at 2-2.

South Korea's Ju Won Kim was thrown out at the plate in the bottom half on Hyeseong Kim's grounder, with first baseman Nien-Ting Wu throwing to catcher Shao-Hung Chiang. Jyun-Yue Tseng retired Do Yeong Kim on a flyout for the save.

Yu Chang and Tsung-Che Chen had solo homers for Taiwan and Stuart Fairchild hit a two-run drive for a 4-3 lead in the eighth, his second home run of the tournament after a grand slam against the Czech Republic.

"That was one of the most fun games I've ever played in my life," said Fairchild, an outfielder in the Cleveland organization whose mother is from Taiwan.

Do Yeong Kim hit an RBI double in the bottom half that drove in Hyeseong Kim.

Winning pitcher Yi Chang got the final out of the ninth. Woo-Suk-Go took the loss.

Jury selection to begin in South Florida for 5 charged in 2021 assassination of Haitian president

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Jury selection is scheduled to begin Monday in the U.S. federal trial of five men charged in the 2021 assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse.

Arcangel Pretel Ortiz, Antonio Intriago, Walter Veintemilla, Christian Sanon and James Solages are charged with conspiring in South Florida to kidnap or kill Haiti's former leader, plus related charges. They face possible life sentences. They all pleaded not guilty.

The trial was previously set for last year, but U.S. District Judge Jacqueline Becerra in Miami agreed to delay the case because of discovery challenges and the large volume of evidence.

Five others have already pleaded guilty in the conspiracy and are serving life sentences. A sixth person, who officials believe didn't know about the assassination plot, was sentenced to nine years behind bars after pleading guilty to providing body armor to the conspirators.

Moïse was killed on July 7, 2021, when about two dozen foreign mercenaries, mostly from Colombia, attacked his home near Port-au-Prince, officials said. Moïse's wife, Martine, was wounded during the attack and flown to the U.S. for emergency treatment.

According to court documents, South Florida served as a central location for planning and financing the plot to oust Moïse and replace him with someone of the conspirators' choosing.

Ortiz and Intriago were principals of Counter Terrorist Unit Federal Academy and Counter Terrorist Unit Security, collectively known as CTU, and Veintemilla was a principal of Worldwide Capital Lending Group. Both companies were based in South Florida.

Sanon is a dual Haitian-American citizen who investigators say was initially favored by the conspirators to replace Moïse. Solages was a CTU representative in Haiti who coordinated with Sanon and others, officials said.

The conspirators met in South Florida in April 2021 and agreed that, once in power, Sanon would award contracts to CTU for infrastructure projects, security forces and military equipment, investigators said. Worldwide Capital agreed to help finance the coup, extending a \$175,000 line of credit to CTU and sending money to co-conspirators in Haiti to purchase ammunition, officials said.

CTU initially retained about 20 Colombian nationals with military training to provide security for Sanon. But by June 2021, the conspirators realized Sanon had neither the constitutional qualifications nor sufficient popular support to become president. They then backed Wendelle Coq Thélot, a former Haitian Superior Court judge. She died in January 2025 while still a fugitive.

Besides the 11 people arrested and prosecuted in the U.S., another 20, including 17 Colombian soldiers and three Haitian officials, face charges in Haiti. Gang violence, death threats and a crumbling judicial system have stalled an ongoing investigation.

Where things stand after another weekend of war

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

Iran has named a son of its late supreme leader as his successor. U.S. President Donald Trump already had expressed disdain for Mojtaba Khamenei, calling him "unacceptable." The Islamic Republic's war strategy now has a new commander, and the powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has pledged allegiance.

Oil prices shot above \$100 a barrel. Both sides in the war struck new targets over the weekend, including civilian ones. Bahrain accused Iran of hitting one of the desalination plants that are crucial for drinking water in Gulf countries. Israel struck oil depots in Tehran, sending up thick smoke and causing environmental alerts.

The U.S. announced another soldier's death. Saudi Arabia announced the first deaths there. Anger grew in Arab countries over Iran's launching of hundreds of missiles and drones around the region. The Israeli military's chief of staff warned that the war "will take a long time."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 38 of 63

Here's where things stand as the war enters its 10th day.

Iran

Iran's announcement of a new supreme leader came after the country's remaining leadership appeared to show a rift. President Masoud Pezeshkian apologized for attacks on neighboring countries, but hard-liners criticized that and said the war strategy would continue.

The new supreme leader had not been seen or heard from publicly since the war began. He has not made a statement in his new role. The younger Khamenei inherits both the war and domestic unrest after Iran earlier this year cracked down on some of its largest protests in half a century.

Iran did not publicly update its death toll over the weekend from the over 1,200 previously reported. Some Iranians continued to flee the country.

Israel

Israel attacked both Iran and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in neighboring Lebanon, where authorities say over a half-million people have been displaced and over 300 killed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed "many surprises" in the next phase of the war. Israel said it destroyed the headquarters of the Revolutionary Guard Air Force, which operated the ballistic missile command, and struck ballistic missile launchers and missile production facilities.

Eleven people have died in Israel since the war began. Multiple alerts continued to sound per day across Israel about incoming projectiles, almost all of them intercepted.

United States

The U.S. military warned Iranians to stay indoors, asserting that Iran was launching attacks from densely populated areas. Evidence mounted indicating that the U.S. was behind the deadly strike on a girls' school in Iran on the first day of the war, but Trump suggested Iran was to blame.

Trump also attended the return of the remains of U.S. soldiers killed in the war. Seven have been killed.

Families of U.S. detainees in Iran worried their loved ones are at risk.

The U.S. military did not give an update over the weekend on the number of missiles and drones that Iran has fired in recent days, after saying the rate had gone down sharply. Experts said it's possible that Iran is holding back some missiles in reserve.

Middle East

The head of the Arab League called Iran's war strategy "reckless" as Gulf and other nations reported intercepting Iranian missiles and drones in areas of their countries with no U.S. military presence.

No country other than the U.S. and Israel has said it is attacking Iran. Some countries in the region host U.S. military facilities or troops. Iran has urged countries not to allow the U.S. to attack it from their territories. A missile hit a helicopter landing pad in the U.S. Embassy complex in Iraq.

More deaths were reported. Saudi Arabia said a falling military projectile killed an Indian citizen and a Bangladeshi one. Kuwait said two border guards were killed, and the United Arab Emirates reported a driver killed.

Foreign residents and workers have made up most of the reported deaths in the Gulf. Over a dozen people have been killed there in all.

Globally

The U.S. sought to assure Americans that surging fuel prices are a short-term problem. Russia is profiting from the surge.

Many travelers and pilgrims remain stranded in the Middle East. The U.S. State Department said over 32,000 Americans have left the region since the war began.

Nervousness remained around some of the world's busiest air hubs. Passengers waiting for flights at Dubai International Airport were ushered into train tunnels after several blasts were heard. Kuwait said fuel tanks at Kuwait International Airport were targeted by drones.

More states are becoming involved. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country will send experts to advise the U.S. and Middle Eastern allies on repelling Iranian drone attacks next week.

Iran names Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his father as supreme leader and Saudi sharpens warning

By JON GAMBRELL, SAM METZ, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Mojtaba Khamenei, a son of Iran's late supreme leader, has been named as the Islamic Republic's next ruler, authorities announced Monday, as Tehran widened its attacks across the Mideast to strike oil and water facilities crucial to its desert sheikdoms.

With Iran's theocracy under assault by the U.S. and Israel for more than a week, the country's Assembly of Experts chose as the next supreme leader a secretive, 56-year-old cleric who maintains close ties to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. The Guard has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states since the younger Khamenei's father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed Feb. 28 during the war's opening salvo.

The war has shaken global energy markets, pushing oil prices above \$100 a barrel and leading to tighter supplies of natural gas after Qatar turned off its production.

The younger Khamenei, who had not been seen or heard from publicly since the war started, had long been considered a contender for the post. That was even before the Israeli strike killed his father, and despite never being elected or appointed to a government position.

There appeared to be some dissension over his selection. Political figures within Iran criticized the idea of handing over the supreme leader's title based on heredity and thereby creating a clerical version of the rule of the shah, who was toppled during the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But top clerics in the Assembly of Experts likely wanted Khamenei to prosecute the war.

Khamenei, who is believed to hold views that are even more hard-line than his late father, now will be in charge of Iran's armed forces and any decision regarding Tehran's nuclear program.

While the country's key nuclear sites are in tatters after the United States bombed them during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, there's still highly enriched uranium in Iran that's a technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Khamenei could choose to do what his father never did — pursue the bomb.

Israel has already described him as a potential target, while U.S. President Donald Trump criticized the idea of Khamenei taking power.

"Khamenei's son is unacceptable to me," Trump has said. "We want someone that will bring harmony and peace to Iran."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Trump told ABC News on Sunday he wants a say in who comes to power once the war is over; a new leader "is not going to last long" without his approval.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard issued a statement expressing support, as did the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

Top Iranian security official Ali Larijani, speaking to Iranian state television, praised the Assembly of Experts for "courageously" convening even as airstrikes continued in Tehran. He said the younger Khamenei had been trained by his father and "can handle this situation."

Regional anger grows and oil rises above \$100 a barrel

Oil depots in Tehran smoldered following overnight Israeli strikes.

In a sign of rising regional anger, the Arab League chief lashed out at Iran for its "reckless policy" of attacking neighbors, including ones that host U.S. forces.

The U.S. military said a service member died of injuries from an Iranian attack on troops in Saudi Arabia on March 1. Seven U.S. soldiers have now been killed.

Saudi Arabia's Defense Ministry said Monday it intercepted a drone attacking the country's massive Shaybah oil field. The kingdom followed the alleged drone attack with sharper warnings to Iran that it would be the "biggest loser" if it continued to attack Arab states.

It dismissed comments by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday that Iran had halted its attacks on Gulf Arab states.

"The kingdom affirms that the Iranian side has not implemented this statement in practice, neither during

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 40 of 63

the Iranian president's speech nor afterward," Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Iran has continued its aggression based on flimsy pretexts devoid of any factual basis."

It added the Iranian attacks mean "further escalation which will have grave impact on the relations, currently and in the future."

Two U.S. officials say the State Department will order nonessential personnel and families of all staff to leave Saudi Arabia as Iran escalates its attacks. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity pending a formal announcement. Eight other U.S. diplomatic missions have ordered all but key staff to leave: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the consulate in Karachi, Pakistan.

The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, at least 397 in Lebanon and at least 11 in Israel, according to officials. Israel reported its first soldier deaths Sunday, saying two were killed in southern Lebanon, where its military is fighting Hezbollah.

Desalination and oil facilities attacked

Bahrain accused Iran of indiscriminately attacking civilian targets and damaging one of its desalination plants, though its electricity and water authority said supplies remained online.

Desalination plants supply water to millions of residents in the region and thousands of stranded travelers, raising new fears of catastrophic risks in parched desert nations.

The strike came after Iran claimed a U.S. airstrike damaged a desalination plant there. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the strike on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz had cut into the water supply to 30 villages.

He warned that in doing so "the U.S. set this precedent, not Iran."

In response, U.S. Central Command spokesperson Navy Capt. Tim Hawkins said that "U.S. forces do not target civilians – period."

The Iranian Red Crescent Society warned Tehran residents to take precautions against toxic air pollution and the risk of acid rain from the oil depot attack. It also said about 10,000 civilian structures across the country had been damaged, including homes, schools and almost three dozen health facilities.

Lebanon says a half-million people displaced

Lebanon said over a half-million people have been displaced in the week of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

The actual number is likely higher. Lebanon's count of 517,000 refers to those who registered on the government's online portal. Israel over the past week has called on residents in dozens of villages across southern Lebanon and the entirety of Beirut's southern suburbs to evacuate.

In Beirut, sheltering families crammed into schools, slept in cars or in open areas near the Mediterranean Sea, where some burned firewood to keep warm.

Israel's renewed offensive began last week after Hezbollah launched rockets toward northern Israel during the Iran war's opening days.

On 61st anniversary of Bloody Sunday, worries about the future of voting rights and calls to action

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Sixty-one years after state troopers attacked Civil Rights marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, thousands gathered in the Alabama city this weekend amid new concerns about the future of the Voting Rights Act.

The March 7, 1965, violence that became known as Bloody Sunday shocked the nation and helped spur passage of the landmark legislation that dismantled barriers to voting for Black Americans in the Jim Crow South.

The anniversary was celebrated in this city that served as crucible for the voting rights movement, with events through the weekend ending with a commemorative march across the bridge Sunday. But the commemoration came as the U.S. Supreme Court considers a case that could limit a provision of the Voting Rights Act that has helped ensure some congressional and local districts are drawn so minority voters

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 41 of 63

have a chance to elect their candidate of choice.

"I'm concerned that all of the advances that we made for the last 61 years are going to be eradicated," said Charles Mauldin, 78, one of the marchers beaten on Bloody Sunday.

Former and current Democratic officeholders, civil rights leaders and tourists descended on Selma to pay homage to the pivotal moment of the Civil Rights Movement and to issue calls to action. Speakers warned of the looming court decision and criticized the Trump administration's actions on immigration and efforts to roll back diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Standing at the pulpit of the historic Tabernacle Baptist Church, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, said that like the marchers on Bloody Sunday, they must press forward.

"Years after Bloody Sunday, the progress that stemmed from that sacrifice is now being rolled back right in our faces," the governor said. Moore is the nation's only Black governor currently in office.

"We are choosing this fight because those who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge deserve better than us cowering while the freedoms that we inherited and they fought for, are being ripped away," Moore said.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, speaking at a rally at the foot of the bridge, said racism is on the rise in America and "Trump's Supreme Court is gutting the Voting Rights Act."

"Let's march forward today with the knowledge that we are the inheritors of the faith that brought marchers to the bridge 61 years ago. It is now on us to bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice," Pritzker said.

The annual commemoration in Selma is a mix of a civil rights remembrances, church services and a street festival filled with vendors and food trucks. It is also part political rally with an eye on November's midterm elections and a longer view to the 2028 presidential race.

The commemoration included a tribute to the late Rev. Jesse Jackson, the civil rights leader and two-time presidential candidate who regularly attended the annual Selma march. He died on Feb. 17 at age 84.

Yusef Jackson said his father's legacy will be carried forward. "In November, we will go back to the polls and take our government back, setting our country on the right path," Jackson said.

The looming court decision cast a shadow over the festivities. Justices are expected to rule soon on a Louisiana case about the role of race in drawing congressional districts. A ruling prohibiting or limiting that role could have sweeping consequences, potentially opening the door for Republican-controlled states to redistrict and roll back majority Black and Latino districts that tend to favor Democrats.

U.S. Rep. Shomari Figures won election in 2024 to an Alabama district that was redrawn by a federal court to give Black voters a greater voice. His district will likely be targeted if the state gets the opportunity to redraw lines. He said what happened in Selma and the subsequent passage of the Voting Rights Act "was monumental in shaping what America looks like and how America is represented in Congress."

In 1965, the Bloody Sunday marchers led by John Lewis and Hosea Williams walked in pairs across the Selma bridge headed toward the state capital of Montgomery. Mauldin, then 17, was part of the third pair behind Williams and Lewis.

At the apex of the bridge, they could see the sea of law enforcement officers, including some on horseback, waiting for them. But they kept going.

"It wasn't that we didn't have fear, it's that we chose courage over fear," Mauldin recalled.

A crowd of several thousand filed behind elected officials on this Sunday for the march across the bridge, this time protected by state law enforcement officers.

James and Dianne Reynolds drove from Montgomery for the annual commemoration. James Reynolds, 79, was a high school student in Selma and worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee helping to set up demonstrations in Selma. He said he sees echoes of the past in efforts to restrict voting, such as curtailing mail-in voting and absentee voting.

"When you look at what's going on today, we're still fighting for the right to vote," Reynolds said.

What China's latest economic plans say about its tech ambitions and rivalry with the US

By KEN MORITSUGU and CHAN HO-HIM Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Two major economic plans unveiled at the annual meeting of China's legislature outline top priorities that have different ramifications for the global economy.

In the government plan for 2026, the No. 1 task is "building a robust domestic market." Then comes accelerating technological progress. But longer-term, a plan for the next five years gives more prominence to achieving advances in tech.

The subtle difference highlights the government's balancing act. Its overarching goal is to transform from a low-cost manufacturing to a tech-driven economy.

But a more immediate concern is dealing with a prolonged period of sluggishness that has depressed consumer and business confidence. China is such a large exporter that the choices it makes affect countries and jobs around the world.

The plans, presented at the recent opening of the National People's Congress, offer a window into the government's thinking. They are set to be formally endorsed by the rubber-stamp legislature at the end of the eight-day session on Thursday.

Tech crucial to China's future

Analysts believe technological prowess remains the far more important goal for Chinese leader Xi Jinping and his vision to build the nation into a major power that can contend with the United States on issues ranging from trade to Taiwan tensions.

Speaking to a provincial delegation at the National People's Congress, Xi called for new breakthroughs, original innovation and "seizing the strategic high ground of science and technology," according to a state media report.

China's rapid growth into the world's second-largest economy has lifted it to the level of a middle-income nation. To keep advancing, Xi has promoted policies that move the economy into higher-value industries.

A government-backed push into electric vehicles, for example, has transformed China into an emerging player in the global auto industry, while dovetailing with national climate goals.

The five-year plan vows to "target the frontiers of science and technology," speeding up development in areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum technology, biotechnology and new energy.

Moves toward self-sufficiency

The push has expanded and morphed as technology has evolved into an area of competition with the U.S. with national security implications.

The U.S. has restricted the access of Chinese companies to the most advanced technologies, including semiconductors that drive AI. The justification is that these parts can wind up in weapons at a time when the two countries are military rivals as well.

China's government has responded by pouring resources into trying to develop these components itself as well as engineer ways to remain competitive with less advanced parts.

China must "fight the battle for key core technologies," the five-year plan said. Specific goals, apart from AI, electric vehicles and robotics, include making advancements in semiconductors, batteries, biomedicine and 6G mobile networks.

The plan also pledged to expand production of China's homegrown passenger jet, the C919, and make breakthroughs in developing its own commercial jet engine. The U.S. temporarily cut off the supply of Western-supplied engines for the C919 last year during an escalation in the trade war with China.

Rare earths — where China is the global leader — was highlighted as an area where it should maintain its competitive edge as the U.S. and other countries seek to develop their own supplies of the critical elements for many advanced tech and military products.

Trump's tariffs

Even as China's economy has cooled at home, rising exports have kept it growing overall. But tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump have exposed the risk of relying too heavily on overseas markets.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 43 of 63

China was able to shift exports to other markets, but that is facing challenges as its record trade surplus of almost \$1.2 trillion raises alarm about the threat to factory jobs and the broader economies in other countries.

That has added impetus to China's push to pump up consumer spending, so the economy is less dependent on outside forces.

"Facing a complex and challenging international environment, we must remain committed to the strategy of expanding domestic demand," the annual economic plan said.

But for all the strong words, analysts say the effort appears aimed at keeping the economy afloat rather than boosting it. The annual plan sets a growth target of 4.5% to 5% for 2026, leaving room for a drop from last year's 5% rise.

Meanwhile, the government is primed to offer huge subsidies for high-tech advances in manufacturing, analysts said.

"Technological development and self-sufficiency remain central priorities, and industrial policy will continue to be deployed as an essential tool to achieve them," economists at Capital Economics wrote in a research note.

Similar subsidies to the wind and solar industries led to manufacturing oversupply that was exported at rock-bottom prices, undercutting overseas competitors. The end result could be an even larger imbalance between China's immense manufacturing capacity and its weaker domestic demand, further driving up its exports.

Trump's 'roaring' economy meets a rough start to 2026: What the latest numbers show

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump promised that 2026 would be a bumper year for economic growth, but instead it has kicked off with job losses, rising gasoline prices and more uncertainty about America's future.

In his State of the Union address less than two weeks ago, the Republican president confidently told the country: "The roaring economy is roaring like never before." The latest batch of data on jobs, pump prices and the stock market suggests that Trump's roar has started to sound far more like a whimper.

There is a gap between the boom that Trump has predicted and the volatile results he has produced — one that could set the tone in this year's midterm elections as he tries to defend his party's majorities in the House and Senate. With Trump's tariffs drama ongoing, the war in Iran has suddenly created inflationary concerns regarding oil and natural gas. To the White House, it is still early in the year and stronger growth is coming.

No signs of a jobs boom

"WOW! The Golden Age of America is upon us!!!" Trump posted on social media Feb. 11 after the monthly jobs report showed gains of 130,000 jobs in January.

Since then, the job market has evaporated in worrisome ways.

Friday's employment report showed job losses of 92,000 in February. The January and December figures were revised downward, with December swinging to a loss of 17,000 jobs. Monthly data can be rocky, but a trend has emerged that shows an enduring weakness. Without the health care sector, the economy would have shed roughly 202,000 jobs since Trump became president in January 2025. Still, his administration notes that construction job gains outside of the housing sector point to future hiring growth.

Trump often brags that jobs are going to people born in the United States, rather than to immigrants. But the latest report punctured some of that argument.

The unemployment rate for people born in the U.S. has climbed over the past 12 months to 4.7% from 4.4%. This means a greater share of the people who Trump said would get jobs because of his immigration crackdown are, in fact, searching for work.

Prices at the pump are going up

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 44 of 63

"Slashing energy costs is among the most important actions we can take to bring down prices for American consumers," Trump said in a February speech in Texas just before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran. "Because when you cut the cost of energy, you really cut -- you just cut the cost of everything."

The president has repeatedly told Americans that keeping gas costs low would be key to defeating inflation. He has talked up the decline, citing figures that were far below the national average to assure the public that driving was getting cheaper.

But the strikes against Iran that began Feb. 28 have, for the moment, crushed that narrative. Prices at the pump have jumped 19% over the past month to a national average of \$3.45, according to AAA. The investment bank Goldman Sachs warned in an analyst note that, if higher oil prices persist, inflation could rise from its 2.4% reading in January to 3% by the end of the year.

The administration is banking on plans to contain any energy price increases, essentially betting that either the conflict will end shortly or the administration can succeed in getting more tankers through the Strait of Hormuz.

On Sunday as oil prices rose above \$100 per barrel for the first time since 2022, Trump sought to assure anxious Americans that it was a temporary problem.

"Short term oil prices, which will drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iran nuclear threat is over, is a very small price to pay for U.S.A., and World, Safety and Peace. ONLY FOOLS WOULD THINK DIFFERENTLY!" Trump posted on social media.

Stocks are off their highs

"You know, we set the all-time record in history with the Dow going to 50,000," Trump said Thursday at the White House.

This frequently repeated talking point has grown stale. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, one of Trump's preferred measures of success, has dropped 5% over the past month. Stocks are up during his presidency, just as they were previously when Democrat Joe Biden was president. The recent decline could be reversed if the war with Iran ends and companies see solid profits over the next year and beyond. The recent dip, however, should be a warning sign as the administration has stressed the importance of more people investing in the stock market through vehicles such as "Trump accounts" for children.

The stock market has become a barometer of how people feel about the economy, with stock investors tending to have more confidence and those without money in the markets being more pessimistic.

Joanne Hsu, the director of the University of Michigan's surveys of consumers, noted that in February a "sizable" increase in sentiment among people owning stocks "was fully offset by a decline among consumers without stock holdings."

Productivity is up, but workers aren't benefiting

Trump can point to a win in that the economy has become more productive — generating more value for each hour of work. That is a positive sign for long-term growth in the U.S. and a reflection of its strong tech sector.

Business sector labor productivity climbed 2.8% in the fourth quarter of last year, the Labor Department reported Thursday. But the challenge is that the gains might not be spread to workers in the form of higher pay as labor's share of income last year fell to the lowest level on record, noted Mike Konczal, senior director of policy and research at the Economic Security Project, a nonprofit aligned with liberal economic issues.

Economy grew at a faster pace under Biden

"Under the Biden administration, America was plagued by the nightmare of stagflation, meaning low growth and high inflation — a recipe for misery, failure and decline," Trump said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January.

The scoreboard tells a far different story, one that makes Biden's track record in 2024 look better than Trump's performance last year. The U.S. economy grew at a 2.8% pace during Biden's last year, compared with 2.2% under Trump in 2025.

As for inflation, the primary measure used by the Federal Reserve is the personal consumption expen-

ditures price index. It was 2.6% in both 2024 and 2025.

Trump has staked his economic argument on doing better than Biden. But while he has avoided the inflation spikes that haunted Biden's presidency, he has not delivered stronger growth or more hiring.

Counterprotester threw improvised explosive at anti-Islam event in NYC, police say

Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — A device thrown by a counterprotester at an anti-Islam demonstration in New York City on Saturday was confirmed to be an improvised explosive, according to a preliminary police analysis. As the investigation continued on Sunday, police said they were looking into a second suspicious device found in the same area of Manhattan's Upper East Side.

Two people were in custody for their alleged role in Saturday's confrontation, which unfolded during a "Stop the Islamic Takeover of New York City" event led by the far right activist Jake Lang outside the Manhattan residence of Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

The sparsely attended event drew a far larger group of counterdemonstrators, including one person who tossed a smoking object containing nuts, bolts, screws and a "hobby fuse" into the crowd, police said.

In a social media post Sunday, Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said the department's bomb squad determined the object wasn't a hoax device or smoke bomb, but an "improvised explosive device that could have caused serious injury or death."

The device extinguished itself steps from police officers, Tisch noted. The same person who threw it then received a second device from another counterprotester, which was dropped and did not appear to ignite, the commissioner said.

Charges against the two counterprotesters were still pending. Tisch said police were working with federal prosecutors and the FBI on the case. The FBI said agents with the bureau's Joint Terrorism Task Force were participating in the investigation.

"Violence at a protest is never acceptable," Mamdani said in a statement Sunday. "The attempt to use an explosive device and hurt others is not only criminal, it is reprehensible and the antithesis of who we are."

Later Sunday afternoon, police said on social media that authorities investigating Saturday's events had "identified a suspicious device in a vehicle on East End Avenue between 81st Street and 82nd Street." Several streets were closed and "limited evacuations of buildings" were ordered as the bomb squad assessed and worked to remove the device, the post said.

Around 7 p.m., police used a flatbed truck to remove a Honda Civic and the streets were reopened.

A person associated with Lang's protest was also arrested and charged with reckless endangerment, assault and unlawful possession of a noxious matter after allegedly macing counterdemonstrators, police said.

Lang was previously charged with assaulting an officer with a baseball bat, civil disorder and other crimes before receiving clemency as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping act of clemency for Jan. 6 defendants last year. He recently announced that he is running for U.S. Senate in Florida.

Earlier this year, Lang organized a rally in Minneapolis in support of Trump's immigration crackdown, drawing an angry crowd of counterprotesters that quickly chased him away.

Crude oil prices surpass \$100 a barrel as the Iran war impedes production and shipping

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Oil prices eclipsed \$100 per barrel for the first time in more than three and a half years Sunday as the Iran war hinders production and shipping in the Middle East.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, was at \$107.97 after trading resumed on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, up 16.5% from its Friday closing price of \$92.69.

West Texas Intermediate, the light, sweet crude oil produced in the United States, was selling for about

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 46 of 63

\$106.22 a barrel. That's 16.9% higher than it closed Friday at \$90.90.

Both could rise or fall as market trading continued.

The increases followed the U.S. crude price jumping by 36% and Brent crude rising by 28% last week. Oil prices have surged as the war, now in its second week, ensnared countries and places that are critical to the production and movement of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf.

Roughly 15 million barrels of crude oil — about 20% of the world's oil — typically are shipped every day through the Strait of Hormuz, according to independent research firm Rystad Energy. The threat of Iranian missile and drone attacks has all but stopped tankers from traveling through the strait, which is bordered in the north by Iran, carry oil and gas from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Iran.

Iraq, Kuwait and the UAE have cut their oil production as storage tanks fill due to the reduced ability to export crude. Iran, Israel and the United States also have attacked oil and gas facilities since the war started, exacerbating supply concerns.

The last time U.S. crude futures traded above \$100 per barrel was June 30, 2022, when the price reached \$105.76. For Brent, it was July 29, 2022, when the price hit \$104 per barrel.

The global surge in oil prices since Israel and the U.S. attacked Iran on March 1 has rattled financial markets, sparking worries that higher energy costs will fuel inflation and lead to less spending by U.S. consumers, the main engine of the economy.

In the U.S., a gallon of regular gasoline rose to \$3.45 on Sunday, about 47 cents more than a week earlier, according to AAA motor club. Diesel was selling for about \$4.60 a gallon, a weekly increase of about 83 cents.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright, speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," said U.S. gas prices would be back under \$3 a gallon "before too long."

"Look, you never know exactly the time frame of this, but, in the worst case, this is a weeks, this is not a months thing," Wright added.

If oil prices stay above \$100 per barrel, some analysts and investors say it could be too much for the global economy to withstand.

Iranian authorities said strikes by Israel on oil depots in Tehran and a petroleum transfer terminal early Sunday killed four people. Israel's military said the depots were being used by Iran's military for fuel to launch missiles. Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, the speaker of Iran's parliament, warned that the war's impact on the oil industry would spiral.

Iran exports roughly 1.6 million barrels of oil a day, mostly to China, which may need to look elsewhere for supply if Iran's exports are disrupted, another factor that could increase energy prices.

The price of natural gas also has climbed during the war, though not by as much as oil. It was selling for about \$3.33 per 1,000 cubic feet late Sunday. That's 4.6% higher than its Friday closing price of \$3.19, after rising about 11% last week.

U.S. stock index futures, a bellwether for the market, fell late Sunday, pointing to Wall Street's main indexes opening down on Monday. The future for the S&P 500 was down 1.6%, while the Dow's fell 1.8%. The future for the Nasdaq composite was down 1.5%.

On Friday, the S&P 500 dropped 1.3% and the Dow plunged as many as 945 points before finishing with a loss of roughly 450, and the Nasdaq sank 1.6%.

Fox News apologizes for showing old video of a hatless Donald Trump at a dignified transfer ceremony

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Fox News apologized for airing old video of a hatless President Donald Trump during coverage Sunday of his attendance at the dignified transfer ceremony for U.S. soldiers killed in the Middle East war, insisting it was an honest mistake.

In a polarized time, some online critics suggested without evidence that it wasn't an error — that the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 47 of 63

network was trying to make Trump look better by not showing him wearing a baseball cap during what is considered one of the most solemn duties of a commander in chief. The return of the bodies of six soldiers took place Saturday at Dover Air Force Base.

But Fox News said archival footage of Trump at an earlier ceremony was inadvertently pulled up by a staff member and used on two Sunday morning telecasts. A spokeswoman noted the correct footage was used at other times, including on Saturday.

"We regret the error and apologize for the incorrect footage," Fox said in a statement.

Fox News anchor Griff Jenkins issued an on-the-air correction Sunday, saying "we extend our respect and condolences" to the families of the service members killed.

The apology didn't sit well with some critics. "If any other network did this it would be a huge scandal, Fox would lead the chorus of criticisms and faux-outrage, and people would lose their jobs," said Mehdi Hasan, founder of the online site Zeteo.

Johnny "Joey" Jones, a veteran and co-host of "The Big Weekend Show" on Fox News Channel, said on social media that he was "embarrassed and ashamed" that this happened.

"My belief was that this was an honest mistake, but that doesn't make it an acceptable one," Jones wrote. "Few things are more sacred than our heroes who give their lives in the line of duty."

Jones said that "if posting snarky comments and insults is your way of reacting to this, please direct them at me. I'm the one with sharp words on these issues. If you are using this as a way to take a partisan jab at my hard working colleagues, check your watch."

Texas judge orders Camp Mystic to preserve damaged grounds hit by last year's deadly flood

By JIM VERTUNO and SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Texas judge on Wednesday ordered Camp Mystic to preserve damaged cabins and other parts of the grounds hit by last year's catastrophic floods that swept away and killed 25 girls and two counselors.

The order follows a lawsuit by the family of 8-year-old Cile Steward, who was swept away in the flood last Fourth of July and whose body still has not been recovered. District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble ordered Camp Mystic to halt any construction or alterations after the family argued that any changes at the camp could destroy evidence needed for their lawsuit.

Gamble ruled that Camp Mystic's owners must not alter or demolish the cabins where campers were housed during the floods, and said they must not use the portion of the camp closest to the Guadalupe River where those cabins were located.

"What we're trying to do is preserve the evidence that's there so that we can understand, so that future campers will never be put in a situation like this again," Will Steward, Cile's father, told reporters after the hearing.

The campers and counselors were killed when the fast-rising floodwaters roared through a low-lying area of the summer camp before dawn on the Fourth of July. All told, the destructive flooding killed at least 136 people, raising questions about how things went so terribly wrong.

The camp, established in 1926, did not evacuate and was hit hard when the river rose from 14 feet (4.2 meters) to 29.5 feet (9 meters) within 60 minutes.

"The worst thing you can do is put a bunch of 8-year-olds on a bus and try to drive them out of there. They all would have drowned," said Mikal Watts, an attorney for Camp Mystic and its family of owners.

In a packed courtroom Wednesday, family members of the deceased girls wore buttons depicting their images as lawyers for Camp Mystic displayed pictures of trees planted in their memory and architectural renderings of plans to rebuild parts of the camp outside a 1,000-year flood zone.

Attorneys for Camp Mystic have expressed sympathy for the girls' families but maintained there was little they could have done during the catastrophic flooding that quickly overcame the camp. Pictures of the rising floodwaters were shown in court Wednesday.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 48 of 63

"Nobody had every seen a prior flood anything like we saw in 2025," Watts said.

More than 850 campers have already signed up to attend camp this summer, he said. The camp still needs to be approved for a license by state regulators to operate this summer.

Edward Eastland, the son of camp owner Richard Eastland, who died in the flooding, testified Wednesday that his mother, his wife and their children as well as another staff member were at a camp house when "the double doors of the house broke open" from floodwaters. They had to break out a separate window to climb out and evacuate to higher ground. All survived.

The camp had security cameras around the campus, Eastland said, but no one was watching the live feed in the middle of the night as the waters rose. When he tried to pull it up about 3 a.m., he wasn't able to.

And when pressed about the camp's flood plans, Eastland said he didn't know if there was anything more detailed than a one-paragraph slide shown in the hearing. Will and Cici Steward said they don't believe the camp has adequate safety measures in place to welcome new campers while they still search for their daughter.

"They didn't have a plan, and they don't have a plan moving forward," Cici Steward said.

The camp's decision last year to partially open and to construct a memorial on the grounds drew outrage from many of the girls' families who are mourning their loved ones and who said they weren't consulted on the plans.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has asked Texas regulators not to renew the license for Camp Mystic while the deaths are being investigated and cited legislative probes that are expected to begin in the spring.

Families of several of the girls who died have sued the camp's operators, arguing that camp officials failed to take necessary steps to protect the campers as life-threatening floodwaters approached.

'Country' Joe McDonald, '60s rock star, proud protest counterculture icon, dies at 84

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Country" Joe McDonald, a hippie rock star of the 1960s whose "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag" was a four-lettered rebuke to the Vietnam War that became an anthem for protesters and a highlight of the Woodstock music festival, died Sunday. He was 84.

McDonald, who performed with his band, Country Joe and the Fish, died in Berkeley, California. His death from complications of Parkinson's disease was reported by Kathy McDonald, his wife of 43 years, in a statement issued by his publicist.

McDonald was a longtime presence in the Bay Area music scene, where peers included the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane and his onetime girlfriend, Janis Joplin. He wrote or co-wrote hundreds of songs, from psychedelic jams to soul-influenced rockers, and released dozens of albums. But he was known best for a talking blues he completed in less than an hour in 1965 — the year President Lyndon Johnson began sending ground forces to Vietnam — and recorded in the Berkeley home of Arhoolie Records founder Chris Strachwitz.

In the deadpan style of McDonald's hero, Woody Guthrie, "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag" was a mock celebration of war and early, senseless death, with a chorus concertgoers and others would learn by heart:

And its 1, 2, 3 what are we fighting for? Don't ask me I don't give a damn, Next stop is Vietnam, And its 5, 6, 7 open up the pearly gates, Well there ain't no time to wonder why, WHOOPEE we're all gonna die

At the time he wrote "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag," McDonald was co-leader of the newly formed Country Joe and the Fish and he added a special "F-I-S-H" chant before the song: "Give me an F, give me an I, give me an S, give me an H." By the time his group appeared at Woodstock in 1969, the Fish were on the verge of breaking up, the chant was a different four-letter word beginning in "F" and McDonald was performing before hundreds of thousands. Many would stand and sing along, a moment captured in the Woodstock documentary released the following year. (For the film, the song's lyrics appeared as subtitles, a bouncing ball on top).

"Some people alluded to peace and stuff (at Woodstock), but I was talking about Vietnam," McDonald

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 49 of 63

told The Associated Press in 2019. He called the opening chant "an expression of our anger and frustration over the Vietnam War, which was killing us, literally killing us."

The song helped make him famous, but brought legal and professional consequences. In 1968, Ed Sullivan canceled a planned appearance by Country Joe and the Fish on his variety show when he learned of the new opening cheer. Soon after Woodstock, McDonald was arrested and fined for using the cheer at a show in Worcester, Massachusetts, an ordeal which helped hasten the band's demise.

McDonald even performed the song in court. His friendships with such political radicals as Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin led to his being called in as a witness in the "Chicago Eight (or Seven)" trial against organizers of anti-war protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. On the stand, he explained how he had met with Hoffman and others and told them about "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag." When he began performing it, the judge interrupted and told him "No singing is permitted in the courtroom."

McDonald recited the words instead.

In 2001, the daughter of the late jazz musician Edward "Kid" Ory sued McDonald, alleging that his song's melody closely resembled Ory's 1920s jazz instrumental "Muskrat Blues." A U.S. district judge in California ruled in McDonald's favor, citing in part the "unreasonable" delay between the song's release and the suit being filed.

A man of the '60s

McDonald continued touring and recording for decades after Woodstock, but remained defined by the late 1960s, a time period he openly longed for in the late 1970s rocker "Bring Back the Sixties, Man." His albums included "Country," "Carry On," "Time Flies By" and "50," and he would continue writing protest songs, notably the 1975 release "Save the Whales."

Although defined by his anti-war activism, McDonald would acknowledge conflicted feelings about Vietnam. He had served in the Navy, in Japan, in the late 1950s, and found himself identifying with both the protesters and those serving overseas. In the 1990s, he helped organize the construction of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Berkeley, formally unveiled in 1995.

"Many remembered the ugly confrontations that had happened during the war years in the city," McDonald later wrote of the ceremony. "Yet the atmosphere proved to be one of reconciliation, not confrontation."

McDonald was married four times, most recently to Kathy McDonald, and had five children and four grandchildren. He was involved off and on with Joplin over the second half of the 1960s, two young hippies whose careers and temperaments drove them apart. When McDonald told her he thought they should break up, she asked him to write a song, which became the ballad "Janis":

Even though I know that you and I
Could never find the kind of love we wanted
Together, alone, I find myself
Missing you and I
You and I

Raised on politics, and music

Country Joe McDonald did not come from the "country." He was born on Jan. 1, 1942 in Washington, D.C., and grew up in El Monte, California. He was the son of onetime Communists who named him for Josef Stalin and otherwise encouraged him to love music and identify with the working class. He was still in his teens when he began writing songs, playing trombone well enough to lead his high school marching band and teaching himself folk, country and blues songs on guitar.

After returning from the Navy, in the early 1960s, he attended Los Angeles State College, but soon moved to Berkeley and became immersed in folk music and political activism. He founded an underground magazine, Rag Baby, for which "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag" was written to help promote, and helped start such local groups as the Instant Action Jug Band and the Berkeley String Quartet.

In 1965, he formed Country Joe and the Fish with fellow singer-guitarist Barry "The Fish" Melton, later

adding Bruce Barthol on bass, organ player David Bennett Cohen and Gary "Chicken" Hirsh on drums. The name was suggested by magazine publisher Eugene "ED" Denson, who cited a quote from Mao Zedong that revolutionaries are "the fish who swim in the sea of the people." McDonald was dubbed "Country Joe" because Denson had heard that Stalin was known as "Country Joe" during World War II.

Like the Jefferson Airplane, the Byrds and other bands, the Fish evolved from folk to folk-rock to acid rock. "Electric Music for the Mind and Body," their debut album, was released in May 1967 and featured a minor hit, "Not So Sweet Martha Lorraine," along with numerous long jams. A month after the album came out, they appeared at the Monterey Pop Festival, the first major rock gathering and a highlight of the so-called Summer of Love.

"I think the 'Summer of Love' thing was manufactured by the media or something, because I don't remember us thinking, 'Wow, this is the 'Summer of Love,'" he told [aquariandrunkard.com](#) in 2018. "(But) I was just thrilled to be a part of this new counterculture and new tribe because I had never really felt comfortable in the other tribes that I was a part of growing up and in the Navy. My parents were actually Jewish Communists. I never felt a part of it, but I was really thrilled and happy to be a hippie."

A son of Iran's late supreme leader is chosen 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 who was named as his successor Sunday, had long been considered a contender to the post even before an Israeli strike killed his father and despite the fact he had never been elected or appointed to a government position.

A secretive figure within the Islamic Republic, Mojtaba Khamenei was not seen publicly in the days after an Israeli airstrike targeting the supreme leader's offices killed his 86-year-old father at the start of the war. Also killed in that strike were the younger Khamenei's wife, Zahra Haddad Adel, who came from a family long associated with the country's theocracy.

Mojtaba Khamenei will now have a central say in Iran's war strategy with the country's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard answering to him. The announcement of his selection came after signs of a rift among Iranian officials as Iran awaited the decision by the 88-seat Assembly of Experts, a group of clerics that selects the supreme leader.

His candidacy may have been indirectly boosted by U.S. President Donald Trump who criticized Khamenei in an interview with news website Axios on Thursday and insisted that he be involved in selecting Iran's next leader. "They are wasting their time. Khamenei's son is a lightweight. I have to be involved in the appointment," Trump said, referring to his operation that saw the U.S. military seize former Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro. "Khamenei's son is unacceptable to me," Trump added. "We want someone that will bring harmony and peace to Iran."

Profile of Khamenei's son rose after airstrike

The idea of having Mojtaba Khamenei replace his father had been criticized as potentially creating a theocratic version of Iran's former hereditary monarchy. But his stock rose after his father and his wife were killed and became martyrs in the war against America and Israel in the eyes of hard-liners.

The younger Khamenei has gained control not only of an Iranian military now at war but also a stockpile of highly enriched uranium that could be used to build a nuclear weapon — should he choose to decree it.

Prior to his selection, 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.

An official biography of Ali Khamenei's recounts a moment when the shah's secret police, the SAVAK,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 51 of 63

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.

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 reelection 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.

NTSB member says he was fired without explanation by the Trump administration

WASHINGTON (AP) — A National Transportation Safety Board member who was a public face of the investigation into last year's deadly collision of an airliner and an Army helicopter near the nation's capital said Sunday that he had been fired by the Trump administration without explanation.

Todd Inman said in a statement that he received notice Friday from the White House personnel office that his position on the board was "terminated effective immediately." He said he had not yet received a reason for his firing.

The White House had no immediate response to a message left by The Associated Press seeking comment.

The NTSB has a five-person board but its website on Sunday showed just three members. The board's vice chair, Alvin Brown, was abruptly removed last year.

Brown and Robert Primus, who served on the U.S. Surface Transportation Board, were the only Black board members overseeing their respective independent agencies when they were fired last year. Both have challenged their firings in court, and the group Democracy Forward has filed discrimination claims on behalf of the men.

When Brown was fired, experts said they couldn't remember such a firing from the NTSB.

The White House previously has said that Trump was within his legal rights to fire Brown and Primus and that performance, not bias, drove the decisions.

The NTSB is tasked by Congress with investigating aviation accidents and significant rail, highway, pipeline and other disasters to determine their probable causes and make recommendations aimed at avoiding similar incidents. The NTSB currently investigating nearly 1,250 cases.

Inman also was the lead board member of the investigation into last year's crash of a UPS cargo plane in Kentucky that killed 15 people. After major incidents, the board sends a member to the crash site for initial briefings and to oversee the initial investigation. The January 2025 midair collision between the passenger jet and Army helicopter killed 67 people.

In his statement, Inman said having been the board member on scene "for two of the largest aviation incidents in the past two decades, working with all of the impacted families and first responders has made me appreciate how the original mission of the NTSB is more crucial now than ever before."

"Witnessing these horrible accidents have undoubtedly taken a toll on me and my family and has changed my perspective in a positive way on how we regulate safety for the traveling public," he said.

Inman praised the NTSB staff and investigators as "world class."

"My only hope is that the NTSB leadership and those who control it stay true to its roots and culture as the preeminent safety organization unimpeded by political or personal agendas," he wrote.

Police in Norway investigate an explosion outside the US Embassy in Oslo

By STEFANIE DAZIO and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

Police in Norway were investigating an explosion early Sunday outside the U.S. Embassy in Oslo, the capital of the Scandinavian country, officials said.

No injuries were reported. Police received reports of a "loud bang" or explosion around 1 a.m., Oslo police said in a news release.

The explosion was caused by some sort of incendiary device, according to Frode Larsen, leader of the Oslo police joint unit for investigation and intelligence. Investigators believe the embassy was the target and are searching for the perpetrators and their motive.

Larsen said the embassy's entrance had damage, but no arrests have been made.

"We are early in the investigation, but we are working based on multiple hypotheses," Larsen said in a statement. "Given the current security situation, it is natural to consider whether this was a targeted at-

tack on the American Embassy. However, we have not committed to any single hypothesis.”

Local media reported that people nearby said the street was blanketed in thick smoke following the blast. Police are seeking to talk to witnesses.

A U.S. official said the incendiary device was inside a backpack and detonated outside the entrance to the Consular Affairs office at the embassy. The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

PST, the Norwegian police security service, called in additional personnel following the incident, but hasn't changed the country's terror threat level, according to communication adviser Martin Bernsen.

“This is an unacceptable incident that is being treated with the utmost seriousness,” said Astri Aas-Hansen, Norway's minister of justice and public security.

“The police have stated that they are investigating the case with significant resources, and that nothing indicates the situation poses any danger to the public.”

The U.S. Embassy in Oslo referred media inquiries to the U.S. State Department, which said it was aware of the incident and was opening its own investigation.

“We thank the Norwegian authorities for supporting the investigation,” the statement said.

George Russell wins Formula 1's Australian GP as Mercedes goes 1-2

By STEWART BELL Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Mercedes' George Russell won a thrilling season-opening Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix, with teammate Kimi Antonelli following him home, after a double-stacked pit stop under the virtual safety car outmaneuvered a lightning-quick start by Ferrari.

Mercedes said this was its 132nd GP victory overall and 61st 1-2 finish.

“We knew it was going to be challenging,” Russell said. “I go onto the grid; I saw my battery level. I have nothing in the tank, made a bad start and honestly some really tight battles with Charles (Leclerc).”

“I was really glad to cross the finish line, but honestly, thank you so much for the whole team because it's been a long time coming to have this car beneath us, and I'm yeah, going to start off in a better way.”

Pole sitter Russell had a sluggish start, as did Antonelli who dropped to seventh, allowing Ferrari's Leclerc — making best use of his quicker getaway — to take the lead into turn one.

The Monégasque then diced for the top spot with Russell, passing and repassing, before the lap 12 deployment of the virtual safety car to cover the stopped Red Bull of Isack Hadjar saw both Mercedes cars take an opportunistic pit stop — a move that proved decisive.

Russell's teammate was relieved to fight back to second, having dropped down to seventh at the start before weaving his way back into the podium positions.

“Yeah, the racing was incredible,” Antonelli said. “The first few laps, the overtake is so powerful that you can give a lot of action. So, it was really good fun at the beginning and yeah, now, a bit of rest and looking forward to China.”

Ferrari outmaneuvered

Leclerc was third for his first podium for Ferrari since Mexico last year, with the 28-year-old frustrated to not go one place higher after the Scuderia erred by failing to follow Mercedes' quick thinking for a cheap pit stop under the virtual safety car, when the rest of the field drove at a slower pace.

Leclerc, though, didn't think the win was possible.

“I don't think so, but maybe I'm wrong,” he said. “Yeah, it looked like Mercedes maybe had a bit more pace than us today. But, maybe not as much as what we saw yesterday, so that's a good thing. But I don't think we could have won.”

Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton was fourth, 0.6 seconds behind at the flag, having chased him hard in the closing laps. The seven-time world champion was vocal over the radio at Ferrari's apparent strategic blunders.

“At least one of us should have come in,” Hamilton said as both Mercedes' pitted.

Sorry day for McLaren

Earlier, the local fans in the stands were disappointed after McLaren's Oscar Piastri crashed out on the way to the grid at the exit of turn four, likely due to an energy spike in his power unit, which ruled him out of his home race before the start.

Lando Norris, the sole McLaren in the race after Piastri's crash, closed out the top five. The reigning world champion not only moved up one place from sixth on the grid but in the closing laps, fought off Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who rocketed from 20th on the grid to finish sixth. The Dutchman was the last racer to finish on the lead lap, albeit 54.6 seconds behind winner Russell.

Oliver Bearman was seventh, up from 12th on the grid, and the sole Haas to finish in the points, with his teammate Esteban Ocon finishing 11th. Bearman finished ahead of 2026's sole rookie, Arvid Lindblad, who scored four points on his F1 debut for eighth place — but was as high as fourth during the race.

Gabriel Bortoleto was ninth for German giant Audi's first points in its first race, while Alpine's Pierre Gasly closed out the top-10, earning his first point since last year's São Paulo Grand Prix.

A retired Lebanese security officer vanishes and his family thinks it was a covert Israeli abduction

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

ZAHLE, Lebanon (AP) — A retired Lebanese security officer vanished in December after going to meet a possible buyer for a plot of land.

Lebanese officials and the family of retired General Security Directorate Capt. Ahmed Shukr believe he was abducted and spirited away to Israel in an intelligence operation aimed at getting information on the fate of an Israeli airman who disappeared in Lebanon four decades ago.

The family believes Shukr was taken because of his brother's possible links to the disappearance of Israeli navigator Ron Arad. The family says Shukr was never part of a militant group and played no role in Arad's disappearance.

Nearly three months after Shukr disappeared — and after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran, triggering a war in the Middle East — Israel carried out a deadly commando operation in Nabi Chit, Lebanon, this weekend in search of Arad's remains.

Residents said the commando team began digging in the Shukr family cemetery in Nabi Chit before being confronted by fighters from the Hezbollah militant group and armed civilians. Intense clashes and airstrikes left 41 people dead and dozens wounded, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. No Israeli casualties were reported.

It wasn't immediately clear if the Israeli operation came as a result of information extracted from Shukr.

The Israeli military acknowledged that the operation aimed to find evidence of Arad's fate, and said that his remains weren't found. The military declined to comment when asked whether Israel had taken Shukr.

Still, the incident appears to fit a decades-long pattern of Israeli covert actions and commando operations deep inside Lebanon to capture or kill people it says were involved in anti-Israel activities.

Israel has in some cases claimed responsibility for such operations, including the case of a sea captain taken from northern Lebanon in November 2024 whom Israel claimed was a senior Hezbollah operative.

In others, such as the mysterious abduction and killing of a Hezbollah-linked Lebanese currency exchanger in April 2024, Israel has remained silent, but Lebanese officials have said they have evidence of its involvement.

Searching for decades

Israel has been trying to find out what happened to Arad since he parachuted from his fighter jet while attacking suspected Palestinian militants in 1986 on the edge of the southern Lebanese port city of Sidon.

A Shiite Muslim faction called the Believers' Resistance captured Arad after he landed.

In 1994, helicopter-borne Israeli commandos landed deep in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley, where they seized the leader of the Believers' Resistance, Mustafa Dirani, and took him to Israel.

Dirani was released a decade later in a prisoner exchange. He told the Israeli daily Maariv in an interview

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 55 of 63

in 2000 that Arad disappeared in 1988 when his guards left him to check on relatives living near the site of a major battle in 1988 between Hezbollah fighters and Israeli troops, who occupied parts of Lebanon at the time.

But The Associated Press reported in 2000 that Dirani told an Israeli court that Arad was taken away by Iranian soldiers. An Israeli judicial official said that Dirani gave different accounts of events while in captivity.

After lengthy indirect negotiations between Israel and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed group sent a report about Arad through mediators in 2008, suggesting that he most likely died trying to reach Israel after escaping.

Shukr connection

Relatives of Shukr told the AP that months before he went missing, he got to know a Lebanese citizen called Ali Morad who contacted him through social media and rented an apartment the retired officer owned south of Beirut.

Shukr's wife, Salwa Hazimeh, said Morad called her husband in mid-December and told him a business owner was interested in buying a plot of land he wanted to sell in the city of Zahle and would like to see it at 5:30 p.m.

"I was standing by him as he spoke and told him that we cannot see the plot of land later in the afternoon but he (Morad) insisted," she said. Shukr drove the next day, Dec. 17, to Zahle, where security footage showed him getting out of his own car and entering another, Hazimeh said.

"Since then we know nothing about him," Hazimeh said.

Shukr's family says he has diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems, and needs constant care and medication.

The family members said Shukr's phone was last active in the eastern village of Ghazze around 7 a.m. on Dec. 18. They believe that he was taken by land into Israel from southern Lebanon.

"It looks like an extraordinary rendition," said Adam Coogle, deputy director with the Middle East and North Africa division at Human Rights Watch. "That is effectively kidnapping someone, then transporting them across borders without any due process."

Judicial officials in Beirut said that four people have been charged with crimes in the case, including Morad, as well as a Lebanese-French citizen, a Syrian-Swedish citizen and a Lebanese woman who rented a villa overlooking Zahle. The judicial officials said that an SUV was bought for \$22,000 for Shukr's kidnapping and that the woman paid \$42,000 for a year's rent of the villa.

Morad's lawyer, Samaher Bourhan, said her client maintains he was a victim who believed he was working for a foreign company and ended up being used in the kidnapping. She said the company asked him to buy the vehicle and register it under his own name, claiming it was because they had no legal presence in Lebanon.

"He said that he handed himself over because he had no idea about the operation," Bourhan said.

Shukr's wife and his brother, Abdul-Salam Shukr, told the AP that the retired officer has no information about Arad's fate.

But another member of Shukr's family, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information, said that Shukr's brother, Hassan Shukr, was a Hezbollah member and knew where Arad had been held.

The family member said that Arad had been held in a locked room at the home of Hassan Shukr's in-laws, who were members of Dirani's Believers' Resistance in Nabi Chit.

The judicial officials said that a Lebanese army report in the 1980s said that Arad was held by the Shukr family in Nabi Chit and that he was ill at some point and they brought doctors to treat him.

The family member said Hassan Shukr was killed in the Meidoun battle on May 5, 1988. On that day, when fighters returned from battle to Nabi Chit, they found the metal door of the room where Arad was kept open and the captive gone, the family member said.

The Shukr family member insisted that Ahmed Shukr wasn't involved in holding Arad and doesn't have any additional information about the case.

The scene

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 56 of 63

An AP crew visited the two-story house that judicial officials and Shukr's family said was used as the base by the operatives to carry out the kidnapping. The main metal gate was sealed by Lebanese authorities, while locals said that they didn't see any suspicious movements inside the house, known as "Wood Villa."

A resident living in a nearby building said that Lebanese security agents collected evidence from the house in mid-December.

A local shop owner said that security agents took the discs of his security cameras. He said that the villa had previously been rented by individuals or groups to hold parties.

Pixar's 'Hoppers' bounds to No. 1 as Warner Bros.' 'The Bride!' is on life support

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Disney and Pixar's environmental adventure "Hoppers" topped the North American box office this weekend with \$46 million in domestic ticket sales in its opening weekend, according to studio estimates Sunday.

After adding another \$42 million from international showings, the film celebrated an \$88 million global launch in total, the biggest for an original animated film since "Coco" came out in 2017.

But it wasn't all good news for big studio fare at the multiplex: Maggie Gyllenhaal's R-rated reimagining of the Bride of Frankenstein story is flailing. A Warner Bros. release, "The Bride!" starring Jessie Buckley and Christian Bale, debuted to an estimated \$7.3 million from 3,304 domestic locations. It cost around \$80 million to produce, not including marketing and promotion expenses.

The two movies were hardly competing with one another for viewers — one being a PG-rated family pic, the other an audacious, R-rated, genre-blending ride. "Hoppers" arrived to a slew of good reviews, while critical responses to "The Bride!" were mixed to negative and its audience scores weren't much better.

"Hoppers" win was much needed for Disney and Pixar following last year's "Elio," which was Pixar's worst opening ever. The studio's only major successes lately have been sequels and franchises, while "Hoppers" is a win for original fare. It also opened higher than 2023's "Elemental," which eventually went on to become a sleeper hit ("Elio" did not).

"Hoppers" had a reported \$150 million production budget and opened in 4,000 locations. Directed by Daniel Chong, the movie is about a 19-year-old environmentalist who infiltrates the animal world in the body of a beaver. It features the voices of Piper Curda, Bobby Moynihan, Jon Hamm and Kathy Najimy.

"Hoppers" got a 94% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, 75% "definitely recommend" from PostTrak polling and an A CinemaScore, suggesting it should have a long and profitable run in theaters.

"This is a fantastic original film from the incredible team at Pixar, and it's wonderful to see audiences coming out with their friends and families to enjoy it together," said Alan Bergman, co-chairman of Disney Entertainment, in a statement. He also congratulated the filmmaking team on "a tremendous launch."

"The Bride!" had a bit of a bumpy path to theaters, with edits being made after reportedly poor test screenings. Its release date was pushed back from September, possibly to give it some space versus Guillermo del Toro's "Frankenstein," which played in theaters last fall before hitting Netflix.

Men made up a slight majority of the audience for "The Bride!" at 53%. The movie currently carries a "rotten" 59% on Rotten Tomatoes and a lackluster C+ CinemaScore. Only 43% of that audience said they would "definitely recommend."

And it doesn't seem like international audiences will be much help: It made only \$6.3 million outside of the U.S. and Canada, bringing its global debut to \$13.6 million.

"Unfortunately, we came in light," said Jeffrey Goldstein, who oversees domestic distribution for Warner Bros., in a text message. "We have a tailored approach to our slate, investing strategically in talent, IP and original storytelling. It spans genres and budget levels and allows us to back bold, distinctive filmmakers ... and sometimes things just don't work out."

Warner Bros.' other recent release, "Wuthering Heights," meanwhile, has surpassed \$213 million globally. And next week, the studio, which is staring down new ownership under Paramount, is expected to sweep

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 57 of 63

the Oscars between "One Battle After Another" and "Sinners."

"We're coming off an incredible run of nine No. 1 openings in a row, and in an increasingly 'risk-averse' business like ours, we believe the business is better served with studios taking bold swings on originals like this one," Goldstein said. "Even the 1927 Yankees had 44 losses that season."

Paramount's "Scream 7" landed in second place in its second weekend with \$17.3 million, down a whopping 73% and bringing its domestic total to \$93.4 million and its global total to \$149.5 million. Sony's "GOAT" came in fourth place with \$6.6 million while "Wuthering Heights" rounded out the top five with \$3.8 million.

"When there's this many holdovers in the top 10, it says we haven't had enough horsepower in the newcomers to really get things moving," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's head of marketplace trends.

But he anticipates that will change when the Ryan Gosling-led sci-fi adventure "Project Hail Mary" hits theaters on March 20.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "Hoppers," \$46 million.
2. "Scream 7," \$17.3 million.
3. "The Bride!" \$7.3 million.
4. "GOAT," \$6.6 million.
5. "Wuthering Heights," \$3.8 million.
6. "Crime 101," \$2.1 million.
7. "Send Help," \$1.6 million.
8. "I Can Only Imagine 2," \$1.5 million.
9. "EpiC: Elvis Presley in Concert," \$1.5 million.
10. "Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba Infinity Castlee," \$1.3 million.

3 Palestinians killed in West Bank clash, bringing toll from week of violence to 6

By IMAD ISSEID and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

ABU FALAH, West Bank (AP) — Three Palestinians were killed in a violent clash with settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Sunday, bringing the number of Palestinians killed in recent days to six. The surge in violence comes as much of Israel and the world's attention is focused on the regional war with Iran.

The Israeli military said it responded to reports of Israeli settlers attacking Palestinians near Khirbet Abu Falah, east of Ramallah. Two Palestinians were killed by gunfire and a third died from suffocation, likely due to tear gas, the military said.

Two of the victims, Fare' Hamayel and Thaer Hamayel, were cousins. The third man killed was Mohammad Murra. All three were buried in a joint funeral.

Amin Shouman, a resident of Abu Falah who witnessed the attack, told The Associated Press that dozens of Israeli settlers approached the village from the north and opened fire when they were confronted by a community guard committee along the border of the village.

In 2025, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 240 Palestinians were killed in the territory, with the vast majority by Israel's military and nine attributed to Israeli settlers. Thus far this year, a far larger share of fatalities has been directly attributed to armed settlers.

Sunday's fatalities followed several deadly incidents last week. One Palestinian was killed in the South Hebron Hills on Saturday by an Israeli reservist, and settlers shot and killed two Palestinian brothers in the northern West Bank on Monday.

In a rare rebuke, the Israeli military strongly condemned the settler violence and said it opened a criminal investigation against the settlers involved.

"This is an unacceptable incident. There will be zero tolerance for civilians who take the law into their

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 58 of 63

own hands," said Maj. Gen. Avi Bluth, the commander of the military's Central Command that includes the West Bank. "Especially at a time when the IDF is striking our bitter enemies, Iran and Hezbollah, with a firm hand — we cannot allow reckless internal violence to undermine the rule of law and the security of the region."

Palestinians and rights groups say Israeli routinely fails to hold settlers accountable for violence.

The Palestinian Authority's Foreign Ministry on Saturday accused Israel of "exploiting the atmosphere of war" and the lack of international attention to issues in the West Bank to intensify intimidation, violence and forced displacement.

Yesh Din, an Israeli rights group, tracked more than 50 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians in the first four days of the war with Iran, which started on Feb. 28.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said checkpoint and gate closures imposed as a result of the war are creating mounting obstacles for first responders in the West Bank, including in incidents involving settler violence.

While there is no full lockdown, as there was following the Oct. 7, 2023, attack and last year's war with Iran, Israel has erected hundreds of new gates across the territory, tightening movement between Palestinian towns and making emergency response significantly more difficult. There are now around 1,100, the Red Crescent said, compared with roughly 800 at the time of last year's war.

Doctors and emergency workers say movement restrictions hamper their ability to respond quickly, especially following violent attacks by Israeli settlers. Many of the communities most vulnerable to such violence are in parts of the West Bank under full Israeli military and civil control, far from city-center hospitals and dependent on roads that can be sealed without notice.

Atle Lie McGrath wins first World Cup slalom since his Olympic exit into the forest

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia (AP) — From Olympic despair in a course-side forest to a joyous win in the World Cup.

Atle Lie McGrath's emotions came full circle Sunday when he protected his first-run lead to win a tough and sun-baked World Cup slalom by just 0.01 seconds.

"Today is just about luck," McGrath said after winning the first men's slalom since his emotional exit at the Milan Cortina Olympics three weeks ago when he skied out of the race he was set to win.

Then, the Norwegian racer famously hiked across the mountain side to cool off alone beneath the trees lining the course in Bormio, Italy.

On Sunday, McGrath was greeted in the finish area by his teammate Henrik Kristoffersen, runner-up by the minimum margin, and his childhood friend Lucas Pinheiro Braathen, who was third by just 0.04 one day after winning a giant slalom.

At the Olympics, McGrath's slalom misstep ensured Kristoffersen got the bronze medal, and Pinheiro Braathen won the giant slalom for Brazil.

Dedicated to his grandfather

McGrath's emotions were heightened at the Olympics because his grandfather had died in the week the games opened. He dedicated this victory to him.

"To bounce back like this after the Olympics, I think he has something to do with it. He was looking over me today," the Vermont-born racer said. "I love him so much and he has helped me with so many things in life."

McGrath also extended his lead in the season-long slalom standings over Pinheiro Braathen to 41 points ahead of a decisive race on March 24 at the course where they raced as kids in Norway.

"Me and Lucas we grew up skiing together in Hafjell," McGrath said. "So it has a lot of special memories and it's going to be a pretty cool fight."

Snow-melting heat

It was a heated battle Sunday in snow-melting temperatures that hit 11 Celsius (52 Fahrenheit) in the early afternoon. The toughest conditions were left for the first-run leaders who get the latest start times

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 59 of 63

second time down.

McGrath's second run was just the 27th fastest of the 29 skiers who completed the race, with his skis sending sprays of wet spring-like snow trailing behind him.

McGrath's sixth career World Cup win, all in slalom, was his third this season. He also has two runner-up results and a third place as the most consistent slalom racer.

Slalom title race

Four men can still win the World Cup slalom title though it shapes up as a duel between McGrath and Pinheiro Braathen, who won the crystal trophy in 2023 before switching to represent his mother's nation Brazil.

Clément Noël, the 2022 Olympic champion, trails by 77 points ahead of a final race that offers 100 to the winner. Noël placed sixth Sunday, though just 0.12 slower than McGrath, and thrashed the snow with a ski pole on seeing his time.

Kristoffersen trails McGrath by 99 and needs an unlikely scenario in Norway where he wins and all three above him in the standings fail to score.

The Olympic and world champion in slalom, Loïc Meillard, is no longer in the chase after he skied out in the first run Sunday.

Overall standings race

Pinheiro Braathen's 60 points earned Sunday also closed the huge gap in the overall standings to four-time defending champion Marco Odermatt, who effectively has the giant crystal trophy secured.

Odermatt leads by 572 with seven races left though Pinheiro Braathen and third-place McGrath do not race in downhill or super-G.

The men's World Cup circuit moves to French resort Courchevel for three speed races starting Friday that should confirm Odermatt's overall win, and likely his latest titles in downhill and super-G.

Democrat Roy Cooper needs to defy North Carolina history to keep winning streak alive in Senate race

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and BILL BARROW Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina does not mind electing Democrats as governor, but it is a different matter when it comes to sending them to the U.S. Senate.

Roy Cooper, who led the state for two terms, is trying to change that with a campaign that could reshape power in Washington.

Standing in his way is Michael Whatley, who has Donald Trump's full backing after previously serving as the president's chosen Republican National Committee chairman.

Both Cooper and Whatley easily won their party's primaries this week, solidifying one of this year's marquee Senate races. The campaign will draw hundreds of millions in spending because North Carolina is critical to Democratic efforts to pick up the four seats necessary to win a Senate majority.

Republicans want to frame Cooper as too far left for a state that Trump won three times. That tried-and-true tactic echoes past victories over Democrats they cast as out-of-step rubber stamps for liberal leaders, and it will test Cooper's bond with voters established across four decades of winning campaigns as a state lawmaker, attorney general and governor.

Cooper wants to turn that narrative on its head, charging his Republican opponent with being a tool of "well-connected friends in Washington" who cannot effectively represent the state.

"Look, I'm going to be a strong, independent senator for North Carolina," Cooper said Wednesday. He said he would work with Trump when it made sense.

Whatley does not shrink from his alliance with the president.

"His leadership has changed our country, and I am proud to stand with him in the fight to secure our border, to strengthen our economy and put America first," Whatley said.

Whatley has history on his side but isn't well known

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 60 of 63

North Carolina is a perennial political battleground that often renders a split verdict. Democrats have kept their grip on the governor's office for more than a century, ceding it to only three Republicans during that time. Since 1968, Republican presidential candidates have won the state in every election except for 1976 and for 2008 — the same year a Democrat last won a Senate race.

Whatley needs those trends to make up for his lack of name recognition as a first-time candidate. As a former political staffer, lobbyist and party leader, he has deep ties in Raleigh and Washington, but less exposure to voters.

"It's one thing to be the party guy, and it's another to be the guy on the ballot yourself," said former Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican who narrowly lost to Cooper in 2016. "We're going to see find out whether he has it or not."

Whatley and his supporters began an advertising campaign in the primary even though he did not face a serious challenge for the nomination.

"I went to school, I went to church. I played sports. And I worked. I was able to pay my own way through college, through graduate school and law school," Whatley said on Tuesday night. "I have lived the American dream right here in North Carolina."

Martha Goodson, 71, is not so sure. She voted for Cooper in the Democratic primary and has doubts about Whatley's commitment to the state.

"I'm just very hesitant about people that I haven't seen be thoroughly invested in North Carolina," Woodson said. "I know he has served the Republican Party in a leadership role," but "I don't know that I had heard his name before it came up for this."

Republican wants to poke holes in Cooper's record

Republicans in Washington say they are eager to mine Cooper's terms as governor, trying to turn his perceived strength into a weakness.

Although Democrats emphasize that Cooper has never lost a campaign for state office, McCrory cautioned that he never has faced the kind of negative attacks that he may this year. Looser rules on campaign spending "have changed the game," he said.

Republicans want to mix national fights over issues such as immigration and transgender rights with state-specific matters including crime and how Cooper managed hurricane responses and COVID-19 policy.

They have pointed to Cooper's veto of legislation that would have required sheriffs to cooperate with immigration agents seeking to pick up inmates believed to be in the country unlawfully.

"Roy Cooper chose criminal illegal aliens over North Carolina communities," Whatley said during his nomination acceptance speech.

Republicans have also focused on last summer's fatal stabbing of Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutka on a Charlotte light-rail train. The murder suspect had more than a dozen prior criminal arrests before his most recent charges in federal and state court. Trump highlighted the slaying during his State of the Union with Zarutka's mother in the gallery.

Democrats see health care as a strength for Cooper

The former governor has countered with a focus on the economy, including health care costs. He notes that he persuaded the Republican-controlled General Assembly to expand Medicaid coverage. The issue is back in the spotlight after Republicans refused to extend pandemic-era subsidies for insurance plans purchased through the Affordable Care Act.

Meanwhile, Cooper already is trying to turn discussion of crime and immigration back on Trump and Republicans after two protesters, both U.S. citizens, were killed by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis.

He said Wednesday that he wants "secure borders" and would "insist on federal resources to deport violent criminals" and "fight violent crime."

But, he said, "I think this administration is losing focus on that."

Trump will be a constant, even when not named

Cooper is not criticizing Trump in harshly personal terms, as some Democrats are. That is likely recognition that his gubernatorial victories came in part from winning votes from at least some Trump supporters. Rather, Cooper criticizes administration policies that he says hurt the state, especially working-class and

middle-class voters, and then hammers Whatley for supporting that agenda.

Democrats see that as a way to capitalize on Trump's declining public support overall without Cooper risking alienating right-leaning voters he might be able to attract.

For Whatley, there is no option to continue embracing Trump while trying to maximize Republican voters, McCrory said.

"I don't think he has any choice but to bring him in," McCrory said. "The president hand-selected him."

That message is tailored to Republican voters such as Kevin Cattell, 71, who said he wants representatives in Washington who "support and see the value and the vision that President Trump is putting forward."

McCrory knows firsthand how powerful Trump's backing can be. In 2022, he unsuccessfully ran against Ted Budd for the Republican Senate nomination.

Once Trump endorsed Budd, McCrory said, "I might as well have been at the beach."

Oil built the Persian Gulf. Desalinated water keeps it alive. War could threaten both

By ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG Associated Press

As missiles and drones curtail energy production across the Persian Gulf, analysts warn that water, not oil, may be the resource most at risk in the energy-rich but arid region.

On Sunday, Bahrain accused Iran of damaging one of its desalination plants. Earlier, Iran said a U.S. airstrike had damaged an Iranian plant.

Hundreds of desalination plants sit along the Persian Gulf coast, putting individual systems that supply water to millions within range of Iranian missile or drone strikes. Without them, major cities could not sustain their current populations.

In Kuwait, about 90% of drinking water comes from desalination, along with roughly 86% in Oman and about 70% in Saudi Arabia. The technology removes salt from seawater — most commonly by pushing it through ultrafine membranes in a process known as reverse osmosis — to produce the freshwater that sustains cities, hotels, industry and some agriculture across one of the world's driest regions.

For people living outside the Middle East, the main concern of the Iran war has been the impact on energy prices. The Gulf produces about a third of the world's crude exports and energy revenues underpin national economies. Fighting has already halted tanker traffic through key shipping routes and disrupted port activity, forcing some producers to curb exports as storage tanks fill.

But the infrastructure that keeps Gulf cities supplied with drinking water may be equally vulnerable.

"Everyone thinks of Saudi Arabia and their neighbors as petrostates. But I call them saltwater kingdoms. They're human-made fossil-fueled water superpowers," said Michael Christopher Low, director of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah. "It's both a monumental achievement of the 20th century and a certain kind of vulnerability."

Early signs of risk

The war that began Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran has already brought fighting close to key desalination infrastructure. On March 2, Iranian strikes on Dubai's Jebel Ali port landed some 12 miles from one of the world's largest desalination plants, which produces much of the city's drinking water.

Damage also was reported at the Fujairah F1 power and water complex in the United Arab Emirates, and at Kuwait's Doha West desalination plant. The damage at the two facilities appeared to have resulted from nearby port attacks or debris from intercepted drones.

On Sunday, Bahrain accused Iran of indiscriminately attacking civilian targets and damaging one of its desalination plants, though it didn't say supplies have gone offline. The island nation, home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, has been among the countries targeted by Iranian drones and missiles.

Earlier, Iran said a U.S. airstrike damaged an Iranian desalination plant. Abbas Araghchi, the country's foreign minister, said the strike on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz had cut into the water supply for 30 villages. He warned that in doing so "the U.S. set this precedent, not Iran."

Many Gulf desalination plants are physically integrated with power stations as co-generation facilities,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 62 of 63

meaning attacks on electrical infrastructure could also hinder water production. Even where plants are connected to national grids with backup supply routes, disruptions can cascade across interconnected systems, said David Michel, senior fellow for water security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"It's an asymmetrical tactic," he said. "Iran doesn't have the same capacity to strike back at the United States and Israel. But it does have this possibility to impose costs on the Gulf countries to push them to intervene or call for a cessation of hostilities."

Desalination plants have multiple stages — intake systems, treatment facilities, energy supplies — and damage to any part of that chain can interrupt production, according to Ed Cullinane, Middle East editor at Global Water Intelligence, a publisher serving the water industry.

"None of these assets are any more protected than any of the municipal areas that are currently being hit by ballistic missiles or drones," Cullinane said.

A long-standing concern

Gulf governments and U.S. officials have long recognized the risks these systems pose for regional stability: if major desalination plants were knocked offline, some cities could lose most of their drinking water within days. A 2010 CIA analysis warned attacks on desalination facilities could trigger national crises in several Gulf states, and prolonged outages could last months if critical equipment were destroyed.

More than 90% of the Gulf's desalinated water comes from just 56 plants, the report stated, and "each of these critical plants is extremely vulnerable to sabotage or military action."

A leaked 2008 U.S. diplomatic cable warned the Saudi capital of Riyadh "would have to evacuate within a week" if either the Jubail desalination plant on the Gulf coast or its pipelines or associated power infrastructure were seriously damaged.

Saudi Arabia has since invested in pipeline networks, storage reservoirs and other redundancies designed to cushion short-term disruptions, as has the UAE. But smaller states such as Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait have fewer backup supplies.

Climate change could threaten water plants

As warming oceans increase the likelihood and intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea and raise the chances of landfall on the Arabian Peninsula, storm surge and extreme rainfall could overwhelm drainage systems and damage coastal desalination.

The plants themselves contribute to the problem. Desalination is energy-intensive, with plants worldwide producing between 500 and 850 million tons of carbon emissions annually, approaching the roughly 880 million tons emitted by the entire global aviation industry.

The byproduct of desalination, highly concentrated brine, is typically discharged back into the ocean, where it can harm seafloor habitats and coral reefs, while intake systems can trap and kill fish larvae, plankton and other organisms at the base of the marine food web.

As climate change intensifies droughts, disrupts rainfall patterns and fuels wildfires, desalination is expected to expand in many parts of the world.

The threat is not hypothetical

During Iraq's 1990-1991 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War, Iraqi forces sabotaged power stations and desalination facilities as they retreated, said the University of Utah's Low. At the same time, millions of barrels of crude oil were deliberately released into the Persian Gulf, creating one of the largest oil spills in history.

The massive slick threatened to contaminate seawater intake pipes used by desalination plants across the region. Workers rushed to deploy protective booms around the intake valves of major facilities.

The destruction left Kuwait largely without fresh water and dependent on emergency water imports. Full recovery took years.

More recently, Yemen's Houthi rebels have targeted Saudi desalination facilities amid regional tensions.

The incidents underscore a broader erosion of long-standing norms against attacking civilian infrastructure, Michel said, noting conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and Iraq.

International humanitarian law, including provisions of the Geneva Conventions, prohibit targeting civilian

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 277 ~ 63 of 63

infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the population, including drinking water facilities.

The potential for harmful cyberattacks on water infrastructure is a growing concern. In 2023 and 2024, U.S. officials blamed Iran-aligned groups for hacking into several American water utilities.

Iran's own water supply at risk

After a fifth year of extreme drought, water levels in Tehran's five reservoirs plunged to some 10% of their capacity, prompting President Masoud Pezeshkian to warn the capital may have to be evacuated.

Unlike many Gulf states that rely heavily on desalination, Iran still gets most of its water from rivers, reservoirs and depleted underground aquifers. The country operates a relatively small number of desalination plants, supplying only a fraction of national demand.

Iran is racing to expand desalination along its southern coast and pump some of the water inland, but infrastructure constraints, energy costs and international sanctions have sharply limited scalability.

"They were already thinking of evacuating the capital last summer," Cullinane of Global Water Intelligence said. "I don't dare to wonder what it's going to be like this summer under sustained fire, with an ongoing economic catastrophe and a serious water crisis."

Today in History: March 9

'Operation Meetinghouse' firebombing devastates Tokyo

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, March 9, the 68th day of 2026. There are 297 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 9, 1945, during World War II, over 300 U.S. B-29 bombers began Operation Meetinghouse, a massive firebombing raid on Tokyo. The raid killed an estimated 100,000 civilians, left 1 million homeless and destroyed 16 square miles (41 square kilometers) of the city.

Also on this date:

In 1796, the future emperor of the French, Napoleon Bonaparte, married Josephine de Beauharnais.

In 1841, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. The Amistad*, ruled 7-1 in favor of a group of illegally enslaved Africans who were captured off the U.S. coast after seizing control of a Spanish schooner, *La Amistad*. The justices ruled that the Africans should be set free.

In 1862, during the American Civil War, the ironclad warships *USS Monitor* and *CSS Virginia* (formerly *USS Merrimac*) clashed for five hours to a draw at Hampton Roads, Virginia. The first engagement of ironclad warships opened a new era in naval warfare.

In 1916, more than 400 Mexican raiders led by Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, killing 18 Americans.

In 1959, the Barbie doll was introduced at the American International Toy Fair in New York.

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, raised the standard for public officials to prove they'd been libeled in their official capacity by news organizations.

In 1997, rapper The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace) was killed in a still-unsolved drive-by shooting in Los Angeles at age 24.

In 2022, a Russian airstrike devastated a maternity hospital in the besieged Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, killing four people and wounding at least 17.

Today's birthdays: Singer Jeffrey Osborne is 78. Actor Juliette Binoche is 62. Actor Emmanuel Lewis is 55. Actor Oscar Isaac is 47. Comedian Jordan Klepper (TV: "The Daily Show") is 47. Rapper Chingy is 46. Actor Matthew Gray Gubler is 46. Retired soccer player Clint Dempsey is 43. Olympic skiing gold medalist Julia Mancuso is 42. Actor Brittany Snow is 40. Rapper Bow Wow is 39. Rapper YG is 36. Social media personality Khaby Lame is 26. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Sunisa Lee is 23.