

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Wednesday, April 8

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

Youth Spring Baseball, 6 p.m., GHS Gym

4th Grade Soccer, 6 p.m., Arena.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; UMYF Eggtravagant Egg Hunt and Brunch, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

## Thursday, April 9

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, green beans, fruit, garlic bread.

Track at Mobridge, noon

5th Grade Girls Basketball, Elementary Gym, 4 p.m.

Girls Softball at Deuel, Varsity at 4 p.m., JV to follow.

Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym.

Groton Lions Club Meeting at 104 N Main, 6 .m.



## Friday, April 10

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken on bun, oven roasted potatoes, California blend, fruit.

Girls Softball hosts Mobridge-Pollock, Nelson Field, Varsity at 4:30 p.m., JV to follow.

## Softball Schedule Change

The girls fastpitch softball game with Hanson, that was originally scheduled for May 23rd, has been rescheduled for Tuesday, April 21st. It will now be a Varsity DH beginning at 4pm (so two 5-inning games).

**Groton Daily Independent**  
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# 1440

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

## A Tentative Deal

The US and Iran agreed to a temporary two-week ceasefire yesterday afternoon, finding an off-ramp to avoid potential widespread strikes across Iran. The agreement was mediated by Pakistan, with officials pointing to the possibility of a longer-term pause in fighting.

In the hours leading up to the cutoff, President Donald Trump levied threats against Iran online, including that a "whole civilization [would] die" if Iranian officials failed to strike a deal. The post came after the US carried out more than 90 strikes on Iran's oil export hub at Kharg Island—a strategic outcropping surrounded by deep waters needed for supertankers and capable of exporting 7 million barrels of oil per day. See a video of joint US-Iran exercises from 1964, when the countries were allies.

Separately, an Iranian-backed militia in Iraq reportedly released US hostage Shelly Kittleson.

## Ye Concert Canceled

The UK's Wireless Festival was canceled after the government blocked Ye, formerly Kanye West, from entering the country amid backlash over his headlining slot.

Ye applied Monday for entry under the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation system—a required online clearance for visa-free short stays—but officials denied the request on the grounds that his presence is "not conducive to the public good." The decision followed backlash over previous antisemitic, racist, and Nazi-supportive remarks (he has since apologized). Supporters framed the dispute as a free-speech issue, while critics said the government was right to block him because of his antisemitic history. Organizers said sponsor withdrawals played a part in the decision to cancel and refund tickets.

Wireless was set for July 10-12 in London, with Ye the only act announced so far. Presale tickets reportedly sold out before the general sale was due to open today. Ye last performed in Britain at Glastonbury in 2015.

## Stanford Takes the Gavel

Stanford yesterday overtook Yale as the nation's leading law school in US News & World Report's latest ranking, ending Yale's 36-year streak as No. 1.

After tying with Stanford for three years, Yale ranks No. 2 alongside the University of Chicago. The drop is likely tied to a dip in Yale graduates' employment rate, from 95.5% to 94.9%; its bar pass rates and median LSAT scores held steady. US News increased emphasis on these public metrics after top schools, including Yale and Stanford, stopped submitting data in 2022, arguing that US News rankings discourage support for public interest careers and need-based aid. The schools typically in US News' top 14 spots—the T-14—send an outsized share of graduates to federal clerkships and the nation's highest-revenue firms, collectively called BigLaw.

Law school applications surged this year, up 17% from 2025 and 44% from 2024, even as firms cut summer associate positions amid AI-driven changes to entry-level work.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Rapper Lil Tjay arrested and charged in connection with shooting of rapper Offset in Florida.

Utah court rules "Secret Lives of Mormon Wives" star Taylor Frankie Paul cannot spend unsupervised time with 2-year-old son.

Colin Kaepernick to publish memoir Sept. 15, roughly a decade after the former 49ers quarterback first took a knee during the national anthem.

Big Ten becomes first league in history to have three different schools win Division I men's basketball, women's basketball, and the football national championship in a single year.

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## Science & Technology

Anthropic launches cybersecurity partnership with Nvidia, Microsoft, Amazon, and about 40 other tech giants to defend against AI-powered cyberattacks.

Elon Musk partners with Intel to design and build chips for SpaceX, xAI, and Tesla.

Uber bets on Amazon's custom chips to accelerate computing and train AI models.

Fossilized ripples in Martian rocks suggest the red planet once had a thick, Earth-like atmosphere capable of sustaining heavy winds—further evidence Mars' climate may have once resembled Earth's.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq +0.1%), with most traders waiting on the outcome of deal to pause fighting in Iran.

Delta hikes checked bag fees to offset rising jet fuel costs tied to Iran war, following similar moves by JetBlue and United.

Universal Music shares rise over 12% after Bill Ackman's fund makes \$64B bid for the record label, which represents Taylor Swift, Kendrick Lamar, and more.

Sony Pictures lays off hundreds as focus shifts to anime, game franchises.

## Politics & World Affairs

Clay Fuller (R) defeats Shawn Harris (D) in Georgia's special election to replace former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R, GA-14), 56-44%; district went for President Donald Trump in 2024 by 37 points.

Bill Gates will testify to House Oversight Committee on June 10 about his relationship with deceased sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Australia's most decorated living soldier charged with war crimes for the murder of five men in Afghanistan.



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## Groton council opts for education over regulation on motorized scooters

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton City Council took up a range of topics during its Tuesday evening meeting, with discussion centered on the growing presence of motorized scooters in the community.

Council members considered whether to pursue a formal ordinance regulating scooter use, citing safety concerns and the age of riders in the community.

Groton Police Chief Stacy Mayou recently shared an ordinance adopted by the city of Madison with Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich that addressed wheeled, electronically propelled devices. That ordinance requires helmets be worn by those under 18 years old riding on a wheeled scooter at a speed exceeding 20 miles per hour.

Council members expressed concerns about how kids have been using motorized scooters in town.

"The kids are crazy. They're all over the place," said Councilwoman Jordan Voss-Severson. "They don't pay attention to what's going on around them."

Motorized scooter injuries are more prevalent than bicycle injuries, and the motorized scooter injuries are more severe, said City Attorney Chad Locken, citing information from the Consumer Product Safety Commission. There would be options if the council wants to put limitations on motorized scooter riding, including registration and licensing requirements, sidewalk bands, age requirements and more.

Ultimately, however, the council opted not to move forward with additional restrictions at this time. Instead, members expressed a preference for focusing on education—encouraging riders to understand the potential dangers of motorized scooters and to operate them responsibly.

"All we can do is try to educate them," said Mayor Scott Hanlon. "You can get hurt. You can get killed. If we're going to allow this, you're going to have to be responsible."

Councilman Brian Bahr added, "I just think we let the parents parent, and let the kids be kids."

In other business, the council awarded a bid for this summer's street resurfacing project. Three sealed bids were opened at Tuesday's meeting.

- Midwest Coatings Company of Modale, Iowa, submitted a bid totaling \$120,780.
- Jensen Rock & Sand of Aberdeen submitted a bid totaling \$111,540.
- Bituminous Paving of Ortonville, Minn., submitted a bid totaling \$125,400.

The council awarded the contract to the low bidder Jensen Rock & Sand.

Officials also approved quotes to paint the exterior of City Hall and to replace aging cedar shakes on the building.

H & M Custom Coating of Ferney will paint the building at 120 North Main Street for \$9,744.92. The Roofers of Hayti will replace the cedar shakes on the building with shingles for \$16,976.69.

The council also reviewed a donation request intended to support senior meal services in the community.

Marla Kiesz with Area IV Senior Nutrition asked the council about a monetary donation in 2025, but city officials said she didn't reach out afterward to provide more information. She sent a 2026 funding request a few weeks ago, but council members had questions about the total being requested and potential partnerships with The Pantry.

While members expressed general support for the cause, they asked for additional details regarding the requested amount before taking further action.

"It's great for the community, and I'm glad they do it," said Councilman Kevin Nehls. "We just need clarification."

• The council approved two more summer recreation hires. Riley Shellenberger was hired as a lifeguard, and Carrie Cole was hired as U8 softball coach.

• The high school student organization HOSA is in talks to take over running Pumpkin Fest.

• The council approved two special event alcoholic beverage license applications. The first was for applicant Julie Sandness for a graduation party May 9. The second was for applicants Jason Warrington and Pat Krause for a graduation reception May 15.

• The council approved renewing malt beverage licenses for MJ's Sinclair, Ken's Food Fair and Dollar General.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Governor candidates clash over inmate rehabilitation as state builds new prisons**

**Johnson alleges Rhoden 'walked away' from issue during legislative session; Rhoden releases roadmap for rehab task force**

**BY: JOHN HULT AND SETH TUPPER**

Two Republican candidates for governor of South Dakota spotlighted dueling plans Tuesday to prevent repeat crime.

As Gov. Larry Rhoden announced new efforts by his prison rehabilitation task force, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson pledged to create his own task force while slamming the lack of progress on the issue during the recently concluded legislative session as "unacceptable."

Their concern about recidivism is rooted partly in recent decisions by Rhoden, his predecessor Kristi Noem and the Legislature to build an \$87 million women's prison in Rapid City and a \$650 million men's prison in Sioux Falls.

As part of Rhoden's efforts last year to win lawmaker support for the men's prison, he created a Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force with a goal of rehabilitating inmates and preventing them from reoffending. Rhoden said at the time that "the next task" after deciding to build a prison "is to expand our rehabilitative programming."

The task force continues to meet, but has yet to offer legislative proposals. Lawmakers rejected a bill last month that would have awarded \$2.7 million to the state Department of Corrections to expand an existing rehabilitation program within the prison system, with some opponents arguing that the task force should finish its work and offer recommendations first. Lawmakers also said no to a bill that would have put \$50,000 toward the study of juvenile corrections in other states.

Rhoden's office did support, and eventually sign, a bill that requires the Department of Corrections to make sure inmates are released with "suitable" clothing, and to transport them upon release to their home county, the county from which they were sentenced, or to a different location as close to their release site as the closer of the other two options.

Johnson criticized the lack of major legislative action during a roundtable discussion he organized Tuesday in Rapid City with officials from law enforcement, addiction counseling and other related fields.

"I just can't believe that after we told everyone that we would have big new rehabilitation and treatment within the walls of the prison — that was a part of the deal of how we got the new prison — that the governor and some members of the Legislature walked away from it," Johnson said.

Rhoden lobbed his own criticism Tuesday on the X social media platform, posting that "plans are fine, but when it comes to public safety, I have delivered RESULTS."

### **Rhoden rolls out task force news**

The rest of Tuesday's news from Rhoden came through the state Department of Corrections, which announced a \$160,000 contract extension that will allow the Council of State Governments Justice Center to continue providing consultation services to the Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force. The contract runs through March 31, 2027.

The council will perform a "comprehensive evaluation" of correctional programming and reentry, recommend changes, and will "help translate those recommendations into action," according to a press release from the department. The consultant pulled together preliminary findings and presented them to the task

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force in December.

The department is also engaged in what Tuesday's news release described as "an evaluation of parole" called the "Smarter Supervision Initiative." That effort aims to help the state supervise parolees more effectively "and reduce violent reoffending across the state."

Rhoden and Lt. Gov Tony Venhuizen, the rehabilitation task force's leader, each wrote letters in support of an application for an \$892,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice, which was submitted at the end of March. If awarded, the grant money would fund a three-year plan to address what Rhoden's letter acknowledged to be a reoffense rate that's higher than South Dakota's neighbors.

Half of exiting inmates reoffend within three years, Rhoden wrote, which "tells us that our current approach to community supervision is not producing the outcomes we need."

The state's parole initiative, he wrote, represents "exactly the kind of data-driven, results-oriented investment in public safety South Dakotans deserve."

## Johnson offers competing plan, points to purported missteps

Rhoden and Johnson are each seeking the Republican Party's nomination for governor in the June 2 primary election. The other candidates are Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden and state House Speaker Jon Hansen. On the Democratic side, one candidate has been certified for the ballot so far: Dan Ahlers, the executive director of the state Democratic Party and a former legislator.

Rhoden took over as governor following the resignation of Noem, who left in January 2025 for a Trump administration Cabinet post.

Johnson is running for governor rather than seeking another term in the U.S. House. He released a "Safer South Dakota" plan Tuesday.

If elected, Johnson would convene a "Supervision and Release Task Force," the congressman said, to be led by Minnehaha County State's Attorney Daniel Haggar and former Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom. The group would explore ways to improve community supervision for parolees and people on probation.

Haggar is a member of Rhoden's task force. In Johnson's public safety press release, Haggar is quoted saying the Johnson plan "is an important first step towards building safer neighborhoods."

The Johnson group would also include other "representatives from law enforcement, the judicial branch, and the Board of Pardons and Paroles."

## Johnson supports clemency reform

Johnson's task force would additionally discuss ways to "reform the clemency process" and "help ensure violent criminals are prevented from repeatedly harming the public."

Under the South Dakota Constitution, only the governor can grant pardons or commutations. A pardon scrubs an old crime from a person's record; a commutation shortens the sentence for a current inmate. Both forms of clemency typically begin with an application to the state parole board, which reviews it, holds a hearing on the matter and votes to recommend approval or denial for the governor.

Noem bypassed the board and granted commutations to 20 people over the course of two years, but she also signed commutations for people who'd been screened and recommended by the board.

The two governors who served just prior to Noem's first term, Dennis Daugaard and now-U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, did not approve clemency applications without parole board review. Thus far, Rhoden hasn't, either.

Johnson indicated Tuesday during an interview with South Dakota Searchlight that he was not aware of Noem's granting of commutations without parole board reviews. But he said presidents of both major political parties have issued "highly problematic" pardons, adding that on the state and federal level, "we need to ask ourselves if we should have more than one person wield this power."

"I would be supportive of a law that would mandate a role for the Board of Pardons and Paroles before the governor could issue that clemency," Johnson said.

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## Drug distribution proposal

Johnson's plan also proposes a change to state law on drug distribution, making possession of at least 3 grams of fentanyl or methamphetamine enough on its own to trigger what he called a "presumption of distribution."

Asked how that position squares with concerns about filling up prisons, Johnson said "you can be tough on crime and smart on crime."

"The reality is we should give no quarter for drug dealers," he said. "They're the ones that are killing our children. And through rehabilitation and treatment, we can get users healthy and we can help them live law-abiding lives."

Under current law, prosecutors must prove a person sold or intended to sell drugs for that person to be convicted of felony drug dealing. People found guilty of dealing 4 or more grams of fentanyl are currently subject to stiffer penalties under state law than they'd be for selling other drugs.

Johnson also promised to push a law change that would require automatic parental notification from schools if a minor has an overdose or "drug-related emergency," and to post drug overdose statistics "in real time."

## Rhoden: We've got results

A new approach to overdoses is necessary, Johnson said, because South Dakota's rate of overdose deaths hasn't dropped as quickly as it has in other states. Nationally, the U.S. had a nearly 20% reduction in overdose deaths over the past year, he said, while South Dakota's overdose rate fell by a little under 12%.

In response to a South Dakota Searchlight request for comment on Johnson's plan, Rhoden spokesman Ian Fury pointed to the governor's post on X.

The post says overdose deaths and "methamphetamine crimes" are down in the state since Rhoden took office, as are burglaries and murders. The new prison is "DONE," the post says, and "Operation Prairie Thunder" — a branded series of city-by-city saturation patrols by state troopers — has been a "SUCCESS." Fewer parolees have lost contact with their parole officers, the post says, and Rhoden added a new squad of state troopers to the Sioux Falls area.

Later Tuesday, Hansen said in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight that he stood "shoulder to shoulder" with state Attorney General Marty Jackley and law enforcement as the state "cracked down on crime," including crimes of government corruption.

If elected, Hansen said, "we will deter crimes before they occur by spreading the message far and wide: there will be zero tolerance for crimes of violence and corruption — and any violations will be met with the strongest possible penalties."

In a statement, Doeden said South Dakota is "on fire with a drug epidemic," that drugs are "the driving force" for crime in the state, and that stiffer penalties for dealers and better options for addiction treatment are needed. He said Johnson and Rhoden "have been in political office for decades and have failed to bring forward anything meaningful to improve public safety."

"It is not lost on the people of South Dakota that they only put forward plans when an election year rolls around," Doeden said.

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

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## Trump announces 2-week Iran ceasefire, backing off threat 'a whole civilization will die'

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JACOB FISCHLER

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump agreed Tuesday evening to a two-week ceasefire with Iran, at least delaying his threat of a catastrophic attack on the country's civilian population as he said the countries were near a long-term peace agreement.

The ceasefire was negotiated with Pakistani leaders as intermediaries, Trump said in a post to his social media site, Truth Social. The deal was conditional on Iran agreeing to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping lane for the global supply of oil, Trump wrote.

"Based on conversations with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir, of Pakistan, and wherein they requested that I hold off the destructive force being sent tonight to Iran, and subject to the Islamic Republic of Iran agreeing to the COMPLETE, IMMEDIATE, and SAFE OPENING of the Strait of Hormuz, I agree to suspend the bombing and attack of Iran for a period of two weeks," he wrote.

Trump added that he had received "a 10-point proposal from Iran" that would form the basis of a long-term agreement.

"Almost all of the various points of past contention have been agreed to between the United States and Iran, but a two week period will allow the Agreement to be finalized and consummated," he said.

### A day of global outrage

Earlier Tuesday, Trump had escalated his rhetoric against Iran, even as some Republicans in Congress began to back away from his declarations, threatening that "A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again."

"I don't want that to happen, but it probably will," he wrote.

He ended the 85-word message with "God Bless the Great People of Iran!"

The threat drew intense opposition throughout the day, including from Pope Leo XIV.

Trump posted the early-morning message roughly 12 hours before his self-imposed deadline for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz or otherwise face U.S. strikes on the country's bridges and power plants, he wrote Sunday in an expletive-laden Truth Social post.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., denounced Trump as "an extremely sick person."

"Each Republican who refuses to join us in voting against this wanton war of choice owns every consequence of whatever the hell this is," he wrote on X Tuesday morning.

Some Democrats in Congress said it's time to invoke the 25th Amendment to the Constitution and remove Trump from office.

### Threats followed rescue operations

Trump's flurry of fresh threats followed Iran's downing of two U.S. military aircraft. U.S. forces and intelligence officers launched a major operation to rescue one of the plane's weapons system officers, which proved successful Sunday, according to the president and U.S. officials. Two pilots had already been rescued.

As of Tuesday, the United States struck Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export terminal, according to The Associated Press, and Israeli forces struck eight bridges, according to a post on X by Israel's military.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday forces had also struck railways. "Yesterday, we destroyed transport planes and dozens of helicopters. Today, we attacked the train tracks and bridges used by the Revolutionary Guards," he wrote on social media.

Speaking in Hungary, Vice President JD Vance said he hopes Iran chooses "the right response" by Trump's evening deadline.

"We've got tools in our toolkit that we so far haven't decided to use. The president of the United States can decide to use them, and he will decide to use them if the Iranians don't change their course of conduct," Vance said.

Sharif in a statement prior to Trump's post announcing the ceasefire urged all parties to continue negotia-

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tions, and for Trump to abandon his Tuesday night deadline.

"To allow diplomacy to run its course, I earnestly request President Trump to extend the deadline for two weeks. Pakistan, in all sincerity, requests the Iranian brothers to open Strait of Hormuz for a corresponding period of two weeks as a goodwill gesture," Sharif wrote on social media.

Trump repeated the threat to bomb Iran's civilian infrastructure Monday during a lengthy White House press conference. Targeting civilian infrastructure violates international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions that were updated following World War II.

U.S. cybersecurity officials alerted critical infrastructure operators to "urgently review" cybersecurity protocols and take measures to disconnect certain components from the internet after indications that Iranian hackers have begun exploiting water and energy systems.

The advisory Tuesday from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, and a host of other federal agencies including the FBI and Department of Energy, did not provide details on locations.

## **Sens. Ron Johnson, John Curtis express objections**

Republicans on Capitol Hill, with the exception of Kentucky's Sen. Rand Paul and Rep. Thomas Massie, have blocked efforts to rein in Trump's war on Iran, but three more GOP voices against the conflict emerged in recent days.

Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., told conservative commentator John Solomon Monday that he is against Trump's threats to bomb civilian targets in Iran.

"I hope and pray that President Trump is just using this as bluster," he said on the "John Solomon Reports" podcast, produced by Just the News. "... We are not at war with the Iranian people. We are trying to liberate them."

Sen. John Curtis, R-Utah, declared opposition Friday to funding the U.S.-Israeli war in Iran.

"I stand by the President's actions taken in defense of our national security interests in the Middle East. But we must be clear-eyed about history and the Constitution. While I support maintaining our readiness and replenishing stockpiles, I cannot support funding for further military operations without a formal declaration of war from Congress," he wrote on X.

On Tuesday afternoon, Rep. Nathaniel Moore, R-Texas, joined the opposition, posting on X that "what sets America apart is not only our strength, but how we use it."

"I do not support the destruction of a 'whole civilization.' That is not who we are, and it is not consistent with the principles that have long guided America," Moore wrote in a statement on X.

The U.S. and Israel began a joint bombing campaign on Iran on Feb. 28, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and numerous other senior officials of the Islamic state.

In response, Iran has targeted global oil trade by effectively choking off the Strait of Hormuz, a major maritime passage for one-fifth of the world's petroleum and liquid natural gas.

The conflict has killed thousands of civilians across the Middle East and injured thousands more. Thirteen U.S. service members have died, and 372 have been injured since the start of fighting, according to the Pentagon's Defense Casualty Analysis System.

## **25th Amendment**

Trump's rash threat to wipe out Iran's "whole civilization" sparked numerous calls to remove the president from office.

Former U.S. House GOP lawmaker and Trump loyalist, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, swiftly denounced Trump's latest threat.

"25TH AMENDMENT!!! Not a single bomb has dropped on America. We cannot kill an entire civilization. This is evil and madness," she posted on X.

Nearly two dozen Democratic lawmakers, including several progressive members, also turned to social media to appeal for the 25th Amendment, which authorizes the vice president and a majority of Cabinet members or Congress to deem the president unfit for office. The amendment has never been invoked.

Rep. Yassamin Ansari, D-Ariz., accused Trump of threatening "massive war crimes" and also implicated

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Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

"In the last 48 hours alone, the rhetoric has crossed every line. Pete Hegseth is complicit. I've called for the 25th Amendment and am introducing Articles of Impeachment against Hegseth," said Ansari, an Iranian-American.

Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., said "removal is the top priority."

In a video message posted on X, Markey urged the House to "immediately" come back into session and pass articles of impeachment against Trump, and for the Senate to remove him from office.

"He is completely unstable and dangerous," Markey said.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., countered the calls, saying, "The president is facing serious mental decline; I'm with you on that."

"But unfortunately, invoking the 25th is not realistic right now, given his oddball cabinet of sycophants and eccentrics, and Republican 'spines of foam.' We're going to have to buckle down and win this the old-fashioned way."

Rep. Marcy Kaptur, whose seat in red northwest Ohio is under threat, stopped short of mentioning the 25th Amendment, but urged GOP congressional leadership to act as Trump is "recklessly threatening to commit atrocities and war crimes."

"This is unhinged saber rattling that follows consistent threats over the past week to violate international law. The President is using the might of the United States military to wage war without constitutionally mandated approval from Congress. Until Congress reasserts itself as a co-equal branch of government, he will remain unchecked and the security of our nation will continue to be at risk," she said in a statement.

## Illegal orders

Sen. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., reminded American service members in a statement Tuesday that attacking civilians en masse "puts them in very real legal jeopardy," as the action is not only in violation of the Geneva Conventions, but also the Pentagon's Law of War Manual.

Slotkin, a former CIA analyst, and five other congressional Democrats who served in the military or national security roles, published a video in November stating that members of the armed services are not obligated to follow illegal orders. The video came during the height of the administration's strikes on small alleged drug-running boats in the Caribbean.

"It's moments like these that are why we made the video to service members last year. And I hope and believe our troops — especially those in command — will have the moral clarity to push back if they are given clearly illegal orders," Slotkin said in a statement Tuesday.

Rep. Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat who appeared in the video with Slotkin, said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., must bring the House back into session and vote to end the war.

"Members of our Armed Forces must remember their oaths to the Constitution. As I have said before, if servicemembers are asked to carry out illegal orders, they have a solemn duty to follow the law," said Crow, a former paratrooper and Army Ranger.

Pope Leo XIV, during a press gaggle outside his summer residence near Rome, appealed to Americans to contact Congress and express opposition to the Iran war.

"I would invite the citizens of all countries involved to contact the authorities, political leaders, congressmen, to ask them, tell them to work for peace and to reject war always," he said.

The offices of Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., and Johnson did not respond for comment on Trump's latest statements.

A general social media account for the Senate Republican Conference posted mid-day Tuesday: "Iran would be wise to take President Trump at his word. They can choose the easy way or the hard way."

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

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

## Historical, cultural and environmental tensions mount ahead of uranium exploration hearing

**Project is proposed near southwestern South Dakota's Craven Canyon, which contains ancient Native American rock art**

**BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN**

A plan to drill exploratory holes in search of uranium near a southern Black Hills canyon lined with ancient Native American rock art has raised tensions ahead of a hearing to determine the project's fate.

At a procedural hearing in January, a tense exchange with project opponents led to an outburst by a member of the board considering the project's permit application.

"Your goal in life is to be a jerk," board member Bob Morris told a member of the public attending the hearing.

The comment was directed toward Taylor Gunhammer. He's an Oglala Lakota community organizer.

"It was just profoundly unprofessional," Gunhammer said afterward, reacting to the exchange.

Gunhammer and other project opponents were arguing for the relocation of a permit hearing from the state capital city of Pierre, in central South Dakota, to a location closer to the proposed project in the southwestern part of the state. Morris' fellow board members ultimately agreed to move the hearing to the city of Hot Springs. The hearing was scheduled to begin April 13, but a notice issued this week says the hearing has been postponed, with no further details.

The hearing will be a continuation of a long-running struggle over proposed uranium mining in the southern Black Hills.

### Project scope

Uranium is a metallic, radioactive element used as fuel in nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants.

Uranium mining became common in the 1950s to supply the United States with materials for Cold War nuclear weapons. That included the southern Black Hills of South Dakota, where mining and milling occurred in the Edgemont area until the 1970s. Much of that mining took the form of open pits, some of which were never reclaimed to a natural condition.

In the early 2000s, a new proposal arose to mine uranium near the southern Black Hills map dots of Dewey and Burdock. That plan, from Texas-based enCore Energy, has met staunch opposition from Native Americans and environmental activists and has been in regulatory and legal limbo for two decades. The project would utilize the "in situ" method of drilling wells and injecting a solvent to loosen underground uranium deposits and draw them to the surface.

Last year, the federal government's Permitting Council selected enCore's project for inclusion in FAST-41, a process intended to improve coordination among permitting agencies and hold them accountable to deadlines.

Interest in uranium exploration and mining has risen recently, in response to nuclear energy's potential to meet the growing electricity demands of data centers handling the computing needs of artificial intelligence.

In March 2024, Clean Nuclear Energy Corporation and its Canada-based parent company Nexus Uranium filed an application to drill exploratory holes in search of uranium near Craven Canyon in the southern Black Hills, about 3 miles southeast of the proposed Dewey-Burdock mine.

Nexus says it has claims on a total of nearly 10 square miles of land along the southern edge of the Black Hills. Its proposed exploration project, called Chord, spans a mix of federal and state land totaling nearly 6 square miles. The company has a lease on 1 square mile of state land in Fall River County, which is the portion of the project under consideration by the state Board of Minerals and Environment.

Clean Nuclear Energy plans to use 50 drilling sites to drill holes up to 700 feet deep on the state land, according to its 2024 application. Each hole will take approximately two weeks to drill. It's estimated that the operation will use up to 10,000 gallons of water daily, drawn from nearby municipal and private water sources, to help lubricate drills.

A part of the Chord exploration project would also take place on U.S. Forest Service land, where the

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agency is determining whether an environmental assessment is necessary. It would use an additional 17 drill sites. The federal agency has fielded nearly 1,000 public comments about the project, including opposition from six tribal nations.

The citizens of Fall River County, where much of the historical mining took place and new mining is proposed, voted in 2022 to declare mining for uranium a public nuisance. But Clean Nuclear Energy attorneys argue that state law supersedes county ordinances, and the Minerals and Environment Board agreed.

Morris, appointed by the board to rule on motions, said the decision hinged on the difference in South Dakota's legal definitions of a "mining operation" and a "uranium exploration operation," which "constitute separate actions."

## Water and rock art concerns

More than 40 people and organizations have formally raised concerns about the drilling on state land. The area holds cultural and religious significance to Indigenous people, for whom the Black Hills is a sacred site in their spiritual traditions. The drilling sites are near Craven Canyon, which is home to ancient rock art, including petroglyphs and pictographs.

Some of the rock art is thought to be about 7,000 years old, according to NDN Collective, an Indigenous rights organization based in Rapid City. The canyon itself has been there for "generations immemorial," said Duane Two Bulls, a lead organizer with Black Hills Clean Water Alliance.

"It predates our people," Two Bulls said. "It was one of the first spots that, in our creation stories and in our history, it was always there."

Some of the rock art depicts ceremonies and creation stories, Two Bulls said.

"The main concern that would come to my mind right away is that whenever they start drilling, like on top of the canyon, then it's going to affect the soundscape. And it's going to cause like an internal vibration where that drilling, that drilling may possibly cause the pictographs on the canyon, the petroglyphs to pretty much shale off the canyon.

Gunhammer said the drilling proposal is an affront to Indigenous people.

"You would never drill for uranium in the lawn of the White House," Gunhammer said. "You would never mine for lithium at Arlington National Cemetery."

A report from the State Historic Preservation Office found that vibratory effects from drilling will be minimal and that the "the risk of damage to these sites is low."

Other opponents worry that further drilling in the area could disrupt holes left from past exploration projects, leaving underground water deposits known as aquifers vulnerable to possible contamination.

Lilias Jarding is the executive director of the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance.

"It's a multi-faceted set of problems," she said. "All the things that drive our economy, our health, our ability to have communities here — because we need water — are all things that are being impacted by the mining rush."

The drilling will take place in Fall River County, the tenth most impoverished county in the state, according to the National Institute of Minority Health and Disparities. It neighbors the Pine Ridge Reservation and Oglala Lakota County, the state's most impoverished county.

"We are the people who live downstream," said Mashanaposhe Camp, from Porcupine, South Dakota. "Whenever the water is affected, anything downstream, we're going to be the ones to drink this water."

Native Americans also have treaty claims to the area. All of western South Dakota was set aside as a Great Sioux Reservation by the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. The United States broke that treaty during the 1870s Black Hills gold rush and subsequently forced tribes onto smaller reservations.

"Every single cultural resource in that one square mile of the project area, the area of potential impact, belongs at least to the Sioux Nation, and possibly to others who've also traversed that particular sacred site area known as Craven Canyon," said Chase Iron Eyes, an attorney for the Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance.

## Company responds

Jeremy Poirier, CEO of Nexus Uranium, said the company's project would not impact Craven Canyon.

"This idea that we're going to be doing exploration anywhere near or in Craven Canyon is false and fac-

tually incorrect," Poirier said. "We're not doing any exploration in Craven Canyon or near it."

In permitting materials, maps of the proposed drill sites show them to be above and back from the western rim of the canyon. A letter from the Board of Minerals and Environment says the proposed operation is located within a quarter-mile of the canyon's edge.

About 160 acres of the canyon are protected from mining by the U.S. Forest Service, but Two Bulls said there are still many scientifically and culturally important sites throughout the area that are unprotected.

The nearest protected site is a little more than 500 feet from a drill site, according to a letter from the State Historic Preservation Office.

That letter also found that the proposed exploration "will not encroach upon, damage, or destroy a historic property which is included in the National and State Registers of Historic Places."

"There will be temporary effects," according to the letter, including one drill pad "within the boundaries of a suspected burial site." That drill pad has been removed, Poirier said, and the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources has approved all other proposed drill pad sites.

Poirier, of Nexus Uranium, said he's "never, ever experienced" this kind of delay on a permit for exploratory uranium drilling.

"We've been having those conversations, we spent hundreds and thousands of dollars on studies to follow the state guidelines and the permitting process," he said. "We're doing that, and we'll continue to do that."

Poirier knew the project would raise concerns.

"We knew that it was going to be a little bit of a longer process than maybe some other processes that I've been involved with," he said. "We've gone above and beyond in what we've done as far as spending all this money before we even drill a hole."

The Board of Minerals and Environment can deny an application to explore for uranium for several reasons, including negative impacts on historical, archaeological or recreational aspects of an area, if those impacts outweigh the benefits of the exploration. Members can also deny the permit if it will negatively affect the productivity of aquifers.

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

## Louisiana judge preserves telehealth abortion access provision for now, puts case on hold

**BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS**

A federal judge in Louisiana upheld telehealth access to abortion medication in a decision issued Tuesday afternoon, pausing the case until the U.S. Food and Drug Administration completes a safety review of the drug, mifepristone.

U.S. District Judge David C. Joseph also ordered the FDA to conduct its review with "deliberate speed," after reports in December that the agency had instructed officials to delay until after the midterm elections in November. Those reports drew sharp criticism from anti-abortion groups.

Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill, a Republican, sued the FDA in October, arguing the court should strike down a 2023 provision allowing telehealth prescriptions for mifepristone. The medication is one part of a two-drug regimen commonly used to terminate a pregnancy before 10 weeks and for miscarriage treatment. Louisiana resident Rosalie Markezich, who said her then-boyfriend coerced her into taking the pills, is also a plaintiff in the case.

Louisiana attorneys have said doctors in states without abortion bans should not be allowed to prescribe and mail the medication into a state where it is illegal. Attorneys also argued the medication is unsafe to be prescribed via telehealth, a claim that is not supported by many years of scientific data, and pointed to Markezich's story as one demonstration of harm.

Many states have enacted shield laws to prevent providers in states without bans from being prosecuted

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by out-of-state investigators. Louisiana officials unsuccessfully attempted to extradite and charge a provider from California in January for mailing abortion pills, about a year after trying to extradite a New York doctor for the same reason.

On Tuesday, the judge left the motion open for Louisiana to refile after the FDA's safety review is complete, so the state could try to strike the provision down again at that point. And Joseph, who was appointed by President Donald Trump during his first term, indicated he thinks there is evidence of harm to the state.

In a statement after the ruling, Murrill indicated she is optimistic about the eventual legal outcome.

"Judge Joseph concluded that Louisiana has standing to sue and is likely to succeed in showing that the 2023 (rule) is unlawful," Murrill said in the statement. "He also concluded that Louisiana suffers irreparable harm every day that the 2023 (rule) remains in effect. Accordingly, under binding Fifth Circuit precedent, the only thing left to do is vacate the 2023 (rule) pending the outcome of this litigation. We will ask the Fifth Circuit to do so."

Since the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision in June 2022, telehealth has become a primary method of obtaining abortion medication. In the first half of 2025, according to the research and advocacy group #WeCount, more than 27% of all abortions were provided through telehealth appointments. Nearly 15,000 abortions per month were provided under shield laws during that same time frame, according to the report.

"Putting this baseless case on hold is certainly a better outcome than what Louisiana asked for: severe and immediate restrictions on mifepristone that would upend abortion and miscarriage care across the country," said Julia Kaye, senior staff attorney for the Reproductive Freedom Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, in a statement. "But it is small comfort that the Trump administration now holds the baton in this ongoing attack on medication abortion when we can see the administration teeing up the same harmful restrictions that abortion opponents are trying to win in court."

A lawsuit similar to Louisiana's is pending in Missouri that the Trump administration also asked the court to pause or dismiss in March.

*Stateline reporter Kelcie Moseley-Morris can be reached at [kmoseley@stateline.org](mailto:kmoseley@stateline.org).*

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

*Kelcie Moseley-Morris covers reproductive rights for Stateline. Based in Idaho, she has covered the effects of abortion bans nationwide, as well as reproductive health issues.*

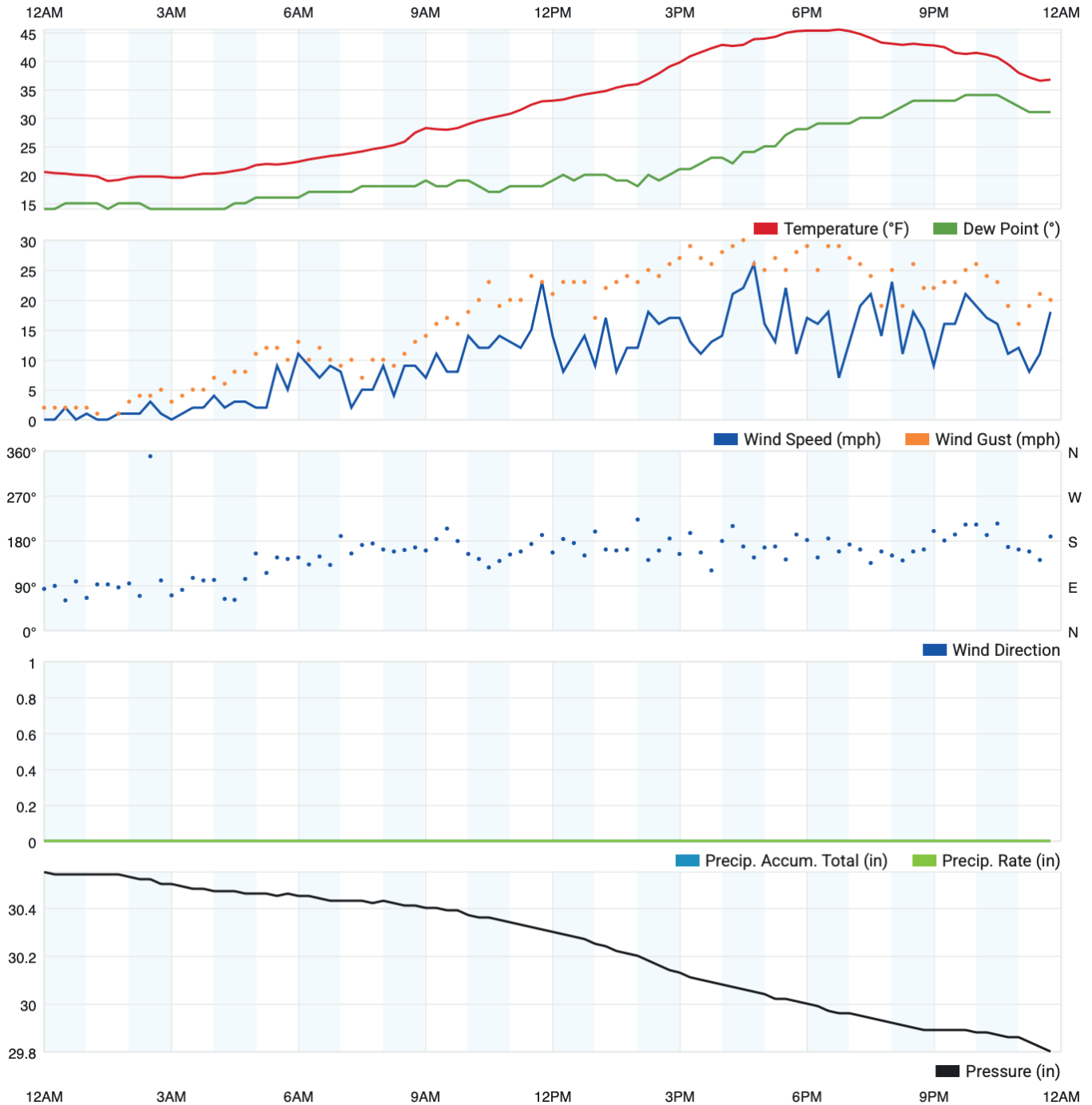
-

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

April 7, 2026



# Broton Daily Independent

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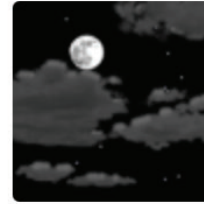
Wednesday

Wednesday  
Night

Thursday

Thursday  
Night

Friday



High: 51 °F

Low: 23 °F

High: 40 °F

Low: 25 °F

High: 54 °F

Chance Rain  
then Mostly  
Sunny and  
Breezy

Mostly Clear  
and Blustery  
then Mostly  
Clear

Partly Sunny  
then Chance  
Snow

Partly Cloudy

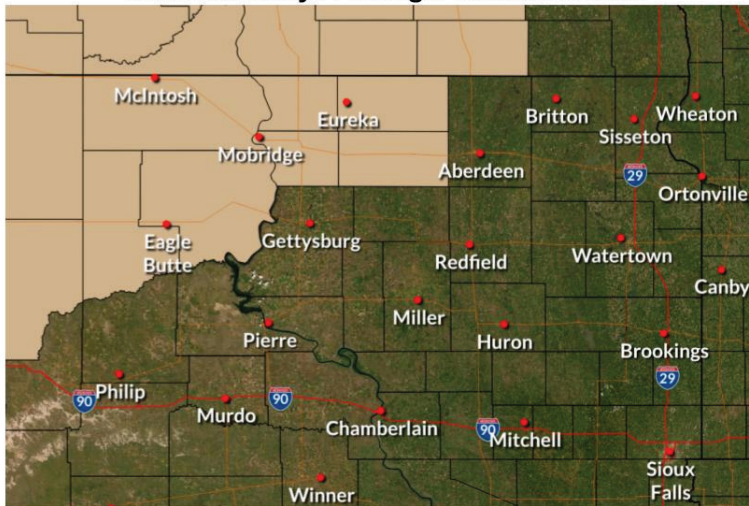
Sunny



## Windy Today

April 8, 2026  
2:58 AM CDT

### Wind Advisory: Through This Afternoon



### Wind Gust (mph) Forecast

	4/8 Wed							
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	
<b>Aberdeen</b>	26↕	18↕	28↕	37↕	39↕	38↕	29↕	
<b>Britton</b>	29↕	17↕	25↕	33↕	38↕	38↕	31↕	
<b>Chamberlain</b>	22↕	20↕	29↕	31↕	35↕	33↕	23↕	
<b>Clark</b>	37↕	17↕	28↕	33↕	38↕	37↕	31↕	
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	40↕	33↕	40↕	47↕	47↕	41↕	30↕	
<b>Eureka</b>	22↕	28↕	37↕	45↕	46↕	43↕	31↕	
<b>Gettysburg</b>	23↕	30↕	36↕	44↕	45↕	40↕	30↕	
<b>McIntosh</b>	30↕	31↕	47↕	52↕	52↕	45↕	30↕	
<b>Milbank</b>	26↕	14↕	22↕	28↕	33↕	33↕	29↕	
<b>Miller</b>	30↕	25↕	30↕	36↕	40↕	37↕	26↕	
<b>Mobridge</b>	30↕	26↕	35↕	41↕	41↕	36↕	26↕	
<b>Murdo</b>	32↕	30↕	32↕	37↕	39↕	38↕	26↕	
<b>Pierre</b>	23↕	24↕	28↕	35↕	38↕	36↕	25↕	
<b>Redfield</b>	32↕	21↕	30↕	37↕	40↕	38↕	29↕	
<b>Sisseton</b>	26↕	15↕	24↕	31↕	37↕	36↕	31↕	
<b>Watertown</b>	36↕	16↕	25↕	31↕	36↕	35↕	30↕	
<b>Webster</b>	32↕	17↕	24↕	31↕	36↕	36↕	32↕	
<b>Wheaton</b>	28↕	16↕	22↕	28↕	32↕	33↕	30↕	



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A wind advisory remains in effect across north central SD today with gusts 45 to 55 mph. Elsewhere, winds shift to the west and northwest with gusts 30 to 40 mph. Temperatures will be close to average with highs in the upper 40s to upper 50s.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 46 °F at 6:43 PM

Low Temp: 18 °F at 1:35 AM

Wind: 32 mph at 6:36 PM

Precip: : 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 85 in 1945

Record Low: 6 in 1997

Average High: 54

Average Low: 29

Average Precip in April.: 0.36

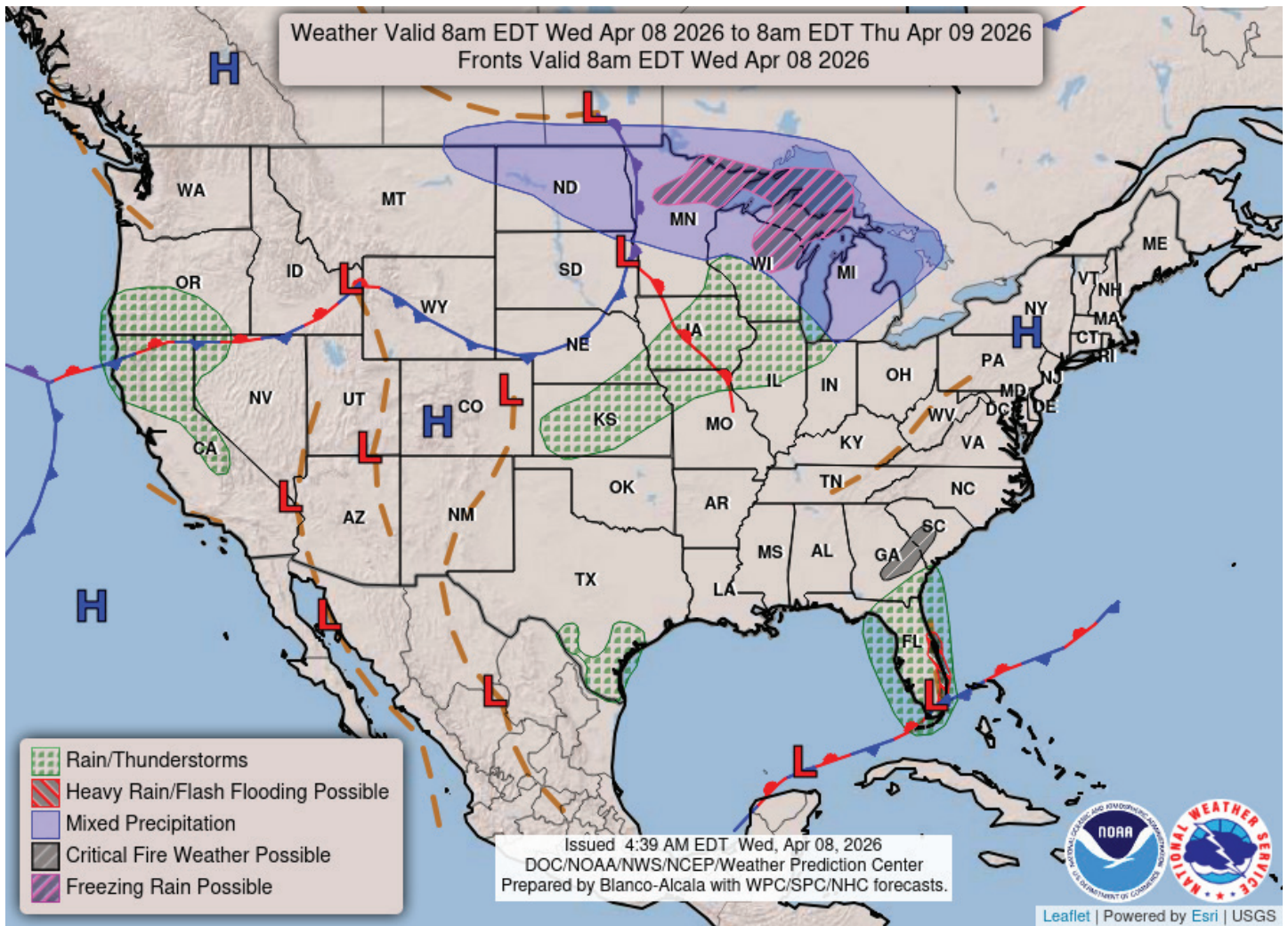
Precip to date in April.: 0.75

Average Precip to date: 2.42

Precip Year to Date: 2.37

Sunset Tonight: 8:08 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:57 am



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## Today in Weather History

April 8-11th, 1995: Ten inches to two feet of snow fell in central South Dakota in a five-day period, beginning April 8th. Many roads became impassable. Several businesses, government offices, and schools closed on the 11th. Twenty-four inches fell at Ree Heights and Gettysburg, 20.0 inches at Faulkton, 18.0 inches at Kennebec, 16.0 inches at Pierre, and 10.0 inches at Doland.

1919 — A tornado swarm in northern Texas resulted in the deaths of 64 persons. (David Ludlum)

1926 — The lightning-set oil depot fire near San Luis Obispo CA boiled over and engulfed 900 acres. Many tornado vortices resulted from the intense heat of the fire. One such tornado traveled 1000 yards, picked up a house and carried it 150 feet, killing the two occupants inside. (The Weather Channel)

1973 — A severe storm brought high winds and heavy snow to Iowa. Belle Plain received 20 inches of snow, and 19 inches blanketed Dubuque, record totals for both locations for so late in the season. Snow drifts up to sixteen feet high closed highways. (David Ludlum)

1987 — A cold front crossing the Northern Plateau and the Northern Rocky Mountain Region produced high winds in northeastern Wyoming. Winds gusting to 69 mph at Sheridan WY downed power lines and caused some property damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Strong northerly winds ushered cold air into the north central U.S. The strong winds, gusting to 60 mph at Rapid City SD and Williston ND, reduced visibilities in blowing dust over the Dakotas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Two dozen cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Phoenix AZ equalled their record for April of 104 degrees established just the previous day. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Twenty-two cities reported record low temperatures for the date as readings dipped into the 20s and 30s across much of the eastern U.S. Freezing temperatures severely damaged peach and apple orchards in West Virginia, where prolonged mild weather since January had caused an early blooming of spring vegetation. State and Federal agencies estimated a 50 percent loss in production for peaches and "Delicious Red Apples". (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

## The Goodness of God

**Even when life is difficult, God's goodness remains constant.**

Psalms 116:1-9: 1 I love the LORD, because He hears My voice and my supplications.

2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live.

3 The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow.

4 Then I called upon the name of the LORD: ``O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!"

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.

6 The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.

7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

8 For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling.

9 I shall walk before the LORD In the land of the living.

God's goodness is another attribute of His that's infinite and unchanging. As a result, everything He does is good. We may look at some difficult aspect of our life and feel that the Lord has not manifested this characteristic to us. However, confusing situations and our limited understanding in no way alter who He is. A circumstance may not be good, but God's goodness isn't dependent upon that.

Scripture tells us that God is good to all (Psalm 145:9) and does not show favoritism (Romans 2:11). Sometimes, if we're being honest, we'd like Him to be more partial with His generosity when people whom we consider bad are doing well in life. However, Jesus said that the Lord "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). We must remember that we as believers don't deserve the heavenly Father's favor either. He gives it freely because His nature is to be good to those He loves, and He loves the whole world—both believers and unbelievers.

If we desire the full measure of God's goodness, we must believe in Him, receive His love, and live obediently. On those who love Him and walk in His righteousness, He pours out the fullness of His favor eternally—nothing is withheld (Psalms 84:11-12).

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

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.07.26

2 9 29 41 57 3

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 41 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.07.26

5 15 22 33 37 2

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$110,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 26 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.06.26

22 33 38 44 50 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$21,220,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 41 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.04.26

6 15 23 25 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$43,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 56 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.06.26

3 17 48 56 64 20

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.06.26

7 24 37 42 57 5

Power Play: 2x

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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

### **Global markets jump and oil prices decline as Iran ceasefire agreement reached**

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares surged in Wednesday trading, as oil prices plunged after the U.S. and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire that includes the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

France's CAC 40 added nearly 4.0% to 8,223.91 in early trading, while the German DAX edged up 4.7% to 23,996.26. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 2.3% to 10,582.86. U.S. shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 2.3% at 47,891.00. S&P 500 futures rose 2.5% to 6,824.00.

In Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 5.4% to finish at 56,308.42. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 jumped 2.6% to 8,951.80. South Korea's Kospi soared 6.9% to 5,872.34. Hong Kong's Hang Seng surged 3.1% to 25,893.02, while the Shanghai Composite added 2.7% to 3,995.00.

Benchmark U.S. crude sank \$16.47 to \$96.48 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard dropped \$13.79 to \$95.48 a barrel. Natural gas futures declined 5%.

The drops reversed some of the rise in oil prices, following the start of the war, which had effectively blocked passage through the strait that's a crucial route for global supplies.

"Yet the mood remains one of cautious optimism rather than outright celebration. The ceasefire is only two weeks long, and markets will be watching closely to see whether shipping through the Strait of Hormuz normalizes as promised and whether the fragile truce can pave the way for a more durable peace agreement," said Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade.

Late Tuesday, Trump said he was holding off on his threatened attacks on Iranian bridges, power plants and other civilian targets. Iran's foreign minister said passage through the strait would be allowed for the next two weeks under Iranian military management.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar fell to 158.35 Japanese yen from 159.52 yen Wednesday. The euro cost \$1.1671, up from \$1.1597. The dollar usually becomes a safe haven during geopolitical uncertainty, so the ceasefire deal worked to lessen that appeal.

But analysts warned against too much optimism.

"There is a reason to be optimistic, but it is still too early to tell, because, as you know, after all, it is Trump," said Takashi Hiroki, chief strategist at MONEX.

### **Decorated Australian veteran remains behind bars on Afghan war crime charges**

By ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australia's most decorated living veteran, Ben Roberts-Smith, did not apply for bail when the war crime murder charges against him were listed in a Sydney court Wednesday.

Roberts-Smith was awarded both the Victoria Cross and Medal of Gallantry for his service in Afghanistan and is only the second Australian veteran of the Afghanistan campaign to be charged with a war crime.

The charges follow a military report released in 2020 that found evidence that elite Australian Special Air Service and commando regiment troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and other non-combatants. Around 40,000 Australian military personnel served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, of whom 41 were killed.

Veteran accused of 5 unlawful deaths

The allegations against Roberts-Smith relate to the deaths of five Afghan people who died in 2009 and 2012 while he served in Afghanistan as an elite SAS corporal. Police allege he either shot his victims or ordered a subordinate to shoot them in Uruzgan province where Australia's forces were based.

Police said he had been charged Tuesday with five counts of war crime murder. But the charges laid in

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court Wednesday were two counts of war crime murder and three counts of aiding or abetting a war crime murder. All charges carry the same potential maximum sentence of life in prison.

The charges allege Roberts-Smith killed and caused a subordinate to kill at Kakarak village on April 12, 2009. He allegedly caused a subordinate to kill at Darwan village on Sept. 11, 2012. He allegedly killed and caused a subordinate to kill at Syahchow village on Oct. 20, 2012.

Australian law defines war crime murder as the intentional killing in a context of armed conflict of a person who is not taking an active part in the hostilities, such as a civilian, prisoner of war or a wounded soldier.

Australian prime minister describes veteran's arrest as a 'difficult time'

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described Roberts-Smith's arrest as a "difficult time" for the Australian Defense Force.

"We should give thanks every day for the men and women who wear our uniform, who are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our nation, to keep our Australian way of life going forward. That doesn't change," Albanese told Sky News television.

"It's important that this not be politicized, and I have no intention of commenting on what is a legal process," Albanese added.

Opposition leader Angus Taylor called on the federal government, known as the Commonwealth of Australia, to pay for the legal defenses of all military personnel prosecuted for war crimes, including Roberts-Smith.

"It is an imperative that the Commonwealth provide anyone who's prosecuted in this process, including Ben Roberts-Smith, with ... the financial support they need to defend themselves and to ensure that there is a fair trial," Taylor told reporters. "The presumption of innocence is crucial."

Former Australian prime minister pays tribute to troops

John Howard, who as Australia's then-prime minister first committed Australian troops to fight in Afghanistan in 2001, said Roberts-Smith's arrest would emotionally impact millions of Australians.

"This is a difficult issue for many, as it tests to the limits not only our respect for Australian values, but the deep and special reverence we have for those who put their lives on the line to keep us safe," Howard said in a statement.

The Australian Special Air Service Association, which represents current and former members of the elite regiment, said some may be required to testify against former comrades. Others must defend themselves against "grave allegations."

"These realities are deeply confronting for a close and enduring community," the association said in a statement.

Roberts-Smith, 47, spent the night in jail after he was arrested at the Sydney Airport on Tuesday morning, and he did not appear in court either in person or by video link Wednesday.

His lawyers did not enter pleas to the charges or apply for his release on bail. The case was adjourned until June 4.

Civil court upholds similar allegations

A civil court has already found similar allegations against Roberts-Smith credible in a defamation suit he brought after newspapers published articles in 2018 accusing him of a range of war crimes. In 2023, a federal judge rejected Roberts-Smith's claims and ruled that he likely killed four noncombatants unlawfully in 2009 and 2012.

But while the civil court found the war crimes allegations were mostly proven on a balance of probabilities, the war crime murder charges would have to be proved in a criminal court to a higher standard of beyond reasonable doubt.

Media magnate Kerry Stokes helped fund Roberts-Smith's civil court action. Roberts-Smith quit his job as a state manager of Stokes' Seven West Media in 2023 after losing the defamation case.

During his defamation trial, Roberts-Smith had testified that he had never killed an unarmed Afghan and denied ever committing a war crime. He claimed he has the victim of spiteful fellow soldiers' lies and of others' envy of his medals.

Roberts-Smith is the second Australian veteran of the Afghanistan campaign to be charged with a war crime.

Fellow veteran pleads not guilty to war crime allegation

Former SAS soldier Oliver Schulz has pleaded not guilty to a charge of war crime murder. He is accused of shooting Afghan man Dad Mohammad three times in the head in an Uruzgan province wheat field in 2012.

Prosecutors and defense lawyers said Schulz's trial is unlikely to be held before 2027.

In 2024, the government announced that several serving and former Australian military commanders had been stripped of medals over allegations of war crimes committed in Afghanistan.

Holding commanders to account for alleged misconduct of Australian special forces between 2005 and 2016 had been recommended in the war crime investigation report made public in 2020.

## Decorated Australian veteran remains behind bars on Afghan war crime charges

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australia's most decorated living veteran, Ben Roberts-Smith, did not apply for bail when the war crime murder charges against him were listed in a Sydney court Wednesday.

Roberts-Smith was awarded both the Victoria Cross and Medal of Gallantry for his service in Afghanistan and is only the second Australian veteran of the Afghanistan campaign to be charged with a war crime.

The charges follow a military report released in 2020 that found evidence that elite Australian Special Air Service and commando regiment troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and other non-combatants. Around 40,000 Australian military personnel served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, of whom 41 were killed.

Veteran accused of 5 unlawful deaths

The allegations against Roberts-Smith relate to the deaths of five Afghan people who died in 2009 and 2012 while he served in Afghanistan as an elite SAS corporal. Police allege he either shot his victims or ordered a subordinate to shoot them in Uruzgan province where Australia's forces were based.

Police said he had been charged Tuesday with five counts of war crime murder. But the charges laid in court Wednesday were two counts of war crime murder and three counts of aiding or abetting a war crime murder. All charges carry the same potential maximum sentence of life in prison.

The charges allege Roberts-Smith killed and caused a subordinate to kill at Kakarak village on April 12, 2009. He allegedly caused a subordinate to kill at Darwan village on Sept. 11, 2012. He allegedly killed and caused a subordinate to kill at Syahchow village on Oct. 20, 2012.

Australian law defines war crime murder as the intentional killing in a context of armed conflict of a person who is not taking an active part in the hostilities, such as a civilian, prisoner of war or a wounded soldier.

Australian prime minister describes veteran's arrest as a 'difficult time'

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described Roberts-Smith's arrest as a "difficult time" for the Australian Defense Force.

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## Trump-endorsed Republican Clay Fuller wins Marjorie Taylor Greene's former House seat in Georgia

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

RINGGOLD, Ga. (AP) — Republican Clay Fuller on Tuesday won Marjorie Taylor Greene's former U.S. House seat in Georgia, turning back a Democratic challenge with the help of President Donald Trump's endorsement despite uneasiness over the war in Iran.

In a deep red district that Greene won by 29 points and Trump carried by almost 37 points two years ago, Fuller was on track to prevail by about 12 points with almost all votes counted. The result added to a string of special elections where Democrats performed better than expected, a track record that the party hopes will create momentum toward November's midterm elections when control of Congress hangs in the balance.

In another election held Tuesday, a Democratic-backed candidate for the Wisconsin Supreme Court won by double-digit margins, growing the liberal majority there.

Fuller insisted that his victory over Democratic candidate Shawn Harris in Georgia was a testimony to

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Trump's staying power.

"They couldn't beat Donald Trump and they never will," he told supporters in Ringgold, near the border with Tennessee. "And I will be on Capitol Hill as a warrior to have his back each and every day."

However, Trump's escalating rhetoric had some Republicans concerned, even in this deep red district. The president had set a deadline for Tuesday at 8 p.m. — one hour after polls closed in Georgia — for Iran to reach a deal with the United States, saying that "a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again." However, he later announced a two-week ceasefire to allow negotiations to continue.

Acworth resident Jason McGinty said he was worried Trump was "about to go too far" and "may be committing a war crime" if he followed through on threats to bomb power plants and other infrastructure in Iran. He voted for Fuller to "make sure the America First party is still in place."

Retiree Judy McDonald agreed with the president's decision to go to war but was "very anxiety-ridden" over the conflict.

"Eventually we will have peace and the Iranians will kind of come to a conclusion that they won't have a country if they don't stop the terrorism," she said.

Some Democrats hoped the election would send a message to Trump

Fuller will serve out the remaining months of Greene's term, bolstering the party's slim majority in the House, where Republicans control 217 seats to Democrats' 214, with one independent.

He'll have to face another Republican primary on May 19 to win a full two-year term, and could face a June 16 party runoff. Harris is already the Democratic nominee for November.

Retiree Melinda Dorl supported Harris "so it sends a message to Trump and his cronies that people aren't happy," she said.

"This war was totally uncalled for. Trump is a liar. Everything he says is a lie," Dorl said, adding that Trump was wrecking relationships with countries that have traditionally been American allies.

Harris, a cattle farmer and retired general who describes himself as a "dirt-road Democrat," stirred enthusiasm even among supporters who expected him to lose.

"I voted for the Democrat even though this is a very red district and the Democrat has almost no chance of winning," said Michael Robards, a software engineer from Kennesaw who calls himself a center-right independent. He said he wants to see Trump's policies rolled back and the president again impeached.

Georgia's 14th District stretches across 10 counties from suburban Atlanta to Tennessee. After losing to Greene two years ago, Harris said his strong showing this time would be a stepping stone to November.

"We're going to beat him next time," Harris said on Tuesday in Rome, Georgia.

Fuller said he had withstood Democrats' best punch.

"The left did their best. They poured in millions upon millions of dollars," Fuller told reporters. "And what you're seeing is the best that they can accomplish."

Fuller had presidential support

Trump endorsed Fuller, a district attorney who prosecuted crimes in four counties, to succeed Greene in February, boosting him over other Republican candidates in a crowded field.

Greene, once among Trump's most ardent supporters, had split with the president by criticizing his foreign policy and his reluctance to release documents involving the Jeffrey Epstein case. The president eventually had enough, saying he would support a primary challenge against her. Greene announced a week later that she would resign.

Outside of Congress, Greene has continued to assail Trump.

"Trump was elected to go to war against America's deep state and to end America's involvement in foreign wars," she wrote on social media on Tuesday. "Not to kill an entire civilization while waging a foreign war on behalf of Israel, another foreign country."

However, Fuller has backed Trump to the hilt — including the war — and has identified no issue on which he disagreed with the president.

Trump reiterated his support for Fuller on Monday night and then again on Tuesday.

"To the Great Patriots in Georgia's 14th Congressional District: GET OUT AND VOTE TODAY for a fantastic Candidate, Clay Fuller, who has my Complete and Total Endorsement!" the president wrote on social media.

## Rep. Eric Swalwell vows to push back on ICE in bid for California governor

By TRÂN NGUYỄN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Rep. Eric Swalwell on Tuesday promised to aggressively push back on federal immigration officers if elected governor, vowing to make them ineligible for state jobs and take away their driver's licenses if they refuse to unmask while on duty.

"They think they're invincible. They're not," Swalwell told a large crowd at a town hall in Sacramento, the state capital. He didn't specify how he'd advance those policies, which would likely face legal challenges.

The event kicked off a series of campaign functions he's planned around the state with less than a month to go until mail-in ballots go out to voters ahead of the June 2 primary. Swalwell, a Democrat, is among a crowded field of candidates jostling for advantage in a race in which a small margin could decide who advances to the November general election. The two highest vote-getters advance regardless of party, and Democrats are worried about a possible lock-out if no clear front-runner emerges.

Speaking to a friendly crowd, Swalwell painted himself as a "battle-tested" fighter in Congress against President Donald Trump. He served as House manager for Trump's second impeachment trial and said he wants to abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement and has supported taking away the agency's funding. Los Angeles was the target of one of the administration's first large-scale immigration sweeps last summer and the first place where it deployed the National Guard. The position comes after Swalwell faced accusations by some of his Democratic rivals for not taking a strong enough stance against the agency.

Positioning himself as a labor-friendly and progressive candidate, Swalwell said he wants to address ongoing state budget gaps with a new corporate tax and use state funding to pay for health care for low-income people, including immigrants. He also said he supports letting state employees work remotely, a contentious issue in Sacramento.

"I will root for the success of anyone who invests and does business in California, if they work with me to lift the wages of hard-working Californians and expand the benefits," he said.

This year's election marks the first time since voters approved the state's "top two" primary system more than a decade ago that there has been a governor's race with no dominant candidate. Swalwell is considered among the leading candidates, alongside billionaire Tom Steyer and former U.S. Rep. Katie Porter on the Democratic side. Republican Steve Hilton, a former Fox News host, won Trump's endorsement this week. Sheriff Chad Bianco is another prominent Republican in the contest.

Swalwell in recent weeks has emerged as a favorite target for fellow Democrats, who have accused him of failing to show up for votes in Congress and questioned whether he actually lives in California. On Tuesday, Swalwell again disputed those criticisms and said he's "not going to be distracted."

An Iowa native who was elected in 2012 and represents a House district east of San Francisco, Swalwell ran a short-lived presidential campaign in 2019.

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, who is term-limited, hasn't endorsed anyone to replace him.

## How Trump went from threatening Iran's annihilation to agreeing to a two-week ceasefire with Tehran

By AAMER MADHANI, WILL WEISSERT and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump over the course of a day went from threatening Iran with "annihilation" to proclaiming that the battered Islamic Republic's leadership had presented a "workable" plan that led him to agree to a 14-day ceasefire that he expects to pave the way to end the nearly six-week-old war.

The dramatic shift in tenor came as intermediaries, led by Pakistan, worked feverishly to head off a further escalation of the conflict. Even China — Iran's biggest trading partner and the United States' most significant economic competitor — quietly pulled strings to find a pathway toward a ceasefire, according to two officials briefed on the matter who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the

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condition of anonymity.

"The reason for doing so is that we have already met and exceeded all Military objectives, and are very far along with a definitive Agreement concerning Longterm PEACE with Iran, and PEACE in the Middle East," Trump declared in a social media post announcing the temporary ceasefire, about 90 minutes before his deadline for Tehran to open the critical Strait of Hormuz or see its power plants and other critical infrastructure obliterated.

The president is set to meet at the White House on Wednesday with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte. The emerging ceasefire and plan to reopen the strait is expected to be at the center of talks.

As the deadline neared, Democratic lawmakers decried Trump's threat to wipe away an entire civilization as "a moral failure" and Pope Leo XIV warned strikes against civilian infrastructure would violate international law, calling the president's comments "truly unacceptable."

But in the end, Trump may have ultimately backed down because of a simple truth: Escalation could risk involving the United States in the sort of "forever war" that had bedeviled his predecessors and that he had vowed he'd keep the United States out of if voters sent him back to the White House.

Controlling the strait would have been a long, costly operation

As Trump boasted about U.S. and Israeli military success over the last six weeks, he appeared to be working from the premise that he could bomb Iran into capitulation.

Starting with the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the opening salvos of the war, he seemed to discount that the Iranian leadership could opt for a long, bloody war.

The Islamic Republic over the last 47 years has repeatedly shown it's willing to dig in, even when it appears to America they're working against their own self-interest.

The clerical leadership held Americans hostages for 444 days, from late 1979 to early 1981, at the cost of the country's international standing. The mullahs allowed the ruinous Iran-Iraq war to go on for years, leaving hundreds of thousands dead. It stood by Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack that spurred a war with Israel that would defang the Iran-backed group in Gaza as well as Hezbollah in Lebanon, and created the conditions that led to the collapse of Tehran-backed Bashar Assad's authoritarian rule in Syria.

Iran's leadership — battered and outgunned — exuded confidence that it could very well bog down the world's superpower in a costly, extended conflict even if it might not defeat a mighty U.S. military.

Defense analysts largely agreed that the U.S. military could quickly take control of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow Persian Gulf waterway between Iran and Oman through which roughly 20% of the world's oil flows on any given day. But maintaining security over the waterway would require a high-risk, resource-intensive operation that could be a years-long American commitment.

Ben Connable, executive director of the nonprofit Battle Research Group, said securing the strait would require the U.S. military to maintain control of about 600 kilometers (373 miles) of Iranian territory, from Kish Island in the West to Bandar Abbas in the East, to stop Iran from firing missiles at ships passing through the strait. It's a mission that Connable said would likely require three U.S. infantry divisions, roughly 30,000 to 45,000 troops.

"This would be an indefinite operation — so, you know, think: be ready to do this for 20 years," said Connable, a retired Marine Corps intelligence officer. "We didn't think we were going to be in Afghanistan for 20 years. We didn't think we're going to have to be in Vietnam as long as we were, or Iraq."

The two-week ceasefire plan includes allowing both Iran and Oman to charge fees on ships transiting through Hormuz, a regional official said. The official said Iran would use the money it raised for reconstruction. It wasn't immediately clear what Oman would use its money for.

The strait is in the territorial waters of both Oman and Iran. The world had considered the passage an international waterway and never paid tolls before.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said after the ceasefire was announced that Trump was effectively giving Tehran "control" of the strait and delivering "a history-changing win for Iran."

"The level of incompetence is both stunning and heartbreaking," Murphy said.

Trump has a pattern of backing down from maximalist demands

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The ceasefire announcement came after Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged Trump to extend his deadline by two weeks to allow diplomacy to advance while also asking Iran to open the strait for two weeks.

Two weeks has become Trump's favorite interval to buy himself time when making major decisions. Last summer, the White House said he'd decide about launching an initial bombing campaign against Iran within two weeks — only to have the president order airstrikes that he said "obliterated" Iran's nuclear program before that interval was up.

Trump has also repeatedly used two weeks to set deadlines that ultimately led to very little during negotiations to end Russia's war with Ukraine and even going back to his first term, suggesting he'd have major policy issues like health care solved over such a timeframe.

Trump has repeatedly made maximalist demands throughout the first 15 months of his second White House term only to dial them back.

The president backed off many of the sweeping "Liberation Day" tariffs he first announced in April 2025 after they caused the financial markets to go haywire. Perhaps the most spectacular example came during a January meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, where Trump insisted that he wanted the U.S. to take control of Greenland "including right, title and ownership" only to switch course and abandon his threat to impose widespread tariffs on Europe to press his case.

The pretext for backing down that time was Trump saying he'd agreed with the head of NATO on a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security — even though the U.S. already enjoyed widespread military latitude in Greenland, which is part of the kingdom of Denmark.

The White House celebrated on Tuesday evening with aides crediting the U.S. military's prowess and Trump's maneuvering for setting conditions for the ceasefire.

"The success of our military created maximum leverage, allowing President Trump and the team to engage in tough negotiations that have now created an opening for a diplomatic solution and long-term peace," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt declared. She added, "Never underestimate President Trump's ability to successfully advance America's interests and broker peace."

## **Rex Heuermann to plead guilty in the Gilgo Beach killings, ending long search for a serial killer**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

A Long Island architect accused in a string of long-unsolved slayings known as the Gilgo Beach killings is expected to plead guilty on Wednesday, closing a case that bedeviled investigators, agonized victims' relatives and tantalized a true-crime obsessed public for years.

Rex Heuermann, 62, is charged with murdering seven women, many of them sex workers, over a 17-year span. A guilty plea would put him in prison for the rest of his life.

His decision to plead guilty was confirmed by three people familiar with it. They spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the plea has yet to be entered in court. Heuermann will be sentenced at a later date.

Suffolk County District Attorney Ray Tierney has scheduled a news conference for Wednesday afternoon, following a morning court hearing. He will be joined by members of victims' families and of the Gilgo Beach Homicide Investigation Task Force, which cracked the case with the help of clues that included DNA lifted from a discarded pizza crust.

A message seeking comment was left for Heuermann's lawyer, Michael Brown.

The Gilgo Beach investigation began in earnest in 2010 after police found numerous sets of human remains along a remote beach highway on Long Island's South Shore, setting off a search for a potential serial killer that attracted global interest and spawned a Hollywood movie.

Investigators used DNA analysis and other evidence to identify victims. In some cases, they were able to connect them to remains found elsewhere on Long Island years earlier.

Remains of six victims — Melissa Barthelemy, Maureen Brainard-Barnes, Amber Lynn Costello, Valerie

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Mack, Jessica Taylor and Megan Waterman — were found in the scrub along Ocean Parkway near Gilgo Beach. The remains of another victim, Sandra Costilla, were found more than 60 miles (100 kilometers) away in the Hamptons.

Police have also identified an eighth woman, Karen Vergata, whose remains were found on Fire Island, more than 20 miles (32 kilometers) west, in 1996, and near Gilgo Beach in 2011. Heuermann has not been charged in Vergata's killing.

But despite the attention, including a documentary series and the 2020 Netflix film, "Lost Girls," the investigation dragged on for more than a decade, punctuated by fleeting leads and dashed hopes.

In 2022, six weeks after a new police commissioner formed the Gilgo Beach task force, detectives identified Heuermann as a suspect by using a vehicle registration database to connect him to a pickup truck that a witness reported seeing when one of the victims disappeared in 2010.

Heuermann lived for decades in Massapequa Park, about a 25-minute drive across a causeway spanning South Oyster Bay to the sandy stretch where the women's remains were found. Some of the victims were believed to have disappeared from that community and their cellphones were found to have pinged towers in the area, authorities said.

After the truck discovery, a grand jury authorized more than 300 subpoenas and search warrants, allowing the task force to dig in to Heuermann's life.

Detectives collected billing records for burner phones he allegedly used to arrange meetings with the victims, retested DNA found with the bodies and scoured Heuermann's internet search history, which showed that he had viewed violent torture pornography and exhibited an intense interest in the Gilgo Beach killings and the renewed investigation. Cellphone data showed Heuermann was in contact with some victims just before they disappeared, investigators said.

To obtain Heuermann's DNA, a task force surveillance team tailed him in Manhattan, where he worked, and watched as he threw the remnants of his lunch — a box of partially eaten pizza crusts — into a sidewalk garbage can.

Investigators rushed in, grabbed the box, and sent it to the crime lab, which matched DNA from the crust to a male hair found on burlap used to restrain one of the victims. He was arrested in July 2023.

After Heuermann's arrest, detectives spent more than 12 days searching his yard and home, where they found a basement vault that contained 279 weapons. On his computer, investigators said, they found what they described as a "blueprint" for the killings, including a series of checklists with reminders to limit noise, clean the bodies and destroy evidence.

Last year, a judge rejected Heuermann's bid to exclude DNA evidence obtained through advanced techniques that prosecutors say proves he's the killer.

## **Eight states, three time zones and a ton of history: Take a trip down Route 66 as it turns 100**

By SUSAN MONTROYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — If you've ever planned to motor west and take the highway that's the best, this might be time: Route 66 turns 100 this year.

The Mother Road, as author John Steinbeck dubbed it, has evolved over the years from an escape for poor farmers fleeing the devastating dust storms of the 1930s to perhaps the quintessential American road trip that's still delivering kicks.

Although there have been faster and more direct routes between the nation's second- and third-largest cities for some time, Route 66's neon still burns brightly and its vintage signs beckon travelers to restored motor lodges, classic diners and roadside attractions.

Each stop turns the wheels of the imagination, leaving travelers to contemplate what life was like for the people and communities that have made the road hum over the years.

Illinois

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Chicago has long been one of the country's economic engines, with access to international waters and railroads that linked all corners of the country. In the 1920s, Oklahoma businessman Cyrus Avery, known as the Father of Route 66, knew it wouldn't be long before automobiles would dominate the transportation landscape, and the Windy City would be the perfect place to start the journey he envisioned.

A member of the federal highway board appointed to map the U.S. highway system, Avery opted to go with the number 66. He knew those double digits were ripe for marketing and could be seared into the minds of motorists.

For some travelers, the journey is fueled more by the food than the scenery, and there's plenty to choose from — slices of homemade pie, thick shakes, cheeseburgers and an assortment of fried delights.

The Cozy Dog Drive In in Springfield, the Illinois capital, is one of the many diners that sprang up along Route 66, and its breaded hot dogs on a stick have stood the test of time. Third-generation owner Josh Waldmire says the recipe is a secret.

Waldmire's grandfather, Ed, saw the concoction's potential as fast and convenient road food and developed a system for frying the dogs vertically.

Missouri

Route 66 has its share of twists and turns, and it's no surprise that a highway famous for its quirky roadside attractions would cross the nation's most famous river on one of the more peculiar bridges known to modern engineering.

As the road nears St. Louis, the mile-long (1.6-kilometer-long) Chain of Rocks Bridge hovers more than 60 feet (18 meters) above the Mississippi River.

Engineers eventually built a straighter, higher-speed option, and a poor resale market spared the original bridge from the scrap heap. Today it's reserved for pedestrians and cyclists.

A median in Missouri is home to St. Robert Route 66 Neon Park, which features orphaned neon signs that once beckoned travelers to stop at certain sites and businesses along the highway. Often handcrafted, they weren't only markers for motels, cafes and gas stations, but were also folk art and symbols of local culture.

Kansas

The Sunflower State hosts only a short stretch of Route 66, but it packs a punch with the Kan-O-Tex Service Station in Galena. A classic example of roadside fare, the station served as inspiration for the animated 2006 Pixar film "Cars."

Director John Lasseter and his crew took road trips along the route, digging into history and looking for elements that could bring the project to life. It was in Galena where they spotted the old boom truck that served as the basis for the character Tow Mater. The plot wasn't far off, as so many once bustling towns — like the fictional Radiator Springs — nearly faded away after being bypassed by an interstate.

Kansas also is home to the Brush Creek Bridge, otherwise known as the Rainbow Bridge. It's on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of few remaining examples of the concrete arched bridges designed by James Barney Marsh.

Oklahoma

There was a real danger for some who traveled the road, particularly Black motorists passing through inhospitable and segregated areas during the Jim Crow era. The Green Book — a guide first published in 1936 by Victor Hugo Green — listed hotels, restaurants and gas stations that would serve Black customers.

The Threatt Filling Station near Luther wasn't listed in The Green Book, but it was a safe haven — not only for getting fuel, but for barbecue and baseball. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it was the only known Black-owned and operated gas station along Route 66.

Route 66 is littered with abandoned buildings and faded signs, but one example of the highway's resilient spirit stands tall in Sapulpa, near Tulsa. The restored Tee Pee Drive-In Theater offers a step back into the 1950s, when the booming car culture helped spawn thousands of drive-in theaters nationwide.

Built in 1949, the drive-in officially opened in the spring of 1950 with a screening of John Wayne's "Tycoon." It was one of the few drive-ins at the time to have paved pathways. Over the years, it survived a tornado, a fire that destroyed the concession stand and break-ins before being shuttered for more than 20 years. It reopened in 2023.

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## Texas

Blink and you might miss it, but a stop at the Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo is a must for any Route 66 journey. For decades, visitors have been spray-painting the 10 vintage Cadillacs at the site and mulling the transitory nature of time as Bruce Springsteen did in his 1980 song of the same name.

It's not a ranch, but rather a public art installation created in 1974 by the art and architecture collective Ant Farm. At first, the cars — which were half-buried front-down at a 60-degree angle — were used for target practice. Others would scratch their initials into the metal. The spray painting started later.

Arrive in Adrian and you're halfway through your trip. Steps from a white line marking the midpoint of Route 66 is the Midway Cafe, where the "ugly pies" are anything but.

If you're still hungry, head back to Amarillo for a 72-ounce (2 kilogram) steak and all the sides at The Big Texan. If you can finish the meal in an hour or less, it's free.

## New Mexico

More than half of Route 66 cuts through sovereign Native American lands, often tracing routes used by tribes long before settlers arrived. Much like the railroad in the 1800s, the highway opened the door to a new era of commerce, but it also fueled stereotypes about cultures along the way.

There are still faded and crumbling references to tipis and feathered headdresses at some stops along the historic highway. The symbols were easily appropriated for marketing by roadside vendors but weren't indicative of the separate and distinct Native American cultures in the area.

Today, tribes are telling their own stories and showcasing their creations, whether it be pottery, fruit pies or poems.

Albuquerque boasts the longest intact urban stretch of Route 66. Those 18 miles (29 kilometers) pass through several neighborhoods and business districts, from historic Old Town to Nob Hill.

Some of the old motor lodges and neon signs along what is now Central Avenue have been restored. Other signs are being reimagined using hubcaps, elaborate lowrider-inspired paint jobs and New Mexico's classic yellow and red license plates in a nod to the car culture that is very much still alive in the city.

## Arizona

Musician Jackson Browne was taking his own road trip in the early 1970s when his car left him stranded in Winslow. The experience inspired the lyrics to the Eagles' hit "Take it Easy." But it's certainly not the only song that is a must-have for a Route 66 playlist.

Bobby Troup created a classic American road anthem in the 1940s with "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66." Nat King Cole, Chuck Berry, The Rolling Stones and Depeche Mode carried it through the decades, each covering the song with their own flare.

While standing on a corner in Winslow, don't be surprised if someone saunters up with a guitar and starts strumming favorites from their own road trip playlist.

Before leaving the state, the one-time gold mining town of Oatman features a Wild West atmosphere, daily staged shootouts and beloved burros. Oatman was a destination along one of the original alignments of Route 66 via a treacherous path through the Black Mountains, but it was later bypassed as part of improvements made in the 1950s.

## California

Once a desert oasis, Roy's Motel & Café in Amboy is a quintessential Route 66 landmark. The towering neon sign is one of the most photographed spots along the road. Inside, foreign currency left by international visitors lines one wall. Across the street, a clothing post decorated with shoes, shirts and other items juts up from the desert floor.

This stretch of the highway through the Mojave Desert offers a special kind of solitude. The pavement gets rough in spots and the landscape takes charge, showing off Joshua trees, wide-open spaces and the remnants of ancient volcanic activity.

Much of the area is undeveloped, meaning it looks a lot like it would have when Route 66 was commissioned in 1926.

After making it through oft-congested Los Angeles, the iconic Santa Monica Pier marks the end of the

line, and it's nothing short of a perpetual party with a steady stream of spectators and performers. Although many stretches of Route 66 have lapsed into decay, the breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean are a reminder of the pursuits made possible by the road over the last century.

## US and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire as Trump pulls back on threats

By BASSEM MROUE, JON GAMBRELL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump pulled back on his threats to launch devastating strikes on Iran late Tuesday, as the U.S. and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire that includes the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump swerved to deescalate the war less than two hours before the deadline he set for Tehran to capitulate to a deal or face attacks on its bridges and power plants meant to destroy Iranian "civilization."

Iran's Supreme National Security Council said it has accepted the ceasefire and that it would negotiate with the United States in Pakistan beginning Friday. Neither Iran nor the United States said when the ceasefire would begin, and attacks took place in Israel, Iran and across the Gulf region early Wednesday.

Israel backed the U.S. ceasefire with Iran but the deal doesn't cover fighting against Hezbollah in Lebanon, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said early Wednesday.

His office said in the statement that Israel supported Trump's decision to suspend strikes subject to Iran immediately opening the Strait of Hormuz and stopping all attacks on the U.S. Israel and countries in the region. His office said Israel also supports U.S. efforts to ensure Iran no longer poses a nuclear or missile threat.

The ceasefire calls for Israel and Hezbollah to halt fighting in Lebanon, according to the prime minister of Pakistan, which has been mediating talks.

The ceasefire process was clouded in uncertainty after Iran released different versions of the 10-point plan intended to be the basis for negotiations. The version in Farsi included the phrase "acceptance of enrichment" for its nuclear program. But for reasons that remain unclear, that phrase was missing in English versions shared by Iranian diplomats to journalists.

Trump initially had said Iran proposed a "workable" 10-point plan that could help end the war launched by the U.S. and Israel in February. But he later called it fraudulent, without elaborating. Trump has said ending Iran's nuclear program entirely was a key point of the war.

Pro-government demonstrators in the streets of Iran's capital screamed: "Death to America, death to Israel, death to compromisers!" after the ceasefire announcement Wednesday morning. They also burned American and Israeli flags in the street.

It shows the ongoing anger from hard-liners, who had been preparing for what many assumed would be an apocalyptic battle with the United States.

Iran and Oman to collect shipping fees in Strait of Hormuz

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said passage through the strait would be allowed under Iranian military management. It wasn't immediately clear whether that meant Iran would completely loosen its chokehold on the waterway.

The plan allows for both Iran and Oman to charge fees on ships transiting through the strait, according to a regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss negotiations they were directly involved in. The official said Iran would use the money it raised for reconstruction.

In addition to control of the strait, Iran's demands for ending the war include withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from the region, the lifting of sanctions and the release of its frozen assets.

Since the war began, Trump has repeatedly backed off deadlines just before they expire.

In doing so again Tuesday, Trump said in a social media post he had come to the decision "based on conversations" with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Gen. Asim Munir, Pakistan's powerful army chief. Sharif, in a post on X hours earlier, urged Trump to extend his deadline by two weeks to allow diplomacy to advance. He used the same post to ask Iran to open the strait for two weeks.

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"Almost all of the various points of past contention have been agreed to between the United States and Iran, but a two week period will allow the Agreement to be finalized and consummated," Trump said.

There are concerns in Israel about the agreement, according to a person familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to speak to the media. The person said Israel would like to achieve more.

Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium is still buried at enrichment sites. The program had been one of the main issues cited by both Israel and the U.S. in launching the war.

Earlier Trump threats raised alarms

"A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again," if a deal isn't reached, Trump said in an online post Tuesday morning. But he also seemed to keep open the possibility of an off-ramp, saying that "maybe something revolutionarily wonderful can happen."

Trump's expansive threat did not seem to account for potential harm to civilians, prompting Democrats in Congress, some United Nations officials and scholars in military law to say such strikes would violate international law.

Tehran's representative at the U.N., Amir-Saeid Iravani, said the threats "constitute incitement to war crimes and potentially genocide" and that Iran would "take immediate and proportionate reciprocal measures" if Trump launches devastating strikes.

The U.S. and Israel have battered Iran with attacks targeting its military capabilities, leadership and nuclear program. Iran has responded with a stream of strikes on Israel and Gulf Arab neighbors, causing regional chaos and outsized economic and political shock.

Late Tuesday, Pakistan's prime minister urged Trump to extend his deadline by two weeks to allow diplomacy to advance. In a post on X, Shehbaz Sharif, whose country has been leading negotiations, also asked Iran to open up for two weeks the Strait of Hormuz.

China, which is Tehran's biggest trade partner, encouraged the Iranians to find a way to a ceasefire as talks progressed, according to two officials who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Before the deadline, airstrikes hit two bridges and a train station, and the U.S. hit military infrastructure on Kharg Island, a key hub for Iranian oil production.

While Iran cannot match the sophistication of U.S. and Israeli weaponry or their dominance in the air, its chokehold on the strait since the war began in late February is roiling the world economy and raising the pressure on Trump both at home and abroad to find a way out of the standoff.

Airstrikes hit Iran, which fires on Saudi Arabia and Israel

Even as the ceasefire was announced, missile alerts continued in the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait early Wednesday, hinting at the chaos surrounding the diplomatic moves. A gas processing facility in Abu Dhabi was ablaze after incoming Iranian fire, officials said.

Israel was continuing its attacks on Iran, said an Israeli military official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations. Iran also kept up fire on Israel.

The U.S. military has halted all offensive operations against Iran but continues defensive actions, said an official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe sensitive military operations.

Earlier Tuesday the Israeli military said it attacked an Iranian petrochemical site in Shiraz, the second day in a row it hit such a facility. The military later said it also struck bridges in several cities that were being used by Iranian forces to transport weapons and military equipment.

More than 1,900 people have been killed in Iran since the war began, but the government has not updated the toll for days.

In Lebanon, where Israel is fighting Iran-backed Hezbollah militants, more than 1,500 people have been killed. and more than 1 million people have been displaced. Eleven Israeli soldiers have died there.

In Gulf Arab states and the occupied West Bank, more than two dozen people have died, while 23 have been reported dead in Israel, and 13 U.S. service members have been killed.

## Bible stories would be part of a new Texas public schools reading list drawing attention

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Biblical stories like Jonah and the whale would be required reading for Texas public schools students under proposals that are putting the state at the center of another contentious wrangling over the role of religion in classrooms.

Religious leaders, teachers, parents and students spent hours Tuesday before the state education board arguing about the reading list for the state's 5.4 million kindergartners to 12th-graders. The debate is part of widening efforts in the U.S. to incorporate religion in schools, mostly in Republican-led states, driving legislation and legal action.

Nationally, President Donald Trump has pledged to protect and expand religious expression in public schools. And Texas, a red state that is home to about one in 10 of the nation's public school students, often helps set the agenda.

Texas became the first state to allow chaplains, in 2023. And just last year, a Republican-led mandate that the Ten Commandments be displayed in public schools took effect in the state, although around two dozen districts took them down because of a lawsuit.

But while the debate over Texas' reading list could have national implications, to the speakers the issue boiled down to whether the passages are essential to understanding the nation's history and morals — or unconstitutional.

"Our children need truth," said Nathan Irving, a pastor and father of eight from Myrtle Springs, Texas. "Truth is the only currency that never devalues. Investing truth into our children is the most loving thing that we can do for them. This is the truth. This country and this state were founded upon a Christian worldview. Like it or not, it is true."

Final vote on the changes still ahead

A final vote on the list is expected in June, and if approved by the Texas State Board of Education, the changes would take effect in 2030.

Several speakers cited the "establishment clause" of the First Amendment, which states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

"This list is a tool of proselytization that has no place in our public schools," Rabbi Josh Fixler, of Congregation Emanu El, a reform synagogue in Houston, told the board. "There is a difference between teaching about religion and teaching religion, and this list will force teachers to cross that line."

Megan Boyden, a mother of three from Denton, Texas, described it as a direct attack on her private faith.

"As a Christian mother, it is my right and responsibility to teach our family's religion," she said. "It is not the state's job to shed through the lens of a teacher who may not share the same beliefs I do. Will Bible passages be taught in conflict with my beliefs?"

"What," she asked, "of non-Christian students?"

The list stems from a state law passed in 2023, which called for the creation of a state-approved list of high-quality materials.

Third graders would learn about the Road to Damascus, which tells the story of Paul's transformation from an early persecutor of Christians into a follower. Seniors, meanwhile, would learn about the Book of Job, a story about a man whose faith is tested when he loses everything.

The list also includes classics like Dr. Seuss' "The Cat in the Hat," stories about the national folk hero Daniel Boone. And there are also works by famous African Americans like Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr. and a book about Harriet Tubman of the Underground Railroad fame.

Texas has already approved optional curriculum that incorporates the Bible

The GOP-leaning board previously approved a new Bible-infused curriculum that is optional for schools to incorporate in kindergarten through fifth grades.

The board also is considering social studies standards that have been criticized as too state-centric, not

focused enough on world events and rife with an undercurrent of American exceptionalism. They call for students to “identify the Texas flag as a symbol of Texas pride,” and recognize the state song “Texas, Our Texas.”

Students also are supposed to be able to understand stories about Texas Independence.

Curriculum debates crop up occasionally. Over the years, state boards in places such as Kansas have debated whether the teaching of evolution should reflect doubt about the well-established scientific theory — and leave room for arguments that the universe’s complexity points to an intelligent design.

Allison Cardwell, a mother of a fourth grader and a fifth grade social studies teacher, urged the board to rethink the standards. She said fifth grade would be the only time most Texas students would receive instruction in U.S. history until high school.

“We have to ask ourselves, How can we expect to create citizens who value liberty, responsibility, and the principles this country was founded on, if we don’t ensure that they truly understand those foundations?” she said.

## Oil prices sink and US stock futures jump as US and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices plunged below \$100 a barrel and Asia markets and U.S. stock futures jumped after the U.S. and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire that includes the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Japan’s benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 4.8% and South Korea’s Kospi gained 5.6%. Futures for the S&P 500 advanced 2.3% as of 9:30 p.m. EDT, while Dow futures rose 2%.

Futures for U.S. crude oil sank 14.3% to \$96.83 a barrel and Brent crude oil, the international standard, dropped 13.3% to \$94.74. Oil prices had spiked because the war snarled the production and transportation of crude in the Persian Gulf. Much of that oil exits the gulf through the Strait of Hormuz to reach customers around the world, but Iran had blocked it to enemies.

Late Tuesday, Trump said he was holding off on his threatened attacks on Iranian bridges, power plants and other civilian targets. Iran’s foreign minister said passage through the strait would be allowed for the next two weeks under Iranian military management.

The dramatic moves in prices are just the latest swings to hit financial markets since late February because of constantly shifting signals about when the conflict may end. Even with word of a ceasefire, neither Iran nor the United States said when it would begin, and attacks took place in Israel, Iran and across the Gulf region early Wednesday.

Earlier, U.S. stocks swung sharply during regular trading as uncertainty about the war with Iran increased after Trump had threatened that a “whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again” if Iran does not meet his deadline at 8 p.m. Eastern time to open the Strait of Hormuz.

The S&P 500 fell as much as 1.2% but stocks rallied at the end of trading after Pakistan’s prime minister urged Trump to extend his deadline for another two weeks and asked Iran to open up the strait for the same amount of time.

The S&P 500 erased all its losses and ended with a modest gain of 0.1%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 85 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.1%.

They’re the latest swings to hit financial markets since late February because of deep uncertainty about when the fighting may end.

Oil prices were likewise shaky. The price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude to be delivered in May briefly climbed above \$117 before settling at \$112.95.

Oil prices have spiked because the war has snarled the production and transportation of crude in the Persian Gulf. Much of that oil exits the gulf through the Strait of Hormuz to reach customers around the world, but Iran has blocked it to enemies.

The worry in markets has been that a long-term disruption will keep oil prices high for a long time and

send a painful wave of inflation crashing through the global economy. Trump kept traders on edge by making a series of threats to blow up Iranian power plants only to delay several times.

The average price for a gallon of regular gasoline across the United States has leaped to \$4.14, according to AAA. It was below \$3 a couple days before the United States and Israel launched attacks to begin the war in late February.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased on word of a potential cease-fire. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.24% from 4.30% earlier Tuesday.

That's still well above its 3.97% level from before the war, and the rise has pushed up rates for mortgages and other loans going to U.S. households and businesses, which slows the economy.

## **American journalist Shelly Kittleson has been released week after kidnapping in Iraq, Rubio says**

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — American journalist Shelly Kittleson, who was kidnapped from a Baghdad streetcorner last week, was released Tuesday, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

The development came after the powerful Iran-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah said in a statement that it had decided to free Kittleson, who was abducted on March 31. Its condition was that Kittleson must "leave the country immediately" upon her release.

Two officials within the militia, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly, told The Associated Press that in exchange for freeing Kittleson, several members of the group who had previously been detained by Iraqi authorities would be released.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed Kittleson's release in a statement early Wednesday. He said on X, "We are relieved that this American is now freed and are working to support her safe departure from Iraq."

Rubio thanked Iraqi authorities, as well as the FBI and U.S. Defense Department and other U.S. agencies for their work toward securing Kittleson's release.

A one-off release

According to one of two Iraqi officials who confirmed her release before the U.S. announcement, Kittleson was freed in the afternoon. The officials, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly, did not share her current whereabouts but said that prior to her release, Kittleson had been held in Baghdad.

In its statement, Kataib Hezbollah said its decision came "in appreciation of the patriotic stances of the outgoing" Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, without giving more details.

It added that "this initiative will not be repeated in the future."

In Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, Kittleson's mother told a reporter who knocked on her door Tuesday that FBI agents were at her home. A number of people could be seen sitting at Barb Kittleson's kitchen table.

Initially she said that her daughter had not yet been freed, but when a reporter returned later, she said she did not know if her daughter had been released or not. No update from the Kittleson family was immediately available after Rubio confirmed her release.

Caroline Clancy, a spokesperson for the FBI's Milwaukee field office, declined to comment.

Kataib Hezbollah had not previously acknowledged that it abducted Kittleson, although both U.S. and Iraqi officials had blamed the group.

A respected journalist in conflict zones

Kittleson, 49, had lived abroad for years before the kidnapping, using Rome as her base for a time and building a respected journalism career across the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Like many freelancers, she often worked on a shoestring budget and without the protections afforded by large news organizations to staff.

She had entered Iraq again shortly before her abduction. U.S. officials have said that they warned her multiple times of threats against her, but that she did not want to leave.

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Iraqi officials have said that two cars were involved in the kidnapping, one of which crashed while being pursued near the town of al-Haswa in Babil province, southwest of Baghdad. The journalist was then transferred to a second car that fled the scene.

Three other Iraqi officials said earlier Tuesday that attempts to negotiate her release had run into obstacles. The two Iraqi security officials and one official from the pro-Iran Coordination Framework political bloc spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the sensitive case publicly.

A shadowy militia group

According to one of the security officials, a member of the Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of Iran-backed militias that is nominally under the control of the Iraqi military, had been tasked with communicating with the abductors to secure Kittleson's release but had run into difficulties in communicating with the Kataib Hezbollah leadership.

"The primary challenge is that the leaders of the Kataib militia — specifically, the commanders of the battalions — are nowhere to be found. No one knows their whereabouts, and the process of establishing contact with them is extremely complex," the security officials said.

"These leaders have gone underground, maintaining no active lines of communication, out of fear of being targeted," they added.

According to the officials, a message had been sent to the Kataib leadership to determine their demands in exchange for releasing Kittleson. Iraqi authorities were willing to release six Kataib Hezbollah members who are currently detained, most of them in connection with attacks on a U.S. base in Syria, they said.

Kataib Hezbollah has previously been accused of kidnapping foreigners.

Elizabeth Tsurkov, a Princeton graduate student with Israeli and Russian citizenship, disappeared in Baghdad in 2023. After she was freed and handed over to U.S. authorities in September 2025, she said that she had been held by Kataib Hezbollah.

The group never officially claimed responsibility for kidnapping Tsurkov.

Iran-backed militias in Iraq have also launched regular attacks on U.S. facilities in the country since the beginning of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

## Russia and China veto watered-down UN resolution aimed at reopening the Strait of Hormuz

By EDITH M. LEDERER and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia and China on Tuesday vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution aimed at reopening the Strait of Hormuz that had been repeatedly watered down in hopes those two countries would abstain.

The vote — 11-2, with two abstentions from Pakistan and Colombia — took place shortly after U.S. President Donald Trump issued an unprecedented threat that a "whole civilization will die tonight" if Iran does not open the strategic waterway and make a deal. But late Tuesday, less than two hours before the deadline he set, Trump pulled back his threat.

Trump said he would suspend the threatened attack for two weeks provided Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. One-fifth of the world's oil typically passes through the strait, and Iran's stranglehold during the war has sent energy prices soaring.

Iran accepted the two-week ceasefire and said passage through the strait during this period would be allowed under Iranian military management. Trump said Iran has proposed a "workable" 10-point plan for ending the war.

Russia and China strongly defended their opposition to the U.N. resolution, both citing Trump's threat to end Iran's civilization as confirmation that the proposal would have given the U.S. and Israel "carte blanche for continued aggression," as Russian envoy Vassily Nebenzia put it.

Nebenzia and China's U.N. ambassador, Fu Cong, said the resolution failed to capture the root causes and full picture of the conflict by not showing that America and its closest ally started the now spiraling war.

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Fu said in his statement that resolution was "highly susceptible to misinterpretation or even abuse," and if it were adopted "would send a wrong message and have serious, very serious consequences."

Russia and China immediately followed up by circulating a rival resolution, seen by The Associated Press, which urged all parties to halt military activities and condemned attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Nebenzia told reporters it was already in a form that could be put to a vote.

The foreign minister of Bahrain, which authored the draft, assailed the U.N.'s most powerful body for not taking action and allowing the international community to be "held hostage to economic blackmail" from Iran.

Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani said failing to adopt the resolution sends "the signal that the threat to international waterways can pass without any decisive action by the international organization responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security."

Al-Zayani told reporters that Gulf countries will intensify diplomatic efforts to deter Iran's attacks and safeguard freedom of navigation.

But Iran's ambassador to the U.N. thanked its allies on the 15-member council for refusing to adopt the resolution.

"The text unjustifiably and misleadingly portrays Iran's lawful measures in the Strait of Hormuz, which have been taken in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defense in accordance with the UN Charter, as threats to international peace and security," Amir-Saeid Irvani said in his statement.

How the resolution evolved

It's doubtful the resolution, even if it had been adopted, would have impacted the war, now in its sixth week, because it was significantly weakened to try to get Moscow and Beijing to abstain rather than veto it.

The initial Gulf proposal would have authorized countries to use "all necessary means" — U.N. wording that would include military action — to ensure transit through the Strait of Hormuz and deter attempts to close it.

The United States, which had supported the draft from its original form, assailed the countries that objected to the resolution.

"No one should tolerate that they are holding the global economy at gunpoint," Mike Waltz, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., said of Iran, "but today, Russia and China did tolerate it." He said in his statement: "They sided with a regime that seeks to intimidate the Gulf into submission, even as it brutalizes its own people during a national internet blackout, for daring to imagine dignity or freedom."

After Russia, China and France, all veto-wielding members of the Security Council, expressed opposition to approving the use of force, the resolution was revised to eliminate all references to offensive action. It would have authorized only "all defensive means necessary." A vote had been expected on Saturday.

But instead the resolution was further weakened to eliminate any reference to Security Council authorization — which is an order for action — and limit its provisions to the Strait of Hormuz. Previous drafts had included adjacent waters.

The resolution vetoed Tuesday would have "strongly" encouraged countries to coordinate their efforts to ensure the safety of navigation across the Strait of Hormuz, including escorting merchant and commercial vessels.

The resolution also demanded that Iran stop impeding freedom of navigation through the strait and attacking civilian infrastructure.

Why it was Bahrain pushing the UN resolution

In response to the U.S. and Israeli attacks beginning on Feb. 28, Iran has targeted hotels, airports, residential buildings and other civilian infrastructure in more than 10 countries, including the Islamic Republic's Gulf neighbors, some of the world's

major exporters of oil and natural gas.

Iran's blockade in the strait is seen by Gulf nations as an existential threat. Bahrain, a Gulf nation that hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet and is the Security Council's Arab representative and its president this month, has been pressing for U.N. action.

In response to Iran's strikes against its Gulf neighbors, the Security Council adopted a Bahrain-sponsored resolution on March 11 condemning the "egregious attacks" and calling for Tehran to immediately halt its strikes.

That resolution, adopted by a vote of 13-0 with Russia and China abstaining, also condemned Iran's actions in the Strait of Hormuz as a threat to international peace and security and called for an immediate end to all actions blocking shipping.

## How Trump's deadline delays and threats escalated leading up to 2-week ceasefire with Iran

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he would suspend his threatened attack against Iran less than two hours before the deadline the president set for Tehran Tuesday, which followed weeks of deadline delays and escalating threats, including Trump's earlier post that "a whole civilization will die tonight."

On Truth Social, Trump posted that he would withhold "the bombing and attack of Iran" for two weeks, subject to Iran reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian officials said they had accepted a two-week ceasefire and that passage through the strait would be allowed for that same period.

The temporary agreement comes after weeks of the Republican president posting a slew of heated threats, announcing deadline delays and proclamations that the negotiations were going well, sometimes in the same statement.

That was true in Trump's Truth Social post before his now-suspended Tuesday 8 p.m. ET deadline. After threatening a "whole civilization," Trump had said Iran's new leaders were more reasonable and "maybe something revolutionarily wonderful can happen, WHO KNOWS?"

Trump's posts earlier in the day had raised the ante from his threats Monday, in which he said: "They'll have no bridges. They'll have no power plants. They'll have no anything."

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres previously warned the U.S. that attacks on civilian infrastructure are banned under international law, according to his office. Trump had said he's "not at all" concerned about committing war crimes with such attacks.

So how did Trump's deadline delays and threats escalate over the weeks leading up to Tuesday night?

An ultimatum about reopening the Strait of Hormuz

On March 21, Trump posted on Truth Social that the U.S. would "hit and obliterate" Iranian power plants if it did not fully reopen the strait within 48 hours.

Iran had until the evening of March 23.

Then, 12 hours before the deadline, Trump took to Truth Social to share what seemed good news: that both countries had productive conversations toward concluding the conflict.

He wrote that he had instructed the Pentagon to postpone any strikes on Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure for five days, to give more time for talks.

That pushed the deadline out to the end of that week.

A threat to target desalination plants

Before that deadline, on March 26, Trump doubled down on his threats on Truth Social: "They better get serious soon, before it is too late, because once that happens, there is NO TURNING BACK, and it won't be pretty!"

But later that day, he extended the deadline for 10 more days, to April 6 at 8 p.m. Eastern, and said on Truth Social that negotiations were "going very well."

On March 30, Trump put out a mixed statement: celebrating progress in the talks with Iran while also expanding his threatened bombing if a deal wasn't "shortly reached," adding that "it probably will be."

"We will conclude our lovely 'stay' in Iran by blowing up and completely obliterating all of their Electric Generating Plants, Oil Wells and Kharg Island (and possibly all desalinization plants!)," he wrote.

It's unclear how soon "shortly reached" meant for Trump, but a deal was not made as the deadline loomed.

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An expletive-filled threat to attack power plants and bridges

"Remember when I gave Iran ten days to MAKE A DEAL or OPEN UP THE HORMUZ STRAIT," Trump said in a Truth Social post on Saturday, "Time is running out - 48 hours before all Hell will reign down on them." He meant rain down.

As the deadline approached, his posts had doubled down on his threats until Sunday, when Trump pushed it again in an expletive-filled post.

"Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!! Open the F——in' Strait, you crazy bastards, or you'll be living in Hell," Trump said on Truth Social, followed by another post that specified 8 p.m. as the deadline.

Trump then suggested on Monday that Tuesday's deadline would be final, saying he'd already given Iran enough extensions.

"The entire country can be taken out in one night, and that night might be tomorrow night," Trump said. "We have a plan, because of the power of our military, where every bridge in Iran will be decimated by 12 o'clock tomorrow night."

By Tuesday morning, Trump had sent his statement saying "a whole civilization will die tonight," to which he added that "I don't want that to happen, but it probably will."

What's next for diplomacy with Iran?

Tuesday night, Trump said that Iran has proposed a "workable" 10-point peace plan that could help end the war the U.S. and Israel launched on Feb. 28.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council said it has accepted a two-week ceasefire and that it would negotiate with the U.S. starting Friday, but added in its statement that "this does not signify the termination of the war."

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said passage through the Strait of Hormuz would be allowed for the next two weeks under Iranian military management, though it wasn't immediately clear whether that meant Iran would loosen its chokehold on the waterway.

In his post, Trump said that "Almost all of the various points of past contention have been agreed to between the United States and Iran, but a two-week period will allow the Agreement to be finalized and consummated."

## Artemis II astronauts make long-distance call to the space station as they head home from the moon

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Still aglow from their triumphant lunar flyby, the Artemis II astronauts made more history Tuesday: calling their friends aboard the International Space Station hundreds of thousands of miles away as they headed home from the moon.

It was the first moonship-to-spaceship radio linkup ever. NASA's Apollo crews had no off-the-planet company back in the 1960s and 1970s, the last time humanity set sail for deep space.

"We have been waiting for this like you can't imagine," Artemis II commander Reid Wiseman called out.

For Christina Koch on Artemis II and Jessica Meir aboard the space station, it marked a joyous space reunion despite being 230,000 miles (370,000 kilometers) apart. The two teamed up for the world's first all-female spacewalk in 2019 outside the orbiting lab.

Koch told her "astro-sister" that she'd hoped to meet up with her again in space "but I never thought it would be like this — it's amazing."

"I'm so happy that we are back in space together," Meir replied, "even if we are a few miles apart."

Houston's Mission Control arranged the cosmic chitchat between the four lunar travelers and the space station's three NASA and one French residents.

Koch described being awe-struck by not just the beauty of Earth, "but how much blackness there was around it."

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"It just made it even more special. It truly emphasized how alike we are, how the same thing keeps every single person on planet Earth alive," she told the space station crew. "The specialness and preciousness of that really is emphasized" when viewing the home planet from the moon.

By late Tuesday afternoon, the Artemis II astronauts had beamed back more than 50 gigabytes' worth of pictures and other data from the previous day's lunar rendezvous, which set a new distance record for humanity. The highlight: an Earthset photo reminiscent of Apollo 8's Earthrise shot from 1968.

"While they are inspirational and, I think, allow all of us to really feel a little bit of what they were feeling, there's also a lot of science hidden inside of those images," said Mission Control's lead lunar scientist Kelsey Young. "The conversations and the science lessons learned are just beginning."

During a debriefing with Young, the astronauts recounted how they spotted a cascade of pinpricks of light on the lunar surface from impacting cosmic debris. The flashes lasted mere milliseconds and coincided by chance with Monday evening's total solar eclipse.

Young said it was too soon to know whether the crew witnessed an actual meteor shower or more random, run-of-the-mill micrometeoroid hits. Either way, there were "audible screams of delight" in the science operations center, she said.

Koch described being awe-struck by not just the beauty of Earth, "but how much blackness there was around it."

"It just made it even more special. It truly emphasized how alike we are, how the same thing keeps every single person on planet Earth alive," she told the space station crew. "The specialness and preciousness of that really is emphasized" when viewing the home planet from the moon.

The first lunar explorers since Apollo 17 in 1972, Wiseman and his crew are aiming for a splashdown off the San Diego coast on Friday to wrap up the nearly 10-day test flight. The recovery ship USS John P. Murtha left port Tuesday for the target zone.

It sets the stage for next year's Artemis III, a lunar lander docking demo in orbit around Earth. Artemis IV will follow in 2028 with two astronauts attempting to land near the lunar south pole.

As for the Orion capsule's pesky potty, Mission Control assured the astronauts that no maintenance was required Tuesday. The toilet has been on-and-off limits to the crew ever since last week's launch, prompting them to rely on a backup bag-and-funnel system for urinating.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman told the crew following the lunar flyby Monday night: "We definitely have to fix some of the plumbing" ahead of the next Artemis mission. Engineers suspect a clogged filter in the overboard flushing system.

Aside from the toilet and other relatively minor matters, the mission has gone well, Isaacman noted at a news conference Tuesday, "but I'll breathe easier when we get through reentry and everybody's under chutes and in the water."

## Wireless Festival canceled after UK bars rapper Ye over antisemitic remarks

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The rapper formerly known as Kanye West was barred Tuesday from entering the U.K., where he was scheduled to headline the Wireless Festival in July, after a backlash over Ye's history of antisemitic remarks.

Festival organizers canceled the three-day outdoor event as a result of the travel ban and said those who had bought tickets would get refunds.

Ye applied for an electronic travel authorization to visit the U.K., but it was blocked by the government on the grounds that his presence in the country would not be "conducive to the public good."

"Kanye West should never have been invited to headline Wireless," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a statement posted on social media. "This government stands firmly with the Jewish community, and we will not stop in our fight to confront and defeat the poison of antisemitism. We will always take the action necessary to protect the public and uphold our values."

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The rapper, who changed his name in 2021, had been expected to play his first U.K. dates for more than a decade in front of around 150,000 revelers over three nights July 10-12 at the Wireless Festival, in London's Finsbury Park. Other acts for the festival had not yet been announced.

The event's organizers had been under mounting pressure from sponsors and politicians to cancel the gigs by the rapper, who has drawn widespread condemnation for making antisemitic remarks and voicing admiration for Adolf Hitler.

Last year, Ye released a song called "Heil Hitler" and advertised a swastika T-shirt for sale on his website. Officials in Australia canceled the musician's visa in July after the release of the single.

The 48-year-old apologized in January with a letter, published as a full-page advertisement in The Wall Street Journal. He said his bipolar disorder led him to fall into "a four-month long, manic episode of psychotic, paranoid and impulsive behavior that destroyed my life."

Wireless sponsors Pepsi, Rockstar Energy and Diageo pulled out of the festival since Ye was announced as the headliner.

In a statement issued Tuesday before his travel authorization was revoked, Ye said he "would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with members of the Jewish community in the U.K. in person, to listen.

"I know words aren't enough — I'll have to show change through my actions," he said. "If you're open, I'm here."

Phil Rosenberg, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, had said the group would be willing to meet with the musician if he pulled out of the festival.

"The Jewish community will want to see a genuine remorse and change before believing that the appropriate place to test this sincerity is on the main stage at the Wireless Festival," Rosenberg said.

Organizer Festival Republic had stood by Ye. In a statement issued Monday, managing director Melvin Benn urged people to offer the performer "forgiveness and hope."

"We are not giving him a platform to extol opinion of whatever nature, only to perform the songs that are currently played on the radio stations in our country and the streaming platforms in our country and listened to and enjoyed by millions," the statement said.

Announcing the cancellation, Festival Republic said that "multiple stakeholders were consulted in advance of booking Ye and no concerns were highlighted at the time.

"Antisemitism in all its forms is abhorrent, and we recognize the real and personal impact these issues have had," it said in a statement. "As Ye said today, he acknowledges that words alone are not enough, and in spite of this still hopes to be given the opportunity to begin a conversation with the Jewish community in the U.K."

The Community Security Trust, which works to protect British Jews, said the government had made the right decision.

"Anti-Jewish hatred should have no place in society and cultural leaders have a role to play in ensuring that is the case," it said in a statement.

"People who show genuine and meaningful remorse for previous antisemitic behavior will always receive a sympathetic hearing from the Jewish community, but that process must come before this kind of public rehabilitation."

A representative for Ye didn't reply to a request for comment.

## Michigan ranked No. 1 in final AP Top 25 poll of season ahead of UConn, Arizona, Duke and Illinois

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

Michigan is No. 1 in the final Associated Press Top 25 men's college basketball poll for the 2025-26 season after winning the program's first national championship in 37 years.

The Wolverines (37-3) claimed all 57 votes in Tuesday's poll in the third year the AP has released its final rankings after the completion of the NCAA Tournament. Michigan beat UConn 69-63 in Indianapolis on Monday night to complete the winningest season in program history, along with winning its first NCAA

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title since 1989 and the Big Ten's first since 2000.

Michigan spent a week at No. 1 in mid-February and didn't rank lower than fourth after November in its second season under Dusty May.

Yaxel Lendeborg, an AP first-team All-American, had said before the Final Four that this could go down as the best team in program history, including the famed "Fab Five" freshman teams that reached the NCAA title game in 1992 and 1993. Standing amid the confetti on the court after Monday night's win, Lendeborg figured this year's group had done enough to earn that distinction.

"I think we are, man," said Lendeborg, who battled through ankle and knee injuries suffered in the win against Arizona in the national semifinals. "I'm waiting for the Fab Five to give us the approval. But if they do, then I'll let it be said that we're the best team ever."

The top tier

UConn (34-6) jumped five spots to No. 2 after its March Madness run, including an incredible comeback from 19 down to stun Duke in the Elite Eight and keep alive its chances for a third national title in four seasons. Arizona was third, followed by Duke, which held the No. 1 ranking before March Madness and was the tournament's top overall seed before a loss to UConn in the Elite Eight.

Illinois was next, climbing eight spots to No. 5 after the program's first trip to the Final Four since 2005. That marked the second time that a team went from being ranked outside the top 10 to cracking the top five after a Final Four run, the other being Alabama jumping 16 spots to No. 3 to end the 2024 season.

Purdue, Houston, Iowa State, Florida and St. John's rounded out the top 10.

Climbing to final position

Tennessee finished at No. 12 after reaching the Elite Eight for the third straight year. The Volunteers' postseason push vaulted them 11 spots, making them the biggest climber from the March 16 poll before the NCAA Tournament.

In all, nine teams ranked from the previous poll moved up in the season's final rankings.

Last slide

Virginia had the poll's biggest tumble, falling eight spots to No. 17 after falling in the second round to the Volunteers as a 3-seed.

No. 18 Gonzaga and No. 25 Wisconsin both fell six spots after failing to make the second weekend. The Cavaliers, Zags and Badgers were among 11 ranked teams from March 16 to tumble while still remaining inside the final poll.

In and out

Iowa and Texas both jumped into the poll after being unranked heading into March Madness. The Hawkeyes finished the season ranked No. 15 after reaching the Elite Eight in a run that included a second-round upset of top-seeded Florida.

Iowa's jump marked the third time a team that was unranked going into the NCAAs hopped into the top 15 in the post-tournament AP poll. The other two came in 2024, with N.C. State sitting at No. 10 after its improbable Final Four run and Clemson at No. 14 after reaching the Elite Eight.

The 22nd-ranked Longhorns entered the poll after going from the First Four to the Sweet 16.

Iowa and Texas replaced North Carolina (No. 21) and St. Mary's (No. 22) from the previous poll.

Conference watch

The Big Ten dominated this year's tournament, first by getting a league-record six teams into the Sweet 16 then tying the tournament's overall record with four teams in the Elite Eight before ultimately sending Michigan and Illinois to Indianapolis. The league finished with a national-best seven teams in the final AP Top 25 of the season.

The Southeastern Conference was next with six ranked teams, followed by the Big 12 with five, the Atlantic Coast Conference with four and the Big East with two. The West Coast Conference with Gonzaga was the only league from outside the power conferences to have a Top 25 team.

## Environmental groups urge appeals court panel to lift halt on closing Florida's 'Alligator Alcatraz'

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Environmental groups on Tuesday asked a federal appellate court panel to drop its temporary halt of a lower court's order instructing state officials to close an immigration detention center in the heart of the Florida Everglades known as "Alligator Alcatraz."

The Everglades facility remains open, still holding detainees, because the appellate court in early September relied on arguments by Florida and the Trump administration that the state had not yet applied for federal reimbursement, and therefore wasn't required to follow federal environmental law. State officials opened the detention center last summer to support President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

Questions by the three appellate judges during oral arguments in a Miami courtroom focused on how much control the federal government had over the state-built facility and under what circumstances an environmental review was required to be in compliance with federal law. The judges did not indicate when they would rule.

Jesse Panuccio, an attorney for the Florida Department of Emergency Management, told the judges federal funding and federal control of the facility were the two criteria for determining if the federal environmental law would apply and the federal agencies had no control over the state-run detention center.

Florida was notified in late September that FEMA had approved \$608 million in federal funding to support the center's construction and operation.

"You need both," Panuccio said. "Even with funding, I don't think that would follow because they don't have federal control."

An attorney for the environmental groups said the law requiring a review applied to the facility because the U.S. Department of Homeland Security had authorized the funding and immigration was a responsibility of the federal government, not the state. There only needed to be "substantial federal control" and not complete control, said Paul Schwiep, an attorney representing the Friends of the Everglades and the Center for Biological Diversity.

Chief Judge William Pryor, who was appointed to the appellate court by President George W. Bush, responded, "It's not federally controlled when the state retains authority to make decisions."

Judge Nancy Abudu, who was named to the appellate court by President Joe Biden, asked an attorney for the federal government if states can be in charge of immigration matters. Adam Gustafson responded that the federal government can delegate certain responsibilities to states.

"Is it also, once the federal government gives the states its authority, it's the 'Wild, Wild West?'" Abudu asked.

The federal district judge in Miami in mid-August ordered the facility to wind down operations over two months because officials had failed to do a review of the detention center's environmental impact according to federal law. That judge concluded that a reimbursement decision already had been made. The appellate court halted the order on an appeal.

The environmental lawsuit was one of three federal court challenges to the Everglades facility since it opened. In the others, a detainee said Florida agencies and private contractors hired by the state had no authority to operate the center under federal law. The challenge ended after the immigrant detainee who filed the lawsuit agreed to be removed from the United States.

In the third lawsuit, a federal judge in Fort Myers, Florida, ruled the Everglades facility must provide detainees there with better access to their attorneys, as well as confidential, unmonitored and unrecorded outgoing legal calls.

## On Hungary visit, Vance urges voters to support Orbán days before pivotal election

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday urged Hungarians to back Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in upcoming elections, dubbing the populist leader a defender of “Western civilization” during a visit to Hungary meant to help push Orbán over the finish line.

Vance’s two-day visit to Budapest was the clearest sign yet that U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration is going all-in for an Orbán victory when Hungarians go to the polls on Sunday. With only five days until the vote, Orbán, the European Union’s longest-serving leader and a close Trump ally, is trailing in the polls.

Speaking before over 1,000 Orbán supporters at an election rally at a sports arena in Budapest, Vance campaigned openly for the autocratic leader, telling the crowd: “We have got to get Viktor Orbán reelected as prime minister of Hungary, don’t we?”

Orbán is running for his fifth-straight term as prime minister. He and his nationalist-populist Fidesz party are facing their toughest race in two decades against a center-right challenger, the Tisza party led by Péter Magyar, that could bring an end to his 16 years in power.

Orbán has bristled at the slightest mention of the Hungarian election by any of his EU partners, decrying any expressions of support for his opponent as a grave breach of Hungary’s sovereignty and meddling in the election.

Yet Vance’s appearance alongside Orbán at the election rally — dubbed a “Day of Friendship” event — was an unusual step from a foreign leader, and a break with most politicians who avoid taking an active role in the political campaigns of other countries.

To loud applause, Vance asked rally attendees: “Will you stand for Western civilization? Will you stand for freedom, for truth, and for the God of our fathers?”

“Then, my friends, go to the polls in the weekend. Stand with Viktor Orbán, because he stands for you, and he stands for all these things,” Vance said.

‘I love that Viktor’

Long accused by critics of taking over Hungary’s institutions, clamping down on press freedom and overseeing entrenched political corruption — charges he denies — Orbán has become an icon in the global far-right movement.

Trump has repeatedly endorsed Orbán’s candidacy for reelection, and many in the Make America Great Again movement approve of the Hungarian leader’s opposition to immigration, curtailing of LGBTQ+ rights, and capture of the media and academia.

But with most independent polls showing a double-digit deficit for Fidesz among decided voters ahead of the April 12 vote, Orbán has sought to boost his profile by appearing publicly with his international admirers.

Vance spoke at length on Tuesday about what he views as the civilizational dangers posed by progressivism, “faceless bureaucrats” and censorship. He lauded Orbán for his strong stand against immigration, and his adversarial approach to the EU.

“I admire what you’re fighting for,” Vance said. “I am here because President Trump and I wish for your success, and we are fighting right here with you.”

Vance used his phone to call Trump from the lectern, to loud applause. After first reaching an automated message about the caller’s voicemail box not being set up yet, Trump answered the call and told the crowd through a microphone: “I love Hungary and I love that Viktor, I tell you he’s a fantastic man.”

Trump said Orbán had not allowed migrants “to storm” and “ruin” Hungary.

“He’s kept Hungarian people in your country,” Trump said.

Hungarian ‘reconquista’

The Trump administration’s embrace of Orbán reflects its affinity for European far-right parties broadly, and the admiration, from Spain to France to Germany and the Netherlands, has been mutual.

Orbán has long been a thorn in the side of the EU, and has tested the bloc’s system of governance by

frequently using his veto power to paralyze decision making in order to leverage concessions.

Last month, he vetoed a major, 90-billion euro (\$104-billion) EU loan to Ukraine, angering the bloc's leaders who accused him of hijacking the critical aid while undermining the EU in an effort to win his election.

At the rally on Tuesday, Orbán declared that "freedom-loving Americans and Hungarians must unite and save Western civilization."

"To do this, we must fight the progressives that nest in Brussels," the EU's de-facto capital, he continued. He declared that Hungary had launched a "reconquista" of EU institutions which "will bring new patriotic governments to power."

Late last month, Orbán hosted dozens of allies from around Europe and beyond at the Hungarian iteration of the Conservative Political Action Conference, and at a meeting of the far-right Patriots for Europe party family, the third-largest group in the European Parliament.

Trump sent a video message to CPAC Hungary, saying Orbán had his "complete and total endorsement" and was a "fantastic guy."

Still, Trump's recent approach to foreign affairs has reverberated in Europe, with his actions over Greenland, Venezuela and Iran straining those relationships. Some commentators have suggested support from Vance and Trump may not help boost Orbán's popularity at home.

Orbán, however, has remained deferential, and echoed Trump's false claims that he won the 2020 election. Russian energy

Orbán's government has broken with most EU countries by refusing to assist Ukraine with financial assistance or weapons to ward off Russia's full-scale invasion. Meanwhile, it has remained firmly committed to purchasing Russian energy despite EU efforts to wean off such supplies.

In November, Hungary received an exemption from U.S. sanctions on Russian oil and gas after a White House meeting between Orbán and Trump.

Yet at a joint news conference with Orbán earlier on Tuesday, Vance seemed to contradict U.S. efforts to push its allies to break with Russian energy, excoriating other EU countries for moving to cease their imports of Russian fossil fuels in response to the war.

"It's funny to watch prime ministers and leaders in some of the Western European capitals talk about the energy crisis when frankly they should have been following the policies of Viktor Orbán," he said.

Despite his clear endorsement of Orbán, Vance lashed out at the EU for what he said was "one of the worst examples of foreign election interference that I've ever seen or ever even read about."

Vance did not address numerous recent reports that Russian secret services are meddling in Hungary's election to tip it in Orbán's favor.

## **Gunmen attack police near building housing Israeli Consulate in Istanbul**

By KHALIL HAMRA and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Three assailants opened fire at police outside a building housing the Israeli Consulate in Istanbul on Tuesday, sparking a gunfight that left one attacker dead, Turkish officials said. The two other assailants were wounded and captured.

Two police officers sustained slight injuries, Istanbul Gov. Davut Gul told reporters. The assailants were carrying long-barreled weapons.

The consulate is located in a high-rise building in Levent, one of the city's main business districts. Officials said that there are no Israeli diplomats present in Israeli missions in Turkey. Israel withdrew its diplomats amid security concerns and deteriorating relations with Turkey during the war in Gaza.

Interior Minister Mustafa Cifti wrote on X that the attackers had traveled from the city of Izmit, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Istanbul, in a rented car. One of the assailants was linked to a group he described as "exploiting religion," without naming the organization.

The Islamic State group has carried out deadly attacks in Turkey in the past.

The two wounded assailants are brothers, identified as Onur C. and Enes C. The first has a criminal

record related to drugs. Both are being interrogated, according to the Interior Ministry.

Video from the attack showed one assailant carrying what appeared to be an assault rifle, wearing a brown backpack and hiding behind a bus when exchanging fire with police. A police officer falls to the ground, apparently having been shot, and then rolls away to get behind a tree for cover.

One of the police officers was wounded in the leg and the other in the ear, the Interior Ministry said.

Turkish Justice Minister Akin Gurlek said that three prosecutors, including a deputy chief prosecutor, have been assigned to lead an investigation.

Police sealed off the building and blocked several roads, while forensic experts in white protective suits combed the area for evidence.

A witness described seeing officers take cover behind parked cars and communicate with each other during the shooting.

"In general, this is a noisy area, so initially we thought this might be something else. But the gunshots continued," said Omer Dilki, 34. "We saw the police officers standing behind the cars, take shelter, and call out to each other."

Ali Riza Arpacı, who works nearby, described witnessing "serious clashes" happening right in front of him.

"We were almost inside the clashes," he said, adding that the gunfight lasted for around 10 minutes.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan denounced what he said was a "treacherous" attack.

"We will resolutely continue our fight against all forms of terrorism, and we will not allow the climate of security in Turkey to be harmed by vile and timed provocations like today's," he said.

U.S. Ambassador Tom Barrack condemned the assault, praising Turkish authorities for "their swift and decisive response."

Israel's Foreign Ministry similarly condemned the attack and commended Turkish security forces for their rapid action in thwarting it.

## Michigan gets its moment, then the transfer portal opens and the scramble for 2027 begins

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The blue-and-maize confetti was still flying around the stadium when a new tradition in college basketball kicked off without much fanfare.

The transfer portal opened.

Every team out there with title hopes for 2027 — even the new champions at Michigan — knows the chances of cutting down the nets a year from now will hinge largely on how well they fare in that phase of the game.

Between the time it opened at midnight through 11 a.m. Tuesday, more than 1,200 players had already entered the portal, according to an Associated Press review of the numbers. Hundreds more are expected to flood the market over the newly condensed two-week period before the portal closes on April 21.

It's a free-for-all filled with cash offers to players in exchange for the use of their name, image and likeness — essentially to come and play.

Nobody navigated this new NIL era better in the season just completed than the Wolverines and coach Dusty May. Four of the five starters who led Michigan to its 69-63 win over UConn on Monday night played at other colleges last season. It figures at least three of them could be in the NBA next year.

"It's important to get the right people on the bus," Michigan assistant Justin Joyner said, referring to the team he helped build and the next one he must put together.

It's the same across college basketball — newly crowned NCAA champion coach Cori Close of UCLA said the "transfer portal just got easier" after her team's win over South Carolina — and across college sports.

For the men, the biggest names in the portal so far include Flory Bidunga (leaving Kansas), John Blackwell (Wisconsin) and Juke Harris (Wake Forest).

Not every team will be looking for a total rebuild.

UConn made its third Final Four in four seasons based on a targeted use of transfers. Coach Dan Hurley

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likes to do the old-fashioned thing and find players who will stay for three or four years. But he's realistic. One of his best players this season, Tarris Reed Jr., came to UConn from Michigan.

"We want to supplement our roster with some strategic portal moves like we were able to do," Hurley said.

Duke and Michigan are the early favorites for 2027

BetMGM Sportsbook listed Duke and Michigan as the early 8-1 favorites to win it all next year. Florida was next at 10-1, followed by Michigan State and Arizona (both 14-1) and UConn (15-1). North Carolina, which has tabbed Michael Malone as its new coach, is 25-1.

The Big Ten is back

The national title is back at Michigan for the first time since 1989. Almost as notably, it's back in the Big Ten for the first time since 2000 (Michigan State).

The Wolverines' victory Monday gave the Big Ten a sweep this year of football (Indiana), along with both Division I basketball titles.

According to Sportradar, this marks the first time the conference has held both the football and men's hoops titles since 1941, when it was known as the Big Nine.

Beyond bragging rights, there is a business side to it all. Last year, the Southeastern Conference got all the buzz by placing a record 14 teams into March Madness and taking the title to Florida.

This year, the Big Ten put a conference-record six teams in the Sweet 16, four in the Elite Eight, two in the Final Four and brought the championship back to its home turf. The conference has won the last three football championships while the SEC hasn't won one since 2022, when it capped a string of four straight that left some wondering if the sport had grown too lopsided.

All of this has a deeper meaning for the two conferences that play an outsized role in shaping the future of college sports, which includes a long-running disagreement over the future of the all-important College Football Playoff and its big paydays: The Big Ten wants a big expansion to 24 or more teams while the SEC does not.

"We're very proud members of the Big Ten, I'm proud to be in there," said Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel, whose own regents have been bickering with the conference over its desire to bring outside investors into the league. "My AD colleagues are working hard to do the same thing that I'm doing tonight, talking to you guys, being here with the confetti, having our team cut down the net. So all of that stuff is really good."

The freshmen can play, but the veterans cut down nets

It was another year in which freshmen-led teams were not able to finish the six-game push to the title.

Michigan won this year with transfers filling all five starter spots, even if there were some key freshmen contributors. Arizona — a team that leaned heavily on the brilliance of freshmen Brayden Burries and Koa Peat — spent nine weeks at No. 1 in the AP Top 25 and won 36 games, only to fall to the Wolverines in a Final Four rout.

That comes a year after Florida won the title with senior guard Walter Clayton Jr. being named Final Four most outstanding player.

The Gators won in a year in which a freshman-heavy Duke team — No. 1 overall draft pick Cooper Flagg and lottery picks in Kon Knueppel and big man Khaman Maluach — lost to Houston in the national semifinals.

Only two teams powered by one-and-done NBA talents have won the championship: Kentucky in 2012 with eventual No. 1 overall pick Anthony Davis and Duke in 2015 behind Jahliil Okafor.

Trump, Congress and courts

The background noise in college sports, which never shuts off, will include court cases and continuing negotiations in Congress as the NCAA and other stakeholders looks to find a compromise to enshrine many of the industry's new rules into law.

President Donald Trump generated headlines in the buildup to the Final Four by issuing an executive order that suggested schools could lose federal funding if they don't comply with rules surrounding paying players, the transfer portal and how many years a player is eligible.

What will the rules be? Ultimately, it seems Congress will have to decide. But one key sticking point will

come over individual players' rights to sue the NCAA over eligibility — an ongoing issue that has landed the NCAA in court dozens of times.

In a largely overlooked development last week, the NCAA notched victories in a pair of those eligibility cases. One involved four former West Virginia football players who sued over whether their junior college experience should count against their eligibility window. The other stemmed from Virginia quarterback Chandler Morris' request to play a seventh season.

"We win way more of those than we lose," NCAA president Charlie Baker said at the Final Four last week. "It's a very small universe here that we're talking about. And an even smaller universe that wins in court. And part of the problem with that is the length of time it takes to process that out to the complete end."

## **As Trump threatens Iran's infrastructure, a Tehran couple wonders how to prepare**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Zahra Arghavan and Mehdi Alishir stood on their balcony, watching the sun set over Tehran and bracing for the sound of airstrikes.

As time ticks down on U.S. President Donald Trump's latest ultimatum, their thoughts were clouded by new fears: How long will the power be out if plants are bombed? How would they leave the city if the bridges are taken out?

Five weeks on, they have grown used to the roar of American and Israeli fighter jets, the sound of explosions and sleepless nights. Like many, they've left the capital and returned in search of elusive safety. Married for over a decade, they made it through the COVID pandemic and the 12-day war last June.

They've used clear packing tape to line the edges of their windows, a precaution against blasts. Mirrors and fragile objects have been moved or secured. A packed bag holds documents, medications and essentials, ready in case they need to leave quickly.

In an expletive-laden threat over the weekend, Trump vowed that "Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day," and that Iran's leaders will be "living in Hell" if they don't open the Strait of Hormuz.

"Honestly, the situation is really unclear," Arghavan said. "We don't really understand things like how long the power might go out if it does, or what life without electricity would even look like."

Alishir said he and his wife could handle life without power — and potentially without running water — for a week at most. "If it goes on longer, we'll definitely run into problems," he said.

Their struggles began even before the first American and Israeli bombs slammed into Iran on Feb. 28.

The Iranian government's crackdown on nationwide protests in January severely limited internet access. The internet monitoring organization NetBlocks says it's the longest nationwide shutdown ever recorded.

Arghavan runs a small language school that teaches French to Iranians who want to live in the Canadian province of Quebec.

"We were basically an online school, and our students had classes with kids abroad," she said. "Around 50% of our learners were outside the country. But now, with all these internet outages, it's really disrupting our work."

Iranians are divided over the war: Some take part in daily pro-government rallies; others quietly cheer the strikes against their leaders while condemning the deaths of civilians and damage to infrastructure.

The couple blames Israel and the U.S. for starting the war and hope for a diplomatic solution.

"I really hope an agreement is reached soon and that whatever happens, it ends up helping people, because right now people are the ones paying a heavy price," Arghavan said.

## Michigan muscles its way to program's 2nd national title, beating stubborn UConn 69-63

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Michigan's new Fab Five threw style points out the door and brought home a prize not even the school's most famous team could capture.

The five fabulous transfers who make up coach Dusty May's starting lineup got down and dirty with the rest of the Wolverines — coming out with the national title trophy Monday night after muscling their way to a 69-63 victory over stingy, stubborn UConn.

Michigan only made two 3-pointers all night.

The Final Four's most outstanding player, Elliot Cadeau, led the Wolverines with 19 points, including the team's first 3, which came 7:04 into the second half. The second 3, from freshman Trey McKenney, came with 1:50 left and felt like a dagger, giving May's team — which had scored 90 points in five straight March Madness games leading to the final — a nine-point lead.

To no one's surprise, UConn fought to the finish. Solo Ball banked in a 3 to cut the deficit to four with 37 seconds left — and after two missed free throws, UConn's Alex Karaban (17 points) barely grazed the rim on a 3 that would've cut the deficit to one with 17 seconds left.

Not until McKenney sank two free throws to bring Michigan's shooting from the line to 25 for 28 for the night could the Wolverines (37-3) kick off the celebration for the program's second title — the other coming in 1989, a few years before the Fab Five arrived and made two trips to the championship game, but never won a title.

"HAIL TO VICTORS!!!!" Jalen Rose, one of the Fab Five stars, posted on social media. "NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!!!!"

It was the first men's hoops title for the Big Ten since Michigan State in 2000. Including UCLA's win in the women's NCAA Tournament Sunday, the conference swept the football (Indiana) and basketball titles this year.

Michigan won this one with defense, holding UConn to 30.9% shooting — the fourth straight game the Wolverines held their opponent to a season-low field-goal percentage.

"These guys have done it all year," May said. "When one side of the ball has let us down, the other side has picked it up. Our togetherness defensively ultimately got us over the hump."

Michigan had to fight for everything. The Wolverines missed their first 11 shots from 3, finished 2 for 15 beyond the arc and won despite the struggles of their best player, Yaxel Lendeborg. Ailing with a hurt knee and foot that kept him from elevating, the graduate transfer from UAB finished with 13 points on 4-of-13 shooting.

"If you'd told me we would shoot it this poorly and (be) dominated on the glass and still find a way to win, I don't know if I would have believed you," May said. "This team just found a way all season."

The two 3-pointers were tied for second fewest by a winning team in the title game, according to Sportradar. Michigan also got outrebounded 22-12 on the offensive glass by a UConn team that would not go away.

"How are you disappointed at all in your group?" UConn coach Dan Hurley said. "These guys have 22 offensive rebounds versus that group of 'mon-stars' out there. So, proud of the guys."

Truth be told, it wasn't anyone's prettiest night.

UConn's hopes of becoming the first team since John Wooden's UCLA dynasty to win three titles in four seasons came up short, done in by massive foul trouble and its own terrible shooting.

Hurley's team missed its first 11 shots from 3 in the second half.

Braylon Mullins, the hero of the Duke win that put UConn in the Final Four, finished 4 of 17, though he made a pair of late 3s that kept the game in reach. Tarris Reed Jr., the transfer from Michigan, finished with 13 points and 14 rebounds but never took control.

UConn (34-6) covered the 6 1/2-point spread, and Hurley kept his players out on the court to watch the podium get set up for the victors.

About the only consolation: The Huskies clogged things up, slowed things down and made Michigan beat them at their game.

"It's complicated, because everyone's crushed," Hurley said. "We came here to be out there, doing what those guys are doing right now."

Nobody did it quite like the Wolverines this year. They came into the title game shooting freely and winning big. In each of their five tournament games, they broke 90 and won by 13 or more.

In this one, they didn't hit 70 and had to battle to the buzzer. It was ugly — the opposite of an instant classic. And yet, in almost every way, it was the prettiest of them all for Michigan — the one that gives the school what the Fab Five couldn't manage — namely, a natty.

"Nobody cared about stats the whole season," Cadeau said. "Nobody cared about nothing but winning. I'm just glad to be part of that."

Style points aside, this was a championship built from outside — the best team money could buy.

All five Wolverines starters played college ball elsewhere, and all but Nimari Burnett came to Ann Arbor this season. That's a product of the transfer portal that May has shown no reluctance to use since he arrived from Florida Atlantic two seasons ago.

His ability to form a makeshift group into a winner shows the value of a coach and a culture.

"They might be still calling us mercenaries but we're the hardest-working team," Lendenborg said. "We're the best in college basketball and we'll be one of the greatest ever."

Pretty much everyone in the maize and blue would second that.

"Go BLUE. ...champions!!! Respect- Love!" was the social media post from another Fab Five icon, Chris Webber.

## Former Australian soldier charged with committing 5 war crime murders in Afghanistan

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australia's most decorated living veteran, Ben Roberts-Smith, faces war crime charges on allegations that he killed five unarmed Afghans while serving in Afghanistan from 2009 and 2012, police and media reported on Tuesday.

Police have not confirmed the name of the 47-year-old former soldier who was arrested Tuesday. But he has been widely reported in the media to be Roberts-Smith, a former Special Air Service Regiment corporal who was awarded both the Victoria Cross and Medal of Gallantry for his service in Afghanistan.

Police charged him Tuesday with five counts of war crime murder. He will remain in custody overnight and make his first court appearance on Wednesday, a police statement said.

He will potentially apply for release on bail Wednesday.

Roberts-Smith is only the second Australian veteran of the Afghanistan campaign to be charged with a war crime.

Former SAS soldier Oliver Schulz, 44, has pleaded not guilty to a charge of war crime murder. He is accused of shooting Afghan man Dad Mohammad three times in the head in an Uruzgan province wheat field in May 2012.

War crime murder carries a potential sentence of life in prison. It's a federal crime in Australia, defined as the intentional killing in the context of armed conflict of a person who is not taking an active part in hostilities, such as civilians, prisoners of war or wounded soldiers.

Police arrested Roberts-Smith at Sydney Airport on Tuesday after he arrived on a flight from Brisbane, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Krissy Barrett said.

"It will be alleged that the victims were not taking part in hostilities at the time of their alleged murder in Afghanistan. It will be alleged the victims were detained, unarmed and were under the control of ADF members when they were killed," Barrett told reporters, referring to the Australian Defense Force.

"It will be alleged the victims were shot by the accused or shot by subordinate members of the ADF in the presence of and acting on the orders of the accused," Barrett added.

A civil court has already found similar allegations against Roberts-Smith credible in a defamation suit he brought after several newspapers published articles in 2018 accusing him of a range of war crimes. In 2023, a federal judge rejected Roberts-Smith's claims and ruled that he likely killed four noncombatants unlawfully in 2009 and 2012.

But while the civil court found the war crimes allegations were mostly proved on a balance of probabilities, the new charges would have to be proved in a criminal court to a higher standard of beyond reasonable doubt.

In September, Australia's High Court said it would not hear an appeal, ending his chances of overturning the ruling.

Nick McKenzie, a reporter unsuccessfully sued for defamation by Roberts-Smith who has been investigating allegations against the soldier since 2017, expected SAS colleagues to testify in the criminal trial as they had during the civil trial.

"You're investigating conduct allegedly taken by some members of the most secretive, elite fighting force Australia has. The journalism task is difficult. What's been really difficult, though, is those brave SAS witnesses" testifying, McKenzie told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"For them to come forward and say: 'Well, we served our country bravely like Ben Roberts-Smith did, alongside him in Afghanistan, but we saw things with our own eyes that we feel uncomfortable about.' These brave soldiers, some of them broke down after they testified, so difficult was it for them to stand up and speak out," McKenzie added.

The charges follow a military report released in 2020 that found evidence that elite Australian SAS and commando regiment troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and other noncombatants.

Barrett said few soldiers were involved in the new allegations.

"The alleged conduct related to these charges is confined to a very small section of our trusted and respected ADF which helps keep this country safe," Barrett said.

"The overwhelming majority of our ADF do our country proud. Today's charges are not reflective of the majority of members who serve under our Australian flag with honor, with distinction and with the values of a democratic nation," she added.

The Office of the Special Investigator was established to work with police on the war crime allegations. The office's director of investigations Ross Barnett said allegations of 53 war crimes had been investigated and 39 of those investigations had concluded without charges. Around 40,000 Australian military personnel served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, of whom 41 were killed.

## Stopgap measures aren't enough to halt rising prices as the world scrambles for more oil

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Global leaders have been scrambling to contain the rising cost of oil and gasoline since the start of the Iran war, which took a record amount of oil off the market when tankers full of crude were stranded in the Persian Gulf and military strikes damaged refineries, pipelines and export terminals.

Hoping to ease some pain for consumers, President Donald Trump and other heads of state have been pulling on various levers, launching more oil on the market in a bid to calm the chaos.

A group of 32 nations that are members of the International Energy Agency began releasing the largest volume of emergency oil reserves in its history: 400 million barrels. Trump is tapping into oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve while lifting sanctions on Russian and Iranian crude and temporarily waiving the Jones Act, a maritime law that requires ships carrying goods between U.S. ports to be U.S.-flagged.

But despite those maneuvers, crude oil has soared well past \$100 a barrel and gasoline is selling for \$4.14 a gallon on average in the U.S. While the stopgaps are helping, they're not adding up to enough oil to replace what's stranded, experts say.

"They're all incremental," said Mark Barteau, professor of chemical engineering and chemistry at Texas

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A&M University. "You're talking about these different patches being at the level of maybe 1 to 2 million barrels a day each, and you've got to get to 20, so it's hard to see those actually adding up to the numbers that are needed. And then the question is, how long can you sustain those?"

## Trapped oil

Before the war began, roughly 15 million barrels of crude oil and 5 million barrels of oil products passed daily through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, amounting to about 20% of global oil consumption, according to the International Energy Agency.

In addition to that loss, some oil producing nations in the Middle East have halted oil production because they can't ship fuel out of the Gulf and their storage tanks are full. That's taken about 10 million barrels per day off the market, the IEA said.

Then there are the eight countries around the Persian Gulf that together hold about 50% of global oil reserves. Under normal circumstances, they coordinate closely to raise or lower their output to keep prices steady, said Jim Krane, energy research fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute. Usually Saudi Arabia steps in to bring spare oil to market and calm things down, he said.

"But all of that spare capacity is also bottled up inside the Persian Gulf right now and it can't get to market either," Krane said. "So the main emergency response system that we have is also blocked."

The IEA said in its recent report that "the resumption of transit through the Strait of Hormuz is the single most important action to return to stable oil and gas flows and reduce the strains on markets and prices."

Barring that, world leaders are grasping for ways to free up more oil.

## Limitations of short-term fixes

Some nations have found workarounds to move oil out of the Gulf. Saudi Arabia is using its East-West pipeline, which stretches from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, to transfer about 5 million barrels per day out of the Gulf, said Michael Lynch, distinguished fellow at Energy Policy Research Foundation, a non-partisan institution focused on energy and economics. But the nation was already using that pipeline to transport oil, so it doesn't have a lot of spare room to move oil from stranded tankers.

Trump also temporarily lifted sanctions on approximately 140 million barrels of Iranian oil that was already in transit. But that didn't add oil to the market — it just widened the pool of potential buyers, said Daniel Sternoff, senior fellow at the Columbia Center on Global Energy Policy.

Typically, most Iranian oil was bought by private refiners in China, who purchased it at a steep discount, Sternoff said. But with sanctions lifted, others could scramble to buy the oil, which in turn raises its price to the benefit of Iran, he said.

"As soon as you are moving to waive sanctions on your adversary with whom you're fighting a military conflict, to do something in their benefit, it just shows you that you are running out of options to try to prevent a rise in the price of oil," Sternoff said.

The decision to lift sanctions on Russian oil could have more impact, because Russia had been storing unpurchased oil in tankers, Sternoff said. "By waiving sanctions, it will allow those barrels to clear."

Trump's temporary waiver of the Jones Act to allow foreign ships to temporarily transport goods between U.S. ports could potentially help ease natural gas prices by enabling companies to more efficiently ship liquefied natural gas from the Gulf Coast to New England.

But experts don't expect the waiver to significantly impact the price of oil or gasoline. "It's helpful, but not a game changer," Lynch said.

## Why U.S. oil production can't solve the problem

The U.S. is a major oil producer, and exports more oil than it imports. But like any other oil producing nation, it can't just ramp up production instantly to fill the void.

"If the U.S. were to try to make up the global shortfall, we would need to nearly double our production," Barteau said. "We couldn't drill wells that fast even if we wanted to."

Increasing domestic production by even 1 million barrels per day, a feat the U.S. accomplished during the shale boom, would be hard to duplicate, Lynch said.

"If we run every drilling rig right now, what happens a week from now when the war is over and the

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price goes back down \$20?" Lynch asked. "People don't want to develop long-term production based on a short-term price spike."

Halting exports and using that oil within the U.S. wouldn't bring down gasoline prices either, experts say.

For one, oil is traded on a global market, so events happening halfway around the globe impact prices for everyone.

In addition, the U.S. doesn't produce enough of the type of oil its refineries process. It produced about 13.7 million barrels per day of oil at the end of 2025, according to the Energy Information Administration. And refineries processed about 16.3 million barrels per day that year, relying on imports to fill in the gaps, according to the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM), a trade association.

That's because nearly 70% of U.S. refineries are set up to process heavy, sour crude, according to AFPM. But much of the oil produced in the U.S. is light, sweet crude, which was unlocked during the shale revolution.

"They need different crudes than the ones that are being produced right next to them now," Krane said.

As a result, just 60% of the crude oil processed in U.S. refineries is extracted domestically, according to the AFPM. And retooling domestic refineries would cost billions of dollars, the group said. It also would require shutting down the refinery for a period of time, which generally raises gasoline prices.

"A lot of people like the IEA are making the point that this is the biggest oil crisis ever, which is partly true, partly an exaggeration, depending on how you count things," Lynch said. "A lot of it has to do with how long does this last ... if it goes on for another six weeks we get to be in some serious trouble."

## Today in History: April 8

### Hank Aaron breaks Babe Ruth's home run record

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, April 8, the 98th day of 2026. There are 267 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 8, 1974, Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves hit his 715th career home run in a game against the Los Angeles Dodgers, breaking Babe Ruth's home run record that had stood since 1935. (Aaron would go on to hit 755 career home runs, only to be surpassed in 2007 by Barry Bonds, who finished his career with a record 762 that still stands).

Also on this date:

In 1820, the Venus de Milo statue, likely dating to the 2nd century B.C., was discovered by a farmer on the Greek island of Milos.

In 1864, the U.S. Senate passed, 38-6, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolishing slavery. (The House of Representatives passed it in January 1865; the amendment was ratified and adopted in December 1865.)

In 1911, an explosion at the Banner Coal Mine in Littleton, Alabama, claimed the lives of 128 men, most of them convicts leased out from prisons.

In 1913, the 17th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, providing for election of U.S. senators by state residents as opposed to state legislatures.

In 1962, Cuba announced that 1,200 Cuban exiles tried for their roles in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion were convicted of treason and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

In 1970, Israeli warplanes bombed a primary school in the Egyptian village of Bahr Al-Baqar, killing at least 30 students and wounding dozens more. Israeli officials later asserted the site was a military target though Egypt insisted nearby buildings only housed agricultural machinery.

In 1990, Ryan White, the teenager whose battle with AIDS drew national attention and led to greater understanding and destigmatization of those suffering from the disease, died in Indianapolis at age 18.

In 1992, tennis great Arthur Ashe announced at a New York news conference that he had AIDS, having contracted HIV from a blood transfusion in 1983.

In 2010, President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the New START nuclear

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arms reduction treaty in Prague.

In 2020, a 76-day lockdown was lifted in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the COVID-19 pandemic began.

In 2024, a total solar eclipse raced across North America, darkening skies along a path from Mexico through the United States and into parts of Canada. The eclipse was viewed by millions of people and would be the last coast-to-coast solar spectacle on the continent until 2045.

Today's Birthdays: Journalist Seymour Hersh is 89. Songwriter-producer Leon Huff is 84. Rock musician Steve Howe (Yes) is 79. Author Barbara Kingsolver is 71. Actor John Schneider is 66. Guitarist Izzy Stradlin (Guns N' Roses) is 64. Singer Julian Lennon is 63. Actor Dean Norris is 63. Actor Robin Wright is 60. Actor Patricia Arquette is 58. Actor Taylor Kitsch is 45. Boxer Gennady Golovkin is 44. Actor Shelby Young is 34. NFL wide receiver CeeDee Lamb is 27. Actor Skai Jackson is 24. Rapper Sha EK is 23. Actor Sophie Grace is 20.