

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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 & Cheese, 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.

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# 1440

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

## Gulf Oil Squeeze

Oil prices whipsawed yesterday, rising to roughly \$120 per barrel—the highest since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine—before retreating below \$100. The swing came as traders reacted to the expanding war in the Middle East and signs that governments may step in to stabilize energy markets.

The conflict, involving the US, Israel, and Iran, has disrupted oil production and tanker traffic across the region, especially in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil passes. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the UAE are among producers that have reduced output amid the fighting, prompting traders to bid up oil futures (contracts to buy oil at a set price in the future) in anticipation of shortages. Prices later retreated after reports that the US and the Group of Seven nations may release emergency oil reserves if prices keep climbing.

For consumers, the impact could mean higher gas prices and heating costs. Analysts warn that sustained high oil prices could push inflation higher and slow economic growth. Separately, President Donald Trump held a news conference yesterday on war updates.

## Anthropic Sues Pentagon

AI company Anthropic filed two lawsuits against the US government yesterday over the decision to label it a supply chain risk. Anthropic is the first American company to receive the designation, typically reserved for foreign entities working with US adversaries.

The designation came last week, after a Feb. 27 deadline for Anthropic to remove restrictions on the Pentagon's use of its technology, specifically for autonomous weapons and domestic surveillance. (The military has reportedly used Anthropic's AI tools for attacks in Venezuela and Iran.) Since then, the Pentagon has signed a contract with Anthropic competitor OpenAI, which says it will build guardrails into its systems' code.

Barring judicial intervention, government contractors like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Palantir have to cut ties with Anthropic or lose business with US agencies, including the Defense, State, and Treasury Departments. Most of Anthropic's \$14B in projected revenue this year comes from businesses and government agencies.

## Birth of the Telephone

Today marks 150 years since Alexander Graham Bell made the first telephone call from his Boston lab to his assistant in a nearby room.

The breakthrough came just days after Bell received a patent for telephone technology, four days after his 29th birthday. His successful prototype used acidified water to convert acoustic oscillations created by the human voice into electrical, voice-mimicking oscillations that could travel to a receiver. The design closely resembled that of American electrical engineer Elisha Gray, who unsuccessfully contested Bell's patent in court. Bell went on to commercialize his telephone by founding the Bell Telephone Co., which eventually became the American Telephone and Telegraph Co., or AT&T.

Nearly 100 years after Bell's first phone call, Motorola engineer Marty Cooper made the first cellphone call.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Live Nation reaches tentative settlement in federal antitrust case to avoid potential breakup of the concert giant, which includes Ticketmaster; several states reject deal and vow to proceed with litigation.

Miami Dolphins release quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, will eat record \$99.2M in dead money on salary cap; Tagovailoa to sign one-year deal with Atlanta Falcons. | Woman, 35, arrested for attempted murder in connection to shooting at Beverly Hills home of Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky.

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Australia grants humanitarian visas to five Iranian women soccer players who were dubbed traitors for declining to sing Iranian anthem. | Iraq's head soccer coach asks FIFA to postpone team's World Cup qualifier, citing travel disruptions due to Iran war.

## Science & Technology

Amazon-owned Zoox begins mapping streets of Dallas, Texas, and Phoenix, Arizona, as precursor to introducing robotaxis.

Uber expands feature allowing women passengers and drivers to request women-only rides nationwide, following similar move from Lyft in 2024.

Researchers simulate complete life cycle of a stripped-down bacterial cell in 4D for first time, providing insight into how cellular processes influence one another.

Rock-paper-scissors study sheds light on the brain networks that interpret and modulate responses to others' actions, helping researchers better understand social conditions such as autism and borderline personality disorder.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.8%, Dow +0.5%, Nasdaq +1.4%) after President Donald Trump initially signals Iran war is nearing an end.

Nasdaq to partner with crypto exchange Kraken to build infrastructure for tokenized stock trading, allowing blockchain-based versions of its listed equities to move between regulated markets and decentralized networks.

Hims & Hers shares rise nearly 41% after striking deal to sell Novo Nordisk's weight-loss drugs; Novo Nordisk drops patent infringement case over copycat drugs.

## Politics & World Affairs

Jury selection begins in the Florida trial of four men charged with assassinating Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in 2021. | Alexander brothers found guilty on all counts in federal sex trafficking trial; sentencing scheduled for August.

New York prosecutors charge two men from Pennsylvania for allegedly throwing explosive devices at the home of NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D); FBI investigates the attack as an act of terrorism inspired by the Islamic State.

Alexander Butterfield, the White House aide who exposed the Watergate tapes that led to former President Richard Nixon's resignation, dies at age 99.

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## Groton school board reviews facility needs, future enrollment at Columbia meeting

by Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area School Board took its meeting on the road Monday night, gathering in Columbia rather than its usual meeting space in Groton to connect with another part of the district.

Part of the discussion centered on issues facing the buildings in Groton, where portions of the high school building date back nearly a century, as well as a look to the future of how many students may fill the hallways in the coming years.

During the meeting, Superintendent Joe Schwan and members of the district's Buildings, Grounds and Transportation Committee provided an update on the ongoing facilities master planning process.

The group has been meeting with Co-Op Architects, and they're getting to the point of defining issues and potential solutions to include within the facilities master plan, Schwan said.

Some discussion has taken place about the feasibility of renovating portions of the high school building, but one area that likely won't be renovated is the 1931 school addition. The only path forward with that addition seems to be replacing it, Schwan said.

The group has discussed splitting some of the work into phases, and concerns were raised about being displaced during the school year and parking concerns.

They're not at the point of talking dollars and cents yet, Schwan said. However, they may be able to bring a presentation to the full school board in April or May.

The board also reviewed the 5-year capital outlay plan, though the numbers are "a little bit in limbo with the facility master planning underway," Schwan said.

Items on the list for the 2027 fiscal year include high school and elementary sidewalk repairs/replacement, parking lot repairs/sealing/stripping, parking lot lighting/exterior lighting, seal coat of the elementary school playground, heat pump replacements for the geothermal system, permanent flag pole at the elementary school, elementary playground fence repair/replacement, fire door installation in the health science lab, high school band room painting and lighting, 2009 addition carpeting, walk-in cooler placement, stage renovations (curtains, rigging, acoustical), refinish/repaint arena floor, high school arena boys lockers, sound system upgrades at the arena, arena door exit device replacement, chain link fence repairs/replacement and athletic complex artificial turf installation.

Items on the 2028 fiscal year list include middle school/high school roofing replacement, high school sidewalk repairs/replacement, parking lot repairs/sealing/stripping, heat pump replacements for the geothermal system, playground equipment upgrades, and track repairs, resurfacing and replacement.

### Enrollment projections reviewed

Board members also heard early enrollment projections that suggest potential declines in student numbers in the coming years, a development administrators said could have future implications for district planning.

Superintendent Joe Schwan presented enrollment projects through the 2031-2032 school year.

The projections show a drop in enrollment numbers through the upcoming handful of years:

- 2024-2025 school year – 270 at the elementary school, 132 at the middle school and 168 at the high school
- 2025-2026 school year – 267 at the elementary school, 139 at the middle school and 158 at the high school
- 2026-2027 school year – 256 at the elementary school, 142 at the middle school and 151 at the high school
- 2027-2028 school year – 245 at the elementary school, 136 at the middle school and 172 at the high school
- 2028-2029 school year – 243 at the elementary school, 126 at the middle school and 180 at the high school

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- 2029-2030 school year – 228 at the elementary school, 137 at the middle school and 180 at the high school
- 2030-2031 school year – 232 at the elementary school, 124 at the middle school and 188 at the high school
- 2032-2033 school year – 225 at the elementary school, 129 at the middle school and 175 at the high school

If those numbers hold true, the district enrollment would drop from 570 this year down to 529 during the 2032-2033 school year.

Groton Area has seen enrollment ebbs and flows through the last two decades, from highs of 633 in the 2004 and 2008 school years, down to 570 in 2024 and 577 in 2017.

Officials will have a clearer view of next year's enrollment after the kindergarten roundup, scheduled for April 10. Elementary school principal Brett Schwan advises parents/guardians of kids turning 5-years-old on or before September 1, 2026 to reach out to the elementary school to make sure their child is on the list of potential students.

## **Two resignations, three hires**

The board made a handful of personnel changes, including accepting the resignation of Business Manager Becky Hubsch, effective June 30, 2026.

Hubsch has worked for the Groton school district since 2021, first as the middle school/high school business and computer teacher before becoming the district's business manager in 2023.

The board also accepted the resignation of Teresa Davies, food service team members, effective at the end of the current school year.

The board approved hiring three people.

Darren Dennert was hired as special education paraprofessional at the middle/high school.

Mike Heilman was hired as bus route driver for the Bristol area.

Kiya Stillman was hired as English Language Arts Teacher for the 2026-2027 school year. Stillman, who is currently attending Black Hills State University, is set to fill the position opening up after Diane Kurtz announced her retirement at the board's February meeting.

• The board approved raising the 2026 Driver's Education Fee and updating the instructor agreement. The board agreed to change the instructor agreement to pay the instructor the same way the extended school year teachers are paid during the summer. The board also voted to raise the driver's education fee from \$290 to \$300.

• The district has received its new transit van, which the board discussed at its February meeting after voting to move \$42,500 from cash on hand to the transportation for the purchase.

• A new last day of school may be decided later this month. The board will look at a proposed adjustment to the 2025-2026 school year calendar. A new last day of school for student may move from May 14 to May 20 due to four weather-related school closings this year. An official decision will not take place until the board approves the adjustment.



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## 2026 Northeast Conference All-Conference Girls Basketball

All NEC	Team	Player	Grade
1 <sup>st</sup> Team	Hamlin	Addison Neuendorf	SR
1 <sup>st</sup> Team	Hamlin	Issie Steffensen	JR
1 <sup>st</sup> Team	Milbank	Belle Pauli	SOPH
1 <sup>st</sup> Team	Clark/WL	Shelby Begeman	FR
1 <sup>st</sup> Team	Roncalli	Claire Crawford	SR
2 <sup>nd</sup> Team	Hamlin	Addelyn Jensen	SOPH
2 <sup>nd</sup> Team	Groton	Jerica Locke	SR
2 <sup>nd</sup> Team	Sisseton	Piper Langager	FR
2 <sup>nd</sup> Team	Clark/WL	Kamryn Nesheim	SOPH
2 <sup>nd</sup> Team	Milbank	Avery Schuneman	SOPH
3 <sup>rd</sup> Team	Groton	Taryn Traphagen	JR
3 <sup>rd</sup> Team	Roncalli	Rylee Voeller	SR
3 <sup>rd</sup> Team	Sisseton	Elliot Hortness	SR
3 <sup>rd</sup> Team	Groton	Jaedyn Penning	SR
3 <sup>rd</sup> Team	Clark/WL	Brynn Roerich	JR

### 2026 Northeast Conference Player of the Year

Addison Neuendorf – Hamlin

### Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #16 Results

**Team Standings:** Foxes 6, Jackelopes 5, Coyotes 5, Chipmunks 5, Cheetahs 2, Shihtzus 1

**Men's High Games:** Vern Meyers 234, 192, Tony Waage 221, 182, Austin Schuelke 189, 187

**Women's High Games:** Suzie Easthouse 216, 197, Brenda Waage 180, Vicki Walter 164

**Men's High Series:** Tony Waage 575, Vern Meyers 572, Brad Waage 525

**Women's High Series:** Suzie Easthouse 536, Brenda Waage 457, Alexa Sperry 448

**Week 16 Fun Game:** Most 8 Spares – Coyotes with 15!

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## Mellette County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash  
Where: Ring Thunder Road, 13 miles southeast of White River, SD  
When: 3:51 p.m. Sunday, March 8, 2026

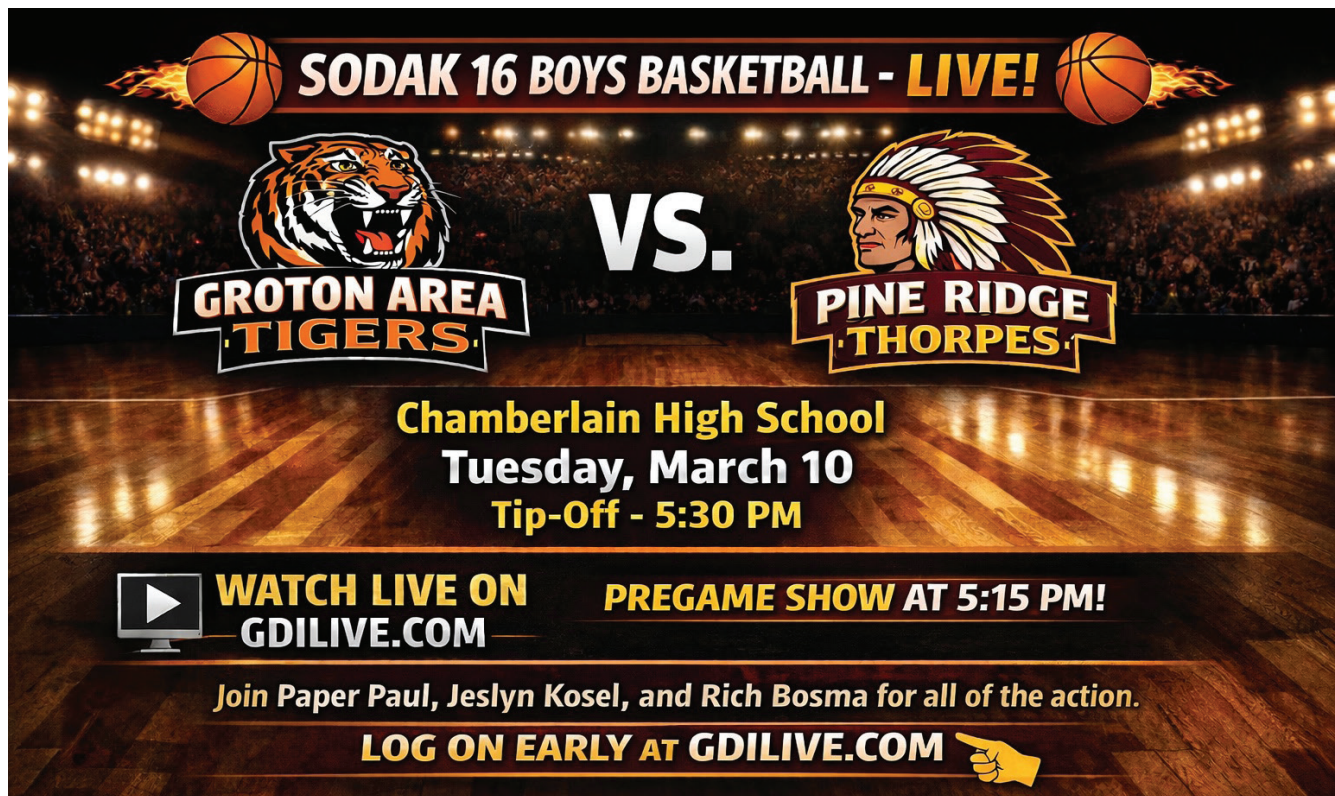
Vehicle 1: 2009 Chevrolet Colorado  
Occupant 1: Female, from Mission, SD, fatal injuries  
Seat belt Used: No  
Occupant 2: Male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries  
Seat belt Used: No  
Occupant 3: Female, serious, non-life-threatening injuries  
Seat belt Used: No  
Occupant 4: Male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries  
Seat belt Used: No

Mellette County, S.D. – A Mission, SD woman died and three others were seriously injured Sunday in a single-vehicle crash 13 miles southeast of White River, SD.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates that a 2009 Chevrolet Colorado was traveling eastbound on Ring Thunder Road. The driver failed to negotiate a curve and went into a yaw. The vehicle tripped and rolled, coming to rest in the north ditch. All four occupants were ejected. Three occupants sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The fourth was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is preliminary. The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



**SODAK 16 BOYS BASKETBALL - LIVE!**

**GROTON AREA TIGERS** VS. **PINE RIDGE THORPES**

**Chamberlain High School**  
**Tuesday, March 10**  
**Tip-Off - 5:30 PM**

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Family: \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

### MONTH-TO-MONTH

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



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BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
GENERAL MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026, 8:45 A.M.  
COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS  
COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
  - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes.*
4. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of the General Meeting Minutes of March 3, 2026
  - b. Claims/Payroll
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Lease Agreements
  - e. Lottery Permits
    - i. Brown County 4-H Leader's
    - ii. Brown County Fair Foundation
  - f. Landfill Tonnage Report for February 2026
  - g. Travel Requests
  - h. Sheriff Reports for January & February 2026
5. Other Business
6. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
7. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>  
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Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at [Commission Meetings | Brown County](#)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Trading property tax for sales tax: Legislature moves forward with parts of homeowner relief package

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

PIERRE — Two pieces of a property tax reduction package prepared by South Dakota's legislative leadership and the executive branch are moving forward, but one bill failed during votes on Monday as lawmakers began the final week of the annual legislative session.

The House of Representatives voted 42-27 in support of Senate Bill 245, which would pull future revenue from a scheduled sales tax increase from 4.2% to 4.5% next year into a relief fund for homeowner property taxes, and use nearly \$56 million in one-time money to seed the fund before the sales tax increase.

The Senate supported House Bill 1323, which would reduce the number of petition signatures needed to force an election on a local government's decision to levy property taxes beyond limits set by the state. The Senate passed the bill 19-15.

Both bills have to return to the opposite chamber for consideration of amendments.

The Senate rejected House Bill 1253, which would cap annual assessment growth for owner-occupied homes and commercial properties at 5% annually and reset assessments back to market value every five years. The bill failed with a 9-24 vote.

The bills are part of a broader, five-bill legislative package targeted at property tax relief. Another bill in the package, which would allow counties to implement a half-percent sales tax with proceeds going to homeowner property tax credits, is awaiting the governor's signature after he proposed it and it received both chambers' approval.

The legislative budget committee is scheduled to consider a fifth piece of legislation in the package on Tuesday. The bill would reduce maximum property tax levies for school districts.

#### Sales tax bill overcomes concerns about future budget needs

SB 245 would capture revenue from the impending sales tax increase to deposit into a "homeowner property tax reduction fund" meant to reduce property taxes levied by school districts. The Legislature and then-Gov. Kristi Noem reduced the state sales tax rate three years ago but scheduled the reduction to sunset in 2027.

House Speaker Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, told lawmakers on Monday that the bill would be an "investment in the people," because it'll give South Dakota homeowners more money to spend as they choose. Hansen, the bill's sponsor and a candidate for governor, said that would lead to more spending and, therefore, more sales tax revenue. The state relies on sales taxes, while counties and schools rely on property taxes, and cities receive revenue from property taxes and sales taxes.

Some opponents said the legislation would favor wealthier, property-owning South Dakotans rather than lower-income renters.

Rep. Mike Weisgram, R-Fort Pierre, worried that automatically diverting future state revenue to reduce homeowner property taxes would come at the cost of other priorities, such as annual funding increases for state employees, Medicaid providers and public schools — which are known as the "big three" budget priorities. Lawmakers often aim to increase funding for the groups by 3% or inflation, whichever is less. An inflationary increase this legislative session would be 2.5%, according to the state Department of Education.

"We are just clawing to get 1.4% for the big three," Weisgram said. "I don't think any of us are proud of that."

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Hansen said the decision "is not an either-or" situation.

"We can help the property taxpayers in the state who desperately, desperately need it," Hansen said, "and then I trust fully that this state is going to continue to grow and that we are going to be able to meet the needs of our core obligations of this state."

The bill was introduced as an amendment to placeholder legislation last week, and it will head to the Senate for approval. The Senate narrowly rejected a similar proposal earlier this legislative session.

## Senate approves lower signature threshold to force election on excess taxes

The version of House Bill 1323 that passed the Senate would set the number of petition signatures needed to force an election on an excess tax levy (often called an "opt-out") for a local government at 2,500 or 5% of registered voters within its jurisdiction, whichever is less. The current threshold to refer decisions by a local government is 5% of registered voters in the district, without a 2,500 signature cap.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Taffy Howard, R-Rapid City, said it will still be difficult to refer decisions by a local government to voters.

"You're talking dozens and dozens of volunteers, weeks of organized effort," Howard said. "There's not a lot of people that have been through that and can even organize that kind of effort. So it's not a trivial bar."

Because the bill was amended since it last appeared in the House, it'll now go to the House for approval.

HB 1253 intended to provide South Dakota homeowners and commercial property owners predictable increases in their property assessments, which factor into property taxes they pay, over five year periods.

But opponents said the change would shift the property tax burden onto farmers and ranchers and surprise homeowners every five years when assessments would be re-based on market value, which could lead to double-digit increases in assessments.

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

## Fate of state funding for reduced-price school meals rests with governor

**South Dakota Senate gives bill legislative approval, after a multi-year effort to apply state money to program**

**BY: JOHN HULT**

South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden will decide if the state helps to pay for some school meals after the state Senate voted 20-14 on Monday to endorse the idea.

If Rhoden signs House Bill 1082 into law, the state would use roughly \$592,000 in state money each year to pay the amount currently charged to families whose students qualify for reduced-price meals under federal income guidelines. The federal government pays the rest of the cost.

South Dakota lawmakers repeatedly declined to back state funding for school meals in previous years. This year's version passed 20-14 in the Senate on Monday and 46-20 in the House of Representatives late last month.

Neither margin is wide enough for the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto from Rhoden, whose administration opposed the idea during committee hearings.

The bill was nearly defeated last week when the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 5-4 to table it. The Senate voted to add the bill to Monday's debate calendar, however, supporting its revival by the same margin it ultimately passed.

HB 1082 is the latest iteration of bills from Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, to introduce state funding into the federal school meals program. In 2023, she unsuccessfully advocated for the state to pay for the

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entire portion of school meal costs that aren't subsidized by the federal government.

Lake Byron Republican Brandon Wipf is the bill's prime sponsor in the Senate.

Families in the reduced-price meal program are expected to pay 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch, with the federal government picking up the remainder of the price.

Some families fail to pay for the meals as kids run up debt, often leaving school districts to rely on community donors to cover the budget gap, and Wipf said sometimes kids go without eating in the face of that debt.

Wipf said Monday that he understands the concerns of lawmakers who worry that paying for reduced-price lunches rewards families who are able to pay the lower price but don't bother to, but that punishing kids and school districts in such situations amounts to a moral failure.

"If we are the kind of people who would inflict suffering on children just to make a point to their parents, we are a wicked people," Wipf said.

The bill's opponents argued that children don't go hungry because their parents don't pay. When questioned by Piedmont Republican John Carley on whether school districts refuse to serve kids with lunch debt, Wipf said he couldn't speak for every school, but that he'd never heard of a kid being denied food. He'd heard of kids getting string cheese snack packs in the past, however.

Sen. Taffy Howard, R-Rapid City, said schools that rack up debt from unpaid meal bills should get help from local churches, community groups or citizens, not the state.

"Schools can get donations, they can get contributions, they can cover that in some other way," Howard said.

Yankton Republican Lauren Nelson said the bill robs communities of "the opportunity to give" to support their schools and children.

But that's not true, said Sen. Curt Voight, R-Rapid City. School is only in session for 185 days a year, Voight said, and families that struggle to feed their kids don't stop struggling when the school year ends.

"That leaves another 180 days where those responsibilities are the community's," Voight said.

When asked if Rhoden would sign the bill on Monday afternoon, a spokeswoman said the governor "will review any bill that reaches his desk."

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

## **Governor signs bill to recognize tribal police in South Dakota as law enforcement**

**BY: JOHN HULT**

Starting July 1, tribal police helping their state or local counterparts will be recognized as law enforcement officers under South Dakota law.

Gov. Larry Rhoden signed House Bill 1007 and other public safety and public welfare-related bills into law on Monday.

Currently, the definition of law enforcement doesn't include tribal officers, who routinely assist their stateside counterparts on crime and crash scenes but lack jurisdiction outside tribal borders.

State-recognized law enforcement officers are afforded legal protections, among them assault laws that deem simple assaults against them as felony crimes.

HB 1007 will extend those protections to tribal officers as they support public safety operations anywhere in the state.

Rhoden also signed a bill Monday removing the addresses, email addresses and personal phone numbers of police and judges from the publicly available information listed on the state's voter rolls. House Bill 1084 initially included a prohibition on the release of contact information for elected officials, but was amended

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based on concerns about constituents' loss of access to their elected representatives.

On the public welfare side, Rhoden signed a bill into law that will require the use of a translator or interpreter when requested during administrative contested case hearings.

House Bill 1219 was sponsored by Sioux Falls Democratic Rep. Erik Muckey in response to concerns about the inability of some Lakota speakers to engage in administrative hearings on a proposed uranium mine in southwestern South Dakota.

State law already requires translation services when requested during circuit court proceedings. Administrative contested case hearings include cases heard by state-appointed boards or commissions, or by the state's Public Utilities Commission.

As of Monday afternoon, Rhoden had signed 116 bills so far in 2026. He's vetoed one bill, which would effectively ban the production or sale of lab-grown meat. The Legislature has not yet considered the veto. As he vetoed that bill, he signaled his support for a five-year moratorium on lab-grown meat. Senate Bill 124, which would do that, has passed both legislative chambers and awaits his consideration.

Rhoden also announced plans to hold a signing ceremony Tuesday in Pierre for Senate Bill 113, which will make it a felony crime for any person who purposely prevents any other person from practicing religion through violence or threats of violence.

This is the last week of the legislative session, other than a day reserved on March 30 if necessary to consider vetoes.

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

## **Abortion-rights group agrees to stop ads at South Dakota gas stations and settle litigation**

**As lawsuits end, legislation criminalizing the sale, distribution and advertising of abortion pills is pending in the state Senate**

**BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN**

A monthslong dispute over abortion-rights advertising is settled, after a New York nonprofit agreed to remove its ads and end its campaign at gas stations in South Dakota.

The group, Mayday Health, began placing signage above gas station pumps across the state in December with links to information about abortion and birth control options, with the tagline "Pregnant? Don't want to be?"

The nonprofit educates people about the safety and effectiveness of abortion pills. After it began its ad campaign in early December, Republican South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley sent the group a cease-and-desist letter and asked a state judge to stop the campaign.

South Dakota lawmakers adopted an abortion trigger ban in 2005 that took effect in 2022, after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Abortions are prohibited in the state, unless the mother's life is threatened by a pregnancy.

Abortion pills are not legal in South Dakota, said Jackley, who accused Mayday Health of spreading the opposite message. He announced a settlement Monday ending litigation between the state and nonprofit.

"Mayday Health targeted women and young girls encouraging them to take abortion pills while misleading them about the physical risks," Jackley said in a press release. "My position has been clear and unwavering, South Dakota law governs, and the misleading advertisements must be, and are, stopped."

The federal Food and Drug Administration has approved the drug mifepristone to terminate pregnancy, when used with misoprostol, finding the pills to be safe and up to 99% effective. In 2023, the FDA allowed mifepristone prescriptions without an in-person doctor visit. The state of Louisiana is challenging that policy in court.

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Mayday Health initially refused to comply with Jackley's cease-and-desist letter, citing First Amendment free speech protections. The group filed a federal lawsuit in January, also on the grounds of free speech, to prevent Jackley from taking legal action against the campaign.

A federal judge declined to intervene and said she could not interfere with the concurrent action at the state level in South Dakota, where Jackley filed a lawsuit seeking to stop Mayday's ads. A state judge had set a court date for July.

Jackley and Mayday agreed both cases are now resolved, following Monday's settlement announcement.

Mayday Health sent a statement to South Dakota Searchlight: "This is why you fight. South Dakota tried to intimidate Mayday. We sued the Attorney General. A federal judge agreed our speech is constitutionally protected. And now the AG is dropping all charges. We'll continue exercising our First Amendment right, telling Americans in all 50 states that they can still access abortion pills. That includes South Dakota."

The federal judge said during a hearing on the federal litigation that she believes "the proper way to view Mayday's website and the materials on it" is as "noncommercial speech subject to protection under the First Amendment." She ultimately did not issue the court order Mayday sought to prevent Jackley's action against the group, citing lack of jurisdiction.

The reference in Mayday's statement to "charges" was apparently a reference to Jackley's lawsuit in state court. He did not file criminal charges. Although Mayday said it plans to continue its messaging in all 50 states, its settlement with South Dakota says Mayday will remove its gas station placards and terminate its campaign to place additional placards in South Dakota.

## Legislation against medication abortions

While the state has been in court against Mayday, South Dakota's Republican-dominated Legislature has been debating legislation that would make it a felony crime to dispense, distribute, sell or advertise abortion pills and any other "article or thing" intended for producing an abortion, or that leads another person to use or apply it for producing an abortion. The bill would also alter language in the state's existing abortion ban, changing language criminalizing the administering, prescribing or procuring of an abortion for any "pregnant female" to any "person."

The bill would additionally empower the state's attorney general to impose civil penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation, and to seek preventative court orders if the attorney general "has reason to believe that a person is engaging in, has engaged in, or is about to engage in a violation."

The bill passed the state House of Representatives last month, and the state Senate approved it 31-2 on Monday. The bill will now go back to the House for consideration of an amendment made in a Senate committee.

In 2023, medication abortions accounted for 63% of clinician-provided abortions in states without total abortion bans, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Mifepristone and misoprostol are also listed on the World Health Organizations' list of essential medicines. In 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an attempt by anti-abortion medical organizations to overturn the Food and Drug Administration's prescribing guidelines for mifepristone.

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

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## Gas prices spike across US amid Iran war

Average is up 45 cents per gallon in South Dakota

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Americans are paying more for gas Monday as the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran chokes off a significant route for roughly one-fifth of the world's petroleum products.

Global prices for Brent crude oil, the international standard, climbed over \$100 a barrel. Prices were just above \$70 a barrel in the days before the U.S. and Israel launched a surprise Feb. 28 attack on Iran, killing the regime's top leader and other powerful government figures.

The spike, which peaked at \$119.50 per barrel early Monday, caused ricochets throughout markets, with major stock indexes falling worldwide. Oil prices have not reached costs above \$100 per barrel since mid-2022 after Russia launched its full-scale invasion in Ukraine.

Following the Feb. 28 strikes, Iranian officials effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, threatening and reportedly attacking vessels attempting to cross the narrow passage.

Iran's top security official, Ali Larijani, reinforced on the social media platform X Monday that vessels trying to cross the Strait of Hormuz are not guaranteed safety as the conflict continues.

"It is unlikely that any security will be achieved in the Strait of Hormuz amid the fires of the war ignited by the United States and Israel in the region," Larijani wrote.

President Donald Trump defended the price spike late Sunday in a post on his online platform, Truth Social.

"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! President DJT," he wrote.

While the price fell to \$90 a barrel just before 6 p.m. Eastern, Patrick De Haan of GasBuddy, a platform that helps people find the cheapest gas prices in their region, said without indications on the direction of the conflict, there's no guarantee the price will continue to drop.

"It's hard to know what (prices) will look like, and there's not a whole lot of clarity on whether or not the administration is actively trying to address the problem that has caused oil to spike," De Haan told States Newsroom.

The price of oil dropped below \$90 just after Trump said Monday afternoon that the war was "very complete" during a phone call with CBS News's Weijia Jiang.

But prices bumped back up.

"There's just a lot of headlines, there's a lot of interest, and there's a lot of volatility in the situation," said De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, said.

### U.S. gas prices

The national average for gasoline in the U.S. rose to \$3.48 per gallon Monday, according to the AAA gasoline price survey. That's up from \$3.25 per gallon on March 5, according to the survey.

AAA data shows consumers in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois experienced the highest prices in the Midwest and eastern U.S., with average retail prices ranging from \$3.52 to nearly \$3.60 for a gallon of regular gas.

Western states, which tend to pay higher gas prices already, saw an average gallon of regular surpass \$4. California topped the nation's list at \$5.20 per gallon.

The price to fill up in Arkansas, Kansas and Oklahoma remained the lowest, hovering between \$2.92 to \$2.99. That's up from a week ago when prices averaged \$2.47 in Oklahoma, \$2.57 in Kansas and \$2.61 in Arkansas.

### Spike among "fastest rates in years"

GasBuddy put the national average Monday of regular at \$3.45, and diesel at just over \$4.59.

"In just a week, consumers have seen gasoline prices surge at one of the fastest rates in years after oil prices spiked following U.S. strikes on Iran and the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz," De Haan said.

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De Haan added in a blog post Monday that the reason behind oil prices pushing past \$100 a barrel for the first time in years is “fuel markets are now rapidly recalibrating to the risk of prolonged disruption to global supply flows.”

“As a result, gasoline prices in many states could climb another 20 to 50 cents per gallon this week, with price-cycling markets potentially seeing increases as early as today,” De Haan said.

Prior to the war, average U.S. gas prices sat just under \$3, with expectations for seasonal increases as warmer weather triggers more demand and refineries produce pricier summer blends.

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

## Kalshi and Polymarket are skirting laws on sports betting, states say

**States feud with companies, feds over authority to regulate emerging prediction markets**

**BY: KEVIN HARDY**

Online prediction markets allow users to put money on the outcome of almost anything — this weekend’s NBA game between the Warriors and the Thunder, the next supreme leader of Iran, whether the government will confirm the existence of aliens.

But those markets have no state oversight and operate even in states that ban gambling.

The platforms are raising bipartisan alarms, especially related to sports gambling. As states have legalized sports betting in recent years, they’ve required legal sportsbooks to jump through multiple hoops — from age verification procedures to protections for gambling addiction to tax collections. Online prediction markets circumvent all those rules.

Platforms including Kalshi and Polymarket say they are offering contracts similar to commodity markets that speculate on the future price of corn or oil — not outright gambling. But a growing number of states are rejecting those justifications, arguing the platforms are offering a backdoor to skirt state gambling regulations, particularly on sports.

The issue has sparked action from state regulators, new legislation, and lawsuits from both states and prediction markets. Complicating matters are the federal government’s moves to block state regulation of prediction markets, which see more than \$13 billion in transactions each month.

Most activity on those platforms revolves around sports. And in national ads, Kalshi even marketed itself as the first national legal sports betting platform — even though states approve and regulate sports gambling since a 2018 Supreme Court decision. In 11 states, sports gambling remains illegal.

“This is sports wagering. If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s probably sports wagering, in this situation,” said Kentucky state Rep. Michael Meredith, a Republican.

Meredith, who sponsored a 2023 law that legalized sports betting in Kentucky, called for states to regulate prediction markets during a webinar hosted by the National Conference of State Legislatures. That organization, representing state legislators across the country, has urged Congress “to act swiftly to address the rapid growth of unregulated sports-related event contracts.”

State leaders argue their longstanding authority to oversee gambling should allow states to regulate or ban prediction market platforms. But those companies maintain they are not beholden to state regulations.

“I think it’s very clear that this authority should be vested in our state governments,” Meredith said last month.

In New York, lawmakers are considering legislation that would ban prediction markets from offering contracts on sports events, in addition to natural disasters, acts of terrorism and deaths. In Nevada, where gambling and tourism are top economic drivers, regulators are involved in a protracted legal fight after the state sought to stop prediction market activity on sports.

“To me, this is clearly gambling,” Thomas Reeg, CEO of Caesars Entertainment, which operates casinos and sports betting, said during a company earnings call in January.

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But states are also fighting an obscure federal agency seeking to protect the emerging marketplace. The Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which regulates derivatives such as futures contracts on stocks, has asserted it has "exclusive jurisdiction" over prediction markets and promised to fight state regulatory efforts in court.

The CTFC did not respond to Stateline's request for comment. Neither did Kalshi or Polymarket, two of the leading prediction market companies.

## A new wave of betting

Unless Congress passes legislation, experts say the courts will ultimately decide what role states can play in regulating prediction markets.

The standoff has led to litigation between the platforms and states in at least eight states, and officials in 11 states have sent cease and desist orders to prediction market companies, according to the American Gaming Association, an industry group representing casinos and sports books. A bipartisan group of attorneys general from 39 states and the District of Columbia recently urged a federal court to uphold state authority to regulate sports gambling.

The American Gaming Association says prediction markets should either get out of the sports betting business or follow the same regulations and rules that apply to sportsbooks such as DraftKings and FanDuel.

"They don't want to pay the taxes, they don't want to undergo the compliance and provide all of the consumer protections that are required by states of operators who operate legal sports betting," said Tres York, the vice president of government relations for the association.

The organization estimates states have lost out on more than \$570 million in sports gambling tax revenues since prediction markets began offering sports events contracts.

Many state leaders and experts are already concerned about the societal effects from the meteoric rise of sports gambling, which has transformed collegiate and professional sports, and the potential for manipulation by players.

"If you already have what I would call an epidemic of sports betting addiction in this country when you have regulated sports betting, imagine what it's going to be like when you have essentially unregulated sports betting," said Benjamin Schiffrin, director of securities policy at Better Markets, a nonprofit watchdog group advocating for consumer and investor financial protections.

The wide range of available bets also is raising alarms over election integrity and insider trading. In addition to individual elections, prediction markets have allowed wagers on the ouster of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and the timing of the U.S. strike on Iran. Last week, hundreds of thousands of dollars were bet the day before the Iranian strikes, and more than 100 accounts cashed in \$10,000 or more from successful predictions, according to a New York Times analysis.

"It's a huge change to all of a sudden allow betting on elections, and it really threatens the underpinnings of our democracy," Schiffrin said. "It just seems like there's tremendous potential for wrongdoing."

On its website, Kalshi says it operates under a "strict regulatory framework" with a suite of market integrity, surveillance, financial safeguards, and anti-manipulation protections.

## Federal-state conflict

Citing what it called "an onslaught" of state litigation, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission last month filed a court brief underscoring its authority to regulate prediction markets.

"To those who seek to challenge our authority in this space, let me be clear: We will see you in court," Commissioner Mike Selig said in a video posted on social media. Selig is the only member of the presidentially appointed commission, which currently has four vacancies.

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, a Republican, immediately vowed to oppose the federal agency and the prediction platforms in court. Gambling has been banned under the Utah Constitution since the state's founding, and Cox posted on social media that prediction markets are "destroying the lives of families."

Kalshi swiftly sued the governor and the state in federal court in anticipation of enforcement efforts and pending legislation in Salt Lake City. The company's lawsuit cited the governor's post and a column penned

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by Republican Attorney General Derek Brown explaining why he joined Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, a Democrat, "in urging Congress to address offshore gambling operations that disregard state law and target young Americans."

Utah Republican state Rep. Joseph Elison sponsored the legislation cited in Kalshi's lawsuit. The bill, which has passed both chambers, would expand the state's definition of gambling to include proposition betting — bets on the performance of an individual player or team that don't necessarily affect the outcome of a competition. While Elison acknowledged the courts will ultimately determine the issue, he said prediction markets are essentially offering proposition betting without authorization.

"We're 50 independent sovereigns that gave centralized government to the federal government to do certain things," he told Stateline. "But the rest, we want those things to be under our purview. And this is one of those."

## The legal landscape

In early rulings on the matter, courts have issued a mix of opinions: States have found initial success in state courts while results have been more mixed in federal courts, said Daniel Wallach, a gaming and sports gambling attorney tracking the issue.

But federal law has long affirmed state authority to oversee gambling, he said.

Despite attempts to cast transactions as investments, Wallach says courts will look at the substance of bets, which he said are almost indistinguishable from those made in state-regulated betting markets.

"The argument that this is investing rather than gambling is essentially elevating form over substance," he said. "Plain and simple, this is wagering on the outcome of a sporting event."

Wallach said state efforts such as cease and desist orders are counterproductive, as they essentially invite federal lawsuits from prediction market firms. He said states are better off pursuing gambling enforcement efforts in state courts, where several have won preliminary injunctions halting operations of the platforms temporarily.

For now, he said the federal agency has applied almost no scrutiny of the platforms, noting that the president's family has a financial interest in the industry.

Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, has a business interest in two of the largest online prediction markets, and the president's social media platform Truth Social announced it would start its own prediction market, according to The New York Times.

Journalist Dustin Gouker, who authors newsletters on gambling and prediction markets, noted that the CFTC rules that currently regulate prediction markets were built for financial products — not gambling. He said prediction markets have moved into the gaming market because "nobody said no."

"It's a bit of a mess," he said. "If we're going to have betting in 50 states for everyone 18 and over, shouldn't we have thought about that a little bit more?"

*Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at [khardy@stateline.org](mailto:khardy@stateline.org).*

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

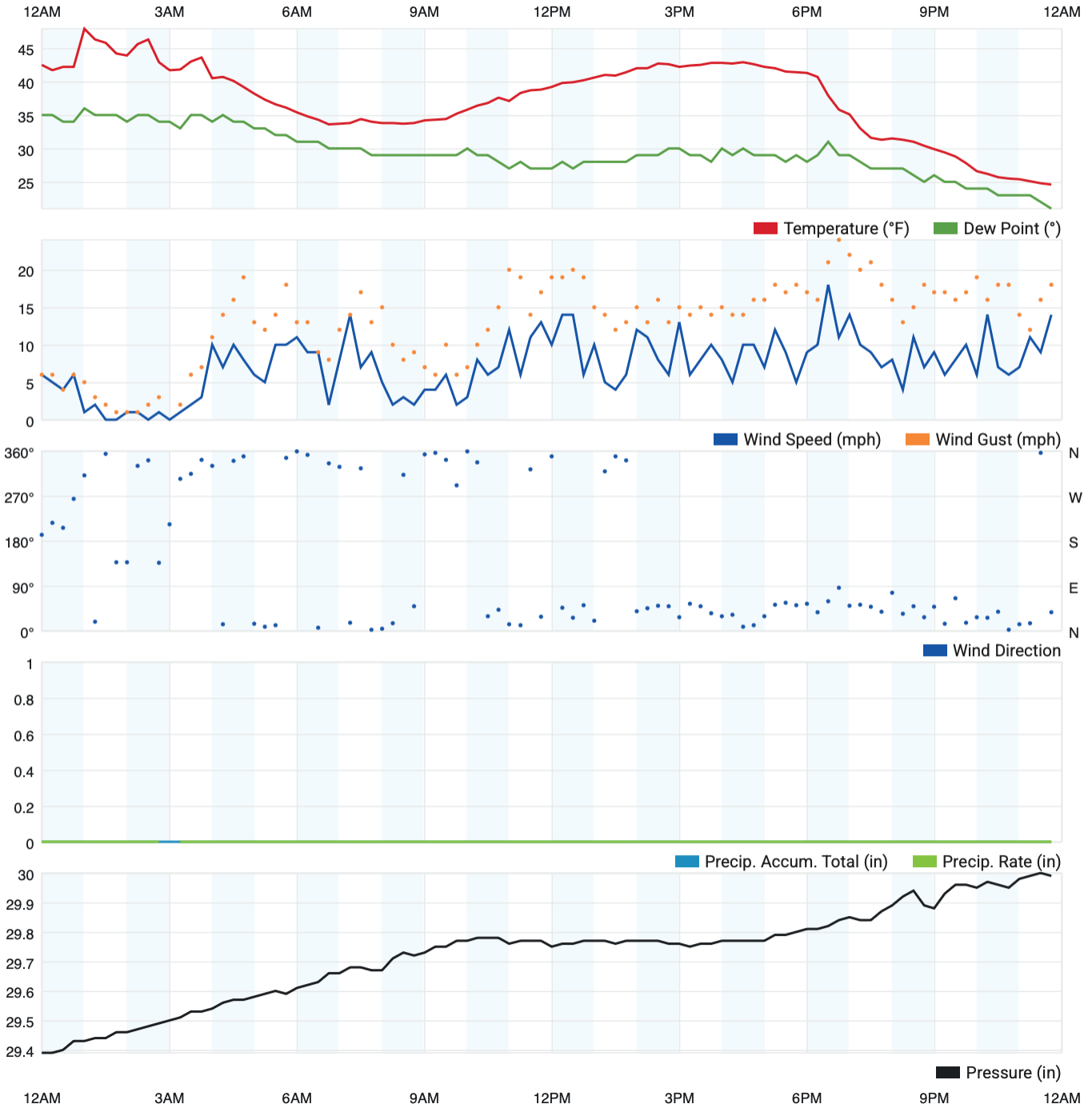
*Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

March 9, 2026

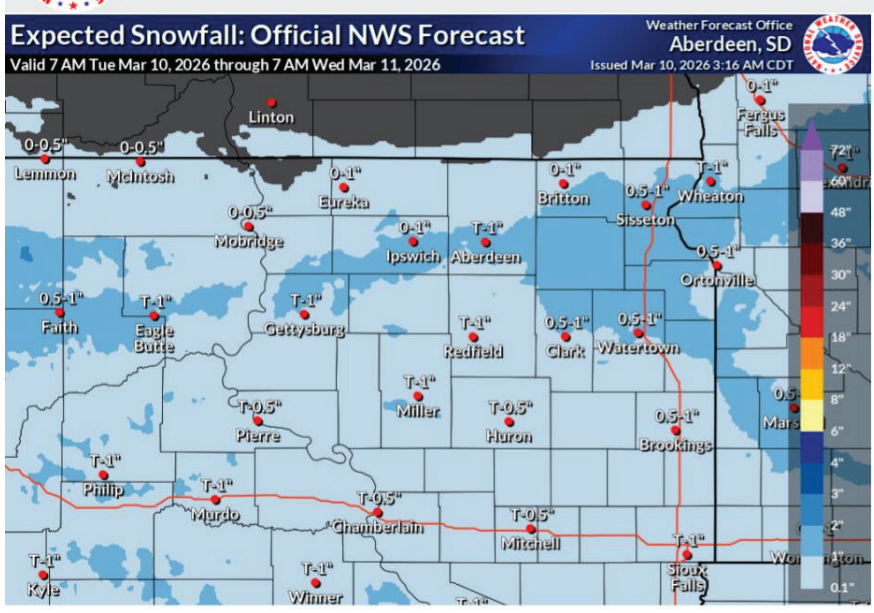


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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
<b>High: 34 °F</b>	<b>Low: 20 °F</b>	<b>High: 40 °F</b>	<b>Low: 24 °F</b>	<b>High: 48 °F</b>
Mostly Cloudy then Chance Snow	Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Slight Chance Snow then Chance Rain/Snow

## Light Snow this Afternoon through Tonight March 10, 2026 4:14 AM



- **Early Afternoon: Light Snow** over central SD
- **2-4pm: Wintry Mix of Light Rain Snow** over central SD. **Light Snow** expands across eastern SD and west central MN
- **Early Evening: Snow** ends over north central SD

**Most locations to receive 1" of snow or less. A few locations getting 2" of snow through tonight**



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Light snow over central SD early this afternoon will spread across northeastern SD and western MN mid-afternoon, before ending tonight. A light wintry mix of rain or snow is possible over central SD mid-afternoon. While most locations will receive 1" of snow or less through tonight, a few spots may receive 2" of snow (highest chance over northeastern SD into west central MN).

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## Timing of Snowfall this Evening

March 10, 2026  
4:21 AM

- **Early Afternoon: Light Snow** over central SD
- **2-4pm: Wintry Mix** of Light Rain Snow over central SD. **Light Snow** expands across eastern SD and west central MN



- **Early Evening: Snow** ends over north central SD

**Most locations to receive 1" of snow or less. A few locations getting 2" of snow through tonight**

### Weather Forecast

	3/10 Tue											3/11 Wed							
	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am		
McIntosh	15%	20%	30%	30%	30%	35%	30%	15%											
Eagle Butte	25%	35%	45%	45%	60%	60%	60%	45%	25%	30%	20%								
Murdo					15%	20%	30%	15%	35%	60%	75%	65%	50%	35%	25%	15%			
Mobridge	20%	30%	30%	35%	45%	50%	35%	30%	20%										
Pierre	15%		20%	30%	40%	40%	45%	45%	60%	60%	45%	50%	35%	20%	20%	15%			
Gettysburg	20%	20%	30%	40%	45%	60%	60%	55%	45%	35%									
Eureka	20%	20%	25%	30%	45%	40%	30%	30%	15%										
Chamberlain		15%	10%					25%	40%	60%	65%	70%	45%	40%	30%	30%			
Miller			20%	30%	30%	40%	40%	65%	60%	60%	65%	45%	30%	20%					
Redfield				15%	30%	30%	40%	50%	65%	65%	45%	45%	25%	25%	20%				
Aberdeen					25%	35%	45%	50%	55%	40%	20%								
Britton					20%	25%	35%	40%	50%	35%	20%								
Clark					20%	30%	35%	45%	70%	70%	60%	55%	45%	35%	25%				
Webster						25%	40%	45%	60%	65%	35%	30%	20%	15%	15%				
Watertown						15%	20%	30%	40%	60%	70%	65%	65%	65%	45%	35%	20%		
Sisseton						20%	30%	40%	65%	55%	40%	25%	15%						
Milbank						20%	30%	45%	50%	65%	60%	50%	40%	35%	25%				
Wheaton							25%	40%	55%	50%	40%	25%	15%						

- Rain +      - Wintry Mix +      - Snow +



Light snow over central SD early this afternoon will spread across northeastern SD and western MN mid-afternoon, before ending tonight. A light wintry mix of rain or snow is possible over central SD mid-afternoon.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 48 °F at 12:59 AM

Low Temp: 25 °F at 11:27 PM

Wind: 24 mph at 6:35 PM

Precip: : 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 74 in 2025

Record Low: -24 in 1948

Average High: 38

Average Low: 17

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.24

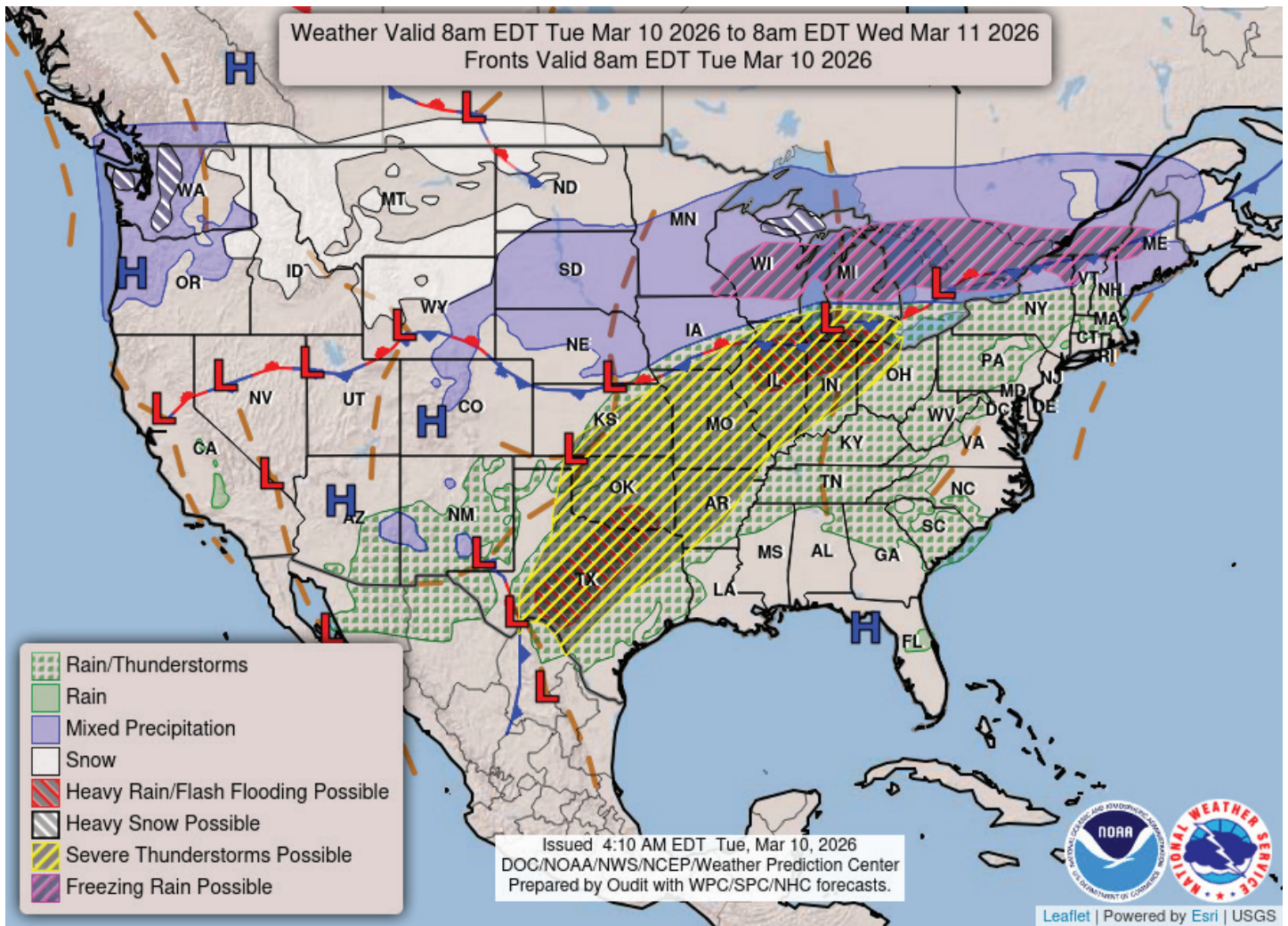
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.41

Precip Year to Date: 1.33

Sunset Tonight: 7.31 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:52 am



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## Today in Weather History

March 10th, 2005: From early morning to early evening, high winds of 35 to 45 mph with gusts of near 70 mph occurred across central and northeast South Dakota. The high winds overturned a semi-truck near Mound City, knocked a large branch down onto a pickup truck in Selby, blew a glass door of a store in Clark off, tore a sign down in Aberdeen, and ripped the roof off a mobile home in South Shore.

March 10-12th, 2009: A low-pressure system tracked across the panhandle of Oklahoma into the Great Lakes region produced moderate to heavy snow across northeast South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 10th. Strong north-to-northwest winds gusting to 45 mph resulted in blizzard conditions. Travel became difficult, if not impossible, across northeast South Dakota. Interstate 29 between Watertown and the North Dakota border was closed for several hours. Several minor accidents occurred, along with some injuries. Snowfall amounts included 3 inches near Milbank, 4 inches near Columbia, Summit, and Sisseton, 5 inches at Waubay and Wilmot, 6 inches 10 miles northeast of Sisseton, Britton, and Roy Lake, 7 inches in Webster and Westport.

Bitter cold air filtered behind the low-pressure system, bringing record cold to the area. On the 11th, Aberdeen and Sisseton broke their record low highs for the date, with afternoon highs only reaching zero. The record at Aberdeen had been in place since 1896. Sisseton also set a record low of 14 degrees below zero on March 12th.

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)

## The Effectiveness of Prayer

**You don't have to face anything alone.**

**Bring your needs to God in prayer and watch Him work.**

James 5:16-18: 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

When you face a problem, what is your first response? God works powerfully through prayer, yet too often we look at it as a last resort. Using the example of Elijah, James reminds us what the effective prayer of a righteous person can accomplish. In today's passage, the subject is healing, but that's not the only prayer God answers. A great many things can be impacted for good by the power of prayer:

Temptation. Jesus told His disciples that prayer was essential to fighting temptation (Mark 14:38).

Praise. After being beaten and thrown into prison, Paul and Silas prayed and praised God (Acts 16:25).

Spiritual Warfare. Paul teaches us to access God's power by "pray[ing] without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Transformation. When we pray according to God's desires, He transforms our mind, character, and actions (Colossians 1:9-12).

Witness. Through prayer, we ask that the Lord open doors for us to spread His Word (Colossians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Protection. God is faithful to answer requests that He strengthen and protect us from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:2-3).

The next time you face a challenging situation, remember that prayer is powerful. Share your needs and watch God work.

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.26

6 16 26 41 43 3

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 45 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.06.26

8 19 26 38 42 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$533,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 30 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.26

3 4 11 20 24 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$17,860,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 45 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.07.26

1 2 6 22 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.26

24 28 32 55 62 5

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 29 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.26

22 23 28 36 54 13

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$58,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 29 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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

### **Iran launches new attacks at Israel and Gulf countries as it keeps up pressure on the Middle East**

By JON GAMBRELL, DAVID RISING and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran launched new attacks on Tuesday at Israel and Gulf Arab countries as it kept up pressure on the Middle East in a war that has impacted the region and beyond, sent oil prices surging and stunned global economies.

Sirens warned of incoming missiles in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and in Bahrain, while Saudi Arabia said it destroyed two drones over its oil-rich eastern region and Kuwait's National Guard said it shot down six drones.

Later in the morning, sirens also sounded in Jerusalem, and sounds of explosions could be heard in Tel Aviv as Israel's defense systems worked to intercept incoming fire, not long after the military said it detected an Iranian missile launch.

"We are definitely not looking for a ceasefire," Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, wrote defiantly on X. "We believe that the aggressor should be punched in the mouth so that he learns a lesson so that he will never think of attacking our beloved Iran again."

Along with firing missiles and drones at Israel and at American bases in the region, Iran has also been targeting energy infrastructure which, combined with its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, sent oil prices soaring.

Brent crude, the international standard, spiked to nearly \$120 on Monday before falling back but was still at around \$90 a barrel on Tuesday, nearly 24% higher than when the war started on Feb. 28.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who has previously said that the war could last for a month or longer, sought to downplay growing fears that it could take even longer, saying it was "going to be a short-term excursion."

Still, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed the strikes on Iran would continue.

"Our aim is to bring the Iranian people to cast off the yoke of tyranny, (but) ultimately it depends on them," Netanyahu said during a meeting with Israel's hospital and health system leaders. "There is no doubt that with the actions taken so far, we are breaking their bones."

Trump sends contradictory messages, Tehran says it's prepared for a long war

The war has choked off major supplies of oil and gas to world markets and sent fuel prices rising. The fighting has also led foreigners to flee from business hubs and prompted millions to seek shelter as bombs hit military bases, government buildings, oil and water installations, hotels and at least one school.

Iran has effectively stopped tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz, the shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman — the gateway to the Indian Ocean — through which 20% of the world's oil is carried. Attacks on merchant ships near the strait have killed at least seven sailors, according to the International Maritime Organization.

In a post on social media, Trump seemed not to acknowledge that, saying that "If Iran does anything that stops the flow of Oil within the Strait of Hormuz, they will be hit by the United States of America TWENTY TIMES HARDER than they have been hit thus far."

Meanwhile, Amin Nasser, the president and CEO of Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco, said tankers were being rerouted to avoid the Strait of Hormuz, and that its East-West pipeline would reach its full capacity of 7 million barrels a day being brought to Red Sea ports this week.

"The situation at the Strait of Hormuz is blocking sizable volumes of oil from the whole region," he said and also hinted at global oil markets being squeezed the longer the Iran war goes on and shipments from the Mideast remain affected.

Tighter supplies would likely push the price per barrel globally even higher, translating to higher costs for gasoline and jet fuel.

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"If this takes a long time, that will have serious impact on the global economy," Nasser said.

Iranian women's soccer team gets asylum in Australia

Five members of the Iranian women's soccer team who were in Australia for a tournament when the Iran war began were granted asylum, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke told reporters in Brisbane.

The team drew widespread news coverage in Australia when players didn't sing the Iranian anthem before their first match. The 26 players had arrived for the Women's Asian Cup last month, before the war started. They were knocked out over the weekend, raising prospect of having to return home to a country under attack.

Burke, who posted photos on social media of the women smiling and clapping as he signed documents, said all players on the squad had been offered asylum.

It was not clear if or when the other 21 players would return to Iran.

Airstrike on Iran-linked militia in Iraq kills 5

As the conflict spread across the region, Israel launched multiple attacks on the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon, which responded by firing missiles into Israel.

Pro-Iran militias in Iraq have also launched attacks at U.S. bases in the country since the beginning of the conflict.

Early Tuesday, one such militia — the 40th Brigade of the Popular Mobilization Forces in the city of Kirkuk — was hit with an airstrike that killed at least five militiamen and wounded four, according to officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the strikes.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said Tuesday it completed a series of strikes targeting Hezbollah's financial arm, al-Qard Al-Hasan. Israel had also targeted several of the group's branches in southern and eastern Lebanon last week.

Israel's military also reiterated a call for all residents of southern Lebanon to evacuate their homes, saying it planned to "operate forcefully" there against Hezbollah.

Since the war began, at least 1,230 people have been killed in Iran, at least 397 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, according to officials.

A total of seven U.S. service members have been killed.

## War with Iran delivers another shock to the global economy

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The war with Iran is doing collateral damage to the world economy.

The conflict is driving up energy and fertilizer prices; threatening food shortages in poor countries; destabilizing fragile states such as Pakistan; and complicating options for the inflation fighters at central banks like the Federal Reserve.

Causing much of the pain: the Strait of Hormuz — through which a fifth of world's oil passes — was effectively shut down after the U.S. and Israel launched missile strikes Feb. 28 that killed Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"For a long time, the nightmare scenario that deterred the U.S. from even thinking about an attack on Iran and which got them to urge restraint on Israel was that the Iranians would close the Strait of Hormuz," said Maurice Obstfeld, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund. "Now we're in the nightmare scenario."

With a key shipping route cut off, oil prices have surged — from less than \$70 a barrel on Feb. 27 to a peak of nearly \$120 early Monday before settling closer to \$90. They've taken gasoline prices with them.

According to AAA, the average price of U.S. gasoline has shot up to \$3.48 a gallon from just under \$3 a week ago. Prices could be felt even more significantly in Asia and Europe, which are more dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas than the United States.

20 million barrels of oil a day go missing

Every 10% increase in oil prices — provided they persist for most of the year — will push up global infla-

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tion by 0.4 percentage points and reduce worldwide economic output by as much as 0.2%, said Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

"The Strait of Hormuz has to be reopened," said economist Simon Johnson of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and recipient of the 2024 Nobel memorial prize in economics. "It's 20 million barrels of oil a day going through there. There's no excess capacity anywhere in the world that can fill that gap."

The world economy has shown it can take a punch, absorbing blows from the Russian invasion of Ukraine four years ago and from President Donald Trump's massive and unpredictable tariffs in 2025.

Many economists express hope that global commerce can stagger through the latest crisis.

"The world economy has shown itself capable of shaking off significant shocks like broad U.S. tariffs, so there is room for optimism that it will prove resilient to the fallout of the war on Iran," said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

Timing is everything

Especially if oil prices can fall back to the \$70-to-\$80-a-barrel range, wrote economist Neil Shearing of Capital Economics, "the world economy may absorb the shock with less disruption than many fear."

But a lot of ifs remain.

"The question is how long is it going to go on?" said Johnson, also former IMF chief economist. "It's hard to see Iran backing down now that it's announced this new leader" – Mojtaba Khamanei. The son of the slain ayatollah is believed to be even more of a hardliner than his father.

Also muddying the outlook for an end to the crisis is uncertainty about what the United States is trying to achieve. "This is all about President Trump," Johnson said. "It's not clear when he's going to declare victory."

Economic winners and losers

For now, the war is likely to create economic winners and losers.

Energy importers — most of Europe, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, India and China — will get clobbered by higher prices, Shearing wrote in a commentary for London's Chatham House think tank.

Pakistan finds itself in an especially bleak position. The South Asian country imports 40% of its energy and relies especially heavily on liquified natural gas from Qatar, supplies of which have been cut off by the conflict. Higher energy prices will squeeze Pakistani families and damage their economy.

Far from cutting interest rates to provide some relief, though, the country's central bank will probably have to raise them instead, say economists Gareth Leather and Mark Williams of Capital Economics. That is partly because inflation remains uncomfortably high in Pakistan — and higher energy prices threaten to make it worse.

But oil-producing countries outside the warzone — Norway, Russia, Canada — will benefit from high oil prices without the risk of missile and drone attacks.

Energy isn't the only issue. Up to 30% of world fertilizer exports — including urea, ammonia, phosphates, and sulfur — pass through the Strait of Hormuz, according to Joseph Glauber of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Disruption in the Strait has already cut off fertilizer shipments, raising costs for farmers — and is likely pushing food prices higher.

"Any countries with significant agriculture sectors, including the United States, would be vulnerable," Obstfeld said. "The effects are going to be most devastating in low-income countries where agricultural productivity may already be challenged. Add this extra cost component and you get the prospect of significant food shortages."

Where things stand in the US

The United States, now a net exporter of energy, should gain slightly overall from higher oil and gas prices. But ordinary families will feel the pain at a time when Americans are already furious about high costs ahead of November's midterm elections.

U.S. households pay an \$2,500 a year, or nearly \$50 a week, to fill up their cars, said Mark Mathews, chief economist at the National Retail Federation. A 20% increase in gasoline prices means an extra \$10 a

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week out their budgets, forcing them to cut back elsewhere. "If I have to pay more for an essential, then I would reduce a discretionary item," Mathews said.

If oil prices remain around \$100 a barrel, analysts at Evercore ISI calculated, the resulting higher gasoline prices will wipe out for most Americans the benefits of higher tax refunds this year arising from Trump's 2025 tax cuts. Only the top 30% would still see a gain.

A quandary for central banks

The Iran crisis also puts the world's central banks in a bind. Higher energy prices feed inflation. But they also hurt the economy. So should central bankers raise rates to curb inflation — or cut them to give the economy a lift?

The Fed is already divided between policymakers who think a weak American job market needs help from lower rates and those still worried that inflation remains stuck above the central bank's 2% target.

"Their minds will easily go to the 1970s," Johnson said, when conflict in the Middle East and an Arab oil embargo sent oil prices rocketing. Central bankers are haunted by the memory that their predecessors "didn't get it right in the 1970s. They thought it was a temporary shock. They thought they could accommodate with lower interest rates, and they ended up regretting that because inflation became much higher."

Johnson predicted that higher energy prices ignited by the war with Iran are "going to massively intensify the debate inside the Fed" and make U.S. rate cuts less likely.

## Global shares surge, echoing a rally on Wall Street as oil prices sank back to about \$90

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares rebounded Tuesday from their sharp declines a day before as global investors wagered that the war with Iran may not last too long.

But the gains fell far short of losses Monday, when oil prices neared \$120 per barrel before falling back to about \$90. U.S. shares were set to rise, with Dow futures up 0.4% at 47,970.00. S&P 500 futures rose 0.4% to 6,830.75.

Helping to assuage investors' fears, U.S. President Donald Trump told CBS News he thinks "the war is very complete, pretty much." He also made other comments that seemed to threaten intensified action against Iran if it makes any "attempt to stop the globe's oil supply."

France's CAC 40 added 1.9% in early trading to 54,248.39, while Germany's DAX surged 2.4% to 23,966.97. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 1.6% to 10,410.08.

In Asia, Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 2.9% to finish at 54,248.39 after the government released revised economic data that showed Japan's economy grew slightly faster than initially estimated in the final quarter of last year, boosted by solid business investments.

The economy expanded at an annual pace of 1.3%. The initial estimate was a much weaker 0.2%.

"Today is the rebound, obviously positive comments from President Trump overnight, we're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel for the war," said Neil Newman, a managing director and head of strategy at Astris Advisory Japan.

"So volatility is going to remain with us but things are certainly looking a lot brighter today," he said.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 1.1% to 8,692.60. South Korea's Kospi jumped 5.4% to 5,532.59.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 2.2% to 25,959.90, while the Shanghai Composite index rose 0.7% to 4,123.14.

Share prices have been swinging mostly in tandem with oil prices, which have gyrated as the war has deepened.

In energy trading Tuesday, benchmark U.S. crude fell \$7.56 to \$87.21 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, dipped \$7.54 to \$91.42 a barrel.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about just how high oil prices will go and how long they will stay there because of disruptions to Middle East energy facilities.

If oil prices stay very high for very long, households' budgets already stretched by high inflation could

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break under the pressure. Companies would see their own bills jump for fuel and to stock items on their store shelves or in their data warehouses.

Concerns have focused on the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway off Iran's coast that a fifth of the world's oil sails through on a typical day. Iran has threatened to set fire to ships sailing the strait.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 157.53 Japanese yen from 157.67 yen. The euro edged up to \$1.1657 from \$1.1636.

## **FAA briefly grounds all JetBlue flights after request from airline**

NEW YORK (AP) — The Federal Aviation Administration briefly grounded all JetBlue flights early Tuesday morning due to a request from the airline, the agency said in a notice posted to its website.

It was not immediately clear why JetBlue requested the ground stop, which was lifted about 40 minutes after it was imposed.

The airline and the FAA didn't immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press requesting more information.

The airline, which was founded more than 25 years ago, has its headquarters in New York City and its flagship terminal at the city's John F. Kennedy International Airport.

## **China's exports surge in Jan-Feb despite waning trade with the US**

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China's exports jumped nearly 22% in the first two months of the year from a year earlier, powered by a surge in shipments of computer chips, autos and electronics.

The export figures released by China's customs agency on Tuesday were much better than economists had forecast. They far exceeded the 6.6% annual pace of growth recorded in December.

Shipments to the U.S. fell 11% in January and February, narrowing from a 30% drop in December. Exports to the European Union increased almost 28% while those to Latin America climbed 16%.

Exports to the rest of Asia, including Japan and India, also were sharply higher.

China's exports have been a bright spot for its economy despite tensions with the U.S. Chinese exports climbed 5.5% for 2025 as its trade surplus surged to a record of nearly \$1.2 trillion. Higher shipments to other regions have helped offset weaker exports to the U.S. after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed a variety of higher tariffs on imports from many countries.

The boom in use of artificial intelligence is driving strong demand for computer chips of all kinds. China's exports of semiconductors by value soared nearly 73% in the first two months of the year, partly also lifted by higher prices as the world faces a memory chip shortage. Its exports of autos rose 67% and mechanical and electrical items rose 27%.

Trump's planned visit to Beijing at the end of March is being closely watched for a possible extension of a trade truce between the two countries reached in October last year, which could be positive news for Chinese exports to the U.S.

A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling against Trump's sweeping tariffs has already resulted in lower tariffs for countries including China.

"While the recent pace of gains is unlikely to be sustained, exports are likely to remain robust given the recent decline in U.S. tariffs and strong demand for semiconductors," Zichun Huang, a China economist at Capital Economics, wrote in a note.

China's total imports in January and February rose almost 20%, up from December's 5.7% year-on-year increase. However, its imports from the United States dropped nearly 27% from a year earlier.

China's global trade surplus in January-February was \$213.6 billion. Trade data is typically combined for January to February each year to help even out seasonal impacts from the Lunar New Year festival, the biggest holiday of the year.

A slowing domestic economy fueled by a yearslong property sector downturn has been weighing on the

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world's second largest economy. Last week, Chinese leaders announced an economic growth target of 4.5% to 5% for 2026, the lowest since 1991.

The war in the Middle East has raised uncertainty over the outlook for trade and for China's own energy security. An effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a transit point for much of the world's trade in oil and gas, may restrict China's access to relatively cheap Iranian oil and also impede its broader commerce with the region.

For China, export competitiveness is paramount, said Han Lin, China Country Director at consultancy The Asia Group. "Energy inflation is the last thing Beijing policymakers need," he said.

If the war drags on, a surge in oil prices fueling global inflation could also weaken consumption abroad, potentially hurting overseas demand for Chinese goods, said Daniel Russel, a distinguished fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

## 15 years after Fukushima meltdown, an innkeeper makes radiation surveys to revitalize her hometown

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

ODAKA, Japan (AP) — Fifteen years after the 2011 nuclear disaster, color-coded radiation maps hang on the wall of Futabaya Ryokan, the family-run inn Tomoko Kobayashi operates in her near-deserted hometown in northeastern Fukushima.

Kobayashi conducted her own radiation surveys before reopening the inn in 2016. Now, she and other monitors share radiation data as part of efforts to rebuild this once-bustling textile town.

"These empty lots used to be filled with shops," Kobayashi says of the pre-disaster town as she heads to a radiation monitoring lab, walking past a kindergarten she attended as a child. It's now used as a museum because there are too few children since the nuclear crisis.

"There used to be businesses, community activity and children playing," she says. "We used to live our ordinary daily lives here, and I hope to see that again."

Only about one-third of Odaka's pre-disaster population of 13,000 have returned over the past decade.

"The town was destroyed, and we need to rebuild it. It's a time-consuming process that cannot be accomplished in just a couple of decades," she said. "But I hope to see the progress, with new people and new development added to what this town used to be."

Facing an invisible danger

When a magnitude 9.0 quake struck off Japan's northeastern coast at 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, Kobayashi was at the Futabaya inn. Despite the long, violent shaking, the inn's walls didn't fall. But about an hour later, a tsunami poured into the kitchen "like a river," she said.

A much higher wave hit the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. It destroyed key cooling systems and caused meltdowns at three reactors.

The No. 1 reactor building was damaged by a hydrogen explosion on March 12. Two days later the Unit 3 reactor building exploded, followed by the No. 4 reactor building, spewing radioactive particles that contaminated the surroundings and caused hundreds of thousands of residents to flee. Some areas remain unlivable today.

Kobayashi's family first headed to a gymnasium in nearby Haramachi town, but it was full. Eventually they made it to Nagoya, where she and her husband stayed for a year.

In 2012, the couple returned to Fukushima to start measuring radiation while living in temporary housing near Odaka, which was still off-limits.

The town has recovered some since then. Her guests include students and others who want to learn about Fukushima, as well as people interested in opening new businesses.

"I had to understand what the nuclear accident was about. I thought someone had to go back and keep an eye out," she said. As she kept measuring, she started seeing what used to be invisible to her and understanding radiation. "Now it has become my lifetime mission."

Citizens document radiation from the disaster

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Kobayashi and her comrades gather twice a year, spending two weeks each time measuring the air at hundreds of locations so they can produce the color-coded maps. They have also set up a lab to test local produce to determine what they can safely eat and serve.

"We are not professional scientists, but we can measure and show the data. What's important is to keep measuring, because the government maintains that it's safe, as if radiation no longer exists," she says. "But we know for a fact that it's still there."

Their lab now sits next to a free folklore museum with paintings, sculptures, photographs and other artwork inspired by the Fukushima disaster.

Fukushima Daiichi gets a facelift, but a mess remains

Fifteen years ago, the plant looked like a bombed factory because of the hydrogen explosions at the reactor buildings where workers risked their lives to keep the crisis under control. Radiation levels have since come down significantly, and the plant has built enhanced seawalls designed to withstand another big tsunami. Now, for the first time since the disaster, all of the plant's reactor buildings have their rooftops enclosed.

"Our decommissioning work at the plant is about how to reduce risks of radiation," says Akira Ono, head of decommissioning at the plant operator, Tokyo Electric Power Holdings Company. Remote-controlled robotics, careful planning, and practice are key to keeping workers safe, he said.

At Unit 1, under its brand-new roof, top floor decontamination will begin ahead of the planned removal of spent fuel from the cooling pool.

The three reactors contain at least 880 tons of melted fuel debris with radiation levels still dangerously high and their details little known.

TEPCO successfully took tiny melted fuel samples last year from the Unit 2 reactor. To examine melted fuel inside the Unit 3 reactor, workers last week deployed micro-drones, a technology not quite realistic 15 years ago, Ono said.

TEPCO plans remote-controlled internal probes to analyze melted fuel and to develop robots for more fuel debris removal that experts say could take decades more.

'Pressure to be silent'

Fukushima prefecture tests thousands of pre-distribution samples every year and says all farm, fisheries and dairy products in stores are safe.

Sale of some fruits, mushrooms, river fish and a number of other harvests in former no-go zones is still restricted.

"Radiation levels have come down significantly over the past 15 years, but I wouldn't use the word 'safe,' just yet," says Yukio Shirahige, a former decontamination and radiation survey worker at Fukushima Daiichi who now helps Kobayashi's monitoring project.

When he tested wild boar meat recently, he found it was more than 100 times over the safety limit and could not be consumed.

In a major reversal after a decade of working to phase out nuclear technology, Japan in 2022 announced plans to accelerate reactor restarts and bolster nuclear power as a stable energy source.

Shirahige was at Fukushima Daiichi when the quake and tsunami struck in 2011. After evacuating his family, he returned in late March to help the emergency cleanup at the plant for six months.

Shirahige has received support and equipment from university researchers and is in charge of testing locally produced food and other samples.

Shirahige, now 76, says measuring radioactive material and sharing that data is his life's work.

As the government pushes Fukushima's safety and recovery, Shirahige says, "we are under growing pressure to be silent."

## Young kids missed the pandemic's school disruptions. Their reading scores are still behind

By MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When COVID-19 wrought havoc on society in early 2020, today's youngest schoolchildren were infants or yet to be born. Now in their early school years, researchers are beginning to see how the pandemic years have shaped their education, even though many had yet to set foot in a classroom when it began.

First and second graders continue to perform worse than their pre-pandemic counterparts on math and reading tests, according to a report published Tuesday by the education assessment and research group NWEA. But while math scores have inched up every year, reading scores remain stagnant, the report shows. The data suggests the slump in academic performance is not rooted only in instructional disruption. Broader societal shifts might be at play.

In the youngest students' failure to recover, "there's something kind of systemic here happening ... within schools and outside of schools," said Megan Kuhfeld, a researcher at NWEA. "We can't pinpoint one specific cause."

The pandemic's effects on older children's academic achievement are well-documented. COVID-19 forced kids out of classrooms and into online learning. Students lost out on face time with instructors, their mental health suffered in the isolation, and their well-being deteriorated as some families endured hardship. Some schoolchildren stopped showing up to school altogether.

The federal government gave billions of dollars to school districts to help students catch up — with mixed results. In 2024, reading scores for fourth- and eighth-graders continued a downward slide, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Math scores, however, trended upward.

Testing for younger kids is less common, so the NWEA report offers insights into the depth of the academic disruption. It's based on assessments given to students in the 2024-25 school year.

Kindergarten scores for math and science remained roughly the same throughout the pandemic. First and second graders are trending in the same way as their older peers. Math and reading scores are still falling short of pre-pandemic levels, although math scores are slowly rising. Reading scores have remained roughly the same since the spring of 2021, when the first full school year in the pandemic was wrapping up.

It's unclear what is depressing the scores. Kuhfeld pointed to emerging data showing that fewer parents are reading to their children, an activity that has been shown to boost literacy. A 2024 survey of parents in the United Kingdom found that less than half of children under 5 were regularly read to, a 20-point drop from a dozen years prior.

In Minnetonka Public Schools outside Minneapolis, school leaders say that while reading scores dipped during the pandemic, they have since recovered. Teachers now focus more on phonics and also regularly assess students on literacy. Students who are behind receive extra help on the parts of reading where they struggle. A student who has difficulty reading aloud might be asked to read to one of their classmates, for example.

But some things are out of the district's control. During the pandemic, Associate Superintendent Amy LaDue said, many young children were homebound. They missed out on activities like going to museums and playing with other children, which are helpful for language and literacy development. She believes that's one factor that continues to hamper kids, especially those from low-income families.

"These kids weren't in school when the pandemic happened, but (some) were ... in early childhood and preschool," LaDue said. "Their opportunities ... to have those experiences outside of their home that build literacy skills and to apply them with peers probably were impacted because they were home."

Along with interventions at school, a growing number of states and cities are investing in pre-kindergarten to help children with early literacy. California has introduced universal pre-kindergarten, and New York City is expanding its pre-kindergarten program to 2-year-olds, giving toddlers an early start on learning. New Mexico has made child care free for nearly all families.

## FBI hunts for clues after 2 men charged with lighting bombs at NYC protest

NEW YORK (AP) — Investigators are trying to learn more about two Pennsylvania men accused of bringing homemade bombs to a protest outside the home of New York City's mayor.

Emir Balat, 18, and Ibrahim Kayumi, 19, told authorities after their arrests that they were inspired by the Islamic State group, law enforcement officials said, but much remains undisclosed about their motives and how much they planned.

The FBI said Monday that it had conducted multiple searches in connection with the investigation, including an examination of a Pennsylvania storage unit. Tests were being performed on some of the devices recovered at the scene.

Balat's lawyer, meanwhile, portrayed him as a confused teenager who didn't know what he was doing.

Prosecutors, police and FBI officials say Balat and Kayumi, who lived in Philadelphia's suburbs, drove to New York City on Saturday and joined a throng of counter protesters at a small, anti-Muslim rally organized by the far-right Christian nationalist Jake Lang.

Journalists photographed Balat hurling a device, smoking with a lit fuse, that was later found to contain the explosive TATP. The object, which also contained nuts and bolts, extinguished itself without harming anyone.

Balat then dropped a second object near some police officers and tried to run, but was tackled and arrested, according to a court complaint.

Balat and Kayumi were being held without bail after a court appearance Monday on charges that include attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and using a weapon of mass destruction.

Balat's lawyer, Mehdi Essmidi, said outside court that his client, a high school senior, had "complicated stuff going on" in his personal life.

"I believe he's 18 and he doesn't have any idea what he's doing," Essmidi said. He added that he didn't believe Balat and Kayumi had known each other long.

New York Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said there were no indications Monday that the attack was connected to the ongoing war in Iran.

After Balat was arrested, police officers asked him whether he was aiming to accomplish something akin to the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three people.

"No, even bigger," Balat replied, according to a criminal complaint.

## Georgia voters choosing a successor to Marjorie Taylor Greene in US House

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Months after Marjorie Taylor Greene resigned from Congress after a falling out with President Donald Trump, voters in her Georgia district will vote for her successor in a special election Tuesday.

With top candidates including Republicans Clay Fuller and Colton Moore and Democrat Shawn Harris, this round of voting could be only the first step in an elections marathon in northwest Georgia's 14th Congressional District.

Fuller, a district attorney endorsed by Trump, is hoping to avoid an April 7 runoff, which would be necessary if no candidate wins a majority of votes in the district that stretches across 10 counties from suburban Atlanta to the Tennessee state line.

"We need to win this thing on March 10 and send an America First warrior to fight for President Trump," Fuller told a crowd in Rome, Georgia, on Feb. 19 before a speech by Trump.

But with 12 Republicans, three Democrats, a Libertarian and an independent running in the all-party

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special election, that may be difficult, even after five Republicans withdrew

The winner will serve out the remaining months of Greene's term. But if they want to remain in Congress beyond next January, they will have to run again. Republicans and Democrats seeking a full two-year term are set for a May 19 party primary, and possibly a June 16 party runoff, before advancing to the general election in November.

Last week, 10 Republicans and Harris qualified to run in November's election for a full two-year term. That includes Fuller, as well as Moore, a former state senator and favorite of far-right activists who drew attention for a vociferous attack on Trump's prosecution in Georgia for alleged election interference.

Harris, a cattle farmer and retired general, promises moderation and a focus on the district's problems. However, a Democrat is unlikely to prevail in the 14th District, which is rated as the most Republican-leaning district in Georgia by the Cook Political Report.

Voters there embraced Greene's hard-right campaign in 2020, when she parachuted into the district after aborting a campaign in a more closely contested district closer to Atlanta.

Greene was one of the most well-known members of Congress until she left in January. She remained loyal to Trump after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden, promoting Trump's falsehoods about a stolen election. When Trump ran again in 2024, she toured the country with him and spoke at his rallies while wearing a red "Make America Great Again" hat.

But Greene began clashing with Trump last year after he and other Republicans pushed back against her running for U.S. Senate or governor. Greene criticized Trump's foreign policy and his reluctance to release documents involving the Jeffrey Epstein case. The president eventually had enough, saying he would support a primary challenge against her. Greene announced a week later that she would resign.

Returning another Republican to Congress would bolster the party's narrow majority in the House. Republicans currently control 218 House seats to Democrats' 214.

## **In a time of war with Iran, Americans unite in aggravation over sticker shock at the gas pump**

By HANNAH FINGERHUT, MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, MICHAEL SCHNEIDER, MICHAEL CATALINI and BILL BARROW Associated Press

DE SOTO, Iowa (AP) — Standing alongside his son's Ford pickup truck at a central Iowa gas station off Interstate 80, Francisco Castillo was not happy.

He had voted for President Donald Trump in the last election. He believed Trump had strengthened the economy in his first term, and he wanted more of that.

"I thought that he was going to bring some of those things back," said Castillo, a 43-year-old factory worker. And now? "He said he was going to bring gas down, but the war in Iran is now making everything worse."

It seems a country divided on so many fronts is finding common ground in pain at the pump, where the cost of the Iran war is hitting Americans squarely in the wallet and aggravating people across the political spectrum.

For Castillo and many others filling their tanks on Monday at gas stations in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina and Iowa, it was a reminder that politicians' promises aren't going to pay the bills.

"They do what benefits them," Castillo said. "I have to go to work every day no matter what."

Some are optimistic that the sticker shock will be short-lived. Others blame corporate interests rather than the president. Electric vehicle owners are especially grateful about their decision as they cruise past gas stations with escalating prices.

The national average gas price was \$3.48 a gallon on Monday, up from \$2.90 a month ago, before the war, according to tracking by AAA.

The higher prices are a reminder of how Trump has veered from his campaign promises. Not only were Americans embroiled in a new war overseas, they were paying for it every time they filled up their tanks.

Trump insisted the conflict was worth it.

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"We're putting an end to all of this threat once and for all, and the result will be lower oil prices, oil and gas prices for American families," he said at a news conference Monday. The war, he said, is "just an excursion into something that had to be done."

Robert Coon from Omaha, Nebraska, filled up on his way to Ames, Iowa. Though not a Trump voter, he believed the strikes in Iran needed to happen.

Even so, he fears U.S. involvement is not going to go the way he wants, which is "in, out, over."

A Quinnipiac poll conducted over the weekend found about half of registered voters oppose the U.S. military action against Iran while about 4 in 10 support it. The vast majority of Democrats were against it (89%), the vast majority of Republicans for it (85%) and independents against it (60%).

Overall, three-quarters were concerned about the war raising gas and oil prices.

In Florida, a gas guzzler keeps rolling

For now, surging prices aren't keeping Ray Albrecht from hauling his 32-foot (11 meter) camper on his Silverado pickup truck around the country as he attended motorcycle festivals like Bike Week in Florida's Daytona Beach.

However, he said he would stop traveling if the price reached \$5 a gallon since he only gets 8 miles per gallon with his truck and camper. He stopped at a Speedway gas station off Interstate 4 in Winter Park, Florida, paying \$3.59 per gallon for half a tank to keep him rolling toward his home in Wisconsin.

"I've been pretty grateful that the gas prices have been really reasonable" at least until the last week, said Albrecht, 67, who identified as an independent voter.

At the same gas station, Republican-leaning Tyler Nepple, 23, said the price of gas for his Toyota Tacoma may shape his vote in the midterm elections this fall but won't change his driving habits.

"You've just got to fill it up and bite the bullet and hope that the prices go back down — that's all I can really do," said Nepple, who runs a startup in the Orlando, Florida, area. "I still have to get from point A to point B, and I need gas to do that."

A retiree cuts back in Pennsylvania

Kathryn Price Engelhard, 70, gassed up her Subaru Forester at a Wawa in Morrisville, Pennsylvania, in the Philadelphia suburbs. A retired nonprofit executive director and "strong Democrat," she said she had to stop at over a half a tank because she's on a fixed income. Last week, she paid only \$30 to top herself off.

Similarly, she cut her order for home heating oil by half because that cost is up, too. "I look at the prices of oil in the past and the stupid war, how did we — how did anybody — think that that was not going to impact oil?" she asked. "Of course it's impacting oil."

In Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, Vivian Knight, 53, is hoping her fill-up last week will last her a month. She is a former exterminator out on disability. "If I had to go to work or something like that, gas prices would be ridiculous," she said.

Speaking of Trump, she said "he kind of starts some problems that really don't need to be started," and she puts the Iran war in that category.

The saga will have no effect on how Joey Perillo, 74, will vote in November.

"The gas price could have gone down to two cents a gallon and I'd vote against him," said the volunteer firefighter, retired actor and political independent from Yardley, Pennsylvania.

In Michigan, gratitude for electric cars

In the Detroit suburb of Livonia, Anthony Gooden, 57, sized up the plight of gas-powered vehicle owners while waiting for his Chevy Equinox EV to charge at a station.

"Whoa, they're going through it right now," said Gooden, 57, from nearby Redford Township. "And it's only getting worse."

Gooden ditched his internal combustion engine vehicle over a year ago and said days like these reinforce that decision. "You're happier now," he said. "No comparison."

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, Elvana Hammoud, 55, a diversity strategist, drives a Mach-E electric SUV as well as a Ford Raptor truck that costs \$100 to fill up when gas is over \$3. It's an easy choice which to use more now.

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"I mostly drive the EV, especially to work because I have a long commute," she said. The Raptor is for snowy days, short errands or when moving something big. "I used it more frequently just for fun when gas prices were lower."

Trump has put up a number of roadblocks to rapid expansion of electric vehicles in favor of policies promoting gasoline-powered ones. Among them, his tax and spending bill passed by Congress last year eliminated federal tax credits that saved buyers up to \$7,500 off new and used EV purchases.

In North Carolina, worries about gouging

Kevin Kertesz, 65, filled his pickup at a Shell station in Graham, North Carolina, where unleaded started at \$3.34 per gallon, up from \$2.59 in the area last week.

The Republican retiree asserted that "everyone who is selling fuel for these elevated prices is price gouging, and there's nothing we can do about it because we all have to have gasoline to keep driving."

Ken Shuttlesworth, a 70-year-old IT manager from Graham who described himself as an independent Democrat, said he can absorb higher gas costs but worries about his children and grandchildren and others who live closer to the financial margins.

Trump, he said, should have consulted Congress and had a more public discussion before taking the country to war.

"We have somebody who doesn't follow the policy," he said. "He follows his instincts."

## Europe rallies around Cyprus days after the Iran war's first drone attack on EU territory

By SYLVIE CORBET and MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

PAPHOS, Cyprus (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday pledged to defend Cyprus and dispatch additional warships to the Eastern Mediterranean to strengthen allies' security in the region unsettled by the Iran war.

Macron said he was visiting Cyprus primarily to show solidarity with the country, where a Shahed drone struck a British air base on the southern coast last week. It was the first drone attack of the war on European territory.

"When Cyprus is attacked, it is Europe that is attacked," Macron said after talks with his Cypriot counterpart Nikos Christodoulides and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at Cyprus' main air base near the southwestern town of Paphos. "We are bound to one another by strategic partnerships."

Macron had ordered the French frigate Languedoc to waters off Cyprus, a fellow European Union member, to bolster its anti-drone and anti-missile defenses. Last week, France also sent ground-based anti-drone and anti-missile defenses.

Greece has dispatched four F-16 fighter planes to the Paphos air base, and its frigates Kimon and Psara are already patrolling off Cyprus, tasked with intercepting any missiles or drones.

Macron hails 'unprecedented' show of strength

Macron said he would deploy eight warships, two helicopter carriers and the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, equipped with its 20 Rafale fighter jets, to the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East, calling France's move "unprecedented." Cyprus and France signed a new strategic partnership in December.

He briefly visited the French aircraft carrier off Crete, Greece.

Macron also pointed to a French-led initiative in the works that will involve European and non-European nations helping to escort oil and gas tankers with the aim of gradually reopening the Strait of Hormuz off Iran "as soon as possible after the most intense phase of the conflict is over."

Cyprus' leader, Christodoulides, noted: "Our countries have the common belief that the European Union must engage more actively, more strategically and more coherently with the wider region as part of a comprehensive approach."

The Greek prime minister stressed that any action is purely defensive in posture, adding that "we're not going to accept any part of European territory, like Cyprus, to be exposed to the slightest danger."

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EU leaders seek to contain Middle East conflict

Macron has been involved in diplomatic talks seeking to avoid further escalation in the Middle East. On Sunday, he spoke to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and urged him to stop strikes.

Christodoulides has underscored that Cyprus won't take part in any military operation and remains focused on its regional humanitarian role that includes a maritime corridor sending aid to Gaza via the Israeli port of Ashdod.

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

Cyprus officials confirmed last week that the Shahed originated from Lebanon and believe that it was launched by the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group. Hezbollah's arsenal includes exploding drones, similar to the ones used by Iran.

Lebanon's Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji on Sunday condemned the drone attack, adding: "I called on our Cypriot friends not to confuse the Lebanese state with those acting outside its authority and legal framework."

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

Macron said France is expending diplomatic capital to ensure a return to calm and to allow for the Lebanese armed forces to assert themselves as Israel pounds Hezbollah positions.

"Our goal is simple, Hezbollah must cease all strikes from Lebanese territory, because it is putting all Lebanese people in danger," Macron said, and urged Israel to cease its strikes in Lebanon.

## How the Iran war and surging oil prices are affecting consumers at the gas pump and beyond

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ, MAE ANDERSON and CHRIS RUGABER AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — As the price of crude oil surpassed \$110 a barrel Monday, reaching heights not seen since 2022, consumers were feeling the effects of the Iran war and its damage to worldwide energy production.

Gasoline prices are climbing, and many people will find some of the most immediate economic pain at the pump.

But you don't have to drive a car to be affected. Nearly all goods — including food — that are bought and sold must travel from where they're produced. Those costs will climb with higher gasoline, diesel and jet fuel prices.

And the spike in oil prices will likely be a big factor for U.S. inflation. As the war continues, some experts say the price of, well, everything could be affected.

"The longer this lasts, the more significant the shock would be," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at consulting firm EY-Parthenon.

Here's how the growing cost of oil and gas could impact consumers as the war continues.

At the pump: Gas prices are likely to continue climbing

Gasoline, diesel and jet fuel are made from crude oil. As the cost of crude climbs, so do the prices of those widely used products, which keep equipment, cars, buses, delivery trucks and airplanes running.

Across the U.S., drivers were paying an average of \$3.48 for a gallon of regular gasoline Monday, compared with \$2.98 before the war started. Prices have increased about 17% since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran.

Prices vary across states. In California, drivers were paying \$5.20, up 12% from a week ago. Some of California's refineries have shut down in recent years, so the massive state relies on imports of gasoline and other refined products from Asia.

By contrast, the average price in Louisiana, which has oil production and refineries, was \$3.04.

The spike in oil prices is likely to further push up gasoline prices, and could be felt more significantly in

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Asia and Europe, which are more dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas than the United States.

The cost of shipping and goods increases alongside the price of diesel

The price of diesel — which powers 18-wheeler trucks — climbed Monday, too: to \$4.65 a gallon in the U.S., a 23% jump since the war started.

“Can’t underscore what a massive jolt this is to the logistics, trucking, (agriculture) sectors,” Patrick De Haan, a petroleum analyst at GasBuddy, wrote on X Monday.

The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway that carries a fifth of the world’s crude oil and liquified natural gas, already has caused problems for the shipping industry. Quickly rising oil and gas prices will add to the burden.

Fuel prices account for 50% to 60% of the total operating cost of shipping goods by ship, according to Patrick Penfield, professor of supply chain practice at Syracuse University, so higher fuel prices have a huge effect on the industry.

“When fuel prices start to go up, everything starts to slow down,” Penfield said. “So your ships slow down, your trucks slow down. People are less apt to ship things via air. And it really kind of causes a drag on the economy when fuel price go up.”

Fuel surcharges will also rise — as shipping companies aim to pass along higher costs to their customers, ultimately making goods more expensive.

Home energy bills will probably rise, and items made from plastic could cost more

Heating your home and cooking food with natural gas are also likely to cost more as the war grinds on.

Europe’s benchmark natural gas rose 75% since the war began, according to data from the Intercontinental Exchange.

That could also affect the cost of products made from natural gas, such as petrochemical feedstock. It’s used to make plastic and rubber, as well as nitrogen fertilizer.

Eventually, groceries might be more expensive, too

The spike in oil prices likely won’t be felt immediately at U.S. grocery stores, said David Ortega, a professor of food economics and policy at Michigan State University. But if oil prices remain high for a month or more, he said, “we’re in different territory.”

Higher oil prices impact the agricultural sector in two ways, Ortega said. They raise the cost of inputs such as fuel for farm equipment and the fertilizer, which is derived from natural gas. They also raise demand for soybean oil, palm oil and other vegetable oils that can be used as replacements for petroleum-based fuel.

But Ortega said on-farm costs are only a small part of what consumers pay at the supermarket. A larger share comes from the cost of processing and transporting food, which uses a lot of energy.

“Food gets to the grocery store on diesel, whether it’s on a truck or on a boat,” Ortega said.

If oil prices remain elevated, fresh foods that must be transported quickly could see price hikes more quickly than packaged foods, which are less perishable, Ortega said.

If inflation rises, everything gets more expensive

With U.S. oil prices increasing by roughly 42% from their pre-war levels, to roughly \$95 a barrel from about \$67 before the conflict, that could push up inflation in the United States from 2.4% in January to 3% or higher in the coming months, according to a rough estimate by economists at JPMorgan.

Economist Daco, of EY-Parthenon, estimated that the bump in gas prices could push monthly inflation to as high as 1% in March, which would be the highest monthly increase in four years. Yearly inflation would near 3% in that case.

“That’s a significant shock in and of itself,” Daco said.

Some experts say consumer spending will decrease

Mark Mathews, chief economist and executive director of research at the National Retail Federation, said higher gas prices would likely affect consumer spending, particularly lower-income shoppers.

U.S. households pay on average \$2,500 a year, or nearly \$50 a week, to fill up their tank, he said. If consumers are paying, say, \$10 more per week, he said, their budgets are certainly affected.

“How do they offset that?” he said. “Going out to a movie theater or going to a theme park or going

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out to eat — all those areas would be ... more likely see cuts.”

Some see hope that prices stay down — for now

Mathews expects that retailers will absorb higher transportation costs for a while — as many did with higher tariffs — before they increase prices.

Italian Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti warned against passing along higher energy costs to consumers, recalling the lessons learned after Russia invaded Ukraine.

“We must act immediately to stop energy prices from spreading to all consumer goods, as happened in 2022,” he told a Monday G7 meeting in Brussels, according to a statement from his office.

Ed Anderson, a professor of supply chain and operations management for the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, said shippers won’t immediately pass on costs to customers.

“If the conflict is only in the short run, companies will eat it,” he said.

## Trump says Iran war could be over soon, but oil disruption would trigger harsher US strikes

By JON GAMBRELL, WILL WEISSERT and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday that the war against Iran could be short-lived, but he left open the possibility of an escalation in fighting if global oil supplies are disrupted by the Islamic Republic, which chose a new hard-line supreme leader.

Oil prices briefly shot to their highest level since 2022 a day after Iran selected Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his late father as Iran’s supreme leader. Investors saw it as a signal that Iran was digging in 10 days into the war launched by the United States and Israel.

But prices later fell and U.S. stocks rose on hopes that the war with Iran may not last much longer.

“We took a little excursion” to the Middle East “to get rid of some evil. And, I think you’ll see it’s going to be a short-term excursion,” Trump told Republican lawmakers at his golf club near Miami.

Hours later, Trump posted on social media: “If Iran does anything that stops the flow of Oil within the Strait of Hormuz, they will be hit by the United States of America TWENTY TIMES HARDER than they have been hit thus far.”

In an apparent response to Trump’s remarks published in Iranian state media, a spokesperson for the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, Ali Mohammad Naini, said “Iran will determine when the war ends.”

The war has choked off major supplies of oil and gas to world markets and sent fuel prices rising across the U.S. The fighting has also led foreigners to flee from business hubs and prompted millions to seek shelter as bombs hit military bases, government buildings, oil and water installations, hotels and at least one school.

Trump also had a call Monday with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss the war and other issues. Putin’s foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said Putin “voiced a few ideas regarding a quick political and diplomatic settlement” of the conflict following his conversations with Gulf leaders and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Khamenei, a secretive 56-year-old cleric, is only the third supreme leader in the history of the Islamic Republic. He has close ties to the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states since his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had ruled since 1989, was killed during the war’s opening salvo.

Multiple strikes shake Tehran

Dozens of explosions were heard in Tehran in what was considered the heaviest air raid on the capital since the war started Feb. 28. Iranian media did not report on damages and casualties.

Israel said Monday that it was carrying out “a wide-scale wave of strikes” on the Iranian city of Isfahan, as well as Tehran and in southern Iran. The Israeli military said it hit dozens of infrastructure sites, including the drone headquarters of the Revolutionary Guard.

Meanwhile, Israel’s military alerted the population throughout the day about incoming missiles from Iran. From Lebanon, Iran-backed Hezbollah also fired rockets into Israel on Monday.

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Trump said the United States was nearing its goal to eliminate Iran's ballistic missile stockpile and its ability to produce and launch them. The administration has offered shifting rationales and timelines since the start of the conflict.

He also talked about "building a new country," a comment that seemed to suggest the U.S. might be engaged in the building of a new Iran.

Trump likes idea of another 'internal' candidate to lead Iran

Thousands poured into a central square in the capital, Tehran, and other locations in a show of allegiance to the new supreme leader, waving flags and shouting phrases like "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

The younger Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since the war started, was long considered a potential successor — even before the killing of his 86-year-old father.

Trump told reporters that he was "disappointed" that Mojtaba Khamenei was picked and that he liked "the idea" of a leader drawn from an "internal" group of candidates, saying that worked well with Venezuela.

The younger Khamenei is seen as even less compromising than his late father. As supreme leader, he has the final say on all major policies, including Tehran's disputed nuclear program.

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

Trump told reporters the war with Iran started because that country was working on a new site for developing material for nuclear weapons to replace one bombed last year by the U.S.

Israel has already described Khamenei as a potential target. Trump said Monday it "would be inappropriate" to say whether he would be targeted.

US market seesaws over uncertainty of war

The U.S. stock market careened through a manic Monday, going from a steep early loss to a solid gain as worries turned into hope that the war with Iran may not last that long. Oil prices whipped from nearly \$120 per barrel, the highest since 2022, back toward \$90.

Iran's attacks in the Strait of Hormuz have all but stopped tankers from using the shipping lane through which a fifth of the world's oil is carried, and Iranian drones and missiles have targeted oil and gas infrastructure in major producers. Attacks on merchant ships near the strait have killed at least seven mariners, according to the International Maritime Organization.

Kamal Kharazi, foreign policy adviser to the office of the supreme leader, told CNN on Monday that Iran is prepared for a long war. He said he sees no "room for diplomacy anymore" unless economic pressure prompts other countries to intervene and stop the "aggression of Americans and Israelis against Iran."

Turkey, meanwhile, said NATO defenses had intercepted a ballistic missile that entered the country's airspace for the second time since the war started.

Arab states decry Iran's drone strikes

Saudi Arabia lashed out at Iran following a drone attack on its massive Shaybah oil field, saying Tehran would be the "biggest loser" if it continues to attack Arab states. The attacks continued Monday night with a dozen drones downed by Saudi Arabia.

In the United Arab Emirates, home to the futuristic city of Dubai, authorities said two people were wounded by shrapnel from the interception of Iranian missiles over the capital, Abu Dhabi. The Emirati Defense Ministry said 15 ballistic missiles and 18 drones were fired at the country on Monday.

Early Tuesday, the UAE said a drone attack targeted its consulate in the Kurdish region of Iraq, causing damage but no injuries. The statement from the foreign affairs ministry did not blame the attack on anyone but decried it as "a dangerous escalation and a threat to regional security and stability."

Iran also attacked Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, where the government said that a person was killed and others injured in an Iranian attack targeting a residential building in the capital, Manama.

Several U.S. diplomatic missions have ordered all but key staff to leave.

The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, at least 397 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, according to officials.

A total of seven U.S. service members have been killed.

Trump said Monday that family members of the soldiers told him during the transfer of their remains over the weekend in Dover, Delaware: "Make sure you win, sir."

## Family sues ChatGPT-maker OpenAI over school shooting in Canada

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — The parents of a girl critically wounded in a school shooting in Canada alleged in a civil lawsuit Monday that ChatGPT-maker OpenAI knew the shooter was planning a mass attack.

OpenAI has said it considered but didn't alert police about the activities of the person who months later committed one of Canada's worst school shootings in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, on Feb. 10.

OpenAI came forward to police after Jesse Van Roostelaar killed eight people and then herself last month, saying the attacker's ChatGPT account had been closed but that she evaded the ban by having a second account.

The legal claim filed in the British Columbia Supreme Court alleged that OpenAI had "specific knowledge of the shooter utilizing ChatGPT to plan a mass casualty event like the Tumbler Ridge mass shooting."

The lawsuit said OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT was used by the shooter as a trusted confidante, collaborator and ally, and it behaves willingly to assist users such as the shooter to plan a mass casualty event.

A spokeswoman from OpenAI didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment on the lawsuit.

The lawsuit said that as a result of the company's conduct Maya Gebala was shot three times at close range, with one bullet hitting her head, another her neck and the third grazing her cheek. It said she has a catastrophic brain injury that will leave her with permanent cognitive and physical disabilities.

## Men who brought explosives to NYC protest cited Islamic State as inspiration, complaint says

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two men who brought explosives to a far-right protest outside New York City's mayoral mansion said they were inspired by the Islamic State extremist group, according to a court complaint.

Emir Balat, 18, and Ibrahim Kayumi, 19, were being held without bail after a court appearance Monday on charges that include attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and using a weapon of mass destruction. Their lawyers didn't argue for bail but could do so later.

The homemade devices, which did not explode, were hurled Saturday during raucous counterprotests against an anti-Islam demonstration led by Jake Lang, a far-right activist and critic of New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a Democrat and the first Muslim to hold the office.

"Balat and Kayumi sought to incite fear and mass suffering through this alleged attempted terror attack in the backyard of an elected city official," James Barnacle, who runs the FBI's New York office, said at a news conference after the brief court session.

The defendants said nothing in court, but Kayumi smirked and looked over at Balat as the judge read part of the complaint alleging they acted in support of the Islamic State group. Balat stared ahead at the defense table.

According to the complaint, Kayumi blurted out, as he was being arrested Saturday, that "ISIS" was the reason for his conduct. Balat later told authorities that he had pledged allegiance to the extremists, and Kayumi asserted that he was affiliated with the group, the complaint said.

Officers asked Balat whether he was aiming to accomplish something akin to the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three people and wounded hundreds more.

"No, even bigger," Balat replied, according to the complaint.

Lawyer says he doesn't believe the suspects knew each other

Emir Balat's lawyer, Mehdi Essmadi, said outside court that his client is a Philadelphia-area high school senior with "complicated stuff going on" in his personal life. "There's a lot to figure out," the attorney added.

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Asked whether he believed Balat was a terrorist, the lawyer said: "I believe he's 18 and he doesn't have any idea what he's doing."

Kayumi's lawyer, Michael Arthus, pointed in court to the extensive publicity surrounding the case and asked that prosecutors avoid saying anything that could prejudice potential jurors.

No one answered the door at a home listed as belonging to one of Kayumi's relatives in Newtown, Pennsylvania. At a home where neighbors said Balat lives in nearby Langhorne, a young man declined to comment when a reporter knocked on the door.

The FBI said Monday it has conducted multiple searches in connection with the investigation, including of a Pennsylvania storage unit.

A spokesperson for Neshaminy High School, located in Langhorne, confirmed that Balat is in his senior year there. He has not attended in-person classes since enrolling in the district's virtual program this past September, according to a note sent to parents Monday by the district's superintendent.

Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said neither defendant had a criminal history. Essmidi said he didn't believe the two young men had known each other for long.

"They are not known to each other. They do not live together. They did not have friendly, family or school ties," Essmidi said. "There is no reason to believe they knew each other prior to this incident, and I don't know how well they knew each other at the time of this incident."

Meanwhile, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi commented on social media that authorities "will not allow ISIS's poisonous, anti-American ideology to threaten this nation."

No ties to Iran war, police say, as prosecutor vows 'swift justice'

Tisch said there are no indications that the attack was connected to the ongoing war in Iran.

An automated license plate reader captured the defendants entering New York City from New Jersey less than an hour before the noontime attack, according to the complaint. Kayumi's mother filed a missing person report, saying she last saw him around 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

The men's vehicle — registered to one of Balat's relatives — was discovered Sunday, a few blocks from where they were arrested. A search of the car turned up a fuse, a metal can, and a list of chemical ingredients and components that could be used to build explosives, the complaint said.

Lang's sparsely attended protest Saturday drew a far larger group of counterdemonstrators. Amid the faceoff, Balat tossed a jar-sized device that contained the explosive TATP into the crowd, the complaint said. The object also contained a fuse, plus an exterior layer of duct-taped nuts and bolts, the complaint said.

The device extinguished itself steps from police officers. According to the complaint, Balat then ran down the block and collected a second, similar device — which has yet to be tested for explosives — from Kayumi. Balat dropped it near some police officers and tried to run away, the complaint said. Police tackled Balat and soon arrested him and Kayumi.

"Violence that is meant to chill free speech, violence that is meant to keep us from assembling peaceably, will be met with swift justice," Manhattan-based U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton said at a news conference Monday.

Protester arrested on unrelated charges

The scene had grown chaotic even before the devices were thrown. Police said one person involved in the anti-Islam demonstration, Ian McGinnis, 21, was arrested after he pepper-sprayed counterprotesters.

McGinnis, of Philadelphia, was released without bond after pleading not guilty Sunday to assault and aggravated harassment in a New York court, records show. His attorney, Steven Metcalf, said Monday that McGinnis was defending himself from counterprotesters.

Three others were arrested but released without charge.

Lang, who's running for U.S. Senate in Florida, was charged with assaulting an officer and other offenses during the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. He was later freed from prison as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping act of clemency.

While Mamdani spoke to reporters Monday morning at the mayoral residence, Gracie Mansion, Lang heckled from outside the gates.

## Trump pushes GOP on voting bill, demanding an end to most mail balloting

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday he won't sign any other legislation into law until Congress passes a strict proof-of-citizenship voting bill that he says also must end Americans' ability to vote by mail, a startling demand months before the midterm elections.

Trump told House Republicans during their annual retreat at his golf club in Florida that he doesn't think they will win elections unless voting laws are toughened up to prevent fraud — even though mail ballots are popular in many states and federal law already requires that voters in national elections be U.S. citizens, with scant evidence that noncitizens ever try to vote.

The president wants to bolster the so-called SAVE America Act, which the House has already approved, and he pressed the Senate to push past its filibuster rules to send it to his desk. Voting experts have said the bill could disenfranchise some 20 million American voters who don't have birth certificates or other documents readily available, a number that would likely swell with the additional ban on mail balloting that Trump is demanding.

"I'm not going to sign anything until this is approved," Trump said, calling it his No. 1 priority.

"It'll guarantee the midterms," he said. "If you don't get it, big trouble."

Voting rights groups sound alarms

The president's determination to impose election changes has sounded alarms from voting rights groups as the Trump administration reaches deep into the realm of the states, which, under the Constitution, are in charge of election ballots and procedures in the U.S.

It also comes as his Republican Party, which narrowly controls Congress, faces headwinds this fall, its majorities at risk. Lawmakers have other priorities, including the more immediate need to fund the Department of Homeland Security as airport workers and others are going without paychecks amid the fight in Congress over the agency's immigration and deportation operations.

Democrats largely oppose Trump's efforts to seize more control over elections, and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump's demands would gridlock the chamber.

"This is what he does — he's a thug, he's a bully," said Schumer of New York.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, who is close with Trump, appeared alongside the president on the stage with other GOP leaders applauding the bill.

But Senate Majority Leader John Thune has said using the so-called "talking filibuster" to pass the voting bill, as Trump and others propose, isn't as easy as it seems.

"We can't find a piece of legislation in history that's been passed that way," Thune told reporters.

Trump has said even if it takes six months, he wants the bill approved before any others will be signed into law.

Trump's grievances over his 2020 defeat

The president continues to claim that he was not the loser in the 2020 election and his Justice Department is digging into his concerns. The FBI took the highly unusual move of seizing ballots and elections materials in Georgia and, most recently, in Arizona.

Trump wants the GOP-led Congress to build on the Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE America Act, with a new package, which he calls the "best of Trump."

Already, the bill, as approved by the House, would require voters to present proof of citizenship with a passport or birth certificate when they register to vote. They would also have to show a photo ID when they cast ballots, as many states already require.

Trump would add one main provision: to ban mail-in ballots, which are used by many states nationwide. He would make exceptions for voters who are disabled, in the military, or in other situations.

The president believes mail-in ballots are fraudulent, but voting groups have long championed the practice as helping to make it easier for Americans to vote.

The president also wants to tack on two unrelated provisions around transgender rights issues — one

that would ban those born as men from playing in women's sports and another to block sex reassignment surgeries on some minors.

Trump also mentioned the possibility of adding an unrelated foreign surveillance bill, known as FISA, which is up for an extension and is often a difficult political matter in Congress.

"Let's go for the gold," he told the House Republicans at his resort in Doral.

A coalition of Trump supporters has been pushing versions of the SAVE America Act, with its proof of citizenship provisions a longtime goal of the president's MAGA coalition. Trump also warned the House GOP that their existing version of the bill is inadequate. "We're not going to sign a watered-down version," he said.

GOP senators mixed over filibuster

Republican senators plan to discuss how to move forward at their own private meetings this week. So far, there is no consensus, with some wanting to use a talking filibuster to pass the voting bill and others strongly against.

Thune has warned that opening the Senate to endless debate, as would happen under the talking filibuster proposal, would also open the floor to endless amendments that could change the bill in ways that could divide the Republicans.

But other senators say the time has come to force the issue, and push past Democrats who oppose the bill.

## **Alexander brothers are convicted of sex trafficking in case that shocked the real estate world**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Three brothers, including two of the nation's most successful luxury real estate brokers, were convicted of sex trafficking Monday after a five-week trial over accusations that they drugged and raped scores of women they had dazzled with their wealth and opulent lifestyle.

The verdict came after 11 women testified in Manhattan federal court they were sexually assaulted by one or more of the brothers: twins Oren and Alon Alexander, 38, and Tal Alexander, 39. All three shook their heads as the jury foreperson said "guilty" 19 straight times, a powerful reckoning that could put them behind bars for the rest of their lives.

Tal Alexander dropped his head into his crossed arms. Their stunned parents sat in the gallery behind them. Alon Alexander's wife shielded her face with her hand and appeared to fight back tears.

Judge Valerie E. Caproni set sentencing for Aug. 6. The brothers, jailed since their 2024 arrests, will appeal the verdict, their lawyers said.

"We believe in our clients' innocence and we're not going to stop fighting until we prevail, and we believe that we will one day prevail," defense lawyer Marc Agnifilo said outside the courthouse.

U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton lauded the verdict as vindication for victims of crimes that often go unreported and unpunished.

"The truth is sex trafficking and other federal sex offenses are present in many walks of life and we have not done enough to root it out," Clayton said in a statement.

Dozens of women say they were drugged and assaulted

The verdict represented a spectacular fall for Oren and Tal Alexander, once known as real estate's "A Team" for their high-ticket sales and celebrity clientele. After smashing sales records at industry powerhouse Douglas Elliman, the brothers started their own firm. Alon Alexander ran their family's private security company.

Victims testified that they met the brothers at nightclubs, parties and on dating apps, and were attacked after accepting their invitations to all-expense paid getaways to the Hamptons; Aspen, Colorado; and a Caribbean cruise. More than 60 women say they were raped by one or more of the brothers, according to prosecutors.

Defense lawyers suggested the accusers had faulty memories or were hoping to cash in on the brothers' fortunes. The brothers were womanizers, their lawyers conceded. But they insisted any sex was consensual.

In addition to the top charges, Alon and Tal Alexander were also convicted of sex trafficking of a minor while Alon and Oren Alexander were convicted of aggravated sexual abuse by force or intoxicant and sexual abuse of a physically incapacitated person. Oren Alexander was also convicted of sexually exploiting a minor after prosecutors showed the jury a video he recorded of himself appearing to assault a drugged 17-year-old.

Lawsuits expose an open secret in the real estate world

Besides the criminal case, the brothers have faced about two dozen lawsuits over the last two years, including one filed last week in which Tracy Tutor, a star of Bravo's "Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles," alleges Oren Alexander drugged and assaulted her while she was in New York City for a real estate event.

When the first of the lawsuits were filed, multiple women came forward claiming they had also been assaulted, and that the brothers' misconduct had been an open secret in the real estate world. The government took notice and opened a criminal case.

During the trial, many women who testified said they believed the brothers had spiked their drinks. Some described feeling like they'd lost control of their bodies.

One woman testified that she met the brothers in 2012 at a party at actor Zac Efron's Manhattan apartment. She said she had almost no interaction with the actor, who was not accused of any misdeeds, and went to a nightclub later in the night before waking up naked with a nude Alon Alexander standing over her.

"I don't want to have sex with you," she testified telling him. "Haha, you already did," she recalled him snapping back as he "laughed in my face."

Testimony challenges claim that money drove allegations

Prosecutors pushed back against the idea that the accusers were hoping to cash in on lawsuits. Only two have lawsuits pending, prosecutor Elizabeth Espinosa told jurors, and both are wealthy.

One woman who testified said she was raped by Alon Alexander in Aspen, Colorado, in 2017, when she was 17. She said she was the daughter of a billionaire.

"I don't want their money. I just don't want them to have it," she told jurors.

Lindsey Acree, an artist and gallery owner, testified she was raped by Tal Alexander and another man at a home in the Hamptons in 2011 after taking a drink that left her feeling paralyzed.

The woman said she sued last year even though she will "never need their money" because the Alexanders "kept calling us gold diggers, shake down artists, con artists."

"If there's a kid with a stick who keeps hitting people, you take their stick away," she told the jury. "Money is their stick, so you take it away so they can't hurt people anymore."

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they choose to come forward publicly, as Acree and Tutor have done.

## Man who helped recruit players into a sprawling NCAA basketball point-shaving scheme pleads guilty

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

One of the so-called fixers in a sprawling betting scheme that allegedly raked in millions of dollars off of big bets on rigged NCAA basketball games pleaded guilty Monday.

Jalen Smith appeared in federal court in Philadelphia and pleaded guilty to wire fraud and bribery charges, becoming the first of 26 people charged in the scheme to formally do so. It came a week before the start of March Madness, in which bettors will wager billions legally — and illegally — on the 68 college basketball teams in the tournament.

Smith, of Charlotte, North Carolina, trained and developed local basketball players for professional scouting combines and used those connections with players when he became part of the scheme, according to prosecutors.

The charges against Smith and 25 others were unsealed in January. Smith's lawyer, Rocco Cipparone,

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said in an interview that Smith pleaded guilty to get the matter behind him, serve whatever sentence he'll be given and "move forward in his life in a positive direction."

Smith had begun talking to prosecutors about a guilty plea well before he was formally charged, and the possibility that others in the case might plead guilty didn't have any impact on his decision making, Cipparone said.

Besides the fixers who recruited players and placed bets, the charges targeted 17 former college basketball players and four other players who were active with their college teams this season.

More than a dozen players tried to fix games as recently as last season and some helped recruit other players, federal prosecutors said.

Two of the players charged were banned by the NCAA after a separate point-shaving investigation. One of the two, former University of New Orleans player Dae Dae Hunter, said on ABC's "Good Morning America" that he participated in point-shaving to get money to care for his child.

It is the latest gambling scandal to hit the sports world since a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court decision unleashed a meteoric rise in legal sports betting.

Smith was active in helping fix games in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 seasons, placing bets and recruiting players with the promise of a big payment in exchange for purposefully underperforming during a game, prosecutors said.

The fixers would then bet against the players' teams in those games, defrauding sportsbooks and other bettors, authorities said.

Smith often traveled to meet players to deliver cash payments by hand, prosecutors said. In one case, Smith traveled to Louisiana to arrange the delivery of about \$32,000 in cash to two of the players charged in the scheme, prosecutors said.

Smith also pleaded guilty to a separate weapons charge, stemming from an FBI search of Smith's bedroom at a house in North Carolina last May where agents found a loaded handgun in a hamper underneath some clothing.

Smith was prohibited from possessing the weapon as a condition of a drug conviction in 2018, and told agents that he had bought it from a man outside a sneaker store in Charlotte, the plea agreement said. Agents later found that it had been reported stolen.

The point-shaving scheme began with two games in the Chinese Basketball Association in 2023, according to the indictment. Successful there, fixers recruited Smith and two other fixers and moved on to rigging NCAA games, and the last game they fixed was in January 2025, it said.

Their scheme grew to involve more than 39 players on more than 17 different NCAA Division I men's basketball teams, who then rigged and attempted to rig more than 29 games, prosecutors said.

They wagered millions of dollars, raking in "substantial proceeds" for themselves, and paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to players in bribes, prosecutors said. Payments to players typically ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000 per game, they said.

Prosecutors named more than 40 schools where games were allegedly targeted by the scheme. Those included Tulane University and DePaul University.

Rigged games included major conferences and some playoffs, including the first round of the Horizon League championship and the second round of the Southland Conference championship, prosecutors said.

Players often recruited teammates to cooperate by playing badly, sitting out or keeping the ball away from players who weren't in on the scheme to prevent them from scoring. Sometimes the attempted fix failed, meaning the fixers lost their bets, prosecutors said.

## **New Mexico prosecutors launch search of Jeffrey Epstein's secluded former Zorro Ranch**

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — State investigators began searching a secluded ranch in New Mexico on Monday where financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein once entertained guests amid allegations that the property may have been used for sexual abuse and sex trafficking of young women.

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The office of state Attorney General Raúl Torrez announced that the search was being done with the cooperation of the current ranch owners.

Torrez last month reopened an investigation of the ranch. New Mexico's initial case was closed in 2019 at the request of federal prosecutors in New York, and state prosecutors say now that "revelations outlined in the previously sealed FBI files warrant further examination."

Epstein purchased the sprawling Zorro Ranch in Stanley, New Mexico, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Santa Fe, in 1993 from former Democratic Gov. Bruce King and built a hilltop mansion with a private runway.

The property was sold by Epstein's estate in 2023 — with proceeds going toward creditors — to the family of Don Huffines, a candidate in Texas for state comptroller who won the Republican primary last week.

"The New Mexico Department of Justice appreciates the cooperation of the current property owners," the agency said in a statement. Prosecutors "will continue to keep the public appropriately informed, support the survivors, and follow the facts wherever they lead."

Additionally, New Mexico state legislators have established a new commission to look into past activities at the ranch.

Epstein killed himself in a Manhattan jail while awaiting trial in 2019 on charges that he sexually abused and trafficked dozens of underage girls.

Epstein never faced charges in New Mexico, but the state attorney general's office in 2019 confirmed that it had interviewed possible victims who visited Epstein's ranch.

## Trump says Vance was 'philosophically' different on Iran while downplaying split

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

DORAL, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump said his vice president, JD Vance, was "philosophically a little bit different than me" at the outset of the war in Iran even as he dismissed the notion of a disagreement between the two.

Speaking to reporters on Monday at his golf club in Doral, Florida, the president said Vance was "maybe less enthusiastic about going" but insisted that his decision to launch airstrikes in Iran alongside Israel was necessary.

"I felt it was something we had to do," Trump said. "I didn't feel we had a choice."

Heading into a challenging election year, the war in Iran has stoked tension among Republicans, with some expressing reservations about how the operation fits into the "America First," isolationist-leaning movement the party has embraced during the Trump era.

Few have embodied that movement as prominently as Vance, who over the course of a decade rose from an author to U.S. senator and ultimately vice president. He's now considered a top contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 2028, giving him the opportunity to carry Trump's movement into the future.

Vance reinforces Trump's vision

Alongside his political rise, Vance, a former Marine, has often reinforced Trump's vision of an America more focused on solving problems at home than intervening in conflicts abroad. In a 2023 op-ed in The Wall Street Journal that's garnered renewed attention after the Iran strikes, Vance wrote that Trump has his support because "I know he won't recklessly send Americans to fight overseas."

On the eve of the strikes, Vance told The Washington Post there was "no chance" that the U.S. would become involved in a drawn-out war as it did in Iraq.

Since then, the administration has provided conflicting messages about how long the war would last. Trump has said it could go on "as long as necessary." Amid intensifying economic turmoil on Monday, Trump described the war as a "short-term excursion."

If Vance has the reservations Trump hinted at on Monday, he has been publicly supportive of the president since the strikes began. In a Fox News interview with Jesse Watters, Vance rejected comparisons of

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the Iran operation to earlier wars, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"If you think back to Afghanistan, 20 years of mission creep, 20 years (of) not having a clear objective and 20 years (of) the United States trying to bring liberal democracy to Afghanistan," Vance said at the time. "Iraq was a little bit shorter, but we were still in that country for nearly a decade with no clear mission, no clear definition."

"What's so different about this, Jesse," Vance added, "is that the president has clearly defined what he wants to accomplish."

On Monday evening, Vance was at Dover Air Force Base to attend the dignified transfer for Sgt. Benjamin Pennington, the seventh U.S. service member to die in combat during the Iran war.

Trump has long maintained a hawkish Iran outlook

When it comes to Iran, Trump, over his five years in the White House, and long before, has shown a steadiness in his hawkish views toward Tehran, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a research fellow focused on Iran security issues at the Foundation for Defense Democracies.

The president, in his first term, moved to end a landmark Iran nuclear deal brokered by the Obama administration, in the face of strong objections from European allies. Later in his first term, he boasted of serving up "American justice" by ordering a drone strike to take out Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, while jeering Democratic leaders for questioning his decision to carry out the attack without first consulting Congress.

At the time, the killing of Soleimani, the Quds Force commander and arguably the most powerful figure in Iran after the supreme leader, was widely considered the most provocative U.S. military action in the Middle East in years, marking a severe escalation in tensions with Tehran.

Trump's deep skepticism toward the Islamic Republic's cleric leadership dates back to his days as a young New York real estate developer when he publicly urged military intervention during the Iran hostage crisis.

"There's this narrative with Trump on Iran that Bibi's in his ear," said Taleblu, referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "Or that Vance is in his ear. But Trump has had a fundamental view and personal interest on Iran for years."

And on Monday, Trump insisted there was no disagreement between him and Vance.

"We get along very well on this," Trump said.

## Justice Department and Live Nation reach settlement over illegal monopoly case

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department touted a tentative settlement of its antitrust lawsuit against Ticketmaster and parent company Live Nation Entertainment on Monday as a victory for consumers that would end an illegal monopoly over live events in America, but over two dozen states planned to keep fighting the companies in court.

The negotiations leading up to the agreement drew criticism from the judge who would have to approve any deal as soon as a government lawyer revealed it in Manhattan federal court, where an antitrust trial began last week. Throughout the day, various state attorneys general issued statements criticizing the agreement.

A "term sheet" spelling out details of the pact said Live Nation had agreed to let venues reach deals that would let a certain portion of tickets be sold by entities other than Ticketmaster. It also would let up to 50% of all tickets to be sold through any ticketing marketplace at amphitheaters that Live Nation owns, operates or controls.

The term sheet also called for Ticketmaster to cap its service fees at those amphitheaters at 15% and to divest ownership or control of 13 amphitheaters, including venues in Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Syracuse, New York, and Austin, Texas. It said Live Nation will create a \$280 million settlement fund to settle claims or pay civil penalties to states.

The settlement includes an eight-year extension of the company's consent decree with the Justice De-

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partment, enabling continuing oversight.

Deal draws praise from Justice Department official but criticism from states

A senior Justice Department official spoke effusively of the looming settlement on the condition of anonymity Monday during a phone call with journalists under terms set by the department to release some information about the proposed settlement. At least 10 states were expected to join the deal, the official said.

The official called it a "win-win for everybody," bringing immediate relief to consumers and protecting venues from retaliation when they choose Live Nation's competitors to handle tickets or promote events.

In a statement, Live Nation Entertainment said it was pleased with a settlement that will let other promoters have increased access to multiple markets.

"We have never relied on exclusivity to drive our ticketing business, it has simply been the result of having the best products, services and people in the industry," said Michael Rapino, president and CEO of Live Nation.

The process leading to the deal brought immediate criticism from Manhattan Judge Arun Subramanian, who called it "entirely unacceptable" that nobody told him what was going on until late Sunday, even after the term sheet was signed Thursday.

States say the deal won't break up a monopoly

New York Attorney General Letitia James said in a statement that the pact "fails to address the monopoly at the center of this case."

"My attorney general colleagues and I have a strong case against Live Nation, and we will continue our lawsuit," James said.

A release containing her statements said other states rejecting the settlement included Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming and the District of Columbia.

North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson called the agreement "a terrible deal" that was hidden from the states until the last minute.

"This case is about Live Nation and Ticketmaster harming consumers, trapping artists, and driving up ticket prices. We will see them back in court, shortly," he said.

Washington State Attorney General Nick Brown said the bipartisan group of state attorneys general who joined the Justice Department's lawsuit in May 2024 would continue because the "case against Live Nation is strong, and the state coalition is committed to holding the company accountable for its illegal behavior, protecting consumers and restoring competition to this market."

A \$280 million fund to pay states is criticized as too little

Stephen Parker, executive director of the National Independent Venue Association, said in a statement that the \$280 million settlement fund represented about four days of Live Nation's 2025 revenue.

"They could potentially make it back by this Friday," Parker said, speaking for thousands of independent venues, festivals and promoters nationwide.

"The reported settlement does not appear to include any specific and explicit protections for fans, artists, or independent venues and festivals," he said, calling the agreement "a failure of the justice system."

Adam Gitlin, a lawyer for the District of Columbia, told Subramanian that several states had not decided what they would do, including Florida, Louisiana and Texas, which he said had expressed "serious concerns" about the deal.

In court, Subramanian told jurors of the agreement, saying the trial would resume next week with some states pressing the claims first brought under President Joe Biden's administration in 2024.

The settlement also drew criticism from U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat and member of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law. She said the only way to end Live Nation's monopoly is to break up the company.

"The Justice Department's previous agreements with Live Nation failed because they did not change

its incentives to enrich itself over fans, artists, and venues. Today's settlement appears to be more of the same," she said in a statement.

She praised states for opposing the deal and said it was "troubling" that the deal was announced a month after the head of the Justice Department's antitrust division was ousted.

Trial set to resume next week for states unwilling to settle

Now, states will be left to press claims that Live Nation was squelching competition and driving up prices for fans through threats, retaliation and other tactics to "suffocate the competition" by controlling virtually every aspect of the industry, from concert promotion to ticketing.

The states accuse Live Nation of engaging in a slew of practices to maintain a stranglehold over the live music scene. They say the company uses long-term contracts to keep venues from choosing rival ticketers, blocking venues from using multiple ticket sellers and threatening venues that they could lose money and fans if they don't choose Ticketmaster.

Live Nation has maintained that artists and teams set prices and decide how tickets are sold.

Ticketmaster and Live Nation Entertainment, based in Beverly Hills, California, have a long history of clashes with major artists and their fans, including Taylor Swift and Bruce Springsteen.

Ticketmaster, which was established in 1976 and merged with Live Nation in 2010, is the world's largest ticket seller across live music, sports, theater and more.

## **AI company Anthropic sues Trump administration seeking to undo 'supply chain risk' designation**

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Artificial intelligence company Anthropic is suing to stop the Trump administration from enforcing what it calls an "unlawful campaign of retaliation" over its refusal to allow unrestricted military use of its technology.

Anthropic asked federal courts on Monday to reverse the Pentagon's decision last week to designate the artificial intelligence company a "supply chain risk." The company also seeks to undo President Donald Trump's order directing federal employees to stop using its AI chatbot Claude.

The legal challenge intensifies an unusually public dispute over how AI can be used in warfare and mass surveillance — one that has also dragged in Anthropic's tech industry rivals, particularly ChatGPT maker OpenAI, which made its own deal to work with the Pentagon just hours after the government punished Anthropic for its stance.

Anthropic filed two separate lawsuits Monday, one in California federal court and another in the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., each challenging different aspects of the government's actions against the San Francisco-based company.

"These actions are unprecedented and unlawful," Anthropic's lawsuit says. "The Constitution does not allow the government to wield its enormous power to punish a company for its protected speech. No federal statute authorizes the actions taken here. Anthropic turns to the judiciary as a last resort to vindicate its rights and halt the Executive's unlawful campaign of retaliation."

The Defense Department declined to comment Monday, citing a policy of not commenting on matters in litigation.

Anthropic said it sought to restrict its technology from being used for mass surveillance of Americans and fully autonomous weapons. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and other high-ranking officials publicly insisted the company must accept "all lawful" uses of Claude, threatened punishment if Anthropic did not comply and condemned the firm and its CEO Dario Amodei on social media.

Designating the company a supply chain risk cuts off Anthropic's defense work using an authority that was designed to prevent foreign adversaries from harming national security systems. It was the first time the federal government is known to have used the designation against a U.S. company. Hegseth said in a March 4 letter to Anthropic that it was "necessary to protect national security," according to Anthropic's lawsuit.

Trump also said he would order federal agencies to stop using Claude, though he gave the Pentagon

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six months to phase out a product that's deeply embedded in classified military systems, including those used in the Iran war.

Anthropic's lawsuit also names other federal agencies, including the departments of Treasury and State, after agency officials ordered employees to stop using Claude.

Anthropic makes several strong First Amendment and due process arguments in a case that has "escalated beyond comprehension," said Michael Pastor, a professor at New York Law School who previously worked as a New York City general counsel helping to craft its technology contracts.

"I've never seen a case like this," Pastor said. "It would never have struck our minds that, when we were having difficulty in a negotiation, we would threaten the company essentially with destruction."

Even as it fights the Pentagon's actions, Anthropic has sought to convince businesses and other government agencies that the Trump administration's supply chain risk designation is a narrow one that only affects military contractors when they are using Claude in work for the Department of Defense.

Making that distinction clear is crucial for the privately held Anthropic because most of its projected \$14 billion in revenue this year comes from businesses and government agencies that are using Claude for computer coding and other tasks. More than 500 customers are paying Anthropic at least \$1 million annually for Claude, according to a recent investment announcement that valued the company at \$380 billion.

Anthropic said in a statement Monday that "seeking judicial review does not change our longstanding commitment to harnessing AI to protect our national security, but this is a necessary step to protect our business, our customers, and our partners."

The lawsuit positions AI safety and "positive outcomes for humanity" as critical to Anthropic's mission since its founding in 2021 by Amodei and six other former OpenAI employees.

Its usage policy always prohibited "lethal autonomous warfare without human oversight and surveillance of Americans en masse," the company said in its lawsuit. Anthropic said it has never tested Claude on those applications and doesn't have the confidence its products could "function reliably or safely if used to support lethal autonomous warfare."

At the same time, it has enabled the military to use Claude in ways that civilians could not, including military operations and in analyzing "lawfully collected foreign intelligence information."

Until recently, Anthropic was the only of its tech industry peers approved to supply its AI model to classified military systems. The dispute has led the Pentagon to look to shift Claude's work to Google's Gemini, OpenAI's ChatGPT and Elon Musk's Grok.

Anthropic's lawsuit alleges the Trump administration's actions are impugning its reputation, "jeopardizing hundreds of millions of dollars" in contracts with other businesses and attempting to "destroy the economic value created by one of the world's fastest-growing private companies."

Conversely, the fight has boosted Anthropic's reputation among some customers and tech workers who sided with the company's refusal to budge to pressure from the Trump administration. Amodei's moral stance was further distinguished when his bitter rival, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, sought to replace the Pentagon's Claude with ChatGPT in a move Altman later admitted was rushed and seemed opportunistic.

Consumer downloads of Claude surged, lifting its popularity for the first time over better-known ChatGPT and Gemini.

How companies set guardrails also continues to have repercussions in the competition to retain AI industry talent. OpenAI's head of robotics, Caitlin Kalinowski, resigned over OpenAI's Pentagon deal.

"This wasn't an easy call," Kalinowski wrote on social media over the weekend. "AI has an important role in national security. But surveillance of Americans without judicial oversight and lethal autonomy without human authorization are lines that deserved more deliberation than they got."

Another group of more than 30 leading AI developers at OpenAI and Google, including Google's chief scientist and AI research division head Jeff Dean, filed a legal brief Monday supporting Anthropic.

"National security is not served by reckless designations of the military's American technology partners as a 'supply chain risk' or the suppression of public discourse on AI safety," said the filing from the workers who said they were acting in their personal capacities.

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## US stocks erase a big early loss and rise after oil prices whip from nearly \$120 back below \$90

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market careened through a manic Monday, going from a steep early loss to a solid gain as worries turned into hope that the war with Iran may not last that long. Oil prices whipped from nearly \$120 per barrel, their highest since 2022, back below \$90.

The S&P 500 dropped as much as 1.5% in the morning before flipping to a gain of 0.8%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average clawed back a plunge of nearly 900 points to rise 239 points, or 0.5%, while the Nasdaq composite climbed 1.4%.

They're the latest hour-to-hour swings to pummel financial markets because of the uncertainty about just how high oil prices will go and how long they will stay there because of disruptions to the energy industry in the Middle East. Markets made their remarkable reversals during the last hour of Wall Street's trading after President Donald Trump told CBS News that he thinks "the war is very complete, pretty much."

That calmed worries that had built earlier in the morning, when the price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, briefly touched \$119.50. It hadn't been that expensive since the summer of 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine.

If oil prices stay very high for very long, households' budgets already stretched by high inflation could break under the pressure. Companies, meanwhile, would see their own bills jump for fuel and to stock items on their store shelves or in their data warehouses. It all raises the possibility of a worst-case scenario for the global economy, "stagflation," where growth stagnates and inflation remains high.

Concerns have focused in particular on the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway off Iran's coast that a fifth of the world's oil sails through on a typical day. Iran had earlier threatened to set fire to ships sailing the strait.

If the strait remains closed for only a few weeks, the price of oil could push to \$150 per barrel or higher, according to oil and gas strategists at Macquarie Research.

But oil prices pared their gains through the day, initially on talk that seven of the world's largest economies could coordinate moves to push back on the spikes. They then slid sharply after CBS News said Trump said of Iran that "if you look, they have nothing left. There's nothing left in a military sense."

Trump also added that when it comes to the Strait of Hormuz, he's "thinking about taking it over," according to CBS.

A barrel of Brent crude pulled back to settle at \$98.96 in the afternoon and then kept falling afterward below \$90. A barrel of benchmark U.S. crude touched \$119.48 during the morning, then pulled back to settle at \$94.77 and then sank toward \$85.

The U.S. stock market has a history of bouncing back relatively quickly from past military conflicts, as long as oil prices don't stay too high for too long. Some professional investors continue to suggest that drops in prices for stocks could ultimately offer opportunities to buy them at cheaper levels before they rise again.

"We continue to believe that the current acute shortage of oil will be reversed in the coming months as new supply comes online and oil should drop significantly," according to Sameer Samana, head of global equities and real assets at Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

Even with all the recent swings in the market, the S&P 500 index that sits at the heart of many 401(k) accounts is still within 3% of its record set in January.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 55.97 points to 6,795.99. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 239.25 to 47,740.80, and the Nasdaq composite gained 308.27 to 22,695.95.

To be sure, prices could reverse again in the coming days given all the uncertainties about the war. That's what happened through the huge swings that rocked Wall Street last week.

In stock markets abroad, where economies are more dependent on the import of oil and natural gas, stocks fell sharply before Trump's comments were published. South Korea's Kospi sank 6%, Japan's Nikkei 225 tumbled 5.2% and France's CAC 40 dropped 1%.

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Trump's comments came after he said late Sunday that high oil prices at the moment were worth the cost. "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," he said in a posting on his social media network.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.10% from 4.15% late Friday.

Worries about high inflation and oil prices are pushing upward on Treasury yields, and the 10-year yield briefly rose above 4.20% early Monday.

But worries about a potentially slowing economy are pulling downward at the same time. On Friday, a discouragingly weak report on the U.S. job market showed that employers cut more jobs last month than they added.

Yields then slid late in the day when oil prices eased.

## Oil prices swing wildly as Iran war threatens transport routes and production across Middle East

By ALEX VEIGA, ELAINE KURTENBACH and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writers

The widening Iran war has upended oil production and shipping across the Middle East, straining energy supplies worldwide.

Those disruptions caused oil to spike Monday, only for it to swiftly fall back after President Donald Trump suggested the war could be near an end.

The price of Brent crude, the international benchmark, briefly surged to \$119.50 per barrel on Monday — its highest level since the summer after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. West Texas Intermediate, which is produced in the U.S., also soared to \$119.48 per barrel at one point. But those prices fell to under \$90 late Monday, as markets made significant reversals after Trump told CBS News he thinks "the war is very complete."

Still, that's much higher than the roughly \$70 a barrel crude was selling for before the U.S. and Israel launched the war against Iran on Feb. 28.

The conflict, now in its second week, is ensnaring countries and infrastructure critical to the production and transportation of oil and gas worldwide. And on Monday, Iran named Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his late father as supreme leader — a new sign of defiance from the country's leaders as the U.S. and Israel continue heavy bombardment.

Fears of attacks have all but stopped tanker traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway off Iran's coast where a fifth of the world's oil sails through on a typical day. Major oil producers in the region like Iraq, Kuwait and the UAE have cut production due to export constraints because they are running out of storage space. Iran, Israel and the U.S. have all struck oil and gas facilities since the war started, worsening supply concerns.

"In economic terms, this is already the largest oil supply shock ever," said Nicholas Mulder, an assistant professor of history who studies the economic impacts of wars at Cornell University. As Gulf producers reduce output and shut down production, he explained, "we are seeing roughly three to four times as many barrels of oil lost as during the 1973 and 1979 oil crises."

The war's toll on civilian targets and the energy sector grew over the weekend, notably as oil depots in Tehran smoldered following Sunday strikes by Israel. Meanwhile, across the Persian Gulf, 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 complex ablaze. The legal declaration releases the company of contractual obligations because of extraordinary circumstances.

And the war has disrupted critical supply chains. 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.

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Some energy experts warn of drawn-out ramifications.

Jim Burkhard, vice president and global head of crude oil research at S&P Global Energy, pointed particularly to rising production cuts and storage constraints — noting that the crisis had evolved past a solely transportation issue, and that restoring outputs will be “a massive technical exercise that could last weeks or more.”

And even higher oil prices could arrive in the near future. If the Strait of Hormuz, in particular, remains closed for only a few weeks, oil and gas strategists at Macquarie Research said the price of crude could push to a \$150 per barrel or higher. That would top previous peaks of around \$147 reached just ahead of the 2008 financial crisis.

Others, however, expect disruptions to be more short-lived. Oxford Economics researchers predict prices will fall to an average of \$80 a barrel for the quarter, but noted Monday that the “risk of a more prolonged crisis has clearly increased.”

In response to soaring prices, there has also been discussions of dipping into emergency oil stockpiles in the U.S. and elsewhere. But on Monday, the Group of Seven major industrialized powers said it had decided against using their strategic reserves, at least for now.

“We’re not there yet,” French Finance Minister Roland Lescure said after chairing a meeting of his G7 counterparts. Still, he told reporters in Brussels that the group was “ready to take necessary and coordinated steps in order to stabilize markets, such as strategic stockpiling.”

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

Yet the surge in costs for oil and natural gas is still pushing fuel prices higher, cascading through a range of industries — impacting anything from jet fuel for airplanes and car gas prices, to household energy bills.

Experts like Burkhard note that Asian economies 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.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung also warned 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.

But price hikes are spreading worldwide. Higher energy costs can push overall inflation higher, straining household budgets and denting the consumer spending that is the dominant engine behind some big economies, including the U.S. Those worries have spilled into financial markets, pulling share prices sharply lower since the war began.

The U.S. is now a net exporter of oil, so it will “suffer less from a rally in Brent and WTI above \$100” than Europe or Asia, FxPro chief market analyst Alex Kuptsikevich noted Monday. Still, he stressed past rapid surges in oil prices have contributed to U.S. recessions.

Gas prices have already climbed for American drivers. On Monday, the average U.S. price of a gallon of regular gasoline rose to \$3.48, up nearly 50 cents from a week earlier, according to AAA motor club. Diesel, used heavily in shipping, sold for about \$4.66 a gallon, a weekly increase of more than 80 cents.

## Ohio State University’s president resigns after reporting ‘inappropriate relationship’

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio State University is investigating after President Walter “Ted” Carter Jr. resigned abruptly over the weekend following the disclosure of “an inappropriate relationship” with a woman seeking public resources for her personal business, the university said Monday.

Carter, 66, said in a statement that he had resigned voluntarily after informing the university’s board of

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trustees of his error. He did not elaborate on the nature of the relationship and whether it was romantic; his statement indicated that he and his wife, Lynda, are still a couple.

"For personal reasons, I have made the difficult decision to resign from my role as president of The Ohio State University," he said. "I disclosed to the board of trustees that I made a mistake in allowing inappropriate access to Ohio State leadership."

Board Chair John Zeiger accepted Carter's resignation in a letter dated Sunday, a day after trustees held a private executive session. Spokesperson Ben Johnson said Carter was not present at the session but that trustees were aware of the situation before they met.

"The Board was surprised and disappointed to learn of this matter and takes the situation and its potential impact on the university very seriously," Zeiger wrote. "We respect your decision and appreciate your cooperation in supporting an orderly leadership transition."

The board had been pleased with Carter's work overall. Trustees awarded him a more than \$50,000 merit raise in August on top of his \$1.1 million annual salary, as well as a nearly \$400,000 bonus. His contract was supposed to run through 2028. Ohio State presidents also are provided residency at a roughly \$3.6 million mansion in a tony Columbus suburb.

Johnson said that the university has opened an investigation into Carter's impropriety, as it also works to put in place a leadership transition plan. The latter could be detailed as soon as this week, he said.

In the absence of its president, the university's daily operations will fall to members of Carter's former cabinet, Johnson said, which includes a chief of staff, two executive vice presidents and seven senior vice presidents. In the event of an emergency, the school's public safety professionals would take direct action, which is always the case.

Ohio State is the nation's sixth-largest university, with more than 60,000 students, over 600,000 living alumni and a highly ranked football team and medical center. Carter oversaw a fiscal year 2026 budget totaling \$11.5 billion in revenues and \$10.9 billion in expenditures — although it was not clear that the "resources" to which he availed the woman were monetary.

The university brought Carter on board in 2023 from the University of Nebraska system. He is also a former superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy and a retired vice admiral who attended the Navy Fighter Weapons School, known as Top Gun. He holds the national record for carrier-arrested landings with over 2,000 mishap-free touchdowns.

He filled a vacancy at Ohio State left by the mid-contract resignation of President Kristina Johnson, which went largely unexplained. The engineer and former undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Energy had been chancellor of New York's public university system before she joined the Buckeyes as president in 2020, succeeding President Michael Drake.

Jennifer Tisone Price, executive director of the Ohio conference of the American Association of University Professors, said Ohio State students, faculty and staff deserve better.

"This is OSU's third president since 2020," she said in a statement. "If the university wants to do better with the next one, it must have a transparent hiring process that honors shared governance which includes the input from faculty. Shared governance isn't just a bureaucratic nicety. It's how universities stay honest."

## **White House says it fired NTSB member over misconduct but Todd Inman denies the allegations**

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

The White House said it fired a National Transportation Safety Board member after reports of drinking on the job and harassing staff, but Todd Inman flatly denied the allegations Monday and said he plans to fight back.

Inman revealed Sunday that he had been fired on Friday without explanation, though his term on the board was supposed to continue through the end of 2027. President Donald Trump's administration said Monday that it believes the firing is justified.

"The White House lawfully removed Todd Inman from the NTSB after receiving highly concerning reports

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of inappropriate alcohol use on the job, harassment of staff, misuse of government resources, and failure to attend at least half of NTSB meetings," White House spokesman Kush Desai said. "The Trump administration remains committed to maintaining safety and security for Americans in the air and on the ground."

Inman said Monday that he hadn't initially planned to sue over his firing, but now says, "I look forward to defending my reputation through all legal means possible."

"I categorically deny the allegations made in the White House statement. It has become increasingly obvious this action was a political hit job," said Inman, a Republican who was appointed in March 2024 during former President Joe Biden's administration.

After Inman's firing and the unexpected dismissal in May of Vice Chair Alvin Brown, a Democrat appointed by Biden, the NTSB currently lists only three members on its website. But the U.S. Senate recently confirmed American Airlines executive John DeLeeuw, and he will become the fourth member of the board that investigates major crashes of planes, trains and automobiles as well as pipeline incidents. The NTSB is currently investigating more than 1,000 cases and will make recommendations on how to prevent similar tragedies when it releases its final reports.

"President Trump has made clear that restoring an accountable government workforce is a top priority of his Administration. The NTSB has upheld this standard since we were established in 1967," a spokesman for the agency said in a statement. "The NTSB's workforce upholds the highest professional standards, is a responsible guardian of public resources, and safeguards the integrity of its investigations."

Inman was the lead board member on scene after last year's midair collision near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people after an airliner collided with a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter. He also oversaw the initial investigation of the crash of a UPS cargo plane in Kentucky that killed 15 people in November.

Before last year, it was extremely unusual for board members at independent agencies to be dismissed. However, Trump has fired members of the Federal Reserve Board, the Surface Transportation Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to clear the way for his own appointees.

The five-member NTSB is supposed to be split between three members of the president's party and two members of the other party. After Inman's firing and the addition of DeLeeuw, the board will be split evenly, 2-2, between the parties, and Trump will be able to appoint a third Republican.

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 legal services group Democracy Forward has filed discrimination claims on the men's behalf.

## **Alexander Butterfield, the Nixon aide who disclosed Watergate tapes, dies at 99**

By DOUGLASS K. DANIEL and MICHAEL TACKETT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alexander Butterfield, the White House aide who inadvertently hastened Richard Nixon's resignation over the Watergate scandal when he revealed that the president had bugged the Oval Office and Cabinet Room and routinely recorded his conversations, has died. He was 99.

His death was confirmed to The Associated Press by his wife, Kim, and John Dean, who served as White House counsel to Nixon during the Watergate scandal and went on to, along with Butterfield, help expose the wrongdoing.

"He had the heavy responsibility of revealing something he was sworn to secrecy on, which is the installation of the Nixon taping system," Dean said. "He stood up and told the truth."

As a deputy assistant to the president, Butterfield oversaw the taping system connected to voice-activated listening devices that had been secretly placed in four locations, including Nixon's office in the Executive Office Building and the presidential retreat at Camp David.

Butterfield later said that, besides himself and the president, he believed that only White House chief

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of staff H.R. Haldeman, a Haldeman assistant and a handful of Secret Service agents knew about the taping system.

"Everything was taped ... as long as the president was in attendance," Butterfield told Watergate investigators when testifying under oath during a preliminary interview.

The tapes would expose Nixon's role in the cover-up that followed the burglary in 1972 at the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate building. To avoid impeachment by the House, Nixon resigned on Aug. 9, 1974, less than a month after the Supreme Court had ordered him to surrender the relevant tapes to the Watergate special prosecutor.

Butterfield believed he'd had a hand in the president's fate. "I didn't like to be the cause of that, but I felt that I was, in a lot of ways," he said in a 2008 oral history for the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.

Butterfield, a college friend of Haldeman's at UCLA who had contacted his friend to ask about opportunities in the new Nixon administration, served as a deputy assistant to Nixon from 1969 to 1973. In that capacity, he worked under Haldeman and, among other duties, was secretary to the Cabinet and helped oversee White House operations.

The Air Force veteran had left the White House to become administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration when Senate committee staffers privately questioned him on July 13, 1973, during their investigation of the Watergate break-in. A routine question about the possibility of a taping system had been prompted by former White House counsel John Dean's testimony that he believed a conversation he had had with Nixon may have been recorded.

When Butterfield acknowledged that a taping system indeed existed, he was brought before a public hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. The public revelation on July 16, 1973, of a taping system designed to record all the president's conversations stunned Nixon friends and foes alike. The tapes promised Watergate investigators a rich vein of evidence in their quest to determine what Nixon and others knew about the break-in — a great deal, as it turned out.

Efforts by investigators to gain access to the tapes sparked a yearlong legal battle that was resolved in July 1974 when the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Nixon had to give them up.

The thousands of hours of tapes made public over the years — they are now controlled by the National Archives — provide a unique, if often unflattering, view of Nixon. His words exposed a bad temper, vulgar language, bigoted racial and religious views, and unvarnished opinions about national and international figures.

"I just thought, 'When they hear those tapes ...' I mean, I knew what was on these tapes ... they're dynamite," Butterfield told the Nixon Library. "I guess I didn't foresee that the president might be put out of office or impeached, but I thought it would be a perilous few years for him. I guess I couldn't conceive of (Nixon) being forced out of office. It had never happened before."

Butterfield later said he believed that Nixon's successor, President Gerald Ford, fired him as FAA administrator in 1975 as part of an agreement worked out between the Nixon and Ford staff members. He said he had heard from White House friends that he had been targeted shortly after his testimony to the Senate committee.

After leaving the FAA, Butterfield worked as a business executive in California. He earned a master's degree from the University of California, San Diego, in 1994.

Alexander Porter Butterfield was born on April 6, 1926, in Pensacola, Florida.

He left UCLA to join the Navy and later earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland in 1956 and a master's degree from George Washington University in 1967.

In 1948, he joined the Air Force and served as an instructor at a base near Las Vegas during the Korean War and later served in Germany. In Washington, he was a military assistant to the special assistant of the defense secretary in 1965 and 1966 and later served as senior military representative of the U.S. and representative for the commander-in-chief, Pacific Forces, Australia. He retired at the rank of colonel after 20 years in the Air Force.

Butterfield was unsparing in his criticism of the former president in later years. While he commended

Nixon's achievements in foreign affairs, he considered his former boss "not an honest man" and "a crook" and believed that Nixon knew about the Watergate break-in before it occurred and was the architect of the ensuing cover-up.

Butterfield found himself "cheering ... just cheering" the day Nixon resigned, he told the Nixon Library, because "justice had prevailed."

"I didn't think that it would for a while," he said. "This guy was the ringleader."

## These lawmakers were shaped by combat after 9/11. Now they're grappling with a new Mideast war

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Congress responds to President Donald Trump's attack on Iran, lawmakers who served on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan are making their voices heard in a war debate that has taken on intensely personal meaning.

Many admit mixed feelings, taking satisfaction in seeing vengeance taken on the leadership of an Iranian regime that has targeted U.S. service members for decades, yet fearful that another generation of soldiers could soon face the same combat experiences that they did.

"Do I take gratification? You know there's the Marine side of me: Yeah, of course," said Arizona Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego, whose company suffered some of the heaviest losses on the U.S. side during the Iraq War. "I know they killed a lot of American soldiers, American Marines. But do I also understand that I have a responsibility not to let my lust for revenge drive my country into another war?"

Experiences in the post 9/11 wars are also coloring the decisions of the Trump administration, given that top officials, including Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, were once deployed to Iraq.

Gallego, like others on Capitol Hill, leaned heavily on his firsthand experience of fighting in the wars after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as he assessed the Iran conflict. Lawmakers wore bracelets etched with the names of friends killed in battle, told stories of coming under attack from Iran-backed militant groups and reflected on their own life-changing injuries suffered during combat.

Veteran lawmakers are wary of war

While the initial votes on Iran saw Congress divide mostly along party lines, with Republicans backing Trump's actions and Democrats warning of an extended conflict, veterans in both parties share deep reservations about entering the conflict.

"As somebody who knows a lot of friends that didn't come home and a lot of Gold Star families, that's why the week before the attack, I was actually one of the ones that was talking about caution and why we needed to avoid at all costs getting into another long, drawn-out Middle Eastern war," said Republican Rep. Eli Crane of Arizona, a former Navy SEAL who left college to enlist the week after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Crane said his concerns were partially assuaged by briefings from the Trump administration that indicated to him the president is not planning a drawn-out war. He voted against a war powers resolution that would have halted attacks on Iran unless Trump got congressional approval.

But Crane said wars are never straightforward. "I've been on military operations that did not go to plan many times, and so I understand the nature," he said, adding that he was calling for the Trump administration to approach the conflict with "humility and caution."

Gallego and other Democrats worried that it was too late for that approach. They paid tribute to the six U.S. military members who were killed in a drone strike in Kuwait and worried that there could soon be more American casualties. A seventh service member died on Sunday from wounds suffered during a March 1 attack in Saudi Arabia.

"War is dirty, and mistakes happen," Gallego said. The longer the conflict drags on, he added, the greater the chance there will be for U.S. military members to be killed. He experienced that firsthand in Iraq when friends would be killed by seemingly random shots from enemy combatants.

Still, many Republicans argued that it was necessary to attack Iran to stop a regime that for decades has

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helped train and arm militant groups throughout the Middle East. Republican Rep. Brian Mast, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, led the debate on the House floor against the war powers resolution.

Mast, who served as an Army bomb disposal expert, now uses prosthetic legs after receiving catastrophic injuries from an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. "Me especially, many of my other colleagues, no one wants to see our military go into combat or war," he said.

Then he added, "But Iran's terror, which has caused the deaths of thousands of Americans, it has to stop."

Trying to push soldiers to forefront of war debate

Important questions loom for Congress as the conflict with Iran unfolds and spreads to other parts of the Middle East. The price of the operation is already likely running into the billions of dollars, likely forcing the Trump administration to soon seek billions in funding from Congress. The outbreak of war has also scrambled global alliances and the future of U.S. foreign policy.

Shadowing it all is the potential of another drawn-out conflict. Lawmakers said they owe it to their fallen comrades to ensure that doesn't happen.

"To me, it's to speak out. It's to say another generation should not go fight in an open-ended, ill-conceived regime change war in the Middle East," said Democratic Rep. Pat Ryan, his hand moving to a bracelet etched with the names of friends who were killed during his two Army combat tours in Iraq.

Others remembered how frustrated they became with Washington during their service, especially as soldiers tried to fight with insufficiently armored vehicles and not enough troops.

"I know what it was like to be on the very end of the receiving line of the decisions made in Washington," said Democratic Rep. Jason Crow, who entered the Army as a private before being promoted to a captain and deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Crow said that front-line soldiers often suffered "because people stopped asking tough questions. People stopped being held accountable. Congress stopped voting on it."

Another veteran, Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, said that was one of the reasons she sought a congressional seat in the first place. As a Blackhawk helicopter pilot with the Illinois National Guard, Duckworth lost her legs when her helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade in Iraq.

"I ran for Congress so that when the drums of war started beating once again, I'd be in a position to make sure that our elected officials fully considered the true cost of the war," she said. "Not just in dollars and cents but in human lives."

## **Multiple gunshots fired near Rihanna's LA home and a woman is taken into custody**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles police took a woman into custody after she fired gunshots outside Rihanna's gated home, according to authorities and news reports on Monday.

No one was injured, police said. It wasn't immediately clear whether the singer was at home when the shooting happened Sunday afternoon.

Police received a call about shots fired around 1:15 p.m. in the Beverly Hills area, Officer Charles Miller said Monday. A 35-year-old woman was later taken into custody and investigators recovered a weapon, according to a police statement. The suspect has been booked on suspicion of attempted murder and is in jail on \$10 million bail. The district attorney had not yet announced charges.

Miller did not say who lived in the home. Multiple local news outlets reported that it belongs to Rihanna. Public records show the property is owned by a trust run by Evan Jehle, who is a member of the advisory board for Rihanna's Clara Lionel Foundation.

Emails seeking comment were left with Rihanna's publicist and manager.

KABC-TV showed video of what appeared to be five bullet holes in the front gate of the home.

"Shooting just occurred. Ten gunshots fired from the vehicle," a police dispatcher told responding officers on audio obtained by KABC. The gunfire came from across the street, police said.

It was not known if the woman under arrest had any connection to Rihanna.

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In 2018, a man was accused of breaking into a different home of Rihanna's in the Hollywood Hills and spending 12 hours there. The man pleaded no contest to felony counts of stalking and vandalism and a misdemeanor count of resisting arrest in 2019. He was sentenced to probation.

A nine-time Grammy Award winner, Rihanna has 14 No. 1 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, including "We Found Love," "Work," "Umbrella" and "Disturbia." She founded the makeup brand Fenty Beauty in 2017. She and A\$AP Rocky announced the birth of their third child, a girl named Rocki Irish Mayers, in September.

## Here are the Iran war's biggest unknowns, from Tehran's new leader to oil prices

By CARA ANNA and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — How long will the Iran war last? What do all sides want to achieve? And how high will oil prices go? Big questions remain as fighting enters week two.

Israel and the United States keep pounding Iran. And Iran keeps carrying out retaliatory attacks against Israel, U.S. military assets in the Middle East and its Arab neighbors.

Here's what we know about the war, and don't.

How long will the war last?

The U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, and there is no sign of the fighting ending soon. Iran's president has said mediation was underway, although he didn't give details.

Iran's new supreme leader is the son of the previous one and seen as more hard-line, with close ties to the Revolutionary Guard, the nation's most powerful armed force. Mojtaba Khamenei worked closely with his father, who was killed in the war's opening strikes along with the younger Khamenei's wife. He has not been seen or heard publicly in his new role, making it difficult to know whether he has interest in talks or in defiance.

Iran's war strategy of causing regional chaos shows no change. Persian Gulf countries still report areas being attacked, including oil facilities and airports, that are well away from U.S. military assets.

The war's length depends in part on Iran's stockpile of missiles and drones and countries' capability to deflect them. Israel's military on Monday said Iran was firing barrages with dozens of missiles in the early days, but now there are less than 10 or 20 at a time.

Israeli army spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said Iran still has "a significant amount" of missiles. Experts say Iran could be holding missiles in reserve, perhaps hoping that interceptors run low.

Iran has not provided information about military losses. Israel says it is focused on destroying long-range missiles while the U.S. focuses on short-range ones threatening the Gulf. Israel estimates that 60% of both types of launchers have been destroyed.

Israel's military is bulking up. It said about 50 cargo aircraft carrying over 1,000 tons of weaponry, military equipment and munitions have landed in the past 10 days, and cited the U.S. and Germany as partners in an effort that is "expected to scale up."

Ahead of the attacks, the U.S. military built up its largest force of warships and aircraft in the Middle East in decades. The Central Command on Monday said "there is no shortage of American military will."

The Trump administration and Israel have said the war will go as long as needed, but public frustration over oil prices and other economic pain could intensify pressure to wind down the conflict.

What do all sides want from the war?

Iran has said it wants an end to the war, not a ceasefire.

An official with knowledge of the war's operations said Israel is not in charge of the postwar plan, but the goal is to remove the regime and let Iranians "grasp their fate." The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. Israel is also attacking Iranian-backed proxies like Hezbollah.

U.S. President Donald Trump has made conflicting statements. The war has been about Iran's nuclear program and concerns that it could take a short technical step to enrich uranium to weapons grade. But it also has been about eradicating the threat from the country's ballistic missiles, which Secretary of State

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Marco Rubio says the U.S. is "well on our way" to achieving.

Trump has also said he doesn't seek regime change, but prioritized taking out several layers of Iran's top leadership and has encouraged Iranians to "take over" their government.

There is no sign of that happening in Iran, with no strong organized opposition, evidence of high-level defections or street protests. Internet restrictions are complicating views of what's happening.

Will other countries join the fight?

Saudi Arabia has issued a sharp statement saying Tehran would be the "biggest loser" if it continues to attack Arab states. Azerbaijan threatened "retaliatory measures" after it said Iranian drones hit its territory.

There is big risk in joining the U.S. and Israel's attacks, and no country has announced taking that step. Already, they have been targeted by hundreds of Iranian missiles and drones.

Iran has exposed the fragility of the global economy by targeting key energy and other infrastructure. A drone strike on a desalination plant in Bahrain underscored the vulnerability of Gulf nations, which rely heavily on such facilities for drinking water.

Meanwhile, France is sending military vessels to the Middle East to help deter Iran's attacks. Britain and Germany also have said they would help reduce Iran's ability to launch them. And Ukraine is sending experts to help in countering drones.

How will it end?

This is especially complicated, as both Israel and the United States have threatened whoever Iran puts in charge. Trump called the younger Khamenei "unacceptable" even before his elevation to supreme leader.

It is not clear who would be acceptable, and negotiating the war's end seems out of reach for now.

Trust will be difficult, since this war and last year's were launched during indirect talks between Iran and the United States.

How high will oil prices go?

As Iran announced its new supreme leader, crude oil prices were soaring above \$100 a barrel. They spiked near \$120 before falling Monday.

The Strait of Hormuz off Iran is a choke point, with about 20% of the world's oil supply normally transiting daily. Cargo ships are now backed up there.

Saudi Arabia has intercepted attacks aimed at its vast Shaybah oil field. Bahrain's national oil company has declared force majeure for shipments, unable to meet obligations because of extraordinary circumstances after an attack on its refinery complex. Iraq, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have cut oil production as storage tanks fill.

Iran's oil facilities are also targets. Israel struck depots over the weekend.

Countries are scrambling. France, currently leading the Group of Seven nations, says they could dip into emergency stockpiles. South Korea says it will cap oil prices. China says everyone has a responsibility "to ensure stable and smooth energy supplies."

Alex Kuptsikevich, chief market analyst at FxPro, said it "would not be surprising" if oil prices briefly push above \$150 as early as next week.

## **Iran war puts at risk key pipelines, terminals and refineries that supply the world with oil and gas**

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — The Iran war has put at risk some of the world's most critical oil and gas infrastructure — the pipelines, refineries, and shipping terminals that keep energy flowing from the countries around the Persian Gulf to the global economy.

Strikes by Iranian drones have disrupted operations, while risk of Iranian strikes has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for some 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas. Oil fields in countries including Iraq have cut back output as storage fills up. Qatar, a major supplier of liquefied natural gas, has shut down its exports as well.

"A lot of very critical energy infrastructure has been either forced to shut down because of direct damage

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from drones and missiles," said Torbjorn Soltvedt, principal Middle East analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, "or because production is effectively being shut in as a result of shipping grinding to a halt. We're already starting to see some of the global ramifications of that."

All that has sent prices soaring, raising the cost of everything that needs fuel: flying, running factories, transporting goods, and farming. International benchmark Brent crude has risen from \$72.97 the day before the war started to almost \$103 on Monday.

Here is the key infrastructure that's at risk and why it's important.

Ras Laffan liquefied natural gas terminal, Qatar

The terminal was shut down by state-owned QatarEnergy following a drone strike, dealing a shock to global gas markets since Qatar produces 20% of the world's liquefied natural gas (LNG). The company is citing force majeure — in other words, that it's unable to supply its contracted customers due to circumstances beyond its control.

Ras Laffan, the largest LNG export facility in the world according to the company's website, draws gas from the world's largest single gas field and chills it until it is liquid for loading on tankers that take it to customers, primarily in Asia. Gas purchasers in Europe will also feel the pinch as competition gets fiercer for available cargoes.

Ras Tanura port and refinery, Saudi Arabia

Located on the Persian Gulf northeast of Dammam, this is Saudi Aramco's largest refinery and a port capable of accommodating large tankers. It was temporarily shut down after a drone impact caused a fire.

East-West pipeline, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Aramco operates this pipeline from the Aqaiq oil processing center near the Persian Gulf to the Yanbu port on the Red Sea, avoiding the Hormuz chokepoint.

Fujairah oil terminal, United Arab Emirates

A key terminal for very large oil tankers on the Gulf of Oman, it is important because it enables Abu Dhabi to export a significant share of its oil without sending it through the Strait of Hormuz. It has been reported as disrupted by the fighting by Rystad Energy data and analytical firm. The port company did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment about its status.

"Iran's targeting of oil storage in Fujairah isn't a coincidence; it's attacking one of the potential reroutings of oil that's been trapped in the Persian Gulf," analyst Soltvedt said.

Kharg Island, Iran

A tanker terminal that has handled almost all of Iran's roughly 1.6 million barrels per day of prewar crude exports, most of it going to China. Iran reportedly accelerated shipments in the days before the war started. Its operational status is unclear.

Leviathan natural gas field, Israel

Israel's Energy Ministry directed operator Chevron to shut down the field, located 130 kilometers (80 miles) off the shores of Haifa, due to the security situation. It's the largest natural gas reservoir in the Mediterranean and is a key supplier to Egypt. A shutdown during Israel's 12-day war with Iran in June led Egypt to curtail gas supplies to industries including fertilizer producers.

Southern Iraqi oil fields

Iraq has suspended output of 1.5 million barrels per day at key fields at Rumaila and West Qurna due to dwindling storage. The Rumaila field is a so-called supergiant, meaning it holds more than a billion barrels in reserves.

Rystad Energy reports Iraq and other Gulf countries are running out of space to put the oil, meaning other fields may shut down. That could bring interruption since once shut down, oil and gas wells may need weeks or months to resume.

Even if the Strait of Hormuz reopens in a few days, "it's going to take time to restart production in some of these fields. It's not a switch that can be turned on and off," said Soltvedt. "It's the same for Qatar in terms of their LNG facility. It will probably take weeks to get some of the facilities up and running again."

Al Basra Oil Terminal, Iraq

This artificial island located 50 kilometers (30 miles) from shore in the Persian Gulf exports oil worth

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80% of Iraq's annual GDP from the country's oil fields.

Bapco refinery, Bahrain

The Sitra Island refinery is the backbone of Bahrain's oil sector, processing supply from Bahraini fields and delivered from Saudi Arabia via pipeline. A missile strike halted operations and disrupted jet fuel, diesel and other supplies.

## Duke marks its record 150th No. 1 ranking in the AP Top 25, Wisconsin, Louisville back in poll

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Duke was chosen No. 1 in the AP Top 25 men's college basketball poll for a record 150th time on Monday.

The Blue Devils received 56 of 61 first-place votes from a national media panel after wins over rivals NC State and North Carolina, leaving them in the top spot for the third consecutive week. Arizona stayed second and received four first-place votes while Michigan received the other No. 1 ballot after its impressive win over No. 8 Michigan State.

"We've put ourselves in a position to do something special and make a run," Duke coach Jon Scheyer said.

The Blue Devils reached No. 1 in the AP poll for the first time on Dec. 13, 1965, and they've spent more time there than any other men's basketball program. UCLA is second with 134 weeks on top while Kentucky is third (125).

Now, Scheyer's crew heads into the ACC Tournament as the No. 1 seed, but potentially without two of their starters. Patrick Ngongba II and Caleb Foster both were wearing boots in the second half of Duke's win over the Tar Heels on Saturday.

"I'd be shocked if both of them are playing (in the conference tournament)," Scheyer said. "Our plan is how can we get as healthy as possible and ready as possible for two weeks from now, wherever we go (into the NCAA Tournament)."

Defending national champion Florida climbed to fourth in this week's AP poll, the highest the Gators have been since they were preseason No. 3. Houston moved up to fifth after finishing second to Arizona in the regular-season Big 12 race.

UConn dropped from fourth to sixth after the Huskies were upset by Marquette in their regular-season Big East finale.

Rising and fall

St. John's moved up five spots to No. 13 after beating Georgetown and Seton Hall last week. The Red Storm have won 16 of their last 17 games with the lone defeat coming to UConn, and Rick Pitino's squad is seeded No. 1 in the Big East Tournament this week.

Texas Tech, which lost All-American forward JT Toppin to a torn ACL, dropped six spots to No. 16 following losses to TCU and BYU.

In and out

Wisconsin made its fifth appearance in the poll this season at No. 23 after routing Maryland and beating Purdue on the road last week. Louisville also returned to the poll at No. 24 after wins over Syracuse and then-No. 22 Miami.

The Hurricanes were the top team outside the Top 25 while Saint Louis dropped out following its loss to George Mason.

Conference tournaments

Arizona, Houston, No. 14 Kansas and Texas Tech are the top four seeds in the Big 12 and earned double-byes into the quarterfinals on Thursday. Duke, No. 10 Virginia, Miami and No. 19 North Carolina are the top four in the ACC and likewise begin play Thursday, as will the top four seeds in the Big East: St. John's, UConn, Villanova and Seton Hall.

Michigan, No. 11 Nebraska, Michigan State and No. 9 Illinois are the top four seeds in the Big Ten and will play their quarterfinal games on Friday. So will Florida, No. 15 Alabama, No. 17 Arkansas and No. 22 Vanderbilt, the top four seeds in the SEC Tournament.

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No. 12 Gonzaga played Oregon State in the West Coast semifinals on Monday night, while No. 21 Saint Mary's played Santa Clara in the other semifinal. The winners will meet for the conference championship Tuesday night.

No. 20 Miami (Ohio) is the top seed in the MAC tourney. The RedHawks play UMass in the quarterfinals on Thursday.

NET rankings

The rankings used by the NCAA to help seed its tournament varied slightly from the AP poll. The NET had Michigan instead of Arizona at No. 2 behind the Blue Devils, while BYU and Iowa — unranked in the media poll — rounded out its version of the Top 25.

The RedHawks, who completed a 31-0 regular season, were ranked 55th by the NET due in large part to their strength of schedule.

Conference watch

The Big Ten has six ranked teams while the Big 12 and SEC have five apiece, though the Big 12's five included three of the top seven and all within the top 16. The ACC has four ranked teams, the Big East and West Coast two apiece and the MAC one.

## **No. 2 UCLA ends UConn run as unanimous No. 1 in women's AP Top 25, Texas moves up to No. 3**

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

No. 2 UCLA picked up first-place votes from top-ranked UConn in The Associated Press women's basketball Top 25 on Monday and Texas jumped South Carolina to move up to No. 3 after winning their head-to-head showdown in the Southeastern Conference Tournament championship game.

The Bruins picked up three first-place votes after their 51-point win over then-No. 9 Iowa in the Big Ten title game Sunday. UConn had been a unanimous No. 1 from the national media panel for the past eight weeks. The undefeated Huskies received the other 28 first-place votes.

UConn and UCLA are expected to be the top two teams when the women's NCAA Tournament bracket is revealed Sunday night. While the Bruins are done until then, the Huskies faced Villanova for the Big East tournament title Monday night.

LSU moved up to No. 5, swapping spots with Vanderbilt. Despite its loss to UCLA, Iowa moved up to seventh. Duke jumped five places to eighth after winning the Atlantic Coast Conference championship, beating then-No. 12 Louisville in overtime.

Michigan was ninth and Oklahoma 10th.

In and out

Buoyed by reaching the ACC Tournament semifinals, Notre Dame re-entered the Top 25, coming in at No. 22. Notre Dame replaced Fairfield, which had entered the poll last week and advanced to the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference championship game Monday.

Conference supremacy

The SEC has the most teams in the Top 25 with eight. The Big Ten is next with seven. The Big 12 and ACC each have four. The Ivy League and Big East each have one.

Games of the week

Besides UConn, Princeton is the only other Top 25 team playing this week. The Tigers will face Brown in the Ivy League Tournament semifinals on Friday night. If they win, they will play either Harvard or Columbia on Saturday. The Lions handed the Tigers two of their three losses this season.

## Lebanese parliament extends term by 2 years as Israel intensifies attacks on Lebanon

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB, NATALIE MELZER and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press BEIRUT (AP) — The Lebanese parliament extended its term by two years on Monday due to the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, which has pushed the region into an escalating conflict, and Israel stepped up its attacks on Lebanon following renewed strikes with the militant group Hezbollah.

The Israeli military said Monday it was targeting Hezbollah's financial arm, al-Qard Al-Hasan, as its ground forces in Lebanon's south launched "focused raids" against what it called the group's infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch has accused Israeli forces of using white phosphorus incendiary shells in strikes on residential areas in a Lebanese village in violation of international law.

Two more years for the current Lebanese parliament

Lebanon's state news agency said 76 legislators voted in favor of the decision, 41 were against, and four abstained. Hezbollah's 13-member bloc in parliament voted in favor of the extension.

The ongoing war with Israel that began last week has displaced over half a million people in Lebanon and made it difficult to hold a vote in large parts of the country.

The parliamentary elections were scheduled for May.

Israel attacks Hezbollah's financial arm in Beirut, forcing people to flee

Residents of Beirut's southern suburb, widely known as Dahiyeh, were ordered to evacuate before Israel launched strikes.

Smoke billowed over Beirut after the attacks. The first strike destroyed a building housing an office of al-Qard al-Hasan in the southern suburb of Chiyah. A Lebanese journalist on site told The Associated Press he was wounded in the leg and taken to a nearby hospital. Video footage showed what appeared to be two strikes on the building that were minutes apart.

The strikes on Chiyah were followed by more airstrikes on nearby areas, forcing Lebanese troops to close roads where al-Qard al-Hasan branches are located to ensure people's safety.

Israel says Hezbollah uses al-Qard al-Hasan to finance its military activities and targeted several of the group's branches in southern and eastern Lebanon last week.

Israeli ground forces start 'focused raid' in southern Lebanon

In southern Lebanon, the Israeli military said it launched a "focused raid" to eliminate Hezbollah operatives and infrastructure using a brigade combat team under the command of the 36th Division.

The military said before they initiated the operation, its forces launched a combined air and ground attack in the area.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it struck Israeli troops inside Lebanon with anti-tank missiles and that it fired a volley of rockets on the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona in retaliation for Israeli strikes on cities, towns and villages in Lebanon.

The group also said it had repelled an attempted Israeli helicopter landing in the eastern town of Nabi Chit, in the same area where a commando force landed two days earlier to search for the remains of Ron Arad, an Israeli navigator who has been missing for nearly 40 years after crashing in Lebanon.

The Israeli army said it was "not aware" of another attempted landing.

Tensions between Hezbollah and Lebanese government flare up

The latest round of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah began on Feb. 2 when the group fired rockets and drones on northern Israel following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei two days earlier in a joint U.S.-Israeli strike. Israel retaliated with large waves of airstrikes and Israeli troops captured several new posts in southern Lebanon.

The Lebanese government last week declared Hezbollah's military activities illegal and ordered the country's security forces to detain those who were behind the strikes on Israel.

Three Hezbollah members were also detained last week while carrying weapons on their way to southern Lebanon and were questioned by judicial authorities. On Monday, the military court in Beirut ordered them released on a \$20 bail each, judicial officials said.

The officials said the judge asked the three men what they were doing and they responded that they

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were heading to southern Lebanon to fight against Israeli forces. They spoke on condition of anonymity as they are not allowed to speak to the media.

Human Rights Watch says Israel used white phosphorus shells in strikes on Lebanon

The human rights group said in a report Monday 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 said in a statement that it is "currently unaware and cannot confirm use of shells that contain white phosphorous in Lebanon as claimed." It added that any weapons that contain white phosphorus are used in line with international law.

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.

## **WNBA sends CBA proposal to players as March 10 deadline nears, AP source says**

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

The WNBA sent a collective bargaining agreement proposal to the union a day after the league received one from the players, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press on Sunday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations.

The league's response to a union proposal from Friday comes a few days before a Tuesday deadline set by the league, which said it would need at least a handshake agreement with the union to start the season on time.

It's unknown what changes the league and union made in their latest proposal. Revenue sharing is the key sticking point between the sides.

The union's previous proposal from a week ago had asked for an average of 26% of the gross revenue — revenue before expenses — over the course of the CBA. That would include only 25% in the first year of the new deal. The league has said that number was unrealistic.

The WNBA's last few proposals have offered more than 70% of net revenue, with that number going up as the league continues to grow.

Caitlin Clark said at USA Basketball training camp on Saturday that the two sides should stop sending proposals and instead meet face-to-face until a deal gets done.

"I don't understand why we don't just get in a room and iron it out and shake hands," she said. "That's how business is. You look each other in the eye, you shake hands, you respect both sides. For me, that's what I would love to see."

Union vice president Breanna Stewart agreed with Clark's idea.

"I think that would be great for us all to sit in a room until we really get it done," the New York Liberty star said. "If that means sitting in there for hours and hours at a time, let's do it. That's for the better of the player. While a situation like that has never happened before, there's a first time for everything."

Stewart isn't going back to Puerto Rico with the U.S. team to play in the FIBA World Cup qualifier tourna-

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ment next week. She said she's going home to New York and would be available for in-person negotiations. "We want the deal to be done. We want to have the season," Stewart said. "We just need to find the right numbers that reflect it."

If a labor deal is agreed to by March 10, it probably would be signed by the end of the month. Under that timeline, the expansion draft for new franchises in Portland and Toronto would be held sometime between April 1-6, according to a timetable obtained by the AP.

Free agent qualifying offers, including franchise player tags, would be sent out April 7-8. Teams would then have three days to negotiate with the more than 80% of players who are free agents. The signing period would take place from April 12-18.

Training camps would open the next day and the season would be able to start on May 8.

"I think it'll be tight. Hopefully we do come to a resolution sooner rather than later," Stewart said. "But even if we do, it's like these other things that need to happen need a moment. You shouldn't have to rush the expansion draft or free agency."

## 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."

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 hardliners 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. More Iranians fled 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.

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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 two people from Bangladesh. 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.

## Today in History: March 10, the Tibetan uprising of 1959

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, March 10, the 69th day of 2026. There are 296 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 10, 1959, thousands of Tibetans rebelled against occupying Chinese forces, surrounding the Dalai Lama's palace to protect him from potential harm. Fierce fighting between Tibetans and Chinese forces ensued, causing the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet for India, where he remains in exile today.

Also on this date:

In 1496, Christopher Columbus concluded his second visit to the Western Hemisphere as he left Hispaniola for Spain.

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln promoted Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to lieutenant general and the command of the Union army in the Civil War.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell's assistant, Thomas Watson, heard Bell say over his experimental telephone: "Mr. Watson — come here — I want to see you" from the next room of Bell's Boston laboratory; those were the first words ever conveyed by telephone.

In 1913, abolitionist and Underground Railroad "conductor" Harriet Tubman died of pneumonia in Auburn, New York.

In 1969, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty in Memphis, Tennessee, to assassinating civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (Ray later repudiated that plea, maintaining his innocence until his death.)

In 1993, Dr. David Gunn was killed outside the Pensacola Women's Medical Services clinic by anti-abortion activist Michael Griffin; it was the first killing attributed to a doctor's role in providing abortion care.

In 2019, a Boeing 737 Max 8 operated by Ethiopian Airlines crashed shortly after takeoff from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people on board.

Today's birthdays: Actor Chuck Norris is 86. Singer Dean Torrence (Jan and Dean) is 86. TV personality/

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business executive Barbara Corcoran (TV: "Shark Tank") is 77. Actor Sharon Stone is 68. Actor Jasmine Guy is 64. Music producer Rick Rubin is 63. Football Hall of Famer Rod Woodson is 61. Singer-songwriter Edie Brickell is 60. Actor Paget Brewster is 57. Actor Jon Hamm is 55. Rapper-producer Timbaland is 54. Singer Robin Thicke is 49. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Shannon Miller is 49. Actor Thomas Middleditch is 44. Country singer-songwriter Carrie Underwood is 43. Actor Olivia Wilde is 42. Actor Emily Osment is 34. Rapper-singer Bad Bunny is 32.