

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 1 of 57

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Baby-sitter Ad](#)
- [4- Qury Fire Evening Update](#)
- [4- Department of Public Safety Closes Pile Burn Season Early](#)
- [5- 2026 SDHSAA State Girls Basketball Tournaments](#)
- [7- Graduation Cards Ad](#)
- [8- PUBLIC NOTICE TO GROTON PROPERTY OWNERS](#)
- [8- March Groton Legion Auxiliary Meeting](#)
- [8- Boddicker graduates from SDSU](#)
- [8- February Pantry Report](#)
- [9- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [10- Minnehaha County Fatal Crash](#)
- [11- City Employment Ad](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: South Dakota Supreme Court affirms 'stand your ground' ruling in survival bunker shooting lawsuit](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Wind, dry conditions drive growth of Qury Fire near Custer](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: After new law puts guardrails around Future Fund, Johnson shares plan to use it for startups](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Homeland Security repair job awaits Trump's pick to replace Noem](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Six more US troops killed in Iran war, in crash of refueling aircraft](#)
- [21- SD SearchLight: North Dakota wants judge to void its \\$28M win in pipeline protest case in favor of fed settlement](#)
- [23- Weather Pages](#)
- [29- Daily Devotional](#)
- [30- Subscription Form](#)
- [31- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [32- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, March 14

HOSA 5K run, 1 p.m.

State A GBB Tourney in Watertown

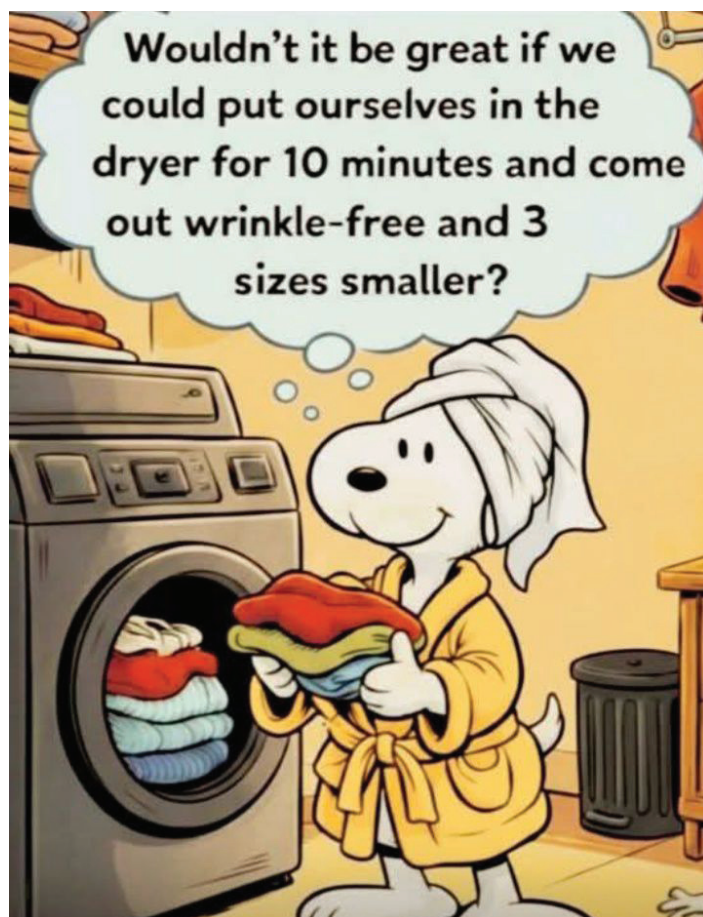
Pickleball, 9:30 a.m., Elementary Gym

Sunday, March 15

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.



Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Groton Soccer Association Clinics, 11:30 a.m., Arena.

4th grade BB Practice, 2 p.m., Gym

6th grade BB Practice, 6 pm., Arena

Monday, March 16

Senior Menu: Lasagna, broccoli, fruit, bread stick.
School Breakfast: Eggs.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, baked beans.

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

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

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 2 of 57

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.

A Slice of Pi Day History

Today marks 39 years since the origin of Pi Day, honoring the mathematical constant π (pi), which represents the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. Observed annually on March 14—or 3/14, echoing the first three digits of pi (3.14)—the day has grown from a nerdy math joke into a celebration of math, science, and pie.

Pi Day was first celebrated in 1988 at San Francisco's Exploratorium, where physicist Larry Shaw led participants in a parade around a circular space and served fruit pies. In 2009, the US House officially recognized March 14 as National Pi Day. The event has since inspired math contests, pie-eating contests, and gatherings timed at 1:59 pm to mark more digits (3.14159).

The concept of pi itself stretches back thousands of years. Ancient civilizations, including the Egyptians and Babylonians, used approximations in architecture and astronomy long before the symbol " π " appeared. Greek mathematician Archimedes later calculated pi using polygons. The symbol itself was popularized in 1706 by Welsh mathematician William Jones and widely adopted thanks to Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler.

Six crew members killed in refueling plane crash in Iraq, US military says.

A KC-135 refueling tanker involved in the US operations against Iran had crashed in western Iraq Thursday after an incident with a second aircraft, which was able to land safely. Officials say the crash did not result from hostile or friendly fire and occurred in what the military described as friendly airspace. Investigations continue into how the midair incident happened.

Separately, the US military is reportedly sending 2,500 Marines and at least one more warship to the Middle East.

DOJ charges man accused of selling gun to Old Dominion University shooter.

A former Army National Guard member opened fire in a classroom, killing an ROTC instructor and wounding two others before being subdued and killed by ROTC students. Officials noted the shooter had been convicted of attempting to aid the Islamic State and was on supervised release at the time. Authorities also charged a man with illegally selling the firearm used in the shooting to the gunman, who was prohibited from owning a gun due to his prior conviction.

Cuba acknowledges talks with the US, aiming to resolve differences.

Cuba publicly confirmed it is engaged in negotiations with the US, after weeks of media reports that Washington and Havana were exploring a possible economic and political arrangement to ease the island's deepening crisis. Cuba's struggles have been compounded by a US-led oil blockade, with widespread blackouts, fuel shortages, and disruptions to essential services.

The 98th Academy Awards take place tomorrow (7 pm ET, ABC and Hulu).

Ryan Coogler's 1930s-set vampire epic, "Sinners," leads the nominations with a record-breaking 16 nods, followed by black-comedy action-thriller "One Battle After Another" with 13. Comedian Conan O'Brien returns as host for the second year. This year also marks the first recognition of casting directors. See predictions here and what's inside the Oscars gift bags here. Read our curated history of the awards here.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 3 of 57

Gene conversion helps clonal fish species hack evolution.

Scientists studying the all-female Amazon molly, a freshwater fish in Texas and Mexico that has reproduced asexually for roughly 100,000 years, have discovered how it avoids the genetic decay normally expected in long-term clones. Researchers found these fish can purge and repair harmful DNA mutations, helping to explain how a self-cloning species has persisted far longer than theory predicts.

Giant early tyrannosaur bone possibly rewrites T. rex origins.

Paleontologists uncovered a 74-million-year-old shinbone in New Mexico, measuring 3.1 feet—about 84% the size of the tibia belonging to “Sue,” the largest known T. rex. The bone likely belonged to an early tyrannosaur that predates the T. rex by millions of years, suggesting the T. rex lineage first evolved in the American Southwest rather than migrating from Asia and was widespread far earlier than previously thought.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we’re sharing a story from reader JT T. in Ocoee, Florida.

“My friend Glenn passed away unexpectedly in 2023 at age 39. In the years prior to his death, he had released two children’s books. They were both based on experiences he had as a child. I travel some for work, and at his funeral, I promised him I would take his books with me and leave them in cities to get his work out. They would be left at libraries, children’s hospitals, and book-exchange locations. Other friends of ours also participated, and we started sharing the journeys on social media. His family and others who knew him joined in as well.

“In the three years since his death, his books are now in 41 cities and towns; in 17 different states, plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico; and in two other countries. He had a third book written before his death, and friends of his are working with his family to finalize it. Coincidentally, it’s about the power of friendship. I’ve learned that you can do little things to help friends that mean plenty, and all it really costs is a bit of time and effort.”

Need a **Babysitter** or
House Cleaner?

♥ **Babysitting Available!**

House Cleaning Offered!

Text Jeslyn Kosel at (605)-290-7821

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

Qury Fire Evening Update

Friday, March 13, 2026 – 7 p.m.

Type 3 Incident Management Team

Todd Hoover, Incident Commander

Size: Estimated ~7,000 acres

Location: 1-2 miles southeast of Custer, SD

Personnel: Federal, State, and Local

Containment: 0%

Start Date: Thursday, March 12, 2026

March 13, 2026 – Firefighters continued prioritizing structure protection and other values at risk today. Successful burning operations were conducted on the northwest corner as crews continue to work toward establishing containment. The fire was most active today on the southwest portion.

Weather conditions are causing smoke to remain in the area tonight and are expected to continue as firefighters work towards establishing containment around the fire. Conditions are expected to change tomorrow as temperatures drop below freezing overnight. Precipitation is expected tomorrow with a higher relative humidity.

An infrared flight over the fire is expected Saturday, providing more accurate acreage and areas burned. The fire is currently estimated at 7,000 acres with 0% containment declared. Federal, state, and local resources will continue working overnight in a unified effort to suppress the fire.

The team was supported by National Guard air operations today. There is a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) in place over the fire area. The public is asked to please avoid the fire area so firefighters and air operations can continue working on fire suppression.

Many roads remain closed, and evacuation orders are still in place. For the latest information on property, road closings, and evacuations please call the Custer County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at (605) 673-8155.

Department of Public Safety Closes Pile Burn Season Early

The South Dakota Department of Public Safety (DPS) has revoked all active pile burn permits effective today, ending the pile burn season early across the Black Hills. Climatic conditions and wildfire activity pose an imminent threat to public safety, resulting in the need for this action.

“This is a preventative step to reduce the risk of wildfires and help protect lives, property, and natural resources.” said DPS Secretary Bob Perry.

The pile burn season had been scheduled to run through March 31, but current conditions, active wildfires, and availability of firefighting resources have prompted the department to end permitted burning ahead of schedule.

With burn permits revoked for the remainder of the season, residents are reminded that permitted pile burning is no longer allowed through March 31.

Officials encourage the public to remain mindful of fire danger conditions and to follow all local restrictions intended to reduce the risk of wildfires.

If you have recently been burning piles, immediately check those burn sites and ensure all piles are completely extinguished. Use water and turn the debris to eliminate any remaining heat. Even small hot spots can rekindle and spread quickly under current conditions.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 5 of 57

2026 SDHSAA State Girls Basketball Tournaments, Semifinal and Consolation Semifinal Recap

SDPB | By Nate Wek

The 2026 SDHSAA state girls basketball tournament continued on Friday from Rapid City, Watertown, and Brookings with the semifinals and consolation semifinals. Here's a recap of the games.

Class AA

Consolation Semifinals

No. 4 Rapid City Stevens 70 No. 8 Tea Area 52

Rapid City Stevens defeated Tea Area 70-52 on Friday afternoon with an impressive 50% shooting performance from the field. Hayden Thorton tallied 17 points and a pair of blocks in the win. Marley Seumanutafa also had a nice game, scoring 12 points and recording 11 rebounds. Tea Area's Jayna VanLaecken had 15 points in the loss.

No. 7 Mitchell 57 No. 6 Sioux Falls Jefferson 51

Mitchell defeated Sioux Falls Jefferson 57-51 in the consolation round on Friday. Nia Talley led the Kernels in points and rebounds, finishing with 17 buckets and eight boards. Addie Siemsen scored 14 points, while Londyn Hajek and Cece Morgan each notched 13 points in the win. Brinley Altenburg was the top performer for Sioux Falls Jefferson. She scored 31 points and had five rebounds.

Semifinals

No. 1 Brandon Valley 73 No. 5 Aberdeen Central 44

Brandon Valley defeated Aberdeen Central on Friday night to advance to their third straight state title game. Alyvia Padgett led the Lynx with 32 points, five rebounds, and five steals in the game. Gracie Salter also contributed with 22-points of her own on 8 of 13 from the field – six of six from beyond the arc. For Aberdeen Central, Lauryn Burckhard led the team with 15 points and five rebounds.

No. 2 O'Gorman 66 No. 3 Sioux Falls Washington 62

O'Gorman defeated Sioux Falls Washington 66-62 in the semifinal round. Ruby Moore led the Knights with 23 points. Sydney Terveen also contributed with 15 points on offense for O'Gorman. Dana Harpe was the top performer for Sioux Falls Washington with a double double performance – 15 points and 15 rebounds.

Class A

Consolation Semifinals

No. 4 Sioux Valley 61 No. 8 Lakota Tech 53

Sioux Valley defeated Lakota Tech in Friday's consolation round 61-53. Kailey Cradduck earned the top performance in the game with 19 points and 17 rebounds. Lakota Tech's Lizzie Robinson also had a nice game, scoring 22 points with five assists.

No. 7 West Central 46 No. 3 Wagner 38

West Central defeated Wagner 46 to 38 in the consolation round. The Trojans were led by Kacey Jatton, who finished with 16 points and five rebounds. Mackenzie Skonhovd and Ellie Knight also had nice production for West Central. The duo combined for 21 points. Ashlyn Koupal scored all but three of Wagner's points in the game. She finished with 35 points, 17 rebounds, and a block in the loss.

Semifinals

No. 5 Lennox 57 No. 1 Hamlin 41

Lennox upset top seeded Hamlin 57-41 in the semifinal round on Friday night. Teagen Sturm led the Orioles with 14 points. She also had four rebounds. Bergan Musser scored 12 points as well in the win. Addison Neuendorf led Hamlin in the game with 22 points.

No. 2 Mahpiya Luta 58 No. 6 Sioux Falls Christian 45

Mahpiya Luta defeated Sioux Falls Christian 58-45 on Friday night to return to the 'A' state championship game. They were led on offense by Ashlan Carlow-Blount, who scored 14 points, grabbed eight rebounds,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 6 of 57

and recorded five steals. Peyton Knife also had a ten-point performance for Mahpíya Lúta. Emory Lems was the top scorer for Sioux Falls Christian with 15 points.

Class B

Consolation Semifinals

No. 1 Lyman 53 No. 5 Colman-Egan 48

Lyman bounced back from a quarterfinal loss on Thursday to beat Colman-Egan 53-48 on Friday afternoon in the consolation round. Both the Scott sisters recorded double-doubles in the game. Mak Scott had 21 points and 15 rebounds, while Jordyn Scott notched ten points and 12 rebounds. Colman-Egan's top performer was Brynlee Landis, who scored 19 points and grabbed six boards.

No. 3 Bennett County 77 No. 7 Centerville 68

Bennett County had a nice bounce back win on Friday as they defeated Centerville 77-68. Peyson O'Neill led the Warriors with 27 points and ten rebounds. Harley Harris also had a 13-point performance and Reagan O'Neill scored 12 points with eight rebounds in the win as well. Izzie Eide was the top offensive performer for Centerville in the loss with 20 points.

Semifinals

No. 4 Ethan 54 No. 8 Corsica-Stickney 34

Ethan defeated Corsica-Stickney 54-34 in the semifinal round to advance to the state title game. Marris Storm led the way with 17 points on offense. She also had five rebounds in the game. Taziah Hawkins scored 15-points on five three-pointers as well in the win. Corsica-Stickney's Sophie DeLange led the Jaguars in scoring with 19 points.

No. 6 Harding County 58 No. 2 Parkston 42

Harding County defeated Parkston 58-42 in the semifinals on Friday night. The Ranchers were led on offense by Kaylen Padden, who finished with 13 points. Carson Page also had a good night for Harding County. She finished with ten points in the win. Keeara Oakley was the top performer for Parkston as she finished with 17 points. Berkley Ziebart also had a 15 point effort in the loss.

Saturday Schedule

Class AA

Championship | No.1 Brandon Valley vs No. 2 O'Gorman
3rd/4th | No. 5 Aberdeen Central vs No. 3 Sioux Falls Washington
5th/6th | No. 4 Rapid City Stevens vs No. 7 Mitchell
7th/8th | No. 8 Tea Area vs No. 6 Sioux Falls Jefferson

Class A

Championship | No. 5 Lennox vs No. 2 Mahpíya Lúta
3rd/4th | No. 1 Hamlin vs No. 6 Sioux Falls Christian
5th/6th | No. 4 Sioux Valley vs No. 7 West Central
7th/8th | No. 3 Wagner vs No. 8 Lakota Tech

Class B

Championship | No. 4 Ethan vs No. 6 Harding County
3rd/4th | No. 8 Crosica-Stickney vs No. 2 Parkston
5th/6th | No. 1 Lyman vs No. 3 Bennett County
7th/8th | No. 5 Colman-Egan vs No. 7 Centerville



GRADUATION CARDS DESIGNED & PRINTED WHILE YOU WAIT!

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

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

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

★ ONLY \$50 FOR 100 CARDS ★



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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 8 of 57

March Groton Legion Auxiliary Meeting

The March meeting of Groton Unit 39 of the American Legion Auxiliary was busy, since we did not meet in December, January or February. Correspondence received included thank you notes for cash donations given to several local organization, the Fort Mead Veteran's Christmas gift shop, as Groton Area school third graders for the dictionaries they are using in their classroom.

The Veteran's Day activities and Turkey shoot summary on the bingo, lunch stand and cake walk indicated successful projects with a lot of membership participation.

In December Ardella Theunissen mailed holiday greetings and Jan Seibel, Meri Erickson, Rita Kampa, Jerrie Vedvei, Wendy Cooper and Lori Giedt made holiday visits to some of the auxiliary members who are unable to attend monthly meetings.

Reports on Americanism activities included visits to the kindergarten class by Jerrie and Tami for flag etiquette education. Information for poem and essay contests were given to the school and these will be collected for judging the first part of March.

Jan reported on the Midwinter conference, and reminded members of the spring district meeting in March in Redfield, and the Department Convention in Aberdeen June 19 & 20.

Girls State chairman Lori worked with the Columbia unit to select attendees. The Groton unit voted to sponsor 2 tables at the Girls State Banquet this year.

Meri reminded everyone to save Ken's and Kessler's grocery receipts for the Give 10 Education project, Wendy keeps track of these and has collected receipts from members totaling \$2509 in January.

We have set the date for our annual Salad Buffet. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, July 15, with serving from 11-1. Set up will be on the 14th at 4 pm if anyone is available to help.

Our next meeting will be Monday, April 6 at the Groton Legion Clubroom. Wendy and Rita will be hosting lunch, serving at 6 and business meeting at 6:30. District President Deanne Hoyle will be our guest attendee.

PUBLIC NOTICE TO GROTON PROPERTY OWNERS

Notice is hereby given that City Council, sitting as the Local Board of Equalization, will meet at City Hall, 120 N Main Street, Groton, SD, for the purpose of reviewing, correcting and equalizing the assessment of property on March 18, 2026, at 8:30 pm, following the regular council meeting.

Appeals must be submitted in writing with supporting documentation by 5:00pm Thursday, March 12th at City Hall or mail appeals to the Finance Officer, PO Box 587 Groton, South Dakota. Those appealing will be notified of their scheduled time to meet with the Board. Contact City Hall for more information at 605-397-8422.

Douglas J. Heinrich, Groton City Finance Officer

Boddicker graduates from SDSU

BROOKINGS, S.D. (03/13/2026)-- South Dakota State University announces Brooke Boddicker of Groton, South Dakota, has graduated following the summer and fall 2025 semesters.

Boddicker graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from SDSU's College of Nursing.

Overall, more than 1,000 students from 35 states and 26 nations graduated following the summer and fall 2025 semesters, after completing all requirements for a degree and/or certificate program. Nearly 40 students received two or more degrees or certificates from a college.

February Pantry Report

In February, The Pantry - Groton, SD recorded 69 visits. Thanks to your generosity, Enrich Groton distributed 1,792 pounds of essential food and household items.

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



for
**SENIOR
CITIZENS**

Open 24/7

GDI Living



Fitness

or anyone using physical therapy

15 N Main • Ste. 101

**BEST
RATES
AROUND!**

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

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

MONTH-TO-MONTH

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



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

Same rates for several years!

Minnehaha County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: Interstate 29, mile marker 88, four miles north of Sioux Falls, SD

When: 7:57 p.m., Thursday, March 12, 2026

Vehicle 1: 2001 Chevrolet Monte Carlo

Driver 1: 56-year-old male from Aberdeen, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Vehicle 2: 2025 Peterbilt Semi

Driver 2: 35-year-old male from St. Paul, MN, no injuries

Seat belt Used: Yes

Minnehaha County, S.D. – An Aberdeen man died Thursday in a two-vehicle crash on I-29, four miles north of Sioux Falls, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2001 Chevrolet Monte Carlo was traveling south on Interstate 29 near mile marker 88. The vehicle had come to a complete stop in the driving lane and was struck from behind by an oncoming Peterbilt semi. The Mote Carlo came to rest in the west ditch.

The driver of the Monte Carlo died from injuries sustained in the crash. The driver of the semi was not injured.

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.

EMPLOYMENT

The City of Groton is seeking an experienced lineman to join our municipal electric department. Duties include but are not limited to maintenance, inspection, construction, and repair of the city's electrical distribution systems, street lighting, substations, and related equipment. Applicants must be citizens of the United States, have a high school diploma or GED, and possess a valid commercial driver's license (or be able to acquire CDL within 6 months of employment). Journeyman certification highly preferred.

Benefits package includes paid time off, medical insurance, life insurance, and SD Retirement. Position is open until filled.

If you are interested in applying, please email completed application/resume to city.doug@nvc.net. You can also drop off, or mail completed application/resume to Groton City Hall, 120 North Main St, Groton, SD 57445. The City of Groton is an equal opportunity employer.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota Supreme Court affirms 'stand your ground' ruling in survival bunker shooting lawsuit

BY: JOHN HULT

South Dakota's "stand your ground" law lets people defend themselves with deadly force if they feel their own life is in danger, they're somewhere they're allowed to be, and they aren't engaged in criminal activity at the time they defend themselves.

Assaulting one person an hour before shooting someone else, the South Dakota Supreme Court ruled this week, doesn't count as crime enough to upend an otherwise valid self-defense claim.

The ruling was born of an escalating series of disputes between one resident of a survival bunker community along the southern edge of the Black Hills near Edgemont and employees of the community's managers, Vivos xPointInvestment Group. The concrete bunkers are remnants of a 1940s military weapons storage depot.

Resident David Streeter accused Vivos employees of harassment following his complaints about the community's septic system, the Supreme Court opinion says, and his attempts to get law enforcement to intervene didn't solve the problem.

On Aug. 23, 2024, Streeter chased down a vehicle that sped past his bunker and shoved its driver, a Vivos employee, back into his seat in the confrontation that followed.

Less than an hour later, Streeter got into an argument with another Vivos employee, who'd stopped by Streeter's property to tell him about some work being done down the road. The Supreme Court's ruling described that confrontation as heated, but not violent.

The violence came after that employee reported the incident to another Vivos employee, Kelly Anderson. Anderson, in a series of text messages to a mutual acquaintance of his and Streeter's, signaled his intention to attack Streeter.

The mutual acquaintance called Streeter to warn him. When Anderson arrived and began to threaten Streeter, Streeter drew a handgun and told him to leave. Anderson, in an exchange captured on video, asked Streeter if he'd ever killed anyone. Streeter said yes. Anderson said he had, too, "with his bare hands," the Supreme Court opinion says.

Streeter, a former law enforcement officer, shot Anderson in the chest as he approached the 4-foot-high fence that separated Streeter's property from the rest of the community. Anderson was about a foot away, on the opposite side of that fence, when Streeter fired.



The entrance to the South Dakota Supreme Court at the state Capitol in Pierre. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota

Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 13 of 57

Streeter, who's an emergency medical technician, told his daughter to call police and "rendered medical aid by placing compression on the wound to control the bleeding," the opinion said.

A Fall River County grand jury indicted Streeter for simple assault against the man he'd chased down, but didn't charge him for shooting Anderson.

Anderson opted to file a civil lawsuit. Anderson and Streeter's attorneys volleyed motions over Anderson's request to access the grand jury transcripts for weeks as the case proceeded toward a hearing at which a judge would decide if Streeter was immune from liability on self-defense grounds.

In early 2025, on the Friday before that Monday immunity hearing, Anderson's lawyer asked for a delay to argue for greater access to the grand jury transcripts. The judge denied the request because it came too close to the hearing. The judge ultimately ruled that Streeter had acted within the bounds of South Dakota's self-defense law.

Anderson appealed to the state Supreme Court, saying the judge should've granted the request for a delay and that Streeter's actions didn't qualify as self-defense because he'd been aggressive with someone else the same day.

The high court ruled against Anderson on both issues. His lawyer admitted, the opinion says, that he'd waited to file his request for delay. Under court precedent, the justices ruled, a judge is empowered to refuse a delay request if the request is rooted in procrastination.

On the self-defense claim, the opinion says Streeter was clearly somewhere he was allowed to be, his property, and that the death threats and warning put him in fear of deadly harm.

The court also ruled that Streeter's criminal behavior — his assault of the speeder prior to the shooting incident — didn't alter his right to defend himself from someone else.

The earlier assault occurred "roughly an hour and a half before his use of deadly force against Anderson," the opinion says.

"Streeter was justified in using deadly force in self-defense," it says, and "he was immune from civil liability."

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.

Wind, dry conditions drive growth of Qury Fire near Custer

BY: JOHN HULT

A wildfire a few miles southeast of Custer in South Dakota's Black Hills grew to nearly 8 square miles in size between its ignition on Thursday and Friday morning, officials said early Friday afternoon.

The Qury Fire spread east, away from the city, and "made a significant run of a few miles" on Thursday due to strong winds, said Todd Hoover of the U.S. Forest Service, the fire's incident commander.

Federal, state and local officials are all part of the response team for the fire, Hoover said, which ignited just after 1 p.m. Thursday.

As of Friday afternoon, there were 20-25 fire engines, two crews of firefighters and four bulldozers working to manage the blaze with support from National Guard air operations. The fire was not contained, Hoover said, but the strong winds that drove its rapid spread had died down.

The crews have been focused on "trying to save buildings" thus far, he said. Work to preserve homes is ongoing, but "we're starting to actively move into trying to get some sort of containment at this time."

"It is a large fire," he said. "It is going to take some time."

Custer County Emergency Management Director Steve Esser urged residents to heed road closures, including on Highway 87 through Custer State Park.

"These are hard closures," Esser said. "They're not to be traveled upon by the public."

The Custer County Commission was set to enact a countywide burn ban at a special meeting Friday afternoon.

The latest information on road closures and area evacuations is available through the Custer County

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 14 of 57

Emergency Operations Center at (605) 673-8155.

Updates are also being posted to a Facebook page created for the fire, and the federal InciWeb fire incident map now has a page for Qury Fire information.

The cause of the Qury Fire is under investigation.

The fire ignited on the same day Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden signed a bill into law that will limit wildfire liability for utilities. The law removes "strict liability," meaning liability for damages regardless of a utility's actions surrounding a fire, as an option for plaintiffs who wish to sue over wildfire-related damages.

Once the law takes effect July 1, people who sue will only be able to recover damages from utilities that either fail to file fire mitigation plans with state or local authorities and follow them, or act with criminal intent or exhibit "willful and wanton" misconduct. No claims will be valid four years after a fire, and plaintiffs will be limited in the types of damages they can recover. Utilities would need to identify higher-risk areas, establish inspection and operating standards, implement vegetation management strategies, and coordinate with the appropriate wildfire agencies as part of their mitigation plans.

Black Hills Energy, which services the area around the Qury Fire, initiated a Public Safety Power Shutoff for about 560 customers in eastern Hot Springs and other areas of the southern Black Hills on Thursday afternoon to prevent any new fires sparking from downed power lines. By shortly after 7 p.m. Thursday those customers had power again, according to the utility's website.

The utility "will continue to monitor conditions to help keep our customers and communities safe," its website said on Friday afternoon.

Fire danger is higher than usual. On March 4, KOTA-TV reported that Rapid City experienced its warmest winter on record since the 1800s, at an average daily temperature of 37.4 degrees, 2 degrees warmer than the previous record in 1930. The city also got around half the average amount of winter precipitation.

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.



The Qury Fire near Custer, South Dakota, pictured on March 12, 2026. (Courtesy of Qury Fire information page)

After new law puts guardrails around Future Fund, Johnson shares plan to use it for startups

Rhoden and lawmakers adopted restrictions this legislative session following Noem's controversial uses of economic development money

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

After lawmakers and Gov. Larry Rhoden put new restrictions on a controversial governor-controlled economic development fund, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson pledged Friday that if he's elected governor, he will use \$2 million from the fund to create a new local business startup initiative.

The Future Fund was created in 1987 at the request of then-Gov. George Mickelson, a Republican. South Dakota employers pay fees to the fund when they remit unemployment payroll taxes. The fund was placed under the governor's exclusive control, enabling quick responses when economic opportunities arise.

Uses of the fund have periodically stirred controversy. Republican former Gov. Kristi Noem incited bipartisan backlash with her use of the fund, which included paying for

a fireworks show at Mount Rushmore, a Rapid City-area shooting range that legislators refused to fund, a Sioux Falls rodeo, and a workforce recruitment campaign in which Noem starred.

During the annual legislative session that ended Thursday, state lawmakers narrowly rejected one bill that would have required the governor to seek approval of Future Fund awards from the state Board of Economic Development, and defeated another bill that would have made employer contributions to the fund voluntary rather than automatic.

Rhoden signed a bill into law Tuesday that makes reforms to the Future Fund, including the addition of definitions for acceptable uses, requiring more reporting to legislators about awards, stipulating information required of applicants, directing the Governor's Office of Economic Development to formulate rules governing the fund's use, and requiring the office to make recommendations to the governor about potential awards.

Johnson said his "Launch South Dakota" plan would expand proof-of-concept grants for early-stage companies, increase support for startups, bolster a local business-plan competition, and ensure the best use of federal small-business funding.

"Chasing huge companies like TikTok grabs headlines, but building South Dakota means investing in South Dakotans," Johnson said in a press release.

Rhoden publicly backed Wyoming resident Reid Rasner's failed effort to acquire TikTok and bring its operations to South Dakota last year. A South Dakota Searchlight investigation found little to support Rasner's ability to bid for TikTok, and found that he was more than \$1 million in debt due to a loan he received from a family trust.



U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, participates in a debate on Oct. 15, 2024, in Sioux Falls. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/South

Dakota Searchlight)

Johnson and Rhoden are two of the candidates for the Republican nomination for governor in the June 2 primary election. Another candidate, state House Speaker Jon Hansen, has been critical of many state economic development efforts that he has described as "corporate welfare." Businessman Toby Doeden has said the state is too focused on recruiting out-of-state companies and should focus more on helping homegrown entrepreneurs.

Johnson's 'Launch South Dakota' plan

Key aspects of governor candidate Dusty Johnson's plan to use \$2 million from the Future Fund to help local business startups:

Johnson said existing proof-of-concept programs assist a small number of early stage entrepreneurs in limited fields with \$25,000 in funding. Johnson would increase the number and size of the awards, including the creation of a second, \$25,000 follow-on grant once key milestones are met. He said the program would be expanded to better support software, technology and artificial intelligence startups.

Johnson said his administration would expand support for venture development organizations that provide startup coaching and mentoring to South Dakota startups.

South Dakota's Giant Vision Business Plan Competition runs a "Shark Tank"-style competition in which finalists pitch their businesses for a chance to win \$20,000 in startup funding. The plan would increase the prize pool and expand the event's marketing.

Johnson said South Dakota allocated its entire \$60 million federal State Small Business Credit Initiative allocation to a loan program, missing an opportunity to provide high-growth startups with technical and capital assistance. He said most states used at least some of those dollars for venture development for founders, which is what his administration would do.

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

Homeland Security repair job awaits Trump's pick to replace Noem Oklahoma GOP Sen. Markwayne Mullin awaits March 18 confirmation hearing

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — If Oklahoma GOP Sen. Markwayne Mullin is confirmed by the Senate to lead the Department of Homeland Security, he will take over an agency that has faced a weeks-long funding lapse, public blowback to its immigration enforcement strategy and a bottleneck of disaster relief awards left by his predecessor that drew bipartisan ire.

Additionally, if the United States remains at war with Iran, he'd oversee monitoring for security threats. That is a task some lawmakers are skeptical the department can undertake during its shutdown.

Mullin, who does not need any Democratic support to be confirmed to lead DHS, will have his nomination hearing March 18 before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. The committee will vote to move his nomination to the Senate floor the following day, committee Chair Rand Paul of Kentucky told reporters.

The Oklahoman would take over from Kristi Noem, whom President Donald Trump ousted after a disastrous two days of testimony on Capitol Hill that capped a controversial 14-month tenure as DHS secretary.

"She was tasked to do a very difficult job ... and I think she has performed the best she can do under the circumstances," Mullin said of Noem, shortly after the president announced his intention to nominate him. "Is there always lessons that can be learned? Every day there's something you can do better."

But Mullin would face the same challenges, if not more, once he takes over.

In addition to heading Trump's aggressive immigration push, which is at a low point in popular support

after the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis in January, Mullin would also be tasked with restoring faith in the department's spending decisions and repairing the pipeline for sending relief to disaster-stricken areas.

Noem faced bipartisan scrutiny during hearings this month for her record on those issues, including awarding a \$220 million no-bid contract for an ad campaign to a firm owned by a subordinate's spouse and requiring that she personally approve almost all Federal Emergency Management Agency expenditures.

Noem often clashed with critics, especially Democrats. Mullin indicated he'd try to find more common ground.

"Yes, I'm a Republican. Yes, I'm conservative. But (the) Department of Homeland Security is to keep everybody (safe), regardless if you support me or not," he told reporters. "My focus is to keep the homeland secure."

His time in Congress has not given Mullin a strong background in the subject matter. He's never sat on any committees dealing with DHS policy. He is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which writes funding bills for the entire federal government, but is not a member of the subcommittee that oversees the DHS funding bill.

If the Senate confirms Mullin, he would be the first Native American to lead DHS. He is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation.

Mullin's office referred questions for this story to the White House. In an email to States Newsroom, the White House said the Trump administration has "no DHS related policy announcements to make at this time."

DHS funding

Mullin is a staunch Trump defender and supporter and will be tasked with carrying out his campaign promise of mass deportations of immigrants. To do that, DHS is flush with more than \$175 billion for immigration enforcement and detention, through Republicans' "One, Big Beautiful" law that Mullin voted for.

"I look forward to earning the support of my colleagues in the Senate and carrying out President Trump's mission alongside the department's many capable agencies and the thousands of patriots who keep us safe every day," Mullin wrote in a social media post shortly after the president's announcement.

Polling has found many Americans have soured on the campaign platform that won Trump a second term in the White House as DHS has deployed officers to conduct aggressive immigration enforcement in the interior of the country. Majorities of Democrats and independents said the Minneapolis shootings were a sign of broader problems in immigration enforcement, though most Republicans remained supportive of the administration.

The approach has led to massive protests against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, es-



U.S. Sen. Markwayne Mullin speaks to reporters after a vote at the on March 12, 2026. President Donald Trump has nominated the Oklahoma Republican to lead the Department of Homeland Security. (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 18 of 57

pecially after the deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, both 37-year-old residents of Minneapolis. Another U.S. citizen, Ruben Martinez, was also killed by immigration agents in Texas last year.

Since Good and Pretti's deaths last month, Democrats have blocked an appropriations bill for the department without significant changes in enforcement tactics.

Mullin has argued that the appropriations bill provides an accountability measure in funding body cameras for immigration agents. He has pushed back on any restrictions on officers, such as barring them from covering their faces.

"We're not going to handcuff law enforcement for a useless political exercise," he wrote in a social media post.



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem testifies during a U.S. House Judiciary Committee hearing on March 4, 2026. The hearing was the second in as many days for Noem, who faces questions about her department's handling of immigration enforcement. (Photo by Heather Diehl/Getty Images)

Mullin's reaction to Pretti video resembled Noem's

One of the biggest criticisms from Noem was that she referred to Pretti and Good as domestic terrorists. Multiple videos contradicted those claims, and Noem refused to admit she made a mistake or apologize to their families when she was questioned by lawmakers.

While Mullin didn't use that label, he made a similar claim, implying that Pretti's actions were a felony. Mullin stressed his support for law enforcement.

"Obstructing federal law enforcement is a felony. Most Americans follow ICE instructions without thinking twice," Mullin wrote on social media hours after the shooting. "These patriots are doing a difficult job under an 8,000% rise in death threats."

Mullin was not the only Senate Republican to take that position, but some did take a different view.

Paul joined the top Democrat on the committee that oversees DHS, Gary Peters of Michigan, in grilling the heads of two immigration enforcement agencies within the department about Pretti's death.

"He is retreating at every moment," Paul said of Pretti. "He's trying to get away, and he's being sprayed in the face. I don't think that's de-escalatory. That's an escalatory thing."

Senators will get a chance to question where Mullin will lead the agency and whether he will continue some of Noem's hardline immigration policies, such as the revocation of legal status for millions of immigrants who hail from countries initially granted protections because their home country is deemed too dangerous to return to.

Mullin has often criticized local governments that have policies to not cooperate with or assist the federal government in immigration enforcement.

In an interview with States Newsroom, Peters said he had not spoken with Mullin about leading DHS and looked forward to questioning him before the committee.

In addition to immigration-related agencies and FEMA, the department includes the Cybersecurity and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 19 of 57

Infrastructure Security Agency, the Secret Service and the Coast Guard.

Additionally, the department will manage security for major events: the World Cup and the celebration for the 250th anniversary of the country's founding that will occur blocks from the White House.

FEMA bottleneck

Another Noem policy that drew bipartisan criticism was her requirement she give personal approval of any FEMA contracts or grants worth more than \$100,000.

It effectively created a bottleneck of relief to disaster-stricken places, and lawmakers expressed their frustration to Noem that the policy meant delayed payments.

North Carolina GOP Sen. Thom Tillis berated Noem for his full 10 minutes of questioning when she appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee about how her policy has slowed down recovery efforts in North Carolina, which was hit by the devastating Hurricane Helene in 2024.

It's unclear if Mullin will keep that policy in place.

"The Department of Homeland Security has a very broad jurisdiction and I think there's a lot of work that we need to do," Mullin told reporters.

FEMA's disaster relief fund is somewhat unique among federal programs since Congress has granted it the authority to deficit spend; it cannot run out of money, even during a shutdown.

Trump has sought to downsize FEMA, firing part of its workforce and directing his officials to restructure the agency. There is currently no permanent FEMA administrator.

No DHS assignments in Congress

Mullin spent a decade in the House before being elected to the Senate in a special election in 2022.

In his time in the House from 2013 to 2023, Mullin sat on the Energy and Commerce, Transportation and Infrastructure and Natural Resources committees.

In the Senate, besides Appropriations, he sits on the Armed Services, Indian Affairs and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committees.

He chairs an appropriations subcommittee that handles funding for the legislative branch, and on the HELP Committee, he chairs the panel on Employment and Workplace Safety.

Mullin, whose congressional staff totals nearly 40, based on records from the Legistorm data service, would oversee an agency with more than 272,000 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$64 billion.

Former pro fighter's Senate confrontations

During a 2023 HELP Committee hearing, Mullin challenged International Brotherhood of Teamsters President Sean O'Brien to a physical fight, after heated testimony.

"You know where to find me," Mullin, who is a former professional MMA fighter, said to O'Brien.

Mullin will also have to appear before Paul, who he's referred to as a "freaking snake," for his confirmation hearing. Mullin also expressed sympathy for a neighbor of Paul's, who was charged with assaulting the senator on his front lawn, breaking several ribs.

When pressed by reporters, Paul did not address Mullin's comments.

"We'll see how the hearing goes," he said.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

Six more US troops killed in Iran war, in crash of refueling aircraft

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Department of Defense announced Friday that six more American troops have died as a result of the war in Iran, bringing the total to 13 since the conflict began in late February.

U.S. Central Command wrote in an early-morning social media post that a "KC-135 refueling aircraft went down in western Iraq" on Thursday and that four of the six crew members aboard had been confirmed dead, but posted later that no one survived.

"The circumstances of the incident are under investigation. However, the loss of the aircraft was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire," Central Command said.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair Gen. Dan Caine said during a press conference at the Pentagon the "incident occurred over friendly territory in western Iraq while the crew was on a combat mission."

He reiterated there was no "hostile or friendly fire" that led to the crash.

"We're also aware of a fire on board the USS Gerald R. Ford. We're thinking about the crew there who were injured in the fire," Caine said. "We believe and hope that everyone will be okay."

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command posted on social media late Thursday the fire began "in the ship's main laundry spaces" and that it "was not combat-related and is contained."

The post said the ship was in the Red Sea in support of the Iran war, which the administration has dubbed Operation Epic Fury.

"There is no damage to the ship's propulsion plant, and the aircraft carrier remains fully operational," the post said. "Two Sailors are currently receiving medical treatment for non-life-threatening injuries and are in stable condition."

Before Friday, there had been seven U.S. deaths reported in the conflict.

'Heaviest day' underway

Caine said during the briefing that military officials expect Friday will be the "heaviest day of kinetic fires" in the Iran war since it began on Feb. 28.

"They're continuing to destroy the Iranian Navy to ensure freedom of navigation. And this means going after Iran's minelaying capability and destroying their ability to attack commercial vessels," he said. "And we're targeting their defense industrial base so they cannot rebuild the capabilities that can harm America's interests or our partners in the future."

Caine said while the U.S. military has made "progress" since it began bombing nearly two weeks ago, "Iran still has the capability to harm friendly forces and commercial shipping."

The Pentagon's efforts, he said, remain "complex, dangerous and difficult."

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who was also at the briefing, said he believes Iran's new supreme leader has been "wounded and likely disfigured."

Hegseth also criticized journalists for not providing the government with more favorable coverage of the war in Iran, before moving on to recognize the troops killed during the airplane crash in Iraq.

"War is hell. War is chaos. And as we saw yesterday with the tragic crash of our KC-135 tanker, bad



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks at a briefing at the Pentagon on March 13, 2026. (Screenshot from C-SPAN)

things can happen," he said, later adding that "war, in this context and in pursuit of peace, is necessary."

Air strike on girls' school

Hegseth did not provide any updates about the military's investigation into whether it bombed a girls' school in Iran in the first days of the war, killing at least 168 people.

"I can report that CENTCOM has designated an investigating officer to complete a command investigation," he said. "The command investigation will take as long as necessary to address all the matters surrounding this incident. And the investigating officer is from outside CENTCOM and is a general officer."

Nearly every Democrat in the Senate sent a letter to Hegseth earlier in the week demanding military officials conduct "a swift investigation into the strikes on this school and any other potential U.S. military actions causing civilian harm, and the findings must be released to the public as soon as possible, along with any measures to pursue accountability."

The New York Times reported the same day that an "ongoing military investigation has determined that the United States is responsible for a deadly Tomahawk missile strike on an Iranian elementary school."

Hegseth declined to say exactly what additional objectives President Donald Trump believes the military must accomplish before ending the bombing campaign he began alongside the Israeli government.

"The president has his hand on the throttle and will decide, ultimately, when they've been reached that serve the purposes of the United States of America," he said.

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

North Dakota wants judge to void its \$28M win in pipeline protest case in favor of fed settlement

BY: MARY STEURER

Attorneys for North Dakota and the United States have asked a judge to toss a nearly \$28 million judgment against the federal government related to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests so the parties can pursue a settlement instead.

In exchange, North Dakota would receive a "substantial monetary payment" from the United States and the federal government would drop its pending appeal, according to court records filed late last month.

The lawsuit, filed in 2019, concerns demonstrations against construction of the crude oil pipeline, also known as DAPL, that took place in rural south-central North Dakota in 2016 and 2017.

North Dakota in the suit alleges that the federal government caused the protests to grow in size and intensity by unlawfully allowing demonstrators



Tribal flags hang on a fence in August 2016 near the construction site of the Dakota Access Pipeline north of Cannon Ball, N.D. (Kyle Martin/For the North Dakota Monitor)

to use U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land. The state was then forced to pay millions of dollars to police

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 22 of 57

and clean up the demonstrations, North Dakota claims. The United States denies the state's allegations. North Dakota U.S. District Court Judge Daniel Traynor in April 2025 sided with the state and ordered the executive branch to pay North Dakota the \$28 million sum, a decision the U.S. Department of Justice appealed in June.

Later that summer, the state and federal government told the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals they had entered settlement negotiations and wanted to pause the case.

The parties have now agreed on a potential settlement, according to documents filed in February. The records don't state how much money North Dakota would receive if the agreement is made official.

As part of the settlement, the parties have asked Traynor to axe the \$28 million judgment and to nullify three other orders in which he ruled against the United States. That includes his nearly 120-page opinion from April 2025.

The state and federal government noted in the request that the judge does not have to rescind the rulings just because both parties both want him to. Judges must weigh the interests of the parties against the interests of the public and the courts, the records state.

Attorneys for North Dakota in the filing acknowledged the legal conclusions Traynor made in those orders "could have utility holding the federal government to account" in the future, which could be undermined if the rulings are nullified. But the state believes the time and money saved by avoiding further litigation — as well as avoiding the risk of getting the judgment against the U.S. overturned upon appeal — is worth the trade-off, according to court records.

Attorneys for the U.S. Department of Justice wrote in the request that while the executive branch "respectfully disagrees" with Traynor's decision, it "believes that the public interest would best be served by bringing this matter to a swift close without further proceedings."

Attorney General Drew Wrigley in a Thursday statement said he could not provide further details about the tentative agreement.

The 8th Circuit would have to first send the case back to Traynor before he could grant the parties' requests.

The case went to trial in Bismarck in early 2024. During the four-week trial, the court heard from witnesses including former governors Doug Burgum and Jack Dalrymple, Native activists, federal officials and law enforcement.

The Dakota Access Pipeline carries crude oil from northwest North Dakota to Illinois. It crosses the Missouri River just north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, which prompted the tribe to begin protesting the pipeline in 2016 and 2017 on the grounds that it poses a threat to its water supply and sovereignty.

North Dakota's lawsuit originally requested \$38 million in damages from the federal government. Traynor ordered the executive branch to pay \$28 million since the U.S. Department of Justice previously gave the state \$10 million as compensation for the protests.

This story was originally produced by North Dakota Monitor, 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.

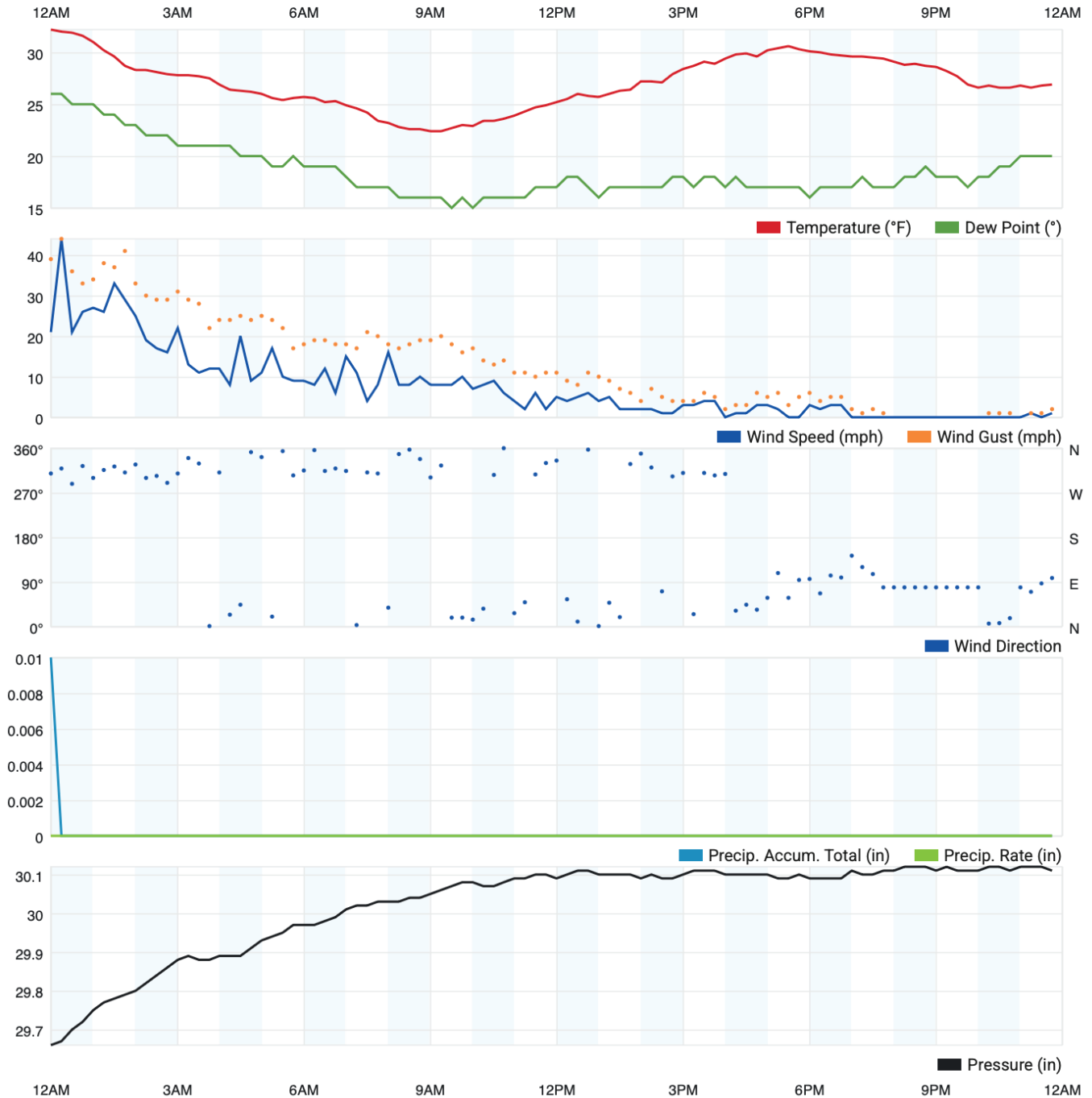
Mary Steurer is a reporter based in Bismarck for the North Dakota Monitor. A native of St. Louis, Steurer previously worked as the local government reporter for the Casper Star-Tribune newspaper in Wyoming.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 23 of 57

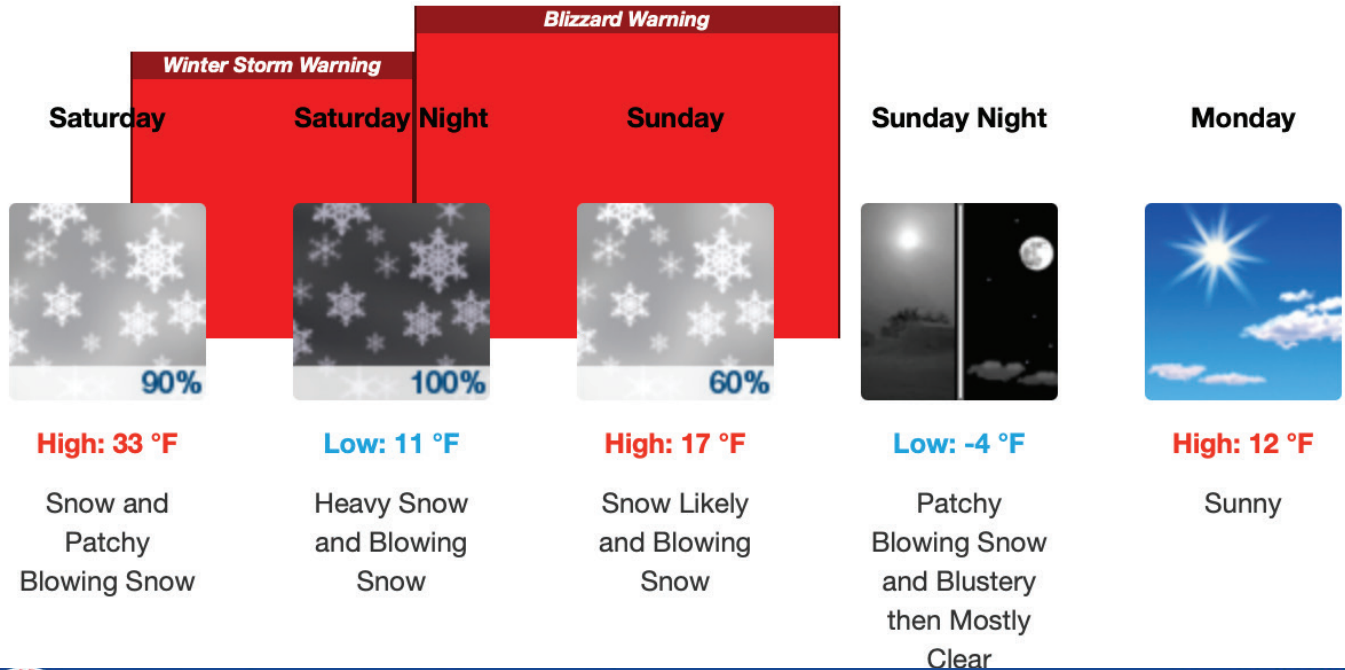
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

March 13, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 24 of 57



Weekend Winter Storm

Heavy Snow + Strong Winds = Major Travel Impacts Likely

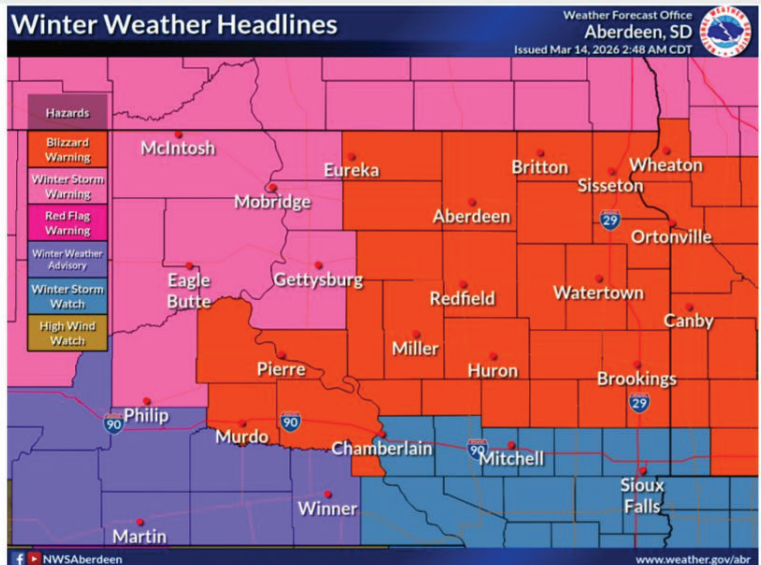
March 14, 2026 4:31 AM CDT

Key Messages

- High confidence in **heavy snow and strong winds** tonight and Sunday.
- Totals possibly as high as **12 to 20 inches** along/north of Hwy 212 in eastern SD.
 - **Snow may accumulate very quickly late tonight through early Sunday morning.**
- Northeast winds increase tonight into Sunday with **gusts of 35 to 50 mph. Major travel impacts likely due to blowing and drifting snow.**

What has Changed

- Further north storm track brings warmer air northward today into Pierre region towards I-90. Opportunity for more mixed precipitation.
- Slightly higher snow totals for higher terrain in the Prairie Coteau.



For headline timing in your area, please visit <https://www.weather.gov/abr/>



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Blizzard Warning remains in effect for much of the region for tonight into the day Sunday. Winter Storm Warnings are in place as well.

Broton Daily Independent

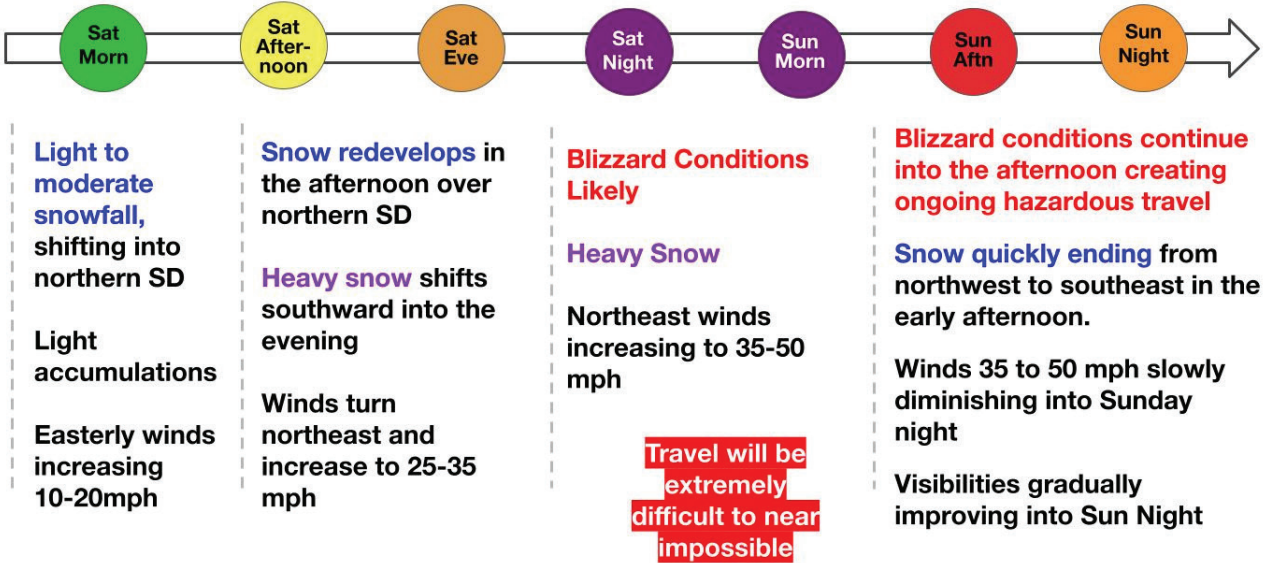
Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 25 of 57



Winter Storm Timeline

March 14, 2026
4:34 AM

Prepare Now for Potential Impacts



Risk Levels	Little to None	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
-------------	----------------	-------	----------	-------	---------

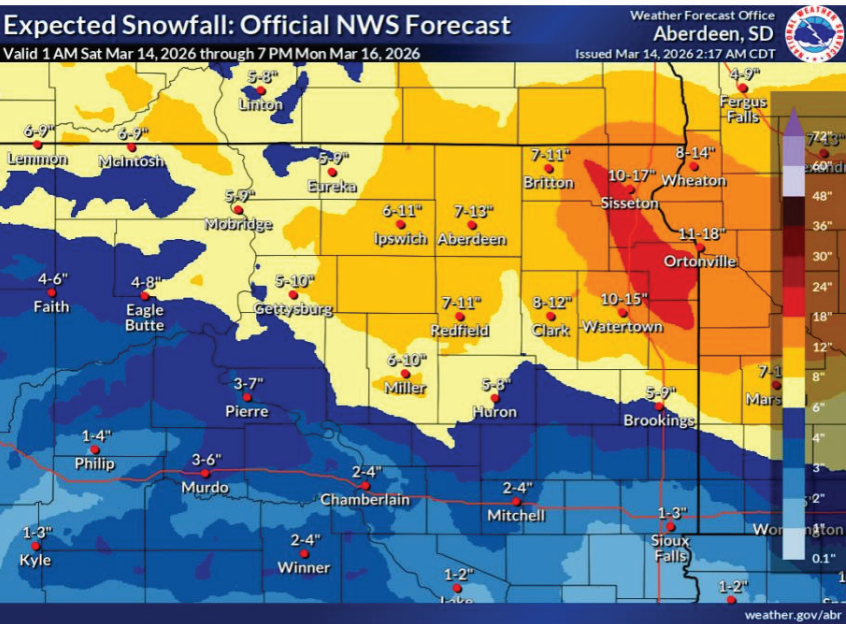
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration U.S. Department of Commerce
National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Total Snowfall Forecast

March 14, 2026
4:36 AM

Total Event Snowfall Starting at 1am CDT Saturday Morning



Key Points

- Highest totals in the Sisseton Hills region of northeast SD. **Totals possibly approaching 20 inches.**
- Snow may accumulate very quickly late tonight through early Sunday morning. **Rates of 1 to 2 inches/hr are possible.**
- Increasing impacts from blowing and drifting snow as winds increase tonight.**
- Travel will be extremely difficult to near impossible late tonight into Sunday morning.**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration U.S. Department of Commerce
National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Groton Daily Independent

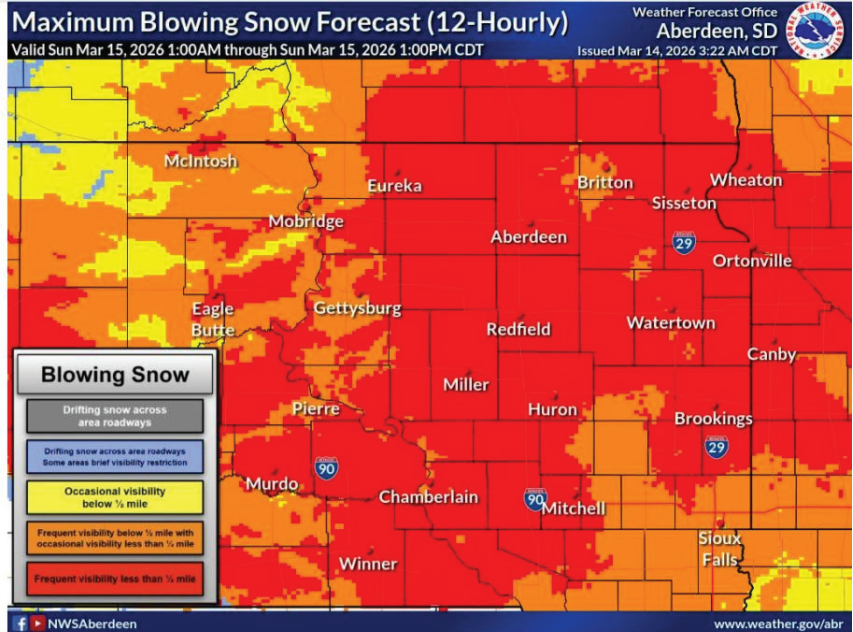
Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 26 of 57



Blowing Snow Impacts

March 14, 2026
4:38 AM CDT

- There will be impacts from blowing snow across most of the region with the **most significant impacts east of the Missouri River Saturday night through Sunday afternoon.**
- Areas in **red** show **frequent visibility potentially less than ¼ mile.**
- Image shows “worst” conditions **late Saturday night into Sunday afternoon.**
 - **Travel will be extremely difficult to near impossible during this time.**



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Worsening conditions are expected tonight into Sunday as northeast winds gust from 35 to 50 mph. This will create areas of blowing and drifting snow, with low visibility around one-quarter mile or less at times, especially for areas east of the Missouri River.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 27 of 57

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 32 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 22 °F at 8:57 AM

Wind: 44 mph at 12:16 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 71 in 1981

Record Low: -31 in 1897

Average High: 41

Average Low: 19

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.35

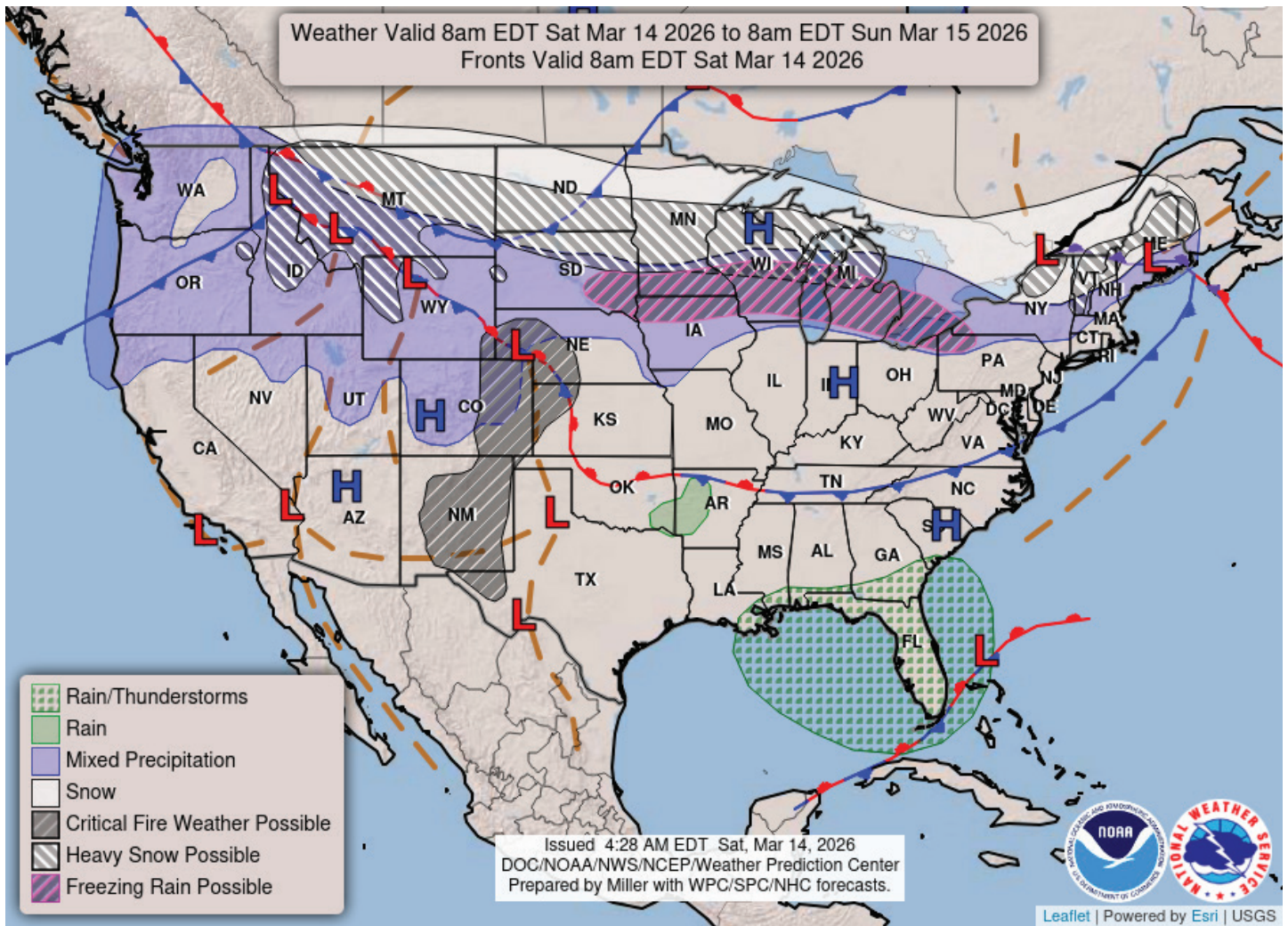
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.52

Precip Year to Date: 1.33

Sunset Tonight: 7.36 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:44 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 28 of 57

Today in Weather History

March 14th, 1989: A fast-moving winter storm produced freezing rain and heavy snow across most of South Dakota. The visibility was reduced to 100 ft within areas of blowing snow. Driving conditions were treacherous, resulting in abandoned vehicles, several accidents, and the temporary closing of I-29 from Sioux Falls to the North Dakota border.

March 14th, 1990: Heavy Snow fell across parts of southwest, central, and north-central South Dakota from the late afternoon on the 13th into the morning hours of the 14th. The highest accumulations were recorded in the north-central part of the state, including 9 inches at Gettysburg, 8 inches at Pollock, and 5 inches at Pine Ridge.

March 14th, 2002: Heavy snow of 6 to 16 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota from the early morning to the evening hours. Some freezing rain fell across the area before changing to snow. Also, the winds increased from the north, blowing snow and reducing visibility. The combination of ice, heavy snow, and blowing snow resulted in challenging travel conditions. There were several accidents across the area, along with many vehicles sliding off the road. Schools either started late or were closed. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Blunt, 7 inches at Murdo, 8 inches at Stephan and Clark, 9 inches at Gann Valley and Miller, and 11 inches at Highmore and Watertown. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included 12 inches at Hayti and Milbank, 14 inches at Castlewood and Presho, 15 inches at Clear Lake, and 16 inches at Kennebec.

1870 — The term blizzard was first applied to a storm which produced heavy snow and high winds in Minnesota and Iowa. (David Ludlum)

1944 — A single storm brought a record 21.6 inches of snow to Salt Lake City UT. (The Weather Channel)

1960 — Northern Georgia was between snowstorms. Gainesville GA received 17 inches of snow during the month, and reported at least a trace of snow on the ground 22 days in March. Snow was on roofs in Hartwell GA from the 2nd to the 29th. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A powerful storm in the western U.S. produced 15 inches of snow in the Lake Tahoe Basin of Nevada, and wind gusts to 50 mph at Las Vegas NV. Thunderstorms in the Sacramento Valley of California spawned a tornado which hit a turkey farm near Corning. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Squalls in the Great Lakes Region continued to produce heavy snow in northwest Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, and produced up to 14 inches of snow in northeast Ohio. Poplar WI reported 27 inches of snow in two days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — High winds in Colorado and Wyoming gusted above 120 mph at Horsetooth Heights CO. High winds in the Central Plains sharply reduced visibilities in blowing dust as far east as Kansas City MO. Winds gusting to 72 mph at Hill City KS reduced the visibility to a city block in blowing dust. Soil erosion in north-west Kansas damaged nearly five million acres of wheat. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Fifty-three cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s from the Gulf coast to the Great Lakes Region. Charleston WV was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 89 degrees. It was the fourth of five consecutive days with record warm temperatures for many cities in the eastern U.S. There were 283 daily record highs reported in the central and eastern U.S. during between the 11th and the 15th of March. (The National Weather Summary)

2007 — The temperature in Concord, NH, reaches a record high of 74 degrees less than one week after a record low temperature of 7 degrees below zero on March 8, an 81 degree temperature swing in six days.

Our Struggle With Guilt

Through Jesus, we can live without guilt, free from the weight of past mistakes.

1 John 1:5-9: 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

For some of us, guilt is a constant companion. We live under the weight of past mistakes and the fear of future wrongdoing. Even if we try to move forward, self-reproach tags along.

Guilt that results from breaking biblical or man-made laws is legitimate. When we transgress, the Holy Spirit points out what is wrong and how to correct it. Then, in response to our confession, God offers us forgiveness and cleansing from guilt every single time (Psalm 32:5).

But some guilty feelings we experience are false. Where do they originate? There are several answers. Through lies and accusations, the enemy seeks to replace inner peace with turmoil and joy with discouragement. Legalism, too, can be a source of guilt. God's Word establishes the way we are to live, but some Christians and churches impose additional rules. Childhood experiences can also bring out the negative emotion of guilt. Whether this stems from the aftermath of traumatic events or the feeling that we didn't meet parental expectations, the experience can prompt us to judge ourselves harshly.

Romans 8:1 tells us, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If you struggle with false guilt, ask the Lord to help you remember who you are in Him.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 30 of 57

The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$52.00/year
- Colored \$80.00/year
- Colored \$49.00/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$35.00/year

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

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

E-mail _____

Password _____

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

paypal.me/paperpaul

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 31 of 57



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.13.26

3 29 44 50 57 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 3 Mins 4 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.13.26

6 19 36 40 55 9

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.11.26

1 3 22 28 40 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$18,150,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 3 Mins 4 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.11.26

2 13 14 17 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$23,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 4 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.11.26

6 7 42 43 59 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 4 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.11.26

3 6 55 58 63 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$75,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 4 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA State Tournament=

Consolation Semifinal=

Class A=

Sioux Valley 61, Lakota Tech 53

West Central 46, Wagner 38

Class AA=

Mitchell 57, Sioux Falls Jefferson 51

Rapid City Stevens 70, Tea 52

Class B=

Bennett County 77, Centerville 68

Lyman 53, Colman-Egan 48

Semifinal=

Class A=

Lennox 57, Hamlin 41

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 58, Sioux Falls Christian 45

Class AA=

Brandon Valley 73, Aberdeen Central 44

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 66, Sioux Falls Washington 62

Class B=

Ethan 54, Corsica/Stickney 34

Harding County 58, Parkston 42

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

US bombs military sites on Iranian island as Trump threatens its oil infrastructure

By JON GAMBRELL, DAVID RISING, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and MIKE CORDER Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — President Donald Trump said the U.S. destroyed military sites on an island vital to Iran's oil network and warned that its oil infrastructure could be next if Iran continues to interfere with the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump said U.S. forces on Friday "obliterated" targets on Iran's Kharg Island, which is home to the primary terminal that handles the country's oil exports. The speaker of the Iranian parliament had warned that such strikes would provoke a new level of retaliation.

Meanwhile, an American official said 2,500 more Marines and an amphibious assault ship are being sent to the Middle East nearly two weeks into the war with the Islamic Republic.

Iran has continued to launch widespread missile and drone attacks on Israel and neighboring Gulf states, and effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passes, even as U.S. and Israeli warplanes pummel military and other targets across Iran.

The humanitarian crisis in Lebanon deepened, with nearly 800 people killed and 850,000 displaced as Israel launched waves of strikes against Iran-backed Hezbollah militants and warned there would be no let up.

Marines and assault ship will add to US forces

Elements from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli have been ordered to the Middle East, according to the U.S. official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 33 of 57

of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans.

Marine Expeditionary Units are able to conduct amphibious landings, but they also specialize in bolstering security at embassies, evacuating civilians, and providing disaster relief. The deployment does not necessarily indicate that a ground operation is imminent or will take place.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the new Marine deployment.

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, as well as the Tripoli and other amphibious assault ships carrying the Marines, are based in Japan and have been in the Pacific Ocean for several days, according to images released by the military. The Tripoli was spotted by commercial satellites sailing alone near Taiwan, putting it more than a week away from the waters off Iran.

Earlier in the week, the Navy had 12 ships, including the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and eight destroyers, operating in the Arabian Sea. Should the Tripoli join this flotilla, it would be the second-largest ship behind the Lincoln in the region.

While the total number of U.S. service members on the ground in the Middle East is not clear, Al-Udeid Air Base alone, one of the largest in the region, typically houses some 8,000 U.S. troops in Qatar.

US strikes Persian Gulf island after Iranian warning

The U.S. strikes on Iran's Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf targeted military sites but left its oil infrastructure alone for now, Trump said in a social media post.

But he warned that if Iran or anyone else interferes with the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz, he will reconsider his decision not to "wipe out the Oil Infrastructure."

Iranian parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf warned on Thursday in a social media post that attacks on the islands on Iran's southern maritime frontier would cause Iran to "abandon all restraint," underscoring how central they are to the country's economy and security.

On Saturday, Iran's joint military command reiterated its threat that it will attack the U.S.-linked oil and energy facilities in the region if the Islamic Republic's oil infrastructure is hit.

Ebrahim Zolfaghari, spokesperson for the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, warned they will target "all oil, economic, and energy infrastructures belonging to oil companies across the region that have American shares or cooperate with America."

The joint military command also threatened to attack cities in the United Arab Emirates, saying the U.S. used "ports, docks and hideouts" within UAE cities to launch strikes on the islands, without providing evidence. It called on people to evacuate those areas where it said U.S. forces were sheltering

Iran's semiofficial Fars news agency Saturday said the U.S. strikes caused no damage to oil infrastructure on the island.

It reported at least 15 explosions followed the strikes, which it said targeted an air defense facility, a naval base, the airport control tower and an offshore oil company's helicopter hangar.

Missile strikes inside US Embassy compound in Baghdad

A missile struck a helipad inside the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad, two Iraqi security officials said.

Associated Press footage showed a column of smoke rising Saturday morning over the embassy compound.

The sprawling embassy complex, one of the largest U.S. diplomatic facilities in the world, has been repeatedly targeted by rockets and drones fired by Iran-aligned militias.

There was no immediate comment from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. On Friday, the embassy renewed its Level 4 security alert for Iraq, warning that Iran and Iran-aligned militia groups have previously carried out attacks against U.S. citizens, interests and infrastructure, and "may continue to target them."

US says 15,000 targets struck in Iran since the start of the war

Israel earlier announced another wave of strikes in Iran targeting infrastructure, and said its air force had hit more than 200 targets in the last 24 hours, including missile launchers, defense systems and weapons production sites.

In Washington, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said that over 15,000 enemy targets have been struck — more than 1,000 a day since the war began.

He also sought to address concerns about the bottling of the Strait of Hormuz, telling reporters: "We have been dealing with it and don't need to worry about it."

Trump says US bombed military sites on an island vital to Iran's oil network

By JON GAMBRELL, DAVID RISING, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and MIKE CORDER Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — President Donald Trump said the U.S. bombed military sites Friday on an island vital to Iran's oil network, while an American official said 2,500 more Marines and an amphibious assault ship are being sent to the Middle East nearly two weeks into the war with the Islamic Republic.

Trump said U.S. forces "obliterated" targets on Iran's Kharg Island — home to the primary terminal that handles the country's oil exports — and warned that the island's oil infrastructure could be next. Just a day before, the speaker of the Iranian parliament said such a strike would provoke a new level of retaliation.

Earlier Friday in the Iranian capital, a large explosion rocked a central square where thousands of people gathered for an annual state-organized rally to support the Palestinians and call for Israel's demise. Israel had warned that it would target the area in central Tehran.

There were no reports of casualties. The decision to proceed with the demonstration attended by some senior government officials, and Israel's threat to target it, underscored the fierce determination on both sides in a war that has rattled the global economy and shows no sign of letting up.

Iran has continued to launch widespread missile and drone attacks on Israel and neighboring Gulf states, and has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passes, even as U.S. and Israeli warplanes pummel military and other targets across Iran.

The humanitarian crisis in Lebanon deepened, with nearly 800 people killed and 850,000 displaced as Israel launched waves of strikes against Iran-backed Hezbollah militants and warned there would be no let up.

In an interview with Fox News, Trump said the war would end "when I feel it in my bones." He was also more measured about whether Iranians could topple the Islamic government.

"So I really think that's a big hurdle to climb for people that don't have weapons," Trump said, citing Iran's paramilitary Basij force, which has played a central role in crushing recent nationwide protests.

Marines and assault ship will add to US forces

Elements from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli have been ordered to the Middle East, according to the U.S. official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans.

Marine Expeditionary Units are able to conduct amphibious landings, but they also specialize in bolstering security at embassies, evacuating civilians and disaster relief. The deployment does not necessarily indicate that a ground operation is imminent or will take place.

The new Marine deployment was first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, as well as the Tripoli and other amphibious assault ships carrying the Marines, are based in Japan and have been in the Pacific Ocean for several days, according to images released by the military. The Tripoli was spotted by commercial satellites sailing alone near Taiwan, putting it more than a week away from the waters off Iran.

Earlier in the week, the Navy had 12 ships, including the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and eight destroyers, operating in the Arabian Sea. Should the Tripoli join this flotilla, it would be the second-largest ship behind the Lincoln in the region.

While the total number of U.S. service members on the ground in the Middle East is not clear, Al-Udeid Air Base alone, one of the largest in the region, typically houses some 8,000 U.S. troops in Qatar.

US strikes Persian Gulf island after Iran's warning

The U.S. strikes on Iran's Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf targeted military sites but left alone its oil infrastructure for now, Trump said in a social media post.

But he warned that if Iran or anyone else interferes with the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz, he will reconsider his decision not to "wipe out the Oil Infrastructure."

On Thursday, the Iranian parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, warned in a social media post that attacks on the islands on Iran's southern maritime frontier would cause Iran to "abandon all restraint,"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 35 of 57

underscoring how central they are to the country's economy and security.

Explosion rocks area of mass demonstration

The explosion in Tehran rocked the Ferdowsi Square area midday, where thousands had gathered for an annual Quds Day rally, chanting "death to Israel" and "death to America."

Israel had issued a warning on a Farsi-language X account for people to clear the area shortly before the blast. But few Iranians would have seen it, as authorities have almost completely shut down the internet. Footage showed people chanting "God is greatest," as smoke rose in the area.

The Israeli military later posted a second message in Farsi, noting the head of Iran's judiciary was at the rally and criticizing Iran for blocking many from seeing their warning.

The hard-liner who leads Iran's judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, was giving an interview on state television at the demonstration when the strike happened. His bodyguards encircled him, as he raised his fist and said Iran "under this rain and missiles will never withdraw."

US says 15,000 targets struck in Iran since the start of the war

Israel earlier announced another wave of strikes in Iran targeting infrastructure, and said its air force had hit more than 200 targets in the last 24 hours, including missile launchers, defense systems and weapons production sites.

In Washington, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said that over 15,000 enemy targets have been struck — more than 1,000 a day since the war began.

He also sought to address concerns about the bottling of the Strait of Hormuz, telling reporters: "We have been dealing with it and don't need to worry about it."

All six crew of US refueling plane confirmed dead after crash

The U.S. military confirmed on Friday that all six crew members of an American KC-135 refueling plane were killed when it crashed in Iraq, bringing the U.S. death toll to at least 13 service members.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said three of the victims were from his state and had deployed with the Ohio Air National Guard's 121st Air Refueling Wing.

U.S. Central Command said the crash wasn't related to friendly or hostile fire, and that two aircraft were involved, including one that landed safely.

The KC-135 is the fourth publicly acknowledged aircraft to crash as part of the U.S. military's operations against Iran. Last week, three American fighter jets were mistakenly downed by friendly Kuwaiti fire.

New Iranian attacks across the region

Iran continued its daily attacks on oil and other infrastructure across the Gulf. In Oman, two people were killed when two drones crashed in the Sohar region, the Oman News Agency reported.

The U.S. Navy destroyer USS Oscar Austin shot down an Iranian ballistic missile over Turkey on Friday, a U.S. official said on condition of anonymity in order to discuss ongoing military operations. It was the third such interception over the NATO member in the last two weeks.

Fighting escalates between Israel and Hezbollah

An Israeli strike in southern Lebanon hit a health care center in the village of Burj Qalaouiyah, killing 12 doctors, paramedics and nurses, the Lebanese Health Ministry said early Saturday.

Earlier, at least eight people were killed in a strike on the southern coastal city of Sidon, the ministry said Friday.

The ministry said 773 people — including more than 100 children and 18 paramedics — have been killed since fighting erupted between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah militants 10 days ago.

US eases some Russian oil sanctions but crude prices stay high

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

The U.S. is temporarily easing some sanctions on Russian oil shipments, reflecting global concerns over sharply higher crude prices due to supply shortages stemming from the Iran war.

The move, intended to soothe jittery markets over the disruption of Middle Eastern oil and gas supplies, underlines how the war has boosted Moscow's ability to profit from its energy exports, a pillar of the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 36 of 57

Kremlin's budget as it presses its invasion of Ukraine.

U.S. sanctions will not apply for 30 days on deliveries of Russian oil that's been loaded on tankers as of Thursday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on X. That would give reluctant purchasers a green light to take the oil without worrying that they will run afoul of U.S. sanctions rules.

The Trump administration earlier had granted a 30-day reprieve to refineries in India.

Bessent said the "narrowly tailored, short-term measure" was part of President Donald Trump's "decisive steps to promote stability in global energy markets" and to "keep prices low."

Allowing the sale of stranded Russian oil would provide no additional financial benefit for the Russian government because the Kremlin already taxed the oil when it was extracted from the ground, Bessent said. Washington has sanctioned Russia's two biggest oil companies, Lukoil and Rosneft, as part of efforts to end the fighting in Ukraine. Except for the 30-day reprieve for floating oil, those sanctions remain in place.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday the move will help stabilize global energy markets, adding it was impossible to do so "without significant volumes of Russian oil."

But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the action "does not help peace."

"This easing alone by the United States could provide Russia with about \$10 billion for the war," Zelenskyy said. "It spends the money from energy sales on weapons, and all of this is then used against us."

Oil prices stayed high after the announcement

The price of international benchmark Brent crude eased after the announcement but soon rose again, breaking through \$100 to trade at \$103.24 per barrel as of 1800 GMT (2 p.m. EDT) Friday. That is still well above \$72.87, where Brent traded on Feb. 27, the eve of the war.

The fighting has choked off most tanker transport through the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which 20% of the world's oil supply typically passes. That has dealt a massive energy shock to the global economy and threatened increased inflation around the world.

"In the short term this slightly increases available supply on the global market, which helps contain the current spike in oil prices," said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy expert at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. "The impact on prices should therefore be modestly downward, or at least stabilizing."

Analysts estimate about 125 million barrels of Russian oil are currently being shipped. That equals five or six days' worth of normal shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, or a bit over one day's worth of global consumption of about 101 million barrels per day.

Sanctions have cut into Russia's oil revenues.

After President Vladimir Putin ordered his full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the European Union — once Moscow's biggest customer — stopped taking Russian oil, and many Western customers also shunned it.

Instead, the oil flowed to China and India, where it sold for a discount due to efforts by the U.S., the EU and Kyiv's other allies to impose a price cap on Russian oil that was enforced through shipping and insurance companies.

Over time, Russia was able to dodge the cap by lining up a fleet of used tankers with obscure ownership and insurance based in countries that weren't observing the cap.

Along with the sanctions on Lukoil and Rosneft, Ukraine's allies penalized more and more of the individual vessels in Russia's "shadow fleet." Customers in China and India started demanding even bigger discounts to compensate for the risk of running afoul of sanctions, for the hassle of concealing the origin of the oil, or for finding workarounds that skirted banks reluctant to handle payments for sanctioned oil.

In December, Russia's Urals blend traded under \$40 per barrel, some \$25 below Brent. That slashed the Kremlin's oil revenues to their lowest levels since the invasion. Oil and gas exports typically supply 20% to 30% of the federal budget.

Rising oil prices boost Russia's market position

Russian oil has risen along with oil prices generally and now trades at over \$80 per barrel — a boost to its financial fortunes if disruptions continue in the Strait of Hormuz and keep prices high while refineries in Asia need to replace supplies no longer available from the Middle East.

Russia's daily revenue from oil sales during the Iran war has been on average 14% higher than in Feb-

ruary, according to the nonprofit Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. Russia has been earning 510 million euros (\$588 million) every day this month from oil and liquefied natural gas exports, according to Isaac Levi of the CREA.

But there's still a big discount to Brent due to sanctions. The latest U.S. move "likely narrows the Urals discount somewhat" by reducing sanctions risk, Tagliapietra said. But since it's limited, the U.S. move "does not fundamentally change the structure of longer-term Russian oil flows or sanctions pressure."

Former Russian Central Bank official Sergei Aleksashenko said the move "will not be a very significant boost" to the Russian budget because the oil was going to find buyers anyway -- especially given the disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz.

The Trump administration may not have been ready for such a dramatic spike or for a prolonged war, said Aleksashenko, head of economics at the NEST Centre, founded by exiled Russian tycoon and opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Now that gasoline prices in the U.S. have risen along with oil, "the president should say something, that 'I'm dealing with the problem,'" he said. That includes the break for India and the release along with other countries of 400 million barrels of strategic oil reserves.

"In my view it's more rhetoric and perception," he said.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said leaders of the Group of Seven democracies discussed Russian oil with Trump this week and that "six members expressed a very clear view that this is not the right signal to send."

Old Dominion shooter was released from prison early after completing drug program

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The man who opened fire in a classroom at Virginia's Old Dominion University completed a drug treatment program that allowed him early release from federal prison, even though he was convicted of a terrorism charge that should have disqualified him from that benefit.

Mohamed Bailor Jalloh was sentenced to 11 years in prison after pleading guilty in 2017 to providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, the Islamic State group, and was released about 2½ years early, according to prison records.

The federal Bureau of Prisons confirmed Friday that Jalloh was released in December 2024 because of a loophole in a legal provision that allows some inmates to shave time off their sentences by completing a substance abuse treatment program.

The agency told The Associated Press that it has since closed the loophole and has changed its policies to bar inmates with terrorism-related convictions from being released in that manner. It said that its previous attempts to update a list of excluded offenses had stalled in negotiations with the union representing correctional workers, the Bureau of Prisons said.

Since canceling the union contract last year "not one inmate with terrorism related charges has received time credit" for completing the drug treatment program, the agency said.

Under federal law, violent offenders aren't eligible for sentence reductions through the prison system's drug treatment program. The program, known as RDAP, is typically available only to inmates with drug-related charges, which Jalloh didn't have.

"It's highly insulting to put the blame on the union. We have no say so in that," union official and former correctional worker Jose Rojas said.

Jalloh, a former Virginia Army National Guard member who authorities said was taking online classes at the university, killed one person and wounded two other people in Thursday's shooting. ROTC students subdued and killed him.

Some elected officials questioned how someone with known ties to the Islamic State group was able to carry out such an attack.

"The horrific tragedy that occurred today on ODU's campus never should have happened," U.S. Rep. Jen

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 38 of 57

Kiggans, who represents the congressional district neighboring the university, wrote on Facebook.

Jalloh had been incarcerated at a low-security federal prison in Allenwood, Pennsylvania, and was transferred to a residential reentry center, or halfway house, in the Baltimore area in August 2024, the Bureau of Prisons said. He was released from federal custody on Dec. 23, 2024.

Jalloh was on probation, known as supervised release in the federal system, when he attacked Old Dominion on Thursday. Based on his release date, that would've run into 2029.

A probation officer visited Jalloh's Sterling, Virginia, home every six months and was last there in November, according to a law enforcement affidavit filed Friday against a man charged with supplying a gun to Jalloh.

Confessions to undercover agents

Jalloh's October 2016 plea came after a three-month sting operation in which he, then 26, confessed to an undercover FBI agent that he was thinking about carrying out an attack similar to the 2009 shootings at Fort Hood, which left 13 people dead. Authorities launched the 2016 operation after Jalloh made contact with members of the Islamic State group in Africa earlier that year.

Jalloh later told the informant that the Islamic State group had asked if he wanted to participate in an attack. He tried to donate \$500 to the group, but the money actually went to an account controlled by the FBI, according to court documents.

Jalloh then tried to buy an AR-15 assault rifle from a Virginia gun store but was turned away because he lacked the proper paperwork. The affidavit says he returned the next day and bought a different assault rifle. Prosecutors said the rifle was rendered inoperable before Jalloh left the store, unbeknownst to Jalloh. He was arrested the following day.

Debate over sentencing

The Justice Department in 2017 requested a 20-year prison sentence for Jalloh, noting that he had made multiple attempts to join the Islamic State group and had attempted to acquire a gun to carry out a murder plot.

"The defendant was fully aware of what he was doing, and the consequences of those actions. His only misgivings seemed to be a fear that he would waver at the critical moment," prosecutors wrote in a sentencing memorandum.

They added: "By putting the idea of this murder plot into religious terms, and by suggesting that murdering members of the US military would be a path to heaven, the defendant showed how strongly committed he was to the deadly ideology" of the Islamic State group.

Jalloh's lawyers asked for a sentence of 6½ years in prison and requested that he be placed in a facility that provides residential drug treatment for inmates with addiction and substance abuse issues.

U.S. District Judge Liam O'Grady, an appointee of former President George W. Bush, sentenced him instead to 11 years in prison, with credit for time served in jail since his July 2016 arrest.

The judge also ordered Jalloh to participate in a program for substance abuse testing and treatment, mental health treatment, and requested that he be evaluated for the federal prison system's residential drug program.

Completing the Residential Drug Abuse Program can reduce an inmate's prison sentence by up to a year, according to the federal Bureau of Prisons.

In addition, some inmates who stay out of trouble in prison can reduce their sentence by earning up to 54 days of good conduct time credit for each year of their sentence. However, under the 2018 prison reform law known as the First Step Act, inmates convicted of terrorism-related offenses are not eligible for such credit.

Troubled shooter lured by radical cleric

Little is publicly known about Jalloh, who was a naturalized citizen from Sierra Leone. But court documents depict him as a troubled man who was radicalized by Anwar al-Awlaki, a well-known American imam who became an al-Qaida propagandist.

The Virginia Army National Guard confirmed he served as a specialist from 2009 until 2015, when he was honorably discharged. Jalloh told a government informant he quit the National Guard after hearing

lectures from al-Awlaki, according to a 2016 FBI affidavit filed in his criminal case.

In a letter to the federal judge that presided over his sentencing, Jalloh wrote: "I feel deep regret in having been driven by my emotions rather than my intellect and becoming involved with such an evil organization. ... I reject and deplore terrorism and any groups associated with it, especially ISIL."

He wrote that he started using drugs after his girlfriend ended their six-year relationship.

"The pain I felt internally was unbearable, and drugs and alcohol were the only things that took that pain away," Jalloh wrote. "I started doing marijuana, coke and mushrooms using one of them at least on a daily basis in order to kill the pain I was in and to fill in the void I felt internally."

The letter itself remains under seal, but his lawyer included excerpts of it in his sentencing memorandum.

Man who rammed into Michigan synagogue had just lost family in an Israeli strike in Lebanon

By COREY WILLIAMS, ED WHITE and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DEARBORN HEIGHTS, Mich. (AP) — A Lebanese-born man who had learned a week earlier that four of his family members were killed in an Israeli airstrike in his native country, waited in his car outside a synagogue for two hours before ramming into the building where dozens of children were inside.

Authorities said Friday that Ayman Mohammad Ghazali, 41, crashed his car into Temple Israel outside Detroit on Thursday afternoon, then started firing his gun through the windshield, exchanging fire with an armed security guard.

Following the attack Thursday, a person familiar with the matter speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity said security guards in the building killed the gunman. Later, authorities said guards "neutralized" him. But Jennifer Runyan, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Detroit field office, said during a news conference Friday that ultimately Ghazali fatally shot himself after he got stuck in his vehicle and the engine caught fire. Officials later found large quantities of commercial grade fireworks and several jugs of a liquid believed to be gasoline.

One of the largest Reform synagogues in the US

The FBI, which is leading the investigation, described the attack on one of the nation's largest Reform synagogues, located in suburban West Bloomfield Township north of Detroit, as an act of violence targeting the Jewish community.

Runyan said that law enforcement didn't have enough evidence to call the attack an act of terror at this time, but said that investigations were ongoing.

None of the 140 children, teachers and staff inside the synagogue were injured, authorities said.

The agency has not provided an exact motive for the attack. "We're just 30 hours into this, and we're letting the facts and evidence lead," Runyan said.

Temple Israel had taken steps to prepare for an attack. Last summer, the synagogue announced it was hiring a former local police lieutenant as its full-time head of security to oversee its in-house, armed security guards. Earlier this year, its clergy and staff underwent active shooter prevention and preparedness training, according to a post on Temple Israel's Facebook page.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and U.S. Sen. Elissa Slotkin during a news conference Friday praised Temple Israel's private security for swiftly stopping the attack.

"If they had not all done their jobs almost perfectly, we would be talking about an immense tragedy here with children gone," Slotkin said.

Ghazali was a father, restaurant cook and US citizen

Ghazali lived in a single-story brick home in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn Heights about 38 miles (61 kilometers) south of the synagogue. On Friday, the front window was boarded, the front door was padlocked and an Amazon package addressed to Ghazali sat on the porch.

"In the four years I've lived here, we never really got past pleasantries," said Chadi Zreik, who lives two houses down. "We all got acquainted with him in the last 24 hours."

Ghazali came to the U.S. in 2011 on an immediate relative visa as the spouse of a U.S. citizen and was

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 40 of 57

granted U.S. citizenship in 2016, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

His family was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Lebanon, official says

An Israeli airstrike on March 5 killed four people in the town of Mashgharah, Lebanese officials reported. Israel has stepped up attacks on the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon as the war with Iran has spread violence across the Middle East.

A local official in Mashgharah told the AP on Friday that the airstrike killed Ghazali's two brothers, a niece and a nephew at their home just after sunset as they were having their fast-breaking meal during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The official, who requested anonymity because he could not publicly discuss details of the airstrike, told the AP that Kassim and Ibrahim Ghazali were killed, along with Ibrahim Ghazali's children, Ali and Fatima. Their mother was seriously wounded and remains in the hospital, the official said.

A Michigan mosque held a service for his relatives

Dearborn Heights and its larger neighbor, Dearborn, have some of the largest populations of Arab Americans in the U.S. Signs of the culture are everywhere, from restaurants to mosques.

Dearborn Heights Mayor Mo Baydoun spoke to reporters Friday about Ghazali losing family members overseas.

"That grief is real and it's heartbreaking," Baydoun said, "But there is never an excuse for violence, especially violence directed at a sacred space."

Osama Siblani, publisher of The Arab American News in Dearborn, said it's common to hold a memorial service in the U.S. for someone who died overseas. "Sharing feelings always gives you comfort, whether in bad times or good times. You don't feel like you're alone," Siblani said.

A flier last weekend promoted a service for Ghazali's relatives at the Islamic Institute of America in Dearborn Heights. The mosque's leader, Imam Hassan Qazwini, said Friday he had seen Ghazali only once. He strongly condemned the synagogue attack, saying houses of worship should be spared from political violence.

"Islam forbids holding innocent people accountable for acts done by others," Qazwini said in a text message to an AP reporter. "The unjustified Israeli attack on civilians in Iran and Lebanon gives no blank check to anyone attacking synagogues, civilians and peaceful communities."

Synagogues and other houses of worship on edge since Iran war

Synagogues around the world have been ramping up security since the U.S. and Israel launched missile strikes against Iran on Feb. 28.

At Temple Israel, a security officer was hit by the vehicle and knocked unconscious but did not suffer life-threatening injuries, Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard said. And 63 law enforcement officers were treated for smoke inhalation.

More than 600 law enforcement officers responded to the 911 calls on Thursday.

Oakland County is Michigan's second-largest county with roughly 1.3 million people. The majority of Detroit-area Jewish residents live there. Temple Israel has 12,000 members, according to its website.

The attack was the second at a house of worship in Michigan within the past year. Last September, a former Marine fatally shot four people at a church north of Detroit and set it ablaze. The FBI later said he was motivated by "anti-religious beliefs" against The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Justice Department charges man accused of selling gun to Old Dominion University shooter

By ALLEN G. BREED, MICHAEL R. SISAK and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — A man was charged Friday with selling a stolen gun to Mohamed Bailor Jalloh, a former member of the Army National Guard who used it to kill one person and wound two others at Old Dominion University, federal authorities said.

The charges come a day after the attack by Jalloh, who had previously spent eight years in prison for

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 41 of 57

attempting to aid the Islamic State group. Authorities say Jalloh yelled "Allahu akbar" before opening fire in a classroom at the Virginia school and being killed by ROTC students.

The shooting happened in a class attended by active duty servicemembers and ROTC students, according to court papers. Jalloh twice asked those in the room to confirm that it was an ROTC event before he began to shoot, the document says. Jalloh was taking online classes at the university at the time of the shooting.

ROTC students receive a scholarship to attend college while training to become commissioned officers in the U.S. military.

Shooter told colleague he needed a gun for protection

The man charged Friday, Kenya Chapman, told federal agents in an interview that he stole the gun from a car in Newport News, Virginia, about a year before the shooting and recently sold it to Jalloh, according to an affidavit filed in court. Chapman said he met Jalloh at work and that Jalloh told him he needed the gun for protection as a delivery driver, the affidavit says.

Chapman said he knew Jalloh had spent some time behind bars but denied knowing he had a previous felony conviction, which made it illegal for Jalloh to possess a firearm. He told agents he had no idea Jalloh would commit the attack, the affidavit says.

Chapman is charged with making a false statement during a firearm purchase and engaging in the business of firearms dealing without a license. Chapman's attorneys declined to comment Friday.

"Chapman allegedly stole a firearm and illegally sold it to a convicted terrorist, who murdered a decorated American veteran, and he will finally face the full weight of justice," U.S. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a social media post.

The gun's serial number was partially obliterated, complicating authorities' efforts to trace the firearm. But authorities ultimately found Chapman through phone records showing multiple calls between him and Jalloh in the week prior to the shooting, according to the affidavit.

Federal authorities had previously investigated Chapman in 2021 for straw purchases, when someone buys a gun for a person who can't get it legally themselves. He was issued a "straw purchaser warning letter" and he wrote a letter of apology after admitting to the straw purchases in 2021, according to the document.

The case was presented to the U.S. attorney at the time but the office declined to prosecute, according to the Justice Department.

Shooter was released early from federal prison

Jalloh was subdued and killed by ROTC students, according to FBI officials who praised the students' bravery for preventing further harm. The shooting killed an ROTC leader who was a professor of military science at ODU.

One of the people wounded was hospitalized in critical condition but has since been upgraded to fair condition, according to Sentara Health. The other was treated and released.

Jalloh, who was sentenced to 11 years in prison in the Islamic State group case, was released from federal custody in December 2024. He was on supervised release, which is comparable to probation.

He was released about 2 1/2 years early after completing a drug treatment program, a person familiar with the matter told the AP. The person was not authorized to speak publicly and did so on condition of anonymity.

It wasn't clear how Jalloh qualified for the program, which allows inmates to shave up to a year off their sentences. Inmates serving sentences for terrorism-related offenses typically aren't eligible for such programs or other sentence-reducing credits.

A message seeking information about Jalloh's incarceration and release was left with the federal Bureau of Prisons.

Authorities dig for more details

At a news conference Thursday, a reporter asked the special agent in charge of the FBI's Norfolk field office, Dominique Evans, if Jalloh had mentioned the ongoing war in Iran, and Evans said there was no mention "whatsoever." The U.S. and Israel launched a war with Iran with missile strikes on Feb. 28.

Evans on Thursday also requested the public's help in the investigation, saying no detail is too small. Old Dominion University Police Chief Garrett Shelton said less than 10 minutes passed between when officers were called about a shooting in the university's business school building and when responders determined the shooter was dead. Authorities have not said exactly how the ROTC students killed Jalloh, though Evans said they did not shoot him.

The U.S. Army Cadet Command has said on social media that three members of the U.S. Army ROTC program at Old Dominion were wounded, including one who died.

Jalloh also had served. The naturalized U.S. citizen from Sierra Leone was a specialist with the Virginia Army National Guard from 2009 until 2015, when he was honorably discharged.

Slain instructor remembered as family man, leader, protector

The man killed was Lt. Col. Brandon Shah, a 42-year-old from Chesapeake who leaves behind a spouse and a child, the U.S. Army Cadet Command said in a social media post.

Shah attended ODU as an ROTC student, according to his biography on the university's website, and had returned in 2022 as a leader for the program. In the Army, Shah piloted helicopters over Iraq, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe.

"Above all else, Lt. Col. Shah embodied what it means to be a devoted family man, a revered leader, and heroic protector even in his final moments," Old Dominion President Brian Hemphill said in a Friday message to the university community.

On campus Friday morning, in honor of his close friend Shah, Eddie Flack poured out a bottle of Wild Turkey on a lawn across from Constant Hall. Flack, also of Chesapeake, said the two became firm friends while enrolled at ODU.

"I love you Brandon. Rest well with the creator. I love you," Flack said as he poured out the whiskey and looked up at the sky.

"Sorry Brandon. The world needs more love," Flack said, weeping. "We need to spread more love and not this hatred."

All 6 crew members on a US refueling plane that crashed in Iraq are dead, US military says

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN, BEN FINLEY and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — All six crew members of a KC-135 refueling aircraft that crashed while supporting operations against Iran are dead, the U.S. military said Friday.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees the Middle East, said the crash in western Iraq on Thursday followed an unspecified incident involving two aircraft in "friendly airspace" and that the other plane landed safely.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said in a social media post that three of the six crew members were from his state and deployed with the Ohio Air National Guard's 121st Air Refueling Wing. He did not identify them but offered condolences to their families.

The crash brings the U.S. death toll in Operation Epic Fury to at least 13 service members, with the seven others killed in combat. About 140 U.S. service members have been injured, including eight severely, the Pentagon said earlier this week.

The KC-135 has been in service for more than 60 years and has been involved in several fatal accidents, most recently in 2013. Adding to concerns about their reliability, the aircraft don't always carry parachutes.

Here's what is known so far about the tanker, which is the fourth U.S. military aircraft publicly acknowledged to have crashed since the war against Iran began on Feb. 28:

Cause of crash not immediately known

U.S. Central Command said the circumstances of the crash are under investigation but that the loss of the aircraft was "not due to hostile or friendly fire."

A U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the developing situation, said the other

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 43 of 57

plane involved was also a KC-135. Yechiel Leiter, the Israeli ambassador to the U.S., wrote on X that the other plane landed safely in Israel.

Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters at the Pentagon on Friday morning that the crash occurred "over friendly territory in western Iraq, while the crew was on a combat mission" and reiterated that hostile or friendly fire was not the cause.

Speaking at the same news conference, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth called the crew heroes.

"War is hell. War is chaos," Hegseth said. "And as we saw yesterday with the tragic crash of our KC-135 tanker, bad things can happen. American heroes, all of them."

Hegseth and Caine spoke to reporters before the deaths of the six crew member had been made public.

Yang Uk, a security expert at South Korea's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said it would be rare for a refueling tanker to be downed by enemy fire because such operations are usually conducted in the rear of combat zones.

Last week, three U.S. F-15E fighter jets were mistakenly downed by friendly Kuwaiti fire. All six crew members ejected safely.

The KC-135 is a long-serving tanker plane

The KC-135 Stratotanker is a U.S. Air Force aircraft used to refuel other planes in midair, allowing them to fly longer distances and sustain operations without landing. The plane is also used to transport wounded personnel during medical evacuations or conduct surveillance missions, according to military experts.

"The last of these planes were produced in the 1960s," Yang said.

Based on the same design as the Boeing 707 passenger plane, the KC-135 is set to be gradually phased out as more of the next-generation KC-46A Pegasus tankers enter service.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Air Force last year had 376 KC-135s, including 151 on active duty, 163 in the Air National Guard and 62 in the Air Force Reserve.

A basic KC-135 crew consists of three people: a pilot, co-pilot and boom operator. Nurses and medical technicians are added in aeromedical evacuation missions.

Refueling typically happens at the back of the plane, where the boom operator is located. A fuel boom is lowered to connect with fighters, bombers or other aircraft. On many of the planes, the boom operator works lying face down while looking out of a window on the underside of the plane.

Some KC-135s can also refuel planes from pods on their wings. The tankers have room to carry cargo or passengers if needed.

Refueling tankers could play an increasingly important role if the Iran war drags on, as U.S. aircraft may need to fly longer missions to pursue Iranian forces retreating deeper into the country, said Yang.

A question about parachutes

KC-135s have been involved in several fatal accidents. The most recent occurred on May 3, 2013, when one crashed after takeoff south of Chaldovar, Kyrgyzstan, while supporting the war in Afghanistan.

In that crash, the crew experienced problems with the plane's rudder, according to a U.S. Air Force investigation. While the crew struggled to stabilize the plane, the tail section broke away and the plane exploded midair, killing all three onboard.

The most serious midair collision involving the plane happened in 1966, when a B-52 bomber carrying nuclear bombs struck a tanker near Palomares, Spain.

The accident caused the tanker to crash, killing four onboard. The disaster led to an extensive decontamination effort to clean up nuclear material dispersed when conventional explosives in the hydrogen bombs detonated after hitting the ground.

The plane has a good safety record overall, is well-maintained and has been updated often with new equipment, said Alan Diehl, a former investigator for the Air Force Safety Center who examined mishaps that involved KC-135s.

But Diehl said an important question is whether this KC-135 was carrying any parachutes. The one that crashed in Kyrgyzstan was not, according to the investigation.

Diehl said the reasoning for not always requiring parachutes, at least in the 1980s and 1990s, included the expense of maintaining them and training to use them. He said K-135s are designed with an escape

hatch on the flight deck and a spoiler to help airmen jump clear of the fuselage.

A 2008 news release from an air refueling unit said the Air Force was pulling parachutes from KC-135s, noting that it was statistically safer to stay with the aircraft, "especially when flying over enemy territory."

"Removing parachutes from military aircraft may sound peculiar, but KC-135s are not like other aircraft," the news release stated. "They seldom have mishaps, and the likelihood a KC-135 crew member would ever need to use a parachute is extremely low."

Diehl stressed that it's unclear whether parachutes would have helped the crew over Iraq. But he said the second plane landing safety suggests the collision may not have been catastrophic.

When asked if the plane that crashed had parachutes, the military would say only that the cause of the incident was still under investigation.

As for why the KC-135 that crashed had six people on board, Diehl said some could have been backup crew, given that the aircraft can stay in the air for many hours.

Cuban president confirms US talks as island's energy and economic crises intensify

By MILEXSY DURÁN, DÁNICA COTO, MATTHEW LEE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba has held talks with the U.S. government, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said Friday, marking the first time the Caribbean country has confirmed widespread speculation about discussions with the Trump administration as it grapples with a severe energy crisis.

Díaz-Canel said the talks "were aimed at finding solutions through dialogue to the bilateral differences between our two nations. International factors facilitated these exchanges." He did not elaborate on those factors, or provide any specifics about the talks, which U.S. President Donald Trump has alluded to in the past.

Cuba's relations with the U.S. have been fraught for decades and punctuated by animosity, with the exception of a brief rapprochement during former President Barack Obama's second term.

Asked for comment on Friday, the White House pointed to Trump's public comments about discussions with Cuba that he said were being led by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and intended to press major changes in Cuban policies and governance.

Trump has suggested that top Cuban leaders would be smart to avoid the fate of former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who was ousted and arrested in a U.S. military operation in January.

Shortly after Díaz-Canel spoke, two U.S. officials said that Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants and a longtime Cuba hawk, and top aides met at the end of February in the Caribbean with the grandson of retired Cuban leader Raúl Castro, who is believed to play an influential role in the government despite not holding an official post.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the discussions, said that Rubio had met secretly with Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro on the sidelines of a Caribbean Community leaders meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis on Feb. 25.

At the time, Rubio refused to say who, if anyone, he was speaking with in or close to the Cuban government.

Díaz-Canel said that the purpose of the talks with the U.S. was to identify "bilateral problems that require solutions based on their severity and impact" and find solutions to them.

He said that the aim was "to determine the willingness of both parties to take concrete actions for the benefit of the people of both countries. And in addition, to identify areas of cooperation to confront threats and guarantee the security and peace of both nations, as well as in the region."

'Impact is tremendous'

Díaz-Canel said that no petroleum shipments have arrived in Cuba in the past three months, which he blamed on a U.S. energy blockade. He said the island is running on natural gas, solar power and thermoelectric plants, and that the depletion of fuel oil and diesel forced two power plants to shut down and has

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 45 of 57

limited the generation of power at solar parks.

The most recent blackout was blamed on a broken boiler at a thermoelectric plant that forced the shutdown of Cuba's power grid.

The president said that Cuba, which produces 40% of its petroleum, has been generating its own power, but that it hasn't been sufficient to meet demand. The lack of power has affected communications, education and transportation, and the government has had to postpone surgeries for tens of thousands of people as a result, he said, adding: "The impact is tremendous."

"Even with everything we're putting together, we still need oil," he said, adding that production output also has dropped. "Without energy, no country can produce at normal levels. All of this has meant making adjustments to employment."

Last month, Cuba implemented austere fuel-saving measures and has converted more than 115 bakeries to run on firewood or coal.

"Cubans are desperate," said Elvis Hernández, 62. "You can't live without water or electricity. That's why we want a consensus to be reached. If there are talks, let them be productive. Let them achieve something good through those conversations."

Miguel García, 65, welcomed the news of talks with the U.S.

"If all of this leads to agreements and solutions that will improve our lives, then all the better, because the situation is quite difficult right now," he said.

Staffing of embassy in Havana

The U.S. State Department has weighed potentially drawing down staffing at the U.S. Embassy in Havana as the fuel shortages caused by the American blockade could affect day-to-day diplomatic operations, according to three U.S. officials.

The officials stressed that there is still time to solve the problem and that the embassy and the State Department were looking at potential solutions, including possibly importing fuel from private sources if the Cubans allow it.

A reduction in staffing at the embassy in Havana would likely lead to a U.S. demand for a similar reduction in staffing at the Cuban embassy in Washington, the officials said.

Brian Fonseca, who studies the Americas at Florida International University, said that a reduced presence at the U.S. embassy would be a less than ideal scenario at a moment when Trump is pressing for dramatic change in the Cuban government.

"The diplomatic staff are your eyes and ears on the ground," Fonseca said. "A downgrading scenario could complicate or challenge U.S. understanding of what's going on, on the ground."

Trump's warning

Critical oil shipments from Venezuela to Cuba were halted after the U.S. attacked the South American country and arrested Maduro.

Since then, the Trump administration has been warning Cuba of a similar fate.

Trump told a gathering of Latin America leaders in Florida last week that Cuba is "very much at the end of the line" and that he was looking forward to "great change" coming soon to the island.

Díaz-Canel also said Friday that FBI officials would visit Cuba as soon as both countries continue to share information about the recent shooting of a Florida-flagged boat in Cuban waters. Four of 10 Cubans from the U.S. were killed after the government accused them of opening fire on local troops.

A fifth suspect later died from his injuries, according to the Cuban government. The five other suspects have been detained and face terrorism charges.

US forecasts blizzard, polar vortex, heat dome and atmospheric river all at once

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Nearly every part of the United States is getting walloped by wild weather or just about to be.

Days of downpours have begun in Hawaii. The Southwest will soon bake with day after day of record 100-degree-plus (38 Celsius-plus) heat. Two storms will dump snow by the foot over northern Great Lakes states. And the dreaded polar vortex will again invade the Midwest and East with soul-crushing Arctic chill.

This forecast of extremes comes as weather whiplash has already hit much of the East. On Wednesday, Washington, D.C., residents walked around in shorts in record-breaking 86 degrees Fahrenheit (about 30 C). On Thursday, it snowed.

"All of the country, even if you're not necessarily seeing extremes, are going to see generally changing from cold to warm, or warm to cold to warm," said meteorologist Marc Chenard of the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center in Maryland.

Former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief scientist Ryan Maue said he expects extreme weather in all 50 states.

Triple-digit heat persists in Southwest

A heat dome will form early next week and park over the Southwest, baking temperatures to triple digits that haven't been seen this early in the year, Maue and Chenard said.

Some forecasts see 98 F (almost 37 C) in Phoenix on Tuesday, followed by 103, 105 and two days of 107 (almost 42 C). In 137 years of record-keeping, Phoenix never hit 100 before March 26 and usually hit its first 100-degree day in early May, according to the weather service, which warned: "Since we are not acclimated to this level of heat this early in the year, it will be more impactful than usual."

It has already started in Los Angeles, with unusual 90-degree March weather that had people in shorts and tank tops seeking shade wherever they could find it, even if it was as slender as a light post.

Shane Dixon, 40, usually runs about 5 miles (8.05 kilometers) near his home in Culver City without much effort, he said, his face glistening with sweat and his T-shirt tucked into his shorts. But Thursday was hard because of the heat, and he had to cut it short.

"The back of my neck was melting," he said. But he preferred it to the cold and snow that will hit elsewhere.

"I could go literally soak myself and walk out in the sun, and I'll make it home fine. If it was freezing cold, I could not do this," he said.

Single-digit cold invades North

Around the same time as the heat starts blasting Phoenix, the polar vortex — a system that usually keeps frigid air penned up near the North Pole — is forecast to send its chill deep into the Midwest and East, even bordering some of the Southeast, Maue said.

Minneapolis will hover around zero (-18 C) for a low, and Chicago will be in the single digits Tuesday. The next day, "temperatures in the teens and 20s in the Northeast and 20s in the Mid-Atlantic," Maue said. Even Atlanta could drop to the 20s.

One-two snowstorm punch

Two storm systems in a row — one Friday, then another Sunday into Monday — will chug along the country's northern tier and Great Lakes and between them could dump 3 to 4 feet (0.91 to 1.22 meters) of snow in places, Maue said.

That bigger second storm system will see its barometric pressure drop so quickly and sharply — meaning it is intensifying and winds are strengthening — that it will qualify as a bomb cyclone, which is quite unusual to develop over land. Normally, bomb cyclones get their energy from warm ocean waters, but this one will draw from the polar vortex.

Just south of the area in Michigan where the heavy snow will hit, there's potential for a significant ice storm, said meteorologist Jeff Masters with Yale Climate Connections.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 47 of 57

Big winds are coming to Texas

An area stretching from Kansas south through Oklahoma and cutting through to Texas to the Gulf of Mexico is forecast to get high winds in the 60 mph (97 kph) range with gusts a bit higher Sunday night, Masters said.

San Antonio and Austin are in the high wind area, and places where there hasn't been a lot of rain will have a heightened wildfire risk, Masters said.

Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen declared an emergency and mobilized the National Guard to help fight two dozen wildfires that have burned more than 550 square miles (about 1,424 square kilometers) of range and grassland. Strong winds with gusts up to 60 mph (97 kph) and low humidity have fueled the fires and made them difficult to contain, but no one has been injured so far, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency said Friday.

Even Alaska and Hawaii aren't quite right

Maue said Hawaii is getting an atmospheric river with such persistent heavy rain that flooding will be a major issue. Oahu is under a flash flood warning.

And Alaska is normally frigid now, but it will be about 30 degrees colder than usual, he said.

It is "the time of year where we can see stuff like this," Chenard said. "But this does seem even anomalous from what you would typically see. I mean, some of these areas will be setting records. Record-high temperatures for March and maybe multiple times."

In the past week or so, tornadoes have killed at least eight people in Oklahoma, Michigan and Indiana. The forecast for severe storms doesn't look as big or widespread for the next week, but dangerous thunderstorms could pop up "anywhere from the Mississippi Valley toward the East Coast" on Sunday or Monday, Chenard said.

The jet stream goes nuts

Underlying this is a jet stream gone wild, Maue and Chenard said.

The jet stream is the river of air that moves weather from west to east on a roller coaster-like path. Usually, the plunges are as mild as a kiddie roller coaster. But now that jet stream is barreling down near-vertical, scream-inducing drops, followed by straight-up ascents.

"Which means you get a lot of extremes next to each other," Maue said. Storm fronts coming from the Pacific hit that high pressure heat dome in the Southwest and are pushed north to climb that mountainous jet stream peak, "grab access to that cold air reservoir up there" and bring it back down south down the other side of the hill, he said.

Numerous studies have connected unusual jet stream and polar vortex activity to shrinking Arctic sea ice and human-caused climate change.

But there is hope.

"The first day of spring is 20th (of March), and then after that we get recovery," Maue said.

US stocks lose ground as war with Iran keeps pressure on oil prices

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

Wall Street's losses deepened Friday as the ongoing fallout from the war in Iran keeps pushing oil prices higher, ratcheting up inflationary pressure on the global economy.

The S&P 500 fell 0.6% after having been up as much as 0.9% in the early going. The benchmark index is now down 3.1% so far this year.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite finished 0.9% lower. The indexes also ended the week with their third straight weekly loss.

After briefly easing early Friday, crude oil prices rose again, bringing the benchmark oil price back above \$100 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, closed 2.7% higher at \$103.14 per barrel. It's up about 40% for the month.

A barrel of U.S. crude oil rose 3.1% to settle at \$98.71. It's risen around 46% this month.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 48 of 57

"Everything's just trading with crude oil at this point," said Michael Antonelli, market strategist at Baird. "We're basically in a holding pattern until we get kind of the hour-by-hour, day-by-day news about the conflict in the Middle East."

Oil prices have been volatile since the start of the war. Iran's actions have effectively stopped cargo traffic through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's oil typically sails. That has oil producers cutting production because their crude has nowhere to go.

In just over a week since the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, more than 12 million barrels of oil equivalent per day have been taken offline, according to independent research firm Rystad Energy.

If the war continues to hamper the production and transportation of oil from the Persian Gulf, it could cause a surge in inflation that could hurt the global economy.

President Donald Trump signaled earlier this week that he would take more action to address the squeeze on oil flows. The move follows the administration's decision to grant temporary permission for India to buy Russian oil.

While the International Energy Agency said Wednesday its members would make a record 400 million barrels of oil available from their emergency reserves, some economists believe that would do little to reassure markets.

Long-term bond yields continued to rise Friday as bond market traders reacted to the latest rise in oil prices, a key driver of inflation.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.28% from 4.26% late Thursday. It was just 3.97% before the war started.

When bond yields rise they can push up interest rates on consumer loans, such as mortgages for prospective U.S. homebuyers and bond offerings for companies looking to expand. They also push down on prices for all kinds of investments, from stocks to crypto.

"Higher inflation expectations means higher yields, and then as the higher inflation expectations go, rate cuts start to be priced out," Antonelli said. "And that's the whammy that we're seeing right now."

A Fed rate cut could give the economy and job market a boost, but also potentially worsen inflation. The Federal Reserve is scheduled to hold its next interest rate policy meetings next week. However, Wall Street traders put the odds of a rate cut at less than 1%, according to CME Group.

A new snapshot of consumer spending Friday shows inflation crept higher in January, even before the Iran war caused oil and gas prices to spike.

The Commerce Department said prices rose 2.8% in January compared with a year earlier. But excluding the volatile food and energy categories — which the Federal Reserve pays closer attention to — core prices rose 3.1%, up from 3% in the prior month and the highest in nearly two years.

Even so, consumers still lifted their spending at a solid 0.4% pace in January, with their incomes rising at the same pace, according to the report.

The University of Michigan's latest gauge of consumer sentiment on Friday showed consumer sentiment declined slightly to its lowest reading of the year as gasoline price hikes since the start of the war in Iran.

Wall Street also got an update on how U.S. economic growth fared in the October-December quarter. The economy, hobbled by last fall's 43-day government shutdown, grew at a sluggish 0.7% annual rate, a downgrade from its initial estimate last month.

Ulta Beauty slid 14.2% for the biggest decline among S&P 500 stocks after the beauty and makeup retailer's latest quarterly results fell short of analysts' profit targets. Ulta's profit was dinged by a 23% increase in selling, general and administrative expenses, which jumped to \$1 billion in the period.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 40.43 points to 6,632.19. The Dow lost 119.38 points to finish at 46,558.47, and the Nasdaq dropped 206.62 points to 22,105.36.

In stock markets abroad, indexes in Europe closed mostly lower after falling in Asia.

Jury finds ex-NY trooper guilty of manslaughter in 2020 chase that killed 11-year-old

KINGSTON, N.Y. (AP) — A former New York state trooper accused of ramming his vehicle into an SUV during a high-speed chase leading to the death of an 11-year-old girl was convicted of manslaughter Friday at his second trial.

Prosecutors say Christopher Baldner, 47, rammed the SUV twice on the New York State Thruway, causing it to lose control and flip over. Eleven-year-old Monica Goods, who was in the SUV, was killed in the December 2020 crash. Baldner's attorneys said the accident occurred after the SUV cut the trooper off as he pulled alongside during the pursuit.

"While nothing can bring Monica back, this verdict is some semblance of justice for her loved ones," state Attorney General Letitia James said in a prepared statement.

The retired trooper, who remained free on bail, faces a maximum of five to 15 years in prison when he is sentenced June 2.

A jury acquitted Baldner of murder and reckless endangerment charges in November, but they deadlocked on a second-degree manslaughter charge. Judge Bryan Rounds declared a mistrial and a second trial on the lone remaining charge began last month.

Assistant State Attorney General Jennifer Gashi told jurors during Baldner's latest trial that he chose to "recklessly use his patrol car as a weapon" during the chase north of New York City. Defense attorney Anthony Ricco argued it was the driver of the SUV — Monica's father, Tristin Goods — who acted recklessly and caused her death, according to the Daily Freeman.

Baldner pulled Tristin Goods over for speeding on the highway near Kingston the night of Dec. 22, 2020. Goods, his wife and two daughters were heading north from New York City to visit family.

Baldner and Goods argued, and the trooper pepper-sprayed the inside the vehicle. Goods drove off and Baldner pursued.

Defense attorneys said Goods collided with Baldner's trooper car twice during the pursuit. An accident reconstruction expert for the defense testified that Goods lost control of the SUV when he overcorrected after "a very minor impact," the newspaper reported.

Charles W. Murphy, president of the Police Benevolent Association of the New York State Troopers, said the union was deeply disappointed by the verdict and that Baldner was "simply following his training when he responded to a rapidly evolving and highly dangerous situation."

"This outcome sends a troubling message to all law enforcement officers who must make split-second decisions to protect the public," Murphy said in a written statement.

Baldner retired in 2022 after almost 20 years with the state police.

Key inflation gauge worsened in January, before Iran war lifted gas prices

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An inflation gauge closely monitored by the Federal Reserve moved higher in January in the latest sign that prices were persistently elevated even before the Iran war caused spikes in oil and gas costs.

Prices rose 2.8% in January compared with a year earlier, the Commerce Department said Friday, slightly below December's increase in a report that was delayed by last fall's six-week government shutdown. The shutdown created a backlog of data that is nearly cleared.

Yet excluding the volatile food and energy categories — which the Fed pays closer attention to — core prices rose 3.1%, up from 3% in the prior month and the highest in nearly two years.

On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.3% in January, while core prices jumped 0.4% for the second straight month, a pace that if sustained would lift inflation far above the 2% annual target set by the Fed.

The data has since been overtaken by the war with Iran, which began Feb. 28 and has shut down the

Strait of Hormuz, cutting off one-fifth of the world's oil supply. Oil prices have soared more than 40% since the war began and gas prices have jumped to \$3.60 a gallon from just under \$3 a month earlier, according to AAA. Those figures will likely cause inflation to spike in March and potentially April, economists forecast.

The inflation-fighters at the Fed have kept their key interest rate elevated to slow borrowing, spending, and growth in an effort to cool inflation further. Fed policymakers meet next week and are widely expected to keep their rate unchanged given that the conflict in the Middle East will raise inflation, at least in the short run.

The report also showed that consumers lifted their spending at a solid 0.4% pace in January, matching December's rise and a sign that Americans are still able to drive steady growth. Consumer spending powers about two-thirds of the economy.

Incomes also rose 0.4%, a positive sign that consumers didn't have to dip into savings to propel spending in January. After-tax incomes jumped 0.9%, fueled by a large increase in Social Security benefit payments after a large cost of living adjustment took effect at the start of the year.

Friday's report includes the personal consumption expenditures price index, which is separate from the more widely-followed consumer price index, which was reported on Wednesday. The PCE index is running hotter than the CPI, largely because it puts much less weight on rental costs, which have been cooling steadily in recent months.

The PCE index typically runs below the CPI, but has pulled ahead of it just in the past few months.

Zelenskyy says US 30-day waiver on Russian oil sanctions is 'not the right decision'

By SYLVIE CORBET and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Friday that the U.S. 30-day waiver on Russian oil sanctions amid the Iran war is "not the right decision" and won't help bring a stop to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of Ukraine.

"This easing alone by the United States could provide Russia with about \$10 billion for the war," Zelenskyy said. "This certainly does not help peace."

"I believe that lifting sanctions will, in any case, lead to a strengthening of Russia's position. It spends the money from energy sales on weapons, and all of this is then used against us," Zelenskyy said at a news conference with French President Emmanuel Macron during a visit to Paris.

"Therefore, ultimately lifting sanctions only so that more drones will later be flying at you is, in my opinion, not the right decision," he said.

The U.S. Treasury Department announced Thursday a 30-day waiver on Russian oil sanctions. The step aims to free up Russian cargoes stranded at sea and ease supply shortages caused by the Iran war.

Analysts say that spiraling oil prices due to Persian Gulf production blockages are benefiting the Russian economy. Moscow relies heavily on oil revenue to finance its invasion, and sanctions were a growing handicap.

U.S.-mediated talks between Moscow and Kyiv that seek to stop Europe's biggest conflict since World War II are on hold due to the Iran war, though they could resume next week, according to Zelenskyy.

Macron noted that broad sanctions on Russia still stand despite the temporary U.S. waiver.

U.S. waivers announced in recent days are "limited" and "taken on an exceptional basis," Macron said. "It does not broadly or permanently roll back the sanctions that they themselves decided to apply," he added.

German leader says US sanctions waiver for Russian oil is 'wrong'

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz adopted a more critical stance. He said Friday that a meeting earlier this week of heads of state and government from the Group of Seven industrialized democracies discussed with U.S. President Donald Trump the issue of Russian oil and liquefied natural gas supplies.

"Six members of the G7 expressed a very clear view that this (waiving of Russia sanctions) is not the right signal to send," Merz said during a visit to Norway. "We learned this morning that the U.S. government has apparently decided otherwise. Once again, we believe this is the wrong decision."

Merz added: "There is currently a price problem, but not a supply problem. And in that regard, I would like to know what additional motives led the U.S. government to make this decision."

Ukraine offers its drone expertise

Ukraine has become one of the world's leading producers of drone interceptors, and Kyiv is offering its expertise to the United States and its Gulf partners for the war in the Middle East, hoping to receive in return the high-end weaponry it can't manufacture at home.

But Trump spurned Ukraine's offer of assistance to the U.S. in comments aired Friday. "No, we don't need their help on drone defense," Trump told the "Brian Kilmeade Show" on Fox News Radio.

Zelenskyy had said on Thursday that Ukraine is awaiting White House approval for an agreement on producing battle-tested drones.

In Paris, he said Kyiv had received a request for drone combat assistance from Washington. The cause of the discrepancy between the leaders' comments was not immediately clear.

Zelenskyy said that Ukraine has received requests from six countries for help with drones. It has already sent expert teams to three countries, he said, without naming them.

Zelenskyy noted that providing interceptors was not enough to help fight drone attacks. The Ukrainian military has expertise in deploying the systems, he said.

"There must be proper, systematic work with radars and with the entire air defense system," Zelenskyy said. "Ukraine is ready to share this experience for the sake of the security of those partners who are helping us."

Iraq is caught in the crossfire of the Iran war, with attacks by both sides on its soil

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Iraq is getting caught in the crossfire of the Iran war as the only country facing strikes from both sides, and that threatens to drag the nation that has so far avoided two years of regional turmoil into a full-blown crisis.

As the war nears two full weeks, Iraq's situation is growing more desperate. Disruptions to Gulf shipping and strikes on oil fields and infrastructure have all but halted exports, jeopardizing a state that relies on such trade for the bulk of its revenue.

If the shutdown continues, Baghdad could be unable to meet its oversized public-sector payroll as soon as next month, risking widespread unrest, two Iraqi Kurdish officials said.

The federal government has appealed to northern Kurdish leaders to resume exports via a pipeline to Turkey, but talks remain deadlocked over longstanding domestic issues. The officials spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive political matters.

In the meantime, a parallel conflict to the wider war has escalated between Iran-backed Iraqi militia groups and the U.S. Near-daily drone strikes have targeted American interests across the country, while the U.S. has struck back against militia bases to defend its troops.

Since the war began Feb. 28 following a major U.S. and Israeli strike in Iran, drone and missile attacks have targeted American interests in Iraq, including military bases in the Baghdad and Irbil airports, and U.S. diplomatic facilities. Iran and its allied Iraqi militias also have struck oil fields and energy infrastructure to escalate the economic toll.

Unlike other Middle Eastern states touched by the war, Iraq hosts both entrenched Iran-aligned forces and significant U.S. interests. Its economy depends overwhelmingly on oil, so disruptions to production or exports through the Strait of Hormuz could sharply cut government revenue just as a fraught political transition grips Baghdad.

The longer the conflict lasts, the greater the risk that economic shocks, political paralysis and friction with Iran-backed militias will combine to unravel Iraq's hard-won relative stability.

Proxy battles

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 52 of 57

Leaders in Baghdad and Irbil continue to urge caution and insist the war must not be fought on their soil, but the conflict's trajectory is increasingly slipping beyond their control. The U.S. has communicated assurances to Iraqi leaders that the country won't be dragged into the regional war, according to the two Kurdish officials who spoke to AP.

In the war's opening days, drone and rocket strikes by Iran and allied groups began targeting U.S. bases, diplomatic missions and oil facilities. In Irbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, near-daily drone attacks have targeted not only U.S. military and allied interests but also commercial sites and even hotels.

Iran-backed groups have also struck Kurdish groups based in northern Iraq after reports that Washington planned to arm some of them to press against Tehran. Some Iranian Kurdish leaders have signaled their willingness to mount cross-border operations into Iran if supported by the U.S..

Iraq is operating under a caretaker government after the U.S. opposed the nomination of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Caretaker premier Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, with even more limited powers, lacks the influence to rein in powerful militia groups.

The U.S. has struck back, striking militia sites across the country, including in Jurf al-Sakhr, south of Baghdad, northern Iraq and in al-Qaim, along the Iraq-Syria border.

As in past upheavals, Iraqis have learned to adapt to daily violence that intrudes on everyday life.

At an Irbil cafe, patrons heard the whine of incoming drones, then a muffled explosion, before a plume of smoke rose on the horizon where it was shot down. A waiter urged calm, saying the strikes were aimed at the U.S. Consulate or airport and posed no direct threat to customers.

Major fiscal shocks

The gravest threat to Iraq's stability is disrupted oil production, which could cripple government revenues. The Kurdish officials said Baghdad warned them that public-sector payrolls could be disrupted as soon as next month.

To alleviate the pressure, Baghdad has asked for exports of at least 250,000 barrels per day of crude from fields in Kirkuk via the pipeline to Ceyhan in Turkey that runs across Kurdish territory. Talks have stalled, however, after Kurdish negotiators conditioned the move on lifting an existing U.S. dollar embargo and restoring economic benefits tied to trade.

Iraq's government ordered production curtailed from oil fields in southern Iraq, where the majority of its 4.8 million barrels per day is produced, after the war all but stopped traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and militias attacked facilities. Sales from oil account for over 90% of state revenues.

Iraq has one of the world's largest public-sector workforces and pensioner rolls, and past payment delays have sparked mass protests.

Production has been halted at oil fields hit by strikes. In the Kurdish region, Canada's ShaMaran Petroleum and U.S. private firm HKN have suspended output at the Sarsang and Atrush blocks.

"If oil exports are disrupted, the immediate impact would likely be a decline in the value of the Iraqi dinar. This would quickly trigger inflation, and within a short time the prices of basic goods could rise sharply," said Farhad Soleimanpour, an Iraqi Kurdish political analyst.

"For the Kurdistan region, the situation could be even more difficult because it does not have its own central bank or significant financial reserves. Iraq may be able to withstand the shock for several months, but the Kurdistan Region would likely face immediate financial pressure," he added.

The war has also battered power supplies.

The Khor Mor gas field in the autonomous Kurdish region is offline, cutting electricity generation by nearly two-thirds. Where the region once provided 24-hour power, households now receive just four to six hours a day, said Omed Ahmad, spokesperson for the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Electricity.

Political weaknesses

Since the November 2025 election, Iraq has been without a government after the U.S. opposed the return of al-Maliki, the former prime minister. The war complicates the fraught transition, forcing a caretaker administration with severely limited powers to manage the fallout.

But that caretaker status also lets Iraqi leaders deflect responsibility by claiming they lack the authority to act, said Iraq analyst Tamer Badawi. "No one wants to take this big responsibility at the moment," he said.

That would mean taking charge and reining in multiple armed groups, from Iran-backed militias targeting U.S. interests to Kurdish-Iranian opposition factions, whose actions deepen fault lines that could spark civil unrest.

Even if some oil is exported via the pipeline, there is no way to assure the infrastructure will not come under attack by militia groups, officials have warned.

Iraq has defied the odds so far, largely avoiding the regional upheaval from the war in Gaza that began in 2023. Political and religious leaders have remained committed to keeping the country out of wider conflict and preserving its stability.

"Iraq faces pressure to maintain neutrality while different political groups inside the country have opposing positions regarding the conflict," Soleimanpour said. "Some factions support closer relations with Iran, while others prefer stronger cooperation with the United States and Western countries. This internal division increases political tension."

Residents of Tehran tell AP of rising fear and isolation as bombs strike without warning

By AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — An engineer crouches under a park bench as fighter jets roar overhead. An athlete wracked by anxiety can't sleep as explosions go off. With the internet shut down, families and friends rely on each other for news about the war and the latest damage caused by airstrikes.

Fierce U.S.-Israeli bombardment of Iran's capital, Tehran, now at the end of its second week, has left residents in a state of shock. From central historic quarters to upscale northern areas, bombs are shaking the city day and night, with no sirens or warning systems to alert the public.

"The psychological pressure is real," said the athlete, who lives in a northern area of the capital. He was among a half dozen Tehran residents reached by The Associated Press, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear for their safety.

Widely respected national symbols have been threatened. The monumental archway of Azadi Square, often seen as the capital's modern emblem, was enveloped by smoke after strikes nearby, while the 19th-century Golestan Palace, a landmark of historic pride, had its windows blasted out. At the same time, security forces have increased their presence in the streets to prevent any shows of dissent.

Israeli strikes on oil depots in Tehran last weekend had a particularly profound impact on residents' psyches. After the blasts, giant fires raged, and toxic, black smoke filled the air — partially eased by rains in the following days.

"I could barely breathe and had to go buy an inhaler," a 54-year-old Tehran resident who is a human-rights activist said. "People are worried it will affect their drinking water." As she spoke to AP, a blast went off in the background.

In a later voice note on Tuesday, the activist said, "Last night the situation was really bad. Fighters as well as drones had taken over the whole sky. East, west, they hit everywhere they could. Today you see a lot of residential places that were damaged. It's really painful."

The war is fraying nerves across the region, as Iran fires waves of missiles and drones at Israel, U.S. military bases and its Persian Gulf neighbors.

'Severe bombardment'

The U.S.-Israeli air campaign has struck thousands of sites across Iran, most belonging to the military and the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. The Iranian Red Crescent says thousands of civilian sites have been damaged, including hospitals, schools, universities and homes. Iran has not publicly updated its death toll from the over 1,200 previously reported.

A 33-year-old engineer described the aftermath of the oil depot strikes as an "end-of-times scene."

Iranians are finding it difficult to follow news of the war, he said, with internet access largely shut down

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 54 of 57

since the first strikes on Feb. 28. Only a sliver of the public has limited access with virtual private networks, the engineer estimated.

He said he phones friends for news of where bombs are landing. Other residents said family and friends trade reports of strikes at anxious gatherings in homes and cafes.

Almost total Israeli and U.S. air superiority has opened up the capital to attack at any moment. The engineer said he was on his street when he heard fighter jets, then a strike nearby. He ducked under a park bench.

A university student said fear of attacks is rising even among those who do not live near clearly marked government and military targets.

"Every moment, without any warning sirens or announcement, some part of the city is under attack," he said, describing some streets as full of broken glass from surrounding buildings.

Hit without warning

Normally a vibrant city of over 9 million people, Tehran's streets — in between airstrikes — are now eerily quiet. Many shops and supermarkets are open. But the traditional bazaar is closed, and many streets are empty as people hunker down at home. Families tape windows to prevent flying glass and they shelter in interior rooms when they hear the roar of strikes.

A teacher who lives in the northern Tehran district of Vanak said the home of a friend in eastern Tehran was damaged by a nearby strike that blew windows out of the frames, broke the sink and wrenched the door of the building's garage out of place. When the friend called to tell her the news, "I was in a very bad shock," the teacher said.

The teacher said she spends most of her time at home, hosting family members who fled another part of Tehran because they live near positions of the Basij, the feared all-volunteer wing of the Guard. She paces and spends a lot of time trying to get on the internet.

"I try to keep myself calm and tell myself, 'This is the price we have to pay for getting rid of the Islamic Republic,'" she said.

U.S.-Israeli strikes have heavily targeted positions of the Guard, Basij and police forces, the main enforcers of the Islamic Republic that suppressed protests earlier this year, killing thousands and arresting tens of thousands. This week, strikes turned to roadblocks and checkpoints set up by the Basij, with at least 18 hit on Wednesday, mostly in Tehran, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, a U.S.-based monitoring group.

On Friday, a large explosion hit a main Tehran square as government supporters held a large demonstration there.

So far, authorities appear to have been able to maintain their grip. Residents described a heightened presence of security forces and Basij on the streets. One resident sent the AP video she took of a procession of Basij on motorcycles and cars waving flags on her street in a northern Tehran neighborhood. Mosques blared pro-government slogans, she said.

On state TV Monday night, Ahmad-Reza Radan, the commander-in-chief of the Islamic Republic's security forces, warned that anyone taking to the streets in protests will be seen "as enemies, and we will deal with them as we would with the enemy. All our guys are ready to fire."

The government has also encouraged its supporters to gather in street demonstrations, especially following the announcement of the new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei. He succeeds his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed by Israel's opening strikes in the war.

The younger Khamenei's selection is widely seen as a further sign that hard-liners are keeping a close grip on power. He issued his first statement Thursday, but has not appeared in public.

'A scorched country'

As the war rages, many Iranians are still reeling from the crackdown after the massive anti-government protests in January.

A 27-year-old nurse said the surgery unit where she works in a Tehran hospital was still treating protesters with serious wounds.

She described the U.S. and Israeli targeting of Iran's leadership and security forces as "revenge" for the

killings of protesters and said she was happy to see the security forces hit.

But the damage from the air campaign is worrying some of those who want to see the Islamic Republic fall.

"It's no longer about weakening the government. It's gone toward weakening the people of Iran," said the activist, who has been imprisoned in the past. "Do you really want to turn us into a scorched country, something the Islamic Republic couldn't do itself?"

Low and slow meets forever: US postage stamps honor lowrider car culture

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — From Mexican American and Chicano barrios in the American Southwest to the halls of the Smithsonian on the National Mall and even the streets of Japan, lowrider culture has become part of mainstream car culture around the globe.

The U.S. Postal Service is joining the club with a new series of stamps dedicated to the low and slow rolling works of art. The stamps — complete with pinstriping — are being unveiled Friday during a celebration in San Diego.

For the lowrider community, it's validation of the vibrant artistic expression that blossomed in the 1940s in the working-class communities of Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas as everyday cars were transformed into one-of-a-kind masterpieces.

Lowriders are known for their dazzling paint schemes, glistening chrome, luxurious interiors and gravity-defying hydraulic systems. They're symbols of creativity, craftsmanship, pride and identity.

Making history

Antonio Alcalá grew up in San Diego admiring the cars from afar, so it was an honor for him to design the stamps. The challenge was finding the right mix of cars and colors to represent the lowrider world.

He pored over tons of photographs before whittling it down to five: a 1946 Chevy Fleetline, three classic Chevy Impalas and a 1987 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. Each brings its own flare, from curvaceous body lines and low stances to a hint of the mechanics that make the cars hop.

"It's a real thrill," said Alcalá, the postal service's art director. "The postage stamps are supposed to represent the best of America. They're kind of a way that the United States signals to the rest of the world these are things that we find important about our people, our accomplishments, our culture, etc. So to have it commemorated on a stamp is a big deal."

Alcalá watched a video of Danny Alvarado pinstriping a car, and his heart stopped as the brush effortlessly glided over the metal flake paint leaving behind intricate swirls. He knew that would be the final touch for the corner of each stamp.

Alvarado, an illustrator and sculptor, has spent about 50 years perfecting his craft and is now teaching others how to spin the brush just right. For him, the stamp project has special meaning — his father worked as a mail carrier for more than 20 years and it marks another corner turned as lowrider culture gains new fans and more respect.

Cruising ahead

In the 1980s, some cities imposed anti-cruising laws and height restrictions, often seen as targeting Chicano youth and associating lowriders with gangs despite the community's emphasis on artistry and family.

But with the Hispanic U.S. population increasing and lowriding becoming more popular, restrictions have been rolled back in recent years. California repealed cruising bans in 2024, and just last year New Mexico lawmakers celebrated Lowrider Day at the state capitol, even though a proposal to enshrine the lowrider as New Mexico's state vehicle didn't gain enough traction.

Founder and president of the San Francisco Lowrider Council, Roberto Hernández began cruising in the late '70s when cruising was banned in California. With the stamp unveiling, Hernández feels "like we got the final stamp of approval as lowriders."

Alvarado agrees, adding that widespread recognition of the positive aspects of lowriding has been a

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 56 of 57

long time coming.

"It's a big hit. I mean the lowriding community is so excited about these stamps," Alvarado said from his home in Monrovia, California. "Everybody I've talked to already knows about them, so they just can't wait till they come out."

Melting pot

Alvarado mentioned car clubs in Las Vegas, Albuquerque, Chicago, Dallas, New York and the ones that are popping up overseas — from London to Hungary, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

Humberto "Beto" Mendoza, whose photographs were used as the basis of three of the stamps, ticked off his own list, describing lowrider culture as both a family affair and a big melting pot.

He has traveled far and wide photographing many of the iconic masterpieces that have graced magazine covers. That includes "El Rey," a red 1963 Chevrolet Impala that is featured on one of the stamps and is on display at the National Museum of American History.

Mendoza was a fan of lowriders long before he built a career photographing them for a living. When he was a boy, his father, a Mexican immigrant, taught him how to frame images with a point-and-shoot and then eventually bought him his first real camera. From there, Mendoza hustled, carrying with him a photo album of his work as he persuaded more lowriders to document their fancy rides.

The stamp project was unexpected, Mendoza said, noting that it couldn't have come at a better time. He had just suffered a stroke in 2022 and was in a dark place. The project was a ray of light for him and for the wider lowrider community.

"We're usually outcasted, you know, so them acknowledging us in this community is historic," he said. "We feel accepted now."

Today in History: March 14, Albert Einstein is born

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, March 14, the 73rd day of 2026. There are 292 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 14, 1879, Albert Einstein, who would revolutionize physics and the human understanding of the universe, was born in Ulm, Germany.

Also on this date:

In 1794, Eli Whitney received a patent for his cotton gin, an invention that revolutionized the American cotton industry.

In 1900, President William McKinley signed the Gold Standard Act into law, tying the value of the U.S. currency solely to gold. (The United States remained on the gold standard until its suspension in 1933 during the Great Depression.)

In 1964, a jury in Dallas found Jack Ruby guilty of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, and sentenced Ruby to death. (Both the conviction and death sentence were overturned, but Ruby died before he could be retried.)

In 1967, the body of President John F. Kennedy was moved from a temporary grave to a permanent memorial site at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

In 1973, future U.S. senator and presidential candidate John McCain was released from North Vietnamese captivity after being held as a prisoner of war for over five years.

In 1980, a LOT Polish Airlines jet crashed while attempting to land in Warsaw, killing all 87 people aboard, including 22 athletes and staff members of the U.S. boxing team.

In 1990, the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies held a secret ballot that elected Mikhail S. Gorbachev to a new, powerful presidency.

In 1995, American astronaut Norman Thagard became the first American to enter space aboard a Russian rocket as he and two cosmonauts blasted off aboard a Soyuz spacecraft, headed for the Mir space station.

In 2013, Xi Jinping, leader of China's Communist Party, was elected president of the People's Republic of China at the 12th National People's Congress; Xi is currently in his third term.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 282 ~ 57 of 57

In 2015, Robert Durst, a wealthy eccentric linked to two killings and his wife's disappearance, was arrested by the FBI in New Orleans on a murder warrant a day before HBO aired the final episode of a serial documentary about his life. (Durst would be convicted in the shooting death of his friend, Susan Berman; he died in January 2022 while serving a life sentence in California.)

In 2018, Stephen Hawking, the best-known theoretical physicist of his time, died at his home in Cambridge, England, at the age of 76 after living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) for 55 years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Michael Caine is 93. Country musician Michael Martin Murphey is 81. Actor-comedian Billy Crystal is 78. Country singer Kristian Bush is 56. Actor Betsy Brandt is 53. Actor Grace Park is 52. Actor Corey Stoll is 50. Actor Chris Klein is 47. Actor Jamie Bell is 40. NBA star Stephen Curry is 38. Actor Ansel Elgort is 32. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Simone Biles is 29. Singer Olivia Dean is 27. Actor Abby Ryder Fortson is 18.