

Groton Daily Independent

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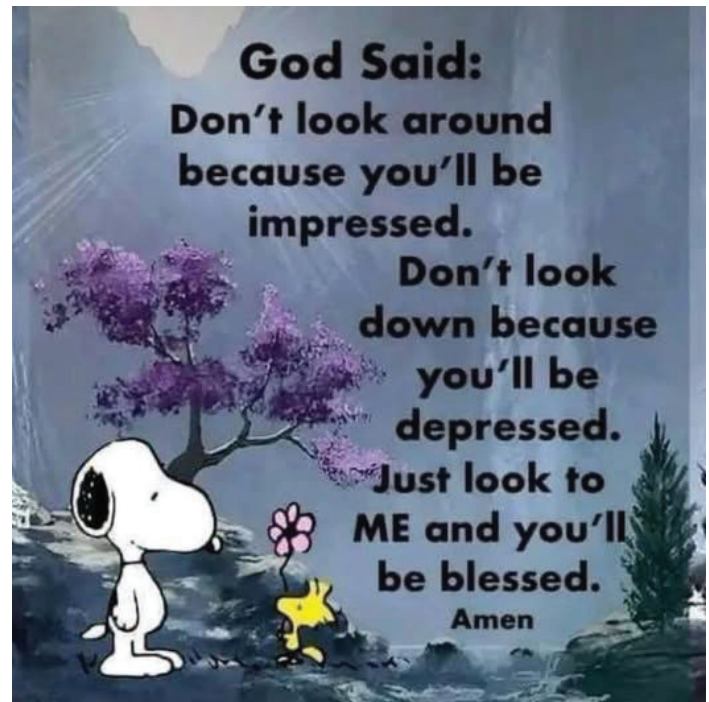
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Monday, April 20

Senior Menu: BBQ chicken breast, au gratin potatoes, coleslaw, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Egg bake.
School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.
Senior Citizens meet at Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.
FFA Convention at Brookings
Grades 5 & 8 Science Testing
Girls Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.
Middle School Track at Ipswich, 2:30 p.m.
Girls Fast Pitch Softball at Arlington (Varsity at 4:30 p.m. followed by JV)
Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., Elementary Gym

Today on GDILIVE.COM

We know not everyone has access to GameChanger and since I'm not able to go to Arlington today, we are going to try and livestream the gamechanger so you can still keep up with the games. There will be no video to go with it, but at least we'll have something for you!



Tuesday, April 21

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, mixed vegetables, mixed fruit, breadstick.
School Breakfast: Muffins.
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, fries.
Grades 5 & 8 Science Testing
Olive Grove Golf Course Annual Meeting, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
High School Track at Britton, 2 p.m.
Biogirls at Elementary Gym, 3:45 p.m.
Girls Fastpitch Softball at Hanson, Doubleheader starting at 4 p.m.
JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena
Groton City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

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1440

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

Psychedelics Reassessed

A number of psychedelics will be fast-tracked for research into their potential to treat serious mental health issues following an executive order signed by President Donald Trump Saturday.

Many such compounds (including LSD, psilocybin, and more) are classified as Schedule I drugs—illegal to possess and federally regarded as having no medical use. Researchers say the restrictions create significant hurdles for formal clinical trials, despite some evidence they may help treat a range of disorders.

The order also earmarks \$50M for state-level research into ibogaine (pronounced “e-BOW-gain”). The plant-based psychoactive compound is associated with intense episodes and has been linked to cardiac issues but has also proved effective in small studies to alleviate substance use disorders and reduce PTSD symptoms. The order, reportedly prompted by a text message to the president from podcaster Joe Rogan, does not reclassify any of the compounds.

US Seizes Iranian Ship

The US says it has seized an Iranian ship in the Strait of Hormuz—an almost 900-foot cargo vessel that allegedly refused the US’ warnings to stop. The claim comes days before the countries’ two-week ceasefire expires Wednesday.

The US says it has turned away more than 20 ships in the strait, part of its weeklong naval blockade on ships entering or exiting Iranian ports. Control over the strait, through which 20% of the world’s oil typically passes, has been a primary sticking point in US-Iran negotiations. Average gas prices in the US may not fall below \$3 per gallon again until next year, the US energy secretary has warned.

Meanwhile, US negotiators head to Islamabad, Pakistan, today to resume peace talks. Iran has not confirmed it will send representatives as of this writing, though reports suggest Iran’s delegation will arrive tomorrow.

Who Let the Dogs Out?

Hundreds of animal rights activists at a dog-research facility in Wisconsin, including some attempting to break into the facility, were met with rubber bullets and pepper spray Saturday. Dozens of people were arrested.

Ridgman Farms is a beagle-breeding and research lab located 25 miles southwest of Madison. Last year, a special prosecutor found one of the company’s experiments likely involved criminal conduct (employees testified dogs had been subjected to surgeries without general anesthesia). The company, which owns roughly 2,000 dogs, has denied wrongdoing but agreed to give up its breeding license July 1.

In the meantime, a local animal rights group has sought to purchase the dogs for \$1M. Last month, the group broke in and removed 22 dogs. Over the weekend, the group again met at Ridgman Farms with avowed plans to break in and release more dogs. One person drove a pickup truck through the front gate, according to police.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Coachella 2026 wraps its second weekend with headlining sets from Justin Bieber, Karol G; Madonna appears alongside Sabrina Carpenter, among highlights.

Roman Reigns defeats CM Punk to win WWE World Heavyweight Championship at WrestleMania 42.

NBA playoffs tip off.

2026 Stanley Cup playoffs also tip off.

Oklahoma wins NCAA women's gymnastics championship for fourth title in five years.

Science & Technology

Humanoid robot surpasses human half-marathon world record by roughly seven minutes in Beijing event meant to demonstrate advances in the technology.

Others fall over at the starting line, need stretcher (More, w/video)

Cygnus X-1 black hole jets—matter violently ejected from the poles of black holes—have the power equivalent of 10,000 suns, first direct measurement finds.

New "immune priming" therapy allows some patients to receive liver transplants without relying on immunosuppressant drugs, keeping the body from rejecting the new organ.

Business & Markets

US stock markets rally Friday (S&P 500 +1.2%, Dow +1.8%, Nasdaq +1.5%) following preliminary news the Strait of Hormuz was "fully open".

Meta targets May 20 to lay off around 8,000 employees, or 10% of its workforce, according to reports; company expects further cuts in the second half of 2026.

Autonomous vehicle startups raised \$21.4B across 34 deals globally through April 15, more than 2.5 times funding from all of 2025.

AI coding startup Cursor in talks to raise \$2B at a \$50B valuation, with round led by a16z and Thrive.

Politics & World Affairs

Gunman kills seven of his children and one other child in Shreveport, Louisiana, in what police characterize as a domestic incident.

Shooting near University of Iowa leaves five people wounded, including three students.

Video footage shows DC police visiting the home of Rep. Cory Mills (R, FL-7) in February 2025 over alleged assault of 27-year-old woman, per Washington Post.

UK authorities arrest suspects in wave of arson attacks on Jewish synagogues, Iranian opposition outlet; no one has been wounded as of this writing.



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The NFL draft is here, and for the first time in a long time, the Vikings are a true wildcard. With no GM in place, no unifying vision, who gets the final say on draft day? Will it be interim GM Rob Bryzinski, the salary cap guru who has been with the team for decades but never in a decision-making role? Will it be Kevin O'Connell, the Vikings' head coach whose seat is starting to get hot despite being recognized as the Coach of the Year less than two years ago? Or was defensive coordinator Brian Flores promised more power to make him put off becoming a head coach again?

Instead of trying to figure out what they will do, here's what I would do in the first three rounds:

Pick 18 - Dillon Thieneman, safety, Oregon.

The Vikings kind of shot themselves in the foot at the end of last season, winning five straight games after being eliminated from the playoffs and pushing their draft pick all the way down to 18. I don't see the team moving up, mainly because there are so many holes on the roster that one player isn't going to turn the Vikings into a Super Bowl contender. So if the team sticks and picks at 18, Thieneman would be a fantastic choice. The best safety in the draft is also one of the few who excel in coverage. The Vikings have plenty of players who can move around to different positions. What they need on the backend is a coverage specialist who acts as the last line of defense (especially with Harrison Smith likely retiring).

Other possibilities include Tight End Kenyon Sadiq (Oregon) whose athletic testing is off the charts, or a cornerback like Mansoor Delane (LSU) or Jermod McCoy (Tennessee), although I believe both of those players will be off the board by the time the Vikings are on the clock.

Pick 49 - Lee Hunter, defensive tackle, Texas Tech

After the Vikings released Jonathan Allen and Javon Hargrave, defensive tackle became an obvious need. Caleb Banks (Florida) is a possibility here, whose draft stock is sliding out of the first round because of injury concerns. Christian Miller (Georgia) should also be available around the 49th pick.

Other possibilities include grabbing a CB who falls like Avieon Terrell (Clemson) or Colton Hood (Tennessee). Linebacker is another option with the 49th pick, so keep an eye on Jacob Rodriguez (Texas Tech) or Anthony Hill Jr. (Texas). And if you want a real wildcard, running back Jadarian Price (Notre Dame) would give the Vikings a threat in the backfield they haven't had since Dalvin Cook.

Pick 82 - Davison Igbinosun, cornerback, Ohio State

If the Vikings go safety in the first round, and defensive lineman in the second, then the two biggest areas of need are center and cornerback. But, based on the consensus big board, drafting a center with the 82nd pick would be a bit of a reach. So instead, in my mock draft, they go cornerback. No matter what, if the Vikings want a successful draft, they need to use these first three picks on safety, defensive tackle, and cornerback.

Pick 97 - Jake Slaughter, center, Florida

Besides having the coolest name in the draft, Slaughter is the strongest center among the handful that should be available when the Vikings pick at the end of the third round. He played against some of the best defensive fronts in the SEC and showed time and again he can hold his own against premier pass rushers. And this may be a personal preference, but I like my centers to be strong. They're going up against defensive tackles every snap, I want someone who can stand in there and hold his own instead of constantly getting pushed back into the QB's lap.

Check out the NFL Draft this week. The first round will be Thursday, starting at 7 p.m. CT, rounds two and three will be Friday at 6 p.m. CT, and rounds 4-7 will be on Saturday starting at 11 a.m.

"Medications for treating substance use disorders"

Substance use disorders like alcohol and opioid use disorders can be diverse, and every patient has a different story when it comes to their addiction. Social factors, genetics, history of trauma or mental health disorders, and many other contributors may be at play, which can make treatment of substance use disorders challenging.

Because of these challenges, successful treatment of substance use disorders often requires multiple approaches. Just like a patient with diabetes is best treated with diet, exercise, education, and medication, a patient with a substance use disorder is most effectively treated

with a multi-disciplinary plan. For many patients, medication can be an important piece of the approach.

I have had several recent experiences with patients successfully abstaining from alcohol and opiates with the help of medication. The most common example that I see is alcohol use disorder, which can range from alcohol dependence to binge drinking behavior which causes disruption in a person's social and family life and often leads to other medical problems.

One evidence-based option that I often use for patients with an alcohol use disorder is an oral medication called naltrexone. Recently, a patient who previously struggled with binge drinking described the effect of this medication to me, which was an enlightening explanation. "Doc, I've always been someone who, if I had one beer I was going to have 6 or 12 more. But on this med I can have one or two beers with my friends and I just don't feel like having any more." As a quite safe and accessible medication, naltrexone is an option I discuss frequently in my primary care clinic.

Another common and sometimes devastating problem is opioid use disorder. We have very good evidence that medications can significantly improve the probability of a patient being able to stay off opioids, and those options are gradually becoming easier to access as well. One of my patients who for many years struggled with opioid use disorder, even as it wreaked havoc on their life from a medical and legal perspective, has done extremely well with medication assisted therapy. They described the effect of medication as, "the first time I can remember that I have gone days without thinking about finding opioids."

A current area of research is around GLP-1 agonists (commonly used in diabetes and obesity) as potential treatment for substance use disorders. While the verdict is still out on these, we may soon have some data on whether they hold up as effective treatment options for this group of patients as well.

While social support, therapy and counseling, and other facets of treatment will always be important, medications to help patients with some forms of substance use disorder are an essential piece of the puzzle. I have witnessed many of my own patients who have hugely benefited from those treatments. I am hopeful that medications will become easier for patients to access and have more options in the future.

Dr. Kelly Evans Hullinger practices internal medicine at Avera Medical Group in Brookings, SD. She serves as one of the Prairie Doc Volunteer Hosts during its 24th Season providing Health Education Based on Science, Built on Trust. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).



Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD

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Princess Prom

The Princess Prom was held Sunday evening put on by the Groton Music Department. These photos are lifted from the GDILIVE.COM video.



Alli Iverson escorted by Jeremy Iverson.



Zanel Daniels escorted by Bernard Daniels.

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Madilyn Stahl escorted by Dustin Stahl.



Hainslee Larson escorted by Josh Larson.

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Vee Fliehs escorted by Tigh Fliehs.



Peyton and Arya Guthmiller escorted by Dustin Guthmiller.

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Harper Cleveland escorted by Justin Cleveland.



**The Lockens continue with their tradition!
Jori Locken escorted by Chad Locken.**



River and Maya Anderson escorted by Taylor Anderson.

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Kayleigh and Kinsley Raba escorted by Chris Raba.



Blake Locke escorted by Mitchell Locke.

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Kailynn Gerlach escorted by Tim Sprung.



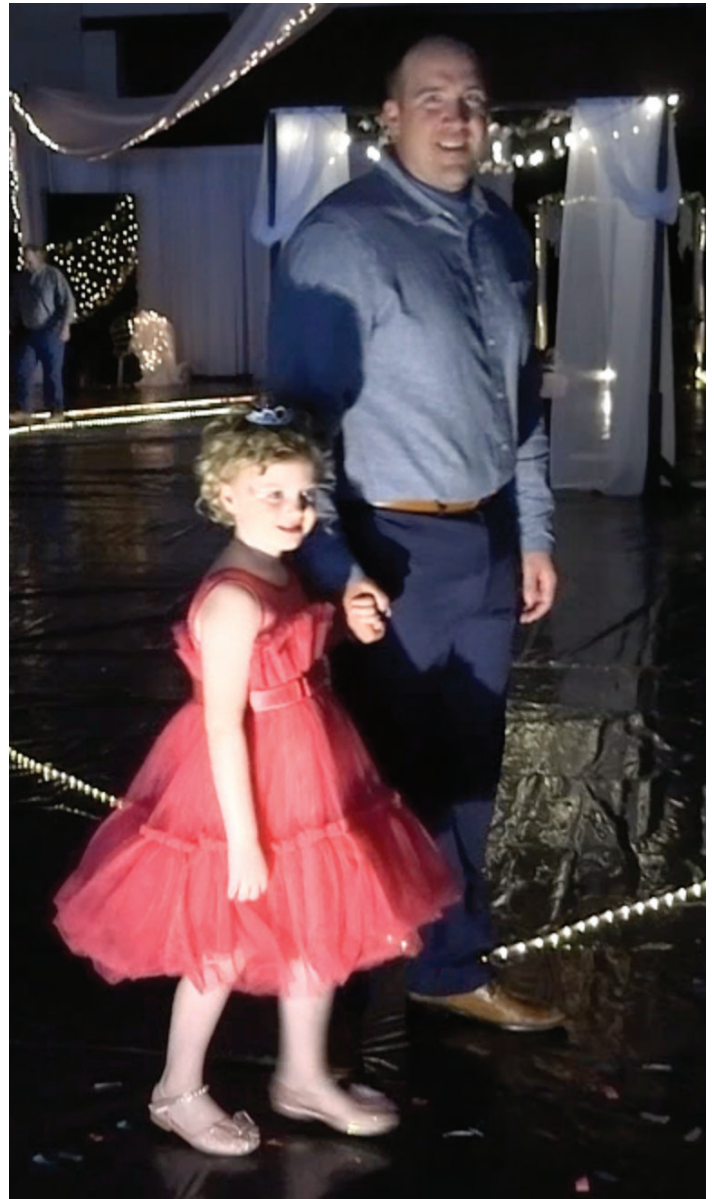
Andi Kampa escorted by Cole Kampa.

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Lexie Locke escorted by Spencer Locke.



Parker Bierman escorted by Quintin Biermann.

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Alexandra Clark escorted by Jeffrey Clark.



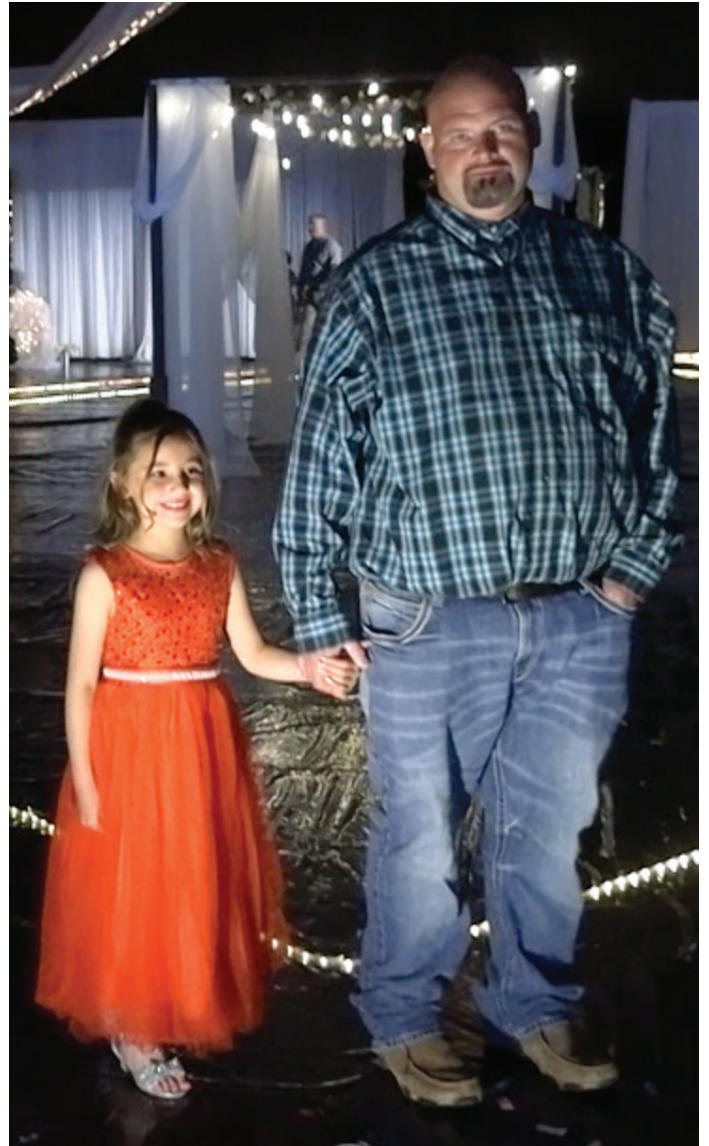
Annie and Harper Harry escorted by Kris Harry.

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Mya and Emme Fliehs escorted by Trey Fliehs.



Paxtyn Menzia escorted by Chris Rice.

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Molly Swisher escorted by Travis Swisher.



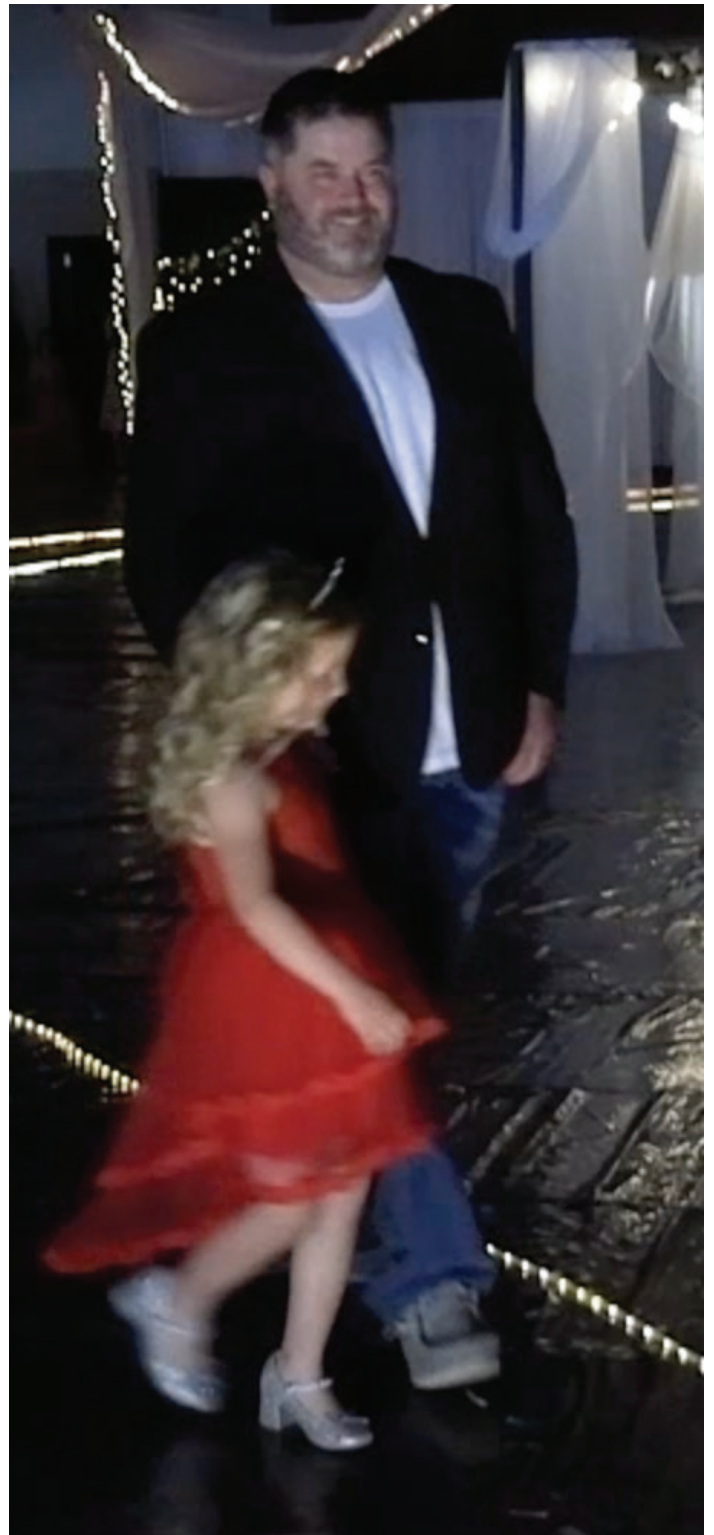
Kinsley Frost escorted by Chris Frost.

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Sawyer Kappes escorted by Andrew Kappes.



Hadlee Ronning escorted by Blake Ronning.

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Avery Hanson escorted by Cody Hanson.



Cora Kotzer escorted by Kevin Kotzer.

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Makenna and Morgan Sternhagen escorted by Tom Sternhagen.



Halle Dolen escorted by Ben Dolen.

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Sunny and Nova Washenberger escorted by Tim Washenberger.



Regan and Emery Lemke escorted by Jon Lemke.

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Kylie Borg escorted by Adam Borg.



Olivia Merkel escorted by Brett Merkel.

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Rafen Bahr escorted by Brian Bahr.



Amara and Alandra Graff escorted by Wes Graff.

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Rylee Tunby escorted by Kris Tunby.



Preslee, Emersyn, Hazel and Wrenley Giedt escorted by Heath Giedt.

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Cicily Duerre escorted by Nathan Duerre.



Madelyn Schock escorted by Brandon Mueller.

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Emma and Adeline Petty and Kimberly Jorgenson escorted by Mason Jorgenson.



Madison Richmond escorted by Casey Richmond.

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Mia Perman escorted by Mitch Perman.



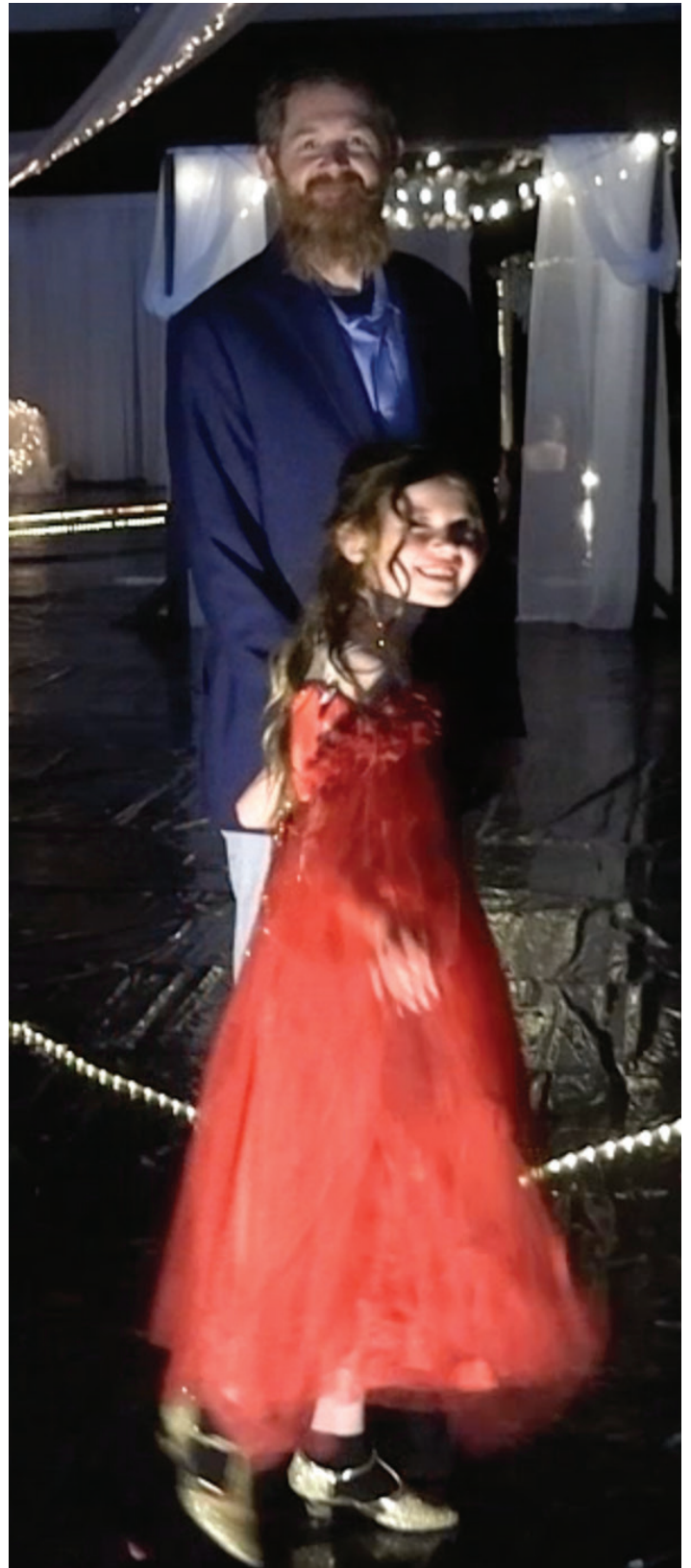
Adeline Larson escorted by Wyatt Larson.

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Aria Shellenberger escorted by Riley Shellenberger.



River Wipf escorted by Keith Wipf.

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Emery Blackwood and Scarlett Stubbs escorted by Bruce Babcock.



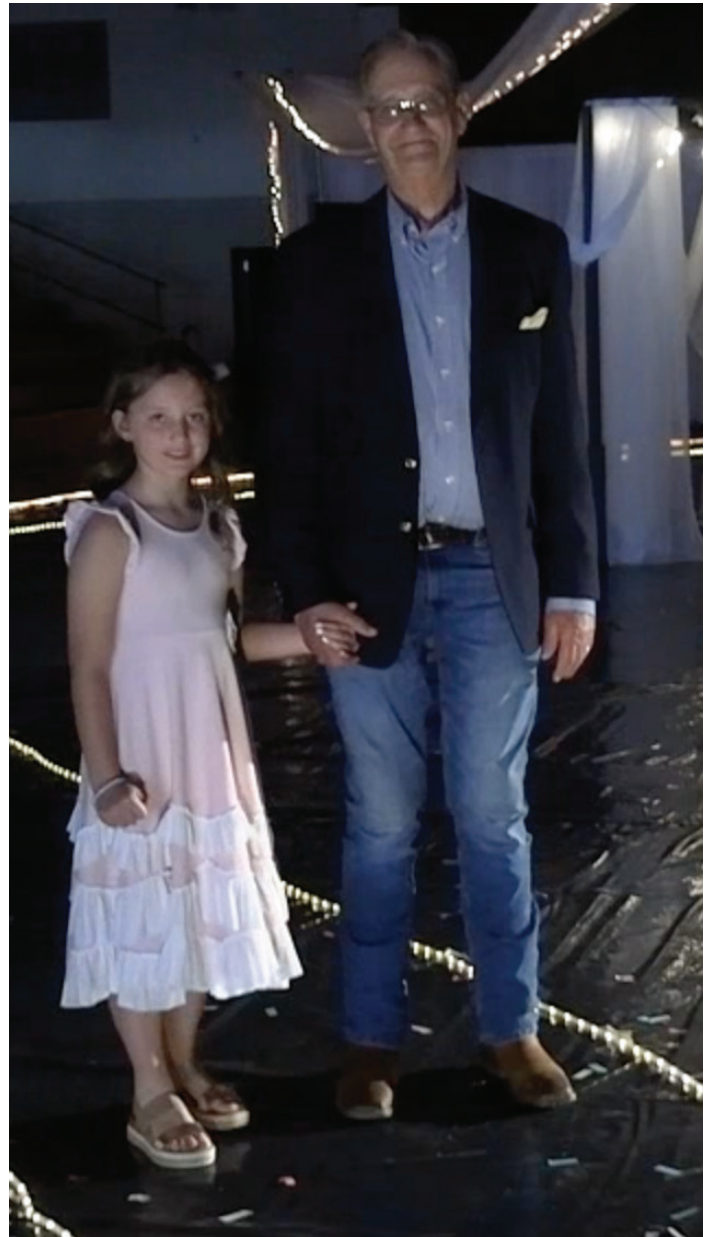
Reagen and Madison Harry escorted by Jeff Harry.

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Aubrey Traphagen escorted by Trent Traphagen.



Collins Traphagen escorted by Richard Traphagen.

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JV Tops Redfield; Varsity Rallies Fall Just Short in Groton

Groton Area's junior varsity picked up a win while the varsity squad mounted a late comeback that came up just short in a Sunday doubleheader against Redfield Area in Groton.

The JV Tigers secured a 5-3 victory, using timely hitting and solid pitching to take control early. Groton Area got on the board in the first inning, and after Redfield tied the game in the second on a single by #19, the Tigers answered right back. Wesley Borg delivered an RBI single in the bottom of the second to give Groton a 2-1 lead.

The Tigers added insurance in the third inning. Owen Tewksbury singled down the right field line, Lincoln Shilhanek drew a walk, and another run came home on a wild pitch as Groton extended its advantage.

Kason Oswald earned the win on the mound, working three innings while allowing just one run on three hits. He struck out four and walked four. Tucker Leicht closed things out to record the save. Oswald, Noah Scepaniak, Borg, and Tewksbury each collected a hit, with Borg and Tewksbury driving in runs.

At the varsity level, Groton Area nearly erased a five-run deficit before falling 5-4 to the Muskrats. Redfield Area jumped out early, scoring in the first inning with the help of two walks, including an RBI walk by Hudson Binger.

Trailing by five runs in the fifth inning, the Tigers rallied late, stringing together key hits — including a pair of doubles — to close the gap to a single run, but the comeback stalled just short.

Jarrett Erdmann led Groton Area with two RBIs from the nine spot in the lineup, finishing 1-for-3. Lincoln Krause, TC Schuster, Jordan Schwan, Erdmann, Alex Abeln, and Gavin Englund each recorded a hit.

Abeln took the loss on the mound despite a strong effort, striking out seven over 4 2/3 innings while allowing five runs, only two of which were earned.

Redfield Area was led by Aiden Frankenstein, who went 2-for-4 at the plate. Hudson Binger and Hunter Binger each drove in a run, while the Muskrats showed patience at the plate, drawing eight walks in the game.

Groton Area will look to bounce back when they travel to SBW for their next contest on Wednesday.

SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

COMMENTARY

33 years after the crash, there's still plenty to miss about Mickelson and his brand of politics

by Dana Hess

Today is 33 years since the Mickelson plane crash. On the way back from a meeting with John Morrell & Co. packing plant officials in Cincinnati, the plane went down at an Iowa farm on a Monday afternoon. Lost were South Dakota Gov. George Mickelson, two state pilots and five men who made up a large portion of the state's economic development expertise.

At the time, I was the editor of the daily newspaper in Pierre. Recalling what life was like in 1993 serves as a reminder of what was lost, not only in that plane crash but also what we've lost in the last 30 years.

Talk all you want to about cynical journalists, but Tuesday's newspapers were full of a big story that no one working in South Dakota journalism ever wanted to print. Those newspapers are different today than they were 33 years ago, hollowed out by corporate malfeasance, the internet, social media and the pandemic.

In 1993, newspapers were so fat with staff that some of the state's larger dailies had reporters assigned full-time to cover government in Pierre. Those were reporters whose names many people will still recognize: Terry Woster, Kevin Woster, Bob Mercer. I'm not sure if The Associated Press even has a presence in South Dakota anymore. Back then, it had two veteran reporters stationed in Pierre: Chet Brokaw and Joe Kafka.

At a time when this tragedy made South Dakotans hungry for news, readers across the state benefited from the breadth of knowledge and the empathy that these reporters brought to their writing. They persevered, even though there was no easy way to chronicle the pain of their friends and neighbors.

Looking back at the weeks after the crash and its first anniversary with the unveiling of the Fighting Stallions memorial, I recall a job well done by journalists who really wanted nothing to do with what was probably the biggest story of their lives. All of them would have been happier if Mickelson's plane had landed safely in Pierre and their April days had been filled with reporting on the minutia of government policy and the pettiness of political squabbles.

Just as journalism has felt the effects of time, so have politics and politicians. Gov. Mickelson was, after all, literally a giant among elected officials. The challenges during his tenure are much like the work that still goes on today — trying to improve education, promoting health care reform, dealing with water issues. Mickelson had a vision for the way the state should approach economic development, proposing a temporary increase in the state sales tax to provide money for the Revolving Economic Development and Initiative Fund.

The state's financial role in economic development was a topic of debate during this year's legislative session. Those critics who like to throw around words like "cronyism" and "corporate welfare" should be



A sculpture, "Fighting Stallions," stands on the grounds of the South Dakota Capitol at Pierre in honor of Gov. George Mickelson and the other victims of a deadly plane crash in 1993. (Photo by

John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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reminded that Mickelson's vision has led to more than three decades of success at attracting new business and industry to South Dakota.

Lawmakers these days are eager to take a pass on trying to solve the challenges on the state's Native American reservations. They like to think that those are federal, rather than state, problems. In 1990, Mickelson declared a Year of Reconciliation while he sought to improve relations with tribes. No South Dakota leader since Mickelson has had the drive to make that kind of commitment. Relations with the tribes have lapsed so badly that at one point, Gov. Kristi Noem found herself banned from all nine of the state's reservations.

It's not the haze created by the passage of time nor nostalgia for the past that makes the 1990s seem better. It's a fact that we were all better off when the state's newspapers were robust and the public was well-informed. It's a fact that George Mickelson was an honorable, decent man — characteristics that are too often missing in today's politicians. Years after the plane crash, there's still plenty for us to mourn.

The victims of the state plane crash

All eight men aboard the state's twin-engine Mitsubishi MU2 airplane were killed when it crashed into a barn and silo nine miles south of Dubuque, Iowa, on April 19, 1993.

Those who died in the plane crash were:

Angus Anson, 38, Sioux Falls, general manager of the South Dakota region for Northern States Power.

Ron Becker, 52, Pierre, the state's chief pilot.

David Birkeland, 54, Sioux Falls, president and chief executive officer of First Bank of South Dakota.

Roland Dolly, 37, Pierre, commissioner of the state Office of Economic Development.

Roger Hainje, 45, Sioux Falls, president of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation.

David Hansen, 45, Pierre, state pilot.

George Mickelson, 52, Pierre, governor of South Dakota.

Ron Reed, 52, Pierre, director of the state Office of Energy Policy.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Forest Service plan to close research stations stokes fear as wildfire season approaches

BY: ALEX BROWN

The U.S. Forest Service's plan to close scores of research stations could threaten the nation's wildfire readiness, many foresters fear, and erode decades of work to understand timber production, soil health, pests and diseases, watersheds and wildlife.

Late last month, the Forest Service announced plans to close 57 of its 77 research stations, located across 31 states, merging them into a single organization in Fort Collins, Colorado.

The agency described the move as a way to consolidate, not cut, the agency's scientific work, and "unify research priorities."

It's unclear how many scientists will be affected by the transition, but it comes as part of a larger agency reorganization that is expected to move roughly 5,000 employees to new outposts. Forest Service leaders have framed the closures as a way to reduce the agency's real estate footprint, citing a facilities budget Congress has shrunk, as opposed to curtailing its scientific work.

But many longtime foresters fear the closures will threaten vital research that has been the backbone of forest management for state agencies, timber companies and tribes. Many of the research stations slated for closure study fire behavior, forecast smoke dispersal and help inform evacuation decisions.

"The research arm of the Forest Service is one of the unsung heroes in forest management around the world," said Mike Dombeck, who served as chief of the Forest Service under President Bill Clinton and

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remains a vocal conservation advocate. "It is the premier forest research entity in the world, on everything from invasive species to wildland fire risk, watershed protection, basic silviculture and harvest methods."

The Forest Service's revamp also will relocate the agency's headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City and restructure its regional management system.

The Forest Service did not grant a Stateline interview request. The agency has not said how much money it expects to save by closing the research stations.

Many Western leaders are skeptical that the consolidated operation will be able to replicate the work of the existing research stations. State officials said they've been given few details about how the transition will play out and whether existing research will continue.

In Washington state, the Forest Service plans to close research stations in Seattle and Wenatchee, while maintaining a facility in Olympia.

"The station in Seattle does some of the most practical-based research that we use for fire and forest management," said Washington State Forester George Geissler. "We don't want to lose that work. They've said they'll keep Olympia open, but we don't know what that looks like. Are they making sure we don't lose the ongoing research?"

Forestry veterans say it's important for the agency to continue its scientific work across a wide variety of forests and climates.

"This is research that's been going on for decades or even a century or more," said Kevin Hood, executive director of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, a nonprofit that advocates for agency workers. "They're able to see how climate change impacts are playing out in a dry ponderosa forest or a humid hardwood forest. There are research plots and experimental forests that have been diligently studied for decades. This could be a loss of a lot of knowledge."

The Pacific Wildland Fire Sciences Laboratory, for instance, plays a crucial role in issuing wildfire smoke forecasts that are relied on throughout the Northwest. After a hot, dry winter, that work could be critical as a dangerous wildfire season approaches.

In Vermont, the Burlington research station slated for closure studied maple syrup production and the effects of acid rain on different tree species, according to VTDigger.

And in Mississippi, the Southern Institute of Forest Genetics, also on the chopping block, has guided tree improvement programs that improved growth and pest resistance in Southern timber forests.

Some conservation advocates are concerned that the research station closures are aimed at suppressing studies that might show the environmental harms of logging or mining. President Donald Trump has pledged to increase timber production on federal lands. He has moved to limit environmental reviews and protections for endangered species to speed up logging projects.

In an interview with the Deseret News, Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz said that the move was designed to ensure that the Forest Service's research "will better align with the priorities of the administration" — minerals, recreation, fire management and "active management" of forests, which can include timber harvests and thinning projects. He said the research would support not just forests but also private landowners.

"It's not streamlining, it's dismantling," said Chandra Rosenthal, Western lands and Rocky Mountain advocate with Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a group that defends whistleblowers in the federal service. "It's going to really impact how the Forest Service makes decisions on the ground. The way the Trump administration is trying to make a lot of decisions is gut feelings."

In a webpage set up to respond to news coverage of the move, the Forest Service said it is a "myth" that the station closures will eliminate scientific positions or cancel research programs. But many forestry veterans said that attrition is inevitable, as researchers are asked to move their families across the country to work under a new model with few details.

"There's concern that we're going to see a lot of really good individuals who cannot uproot their families that we'll lose," said Geissler, the Washington state forester. "It's taken a long time to develop that kind of expertise. It's scary."

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Foresters in both conservative and liberal states said they rely heavily on the research the Forest Service provides. Most were unwilling to comment extensively about the closures without seeing more details.

"That work is absolutely important, and I sure hope it continues," said Wyoming State Forester Kelly Norris. "I don't think research should stop. It may need to look a little different."

Some leaders said there may be opportunities for states, through forestry agencies and universities, to pick up the slack and ensure research continues, even if the Forest Service is no longer playing a lead role.

"This is still a little bit of an unknown area, but we'll have to make sure that if there's a gap there, that we're working with our universities and (state) research centers to make sure that is still being provided," said Utah State Forester Jamie Barnes.

Nick Smith, public affairs director with the American Forest Resource Council, a timber industry group, expressed support for the agency's effort to consolidate its work, saying he'd had "limited interaction" with the research stations.

While some of the Forest Service's work is controversial, agency veterans say its research program is valued by loggers and tree-huggers alike.

"Nobody was asking for this," said Robert Bonnie, who served as undersecretary of agriculture for natural resources and environment during the Obama administration. "There was no call to do anything like this."

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.

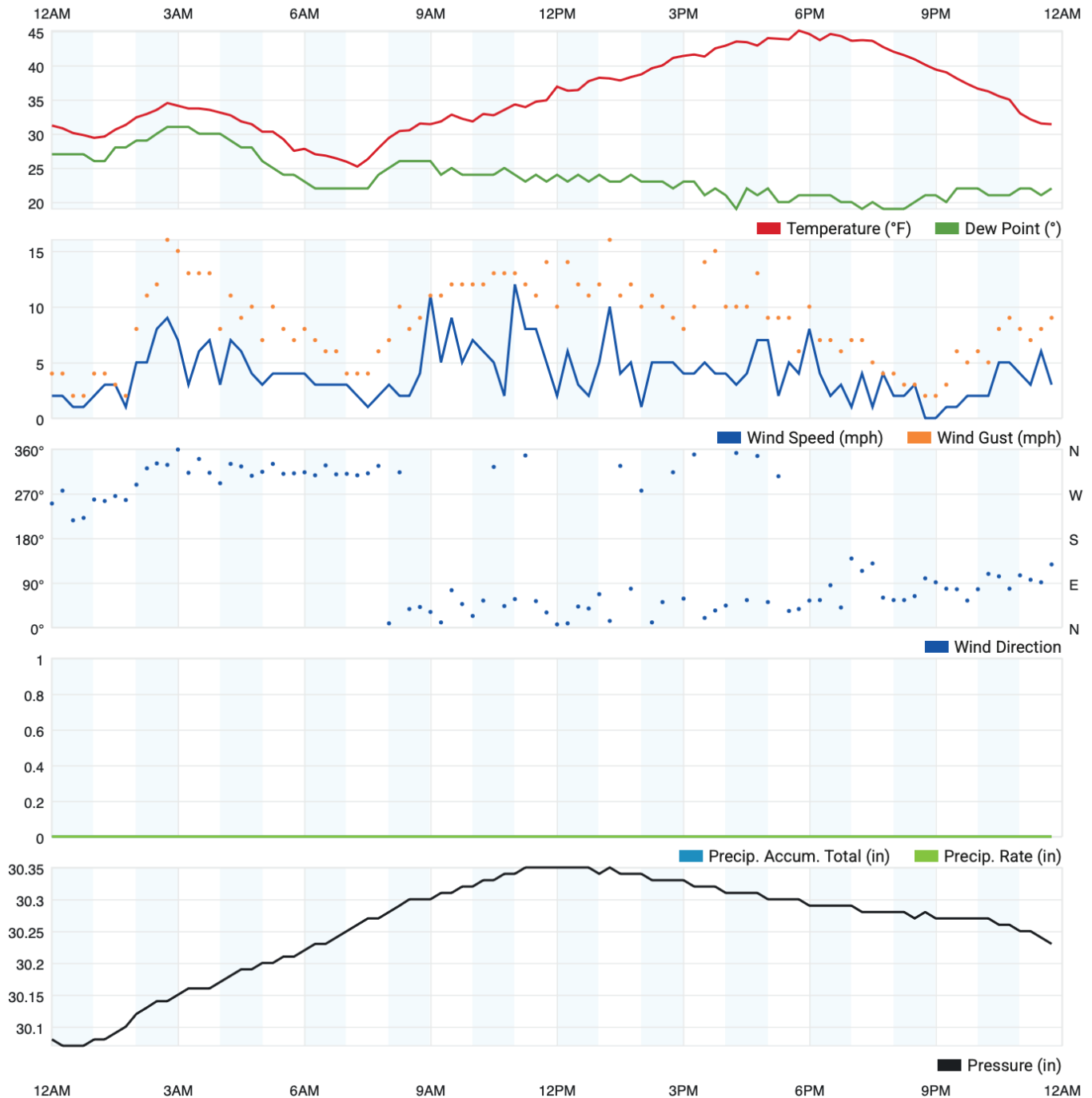
Based in Seattle, Alex Brown covers environmental issues for Stateline. Prior to joining Stateline, Brown wrote for The Chronicle in Lewis County, Washington state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

April 19, 2026



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Today



High: 70 °F

Sunny and
Breezy

Tonight



Low: 38 °F

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday



High: 76 °F

Sunny

Tuesday Night



Low: 49 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 87 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Mostly
Sunny and
Breezy

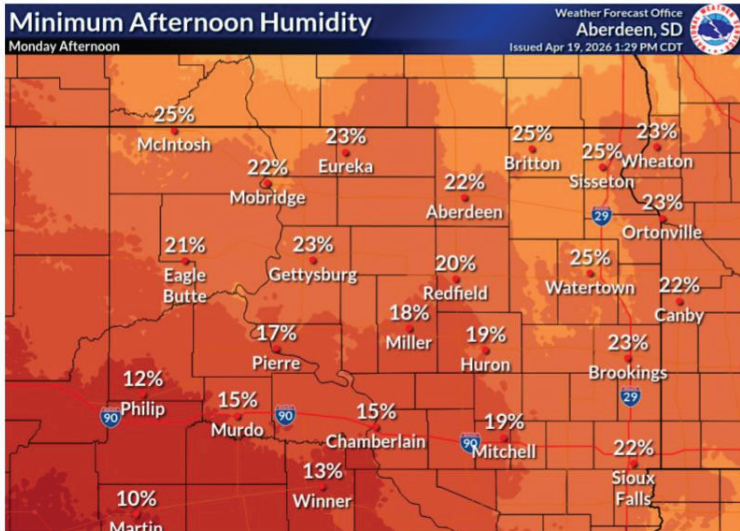


Elevated Fire Weather Concerns Monday

April 19, 2026
2:51 PM CDT

Dry and Windy conditions will be present Monday morning and afternoon.

- Dry and windy conditions are expected Monday morning into afternoon. The highest gusts, up to 35 mph, will be located over northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota.
- Lingering strong gusts of 20-30 miles per hour will occur at the time of the lowest afternoon humidities.



Average Wind Gust (mph) Forecast

	4/20 Mon								4/21 Tue	
	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am
Wheaton	13	18	23	28	30	26	18	13	12	12
Milbank	11	15	20	26	31	28	20	12	10	12
Sisseton	12	18	23	30	34	30	20	14	13	13
Watertown	13	18	24	31	35	29	20	11	9	11
Webster	16	21	26	33	35	29	20	12	12	14
Clark	19	23	28	34	35	29	18	11	10	13
Britton	16	22	26	35	37	30	19	13	12	13
Aberdeen	16	20	26	32	32	26	15	11	12	15
Redfield	18	23	28	34	34	26	14	11	11	13
Miller	18	23	28	33	32	24	14	9	10	10
Chamberlain	16	17	18	24	25	21	14	9	6	6
Eureka	20	25	28	29	26	21	14	8	12	14
Gettysburg	22	26	29	31	26	18	12	9	12	14
Pierre	19	21	21	21	18	14	9	6	5	5
Mobridge	20	23	27	25	21	16	12	9	10	9
Murdo	26	26	26	25	22	21	16	10	8	8
Eagle Butte	26	28	27	23	18	16	14	12	14	14
McIntosh	25	29	27	25	22	20	16	14	13	13

WindGust >= 25

Average Wind Gust Forecast (mph)



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Afternoon humidity will drop to between 20 and 25 percent across northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota due to above normal temperatures, with highs in the upper 60s to low 70s over that area. Southerly wind gusts are expected to reach 20 to 30 miles per hour at the time of these low humidity values, creating the potential for critical fire weather conditions.

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Elevated Fire Weather Concerns Wednesday

April 19, 2026
2:51 PM CDT

Dry and Windy conditions create elevated fire weather concerns Wednesday afternoon.

- Dry and Windy conditions will return across a widespread area Wednesday afternoon.
- Southerly wind gusts will reach up to 35-45 miles per hour in the afternoon.
 - Strongest gusts are expected over parts of central South Dakota and into the James River Valley.
- The combination of dry conditions and strong winds will create **Very High Grassland Fire Danger over the area.**
 - Some localized areas of Extreme Grassland Fire Danger are possible.
- Fires that ignite may spread rapidly and be difficult to control or suppress.

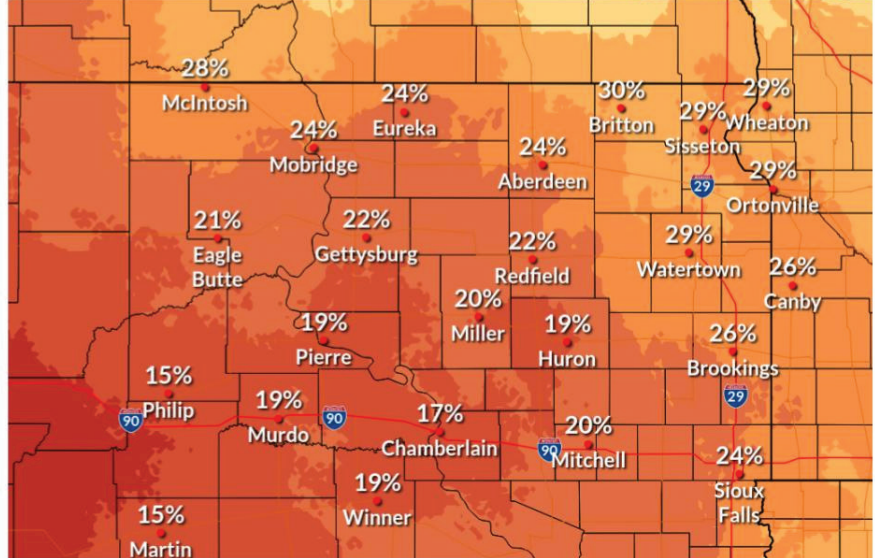
Minimum Afternoon Humidity

Wednesday Afternoon

Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD

Issued Apr 19, 2026 1:30 PM CDT



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

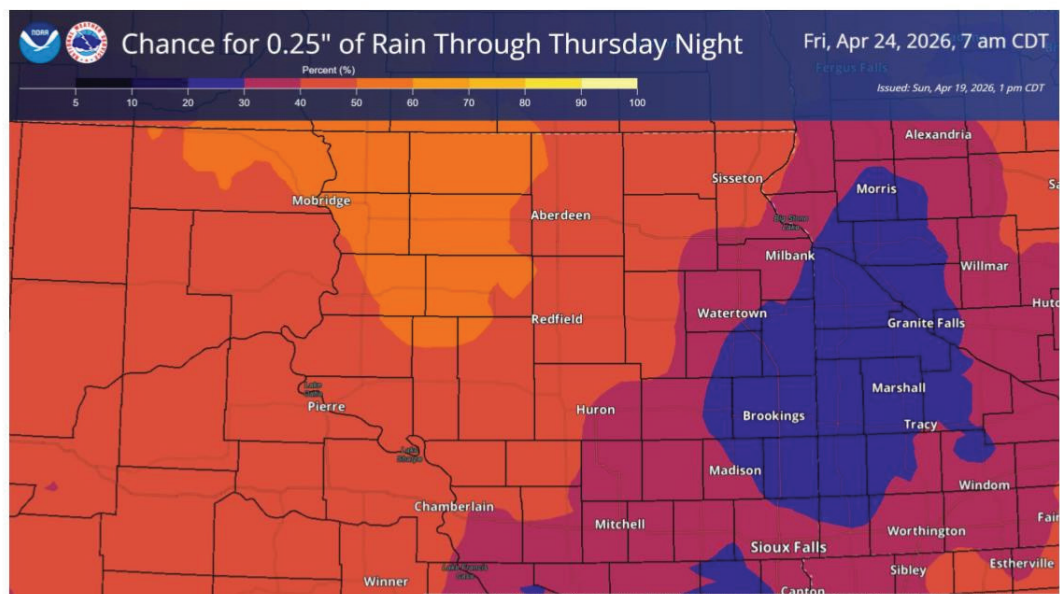


Upcoming Rain Chances

April 19, 2026
2:51 PM CDT

Multiple Rounds of Rain move through Wednesday and Thursday.

- Multiple rounds of rain are expected to move over the area for the middle of this week.
- The best chances to see at least a quarter of an inch are located over north central South Dakota, between 50 and 60 percent.
- Wind gusts will be strong both Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.
 - ◆ Wed: Southerly gusts 35-45 mph.
 - ◆ Thurs: Westerly gusts 40-55 mph.



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 45 °F at 5:50 PM

Low Temp: 25 °F at 7:11 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 2:47 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 1980

Record Low: 11 in 2013

Average High: 60

Average Low: 33

Average Precip in April.: 1.04

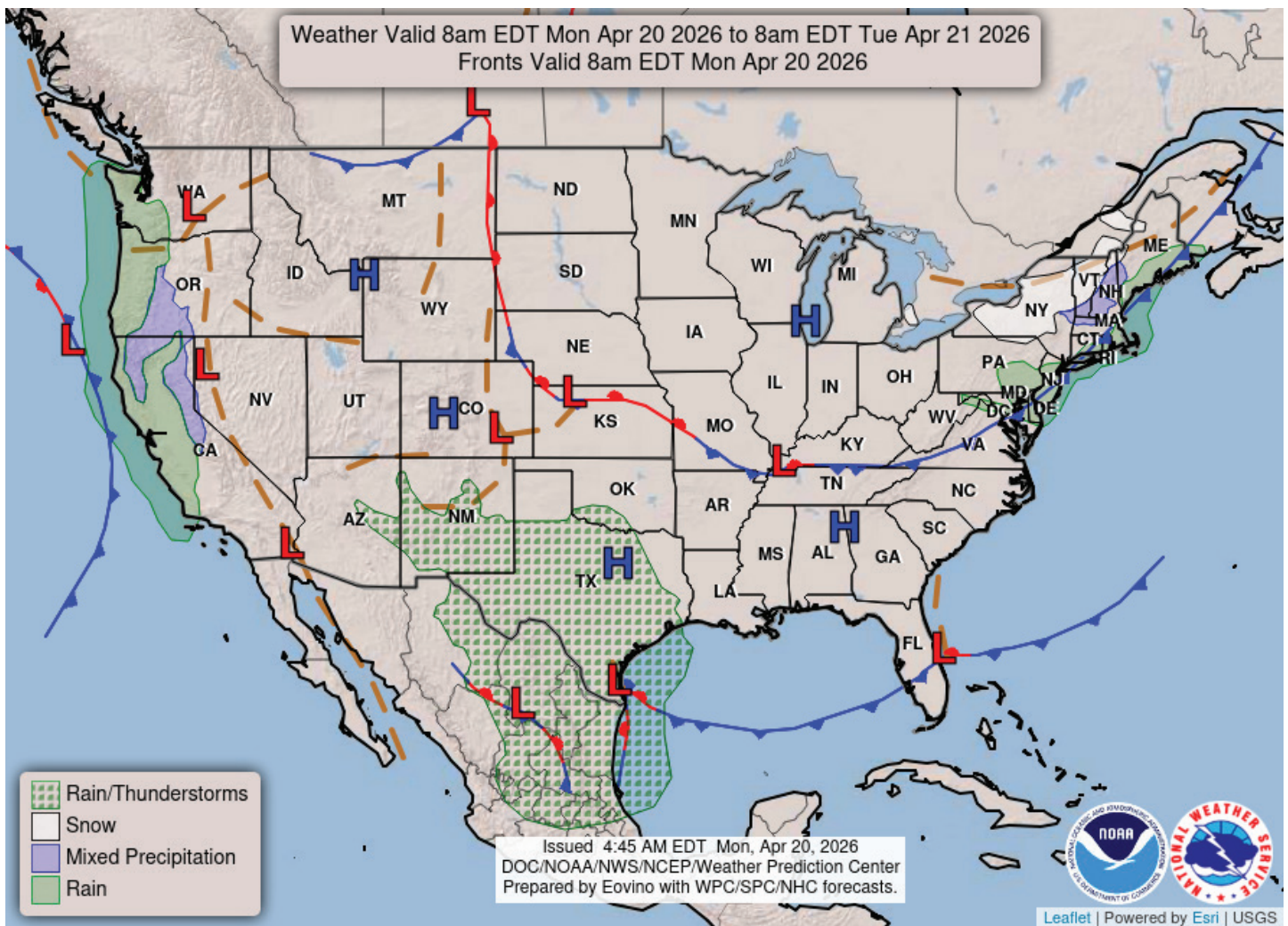
Precip to date in April.: 0.95

Average Precip to date: 3.10

Precip Year to Date: 2.57

Sunset Tonight: 8:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:36 am



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Today in Weather History

April 20th, 1966: Canadian high pressure brought frigid air to the Rockies and northern Plains. Record lows included three below in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, two below in Cheyenne and Casper, Wyoming, two above in Rapid City, 11 above in Fargo, Williston, and Aberdeen, and 15 in Huron.

April 20th, 2007: Severe thunderstorms moved through parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and evening, producing large hail. The most significant hail measured 1.75 inches in diameter and fell 3 miles east of Westport in Brown County.

1901 — A spring storm produced unusually heavy snow in northeast Ohio. Warren received 35.5 inches in thirty-six hours, and 28 inches fell at Green Hill. Akron OH established April records of 15.6 inches in 24 hours, and 26.6 inches for the month. Pittsburgh PA established April records of 12.7 inches in 24 hours, and 13.5 inches for the month. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1920 — Tornadoes in Mississippi and Alabama killed 219 persons. (David Ludlum)

1952 — The tankers Esso Suez and Esso Greensboro crashed in a thick fog off the coast of Morgan City LA. Only five of the Greensboro's crew survived after the ship bursts into flame. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Fifty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The high of 92 degrees at Memphis TN was a record for April, and the high of 94 at Little Rock AR equalled their April record. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — A storm in the western U.S. brought heavy rain to parts of California. Mount Wilson was soaked with 4.15 inches of rain in 24 hours. The heavy rain caused some flooding and mudslides in the Los Angeles area, and a chain reaction collision of vehicles along the Pomona Freeway which resulted in 26 injuries. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Hot weather spread from the southwestern U.S. into the Great Plains Region. Twenty-three cities reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 104 degrees at Tucson AZ was an April record, and highs of 87 at Provo UT, 90 at Pueblo CO, and 85 at Salt Lake City UT, equalled April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — A fast moving Pacific storm produced heavy snow in the central mountains and the Upper Arkansas Valley of Colorado, with a foot of snow reported at Leadville. Thunderstorms in the south central U.S. produced wind gusts to 76 mph at Tulsa OK, and heavy rain which caused flooding of Cat Claw Creek in the Abilene TX area. Lightning struck the building housing a fish farm in Scott AR killing 10,000 pounds of fish. Many of the fish died from the heat of the fire. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 — Up to five feet of snow falls in the Dakotas. I-94 and other highways were closed, power was out for thousands and caused at least four deaths.



Seeking Guidance: The Pattern

When we truly believe God's way is best and let go of our own plans, we position ourselves to hear His voice.

Matthew 7:7-8: 7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Yesterday, we saw there's a pattern to seeking God's guidance, and the first step—cleansing—is important throughout the entire process. Interestingly, all but one of the remaining steps have no particular order and can actually fit together in many ways.

After we've asked for cleansing, we must surrender—this is not an admission of weakness but, rather, an expression of humility and trust. The Lord is looking for commitment to follow Him no matter what. Therefore, surrender must precede even our prayers for guidance. 1 John 5:14-15 says that the Lord hears and grants our petitions when we ask according to His will.

God often guides believers to an answer through His Word (Psalm 119:105). Our reading might take us to a passage that deals with our specific situation, or it might reveal a principle that applies. God can also speak a clear message directly to a person's heart. The key is to believe that the Lord is going to guide you—and then to live out that faith (Mark 11:24).

The process of seeking guidance is often slow. We are wise to be patient, because running ahead or manipulating circumstances can be a costly mistake. Our omniscient, sovereign God "acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:4). Those who seek direction will receive—that's a promise (Matthew 7:7-8).

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.19.26

32 42 52 53 55 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 47 Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.17.26

38 43 44 49 62 8

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$140,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 32 Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.18.26

18 21 22 32 42 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$22,430,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.18.26

11 14 17 25 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 2 Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.18.26

2 38 45 53 63 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.18.26

24 25 39 46 61 1

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$87,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake strikes off Japan, tsunami alert issued

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A powerful earthquake struck off the northern Japanese coast, and the Japan Meteorological Agency issued a tsunami alert in the region.

The quake registering a preliminary magnitude of 7.5 occurred off the coast of Sanriku in northern Japan at around 4:53 p.m. (0753 GMT), at a depth of about 10 kilometers (6 miles) below the sea surface, the agency said.

A tsunami of about 80 centimeters (2.6 feet) was detected at the Kuji port in the Iwate prefecture, and a smaller tsunami of 40 centimeters (1.3 feet) was recorded at another port in the prefecture, the agency said.

The agency urged residents in the region to immediately stay away from the coast or along rivers and take shelter on higher ground. It also cautioned people in the area against possible aftershocks for about a week.

The Iwate prefecture issued non-binding evacuation advisories to residents in 11 towns.

A tsunami of up to 3 meters (10 feet) could hit the area, the agency said. In addition to the tsunami alert in Iwate and Aomori to the north and southeastern Hokkaido, the agency also issued a milder tsunami advisory for the coasts of Miyagi and Fukushima, south of the epicenter.

Another 7.5 magnitude quake in December left dozens injured.

It's 15 years since a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, ravaged parts of northern Japan, caused more than 22,000 deaths and forced nearly half a million people to flee their homes, most of them due to tsunami damage.

Some 160,000 people fled their homes in Fukushima because of the radiation spewed from the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. About 26,000 of them haven't returned because they resettled elsewhere, their hometowns remain off-limits or they have lingering concerns about radiation.

Grieving, traumatized survivors return to their homes 5 months after deadly Hong Kong fire

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — He knows what he will see and he's already hurting, but he has to go back.

For the first time since Hong Kong's deadliest fire in decades engulfed his apartment building in November, Keung Mak will step into his former home again Monday. But he expected little remained. A photo from his social worker had already shown the devastation.

The ceiling of the apartment where he and his wife lived for over 40 years and raised their children was burned so badly that steel rebar was visible. The floor was littered with broken tiles, and parts of the apartment needed reinforcement to prevent collapse.

"My heart is heavy, I'm very disappointed. I didn't expect the first floor would be burned like this," Mak, 78, said ahead of returning.

The fire spread rapidly across seven of the eight buildings in the apartment complex in the suburban district of Tai Po, killing 168 people. Starting Monday, the thousands of residents displaced by the fire were returning to see what is left of their homes and retrieve their belongings. The process is expected to continue into early May.

As the investigation into the cause of the fire continues, survivors have been living as best they can, scattered across the city, many in temporary housing as they wait to find out where they can resettle.

Elders prepare to climb the ruins

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The exteriors of some buildings remained blackened from the flames, a reminder of the tragedy.

The return will be particularly difficult for many of the complex's older residents, who made up over a third of some 4,600 people who lived there before the blaze.

With elevators out of service, some have been training to improve their fitness in preparation for climbing the stairs up the 31-story buildings.

Hong Kong Deputy Chief Secretary Warner Cheuk said over 1,400 people registered for the return are 65 or older, public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong reported.

He later told reporters about 270 people would return to the complex Monday. Some residents remained silent as they left.

After the return, resident Steven Chung said the staircases were blackened when he climbed several flights. Chung still found some valuable belongings he had wanted to retrieve in his lesser-damaged home. But he said many other items, like his gaming device, were contaminated by water mixed with concrete particles.

"I worry about another problem because housing prices are increasing rapidly these days," he said.

Limited access

There were many items in Mak's apartment that the family cherishes and longs to retrieve: a fishing rod Mak's son bought him as a gift; wedding photos from half a century ago; letters from their son from years past. They believe almost all of it is destroyed.

"A lot of things with commemorative value are all gone," said Mak's wife, Kit Chan, 74. "Not even a single piece of paper will be left."

Residents will typically be allowed to stay in their apartments for up to three hours, with up to four people entering. In some severely damaged units, only one person can go in.

With only two people allowed in due to the condition of their apartment, Mak and his son will go back. Chan hopes authorities can let her take a look too.

Former residents have complex feelings

Cyrus Ng, 39, lived on the 10th floor of the Wang Fuk Court complex with his parents for over a decade before moving out.

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, he couldn't sleep, feeling angry, sad and worried about his parents. Nearly five months later, he is more emotionally settled but has not fully accepted what happened.

"We know there are suspicious issues behind this," he said. "I hope we can really find the truth."

A lawyer representing an independent committee conducting an ongoing inquiry into the fire's cause has said almost all fire safety devices in the apartment buildings failed on the day of the blaze because of human error.

Ng has mixed feelings about returning next week to their apartment, which was spared the worst damage. He fears the emotional impact on his parents, but looks forward to the chance to retrieve their title deed, old photos, clothes and other valuable items.

He also said he is worried about theft after months of vacancy. Police arrested three men in March on suspicion of stealing from the site.

Mixed responses to resettlement offers

The government previously said repairing the damaged buildings cost-effectively would be difficult. Officials were inclined to demolish the seven fire-ravaged buildings, and have proposed to buy back the homeownership rights from the fire victims.

They cited results from a residents' survey, dashing hopes for those who want their homes rebuilt.

Some residents questioned that stance. Data from the fire inquiry showed that only half of some 1,700 apartments in the seven buildings were damaged, to varying degrees.

Ng wondered if some of the buildings could be repaired to allow some residents to return, though his parents were already considering the government's offer of an apartment elsewhere. He plans to take photos of his apartment during his return to document its condition and help prove that some homes were unaffected.

Other residents who lived in the only building in the complex that escaped the fire face the trauma of

living with nightmarish memories.

Stephanie Leung, a resident of that block, is reluctant to live in the same apartment again. She said her family would face great mental stress every time they looked out over the seven other buildings where their former schoolmates or friends died.

She hopes the government will include her block in the same plan as the other buildings, while allowing those who want to remain to stay.

"Whenever I go back, I want to cry," she said.

EU hosts Palestinian leader in conference about security and peace in Gaza and the West Bank

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — More than 60 nations are sending representatives to Brussels to discuss with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohamed Mustafa stability, security and long-term peace in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, as global attention largely remains focused in the Middle East on the ongoing crises in Iran and Lebanon.

Ongoing attacks in the West Bank and continued devastation in Gaza dims the prospect for a two-state solution, said Belgian Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot ahead of the meeting Monday. He is co-hosting the meeting with the EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas.

"We observe without naivety that the two-state solution is being made more difficult by the day," Prévot said. "But Belgium and many European and Arab partners continue to believe that this remains the only realistic path to a lasting peace, for Israelis, for Palestinians and for the stability of the entire region."

The 27-nation European Union is the largest single donor to the Palestinian Authority, with its 90-year-old president Mahmoud Abbas ruling from Ramallah for two decades. And while the EU has avoided directly joining the Board of Peace created by United States President Donald Trump, preferring the multilateralism of the United Nations and global legal norms, the bloc is eager to not be sidelined in diplomacy in a volatile region just across the Mediterranean.

Outrage in Europe over the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza drove many EU leaders to condemn Israel's war conduct and to pressure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. With the recent ouster of long-serving Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a close ally of Netanyahu, there might now be enough political support within the bloc for stronger actions like targeted sanctions on Israeli settlers or even the suspension of some ties to Israel.

Palestinians in the West Bank say that Israel has used the cover of the Iran war to tighten its grip over the territory, as settler attacks surge and the military imposes additional wartime restrictions on movement, citing security.

Gaza requires "one state, one government, one law and one goal," Mustafa said on Monday in Brussels.

"Our common objective of achieving one security structure under the legitimate authority should guide the effective coordination between the International Stabilization Force, the Palestinian Authority, security institutions and other international actors. Security must not be fragmented," he said.

He also called for "the gradual and responsible collection of arms from all armed groups and also the full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza."

UK police arrest 2 in connection with weekend arson attack on synagogue

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police have arrested two teenagers in connection with a weekend arson attack on a synagogue in northwest London, as Jewish leaders express concern about a wave of incidents targeting their community.

Deputy Commissioner Matt Jukes of London's Metropolitan Police Service on Monday said officers arrested two young men, aged 19 and 17, overnight in relation to the attack on the Kenton United Synagogue

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in the borough of Harrow. The department has made 15 arrests related to six attacks on Jewish targets and a Persian-language media organization critical of Iran's government that occurred over the past few weeks, he said in an interview with the BBC.

One "serious line of inquiry" is that Iran is hiring local criminals to carry out these attacks amid tensions in the Middle East, including the U.S.-Israeli war against the Islamic Republic, Jukes said.

"We've seen a pattern with other actors of thugs for hire, people taking cash that looks like quick and easy money," Jukes said. "This is part of the modern hybrid war fought by proxies."

In the most recent incident, a bottle containing a flammable liquid was thrown through the window of the Harrow synagogue on Saturday night, causing smoke damage, police said.

Counterterrorism police are investigating the series of incidents, which began on March 23 when an arson attack destroyed four ambulances owned by a Jewish charity that serves people of all faiths in north London. Police on Friday closed Kensington Gardens, a central London park visited by thousands of tourists and local residents every day, to investigate an alleged drone attack on the nearby Israeli embassy.

No one has been injured in the incidents, which all happened within a few miles (kilometers) of each other.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said on Sunday that "a sustained campaign of violence and intimidation against the Jewish community of the UK is gathering momentum."

"Thank God, no lives have been lost, but we cannot, and must not, wait for that to change before we understand just how dangerous this moment is for all of our society," he said on X.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Vicki Evans on Sunday said police are aware that a group calling itself Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia had claimed responsibility for most of the attacks in Britain. The same group has claimed responsibility for incidents in recent months at places of worship, business and financial institutions across Europe, all of which appear to be linked to Jewish or Israeli interests, she said.

Israel's government has described Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia, whose name means the Islamic Movement of the Companions of the Right, as a recently founded group with suspected links to "an Iranian proxy."

"I want to be clear, irrespective of the motivation of this group, to those facilitating on their behalf and those committing the acts – we will not tolerate activity which seeks to intimidate or frighten our communities. You will not succeed in creating division and hate," Evans said.

The U.K. has accused Iran of using criminal proxies to conduct attacks on European soil targeting opposition media outlets and the Jewish community. Britain's MI5 domestic intelligence service says that more than 20 "potentially lethal" Iran-backed plots were disrupted in the year to October.

British Prime Minister Starmer faces angry lawmakers over Mandelson's appointment as ambassador

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will try on Monday to get a grip on a crisis that has left power slipping from his grasp.

Starmer will face a tough barrage of questions in Parliament when he stands up to explain why Peter Mandelson, a scandal-tarnished politician and friend of Jeffrey Epstein, became Britain's ambassador to Washington despite failing security checks — and seemingly without Starmer being told about the concerns.

The revelation has left furious opponents calling for Starmer to resign and uneasy allies wondering what else the nation's leader didn't know about.

Starmer repeatedly told lawmakers that "due process" was followed when Mandelson was appointed. He now says he's "furious" that he wasn't informed that an intensive vetting process had recommended Mandelson not be given security clearance. The Foreign Office, which oversees diplomatic appointments, cleared him anyway.

"The fact that I wasn't told that Peter Mandelson had failed his security vetting when he was appointed is astonishing," Starmer told the Daily Mirror. "The fact that I wasn't told when I said to Parliament that due process had been followed is unforgivable."

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Starmer fired the top Foreign Office civil servant, Olly Robbins, within hours of the revelation by The Guardian last week. But allies of Robbins say he would never have been able to share sensitive vetting information with the prime minister.

Robbins is expected to give his own version of events to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday.

All the main opposition parties have called on Starmer to resign. Right-of-center Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch said in the Mail on Sunday that he had "misled Parliament over Mandelson, misled the country and is taking the public for fools."

Ed Davey, leader of the opposition Liberal Democrats, said Starmer had "showed catastrophic misjudgment."

Senior government colleagues have defended the prime minister. Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy said that if Starmer had known about the failed security vetting, "he would never, ever have appointed him ambassador."

But lawmakers in Starmer's center-left Labour Party, already anxious about the party's dire poll ratings, are restive. Starmer has already defused one potential crisis in February, when some Labour lawmakers urged him to resign over the Mandelson appointment.

He could face a new challenge is, as expected, Labour takes a hammering in local and regional elections on May 7, which give voters a chance to pass a midterm verdict on the government.

Critics say the Mandelson appointment is more evidence of a failure of judgment by a prime minister who has made repeated missteps since he led Labour to a landslide election victory in July 2024. Starmer has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living, and has been forced into repeated policy U-turns.

He picked Mandelson for one of Britain's most important diplomatic jobs despite being warned by his staff that Mandelson's friendship with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, exposed the government to "reputational risk."

Mandelson's business links to Russia and China also set off alarm bells. But his expertise as a former European Union trade chief and contacts among global elites were considered assets in dealing with President Donald Trump's administration.

He lasted less than nine months in the job. Starmer fired Mandelson in September 2025 after evidence emerged that he had lied about the extent of his links to Epstein.

A trove of Epstein-related documents released by the U.S. Department of Justice in January included emails suggesting Mandelson had passed on sensitive, and potentially market-moving, government information to Epstein in 2009 after the global financial crisis.

British police launched a criminal probe and arrested Mandelson in February on suspicion of misconduct in public office. Mandelson has previously denied wrongdoing and hasn't been charged. He does not face allegations of sexual misconduct.

Oil prices jump and stocks are mixed as the US-Iran standoff keeps the Strait of Hormuz in limbo

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Oil prices climbed more than 5% while world shares were mixed Monday as a standoff between Iran and the U.S. prevented tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz.

The Persian Gulf waterway was closed again after Iran reversed a decision to reopen the strait and President Donald Trump said a U.S. Navy blockade of Iranian ports remains in effect.

U.S. benchmark crude gained 5.3% to \$87.88 a barrel, while Brent crude, the international standard, was up 5.3% at \$95.62 a barrel.

In share trading, U.S. futures declined, with the contracts for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average down 0.7%.

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In early European trading, benchmarks declined. Germany's DAX lost 1.6% and the CAC 40 in Paris shed 1.2% to 8,325.67. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 0.6% to 10,601.64.

Despite renewed doubts about how soon ships will again transport the vast amounts oil the world gets from the Middle East, share prices were mostly higher in Asia, though they gave up the bigger gains of earlier in the session.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 rose 0.6% to 58,824.89, while South Korea's Kospi picked up 0.4% to 6,219.09.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.8% to 26,361.07 and the Shanghai Composite index advanced 0.8% to 4,0802.13.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.1% higher to 8,953.30.

In Taiwan, the Taiex jumped 0.4%. India's Sensex rose 0.1% and the SET in Bangkok lost 0.2%.

"The problem for markets is not the absence of hope; it is the overpricing of it," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary. "The latest move higher in equities has started to feel less like conviction and more like momentum feeding on itself."

On Friday, oil prices had dropped back to where they were in the early days of the Iran war, and U.S. stocks raced to a fresh record after Iran said the strait was open again for commercial tankers carrying crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide.

A freer flow of oil could relieve pressure on prices for gasoline and all kinds of other products that get moved by vehicles. It could even ultimately help people pay less on credit-card interest and mortgage bills.

The S&P 500 leaped 1.2% to an all-time high of 7,126.06, closing out a third straight week of big gains, its longest streak since Halloween.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average surged 1.8% to 49,447.43. The Nasdaq composite climbed 1.5% to 24,468.48.

The U.S. stock market has jumped more than 12% since hitting a bottom in late March on hopes the United States and Iran can avoid a worst-case scenario for the global economy despite their war.

The price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude had plunged 9.4% after Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, posted on X that passage for all commercial vessels through the strait "is declared completely open" as a ceasefire appears to be holding in Lebanon.

Brent crude fell 9.1%.

After Araghchi's announcement, Trump said on his social media network that the U.S. Navy's blockade of Iranian ports remained "in full force" pending a deal on the war, though he also suggested that "should go very quickly in that most of the points are already negotiated."

President Donald Trump said Sunday that the U.S. had seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship that tried to get around a naval blockade. Iran's joint military command said Tehran would respond soon and called the U.S. seizure an act of piracy.

A fragile, two-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran is set to expire Wednesday, while escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz raises questions over new talks to end the war.

Since the war began, market sentiment has swung between optimism and gloom over when the fighting will end and what costs the world economy will endure. A strong start to the earnings reporting season for big U.S. companies has helped support stocks.

In other dealings early Monday, the U.S. dollar rose to 159.02 Japanese yen from 158.79 yen. The euro climbed to \$1.1759 from \$1.1742.

Doubts over talks between Iran and US after violence flares in Strait of Hormuz

By MUNIR AHMED, JON GAMBRELL and DAVID RISING Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan moved ahead Monday with preparations for a new round of talks between the United States and Iran days before a tenuous ceasefire is set to expire, even as renewed conflict around the Strait of Hormuz raised questions about whether the meeting would take place.

Over the weekend, the U.S. attacked and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo vessel that it said had tried

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to evade its blockade of Iranian ports. Iran's joint military command vowed to respond, and its Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi told his Pakistani counterpart that American threats to Iranian ships and ports were "clear signs" of Washington's disingenuousness ahead of the planned talks, Iran state media reported.

With tensions flaring and the ceasefire due to expire midweek, Pakistan has intensified diplomatic contacts with both Washington and Tehran over the past 24 hours with the goal of resuming the talks on Tuesday as planned, according to two Pakistani officials involved in the preparations. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

U.S. President Donald Trump has said American negotiators would head to the Pakistani capital on Monday, but it was not immediately clear whether those plans would now change.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told reporters in Tehran on Monday that there were no plans yet to attend the talks with the U.S. But at the same time, he did not rule it out.

"We have no plans for the next round of negotiations and no decision has been made in this regard," Baghaei said.

Iran on Saturday said it had received new proposals from the United States but suggested a wide gap remained between the sides. It was unclear whether either side had shifted stances on issues that derailed the last round of negotiations, including Iran's nuclear enrichment program, its regional proxies and the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran throttled traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf to the open seas, shortly after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28 to start the war. The U.S. has also instituted a blockade of Iranian ports.

Roughly one-fifth of the world's oil trade normally passes through the strait, along with critical supplies of fertilizer for the world's farmers, natural gas and humanitarian supplies for places in dire need like Afghanistan and Sudan.

Iran says more than 3,000 have been killed in country so far

Since the war started, at least 3,375 people have been killed in Iran, according to a new toll released Monday in official Iranian media by Abbas Masjedi, the head of Iran's Legal Medicine Organization. He did not break down casualties among civilians and security forces, instead just saying that 2,875 were male and 496 were female. Masjedi said 383 of the dead were children 18 years old and under.

More than 2,290 people have also been killed in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Fifteen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon and 13 U.S. service members throughout the region have been killed.

Oil prices on the rise again after renewed conflict in Strait of Hormuz

Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz has also sent oil prices skyrocketing and given rise to one of the worst global energy crises in decades.

Oil prices recovered slightly following Iran's announcement that the strait was being reopened a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon took hold on Friday.

But then Trump said the U.S. blockade "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the U.S. and on Sunday the military seized the Iranian cargo ship, the first interception since the blockade began last week.

Iran's joint military command called the armed boarding an act of piracy and a ceasefire violation, the state broadcaster said, and vowed to again enforce restrictions imposed early in the war. Already on Saturday, Iran fired at ships trying to transit.

Oil prices were up again in early trading on Monday, with Brent crude, the international standard, at about \$95 a barrel — up more than 30% from the day the war started.

Iran early Monday warned it could keep up the global economic pain as ships remained unable to transit the strait, with hundreds of vessels waiting at each end for clearance.

Security of the strait is not free and "the choice is clear: either a free oil market for all, or the risk of significant costs for everyone," Mohammad Reza Aref, first vice president of Iran, said in a social media post calling for a lasting end to military and economic pressure on Tehran.

French prosecutors summon Elon Musk over allegations of child abuse images and deepfakes on X

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Elon Musk has been summoned to Paris on Monday, where investigators are looking into allegations of misconduct related to the social media platform X, including the spread of child sexual abuse material and deepfake content.

The world's richest man and Linda Yaccarino — the former CEO of X — have been summoned for “voluntary interviews,” while other employees of the platform are scheduled to be heard as witnesses throughout this week, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

It remains unclear whether Musk and Yaccarino will travel to Paris. A spokesperson for X did not respond to questions from The Associated Press and Yaccarino's current company, eMed, did not answer a request sent to the press email.

French prosecutors also suspect that controversy around the platform's AI system Grok's deepfakes was concocted to boost the value of Musk-owned companies ahead of a key market listing, and alerted U.S. authorities. Musk welcomed a report that U.S. justice officials refused to help French investigators, posting on X, “This needs to stop.”

The reason for summoning Musk

Musk was summoned after a search took place in February at the French premises of X as part of an investigation opened in January 2025 by the cybercrime unit of the Paris prosecutor's office. Musk and Yaccarino have been invited in their capacities as managers of X at the time of the events investigated. Yaccarino was CEO from May 2023 until July 2025.

“These voluntary interviews with the executives are intended to allow them to present their position regarding the facts and, where appropriate, the compliance measures they plan to implement,” prosecutors said. “At this stage, the conduct of this investigation is part of a constructive approach, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that platform X complies with French law, insofar as it operates within the national territory.”

Asked whether Musk would risk sanctions if he skipped the hearing, the Paris prosecutor's office declined to comment.

What is being investigated

French authorities opened their investigation after reports from a French lawmaker alleging that biased algorithms on X likely distorted the functioning of an automated data processing system. It expanded after the AI system, Grok, generated posts that allegedly denied the Holocaust, a crime in France, and spread sexually explicit deepfakes.

It's looking into alleged “complicity” in possessing and spreading pornographic images of minors, sexually explicit deepfakes, denial of crimes against humanity and manipulation of an automated data processing system as part of an organized group, among other charges.

Grok, which was built by xAI and is available through X, sparked global outrage this year after it pumped out a torrent of sexualized nonconsensual deepfake images in response to requests from X users.

Grok also wrote in a widely shared post in French that gas chambers at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp were designed for “disinfection with Zyklon B against typhus” rather than for mass murder — language long associated with Holocaust denial.

In later posts on X, the chatbot reversed itself and acknowledged that its earlier reply was wrong, saying it had been deleted, and pointed to historical evidence that Zyklon B was used to kill more than 1 million people in Auschwitz gas chambers.

French prosecutors alert U.S. authorities

In March, the Paris prosecutor's office alerted the U.S. Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) — the U.S. federal agency responsible for regulating and overseeing financial markets — suggesting “that the controversy surrounding sexually explicit deepfakes generated by Grok

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may have been deliberately orchestrated to artificially boost the value of the companies X and xAI — potentially constituting criminal offenses,” prosecutors said.

The Paris prosecutor’s office said this could have been done “ahead of the planned June 2026 stock market listing of the new entity formed by the merger of Space X and xAI, at a time when company X was clearly losing momentum.”

Justice Department brushes off French call

According to the Wall Street Journal, the Justice Department told French law enforcement authorities it wouldn’t facilitate their efforts to investigate Musk’s X. The newspaper reported that the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs, in a two-page letter last week, accused the French of inappropriately using its justice system to interfere with an American business.

The letter also said France’s requests for U.S. assistance “constitute an effort to entangle the United States in a politically charged criminal proceeding aimed at wrongfully regulating through prosecution the business activities of a social media platform.”

French judicial authorities didn’t respond to requests for comments.

Reporters Without Borders’ lawsuit

Meanwhile, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said it has lodged a new complaint against X with the cybercrime unit of the Paris prosecutor’s office targeting “the platform’s policies that allow disinformation to flourish.”

“Disinformation campaigns are flooding X, some of which have accumulated several hundred thousand views. Although the staff at Elon Musk’s platform are well aware of the situation, this has not stopped them from responding to RSF’s repeated alerts with automated refusals to remove the content in question,” RSF said. “This is a deliberate policy instated by X, and it is incompatible with the public’s right to reliable information.”

Man kills 8 children and shoots his wife and another woman in Shreveport, Louisiana

By SOPHIE BATES, LEKAN OYEKANMI, GERALD HERBERT and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

SHREVEPORT, La. (AP) — A man killed eight children, including seven of his own, and shot two women in an attack in a Shreveport, Louisiana, neighborhood that was the nation’s deadliest shooting in more than two years, authorities said.

At a news conference outside the residence where one of the shootings occurred early Sunday, officials appeared stunned, requesting patience and prayers from the community.

“This is a tragic situation — maybe the worst tragic situation we’ve ever had,” said Tom Arceneaux, mayor of the city in northwestern Louisiana.

Mourners laid flowers outside the single-story house on 79th Street, and people lit candles for the victims at an evening prayer vigil in a nearby parking lot.

“It just makes you take your children and hug them and hold them and tell them how much you love them,” said Kimberlin Jackson, who was at the vigil.

The violence started before sunrise Sunday

Police said the man shot a woman at one home in the neighborhood south of downtown then drove to the second location.

Seven children were killed inside the second house, and one was found dead on the roof after apparently trying to escape, police spokesperson Chris Bordelon said. Another child jumped off the roof and was expected to survive after being taken to a hospital.

State Rep. Tammy Phelps said some children tried to get away through the back door. “I can’t even imagine what the police officers, first responders actually dealt with when they got here today,” she said at a news conference.

“I just don’t know what to say, my heart is just taken aback,” Shreveport Police Chief Wayne Smith said.

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The children who were killed were 3 to 11 years old. They were three boys and five girls, according to the Caddo Parish Coroner's office.

All the children were "happy kids, very friendly, very sweet," said Crystal Brown, who is a cousin of one of the women who were shot.

The gunman died after a police pursuit

The gunman, identified as 31-year-old Shamar Elkins, died after a police pursuit that ended with officers firing on him, according to Bordelon. Authorities did not say what may have set off the violence but Bordelon said detectives were confident the shooting was "entirely a domestic incident."

Elkins had been arrested in a 2019 firearms case, but Bordelon said officials were not aware of any other domestic violence issues.

Elkins and his wife were in the middle of separating and were due in court Monday, according to Brown. She said the couple had been arguing about the separation before the shooting.

"He murdered his children," Brown said. "He shot his wife."

Elkins had four children with his wife and three children with another woman who lived close by and was also shot, according to Brown. All the children were together at one house, she said.

The shooting in Shreveport, a city of about 180,000 residents, was the deadliest in the U.S. since January 2024, when eight people were killed in a Chicago suburb, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

US military strike on alleged drug boat kills 3 in Caribbean Sea

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said it launched another strike on a boat accused of ferrying drugs in the Caribbean Sea, killing three people Sunday.

The Trump administration's campaign of blowing up alleged drug-trafficking vessels in Latin American waters has persisted since early September and killed at least 181 people in total. Other strikes have taken place in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Despite the Iran war, the series of strikes have ramped up again in the past week or so, showing that the administration's aggressive measures to stop what it calls "narcoterrorism" in the Western Hemisphere are not letting up. The military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs.

The attacks began as the U.S. built up its largest military presence in the region in generations and came months ahead of the raid in January that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. He was brought to New York to face drug trafficking charges and has pleaded not guilty.

In the latest attack Sunday, U.S. Southern Command repeated previous statements by saying it had targeted the alleged drug traffickers along known smuggling routes. It posted a video on X showing a boat moving along the water before a massive explosion engulfs the vessel in flames.

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

Critics, meanwhile, have questioned the overall legality of the boat strikes.

An Iraqi captain keeps sailing despite the threat of attack amid regional war

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Aboard an oil tanker plying the tense waters between the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, Iraqi Captain Rahman Al-Jubouri continues to work in one of the world's most volatile maritime corridors, where the U.S.-Israel war with Iran has disrupted global trade and left some crews stranded and exposed to attacks.

The hostilities are not new for al-Jubouri, a veteran who has worked at sea since 1984 and lived through

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decades of upheaval, including the Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War. Once again, he finds himself operating in high-risk waters, as sporadic military strikes threaten vessels seeking to navigate through chokepoints like Bab el-Mandeb and the Persian Gulf.

"Work has become a real risk; we don't know when we might be bombed. We're sailing over a ball of fire," he said.

Al-Jubouri has been on board his tanker, the Palau-flagged Sea Moon, for four months. Currently he and his crew are sailing from the Gulf of Aden toward the Gulf of Oman to unload oil at Ras Isa port in Yemen. He spoke to The Associated Press by phone.

The war has put commercial vessels in the crossfire of the regional war amid the ongoing standoff between Washington and Tehran over the Strait of Hormuz. Several tankers have been targeted in attacks carried out by Iranian forces and allied groups. Intermittent disruptions and threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint for global oil flows, has also left vessels delayed, rerouted, or stranded in the Gulf.

On Sunday, American military forces forcibly seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship that tried to get around a naval blockade near the strait, the first such interception since the blockade of Iranian ports began last week.

The dangers of his work mean his crew undergoes regular safety drills to prepare for potential attacks. "We've trained them on how to respond if the ship comes under fire, God forbid," he said.

Last year, while docked at a Yemeni port, his vessel came under bombardment. "I immediately cut the ropes, prepared the engines, and left the port at my own risk to protect the crew and the ship," he said.

Shrapnel struck the tanker as it pulled away, causing minor damage, but the crew escaped unharmed. Despite the ongoing threat, the vessel later returned to port operations and resumed its planned route.

Not all of al-Jubouri's crew can bear the dangers of the job, however. His team has thinned from 27 sailors to 17, he said. Fear drove them away.

The psychological toll is compounded by long stretches at sea. For four months, al-Jubouri has not seen his family. Like many sailors, he struggles with homesickness.

"We suffer from being away from our families and our homelands," he said. While internet access on board allows crew members to stay in touch, the distance feels especially stark amid the strain of an ongoing war.

Basic supplies, at least, remain steady. Food and bottled water are regularly replenished at port, with no major shortages reported.

Al-Jubouri's four decades at sea allow him to adapt under pressure, he said.

Man kills 7 of his children plus another child in shooting in Louisiana neighborhood

By SOPHIE BATES, LEKAN OYEKANMI, GERALD HERBERT and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press SHREVEPORT, La. (AP) — A Louisiana father fatally shot eight children, including seven of his own, in an attack on his family Sunday morning that stretched across two houses in a Shreveport neighborhood left shaken by one of the nation's deadliest mass shootings in recent years, police said.

Two women, including the gunman's wife who was the mother of their children, were also shot and critically wounded, according to Shreveport Police Department spokesperson Chris Bordelon. Officials said the children — who were all killed in the same house — ranged in age from 3 to 11 years old.

The gunman, identified as 31-year-old Shamar Elkins, died after a police pursuit that ended with officers firing on him, according to Bordelon. Authorities did not say what may have set off the violence but Bordelon said detectives were confident the shooting was "entirely a domestic incident."

The attack was the deadliest mass shooting in the U.S. in more than two years.

"I just don't know what to say, my heart is just taken aback," Shreveport Police Chief Wayne Smith said. "I cannot begin to imagine how such an event could occur."

Bordelon said police were familiar with Elkins, who had been arrested in a 2019 firearms case, but he

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said officials were not aware of any other domestic violence issues.

Police said the attacks began before sunrise in a neighborhood south of downtown Shreveport when the suspect shot a woman at one home and then drove to the other location "where this heinous act was carried out."

Seven children were killed inside the second house, and one was found dead on the roof after apparently trying to escape, Bordelon said. Another child jumped off the roof and was expected to survive after being taken to a hospital.

State Rep. Tammy Phelps said some children tried to get away through the back door. "I can't even imagine what the police officers, first responders actually dealt with when they got here today," she said at a news conference.

Family member says suspect was separating from his wife

The victims were three boys and five girls, according to the Caddo Parish Coroner's office.

Shamar Elkins and his wife were in the middle of separating and were due in court Monday, said Crystal Brown, who is a cousin of one of the wounded women. Brown said the couple had been arguing about the separation before the shooting.

"He murdered his children," Brown said. "He shot his wife."

Elkins shared four children with his wife and three children with another woman who lived close by and who was also shot, according to Brown. All the children were together at one house, she said.

Brown described all the children as "happy kids, very friendly, very sweet."

A neighbor wakes up to a mass shooting

Liza Demming, who lives two houses down from where most of the victims were shot, said her security camera captured video of the suspect running away along with the sound of two shots.

"That's pretty much all I saw, was him running out of the house and the cars leaving," she said.

Demming later went outside and saw the covered body of a child on the home's roof.

Pastor Marty T. Johnson Sr., of nearby St. Gabriel Community Baptist Church, who owns one of the homes where the shootings occurred, said a person who works for him had rented it to the family, but he never had dealings with them.

"What began as a domestic dispute has ended in irreversible harm," the parish's district attorney's office said in a statement.

Shreveport is overwhelmed by grief

It was the deadliest mass shooting in the U.S. since eight people were killed in a Chicago suburb in January 2024, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

At a news conference outside the residence where one of the shootings occurred, officials appeared stunned, requesting patience and prayers from the community as they sorted through multiple crime scenes.

"This is a tragic situation — maybe the worst tragic situation we've ever had," said Tom Arceneaux, mayor of the city in northwestern Louisiana with about 180,000 residents. "It's a terrible morning."

Hours after the shooting, mourners gathered outside the single-story house on 79th Street and laid flowers. One door appeared stained with blood. Later that evening at a nearby prayer vigil, Kimberlin Jackson joined other members of the community who lit candles for the victims in a parking lot.

"It just makes you take your children and hug them and hold them and tell them how much you love them," she said.

Paul Revere's midnight ride to be reenacted — but in broad daylight and with a police escort

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The historic midnight ride of Paul Revere is set to be reenacted Monday but with some modern-day tweaks: It will be run in the middle of the day, and the horse and rider will get a police escort.

Revere's ride took place on April 18, 1775, when the silversmith and express rider was dispatched to

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Lexington to warn Revolutionary leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock that the British were coming to arrest them. He then headed to Concord to warn about raids on military stockpiles.

Revere reached Lexington around midnight, and another rider, William Dawes, got there along a different route soon after with the same message.

Their efforts resulted in militiamen, muskets in hand, confronting a much larger contingent of British regulars marching from Boston on the Lexington Battle Green. The British regulars were eventually chased back to Boston, where militias pinned them down for 11 months in what became known as the Siege of Boston.

"It's important because you have to have someone to meet the British troops," said Nina Zannieri, executive director of the Paul Revere Memorial Association, which owns and operates The Paul Revere House. "It becomes a turning point. If no patriots had turned out on the green and the British had just rolled into town, it would have been different. But they actually meet resistance."

The reenactor, dressed in Colonial costume and accompanied by another horseman, will roughly trace the route taken by Revere 251 years ago. The ride will start in Boston's North End and head to Charlestown, Somerville, Medford and Arlington before finishing in Lexington — all communities where Revere alerted militias about British movements.

Some aspects of the historic night will not be part of the event, such as Revere taking a boat to Charlestown before starting his ride.

Nor will there be Revere's brief detention by a British patrol on his way to Concord after leaving Lexington. Revere was ultimately let go without his horse after convincing the British that hundreds of patriots were waiting for them, and he returned to Lexington to see the end of the battle.

"It's basically important that he leaves Boston. He rides. He's alerting people. Other people are out," Zannieri said. "He starts a chain reaction, and he accomplishes his mission even though he gets stopped and held. He's lucky he wasn't killed."

While Revere dodged patrols and contended with rutted and muddy roads, his 21st-century counterpart will have it easy, traversing pavement the entire way and passing through a world of stoplights, car dealerships and bustling downtowns that Revere never could have imagined. The 2026 Boston Marathon takes place at the same time, though the routes will not overlap.

Michelle DiCarlo-Domey, who organizes the ride each year for the National Lancer, the state's historic mounted cavalry unit, said thousands come out to see history come alive and show their patriotism. The National Lancer has been holding the Revere and Dawes ride for over 110 years.

"Whenever you can interact with the riders and the horses, it can help carry history on," DiCarlo-Domey said. "Kids can relate to what they learn in school. And where else do you see two horses running down the street?"

Four candidates for UN secretary-general audition this week. That's far fewer than in 2016

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Four candidates to be the next secretary-general of the United Nations will audition for the job this week, far fewer than there were 10 years ago when António Guterres was selected as U.N. chief.

Chile's former President Michelle Bachelet — one of two women and one of three from Latin America — will be the first to face ambassadors from the U.N.'s 193 member nations during a three-hour question-and-answer session on Tuesday. Bachelet will be followed by U.N. nuclear chief Rafael Mariano Grossi of Argentina.

On Wednesday, U.N. trade chief Rebeca Grynspan will take center stage in the General Assembly hall, and finally, Senegal's former President Macky Sall.

In 2016, a hotly contested race drew 13 candidates. What has changed?

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For starters, the deeply polarized and conflict-wracked world of 2026 is far different from the more peaceful global climate in 2016, the year Donald Trump was elected president for the first time.

Add to that the diminished stature of the United Nations. A decade ago, the world organization was basking in its success in helping achieve the Paris climate agreement to curb global warming and an agreement by world leaders on 17 goals to promote global economic growth, preserve the environment and close the growing gap between rich and poor nations.

Today, the divisions among world powers are so deep that the U.N. has been unable to fulfill its primary role in ensuring global peace and security. The once powerful Security Council has been blocked from acting to halt wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Iran, among other conflicts, leaving the U.N. on the sidelines of major global crises.

The International Crisis Group's Richard Gowan, a U.N. watcher and program director, said the current geopolitical scene has affected the race to succeed Guterres, whose second five-year term ends on Dec. 31.

He said 10 years ago, many candidates entered the race knowing they had little chance of winning, but used it to raise their profiles.

"There was no real cost associated with losing," Gowan said. (asterisk)This time around, potential candidates and the governments who sponsor them are much more cautious. There is a feeling that if a candidate puts a foot wrong and offends Washington or Beijing, it could cause real diplomatic damage."

How the selection worked in 2016

In 2016, there was intense pressure to choose the first woman to lead the United Nations. Seven of the 13 candidates were women. But there was widespread agreement that Guterres performed best in what the U.N. calls the "interactive dialogue" with General Assembly members.

The U.N. Charter says little about choosing the secretary-general except that the General Assembly, which includes all members, should do so upon the recommendation of the Security Council. That gives the five permanent members of the U.N.'s most powerful body — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — the decision-making role and veto power over the selection.

By tradition, the secretary-general rotates by region. Guterres, a former Portuguese prime minister and U.N. refugee chief representing Europe, succeeded former South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon, who represented Asia. He followed Ghana's Kofi Annan, who represented Africa.

Now, it should be Latin America's turn, though Eastern Europe has never had a secretary-general and lost out in 2016.

Under U.N. rules, candidates must be nominated by a member nation — not necessarily their own. There is no time limit for nominations, and more candidates could appear, but in 2016 the Security Council started doing "straw polls" among the 13 candidates in late July, which basically served as a cutoff.

How the four candidates were nominated

During their sessions this week, the four candidates are likely to be asked about their vision for the job, global hot spots and the future of the United Nations — but anything goes.

Bachelet, 74, who was the U.N. high commissioner for human rights after serving two non-consecutive terms as Chile's president, was initially nominated by Chile, Brazil and Mexico. But after Chile's far-right leader, José Antonio Kast, became president in March, his government withdrew its support for Bachelet, a leftist, though she remains a candidate because of nominations from Brazil and Mexico.

Grossi, 65, a former Argentine diplomat who has been director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency since 2019, was nominated by his home country.

Grynspan, 70, a former vice president of Costa Rica, has been secretary-general of the U.N. Trade and Development agency, UNCTAD, since 2021 and was also nominated by her country.

Sall, 64, was nominated by Burundi, but his home country, Senegal, told the African Union that it had not endorsed him. Neither did the divided 55-nation regional organization.

A fifth candidate, Argentine diplomat Virginia Gamba, a former U.N. representative for children in armed conflict, was nominated by the Maldives, but the Indian Ocean nation withdrew her candidacy in late March without giving a reason.

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While there are only two female candidates, pressure for a madam secretary-general continues, including from Guterres, who has sought to achieve gender equality in his administration. Britain and France have also said they would like to see a woman at the helm.

The global advocacy group 1 for 8 Billion and GWL Voices, an organization of nearly 80 global female leaders, have been campaigning for a woman. GWL's president and co-founder, Susana Malcorra, a former Argentine foreign minister and senior U.N. official, was a candidate for secretary-general in 2016.

Bachelet, however, already faces US opposition

In a March 25 letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, 28 Republican Senate and House members asked the United States to veto Bachelet, calling her "a pro-abortion zealot intent on using political authority to override state sovereignty in favor of extreme agendas."

Mike Waltz, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was asked at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing last week by Republican Sen. Pete Ricketts of Nebraska — one of the letter's signatories — about Bachelet's fitness for the job. Waltz responded that he wasn't in a position to say whether the U.S. would support or oppose her, but he said, "I share your concerns."

Gowan said the odds that a woman would be chosen were seen as changing sharply when Trump returned to the White House.

"Before that, there was a feeling that this time a woman had to win, but now a lot of diplomats assume that Washington will insist on a male secretary-general on principle," he said. "I am not sure that is necessarily correct."

Pope prays at Catholic shrine in Angola that was a center of African slave trade

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

MUXIMA, Angola (AP) — Pope Leo XIV on Sunday recalled the "sorrow and great suffering" Angolans endured for centuries, as the American pope prayed at a Catholic shrine located at the site of an important hub of the African slave trade during Portugal's colonial rule.

Leo traveled to the Sanctuary of Mama Muxima, nestled in the Angolan savanas of baobab trees at the edge of the Kwanza River. It became a major pilgrimage destination after believers reported an appearance by the Virgin Mary around 1833.

But the Church of Our Lady of Muxima was originally built by Portuguese colonizers at the end of the 16th century as part of a fortress complex and it became a hub in the slave trade. It was where enslaved Africans were gathered to be baptized by Portuguese priests before being forced to walk to the port of Luanda, over 110 kilometers (70 miles) to the north, to be put on ships to the Americas.

Leo, whose own ancestors include enslaved people and slave owners, prayed the Rosary at the sanctuary, a simple whitewashed church with blue trim and a statue of the Madonna inside. Speaking in Portuguese, he recalled it was here "where, for centuries, many men and women have prayed in times of joy and also in moments of sorrow and great suffering in the history of this country."

He didn't refer specifically to slavery. After viewing plans to build a basilica at the site, Leo urged the estimated 30,000 people gathered outside to also build "a better, more welcoming world, where there are no more wars, no injustices, no poverty, no dishonesty."

Muxima's history is emblematic of the Catholic Church's role in the slave trade, the forced baptisms of enslaved people and what some scholars say is the Holy See's continued refusal to fully acknowledge it and atone for it.

"For Black Catholics, Pope Leo's visit to the Muxima shrine is an important moment of healing," said Anthea Butler, senior fellow at the Koch Center, Oxford University.

She noted that many Black Catholics are Catholic because of slavery and the "Code Noir," which she said required slaves purchased by Catholic owners to be baptized in the church.

"Others were already Catholic when they were trafficked from Angola to slave-holding colonies," said Butler, a Black Catholic scholar whose maternal family hails from Louisiana, where the pope's ancestors

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also had their roots.

The role of papal bulls in the slave trade

Angola's Portuguese colonizers were emboldened by 15th-century directives from the Vatican that authorized them to enslave non-Christians.

In 1452, for example, Pope Nicholas V issued the papal bull *Dum Diversas*, which gave the Portuguese king and his successors the right "to invade, conquer, fight and subjugate" and take all possessions — including land — of "Saracens, and pagans, and other infidels, and enemies of the name of Christ" anywhere, said the Rev. Christopher J. Kellerman, a Jesuit priest and author of "All Oppression Shall Cease: A History of Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Catholic Church."

The bull also gave the Portuguese permission "to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery."

That bull and another issued three years later, *Romanus Pontifex*, formed the basis of the Doctrine of Discovery, the theory that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of land in Africa and the Americas.

The Vatican in 2023 formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, but it never formally rescinded, abrogated or rejected the bulls themselves. The Vatican insists that a later bull, *Sublimis Deus* in 1537, reaffirmed that Indigenous peoples shouldn't be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, and were not to be enslaved.

Ultimately, more than 5 million people left from Angola on the trans-Atlantic slave route, more than any other country and nearly half of the roughly 12.5 million African slaves sent across the ocean.

Kellerman recalled that most of these direct victims were sold into slavery by other Africans and were not captured by Europeans.

"That being said, at the time of the building of Muxima, the Portuguese were doing both — buying enslaved people and colonizing/slave raiding. So they were fully using their papal permissions during this time," Kellerman said in emailed comments to The Associated Press.

He said the first pope to condemn slavery itself was Pope Leo XIII, the current pope's namesake, in two encyclicals in 1888 and 1890, after most countries had already abolished slavery. But Kellerman said that pope and others since have continued to perpetuate the "false narrative" that the Holy See always opposed slavery, when the historical record says otherwise.

While Leo's visit to Muxima was to commemorate its role as a shrine, Kellerman said he hoped Leo had also learned about its role in the slave trade.

"The popes repeatedly authorized Portugal's colonization efforts in Africa and Portuguese participation in the slave trade, but the Vatican has never fully admitted this," he said. "It would be so powerful if at some point Pope Leo were to apologize for the popes' role in the trade."

During a 1985 visit to Cameroon, St. John Paul II asked forgiveness of Africans for the slave trade on behalf of Christians who participated in it, but not for the popes' own role in it. In a 1992 visit to Goree Island, Senegal, the largest slave-trading center in West Africa, he denounced the injustice of slavery and called it a "tragedy of a civilization that called itself Christian."

Leo's own personal history a point of reflection

According to genealogical research published by Henry Louis Gates Jr., 17 of Leo's American ancestors were Black, listed in census records as mulatto, Black, Creole or a free person of color. His family tree includes slaveholders and enslaved people, Gates wrote in the *New York Times*.

Gates, a Harvard University professor who hosts the PBS documentary series "Finding Your Roots," presented his research to Leo during a July 5 audience at the Vatican. According to a report of their meeting in *The Harvard Gazette*, "The pope asked about ancestors, both Black and white, who were enslavers."

Leo has not spoken publicly about his family heritage or the genealogical research, and some Black Catholic scholars were hesitant to impose on him a narrative about his identity that he himself has not yet addressed.

"It's important that we tell our own stories," said Tia Noelle Pratt, a sociologist of religion and professor at Villanova University, the pope's alma mater.

"We haven't heard anything from him about what he thinks about it, and so to impose anything on him, I think would be completely inappropriate," said Pratt, author of "Faithful and Devoted: Racism and

Identity in the African American Catholic Experience.”

Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the retired archbishop of Washington and the first African American cardinal, said he had facilitated the Gates-Leo encounter and was “delighted” to have done so.

“It’s one of the things that I think for many African Americans and people of color, they identify with great pride that the pope has roots in our own heritage,” Gregory told AP. “And I think he’s happy about that too, because it’s another link to the people that he tries to serve and is called to serve.”

UK police investigating if arson attacks on Jewish sites in London are the work of Iranian proxies

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. police said Sunday they are investigating whether a string of arson attacks on Jewish sites in London are the work of Iranian proxies, as the country’s chief rabbi said British Jews are facing a campaign of violence and intimidation.

The Metropolitan Police force says counterterrorism officers are probing fires at synagogues and other sites linked to the Jewish community, as well as an attack on a Persian-language media company.

No one has been injured in the blazes, the latest of which caused minor damage to a north London synagogue on Saturday night.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Vicki Evans said the attacks had been claimed online by a group calling itself Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia.

“We are aware of public reporting that suggests this group may have links to Iran. As you would expect, we will continue to explore that question as our investigation evolves,” she said.

“I’ve spoken previously about the Iranian regime’s use of criminal proxies, and we’re considering whether this tactic is being used here in London,” she added.

Israel’s government has described Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia, whose name means the Islamic Movement of the Companions of the Right, as a recently founded group with suspected links to “an Iranian proxy” that has also claimed responsibility for synagogue attacks in Belgium and the Netherlands.

The police force has deployed extra uniformed and plainclothes officers to northwest London after attacks in the past month on synagogues, Jewish charity ambulances and a Persian-language media organization critical of Iran’s government.

In the most serious incident, four ambulances belonging to a Jewish charity were torched on March 23 in the Golders Green neighborhood,

No one has been injured in any of the incidents, which all happened within a few miles of each other. Several people, ranging in age from teens to people in their 40s, have been arrested and charged.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said on X that “a sustained campaign of violence and intimidation against the Jewish community of the UK is gathering momentum.

“Thank God, no lives have been lost, but we cannot, and must not, wait for that to change before we understand just how dangerous this moment is for all of our society,” he added.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was “appalled” by the attacks, and pledged that “those responsible will be found and brought to justice.

“This is abhorrent and it will not be tolerated. Attacks on our Jewish community are attacks on Britain,” Starmer said.

Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia also posted a video claiming Israel’s London embassy was going to be attacked with drones carrying dangerous substances. Police said the embassy was not attacked, but the force shut the nearby Kensington Gardens park on Friday as officers examined discarded items including two jars containing powder. Police said nothing harmful was found.

The U.K. has accused Iran of using criminal proxies to conduct attacks on European soil targeting opposition media outlets and the Jewish community. Britain’s MI5 domestic intelligence service says that more than 20 “potentially lethal” Iran-backed plots were disrupted in the year to October.

Some security experts say Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia is likely a flag of convenience rather than

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a coherent group, and its claims should be treated with caution.

Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner Matt Jukes said any “thugs for hire” who carried out such attacks would face justice.

“Let’s be really clear — it’s a mug’s game,” he said. “That’s what people who are now serving long prison sentences have found out, and the same fate awaits those responsible for these recent crimes.”

Baby food brand HiPP recalls jars in Austria after samples test positive for rat poison

VIENNA (AP) — Baby food brand HiPP is recalling some of its baby food jars after samples in Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic tested positive for rat poison, officials said Sunday.

Authorities believe the tampering occurred in 190-gram (6.7-ounce) jars of baby food made with carrots and potatoes for 5-month-olds that were sold from SPAR supermarkets in Austria. The first sample tested positive on Saturday.

“This recall is not due to any product or quality defect on our part. The jars left our HiPP facility in perfect condition,” HiPP said in a statement. “The recall is related to a criminal act currently under investigation by the authorities.”

Burgenland Police in Austria said the suspicious products likely have a white sticker with a red circle on the bottom of the jar. Other warning signs include a damaged or opened lid and an unusual or spoiled smell. There also might not be a popping noise when the jar is first opened.

HiPP said it is recalling all of its baby food jars sold at SPAR supermarkets — which include SPAR, EUROSPAR, INTERSPAR and Maximarkt stores — in Austria as a precaution. Customers can get full refunds even without a receipt. Vendors in Slovakia and the Czech Republic have removed all of the brand’s baby jars from sale.

A customer reported that a jar appeared to have been tampered with, police said, though no one had consumed the baby food.

Rat poison typically includes bromadiolone, an anticoagulant that prevents the blood from clotting, according to the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety. Ingesting rat poison could lead to bleeding like bleeding gums and nosebleeds, as well as bruising and blood in the stool.

Symptoms could appear two to five days after ingestion, the agency said.

Carney says Canada’s economic ties with US are a weakness that must be corrected

By JIM MORRIS Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a video address released Sunday that Canada’s strong economic ties to the United States were once a strength but are now a weakness that must be corrected.

In the 10-minute address, Carney spoke about his government’s efforts to strengthen the Canadian economy by attracting new investments and signing trade deals with other countries.

“The world is more dangerous and divided,” Carney said. “The U.S. has fundamentally changed its approach to trade, raising its tariffs to levels last seen during the Great Depression.

“Many of our former strengths, based on our close ties to America, have become weaknesses. Weaknesses that we must correct.”

Carney said tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump have affected workers in the auto and steel industries. He added that businesses are holding back investments “restrained by the pall of uncertainty that’s hanging over all of us.”

Many Canadians have also been angered by Trump’s comments suggesting Canada become the 51st state.

Carney said he plans to give Canadians regular updates on his government’s efforts to diversify away from the U.S.

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"Security can't be achieved by ignoring the obvious or downplaying the very real threats that we Canadians face," he said. "I promise you I will never sugarcoat our challenges."

It's not the first time Carney, who served as a central bank governor, first at the Bank of Canada and later with the Bank of England, has spoken about a shift in world power.

During a speech in January at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, he received widespread praise for condemning economic coercion by great powers against small countries.

His remarks brought a rebuke from Trump.

"Canada lives because of the United States," Trump said after the speech. "Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements."

There was no immediate White House reaction Sunday to the address.

Carney's comments came days after securing a majority government following special election wins and as the opposition Conservatives push him to deliver a U.S. trade deal, which was among his promises in last year's election.

A review of the current version of the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico is scheduled for July.

In his address, Carney said he wants to attract new investments into Canada, double the size of clean energy capacity and reduce trade barriers within the country. He also emphasized Canada's increased defense spending, reduction in taxes and efforts to make housing more affordable.

"We have to take care of ourselves because we can't rely on one foreign partner," he said. "We can't control the disruption coming from our neighbors. We can't control our future on the hope it will suddenly stop."

"We can control what happens here. We can build a stronger country that can withstand disruptions from abroad."

Carney said simply hoping the "United States will return to normal" is not a feasible strategy.

"Hope isn't a plan and nostalgia is not a strategy," he said.

Carney said Canada has "been a great neighbor" standing with the U.S. in conflicts including Afghanistan, plus two World Wars.

"The U.S. has changed and we must respond," he said. "It's about taking back control of our security, our borders and our future."

It'll be an international MVP for the NBA with Gilgeous-Alexander, Jokic and Wembanyama finalists

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander might be adding a couple more trophies to his collection. San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama has a shot at doing the same.

And for the eighth consecutive year, the MVP will be an international one.

Gilgeous-Alexander — the reigning NBA MVP — is one of the finalists for this year's top individual honor, along with Denver's Nikola Jokic and the Spurs' Wembanyama, who is also a finalist for defensive player of the year.

The NBA's run of international MVPs started in 2019 and 2020 with Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo, who is of Greek and Nigerian descent. Jokic, a Serbian, won in 2021, 2022 and 2024. Philadelphia's Joel Embiid, who was born in Cameroon but since became a U.S. citizen, won the award in 2023, and Canada's Gilgeous-Alexander won last year.

Gilgeous-Alexander is also a finalist for Clutch Player of the Year this season.

The NBA announced the finalists for seven individual awards Sunday night and will start announcing winners on Monday. The Defensive Player award — widely expected to be going to Wembanyama — comes out then, followed by Clutch Player on Tuesday and Sixth Man on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the appeal that got the Los Angeles Lakers' Luka Doncic onto the award ballots might earn him All-NBA, but did not lead to him getting his first MVP award. He was not among the top three in the

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balloting for MVP; voters cast their ballots last week after Doncic and Detroit's Cade Cunningham won appeals that got them on the ballot even though they didn't satisfy the terms of the NBA's 65-game rule for eligibility in most cases.

Minnesota's Anthony Edwards lost his appeal — but might get an award after all.

Edwards is a finalist for Clutch Player of the Year. He wasn't on the ballot for MVP, All-NBA and other honors, but was on the Clutch ballot because those nominees were selected by the league's coaches.

The finalists

- MVP: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Oklahoma City; Nikola Jokic, Denver; Victor Wembanyama, San Antonio.
- Defensive Player of the Year: Wembanyama; Chet Holmgren, Oklahoma City; Ausar Thompson, Detroit.
- Clutch Player: Anthony Edwards, Minnesota; Gilgeous-Alexander; Jamal Murray, Denver.
- Most Improved Player: Nickeil Alexander-Walker, Atlanta; Deni Avdija, Portland; Jalen Duren, Detroit.
- Sixth Man: Tim Hardaway Jr., Denver; Jaime Jaquez Jr., Miami; Keldon Johnson, San Antonio.
- Coach of the Year: J.B. Bickerstaff, Detroit; Mitch Johnson, San Antonio; Joe Mazzulla, Boston.
- Rookie of the Year: VJ Edgecombe, Philadelphia; Cooper Flagg, Dallas; Kon Knueppel, Charlotte.

MVP

Gilgeous-Alexander is trying to go back-to-back, Jokic — who has been first or second in five straight seasons, entering this year — is seeking his fourth MVP in six years and Wembanyama is a finalist for the first time.

Coach of the Year

Bickerstaff won the award from the National Basketball Coaches Association, selected by his peers, and is the likely favorite for the official NBA honor. Johnson and Mazzulla both led teams that widely exceeded most preseason expectations.

Rookie of the Year

This will likely be a two-person race in the end, with Flagg and Knueppel — both former Duke players — the presumed frontrunners. That would suggest Edgecombe likely finishes third.

Defensive Player of the Year

Wembanyama was the likely frontrunner to win it last season, but wound up falling short of eligibility after being diagnosed with deep vein thrombosis at the All-Star break and missing the rest of the season.

Minnesota's Rudy Gobert's bid for a fifth DPOY award — which would break a record — will continue for at least one more year.

Clutch Player

Gilgeous-Alexander led the league in clutch scoring per game, with Edwards second. Denver had two legitimate candidates with Murray and Nikola Jokic; voters clearly gave Murray the edge.

Clutch scoring is defined as points that come in the final five minutes of a game where the point differential between teams is five or less.

Sixth Man of the Year

Jaquez averaged 15.4 points in 74 appearances off the bench, Johnson averaged 13.2 points — after playing in all 82 Spurs games as a reserve — and Hardaway also averaged 13.2 points in the 74 games where he came off Denver's bench.

The winner will be a first-time selection for the award.

Most Improved Player

Avdija averaged 24.2 points and led Portland's surge to the playoffs, while Alexander-Walker — bidding to give Atlanta its second consecutive MIP winner after Dyson Daniels last season — averaged 20.8 points, by far the most his career.

Duren was a first-time All-Star selection and averaged 19.5 points, almost double what he averaged last season despite playing basically the same amount of minutes.

US Navy seizes an Iranian-flagged ship near Strait of Hormuz and Tehran vows swift response

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, SAMY MAGDY and SAM METZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States attacked and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship it said had tried to evade its naval blockade near the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday, and Iran's joint military command vowed to respond, throwing a fragile ceasefire into question days before it expires.

It was the first interception since the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports began last week. Iran's joint military command called the armed boarding an act of piracy and a ceasefire violation, the state broadcaster said.

With the U.S.-Iran standoff over the strait sharpening and the ceasefire expiring by Wednesday, it was not clear where President Donald Trump's earlier announcement on new talks with Iran now stood. He had said U.S. negotiators would head to Pakistan on Monday.

The uncertainty sent oil prices rising again. One of the worst global energy crises in decades threatened to deepen.

Trump on social media said a U.S. Navy guided missile destroyer in the Gulf of Oman warned the Iranian-flagged ship, the *Touska*, to stop and then "stopped them right in their tracks by blowing a hole in the engineroom." U.S. Marines had custody of the U.S.-sanctioned vessel and were "seeing what's on board!"

It was not clear whether anyone was hurt. The U.S. Central Command, which didn't answer questions, said the destroyer had issued "repeated warnings over a six-hour period."

Iranian state media suggest new talks won't take place

There was no comment from Iranian officials directly addressing Trump's announcement of talks. However, Iranian state media, without citing anyone beyond unnamed sources, issued brief reports suggesting that they would not happen.

Minutes after the ship seizure was announced, Iranian state media reported on President Masoud Pezeshkian's phone conversation with Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, earlier Sunday. U.S. actions, including bullying and unreasonable behavior, have led to increased suspicion that the U.S. will repeat previous patterns and "betray diplomacy," the reports cited Pezeshkian as saying.

Two previous attempts at talks — last June and earlier this year — were interrupted by Israeli and U.S. attacks.

On another phone call, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told his Pakistani counterpart, Ishaq Dar, that recent U.S. actions, rhetoric and contradictions were signs of "bad intentions and lack of seriousness in diplomacy," Iran's state broadcaster said.

Pakistan did not confirm a second round of talks, but authorities had begun tightening security in Islamabad. A regional official involved in the efforts said mediators were finalizing preparations and U.S. advance security teams were on the ground. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss preparations with the media.

The White House had said Vice President JD Vance, who led the first round of historic face-to-face talks over 21 hours last weekend, would lead the U.S. delegation to Pakistan with envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

Iran on Saturday said it had received new proposals from the United States. While Iran's chief negotiator, parliament speaker Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf, late Saturday said "there will be no retreat in the field of diplomacy," he acknowledged a wide gap remained between the sides.

It was unclear whether either side had shifted stances on issues that derailed the last round of negotiations, including Iran's nuclear enrichment program, its regional proxies and the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump's announcement on talks repeated his threats against Iranian infrastructure that have drawn widespread criticism and warnings of war crimes. If Iran doesn't agree to the U.S.-proposed deal, "the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran," he wrote.

Iran wants to control strait until 'war fully ends'

Iran early Monday warned it could keep up the global economic pain as ships remained unable to transit the strait, with hundreds of vessels waiting at each end for clearance.

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Security of the strait is not free and “the choice is clear: either a free oil market for all, or the risk of significant costs for everyone,” Mohammad Reza Aref, first vice president of Iran, said in a social media post calling for a lasting end to military and economic pressure on Tehran.

Roughly one-fifth of the world’s oil trade normally passes through the strait, along with critical supplies of fertilizer for the world’s farmers, natural gas and humanitarian supplies for places in dire need like Afghanistan and Sudan.

Iran had announced the strait’s reopening after a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon took hold on Friday. But then Trump said the U.S. blockade “will remain in full force” until Tehran reaches a deal with the United States. Iran said it would again enforce restrictions it imposed early in the war. On Saturday, Iran fired at ships trying to transit.

For the Islamic Republic, the strait’s closure is perhaps its most powerful weapon, inflicting political pain on Trump. For the United States, the blockade squeezes Iran’s already weakened economy. Each side has accused the other of violating the ceasefire.

Since most supplies to U.S. military bases in the Gulf region come through the strait, “Iran is determined to maintain oversight and control over traffic through the strait until the war fully ends,” Iran’s Supreme National Security Council said late Saturday. That means Iran-designated routes, payment of fees and issuance of transit certificates.

The council has recently acted as Iran’s de facto top decision-making body.

The war is now in its eighth week after the U.S. and Israel launched it on Feb. 28 during talks over Tehran’s nuclear program. At least 3,000 people have been killed in Iran, more than 2,290 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Fifteen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon and 13 U.S. service members throughout the region have been killed.

Oil prices rise anew after a US-Iran standoff in the Strait of Hormuz strands tankers

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices rose in early trading Sunday as a standoff between Iran and the U.S. prevented tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf waterway that is crucial to global energy supplies.

The price of U.S. crude oil increased 6.4% to \$87.90 per barrel an hour after trading resumed on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, climbed 5.8% to \$95.64 per barrel.

The market reaction followed more than two days of lifted hopes and dashed expectations involving the strait. Crude prices plunged more than 9% Friday after Iran said it would fully reopen the strait, which it effectively controls, to commercial traffic.

Tehran reversed that decision and fired on several vessels Saturday after President Donald Trump said a U.S. Navy blockade of Iranian ports would remain in effect. On Sunday, Trump said the U.S. attacked and forcibly seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship that allegedly tried to get around the blockade. Iran’s joint military command vowed to respond.

Sunday’s higher prices wiped out much of the declines seen Friday, signaling renewed doubts about how soon ships will again transport the vast amounts of oil the world gets from the Middle East.

The US-Israeli war against Iran, now in its eighth week, has created one of the worst global energy crises in decades. Countries in Asia and Europe that import much of their oil from the Gulf have felt the most impact of halted supplies and production cuts, although rapidly rising gasoline, diesel and jet fuel prices are affecting businesses and consumers worldwide.

Asked when he thought U.S. motorists would again see gas cost less than \$3 a gallon on average, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said prices at the pump might not go down that much until next year.

“But prices have likely peaked, and they’ll start going down,” Wright told CNN’s “State of the Union” on Sunday.

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The price of crude oil — the main ingredient in gasoline — has fluctuated dramatically since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, and as Iran retaliated with airstrikes on other Gulf states. Crude traded at roughly \$70 a barrel before the conflict, spiked to more than \$119 at times, and previously closed Friday at \$82.59 for U.S. oil and \$90.38 for Brent.

Industry analysts have repeatedly warned that the longer the strait is closed, the worse prices could get. A fragile, two-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran is set to expire Wednesday, while escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz puts the fate of new talks to end the war into question.

Even if a lasting deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz emerges, analysts say it could take months for oil shipments to return to normal levels and for fuel prices to go down. Backed-up tanker traffic, shipowners concerned about another sudden escalation, and energy infrastructure damaged during the war are factors that could impede production and shipment volumes from returning to pre-war levels.

A gallon of regular gas cost an average of nearly \$4.05 a gallon in the U.S. on Sunday, according to motor club federation AAA. That's about 8 cents lower than a week ago, but far higher than \$2.98 before the war.

Businesses can claim refunds starting Monday for Trump tariffs declared unconstitutional

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A refund system for businesses that paid tariffs which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled President Donald Trump imposed without the constitutional authority to do so is scheduled to launch Monday.

Importers and their brokers will be able to begin claiming refunds through an online portal beginning at 8 a.m., according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the agency administering the system.

It's the first step in a complicated process that also might eventually lead to refunds for consumers who were billed for some or all of the tariffs on products shipped to them from outside the United States.

Companies must submit declarations listing the goods on which they collectively put billions of dollars toward the import taxes the court subsequently struck down. If CBP approves a claim, it will take 60-90 days for a refund to be issued, the agency said.

The government expects to process refunds in phases, however, focusing first on more recent tariff payments. Any number of technical factors and procedural issues could delay an importer's application, so any reimbursements businesses plan to make to customers likely would trickled down slowly.

In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court on Feb. 20 found that Trump usurped Congress' tax-setting role last April when he set new import tax rates on products from almost every other country, citing the U.S. trade deficit as a national emergency that warranted his invoking of a 1977 emergency powers law.

Although the court majority did not address refunds in its ruling, a judge at the U.S. Court of International Trade determined last month that companies subjected to IEEPA tariffs were entitled to money back.

Not all taxed imports immediately eligible

Customs and Border Protection said in court filings that over 330,000 importers paid a total of about \$166 billion on over 53 million shipments.

Not all of those orders qualify for the first phase of the refund system's rollout, which is limited to cases in which tariffs were estimated but not finalized or within 80 days of a final accounting.

To receive refunds, importers have to register for the CPB's electronic payment system. As of April 14, 56,497 importers had completed registration and were eligible for refunds totaling \$127 billion, including interest, the agency said.

System requires accuracy

Meghann Supino, a partner at Ice Miller, said the law firm has advised clients to carefully list in their declarations all of the document numbers for forms that went to CBP to describe imported goods and their value.

"If there is an entry on that file that does not qualify, it may cause the entire entry to be rejected or that line item might be rejected by Customs," she said.

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Supino thinks the portal going live will require composure as well as diligence.

"Like any electronic online program that goes live with a lot of interest, I would expect that there might be some hiccups with the program on Monday," she said. "So we continue to ask everyone to be patient, because we think that patience will pay off."

Nghi Huynh, the partner-in-charge of transfer pricing at accounting and consulting firm Armanino, said most companies claiming refunds will have imported a mix of items, and not all will qualify right away.

"It's about having a clear process in place and keeping track of what's been submitted and what's been paid, so nothing falls through the cracks," she said. "Each file can include thousands of entries, but accuracy is critical, as submissions can be rejected if formatting or data is incorrect."

Patience with the process

Small businesses have eagerly awaited the chance to apply for refunds. Brad Jackson, co-founder of After Action Cigars in Rochester, Minnesota, said he starting compiling records and preparing to enter information into the system the minute CPB announced the launch date.

The company imports cigars and accessories from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. Last year, it paid \$34,000 in tariffs and absorbed much of the cost instead of raising customer prices, Jackson said.

Last spring, he had a two-week delay in a shipment due to a missing document, so he is being more careful with refund documents, he said.

"My main concern is the turnaround time," Jackson said. "A refund process that takes several months to complete doesn't solve the cash flow problem that it is supposed to fix."

Will consumers see refunds?

Tariffs are paid by importers, and some companies pass on the tax costs to consumers via higher prices.

The system starting up Monday will refund tariffs directly to the businesses that paid them, which are not obligated to share the proceeds with customers. However, class-action lawsuits that aim to force companies, ranging from Costco to Ray-Ban maker Essilor Luxottica, to reimburse shoppers are winding their way through the U.S. legal system.

Individuals may be more likely to receive refunds from delivery companies like FedEx and UPS, which collected tariffs on imports directly from consumers. FedEx has said it would return tariff refunds to customers when it receives them from the CPB.

"Supporting our customers as they navigate regulatory changes remains our top priority," FedEx said in a statement. "We are working with our customers as CBP begins processing refunds and plan to begin filing claims on April 20."

Fears of looser standards as the FBI and Justice Department scramble to fill a depleted workforce

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI and Justice Department are scrambling to rebuild a depleted workforce after a wave of departures over the past year, with leaders easing hiring requirements and accelerating recruitment in ways that some current and former officials see as a lowering of long-accepted standards.

The FBI has used social media campaigns to attract applicants, offered abbreviated training for candidates from other federal agencies and relaxed requirements for support staff seeking to become agents, according to people familiar with the changes and internal communications seen by The Associated Press. At the same time, the Justice Department has opened the door to hiring prosecutors right out of law school to help fill vacancies in U.S. attorney's offices across the country.

Some current and former agents also say the FBI is promoting into positions of leadership employees with less experience than is customary for the jobs.

The moves reflect a broader effort to stabilize a workforce strained by retirements and resignations prompted in part by concerns over the Trump administration's politicization of the department, along with the firings of lawyers, agents and other employees deemed insufficiently loyal to the Republican president's agenda. Critics of the changes say they amount to a reduction in standards for a law enforcement

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institution that has long prided itself on professional expertise and bears responsibility for everything from preventing terrorist attacks to building complex public corruption prosecutions.

"It's a sign of, among other things, the difficulty the department is having right now in keeping and recruiting people," said Greg Brower, a former U.S. attorney in Nevada who left the FBI in 2018 as its chief congressional liaison.

The FBI defended the changes as a necessary modernization of its hiring pipeline, saying it is streamlining, not lowering, standards and removing what it says were "bureaucratic" steps in the application process. It said applicants were still evaluated "on the same competencies."

"The Bureau holds high standards for potential and current employees, and there is a rigorous application and background process to join the FBI," the FBI said in a statement.

Waived requirements in some cases to become an FBI agent

The FBI has long been seen as the nation's premier federal law enforcement agency, with a recruitment process anchored around physical fitness tests, a writing assessment, interview and training academy at Quantico, Virginia.

Elements of the regimen have been periodically tweaked to fit the bureau's needs, including over the past year under FBI Director Kash Patel's leadership.

With a mantra to "let good cops be cops," Patel announced last year that transfers from other agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration would be able to complete a nine-week training academy instead of the traditional academy that spans more than four months. The change rankled some current and former officials who say the FBI's protocols, culture and diversity of cases it handles help to distinguish it from other agencies.

For support staff employees looking to become agents, the bureau more recently said it would waive requirements of a written assessment and an interview with a three-member panel of FBI agents meant to measure life experience and judgment, according to people familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the moves and an internal message seen by the AP.

The FBI said onboard employees would still need recommendations from a senior leader and to complete Quantico training.

"We are not lowering standards or removing qualifications in any way. What we are doing is streamlining the process to remove duplicative, bureaucratic steps to the application system for onboard employees," the FBI said in a statement, adding, "These are changes based on a wide variety of feedback from successful agents with over 20 years' experience."

Patel boasted in January of a 112% increase in applications, and the FBI says it has a "clear path" to add around 700 special agents this year and that its current Quantico class is one of its largest in years. But some people familiar with the matter say an applications uptick does not necessarily correspond to a surge in high-caliber recruits that can offset the attrition the bureau has endured.

At the other end of the employment spectrum, the FBI also faces turnover among senior leaders, including special agents in charge, the title given to heads of most of the bureau's 56 field offices. Some were fired by Patel over the past year. Others retired. Many offices are now led by someone who has been in the job for under a year.

Facing what current and former officials say is difficulty in filling some of the positions, the FBI has moved quickly to promote agents up the ladder, people familiar with the matter say. That includes elevating assistant special agents in charge to special agents in charge and opening the door for employees to be considered for leadership roles without the significant headquarters experience the FBI historically regarded as necessary for a holistic view of bureau operations.

As a conservative podcast host before becoming director, Patel talked about shutting down FBI headquarters and transforming it into a museum of the "deep state" and immediately upon his arrival told colleagues that as director he would move hundreds of employees from Washington into the field.

"As a field agent, you have a field agent's mentality, you have a field agent's view," said Chris Piehota, a retired FBI senior executive. Without adequate headquarters experience, he added, you don't know "the

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business side of the FBI, the logistical side of the FBI or the political jungle" that can accompany the job. Justice Department changes

The Justice Department, meanwhile, has lowered hiring prerequisites for some federal prosecutors.

Department officials recently suspended a policy that U.S. attorneys offices only hire prosecutors with at least one year of experience practicing law. The department did not explain the reason, but said in a statement that it is "proud to empower young and passionate prosecutors and offer attorneys at every level the opportunity to invest their talents into keeping their communities safe."

It comes as parts of the agency are struggling to keep up with the workload amid critical staffing shortages, with the department recently acknowledging that it has lost nearly 1,000 assistant U.S. attorneys.

In Minnesota, for example, the federal prosecutors' office has been gutted by resignations amid frustration with the administration's stepped-up immigration enforcement and the department's response to fatal shootings of civilians by federal agents.

Justice Department headquarters in Washington has endured staffing losses, too.

The number of lawyers in the Criminal Division's Violent Crime and Racketeering Section, which prosecutes organized crime groups and violent gangs, is down significantly, though the section is looking to hire additional attorneys. A National Security Division section that works espionage cases has reported a 40% drop in prosecutors.

The department said in a statement that it has seen an increase in criminal complaints and indictments despite a loss in prosecutors, underscoring the "bloated, ineffective and weaponized" institution it says the administration inherited.

Officials have enlisted military lawyers to serve as special prosecutors in some offices. The Justice Department has taken to social media to recruit applicants, and the FBI has done the same in search of new agents. One recent post from the FBI's Indianapolis office said: "A calling bigger than yourself. A mission that matters. If you're ready for the challenge, there's a place for you on the FBI team."

Chad Mizelle, who served as chief of staff to Trump's first attorney general, Pam Bondi, recently urged lawyers to contact him on X if they want to become prosecutors, "and support President Trump and anti-crime agenda." Mizelle's post raised eyebrows not only because federal prosecutors have not generally been solicited over social media, but also because support for the president has not been a prerequisite for career employees.

"We need good prosecutors," wrote Mizelle, who left the department in October. "And DOJ is hiring across the country. Now is your chance to join the mission and do good for our country."

The center-left coalition of former President Radev will win Bulgaria's election, exit poll suggests

By VESELIN TOSHKOV Associated Press

SOFIA, Bulgaria (AP) — A center-left coalition led by Bulgaria's former President Rumen Radev will win the parliamentary election, an exit poll suggested hours after polls closed on Sunday. The list is unlikely to garner enough votes to rule alone, which could prolong a yearslong political deadlock in the European Union country.

The election on Sunday was the country's eighth in five years, illustrating a crippling political impasse that has gripped this Balkan nation. Preliminary results are expected on Monday.

The poll conducted by Trend research group showed Radev's Progressive Bulgaria earning 39.2% support, edging out the center-right GERB party of its veteran leader, Boyko Borissov, which is expected to capture 15.1% of the vote. Despite the huge gap between the two groups, the predicted percentage may not be enough for Radev to form a one-party government, and he will face the uphill task of looking for partners to govern.

The exit poll also predicted that voter turnout stood at 43.4%, and that six parties could pass the 4% threshold to enter a fragmented parliament.

Radev said after the initial projections were announced that "we will do our best to prevent having to

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go to the polls" again.

"It (new election) will be a disaster for Bulgaria," he said. "It would mean going from crisis to crisis when what we have to do is work very hard to emerge from these crises."

The snap vote followed the resignation of a conservative-led government amid nationwide protests last December that drew hundreds of thousands, mainly young people, to the streets. The protesters called for an independent judiciary to tackle widespread corruption.

If confirmed in an official tally, the victory of Radev's coalition could potentially bring to power a left-leaning leader who is seen by critics as pro-Russian. Last weekend, Hungarian voters rejected the authoritarian policies and global far-right movement of Viktor Orbán, who cultivated close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Radev resigned from the mostly ceremonial presidency in January, a few months before the end of his second term, to launch a bid to lead the government as prime minister.

The 62-year-old former fighter pilot and air force commander has promised to give the nation a fresh start. His supporters are split on those hoping he will put an end to the country's oligarchic corruption and those lining up behind his Eurosceptic and Russia-friendly views.

Radev's popularity surged as he has cast himself as an opponent of the country's entrenched mafia and its ties to high-ranking politicians. At campaign rallies he vowed to "remove the corrupt, oligarchic model of governance from political power."

Since 2021, the nation of 6.5 million has struggled with fragmented parliaments that produced weak governments, none of which managed to survive more than a year before being brought down by street protests or backroom deals in parliament.

After voting on Sunday, Radev said that Bulgaria now has a historic chance to change the alleged oligarchic model of governance. He urged people to go to the polls because mass "voting is the only way to drown vote-buying in a sea of free votes."

Though Radev has officially denounced Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he has repeatedly opposed military aid to Kyiv and has favored reopening talks with Russia as a way out of the conflict.

Radev's relatively vague campaign has left him open for cooperation with almost any party in the future Parliament, according to Mario Bikarski, senior Eastern and Central Europe analyst at the risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

Radev, however, seems reluctant to enter a formal coalition with the hard right and openly pro-Russian Revival party, Bikarski said.

Bulgaria is a European Union and NATO member country that joined the eurozone on Jan. 1, shortly after entering the border-free Schengen travel area. However, it has been plagued by political instability since 2021, when Borissov — a three-time prime minister at the time — resigned following massive protests fueled by anger over widespread corruption and injustice.

Los Angeles woman arrested on Iranian arms trafficking charge

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Federal prosecutors said a 44-year-old Los Angeles woman was arrested Saturday night at Los Angeles International Airport on suspicion of helping Iran traffic weapons to Sudan, which is in its fourth year of a bloody civil war.

Shamim Mafi will face charges that she brokered the sale of "drones, bombs, bomb fuses, and millions of rounds of ammunition" between Iran and the Sudanese Armed Forces, First U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli said Sunday on social media.

A phone number for Mafi could not be located and it wasn't known Sunday if she has an attorney who could speak on her behalf.

Essayli posted a photo of someone in an FBI jacket escorting a woman into the back of a sedan outside a terminal at LAX.

Mafi is an Iranian national who became a lawful permanent resident of the United States in 2016, Essayli said.

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A criminal complaint dated March 12 alleges that Mafi and an unnamed co-conspirator operated a company in Oman called Atlas International Business through which weapons and ammunition were trafficked. The company received over \$7 million in payments in 2025.

Separately, Mafi and the co-conspirator brokered the sale of 55,000 bomb fuses to the Sudanese Ministry of Defense, according to the court documents.

"In connection with the transaction, Mafi submitted a letter of intent to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ('IRGC') to purchase the bomb fuses for Sudan," the complaint said.

Mafi is scheduled to appear in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles on Monday. If convicted, she could face up to 20 years in prison.

The Sudanese civil war has created a humanitarian crisis in the North African country where food supplies are dwindling and millions of people have fled their homes.

Wisconsin authorities put total arrests from clashes at beagle breeding facility at about 25

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Around 25 protesters were arrested as around 1,000 animal welfare activists tried to gain entry to a beagle breeding and research facility in Wisconsin and were met by officers firing pepper spray and rubber bullets, authorities said Sunday.

Saturday's protest was the second attempt in as many months by demonstrators to take beagles from Ridgman Farms in Blue Mounds, about 25 miles (about 40 kilometers) southwest of the capital, Madison. They were turned back by officers who arrested the group's leader.

The Dane County Sheriff's Office said the situation was "significantly calmer and more peaceful" on Sunday, when around 200 people assembled outside the farm. They dispersed after around two hours, it said.

"We're pleased with the group's cooperation today, and their willingness to remain peaceful, while still sending their message of concern for the dogs at Ridgman Farms," Sheriff Calvin Barrett said in a statement. "We are happy to support anyone who wants to exercise the right to protest, as long as they do so lawfully."

The sheriff had said in a video statement Saturday that 300 to 400 protesters were "violently trying to break into the property." They tried to overcome barricades that included a manure-filled trench, hay bales and a barbed-wire fence.

Some got through the fence but were unable to enter the facility, where an estimated 2,000 beagles are kept, the Wisconsin State Journal reported.

Those arrested included the leader of the Coalition to Save the Ridgman Dogs, Wayne Hsiung, 44, of New York, who was being held on a tentative felony charge of conspiracy to commit burglary. But most arrestees were just booked and released, the sheriff's office said Sunday.

"No one should be assaulted for giving aid to a dog, even if damage to property is part of that rescue effort," Hsiung said in a statement from jail Sunday that also accused authorities of using excessive force. "The animals of this Earth are not 'things.' They're sentient beings. And we have the right to rescue them from abuse," he concluded.

Protesters took 30 dogs when they broke into the facility in March, when authorities arrested 27 people. Ridgman denies mistreating animals but agreed in October to give up its state breeding license as of July 1 in a deal to avoid prosecution on animal mistreatment charges.

On its website, the company says "no credible evidence of animal abuse, cruelty, mistreatment or neglect at Ridgman Farms has ever been presented or substantiated."

Trump wants to stop states from regulating AI. This Utah Republican isn't listening

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

RIVERTON, Utah (AP) — When a dozen Republican activists gathered on a back deck in the Salt Lake City suburbs to talk about this year's elections, the conversation cycled through all the staples of conservative chatter in Utah such as dwindling water supplies, illegal immigrant fraud and chemtrail conspiracy theories.

But Doug Fiefia, a state representative running to be a state senator, wanted to start with something else — artificial intelligence. Fiefia used to work at Google and, like several other tech employees who have gone into politics, he has made regulating the industry a centerpiece of his campaign.

"I know it sounds like 'Doug, this is all you talk about,'" Fiefia said. "That's because it's coming, it's here and it's going to be our biggest fight."

Fiefia's focus has put him on a collision course with President Donald Trump's administration, which this year helped block his state proposal requiring companies to include child safety protocols. The White House wants a single national standard for artificial intelligence, arguing that a patchwork of excessive regulation could handicap American innovation in a global competition with China.

But with no progress in Congress, it has been state lawmakers struggling to address concerns about a technology that is poised to reshape the economy. In Florida, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis added the issue to a special legislative session that he is convening later this month. Democratic-controlled New York last year required major AI developers to report dangerous incidents to the state.

All told, there are more than 1,000 state legislative proposals addressing AI, a reflection of the uneasiness that has seeped through the country.

"None of us are really sure," said Brett Young, a structural engineer who attended the backyard event with Fiefia. "Is this something we should be scared about, or is it no so big a deal and it'll enhance our lives?"

Pressure in the states

Trump has routinely tried to stamp out state-level AI policies, and he issued an executive order that included legal threats and funding penalties to deter new regulations.

The White House recently released a framework for potential congressional legislation that calls for preempting state laws considered "too burdensome" but would allow some rules to protect children and copyright material.

None of these steps has eased the number of proposals in state capitals. Popular ideas include forcing chatbots to remind users they are not human and barring the use of AI to make nonconsensual pornography, which includes replacing or removing clothing from photos that are posted online.

"There's a lot of state lawmakers looking at what the federal government is doing and saying, 'We want to take action because we're not satisfied,'" said Craig Albright, senior vice president for government relations for the Business Software Alliance, which represents software companies.

About 8 in 10 people in the United States said they were "concerned" or "very concerned" about AI in a Quinnipiac poll last month, with about three-quarters saying government is not doing enough to regulate the technology. Roughly 9 in 10 Democrats and 6 in 10 Republicans wanted more government involvement.

The most significant regulations have passed in California and New York, solidly Democratic states. The provisions focus on disclosure of catastrophic risk, such as the AI-controlled meltdown of nuclear plants or AI models refusing to heed human direction.

But there is pressure in Republican-led states, too.

DeSantis pushed a bill to implement parental controls for minors using AI and to prohibit systems from using anyone's likeness without permission. It fell short in the state House after overwhelmingly passing the state Senate. AI bills in Republican-controlled Louisiana and Missouri have stalled out because of Trump administration resistance.

'An army of full-time lobbyists'

Fiefia is part of a loose network of former tech employees turned state lawmakers trying to meet the demand for stronger regulations. He co-chairs the AI task force of the Future Caucus, a network of younger

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state lawmakers, with Monique Priestley, a Vermont Democrat who also has worked in tech.

Priestley said the group uses video conferences and group chats to share ideas for new proposals and deal with lobbyists who oppose their bills. She said that 166 of her state's 482 registered lobbyists weighed in on her data privacy bill last year, which was ultimately vetoed by the governor.

"It's like you're running around against an army of full-time lobbyists," said Priestley. Like many state lawmakers, she works a separate, full-time job.

Alex Bores, a former data scientist at the tech firm Palantir who quit after it signed a deal to help the first Trump administration with immigration enforcement, is also a member of the AI task force. A Democrat, Bores wrote the New York bill that was signed into law last year.

Now Bores is competing in the crowded Democratic primary to replace retiring U.S. Rep. Jerry Nadler representing much of Manhattan in Congress, and he is facing payback from the industry. A pro-AI campaign committee has spent \$2.3 million against his candidacy.

Bores said tech companies are trying to make an example of him to scare off more regulation at the state and federal level.

"It's one reason it's so important for me to win this race is because, if I don't, that intimidation they're trying on Congress will be successful," he said. Bores' competitors in the June 23 primary include Jack Schlossberg, the grandson of former President John F. Kennedy, and George Conway, a former Republican who has become one of Trump's chief antagonists on social media.

From Google to politics

Fiefia has not attracted the sort of attention as Bores as he tries to move to the state Senate after a single session in the House. The subdivisions and shopping centers of his district are sandwiched between Utah's jagged mountain ranges and the cul de sacs are crammed with children on bikes and scooters.

The son of Tongan immigrants, Fiefia grew up in Utah but moved to Silicon Valley, where he worked as a salesperson for Google.

Fiefia rose to manage a team working with companies on the implementation of Google's early AI model and was disturbed by what he saw.

"What I realized is Big Tech cares about their bottom line, and they were worried about making money, not doing right for the human race," said Fiefia, who now works at a Utah-based cloud computing and AI company.

Fiefia's legislation was unanimously passed by a House committee this year, but the Trump administration sent a letter to the Senate saying that the measure was "unfixable." The measure quickly died.

Daniel McCay, the state senator who Fiefia is challenging in the primary, said he thinks that was a good thing.

"I've been around long enough to recognize the invention of fire, the wheel, cars and the internet did not ruin society and I'm very skeptical of anyone trying to scare society into regulations," McCay said in an interview.

He noted that the bill went beyond child safety, including whistleblower protection for AI workers and public disclosure of risks.

"It would have driven Utah out of the AI innovation business," McCay said.

At the cottage meeting — the Utah term for a small gathering at someone's home to discuss important issues — Fiefia faced several tech-related questions from the crowd.

Asked about defying the Trump administration, Fiefia said it was especially important to stand up for states' rights when a fellow Republican was in power to demonstrate the principles involved.

"The Trump administration is, 'We want zero regulations on AI,'" Fiefia said. "I think that's wrong. I agree with a lot of what Trump says on taxes. I disagree with him on this."

The US backs a South Africa project to extract rare earths despite a diplomatic clash

By MICHELLE GUMEDE Associated Press

PHALABORWA, South Africa (AP) — Two enormous sandlike dunes at an old chemical processing plant in South Africa are at the center of an exploratory U.S.-backed project to extract highly sought-after rare earth elements from industrial mining waste.

The Phalaborwa Rare Earths Project has U.S. support through a \$50 million equity investment by the government's International Development Finance Corporation and is part of accelerated U.S. efforts to reduce reliance on economic rival China for the minerals crucial for making electronic devices, robotics, defense systems, electric vehicles and other high-tech products.

Countries have identified dozens of minerals, including copper, cobalt, lithium and nickel, as critical because they are essential for new technologies. The 17 rare earth elements are a subset of them.

President Donald Trump has made expanding U.S. access to critical minerals, including rare earth elements, a central policy to counter China. The Trump administration said this year it will deploy nearly \$12 billion to create its own strategic reserve.

Project continues despite a diplomatic rift

The DFC was created during the first Trump administration and committed its investment in the Phalaborwa project in 2023 under former U.S. President Joe Biden.

The current Trump administration has moved forward with the project despite a major diplomatic rift with South Africa, which began when Trump returned to office and issued an executive order last February to halt all financial assistance to the country.

But the administration has shown that certain economic concerns come first. The DFC has promoted its involvement in the Phalaborwa project as part of a push to unlock Africa's mineral potential "while advancing U.S. strategic interests."

The Phalaborwa project is being developed by Rainbow Rare Earths. The DFC's investment is through partner TechMet, a company that says it is focused on securing critical mineral supplies for the West. South Africa's government does not have a direct stake in the project.

Rainbow Rare Earths CEO George Bennett told The Associated Press they hope to supply predominantly the U.S., saying its interest in the project was largely related to defense systems.

The company says it aims to supply the rare earth elements neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium, terbium and others from its South African project. They are used in high-performance magnets in wind turbines, electric vehicles, defense and emerging applications, including robotics.

The Phalaborwa project aims to start extracting rare earths from the two huge dunes in 2028. The dunes are 35 million tons of phosphogypsum, a byproduct of mining waste and the processing of phosphate rock for acid and fertilizer production.

The project is expected to operate for 16 years, Rainbow Rare Earths said. The \$50 million injection from the DFC will be used only once Rainbow Rare Earths starts construction of its processing factory in Phalaborwa, anticipated in early 2027.

Rare earths are relatively common but usually occur at low concentrations and are difficult to separate, making their mining costly.

Neha Mukherjee, research manager at Benchmark Mineral Intelligence, said that while the Phalaborwa project was unique, with its experimental above-ground mineral extraction process, its potential remains unknown.

"It looks like a fairly low-cost asset in terms of operational cost," she said. "Even the capital requirement is not very high ... which is a good sign."

Mukherjee added that the project is important because "we do not have enough projects to meet the entire demand outside of China."

US is 'trying to catch up'

Rainbow Rare Earths says mineral extraction from the dunes will use up to 90% renewable energy and

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be significantly less expensive than typical rare earth mining.

Bennett said Phalaborwa would be a low-cost producer comparable to Chinese producers.

"(Former owners) crushed it, they milled it, they put energy into it, put heat into it, all that to make the phosphogypsum, which is what's needed to make rare earths," said Rainbow Rare Earths project director Alberto Bruttomesso, referring to the processes the waste previously underwent. "Heating is the most expensive part of the process. It's what costs the most money."

The Trump administration also has invested in critical mineral mining in the U.S. and has pursued deals to secure access to these minerals abroad, including in Ukraine. Greenland's rare earths are part of the reason Trump has wanted to acquire the Arctic island.

The Phalaborwa project is one of several mineral projects in Africa with DFC investment.

Patience Mususa, a mining specialist at the Nordic Africa Institute in Sweden, said the U.S. was "trying to catch up in terms of investment in mining" on the African continent, where China is the dominant player in mining.

In February, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency signed a formal agreement to provide \$1.8 million for a feasibility study at the Monte Muambe rare earths project in Mozambique.

In Africa, the Trump administration is also continuing U.S. financial support for the Lobito Corridor, a Biden administration initiative to build an 800-mile (1,290-kilometer) railway linking mineral-rich regions of Congo and Zambia to Africa's Atlantic coast.

'Lee Cronin's The Mummy' is no match for 'Super Mario' or 'Hail Mary' at the box office

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

"The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" and "Project Hail Mary" dominated the North American box office again this weekend, leaving "Lee Cronin's The Mummy" in third place for its debut.

The Mario sequel has spent all of its first three weekends in the first place spot, this time adding \$35 million, according to studio estimates on Sunday. The Universal release has now made \$747.5 million worldwide.

"Project Hail Mary" meanwhile dropped only 15% in its fifth weekend, earning \$20.5 million and bringing its domestic total to \$285.1 million. Worldwide it's at \$573.1 million. Amazon MGM's hit is in the midst of another run on IMAX screens, after ceding them to "Mario" for two weeks. Filmmakers Phil Lord and Chris Miller, along with star Ryan Gosling, made an appearance at the industry trade show CinemaCon last week to thank theater owners for helping to make it the year's highest earning original film.

The weekend left "Lee Cronin's The Mummy," which opened wide in 3,404 locations, in third place with \$13.5 million. The R-rated movie, directed by the filmmaker behind "Evil Dead Rise" and produced by Jason Blum's Blumhouse and James Wan's Atomic Monster, did not resonate with critics or audiences, recording a 45% on Rotten Tomatoes and a lackluster C+ CinemaScore.

The film, starring Jack Reynor, follows a family whose missing daughter reappears, mummified and living. It devolves into a "a gross-out bloodfest," according to a review for The Associated Press. But it also only cost a reported \$22 million to produce, and with \$20.5 million from international showings, it already has a worldwide total of \$34 million.

"Horror movies had their biggest year in 2025," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's head of marketplace trends. "So far that's not happening in 2026."

The Bob Odenkirk-led action movie "Normal," about a visiting sheriff in a Midwestern town, also opened this weekend, earning an estimated \$2.7 million. Directed by Ben Wheatley and released by Magnolia, "Normal" was better received by critics (77% on Rotten Tomatoes) but also got a C+ CinemaScore from audiences, who were 65% male.

This weekend also had several high profile limited or art house releases, including the Lorne Michaels documentary "Lorne," and David Lowery's "Mother Mary," starring Anne Hathaway as a tormented pop star and Michaela Coel as her estranged designer. "Lorne," a Focus Features release, opened in 414 the-

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aters in North America, earning an estimated \$270,000. A24's "Mother Mary" opened on five screens and made \$168,063.

Neither were enough to make the top 10, but one independent that did was the comedy "Busboys," co-starring David Spade and podcaster Theo Von, which managed to land in eighth place with \$1.6 million from 800 theaters.

Last year on this weekend, Warner Bros. opened "Sinners" to \$48 million. While the weekend is down from a year ago, the overall box office is still up over 16% from this time last year, and Dergarabedian gives a lot of credit to "Project Hail Mary."

Things will likely pick up next weekend as the Michael Jackson movie "Michael" arrives in theaters. Early tracking suggests the Lionsgate release is poised to earn more than \$60 million (some put it as high as \$75 to \$90 million) in its first weekend in North America, which would make it the biggest ever for a musical biopic. The current record-holder is "Straight Outta Compton" which opened to \$60 million in 2015. "Bohemian Rhapsody" debuted to \$50 million and went on to earn over \$910 million worldwide.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

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

1. "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie," \$35 million.
2. "Project Hail Mary," \$20.5 million.
3. "Lee Cronin's The Mummy," \$13.5 million.
4. "The Drama," \$4.8 million.
5. "You, Me & Tuscany," \$3.8 million.
6. "Hoppers," \$2.9 million.
7. "Normal," \$2.7 million.
8. "Busboys," \$1.6 million.
9. "Bhooth Bangia," \$977,582.
10. "A Great Awakening," \$823,667.

Russian attacks kill at least 2 as Ukraine strikes a Russian drone factory

By DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian strikes killed at least two people in Ukraine, officials said Sunday, as the Ukrainian military struck a drone factory in southwestern Russia.

A "massive" nighttime drone strike on Chernihiv in northern Ukraine killed a 16-year-old boy and wounded four others, according to the head of the city's military administration.

Rescuers found the teenager's body as they cleared away rubble, Dmytro Bryzhynskyi reported on Telegram on Sunday morning. He said the drone strike also wounded three women and one man. Several houses were set on fire, he added.

Russian drones also attacked the southern city of Kherson on Sunday, local officials reported.

A man died of his wounds after a drone hit a van driving through the city center, according to Oleksandr Prokudin, the head of the regional administration. A second man was hospitalized with blast injuries, regional authorities said.

Russia launched 236 drones into Ukrainian territory overnight into Sunday, Ukraine's air force reported. Of those, 203 drones were shot down while 32 hit targets in 18 separate locations, it said.

Kyiv says it struck a Russian drone factory

Meanwhile, Ukraine hit a drone factory in the city of Taganrog, Ukraine's General Staff reported. The site lies some 55 kilometers (35 miles) east of Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine in southwestern Russia.

According to the military, Ukrainian drones sparked a fire at the Atlant Aero factory, which designs and produces strike and reconnaissance drones, as well as components for more powerful UAVs that can carry

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guided bombs weighing up to 250 kilograms (550 pounds).

Ukraine's navy said it carried out the attack on the drone factory in southern Russia, using domestically manufactured Neptune cruise missiles.

"This defense enterprise is an important part of the Russian military-industrial complex, where drones were developed and manufactured," the navy said in an online post.

It also posted images showing a huge cloud of smoke over the city, which it said was the impact of the strikes.

Three people were injured in a nighttime air attack on commercial infrastructure in Taganrog, according to the Russian regional governor, Yuri Slyusar. He did not specify what facility was hit, but said warehouses were set on fire following the strike.

Taganrog Mayor Svetlana Kambulova said the strike damaged "commercial enterprises" in the city, as well as a vocational school and multiple cars.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces shot down 274 Ukrainian drones during the night, as well as guided aerial bombs and a Neptune cruise missile. The ministry did not say how many struck targets.

Ukraine launches inquiry into mass shooting in the capital

Ukraine's Interior Ministry on Sunday launched an official inquiry into a mass shooting in Kyiv the previous day that killed six people and wounded at least 14 others.

A gunman wielding an automatic weapon killed six people and barricaded himself inside a supermarket with hostages in the Ukrainian capital before he was shot and killed by police, authorities said.

Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko described the attacker's mental state as "clearly unstable."

The 58-year-old gunman has not been named, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday said he was born in Russia. Authorities worked to piece together a motive for the violence.

Several police officers were suspended for allegedly failing to respond appropriately in the initial stages of the shooting. Klymenko, the interior minister, described their behavior as "shameful and unworthy" of their role as police officers.

He said there was no plan to toughen gun ownership laws, arguing that guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens had helped the country's defense against Russia.

The mass shooting — unheard of in wartime Kyiv following Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in 2022 — took place in a busy central district of the city, outside an apartment block and a nearby shopping center, leaving bodies on a crowded street as bystanders fled for safety.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw victims' bodies covered with emergency blankets before they were taken away.

Zelenskyy hits out at U.S. sanctions waiver for Russian oil

Elsewhere, Zelenskyy responded with dismay to the Trump administration's decision on Friday to extend its pause on sanctions on Russian oil shipments.

"Every dollar paid for Russian oil is money for the war," Zelenskyy wrote in a post on X, arguing that any additional revenue the Kremlin gets from oil sales "is directly converted into new strikes against Ukraine."

"That is why it is important that Russian tankers are stopped, not allowed to deliver oil to ports. The aggressor's oil exports must decrease, and Ukraine's long-range sanctions continue to work toward that goal," he added.

The so-called general license, intended to ease supply constraints resulting from the Iran war, means U.S. sanctions will not apply for 30 days on deliveries of Russian oil that has been loaded on tankers as of Friday. It extended a similar 30-day license issued in March for Russian oil that had been loaded by March 11.

Eddie Murphy receives life achievement award by AFI, drawing standing ovation at star-filled tribute

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Eddie Murphy took a moment to look out at the star-studded room at the American Film Institute ceremony — at his family, his peers, the people who have shared his journey — and let it all sink in.

"Seeing all of my family, all my kids, my beautiful wife, and seeing all the different people I worked with, I'm just really filled up," said Murphy, who received the life achievement award at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles on Saturday night. "This is a special moment. I wish y'all could feel what I'm feeling, see what I'm seeing. I almost teared up. I'm going to get backstage and cry."

Just before accepting the award, Murphy was met with a standing ovation, stepping onstage and moving through the ballroom as the applause followed. Along the way, he passed Spike Lee, Martin Lawrence, Dave Chappelle, Chris Rock, Arsenio Hall and Judge Reinhold.

The tribute, which also featured appearances from Bill Burr, Kevin Hart, Eva Longoria, Da'Vine Joy Randolph and Kenan Thompson, will premiere as a special on Netflix on May 31.

Murphy, 65, has moved from a teenage stand-up sensation to a breakout force on "Saturday Night Live" to a box office mainstay with films like "Beverly Hills Cop," "Coming to America," "The Nutty Professor" and the "Shrek" franchise.

Large images from those defining moments filled the venue stage, tracing a career that has crossed stand-up, television and film.

"Eddie made us laugh and made our nation feel better," said Lee, who presented the award to Murphy. "I took a camera and told stories on how our nation could be better. ... We both pushed culture forward. ... Every step of this journey, Eddie has been true to himself."

Comedians pointed to Murphy's influence across generations.

"There is no us without you," Rock said.

Lawrence, who starred in the film "Life" with Murphy, shared a personal moment from early in his career, recalling how Murphy once declined his request for a photo. But now, that shouldn't be a problem since their children married each other in 2025.

"Now I can get all the pictures I want," Lawrence said with a smile. "Because we're in-laws."

Arsenio Hall, Murphy's longtime collaborator on "Coming to America," spoke about Murphy advocating for him in the film and highlighted the depth of his talent.

"When Eddie does a family film, he plays a whole damn family," Hall said.

Chappelle reflected on studying Murphy's stand-up as a teenager watching "Raw." He described Murphy as one of the defining figures in the industry and shared a recent visit to his home, where seeing Murphy's grandchildren playing offered a deeper perspective on his life.

"I would watch him every day after school like I was taking a class," said Chappelle, who also spoke on an interview where he considered revisiting "Chappelle's Show," a project he once stepped away from, calling it one of the most meaningful experiences of his career.

Chappelle said Murphy encouraged him to revisit the idea, and even joked about joining the project if it comes to fruition.

"You are still the hero I want to be," he said.

Stevie Wonder described Murphy's impact as something that extends beyond comedy. He showed his deep admiration for the comedian-actor.

"Laughter can make life livable," Wonder said. "Eddie is more than a comedian ... he is a universal reminder."

Mike Myers, who co-starred in the "Shrek" films with Murphy, credited him with helping define one of animation's most beloved characters, calling his character portrayal of Donkey a "masterpiece."

Jennifer Hudson delivered a musical tribute with performances from "Dreamgirls," backed by a house band led by Rickey Minor.

The gala, which raised more than \$2.5 million to support AFI's nonprofit education programs, also included the presentation of the Franklin J. Schaffner Alumni Medal to cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw, who spoke about finding her voice through the institute.

Murphy's career has spanned nearly 50 years, from stand-up stages to blockbuster films, with a versatility that has kept him relevant across generations. In 2023, he received the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the Golden Globes and has spoken about embracing a deeper appreciation for his journey.

"Thank you for giving me this night that I will remember forever and ever and ever," Murphy said. "I love you."

Sociedad's Matarazzo: The American coach who studied math at Columbia and grew up watching Maradona

By TALES AZZONI AP Sports Writer

MADRID (AP) — A 48-year-old American coach who studied mathematics at Columbia and grew up watching Diego Maradona play for Napoli is now part of the history of Spanish club Real Sociedad in the Basque Country.

Pellegrino "Rino" Matarazzo led Sociedad to its fourth Copa del Rey title on Saturday with a penalty-shootout win over Atletico Madrid.

It was the first career title for the coach who left the United States to try to play soccer professionally and ended up becoming a manager in Germany.

"Just the feeling you have of 'wow, wow, this happened, we did it, we did it,'" said Matarazzo, who in less than four months took Sociedad from near the relegation zone in the Spanish league to lifting the prestigious Copa del Rey trophy.

The New Jersey-born coach was hired in December when Sociedad was two points above the relegation zone. He guided it back to safety and to its title run in the Copa in what he called "an unbelievable journey."

"If you think about all the games that we played, every game has been very very special since I arrived and I think we finished with a very special game," the soft-spoken Matarazzo said. "Wow, wow..."

Matarazzo downplayed his role in the team's turnaround and credited his players' talent and character for the improvement and the title run in the Copa.

"I'm very grateful to be manager of this club, very very grateful," Matarazzo said. "Being part of its history now is, of course, something special, and I'm also very grateful to have this team, these players, this staff, this club. It's a product of the work we've done together in the past weeks."

Italian roots

Matarazzo is from an Italian family whose parents met in the United States after emigrating to the country for work.

Matarazzo's first language was Italian before he went to school. He used to watch Serie A matches on a small television in his father's bedroom during the time that Argentina great Maradona played for Napoli.

In an interview with Sociedad's TV channel, Matarazzo said he was always passionate about soccer even though the sport was far from popular while he grew up in the United States.

Before moving to Germany to try to play, Matarazzo earned a degree in mathematics from Columbia University, which he said has helped him as a coach even though he knows that the job is about people and not just numbers.

Career in Germany

Matarazzo, a defender, first tried to play in Italy but ended returning to the United States after what he called broken promises by agents. He was then invited by a friend to go to Germany, where he moved in his early 20s without knowing a word of German. He ended up staying and working in the country for 25 years.

Matarazzo started playing in the fourth division and eventually moved into coaching with Nuremberg's reserves and youth sides. He was an assistant to Julian Nagelsmann when both were at Hoffenheim in 2018, then landed the Stuttgart job in December 2019. He steered the club back to the Bundesliga at the

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first attempt and guided it to a commendable finish in his first top-flight season.

He was fired by Stuttgart in late 2022 and about four months later was hired by Hoffenheim, where he stayed until the end of 2024, when he was let go following a disappointing season.

Matarazzo got off to a great start in Spain, and he hoped it could be "just the beginning" of a long and successful stint for him and the club.

"I hope that we continue to stay ambitious because we still have seven games left in La Liga and we can do more," he said. "I'm not done yet, and hopefully we are not done yet."

Nathalie Baye, French actor known for her warmth and versatility, dies at 77

PARIS (AP) — Nathalie Baye, a French actor who was a fan's favorite for her her down-to-earth charm and great versatility, has died. She was 77.

French president Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to an actor "with whom we loved, dreamed and grew." French media reported that Baye died on Friday in Paris from a neurodegenerative disease, quoting a statement from her relatives.

"We loved Nathalie Baye so much," Macron wrote in a message on X. "Through her voice, her smiles, and her modesty, she accompanied the past decades of French cinema, from François Truffaut to Tonie Marshall."

Baye featured in more than 80 movies, switching from mainstream comedies to auteur films with ease in a career that spanned over five decades. She twice claimed the prize for best actress at the Césars, France's equivalent of the Oscars.

Baye, who was Leonardo DiCaprio's on-screen mother in Steven Spielberg's "Catch Me If You Can," won both popular and critical acclaim for her role in "Venus Beauty Institute," a romantic comedy that follows three women working in a Parisian beauty salon as they search for fulfillment. Marshall won the César award for best director in 2000 for the movie.

The daughter of artists, Baye first trained as a dancer then honed her acting skills at the famed Cours Simon and the Conservatoire. She took the spotlight in François Truffaut's "Day for Night" in 1973 and, five years later, worked with him again on "The Green Room."

Baye worked with directors Maurice Pialat, Claude Sautet and Bertrand Tavernier, among others. She rose to fame with "The Return of Martin Guerre" in 1982. A year later, her role as a tough-talking streetwalker devoted to her down-and-out gangster boyfriend Philippe Leotard in "La Balance" earned her a César.

Baye liked to work with emerging filmmakers such as Xavier Beauvois. She won the César for best actress for his movie "The Young Lieutenant" in 2006.

Allies back Starmer as Mandelson and Epstein leave the UK leader fighting for his job

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Senior Cabinet ministers on Sunday rallied around U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, whose leadership is teetering over his decision to give Britain's most important diplomatic job to Peter Mandelson, a scandal-tarnished politician and friend of Jeffrey Epstein.

Starmer will face restive lawmakers in Parliament Monday to fight for his job after the explosive revelation that Mandelson was appointed ambassador to the United States despite failing security checks.

Starmer says he's "furious" that he wasn't told at the time, in January 2025, that an intensive vetting process had recommended Mandelson not be given security clearance. The Foreign Office, which oversees diplomatic appointments, cleared him anyway.

Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy said that if Starmer had known, "he would never, ever have appointed him ambassador."

Technology Secretary Liz Kendall told Sky News on Sunday that Starmer "is a man of integrity and there

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is no way he would have proceeded" with Mandelson's appointment had he known.

The top civil servant in the Foreign Office, Olly Robbins, was forced to resign on Thursday — though allies say he was just doing his job and is being made a scapegoat. Robbins is expected to give his own version of events to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday.

Simon McDonald, who was top civil servant in the Foreign Office until 2020, said Robbins had been "thrown under the bus." He told the BBC that vetting information was highly sensitive and "would never be shared" with the prime minister or his staff.

All the main opposition parties have called on Starmer to resign. Right-of-center Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch said the prime minister's position is "untenable." Ed Davey, leader of the opposition Liberal Democrats, said Sunday that the government is "in perpetual crisis, and I don't think they can get out of that unless Keir Starmer moves aside."

Starmer's Labour Party holds a large parliamentary majority, so power to topple him lies with his own lawmakers, who are already glum about the party's dire poll ratings.

Starmer defused a potential crisis in February, when some Labour lawmakers called for him to resign over the Mandelson appointment. But he could face a leadership challenge after local and regional elections on May 7, in which Labour is expected to do badly.

Some Labour lawmakers think it would be damaging to change leaders at a time of global instability, with wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and with three years until a national election must be called.

Others despair at the prime minister's repeated missteps since he led Labour to a landslide election victory in July 2024. Starmer has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living, and has been forced into repeated policy U-turns.

Critics say the Mandelson appointment reveals the prime minister's lack of judgment. Documents released by the government in March, after being forced to by Parliament, showed Starmer was warned by his staff that Mandelson's friendship with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, exposed the government to "reputational risk."

But his expertise as a former European Union trade chief and contacts among global elites were considered assets in dealing with President Donald Trump's administration.

He lasted less than nine months in the job. Starmer fired Mandelson in September 2025 after evidence emerged that he had lied about the extent of his links to Epstein.

The release of millions of pages of Epstein-related documents by the U.S. Department of Justice in January brought more revelations, showing that Mandelson's relationship with the financier continued even after Epstein's conviction in 2008 for sexual offenses involving a minor.

Emails also suggested Mandelson had passed on sensitive, and potentially market-moving, government information to Epstein in 2009 after the global financial crisis.

British police launched a criminal probe and arrested Mandelson Feb. 23 on suspicion of misconduct in public office.

He has been released without bail conditions as the police investigation continues. Mandelson has previously denied wrongdoing and hasn't been charged. He does not face allegations of sexual misconduct.

Today in History: April 20, the Columbine High School shootings

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, April 20, the 110th day of 2026. There are 255 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 20, 1999, two students shot and killed 12 classmates and one teacher and injured 23 others before taking their own lives at Columbine High School, near Denver, Colorado.

Also on this date:

In 1812, the fourth vice president of the United States, George Clinton, died in Washington at age 72, becoming the first vice president to die while in office.

In 1912, Boston's Fenway Park, now the oldest active stadium in Major League Baseball, hosted its first

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official baseball game with an estimated 27,000 spectators. (The Red Sox defeated the New York Highlanders 7-6 in 11 innings.)

In 1914, private militia and Colorado National Guard members opened fire on an encampment of striking coal miners and their families in Ludlow, Colorado; at least 19 people in the camp, including 12 children, and one National Guard member were killed in what became known as the "Ludlow Massacre."

In 1971, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation in schools.

In 1972, Apollo 16's lunar module, carrying astronauts John W. Young and Charles M. Duke Jr., landed on the moon.

In 1986, following an absence of over six decades, Russian-born pianist Vladimir Horowitz returned to the Soviet Union to perform a concert at the Grand Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow.

In 2010, an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform, leased by BP, killed 11 workers and caused a blowout that began spewing an estimated 200 million gallons (757 million liters) of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico in one of the largest environmental disasters in U.S. history. (The well was finally capped nearly three months later.)

In 2021, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter charges for the killing of George Floyd; Chauvin was later sentenced to 22 ½ years in prison.

In 2023, SpaceX's giant new rocket — the biggest and most powerful ever built — exploded minutes after blasting off on its first test flight from South Padre Island, Texas, and crashed into the Gulf of Mexico. The nearly 400-foot (120-meter) Starship carried no people or satellites.

Today's Birthdays: Actor George Takei is 89. Actor Jessica Lange is 77. Actor Clint Howard is 67. Former MLB first baseman Don Mattingly is 65. Actor Crispin Glover is 62. Actor Andy Serkis is 62. Actor Shemar Moore is 56. Actor-model Carmen Electra is 54. Reggae musician Stephen Marley is 54. Rapper Killer Mike is 51. Actor Joey Lawrence is 50. Model Miranda Kerr is 43. Former NFL linebacker Luke Kuechly is 35.