

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Tuesday, May 19

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, tri tater, sauerkraut, fruit.

School Breakfast: Cook's choice.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas.

5th DARE Graduation, 2 p.m., GHS Gym

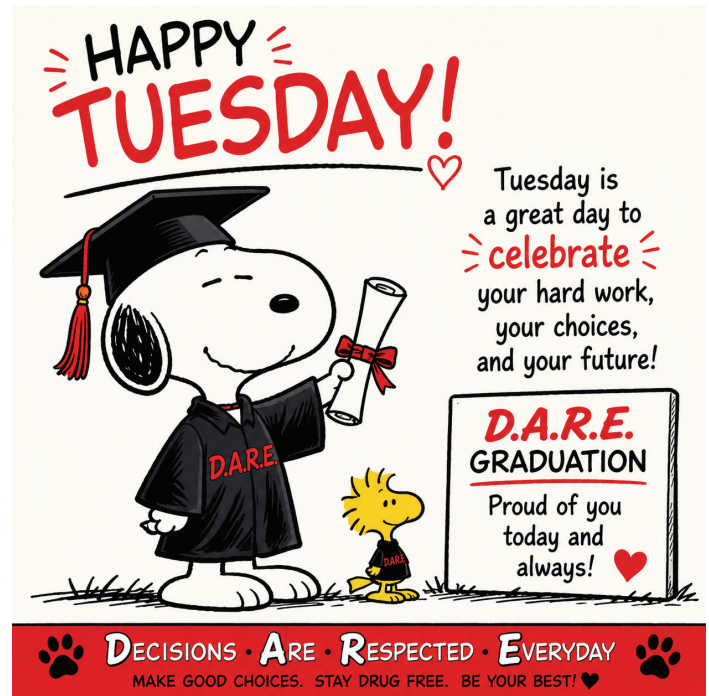
Biogrils, 3:45 p.m., Elementary Gym

Softball at Deuel, Varsity at 4 p.m. followed by JV

## Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



JVT Practice at Arena, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.

North Super Region High School Baseball Tournament

## Wednesday, May 20

Last Day of School!

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

School Breakfast: Cook's choice.

School Lunch: Sack lunch made by kitchen.

Girls Region 1A Golf Meet at Dell Rapids, 9 a.m.

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

JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

North Super Region High School Baseball Tournament

Softball at Redfield (JV at 4:30 p.m. followed by varsity)

Track at Warner, 9:30 a.m.

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# 1440

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

## 'Anti-Weaponization Fund'

The Justice Department yesterday announced a \$1.776B taxpayer-funded program to compensate individuals who claim the DOJ politically targeted them. The figure appears to be a nod to America's founding year. Payments would come from the Treasury's Judgment Fund, an uncapped account used to settle federal cases.

The "Anti-Weaponization Fund" is part of a settlement resolving President Donald Trump's \$10B lawsuit against the IRS over the leak of his tax returns, along with civil claims tied to the Russia probe and the search of his Mar-a-Lago residence. Trump and his family will receive a formal apology but no monetary damages. The tax case stems from disclosures by a former IRS contractor who was sentenced to prison for leaking high-profile figures' tax data between 2018 and 2020.

A five-member commission, appointed by the attorney general and removable by Trump, will oversee claims through December 2028. The fund is modeled after an Obama-era program that compensated Native American farmers for discrimination in federal lending programs.

## Largest Utility Company

NextEra Energy announced plans yesterday to acquire Dominion Energy in a \$66.8B all-stock deal, pending regulatory approval. The combined company would form the US' largest regulated electric utility company and the world's largest by market value.

NextEra provides electricity to roughly 12 million people in Florida. Dominion serves 3.6 million homes and businesses across Virginia and the Carolinas, including "Data Center Alley," the world's largest concentration of data centers. As AI companies rely on higher computing power, electricity demand is expected to grow.

US power prices are up 40% over the past five years. One analyst found the NextEra-Dominion deal would further drive up costs by creating a larger company that is more difficult to regulate. The companies are offering \$2.3B in credits to Dominion customers over two years, amounting to a roughly \$562 payout per customer.

## Musk Missed Deadline

A federal court yesterday rejected Elon Musk's lawsuit over OpenAI's decision to become a for-profit company. The court did not rule on the merits of the case, instead finding that the statute of limitations had expired.

Elon Musk filed the lawsuit in 2024, but the jury found he was aware of OpenAI's commercial ambitions as early as 2021. Musk cofounded the AI company in 2015 as a nonprofit with the stated goal of advancing digital intelligence for the benefit of humanity rather than profit. After investing roughly \$38M in OpenAI's early years, he left the board in 2018 over strategic disagreements. Fellow cofounder Sam Altman became CEO in 2019 and began securing roughly \$13B from Microsoft—a move Musk claims caused OpenAI to stray from its nonprofit mission.

OpenAI converted to a for-profit structure in October and is reportedly preparing for one of the largest-ever initial public offerings at a \$1T valuation.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Shakira is acquitted of tax fraud in Spain; Spain's high court orders government to repay her roughly \$70M. Mark Fuhrman, former Los Angeles police detective convicted of lying during the OJ Simpson murder trial, dies at age 74.

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José Mourinho to leave Benfica for Real Madrid; he is one of the most decorated soccer coaches of all time, with 26 major trophies.

Pep Guardiola to leave Manchester City, ex-Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca favored to replace him.

Ella Langley wins record seven awards at Academy of Country Music Awards; Cody Johnson takes home coveted entertainer of the year award.

## Science & Technology

Asteroid discovered last week passes within roughly 57,000 miles of Earth—about one-quarter the distance between Earth and the moon.

Australian Aboriginal community tended to a wild dog burial site for centuries after its death, offering insight into the depth of early human-dog relationships.

Poor sleep may be an early warning sign of Alzheimer's disease in older women with a genetic predisposition to the condition.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq -0.5%).

Bitcoin Depot Inc., once the largest operator of cryptocurrency ATMs in North America, files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Chinese e-commerce giant Shein reportedly acquires US apparel brand Everlane; transaction values the San Francisco-based company at around \$100M.

## Politics & World Affairs

At least three men killed after two suspected teenage shooters opened fire at the Islamic Center of San Diego before apparently shooting themselves nearby; authorities are investigating the attack as a possible hate crime.

Kentucky voters head to the polls for the most expensive House primary race in history, with Rep. Thomas Massie (R, KY-4) defending his seat against Ed Gallrein, a former Navy SEAL backed by pro-Israel groups and President Donald Trump.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention bans noncitizens from entering the US if they've been in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or South Sudan in the past three weeks amid Ebola outbreak.

At least one US citizen contracted Ebola in the DRC, is being evacuated to Germany for treatment.

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## **Groton City Council Meeting Agenda**

May 19, 2026 – 7:00pm  
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY  
CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
*(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)*
3. Implementation of 4-Way Stop at Intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue
4. Convert Seasonal 4-Way Stop to Permanent at Intersection of Main Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue
5. Project Rural Practice Funding Request
6. Update City Map
7. April Finance Report
8. Minutes
9. Bills
10. Reimburse Darrell Hillestad for Improvements at Groton Airport
11. Announcement: Grand Opening of New Groton Baseball Concessions on the Day of Play on June 6<sup>th</sup>
12. Announcement: City Offices Closed on May 25<sup>th</sup> for Memorial Day
13. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
14. Designate Darrell Hillestad as Groton Airport Manager
15. Groton Airport Hangar Leases
16. Forgive Resident's Outstanding Invoice from 2017
17. Adjournment



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## **BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA**

### **GENERAL MEETING**

**TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026, 8:45 A.M.**

**COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS**

**COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
  - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes.*
4. Kelly Weaver, Grow SD
  - a. Recap of Grow SD and 2027 Budget Request
5. Karly Winter, State's Attorney or Allison Tunheim, HR Director
  - a. Discuss Grant Agreement with 605 Consulting to provide grant research and writing services to Brown County – Possibly Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign
6. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
  - a. Fair Board Appointment
  - b. RC Kart Contract
  - c. Department Update
7. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
  - a. R-O-W for Basin Construction
  - b. R-O-W for LTS Telecommunications
  - c. Department Update
8. Discussion on BC Hwy 13 Speed Limit
9. Richmond Dam Update
10. First Reading of Ordinance #324 – Rezone for Shawn & Melissa Schultz
11. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Agreement with HKG Architects
12. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of May 12, 2026
  - b. Claims/Payroll
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Approval of Primary Election Workers
  - e. Set Public Hearing for Temporary Alcohol Permit for Richmond Lake Association
  - f. Lease Agreements
13. Other Business
14. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
15. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311) - Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at** [Commission Meetings | Brown County](#)

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**Pictured are Groton Area Coach Joel Guthmiller and the Groton Area team members Carlee Johnson, Halee Harder, Rylie Rose and Claire Schuelke** (Courtesy Photo)

## Groton Girls Place Second at Weather-Shortened NEC Golf Meet

The Groton Area Tigers turned in a strong performance Monday at the Northeast Conference Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course, finishing second in the team standings after weather forced the event to be shortened to nine holes.

Groton carded a team score of 201, trailing only champion Aberdeen Roncalli, which finished with a 177. Sisseton placed third with a 206, while Milbank shot a 231.

The Tigers were led by a pair of top-10 finishers as both Claire Schuelke and Carlee Johnson shot rounds of 48 to tie for sixth place overall. Schuelke and Johnson each finished 12-over par on the shortened layout and helped anchor Groton's runner-up finish.

Rylie Rose also cracked the top 12 for the Tigers, carding a 52 to place 11th overall, while Halee Harder followed closely with a 53 to finish 12th.

Aberdeen Roncalli dominated the individual standings with Grace Seyer earning medalist honors after shooting a 41. Sisseton's Kenzley Heath was second with a 43, while Claire Crawford of Roncalli placed third with a 44.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Strokes																					
GOLD - Ladies Tee / SLOPE®: 120 / Course Rating™: 70.4 / Olive Grove Golf Course																					
Yardage	310	309	418	132	334	285	305	175	405	2673	310	309	418	132	334	285	305	175	405	2673	5346
Par	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	36	72
Claire Schuelke	6	4	6	6	5	7	4	4	6	48										0	48
Carlee Johnson	6	5	5	5	6	4	6	5	6	48										0	48
Rylie Rose	6	5	5	6	6	5	7	6	6	52										0	52
Halee Harder	3	7	6	4	8	5	6	4	10	53										0	53

Starting Hole
  Eagle or Better
  Birdie
  Par
  Bogey
  Double Bogey or Worse



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ABERDEEN, SD | EST. 2011

WEBER LANDSCAPING  
GREENHOUSE

# FOOD TRUCK

TTT GRILL & CATERING



20  
MAY

10:45<sub>AM</sub> - 3:00<sub>PM</sub>



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**D.A.R.E.<sup>®</sup>**  
**GRADUATION**

 **TUESDAY,  
MAY 19**

 **2 P.M.**

 **GHS GYM**



**((▶)) BROADCAST LIVE ON [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)**



**SOFTBALL**  
**AT DEVEL**

**TUESDAY, MAY 19**

 **VARSITY AT 4 P.M.**  
*FOLLOWED BY JV*

 **BROADCAST LIVE ON  
[GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)**

 **SPONSORED BY THE  
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**Teylor Diegel and Korbin Kucker have joined the City of Groton electric department.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## Groton Graduates Return Home to Join City Electric Department

Two recent Groton Area School District graduates officially began work Monday with the City of Groton electric department, turning hometown roots and longtime interests into careers in line work.

Teylor Diegel and Korbin Kucker, both members of the Groton Area Class of 2025, recently completed training at Mitchell Technical College and are now beginning their careers serving their hometown community.

For Diegel, the interest in electrical work started at a young age.

"I always wanted to do it since I was a little kid," Diegel said. "It was more my Uncle TJ — always being around in the bucket truck. That kind of piqued my interest when I was young and I kind of just fell in love with it and decided that's what I wanted to do."

Diegel attended Mitchell Tech, where he spent nine months learning the fundamentals of the trade.

"It's more just to learn the basics," he explained. "They teach you as much as they can in that time span. But they're a growing school and they're starting to do better things quicker. I think that school will be pretty big in the next couple years."

When asked why he chose to apply in Groton, Diegel's answer was simple.

"Hometown. Easy," he said. "You get to know everybody here, so it's a lot nicer."

Kucker said his interest in line work also began during his school years after completing a research project on the profession.

"It was something that I did a research project on in school when I was, I think, a freshman," Kucker said. "Just learning about it and being around it a little bit really sparked my interest. Talking with my dad, he told me to shoot for the stars. It's a great profession, and so far it's been nothing short of that."

Like Diegel, Kucker said returning home to work in a small community played a major role in his decision.

"It's hometown. It's my community," Kucker said. "I grew up in this community. Everyone knows me and I know just about everyone. Small communities are special. I'd rather be back home in a small community than off somewhere random with nobody supporting me like they used to."

The pair said they actually did not realize they had both applied for the positions until interview day.

"I don't even think we knew we both applied for it," Kucker said. "I think I found out when I was walking out for my interview and he was walking in."

Diegel said city officials informed him they planned to contact Kucker shortly after offering him the position.

Kucker received his call while working during class at Mitchell Tech.

"I was in my power grid and transformer connections class sweeping out the shop and getting ready for the lineman rodeo," Kucker said. "My phone started ringing and I got the news. I was pretty pumped and didn't sweep a single thing after that."

Diegel joked that he received his call while sitting in English class.

"It was a good way to interrupt it," he said.

Both young men now begin the next chapter of their careers helping power the community they grew up in.

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**Groton Sons of the American Legion help set up tables for the upcoming Groton Memorial Day luncheon. L-R Paul Kosel, Aaron Severson, Travis McGannon, Rylan Blackwood, and Mark Abeln. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)**



**Both Emery and Rylan Blackwood helped place the vases in the Groton Union Cemetery Veteran's Circle. Emery is a member of the Groton American Legion Auxiliary while Rylan is a member of the Groton Sons of the American Legion. They are both grandchildren of Groton Legion member Bruce Babcock. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)**



## **Names Released in Pennington County Fatal Crash**

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 16, mile marker 58, six miles west of Rapid City, SD

When: Thursday, May 14, 2026

Vehicle 1: 1996 Toyota Corolla

Driver 1: Leah Renee Thornton, 56-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, life-threatening injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Passenger 1a: Lyla Dee Henrichsen, 76-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Vehicle 2: Donald Leslie Holmes, 2019 GMC Sierra

Driver 2: 58-year-old male from Newcastle, WY, minor injuries

Seat belt Used: Yes

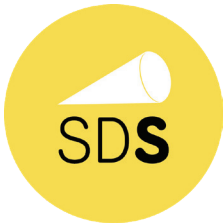
Pennington County, S.D.- A Rapid City woman died from a two-vehicle crash Thursday on US Highway 16, six miles west of Rapid City, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Leah Renee Thornton, the driver of a 1996 Toyota Corolla, had entered the intersection on US 16 from Busted Five Court when a westbound 2019 GMC Sierra driven by Donald Leslie Holmes on US 16 collided with the Corolla. The Corolla spun onto the north shoulder, ejecting the passenger, Lyla Dee Henrichsen.

Both the driver and passenger in the Corolla were transported to Monument Health with life-threatening injuries. Neither were wearing seat belts. Henrichsen later died from her injuries. Holmes sustained minor injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Hearing on proposed Black Hills uranium drilling opens with hours of opposition testimony

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

HOT SPRINGS — Persistent, drizzling rain didn't keep dozens of people from rallying against a proposed uranium drilling project in the southern Black Hills on the first day of a weeklong hearing to decide on a permit application.

Law enforcement officers and vehicles flanked the parking lot and theater doors Monday at the Mueller Civic Center, where the hearing took place.

Opponents cited concerns about Craven Canyon, which is near the proposed drilling sites and is marked with ancient Native American petroglyphs. Opponents said they're also concerned about the potential to contaminate underground water, and to negatively affect the state's agriculture and tourism industries.

"A lot of the people in this room don't live near Craven Canyon, but that doesn't mean that you ditch the responsibility to protect it," said project opponent Anissa Martin. She then referenced the Lakota name for the Black Hills. "So I ask you, where will we go when the He Sapa are uninhabitable, when we have no water in the Black Hills? And I ask you, what water will you drink?"

The hearing drew public testimony from not only residents of the Black Hills, but also from Wyoming, Minnesota and Pennsylvania. People who spoke Monday during the hourslong public comment period were all in opposition to the project.

The company proposing the drilling has maintained that it has gone through all the necessary steps in the permitting process, and the project will not harm the nearby canyon.

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

In March 2024, Clean Nuclear Energy Corporation and its Canada-based parent company Nexus Uranium filed an application to drill exploratory holes in search of uranium near Craven Canyon, 7 miles north of Edgemont.

The company plans to use 50 sites to drill holes as deep as 700 feet on state-owned land, according to its application. Each hole will take approximately two weeks to drill.

The company has additional drilling plans on federally owned land. That portion of the project is under review by the U.S. Forest Service, which estimates it will issue a decision next month.

Besides taking public testimony, the state board dealt with several preliminary matters Monday.

The board's hearing chairman, Bob Morris, declined to require the state's commissioner of school and public lands to testify in person. That office manages the state land at the proposed project site.

Bruce Ellison, an attorney and project opponent, sought to require the commissioner's in-person testimony. Ellison said he didn't receive sufficient evidence from a records request about the commissioner as to "how he did his job."

Morris said there is written material from the commissioner in the case file, and Morris doesn't see "how it's relevant" to question the commissioner.

The board also failed to produce a Lakota interpreter for the hearing, after agreeing to provide one. A staff member for the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources said potential interpreters had conflicts of interest or scheduling conflicts that prevented them from accepting the role.



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The board decided to have a discussion Tuesday morning about whether to continue the hearing without an interpreter. The hearing is scheduled to continue through Friday.

The proposed drilling near Craven Canyon is separate from another proposal to mine uranium in the Edgemont area that's been pending since the early 2000s. That proposal, from Texas-based enCore Energy, has met staunch opposition from Native Americans and environmental activists and has been in regulatory and legal limbo. Last year, the federal government's Permitting Council selected enCore's project for inclusion in FAST-41, a process intended to improve coordination among permitting agencies and hold them accountable to deadlines.

Uranium is a metallic, radioactive element used as fuel in nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants. Interest in uranium exploration and mining has risen recently, in response to nuclear energy's potential to meet the growing electricity demands of data centers handling the computing needs of artificial intelligence.

The hearing in Hot Springs comes on the heels of a victory for opponents of another drilling project in the Black Hills. Rapid City-based company Pete Lien & Sons recently withdrew from an exploratory graphite drilling project that was underway near Pe' Sla, also known as Reynolds Prairie, a sacred site for Lakota people in the central Black Hills. The withdrawal came after two lawsuits from opponents challenging the project and the formation of a protest camp at the drilling site.

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

## State cooperation helps ICE deport hundreds, SD governor says while planning more trooper training

BY: JOHN HULT

Since last year, South Dakota's National Guard has helped U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deport 664 people, the Department of Corrections has handed 24 inmates over to that agency, and state troopers have arrested 150 people who lack legal status.

South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden released the figures Monday in a news release announcing the state's plans to train more troopers to help ICE.

The state Highway Patrol initially trained five troopers to question and detain people suspected of being in the country illegally on ICE's behalf. Those troopers, and another dozen trained since, are working under a 287(g) "task force model" agreement with ICE that Rhoden initiated last May.

Such agreements allow trained state and local law enforcement to act on behalf of immigration agents during their interactions with members of the public.

The new round of training will increase the number of troopers trained in immigration enforcement to 41, the news release says, and the federal government will reimburse South Dakota \$165,000 to pay for the training.

The Department of Public Safety's spokesperson Brad Reiners said the agency only arrested the 150 people who lacked legal status, and that only ICE could say if they'd actually been deported. ICE did not immediately respond to an email on the matter.

The Department of Corrections and ICE, meanwhile, "have identified an additional 14 inmates that will be considered for federal custody and deportation," the news release says.

Rhoden requested and received approval last year from ICE for the state's prison system to cooperate with immigration agents through the 287(g) program's "jail enforcement model."

The state Board of Pardons and Paroles initially paroled 10 inmates without legal status to ICE custody last August. Rhoden's office sent a news release at that time that included each paroled inmate's name, age, home country and state criminal offenses. Fourteen others have been paroled since then, the most recent on May 7.

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Corrections spokesman Michael Winder said the additional 14 people now "identified" for a potential federal custody transfer will appear before the parole board "over the next few months."

The Rhoden administration announced the immigration enforcement cooperation push last summer in tandem with what would become an ongoing series of state trooper saturation patrols branded "Operation Prairie Thunder." The patrols are not focused solely on immigration, but troopers have questioned and detained people suspected of lacking legal status across Operation Prairie Thunder's 13 visits to South Dakota communities.

The most recent statistics from Operation Prairie Thunder suggest that half of the people without legal status who've been arrested on ICE's behalf since last year were apprehended during the saturation patrols. After the most recent of them, which ran from April 30 through May 1 in Mitchell, the Department of Public Safety said troopers had interviewed 99 people for ICE and detained 75 in total since the patrols began.

The National Guard's role has been to process paperwork for ICE. Monday's news release says seven Guard members — some in Sioux Falls, some in Rapid City — are involved in that work.

The news release says the National Guard "has assisted directly in processing 664 illegal immigrants who have been deported out of South Dakota."

In email responses to South Dakota Searchlight, Rhoden spokeswoman Josie Harms said "all 664 were deported out of South Dakota via the regional offices in Rapid City and Sioux Falls. The individuals were not necessarily all originally residing in South Dakota."

"For instance," Harms continued, "someone traveling from one state to another could be arrested while passing through South Dakota on the interstate and then be deported out of South Dakota."

The nonprofit Deportation Data Project collects and distributes statistics on immigration enforcement using information posted by ICE or provided by ICE through federal Freedom of Information Act requests.

The most recent data release from ICE came in March. Based on its available sources, the Deportation Data Project lists 609 immigration actions in South Dakota, not all of which are deportations.

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

## **'It will always be the community' that drives work to find missing Native Americans, speaker says**

**Missing and murdered Indigenous people lists have improved, but have limitations**

**BY: JOHN HULT**

PIERRE — The official figures are flawed, the lists incomplete.

The officials know that, but can only do so much to address it on their own.

That's why the work of the community organizers who swarm social media with news of missing and murdered Indigenous people is so critical, said Tanya Grassel-Krietlow, a Pierre-based advocate for Native American victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and human trafficking.

"It will always be grassroots moving the envelope," the Lower Brule Sioux tribal member told a small crowd at the Capitol Lake Visitors Center on May 12.

The reasons are legion, Grassel-Krietlow has learned. She spent her formative years on the reservation and has family members on her tribe's MMIP list. She's also put in time as a federal probation officer, and she now spends her days connecting nonprofits to grant sources and victims to services.

Law enforcement and nonprofit databases don't always share information, she said. Reports submitted to a national database designed for the general public's use, meanwhile, can be slow to receive official approval from the local law enforcement agencies that lead missing persons investigations.

And those agencies may not see every report as equally worthy of immediate follow-up, she said — particularly if the missing person has a history of substance use or a habit of periodic disappearances.

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Figuring out which agency ought to take a report or lead a search can be a challenge, too. Missing people may cross the jurisdictional lines that separate tribal land from state land, counties from counties and states from states. That can slow response times.

And then there's another kind of agency to consider: human agency. Adults have the right to "ghost their friends" and not return phone calls, Grassel-Krietlow said, or to not come home at all. Police might find a missing person based on a family's report, only to hear the allegedly missing person say they'd rather their family not know where they are.

That can be true, Grassel-Krietlow said, but it can also be that a person who says that is being trafficked, and that their handlers have pressured them to stay out-of-touch with those closest to them.

Agency plays a role in what gets reported on the front end, as well. Those who worry about a lost loved one may not trust that law enforcement will take their reports seriously, and could choose to share their concerns on social media or with family and friends instead.

"It will always be the community deciding what to share with law enforcement," Grassel-Krietlow said. "It will always be the community remembering who's gone, who needs to come home, who died and how they died."

## **Activism guides investigations**

The work of those communities has made a difference, in spite of those difficulties.

The day before Grassel-Krietlow spoke, U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons told South Dakota Searchlight that the work of activists to bring names and unsolved cases to light over the past two decades has informed the work of federal prosecutors.

The grassroots lists of the missing in South Dakota's tribal communities that are shared with police and circulated online, he said, were "put together by people who needed to bring the issue to light."

"The FBI has gone through the lists," said Parsons, whose office oversees the prosecution of major crimes on tribal land in South Dakota.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has a prosecutor, Troy Morley, who is devoted to MMIP cold cases across the Midwest. Morley, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, led the case against Jay Adams, who pleaded guilty to manslaughter two years ago for killing an infant in Sisseton in 1992.

Building trust with tribal communities is key to the U.S. Attorney's Office's efforts, Parsons said, so families need to see prosecutors follow through on leads from the "courageous" witnesses who share what they know.

"When they see that there are results, that can't help but make people feel comfortable coming forward," Parsons said.

## **Evolving movement**

Grassel-Krietlow spoke at one of two MMIP vigils hosted last week by South Dakota Urban Indian Health. The first took place May 12 in Pierre, the second on May 14 in Sioux Falls. Attendees in Pierre wrote the names of missing loved ones on red rocks and placed them on the shores of the lake outside the visitors center, which is located on the grounds of the state Capitol.

The clinic tagged the vigils with the acronym "MMIR," which stands for missing and murdered Indigenous relatives.

The adjustment is part of an ongoing evolution in the MMIP conversation, according to Ellen Durkin, the chief behavioral health officer for South Dakota Urban Indian Health and a member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

The move toward MMIR by some organizations, Durkin said, is meant to signal kinship as much as personhood.

"It's a closer-knit, 'we are all related' kind of thing," she said.

MMIP remains the term attached to May 5, a date established nationally as MMIP Day of Remembrance in 2017 through a resolution introduced in the U.S. Senate by Montana's congressional delegation. The

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date corresponds with the birthday of Hannah Harris, a 21-year-old member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in that state.

A search team of volunteers found her body five days after she was last seen on July 4, 2013, near Lame Deer, Montana. Local law enforcement hadn't taken her disappearance seriously. Frustration over the response and outcome would eventually spur both the U.S. Senate resolution to establish an MMIP Day of Remembrance and the state-level passage in 2018 of Hannah's Law, which cleared the way for the Montana Department of Justice to assist in missing persons cases.

## **Changes, imperfections**

The homicide rate for Native Americans is five times higher than for whites, according to a 2025 fact sheet from the Centers for Disease Control. It's the fourth-leading cause of death for Native American men between 1 and 44 years old, and the sixth leading cause of death for women in that age group.

Native Americans are also more likely to go missing than non-Natives, both nationally and in South Dakota. As of May 15, South Dakota's missing persons database listed 110 people. Sixty-nine of them are Native American. Of the 59 women listed in the database, 42 are Native American.

The South Dakota database, operated by the state Attorney General's Office, is six years old. It was created in 2020 after an endorsement by state lawmakers in 2019 — two years before they authorized the creation of an MMIP coordinator for the Attorney General's Office — and the database automatically logs missing persons cases reported by state or tribal agencies to the National Crime Information Center. The NCIC is a centralized law enforcement database for all manner of incidents.

But the NCIC database doesn't have every missing persons case, Grassel-Krietlow said during the Pierre vigil. It also doesn't cross-reference its data with data from the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.

Grassel-Krietlow sometimes helps family members enter information into another database that was created in 2007 to act as a centralized repository of all missing persons cases. It's called the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System and is funded by the Justice Department.

Anyone with an account can enter information into NamUs, as Grassel-Krietlow does, but the local agency to which a report was made must approve the report before it goes live.

As a result, she said, names may appear in the South Dakota database, but not NamUs.

On Friday, NamUS listed 20 Native Americans missing in South Dakota — 49 fewer than there were in the state's database on the same day.

With either database, law enforcement is responsible for removing a name once a person is found. That doesn't always happen quickly.

"Sometimes we have a wait time of up to a month on getting accurate data into NamUs, and then getting that data pulled if we find the person," Grassel-Krietlow said. "And so we still have inconsistencies, even with the best intentions."

## **Suspicious deaths**

Lists of the Indigenous murdered may not reflect suspicious deaths, she said, particularly if initial autopsies miss or gloss over signs of violence.

A botched initial autopsy was a factor in one of South Dakota's most famous cold cases.

The body of Annie Mae Aquash, a Mi'kmaq activist who worked with the American Indian Movement in the 1970s, was found in the Badlands in February 1976, months after her death. The initial autopsy concluded she'd died from exposure to the elements. A second autopsy found a bullet hole in the back of her head and a bullet lodged in her left eye socket, sparking a homicide investigation and series of trials that stretched across four decades and inspired books, documentaries and, most recently, a miniseries on the streaming service Hulu.

Lackadaisical death investigations are still an issue, Grassel-Krietlow said.

Using his first name only, she told the story of a young man who went missing after a party in winter. His



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body was bruised and battered when he was found, she said, but law enforcement "ruled it an accidental death, because he had been drinking, so he must have passed out outside and then died."

"The broken bones, the evidence of a meeting and the missing clothing, it was inconsequential," she said.

Grassel-Krietlow would like to see a federal commission convened to review unattended deaths where families are left with questions.

Her own uncle went missing the day she was born, she said. His body was found two weeks later, on the opposite side of the river where he'd gone fishing. His 1970 death was never investigated as a homicide, she said, so "he'll never appear on any missing and murdered list."

Leta Wise Spirit, who also works for South Dakota Urban Indian Health, spoke at the vigil of losing a family member to a homicide that went unsolved. Too often, she said, cases that occur on reservations are "swept under the rug," or kept quiet by people more interested in protecting those responsible for a killing than bringing a killer to justice.

But Native Americans are also overrepresented in homicides in urban areas of South Dakota.

Wise Spirit referenced the recent death of 14-year-old McKenna Wendel in Sioux Falls. Her body was found in Brookings County in March, sparking a multi-state investigation.

"She went somewhere to babysit and she never came home," Wise Spirit said, speaking through tears. "When they found her, she was murdered. Stuff like that really goes on."

No charges have yet been filed in Wendel's death. Attorney General Marty Jackley told South Dakota Searchlight on Friday that the investigation is active and ongoing, and that charges are expected soon.

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

## Trump drops IRS suit in trade for \$1.7B 'anti-weaponization' fund decried by Dems

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Justice announced Monday a new "anti-weaponization" settlement fund as a condition of President Donald Trump voluntarily dropping his multi-billion-dollar lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service for the leak of his tax returns several years ago.

Trump, his sons Don Jr. and Eric, and the Trump Organization moved to drop the \$10 billion suit Monday in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, with prejudice — meaning he cannot revive it in the future.

Shortly after Trump's filing hit the court docket, the DOJ announced the creation of a \$1.776 billion settlement, not to be paid to Trump or his family, but to be divvied up among "others who suffered weaponization and lawfare," according to a department press release.

Democrats swiftly denounced the settlement as a "slush fund."

The move presumably means those pardoned by Trump for crimes related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol could seek money from the government. The DOJ's announcement did not specifically mention President Joe Biden, former Attorney General Merrick Garland or the Capitol riot, and noted there are "no partisan requirements to file a claim."

Trump campaigned on pardoning anyone prosecuted by the Biden administration for crimes related to the 2021 attack, describing them as "patriots" and "hostages." He pardoned roughly 1,600 defendants on the first night of his second term, and the White House published a dedicated web page to those targeted by "a weaponized Biden DOJ."

In addition to monetary relief, eligible claimants will also receive a formal apology from the government.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, Trump's former personal defense attorney, said in a statement, "The machinery of government should never be weaponized against any American, and it is this Depart-

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ment's intention to make right the wrongs that were previously done while ensuring this never happens again."

"As part of this settlement, we are setting up a lawful process for victims of lawfare and weaponization to be heard and seek redress," he added.

Trump, his family and the Trump organization will also receive a formal apology but no monetary damages as part of the arrangement, according to the DOJ.

Trump tax info leaked

The president and his family had filed suit in January against the IRS for the leak to news media of their tax information by a contractor in late 2019. The contractor was sentenced for the leak in early 2024.

When questioned by the press Monday afternoon, Trump said he knew "very little about" the creation of the fund.

"These were people that were weaponized and really treated brutally by a system that was so corrupt, with corrupt people running it, and they're getting reimbursed for their legal fees and the other things that they had to suffer," Trump said.

A committee of five "very talented people, very highly respected people" will decide how to distribute the money, he said.

## Funding an 'insurrectionist army'

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer denounced the plan Monday afternoon as "one of the most depraved" uses by Trump of the Justice Department.

"This weekend, Trump worked up a plan to shake hands with himself in order to fund his insurrectionist army to the tune of billions," Schumer, D-N.Y., said in a statement.

"Donald Trump sued his own government. Trump's DOJ settled with Trump. And now Trump gets a nearly \$2 billion slush fund to reward his own allies, loyalists, and insurrectionists. That is not justice. That is corruption happening in broad daylight," he continued.

In an amicus brief filed Monday afternoon, 93 House Democrats urged U.S. District Judge Kathleen Mary Williams, nominated by President Barack Obama, to immediately dismiss Trump's "collusive lawsuit" for lack of jurisdiction.

The Democratic lawmakers argued in the filing the fund is "plainly unlawful" for numerous reasons.

"(F)iling a collusive lawsuit only to immediately dismiss it in order to produce a collusive settlement that is illegal multiple times over would not only be legally barred; it would also raise serious questions about whether the parties have manipulated the court system to achieve illicit ends," according to the brief.

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

## US Supreme Court's uneven rulings in election lead-up causing chaos, experts say

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

When the U.S. Supreme Court allowed Texas' gerrymandered congressional map to take effect in December, its conservative majority wrote that a lower court had "improperly inserted itself into an active primary campaign" when it blocked the map more than three months before the election.

Now, the Supreme Court is the one upending elections.

For the past two decades, the Supreme Court has advanced the idea that federal courts should not order major changes close to an election to limit voter confusion. Over time the doctrine, first articulated in the 2006 case *Purcell vs. Gonzalez*, became known as the *Purcell principle*.

But election law experts and one of the court's liberal justices say the Supreme Court is wielding — or disregarding — the principle unevenly in ways that aid Republicans.

In recent weeks, the Supreme Court has effectively allowed last-minute election changes in Southern states that hold major consequences for what districts voters are assigned to and the future of Black

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political representation across the region.

These Republican-controlled states are racing to redraw congressional maps to eliminate majority-Black districts, many of which have elected Black Democrats to Congress. The gerrymandering rush has come even with early voting underway in some states.

Wilfred Codrington III, a professor of law at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York, who has studied the Purcell principle, said limiting voter confusion is common sense. But after that general idea, the principle “just falls apart” because the Supreme Court has never answered questions raised by the doctrine — like how close to an election is too close.

“The court has not thought through them and it seems like when the court applies them, they’re being applied in partisan ways,” Codrington said, about questions the doctrine raises.

April ruling OK'd redistricting

After the high court gutted the federal Voting Rights Act in Callais, a landmark decision on April 29 that found Louisiana’s map unconstitutional, it fast-tracked paperwork so the state could quickly redraw district lines.

Voting had begun in the state’s congressional primary election, which Republican Gov. Jeff Landry suspended, discarding 42,000 votes already cast.

A majority of the court voted to immediately certify its decision instead of observing its typical 32-day waiting period. In a blistering dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote that the justices were disregarding their previous insistence that courts shouldn’t risk assuming political responsibility for a redistricting process that often produces hard feelings.

“There is also the so-called Purcell principle, which we invoked only five months ago to chide a federal district court for ‘improperly insert[ing] itself into an active primary campaign,’” Jackson wrote. “The Court unshackles itself from both constraints today and dives into the fray. And just like that, those principles give way to power.”

The conservative justices on May 11 then cleared a path for Alabama to move toward implementing a Republican gerrymander that state lawmakers approved in 2023 but was blocked by a lower court. Their decision came a little more than a week before the state’s primary election.

Republican Gov. Kay Ivey has called an August special primary election for some of the state’s congressional districts.

“The United States Supreme Court’s decision is plain common sense and enables our values to be best represented in Congress,” Ivey said in a statement.

## **‘Like it doesn’t exist’**

The Supreme Court’s actions this spring stand in stark contrast to its December decision to allow Texas’ gerrymander to take effect. After President Donald Trump urged GOP states to redraw their maps for partisan advantage, Texas was the first state to respond, enacting new lines that could help Republicans pick up five seats.

A three-judge district court panel ruled against the map, finding that it was racially gerrymandered. The Supreme Court paused the panel’s decision, finding that the panel likely made serious errors and that the district court was “causing much confusion and upsetting the delicate federal-state balance in elections” amid the campaign season.

That language echoed the Purcell decision, which found that an appeals court had erred in blocking an Arizona law requiring a photo ID to register to vote. The Supreme Court’s unsigned opinion cautioned that court orders affecting elections can cause voter confusion.

“As an election draws closer, that risk will increase,” the 2006 opinion said.

Nearly 20 years later, the Supreme Court made no mention of Purcell in its Callais opinion, which dropped like a political bomb across the South. Since the decision, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina and Tennessee have either enacted new maps or are seeking to do so ahead of the November midterm elections.

Mark Johnson, a Kansas City-based lawyer with a long history of working on election litigation, noted

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that Callais was argued at the Supreme Court twice, first in March 2025 and again in October. The justices then waited a long time before releasing their decision, he said, adding that if they didn't realize the implications of their ruling they were "asleep at the wheel."

"That's why the Callais case is so disturbing, because a Supreme Court that has by and large followed Purcell just acted like it doesn't exist," Johnson said.

## **Court legitimacy at stake**

Several high-profile observers of the Supreme Court have been unsparing in their criticism of the justices' approach.

Steve Vladeck, a professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center and a foremost expert on the court, wrote in an online post that the court's recent decisions "fatally undermine" the animating purpose of the Purcell principle.

"The Court's own interventions are now wreaking havoc—and a majority of the justices either don't think it's their fault, or don't care that it is. Either way, they don't seem to mind the inconsistency—in a context in which it's having the remarkably coincidental effect of benefiting Republicans," Vladeck wrote.

Rick Hasen, a professor at UCLA School of Law and director of the Safeguarding Democracy Project, wrote on social media that the Supreme Court in Chief Justice John Roberts' hands "has become a chaos agent in elections."

Public support for the Supreme Court was dropping prior to Callais. An August 2025 Pew Research Center survey found 48% of Americans hold a favorable view of the court, a 22-percentage point drop from August 2020.

In the wake of the decision, Democrats have renewed their calls for court reform. Some have proposed term limits for the justices or expanding the size of the court to dilute its conservative majority. However, major changes are unlikely to become law while the U.S. Senate retains the filibuster and Trump remains in office.

For his part, Roberts has taken pains to paint the court as outside of politics. But at a judicial conference in Pennsylvania in early May, Roberts acknowledged the public thinks the justices are expressing policy preferences rather than interpreting the law.

"I think they view us as purely political actors, which I don't think is an accurate understanding of what we do," Roberts said, according to The Associated Press.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, another of the court's conservatives, has drawn a distinction between federal courts ordering last-minute changes to elections and states making changes themselves — suggesting that courts shouldn't necessarily thwart state legislatures that alter rules and procedures in the run-up to elections.

In a 2020 concurring opinion about a federal judge who had altered Wisconsin's absentee ballot deadline amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Kavanaugh wrote that it was one thing for state legislatures to change their own election rules "in the late innings" and bear responsibility for unintended consequences.

"It is quite another thing for a federal district court to swoop in and alter carefully considered and democratically enacted state election rules when an election is imminent," Kavanaugh wrote.

## **Chaotic campaign season**

But voting rights advocates say Callais is unleashing a wave of voter confusion as Southern legislatures rush to gerrymander.

Tennessee's Republican-controlled legislature passed a map May 7 that divides the Memphis area among three congressional districts. The move splits a majority-Black district in Memphis represented by U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, a white Democrat. Cohen announced Friday he wouldn't seek reelection.

The state's primary election is scheduled for Aug. 6.

"This is a year where we're already in the cycle and they're going to have to redo everything they've already worked on because these districts are completely different," Matia Powell, executive director of the voting rights group Civic TN, told reporters.

The Tennessee Democratic Party and several Democratic candidates, including state Rep. Justin Pearson,



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who is running for Cohen's current seat, have filed a federal lawsuit against the map. They argue the new map will cause "significant voter confusion" and severely burden the right to vote.

Tennessee Republican Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti argues the Democrats have a solution in search of a problem. Tennessee lawmakers have provided more than \$3.1 million to implement the new map and that state officials are already working to meet election deadlines, Skrmetti's office wrote in a Wednesday court filing.

"At bottom, this suit is an invitation to play politics, not law," Tennessee Senior Assistant Attorney General Zachary Barker wrote in the filing.

U.S. District Court Judge William Campbell, a Trump appointee, on Thursday declined to immediately halt the map.

The Supreme Court has sent states the message that "there are no rules" and that state legislatures are welcome to gerrymander Black representation at any point, said Anna Baldwin, voting rights litigation director at Campaign Legal Center, which has sued over Florida's recent gerrymander.

And the way the court applies the Purcell principle encourages states to make changes close to elections — because courts are more reluctant to block them.

"The court is creating a perverse incentive structure that ultimately does make it harder for people who are trying to protect voting rights to prevail," Baldwin said.

*Jonathan Shorman covers democracy for States Newsroom. Based in Kansas City, his coverage area includes elections and voting rights, fights over state and federal power, civil liberties and more. An alumnus of the University of Kansas, he previously covered politics for The Kansas City Star.*

## 'We owe it to society' to rehabilitate inmates, Gov. Rhoden says amid campaign debates about prison

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

RHODEN We owe it to society, we owe it to humanity to provide these inmates an opportunity to get a job when they're out of prison and start their lives over and be productive members of society. And that's what we'll do, work toward, especially when we get the new prison up and running.

O'BRIEN Welcome to a special episode of the Searchlight Report, a podcast from South Dakota Searchlight.

I'm your host, Meghan O'Brien. I sat down for an interview with each of the Republicans seeking their party's nomination for governor in the June 2nd primary election. I asked each of them the same set of questions.

In this series of episodes, you'll hear more from each candidate about their goals for state policy on abortion, data centers and economic development, among other topics. I also asked each candidate to share their big idea for South Dakota.

You just heard from Governor Larry Rhoden. The rancher from rural Union Center took over as governor last year, after his predecessor Kristi Noem left to lead the national Department of Homeland Security. Before serving as lieutenant governor, Rhoden served sixteen years in the state Legislature, including leadership positions such as House majority leader.

One of Rhoden's major accomplishments as governor has been convincing legislators to begin construction of a \$650 million men's prison in Sioux Falls. That will replace the oldest parts of the penitentiary. The state is also building an \$87 million women's prison in Rapid City. You'll hear the governor reference those projects in this interview.

O'BRIEN: This past legislative session, there had been a focus on abortion legislation, including restricting abortion medications from entering the state and defining what an abortion procedure is. Abortion is already illegal in the state, except to preserve for the life of the mother. Do you

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see the need for further regulations and legislation relating to abortion, and what would that look like?

RHODEN: The legislation that we went through this year was a result of current events. I'll never say never. I think we're at a good place in South Dakota, but when a company was advertising for the abortion pill coming into our state. We took action on that, and ended up passing legislation to address that and keep that from coming into our state. So, you know, that was a case of the circumstances dictating the need for legislation, and so we took action to protect the unborn in South Dakota.

O'BRIEN: Do you see there needing to be further regulations or restrictions on abortion access then in the future?

RHODEN: Not right now I don't. I don't, I can't think of, I think we've got pretty sound laws on the books, and we strengthened them this year, and I feel pretty comfortable with where we're at right now.

O'BRIEN: Obviously, property tax kind of dominated the conversation in the Legislature this year, but aside from providing relief and reductions for all homeowners, there was also a lot of talk about expanding programs that would give relief to people who are veterans, people who are seniors or disabled and on fixed incomes. Do you want to see more South Dakotans taking advantage of those programs? And how would you promote or expand those programs?

RHODEN: Well, so that's exactly what we've done the last couple years. Last year, if you recall Senate Bill 216 that I carried, put together a task force and we carried that, was kind of to stop the bleeding, but it did some significant things in addition to just capping the amount house valuation can go up in a year. It addressed the current laws that we have on the book for a tax freeze, raised the income substantially of the household that was members that would make them still eligible for that tax freeze, and also raised the maximum price of the house.

So we expanded that program last year, we addressed that more this year in specific legislation, so we took action on that. So there's a lot of programs out there that I think people aren't aware of, and we can do a better job of making sure that they're aware of it. When I've talked to people that have given me anecdotal stories about people being taxed out of their houses, some of that is kind of suspect, because I know, if you know a lot of the circumstances that they tell me about, that they would be eligible for tax freezes and programs that are on the books and have been on the books for a number of years.

O'BRIEN: More than 1,000 Medicaid enrollees in the state could potentially lose coverage as new federal work requirements set in over the next year. And that's according to the Department of Social Services. What would you as governor do to address that change?

RHODEN: Well, we'll address them as they come. I'm not, I'm not real familiar with what they are, the work requirements are at this point, but obviously in South Dakota, we support work requirements for Medicaid recipients, and so we'll support that law and deal with it as the guidelines are dictated to us.

O'BRIEN: What do you think the state's role in economic development should be, and how would you establish or continue that role?

RHODEN: Well, I think, you know, the biggest thing the state can do for businesses and economic development is give business owners and people that would move businesses here the opportunity to succeed with lower regulations and smaller government, and then get out of their way. We have, you know, we have different programs to provide a boost, a helping hand, in some cases, and existing businesses expanding, or businesses moving here, but we've done a very good job of providing opportunity in South Dakota, and that's what we'll continue to do.

O'BRIEN: A lot of recently enacted laws in South Dakota could make it harder to vote, including new regulations requiring people to show proof of citizenship when registering to vote, and a new way for people to challenge another voter's ability to vote. What policies would you pursue to address voting access in the state?

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RHODEN: Well, we've supported common sense reforms as far as, I don't think it's unreasonable that you provide proof that you are a citizen, and that's part of, you know, it's already being done. I look at my driver's license, and it already indicates on my driver's license I'm a citizen. So you know, we've covered a lot of that ground in years past with the Real ID, and so I don't think that we have, where we're headed provides a disincentive to vote that some people would say. I think we've just applied common sense and reasonable thinking in a requirement that you prove you are who you say you are and that you're a voting citizen.

O'BRIEN: Some of the concern is that setting up these systems of requiring citizenship when you're, proof of citizenship, when you're registering to vote, could set up additional burdens for people who might not have access to their birth certificates or their passports. I guess I'm just curious your response to that criticism.

RHODEN: If that's a legitimate concern, show me. Show me. If there are circumstances where we've, you know, went too far, or there's something that we have not realized, bring it to our attention. You know, there's a lot of conjecture, but, you know, we're dealing in facts, and if there's, if there's areas that we've made it too restrictive or cumbersome for people to vote? We'll deal with that, but you need to show us.

O'BRIEN: Regulations for data centers in South Dakota were also on the table for a lot of lawmakers this year. How would you regulate data centers, if at all?

RHODEN: Well, I you know, I think they came up with kind of a guidelines for data centers, and passed that legislation, and I supported that. So I think we've kind of landed in a place that's adequate.

O'BRIEN: You feel comfortable with the legislation that's been passed through?

RHODEN: I do.

O'BRIEN: The western part of the state saw significantly less snow this winter, and thousands of acres were burned by wildfires out west. How does the state play a role in positive change when it comes to climate change or environmental disasters, and how would you kind of try to make those changes?

RHODEN: Well, that's kind of a loaded question, but I'll say this, you know, we provide assistance, and did in the case of the fires out west, and provided assistance. You know, we have interstate compacts and will provide assistance in other states, and they provide assistance here, but from a good government standpoint, we'll continue that policy, and it's worked very well to help mitigate some of these disasters, potentially stop them before they become major disasters, and especially when it comes to fires.

O'BRIEN: Where do you think that the state's relationship stands with tribal nations in the state, and how would you plan to continue or grow that relationship?

RHODEN: Yeah, it's an interesting question, because that's all, there's always been ongoing tension. In the last 17 months, 16 months since I've taken office, we have really, I think, come a long way toward lessening that pressure. I've been very encouraged at the meetings I've had, a number of impromptu meetings. I think a lot of times that's a more desirable way to to meet folks, that we've kind of had these accidental meetings, including this year, during the State of the Tribes address, afterwards, we were going to meet with some officials from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, and some of the other, there were a lot of tribal members in the Capitol and noticed this going into my conference room. We ended up with, like, I don't know, 60, 70 tribal members in the conference room from six, seven of the nine tribes, or eight of the nine tribes, and chairmen from six of the nine tribes in the meeting. And we had a great, probably an hour and a half, just discussion, and give and take conversation and questions, and some things we agreed on, some that we didn't, but we had a very productive meeting, and everybody walked away with, on both sides, very encouraged.

And even more recently, I've had a chance meeting with the Oglala Sioux Tribe at the Lodge in Deadwood and went in to visit with them. So all that to say is I've been pretty happy with where



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we're at right now. We've got an open line of communication with tribes, and we recognize their sovereignty, we respect that, and we leave them be. And if they need assistance from the state we're there to, we'll take their calls and provide assistance when it's needed.

O'BRIEN: About half of the existing inmates in South Dakota end up returning to prison within three years of release. How will you as governor work to redirect those inmates?

RHODEN: Well, it's what I've been doing for the last 16 months, working extremely hard on that, including, you know, the biggest issue was getting the prison across the finish line, our current facility, a huge part of what's wrong with our current facility is, you know, it's when I toured it, it's, I was just appalled by the conditions in that prison and the overcrowding, and our lack of ability because of that overcrowding and facility they're in, to rehabilitate, have programs for rehabilitation. So that was a huge part of the importance of funding the new prison and building a new prison.

Our recidivism rate is not acceptable, and unfortunately, with the current facility, there was no way around trying to, you know, help that issue. So the new prison, in addition to resurrecting that discussion, I created the task force on rehabilitation, and they've met several times now, and they have several subcommittees, and we've already covered a great deal of ground as far as what the new rehabilitation program will look like with the new prison. Because we owe it to society, we owe it to humanity to provide these inmates an opportunity to

get a job when they're out of prison and start their lives over and be productive members of society. And that's what we'll do, work toward, especially when we get the new prison up and running.

I will say the women's prison is, you know, it's ahead of the men's prison. It'll be opening that here in a couple months, and we invested, I think, \$13 million this year in ongoing funding to create a drug treatment program, so nearly 100 female inmates can take four to five hours of classes every single day. And if you look at the percentage of those female inmates that are there for drugs, it's something like 80, 90% of them. So all that has a huge potential to help turn the problem around as far as recidivism.

O'BRIEN: And when we look back at past governors of South Dakota, a lot of them have kind of made their mark on the state. Peter Norbeck founded Custer State Park. George Mickelson had his year of reconciliation that kind of brought together the state and Native Americans. And Bill Janklow used prison inmates to rewire K through 12 buildings, college buildings throughout the state for internet access. Obviously, there's a lot of other accomplishments from a lot of those folks. But what do you see as your big, specific vision for the future of South Dakota?

RHODEN: Well, you know, a couple things kind of as a honorable mention, I guess, you know it's been mentioned, Janklow wiring the schools. Well, in the last three, four years, we've invested almost a half a billion dollars in South Dakota for rural broadband. And that's on the same magnitude, if not more so, in some ways, than Bill Janklow wiring the schools. Because you think of the opportunity that provides in rural South Dakota when we have all these vast, sparsely populated areas for them to have the same opportunities in Reva, South Dakota, as they do in downtown Sioux Falls.

So you know that's just a sideline as a starting point. We've got a lot of things to be extremely excited about in South Dakota. Our economy is growing well, you know, we're the second lowest taxed state in the nation. And I announced last year at the State of the State that the next big industry, and that's what I'll talk about more specifically, is national security. We have a huge amount of potential in that area. Starting with, you know, food security is national security. And we grow, you know, we feed the world. In South Dakota, we were an ag state, always will be. And that in addition to the expansion at Ellsworth, we already have startup businesses that have been focused on the defense industry, and we have the potential to make that into a huge economic boost, economic engine for the state of South Dakota, and one that will last for generations to come.

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O'BRIEN: And then, as a final question, is there anything else that you want the voters of South Dakota to know?

RHODEN: Well, I think, you know, I think it's, I've tried to put myself in the position of being a voter and what you must think, and I just encourage people to do your research. You know, we've had, seen millions of dollars this year expended on not just negative attack ads, but blatantly false negative attack ads, and more than I've ever seen in South Dakota. So I would

just encourage people to be vigilant, be wise, be informed on what they're hearing, and if you have questions, you know I think I'm probably the most accessible governor the state's had for a long time. I've often said that half the people in the state, I think, have my cell phone number, and that's OK. But if you have questions for me, I'm not hard to find.

O'BRIEN: Rhoden is one of four Republican candidates running for governor. The Republican primary election is June 2nd, and early voting is underway. The winner of the Republican primary will advance to the November general election to face Democratic candidate Dan Ahlers.

That's all we have for this episode of Searchlight Report. Audio for this episode of the podcast came from recordings by South Dakota Searchlight.

The podcast is based on reporting by South Dakota Searchlight's staff — editor Seth Tupper, senior reporter John Hult and reporters Joshua Haiar, Mackenzie Huber and me.

I write the scripts and produce the audio, with editing by Seth Tupper.

South Dakota Searchlight is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest nonprofit news organization.

Until next time, I'm South Dakota Searchlight's Meghan O'Brien with the Searchlight Report.

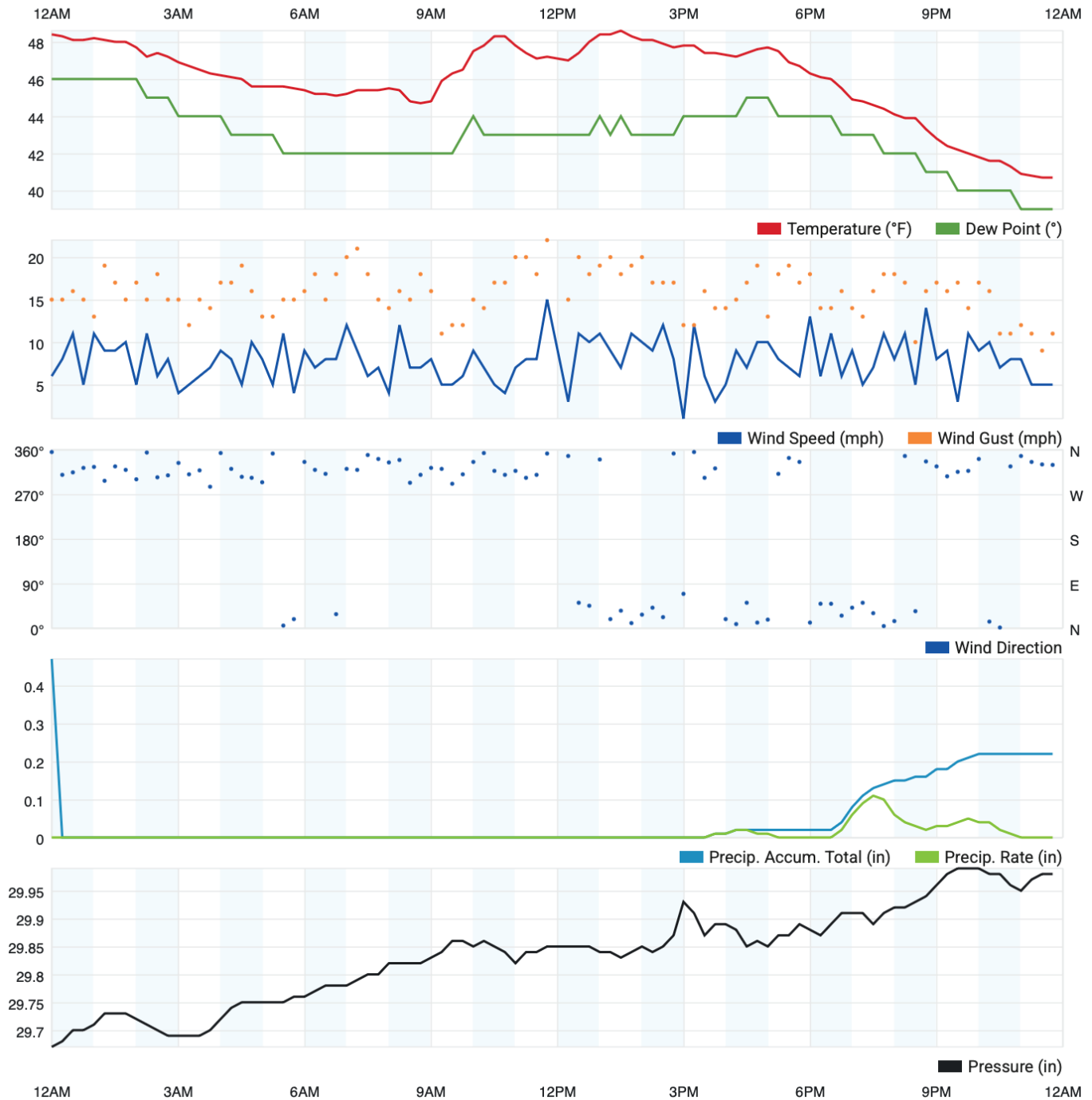
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

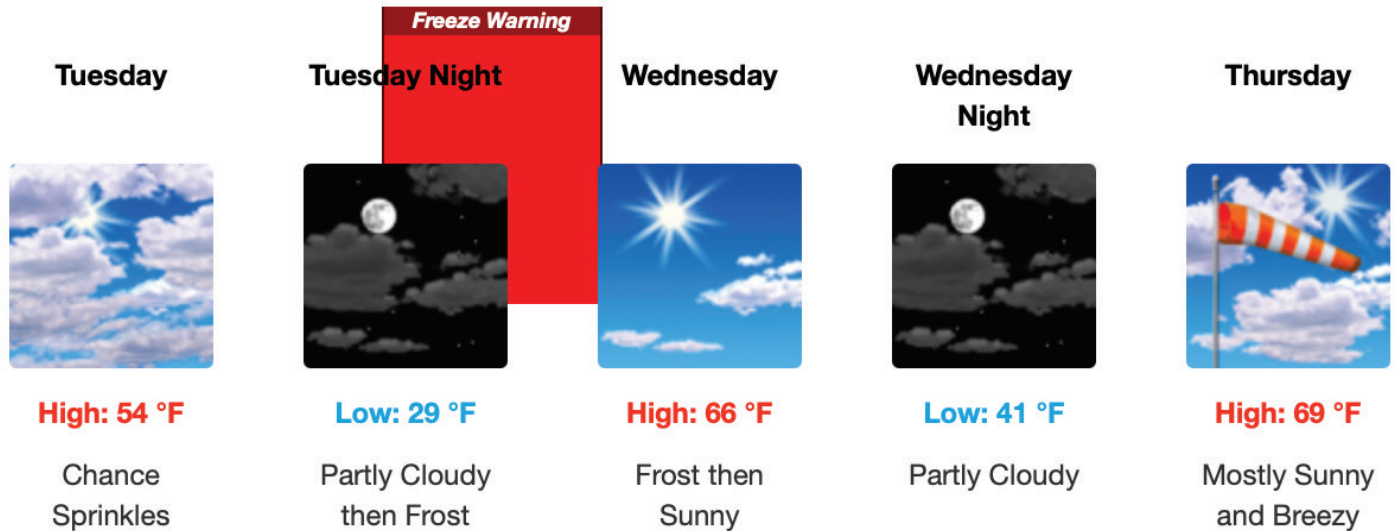
May 18, 2026



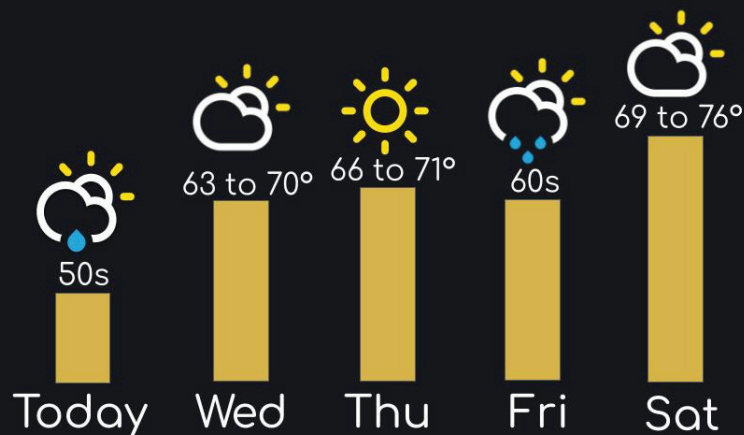


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**Weather Highlights for the rest of the week...**  
Sprinkles today. Cold tonight. Warmer Wednesday on. 40-50% chance of showers Friday.



## \*\* Cold Tonight \*\*

Lows in the upper 20s to low 30s

Cold temperatures could harm sensitive outdoor plants

Freeze Warning over portions of central to northeastern SD Wednesday morning

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

[weather.gov/aberndeen](http://weather.gov/aberndeen)

Sprinkles will remain today, ahead of high pressure building in from the west. The area of high pressure will result in lighter winds and colder temperatures tonight into Wednesday morning, with lows in the upper 20s to low 30s. Expect warmer weather Wednesday on. Our next chance of precipitation is Friday, with a 40-50% chance of showers Friday.

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## Cold Overnight into Wednesday Morning

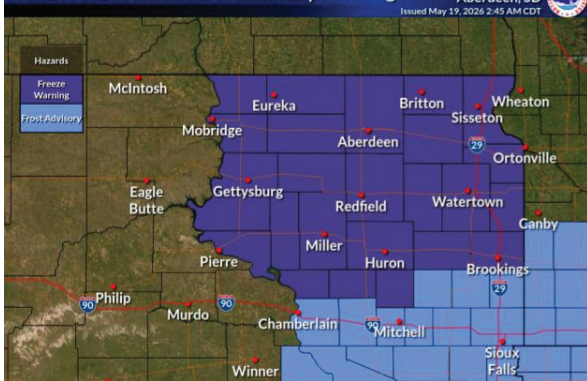
May 19, 2026  
2:58 AM CDT

- Lows in the upper 20s to low 30s
- **Freeze Warning** over portions of central to northeastern SD Wednesday morning
- **Cold temperatures could harm sensitive outdoor plants**



### Frost/Freeze Headlines Wednesday Morning

Weather Forecast Office  
Aberdeen, SD  
Issued May 19, 2026 2:45 AM CDT

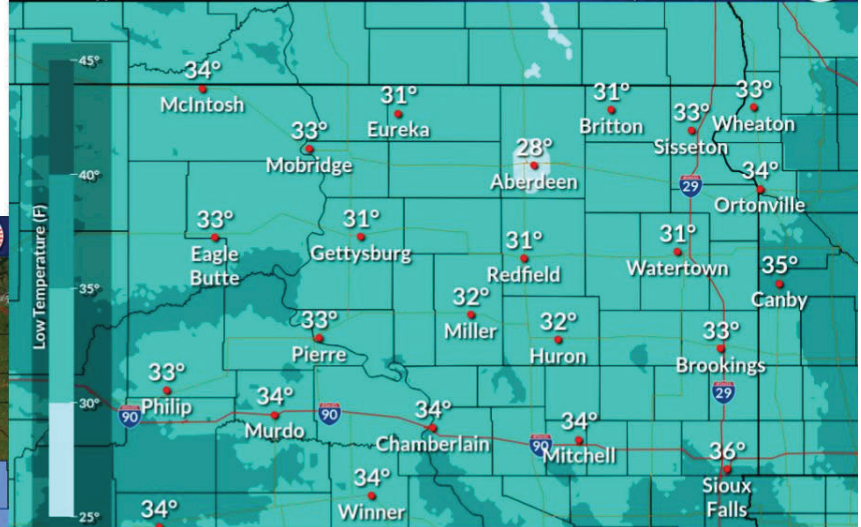


### Low Temperature Forecast - Wednesday Morning

lows in the upper 20s to low 30s

Weather Forecast Office  
Aberdeen, SD

Issued May 19, 2026 12:59 AM CDT



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

There are Freeze Warnings in effect late tonight into Wednesday morning for temperatures falling into the upper 20s to low 30s. These cold temperatures could harm sensitive outdoor plants.

## Protecting Plants From The Cold



**Bring potted plants inside a shelter or in your garage.**

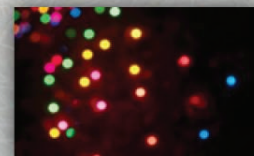


**Cover the plants. Use a sheet, box or container. Remember to uncover.**

Credit: charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu



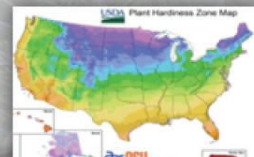
**Apply a thick layer of mulch around plants.**



**Supply a heat source. Holiday lights or 100 watt bulbs can provide sufficient heat.**



**Water your plants. Water helps trap heat or slow heat loss around the plant.**



**Be sure your plants are suited to the local climate.**



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 49 °F at 1:32 PM**

**Low Temp: 41 °F at 11:09 PM**

**Wind: 22 mph at 1:21 PM**

**Precip: : 0.22**

## Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1932

Record Low: 28 in 2002

Average High: 72

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in May.: 2.11

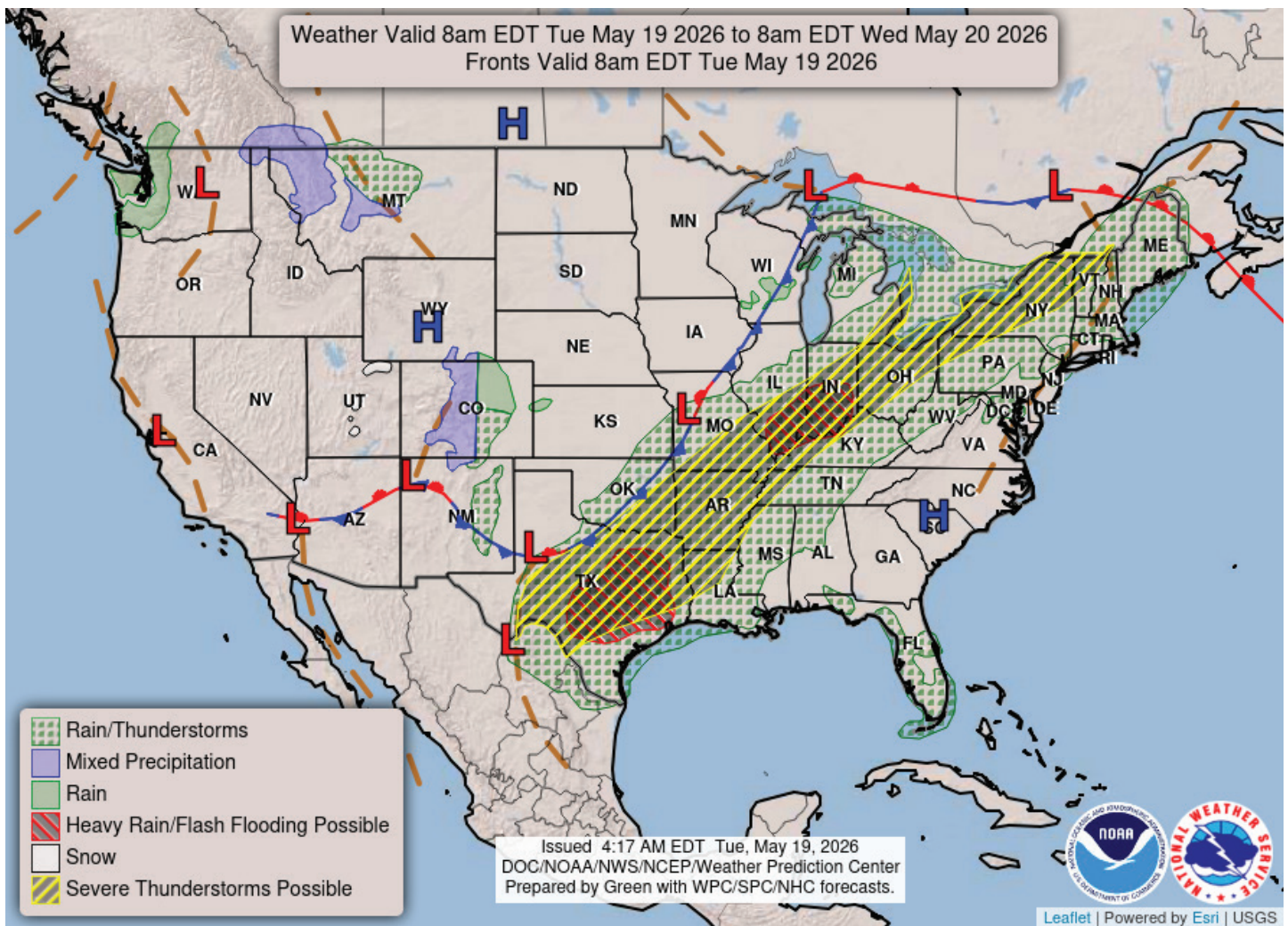
Precip to date in May.: 0.72

Average Precip to date: 6.08

Precip Year to Date: 3.84

Sunset Tonight: 9:00 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:56 am





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## **Today in Weather History**

May 19th, 1982: With the ground in the Black Hills already saturated from heavy rains the previous week, developing thunderstorms were not a welcome sight. The thunderstorms produced additional heavy rains, including 3.58 inches at Spearfish, 3.32 inches at Cheyenne Crossing, and 0.82 of an inch in twelve minutes at Hot Springs. With Flash Flood Warnings in effect, much of the area water came out of the banks of many streams, causing widespread damage in the Hills. A diversion Dam broke at Spearfish, causing a mudslide to cover some roads. In Deadwood, the main water line broke, leaving the city temporarily without water. Homes were evacuated at Nisland, Hot Springs, and Bridger. Damage throughout the Black Hills included washed-out bridges, flooded basements, several breached dams, and roads thoroughly washed away.

1780 — The infamous “dark day” in New England tradition. At noon it was nearly as dark as night. Chickens went to roost, and many persons were fearful of divine wrath. The phenomena was caused by forest fires to the west of New England. (David Ludlum)

1955 — Lake Maloya NM received 11.28 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (>The Weather Channel)

1975 — Thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 110 mph in Minnesota, between Fridley and Hugo. Fifty persons were injured. The hail and high winds destroyed fifty mobile homes, and a dozen aircraft, and also destroyed a third of the Brighton Elementary School. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms in Texas produced thirteen inches of rain northwest of Lavernia. The heavy rain, along with golf ball size hail, destroyed eighty percent of the crops in the area, while high winds toppled trees. Golf ball size hail was also reported south of Dallas and around San Antonio. Up to eight inches of rain drenched Guadalupe County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas produced hail as large as tennis balls around Midland, with the hail accumulating up to a foot deep. Showers and thunderstorms in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region produced 3.5 inches of rain near Schuylkill PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front spawned ten tornadoes from Illinois to Tennessee during the afternoon and night. Snow, wind and cold prevailed in the Northern Plateau Region and the Northern Rockies. Dixie, ID, was blanketed with nine inches of snow, winds gusted to 87 mph at Choteau MT, and the temperature at Crater Lake, OR, dipped to 11 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Thunderstorms deluged Hot Springs AR with thirteen inches of rain in nine hours resulting in a devastating flood. Two waves of water, four to six feet deep, swept down Central Avenue flooding stores and the famous bathhouses on Bathhouse Row. Water released from Lake Hamilton devastated the area between it and Remmel Dam. The 500 foot Carpenter Dam Bridge across Lake Catherine was completely washed away, as were cabins and mobile homes near the lake, many of which flowed right over the top of Remmel Dam. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



## Standing on a Firm Foundation

**When life's storms hit, only Christ provides the firm foundation needed for us to stand our ground.**

Isaiah 52:7: 7 How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, ``Your God reigns!"

Romans 10:15: 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ``HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

When the apostle Paul described the armor of God, he included every piece a Roman soldier would wear—including footwear (Ephesians 6:13-18). The wording indicates that the armor's purpose lies in its ability to help us "stand firm." After all, what good is armor if it can't help you keep your footing?

Paul identified the shoes as "the preparation of the gospel of peace" (v. 15). The Roman soldier's sandals had sturdy metal studs embedded in the soles. These hobnails provided sure footing on rough terrain and in the chaos of battle. With his feet secured in this way, the warrior had an obvious advantage: the ability to stand his ground. This part of his uniform enabled him to hold his position no matter what dangers he faced on the battlefield.

That is precisely what our heavenly Father wants for His children: to be able to stand firm in the face of troubles. When storms come—and they will—we need more than good intentions or positive thinking. We need something solid beneath us. This is possible only when we plant our feet firmly on Jesus Christ and trust in the gospel of peace He has given us. With Him as our foundation, we can stand strong.

*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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Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.18.26

1 5 20 29 34 2

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 10 Mins 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.15.26

17 23 25 52 61 3

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$277,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.18.26

23 27 29 36 51 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$27,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 10 Mins 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.16.26

14 16 18 32 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$94,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 25 Mins 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.18.26

3 13 18 40 63 23

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

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.18.26

4 13 34 61 65 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$113,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 44 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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

### **Congo reports more Ebola cases as WHO expresses concern over scale and speed of the outbreak**

By The Associated Press undefined

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — At least 131 deaths and over 500 suspected cases have been reported in the latest Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo, the Congolese health ministry said Tuesday as the World Health Organization's head expressed concern over the "scale and speed of the epidemic."

The virus spread undetected for at least a few weeks since the first person died of the virus, health experts and aid workers said, and the delayed response is now complicating efforts to curb the outbreak.

Congo's health minister, Samuel Roger Kamba, said 513 suspected cases and 131 deaths have been recorded, though he added "these are suspected deaths, and investigations are underway to determine which ones are actually linked to the disease." The numbers mark a sharp increase from Monday, when officials said there were 300 suspected cases, and highlight the largely unknown scale of the outbreak.

The World Health Organization's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said he is "deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic" and the U.N. health agency will convene its emergency committee later Tuesday.

He said the emergence of cases in urban areas, the deaths of healthcare workers, significant population movement in the area and a lack of vaccines and therapeutics are the main reasons for concern "for further spread and further deaths."

Health authorities say the outbreak, first confirmed Friday, is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant of the Ebola disease that has no approved therapeutics or vaccines. The WHO declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern on Sunday.

Cases have been confirmed in Bunia, North Kivu's rebel-held capital of Goma, Mongbwalu, Butembo, and Nyakunde. There has also been one case and one death reported in Uganda in people who traveled from Congo.

An American doctor is among the cases in Bunia, the capital of Ituri province, said Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, medical director of the country's National Institute of Bio-Medical Research. Dr. Peter Stafford had been treating patients at a hospital there when he developed symptoms, Serge, the organization he works for, said in a statement.

Three others employees of Serge were working at the same hospital — including Stafford's wife — but are not showing symptoms.

False negative Ebola tests delayed the response

Congo has said the first person died from the virus on April 24 in Bunia, and the body was repatriated to the Mongbwalu health zone, a mining area with a large population.

"That caused the Ebola outbreak to escalate," said Kamba, the health minister.

When another person fell ill on April 26, samples were sent to Kinshasa for testing, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control.

Samples from Bunia were initially tested for the more common type of Ebola, Zaire, Congolese officials said. They came back negative, said Dr. Richard Kitenge, the Health Ministry Incident Manager for Ebola, and local authorities assumed it was not Ebola.

On May 5, the WHO was alerted of about 50 deaths in Mongbwalu, including four health workers, which prompted further tests. The first confirmation of Ebola came on May 14.

Matthew M. Kavanagh, director of the Georgetown University Center for Global Health Policy and Politics said that because of the false negative tests, "we are playing catch-up against a very dangerous pathogen."

He criticized the Trump administration's earlier decision to withdraw from the WHO and make deep cuts in foreign aid — "the exact surveillance system meant to catch these viruses early," he said.

The U.S. State Department pushed aside criticism on Monday, saying that it sprang into action immedi-

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ately and has already provided \$13 million in assistance for the response.

Esther Sterk with the Medecins Sans Frontieres aid group told the AP: "The situation is quite worrying and is evolving pretty quickly. It was detected quite late." But she said that was often the case with outbreaks of Ebola, which has similar symptoms to other tropical diseases.

This is a rare type of Ebola

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare but severe and often fatal.

During a big Ebola outbreak over a decade ago, which killed over 11,000, many got infected while washing bodies during community funerals.

"Ebola is very much a disease of compassion in that it impacts the people who are more likely to be taking care of sick folks," said Dr. Craig Spencer, an associate professor at the Brown University School of Public Health who survived Ebola more than a decade ago after contracting the disease in Guinea.

The U.S. CDC says it causes fever, headache, muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and unexplained bleeding or bruising.

The severity of the symptoms and the rising caseload are fueling a growing sense of panic in the neighborhoods of Bunia.

"I know the consequences of Ebola, I know what it's like," said Noëla Lumo, a resident of Bunia. She previously lived in Beni, a region hit by former outbreaks. When she heard about the latest outbreak, Lumo began making protective masks by hand.

The region already grapples with a humanitarian crisis

Ituri's Mongbwalu is in remote eastern Congo with poor road networks more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the capital, Kinshasa.

Eastern Congo long has grappled with a humanitarian crisis and the threat of armed groups that have killed dozens and displaced thousands in Ituri in the past year.

U.N. staff have been asked to work from home and avoid physical contact and crowded areas, said a Bunia-based U.N. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the subject.

Ituri has over 273,000 displaced people out of a population of 1.9 million, according to the U.N.

## **Rescuers search for 3 missing after German building collapse possibly caused by gas explosion**

GÖRLITZ, Germany (AP) — Rescue teams in eastern Germany searched Tuesday morning for three people who were missing after a building collapsed in the eastern city of Görlitz near the Polish border.

Police said a gas explosion may have been the cause for the collapse of the building, which took place Monday night.

Emergency responders proceeded with great caution at the scene in case of gas leaks, German news agency dpa reported.

After unsuccessful attempts to locate the missing under the rubble with the help of search dogs, rescuers began clearing debris with an excavator and by hand around 2 a.m. Tuesday.

Initial concerns that up to five people may have been buried under rubble turned out to be wrong, police said.

A man who feared his wife and cousin might be trapped under the rubble said Monday they had arrived that day for a vacation in the rented house. While shopping at nearby supermarket, he heard an explosion and returned to the house to find nothing but a large pile of rubble, dpa reported.

The collapsed building in the historic Wilhelminian style contained rental and vacation apartments, police said.

Görlitz is Germany's easternmost city with a population of 57,000. The historic, undamaged old town district is a popular location for international film productions.



## **Blanche will face questions from lawmakers over a nearly \$1.8B fund to compensate Trump allies**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche will appear on Capitol Hill Tuesday for his first congressional testimony since taking the reins at the Justice Department as the law enforcement agency faces intense scrutiny over its plans to create a \$1.776 billion fund to pay allies of the Republican president who believe they were targeted politically.

Blanche's testimony before a Senate appropriations subcommittee follows Monday's announcement about the creation of the "Anti-Weaponization Fund," which critics decried as an illegal abuse of power designed to line the pockets of Trump supporters with taxpayer dollars.

In the weeks since assuming control of the Justice Department, Blanche has moved aggressively to advance the president's priorities — pushing forward cases against Trump's political foes, cracking down on leaks to media outlets and establishing the new fund to compensate those who believe they were mistreated by the Biden administration Justice Department.

Tuesday's hearing is meant to address the Trump administration's budget request for the Justice Department but is likely to delve into other controversies that have escalated concerns about the erosion of the law enforcement agency's tradition of independence from the White House.

Blanche is expected to face tough questions from lawmakers about the fund designed to resolve Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns. Nearly 100 Democrats in the House of Representatives signed onto a legal brief urging a judge to block what they described as an unprecedented resolution that they said would unjustly enrich people close to the president and open the door to meritless claims of political persecution.

"Let's call this what it is: a billion-dollar slush fund for Trump to reward felons, insurrectionists, and cronies, paid for by YOUR taxpayer dollars," Democratic Sen. Chris Coons, a member of the subcommittee from Delaware, wrote on X. "It's bad enough that this DOJ believes it works for Donald Trump. Now, it's giving him its budget to use as his piggy bank."

Blanche said Monday the fund will allow for people who believe they were targeted for prosecution for political purposes to apply for payouts, creating what he described as "a lawful process for victims of lawfare and weaponization to be heard and seek redress."

"The machinery of government should never be weaponized against any American, and it is this Department's intention to make right the wrongs that were previously done while ensuring this never happens again," Blanche said in a statement.

The fund is a further demonstration of the administration's eagerness to reward allies who before Trump came to power were investigated and in some cases charged and convicted. Most notably, the president on his first day back in office pardoned or commuted the sentences of supporters who rioted at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. His Justice Department since then has approved payouts to supporters entangled in the Trump-Russia investigation and investigated and prosecuted some of his perceived adversaries.

## **Putin visits China to reaffirm Russia ties as Xi also seeks stable US relations after Trump summit**

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin is traveling to China to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping less than a week after U.S. President Donald Trump wrapped up his own trip to Beijing.

Putin is scheduled to be in China on Tuesday and Wednesday in a visit likely to be closely watched as Beijing seeks to maintain stable relations with the United States while also preserving strong ties with Russia.

The Kremlin has said Putin and Xi plan to discuss economic cooperation between the two countries, but also "key international and regional issues." The visit coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship signed in 2001.

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Putin said in a video address released before his visit that bilateral ties are at "a truly unprecedented level" and the relationship plays an important role globally, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday.

There is "no connection" between Trump's visit to China and Putin's, presidential aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters Monday, noting the trip by the Russian leader was agreed in advance, several days after Putin and Xi spoke via videoconference on Feb. 4.

"The Trump visit was about stabilizing the world's most important bilateral relationship; the Putin visit is about reassuring a long-standing strategic partner," said Wang Zichen, deputy secretary-general for the Beijing-based think tank Center for China & Globalization. "For China, these two tracks are not mutually exclusive."

Putin and Xi call each other 'friend'

Putin last visited China in September 2025 to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Tianjin, watch a military parade honoring the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and hold talks with Xi.

At the time, Xi called his counterpart an "old friend" while Putin addressed Xi as "dear friend." In China, "old friend" is a very rare diplomatic term used by the government and party to describe favored foreign people.

In April, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Beijing and met Xi, who described the bilateral relationship as "precious" in the current international context. Xi said China and Russia needed to use a stronger strategic collaboration to defend their legitimate, shared interests and safeguard the unity of Global South countries.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said over the weekend that Putin's trip also would allow Russia to receive direct updates and exchange views with China concerning its talks with the U.S.

During Trump's visit, Xi described the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and China as the world's most important and said they should see each other as partners rather than rivals. By the end of the two-day summit, the countries said they would work on a new framework to manage "a constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability."

Wang of the center for China & Globalization observed, "Beijing wants stable relations with the West, continued strategic trust with Moscow, and enough diplomatic room to present itself as an unbiased major power capable of talking to all sides."

China is Russia's primary trade partner

For some, Putin's visit is meant to reinforce the partnership between Russia and China that has strengthened in recent years, in particular after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. China has said it is neutral in the Ukraine conflict while maintaining Russian trade ties despite economic and financial sanctions by the U.S. and Europe.

China has become Russia's top trading partner. Beijing is now the top customer for Russian oil and gas supplies and Moscow expects the war in Iran to increase the demand. China also has ignored demands from the West to stop providing high-tech components for Russia's weapons industries.

Ushakov, the Russian presidential aide, said Russia's oil exports to China grew by 35% in the first quarter of 2026 and that Russia is one of the biggest exporters of natural gas to China.

During "the crisis in the Middle East," Russia remains a reliable energy supplier and China is a "responsible consumer," Ushakov said.

Putin noted earlier this month that Moscow and Beijing have reached "a very substantial step forward in our cooperation in the oil and gas sector."

"Practically all the key issues have been agreed upon," the Russian leader said. "If we succeed in finalizing these details and bringing them to a conclusion during this visit, I will be extremely pleased."

Putin also hailed their bilateral relationship as a crucial, balancing force in international relations.

"Interaction between such nations as China and Russia undoubtedly serves as a factor of deterrence and stability," he said.

Moscow welcomes China's dialogue with the U.S. as another stabilizing element for the global economy, Putin added.

"We stand only to benefit from this, from the stability and constructive engagement between the U.S. and China," he said.

## The UAE's image as a Middle Eastern haven is tested by the Iran war

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United Arab Emirates for decades has advertised itself as a haven for international business in a Middle East awash in violent upheaval. Those waves have now crashed into this nation, testing its economic model like never before.

The UAE, a close ally of the United States and Israel, faced more missile and drone attacks from Iran during the war than any other country. The attacks — and Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz — have more than halved the Emirates' exports of crude oil and natural gas. Its tourism and conference sectors have also suffered.

The country, which sits just across the Persian Gulf from Iran, has portrayed itself as unfazed, even as it makes significant changes. It recently announced plans to build another pipeline to reduce its reliance on the strait, and it dropped out of the OPEC oil cartel so it can boost energy production longer-term, something that had been under consideration since before the war.

While the U.S. and Israel started the war, the UAE is firmly entangled. A drone attack Sunday on its Barakah nuclear power plant underlines the continued risks — even if a shaky ceasefire holds.

Because the Emirates boasts a large surplus of cash, the war's economic disruptions so far do not appear to have caused major job losses or an exodus of foreign business. The longer the standoff drags on and prevents business as usual in the Emirates, the greater the risk to its image that has been key to drawing international business and investment.

Emirati officials' increasingly accuse Iran of piracy and even terrorism, while threatening to take military action.

The UAE "will not tolerate any threat to its security and sovereignty under any circumstances," its Foreign Ministry said Sunday night. "It reserves its full, sovereign, legitimate, diplomatic, and military rights to respond to any threats, allegations or hostilities."

UAE's ruling family directs a more aggressive foreign policy

It's hard to know how the UAE will respond to the Barakah attack, which caused no radiological release and hasn't stopped the nuclear plant in Abu Dhabi's far western desert from operating.

The UAE is a federation of seven autocratically ruled sheikhdoms, including Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Its top ruling body is the Federal Supreme Council, comprised of the hereditary rulers of its seven emirates. But decision-making is dominated by Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and his family.

The ruling family, analysts say, has directed a more aggressive foreign policy in the last decades, including entering the war in Yemen against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The UAE helped bring Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi to power in 2013, and is alleged to have sent arms to parties in Sudan and Libya's civil wars, which it denies.

Sheikh Mohammed, who rarely speaks publicly, gave his only brief remarks on the war for state media while visiting those wounded by Iranian attacks at a hospital in March.

"The UAE is attractive, the UAE is beautiful, the UAE is a model. But I say to them: do not be misled by the UAE's appearance," the sheikh warned at the time. "The UAE has thick skin and bitter flesh; we are no easy prey."

But that doesn't mean there has been no pain.

Economic warning signs

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has impeded the UAE's ability to sell crude oil and natural gas,

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though a few of its tankers have made it out. It can export approximately 1.8 million barrels of crude a day through a pipeline to Fujairah, a city with an oil terminal on the Gulf of Oman outside the strait. The Emirates is trying to speed up the construction of a second pipeline to double that capacity.

The UAE's tourism and conference market — estimated to be more than 12% of its economic output — has also been hit hard.

Since the war started Feb. 28, over 70 scheduled events in the UAE have been postponed, canceled or otherwise affected, according to Northbourne Advisory, a communications firm based in Qatar that's been tracking the effects of the war. The Emirati government did not issue a blanket ban for events, but organizers likely changed their plans over "insurance withdrawal and liability exposure," the firm said.

On May 4, the country's airline, Emirates, announced it had resumed nearly its entire schedule of flights out of Dubai International Airport, the busiest worldwide for years for international travel. But the same day, Iran launched multiple drone and missile attacks, setting off alerts on mobile phones and groans among the Emirates' business community, which is eager to return to some sense of normalcy.

The airport appears to be building a protective cage around its jet fuel tanks, something officials there declined to discuss.

Hotels, including Dubai's iconic, sail-shaped Burj Al Arab, have closed for renovations as occupancy rates have fallen to around 20%. Moody's Analytics estimates that rate will fall to 10% in the June quarter, down from 80% before the war.

Moody's warned that occupancy rates will likely stay down through the rest of 2026, with travelers likely to remain hesitant even after hostilities subside.

In an analysis published on Monday, the Institute of International Finance said: "Dubai's openness makes it vulnerable to shocks in travel, logistics, and confidence, while Abu Dhabi's balance sheet and energy assets give the federation the capacity to absorb the blow."

Coin-operated fighter jet art

Dubai in particular has been trying to show it is still open.

This past weekend, Dubai hosted an abbreviated version of its annual Art Dubai show. The war felt close by, not only because the show's preview happened the same day Iran seized a ship anchored off Fujairah.

One piece of art was a coin-operated black fighter jet, covered in pairs of black Nike tennis shoes.

One artist, Solimán López of Spain, came with a piece centered on the idea of him claiming ownership of a metal-rich asteroid that's the target of a NASA mission. The artwork is meant to reflect on how countries and companies extract oil and other commodities.

The conflict made it a challenge to attend with his work, he said. "But I said I have to do my best, because I do believe that it's the perfect context to talk about this in the region," he said.

Another artist, Alfred Tarazi of Beirut, noted his grandparents lived through two world wars.

"Life doesn't stop in a world war," he said. "We can only counter a narrative of violence with culture."

## Trump's tough-talk foreign policy is hitting a wall with Iran as it grips Strait of Hormuz

By MATTHEW LEE and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has considered himself an effective dealmaker above all else, but he appears to have hit a wall with Iran as his tough talk, threats and even military action have not moved Tehran from its long-established positions.

With shifting goals that make it difficult to judge the status of the U.S. effort, Trump and his top aides have insisted the United States has already won the war and that Iran is ready to reach an agreement in the wake of escalating U.S. threats during a tenuous ceasefire.

But Trump once again backed down, saying Monday that he had put plans for an imminent resumption of attacks on hold at the request of Gulf Arab states because "serious negotiations are now taking place, and that, in their opinion, as Great Leaders and Allies, a Deal will be made, which will be very acceptable to the United States of America, as well as all Countries in the Middle East, and beyond."



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Although he said he had called off strikes planned for Tuesday, Trump kept up the bravado, saying he told military leaders "to be prepared to go forward with a full, large scale assault of Iran, on a moment's notice, in the event that an acceptable Deal is not reached." Trump has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off.

Despite growing internal unrest, a crippled economy and the deaths of many of its leaders, there is no evidence Iran is set to meet Trump's demands — many of which it has long rejected. In fact, it has dug in. That has left Trump's stated top objectives unrealized: Iran has yet to agree to abandon its nuclear program or its ballistic missile development, or cease support for its proxies in the region, including those in Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

The White House on Monday defended the president's approach, saying, "Trump's preference is always peace and diplomacy" but he will only accept a deal that puts America first. "President Trump holds all the cards and wisely keeps all options on the table to ensure that Iran can never have a nuclear weapon," spokesperson Olivia Wales said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Iran has leverage with the Strait of Hormuz

Crucially, Iran still has a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the vital shipping lane for global oil supplies, even as the U.S. military has enforced its own blockade on Iranian ports. The wild shifts in the global energy market that followed have raised gasoline prices, hurting U.S. consumers and causing potential problems for Trump's Republican Party ahead of congressional midterm elections in November.

Trump's playbook of turning up the pressure — economically and militarily — to bend foreign governments to his will is not playing out in Iran as it has in Venezuela, Cuba and elsewhere. Oil blockades have squeezed those two countries and the Trump administration quickly ousted Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, but they do not hold a bargaining chip as effective as Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz.

With the Iran war driving up costs for Americans, Trump's approval rating on the economy has slumped, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted last month, with even Republicans showing less faith in his leadership.

For all of Trump's rhetoric, Iran has been unwilling to accept limitations on any of its policies that amount to more than what it conceded during the negotiations for a nuclear deal with world powers during the Obama administration. Trump called it the "worst ever" agreement negotiated by the U.S. and pulled out of it in his first term in 2018.

Since a fragile truce in the war went into effect last month, Trump has lashed out over the slow pace of negotiations to reach a permanent deal.

"For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them," Trump posted on social media Sunday shortly after a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Iranian response was quick. "Our armed forces' fingers are on the trigger, while diplomacy is also continuing," Mohsen Rezaei, a military adviser to Iran's supreme leader, said on state television.

Neither side sees defeat, expert says

Ali Vaez, Iran director at the International Crisis Group who has watched years of fruitless diplomacy between Washington and Tehran, said the longtime adversaries do not see themselves as being defeated by the latest conflict.

"Since the ceasefire took effect, both Washington and Tehran seem to be working on the assumption that time acts in their favor: Each believes that the blockade and counter-blockade in the Strait of Hormuz raises the costs for the other side, while giving a reprieve to prepare for a potential resumption of hostilities," Vaez said.

Despite the impact of America's economic pressure campaign, Iranian officials have not reached the pain threshold "to the point of accepting what it perceives as capitulatory demands," he said.

David Schenker, a former assistant secretary of state for the Middle East in Trump's first administration who is currently at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, described the current situation as "a stalemate."

He said Trump likely has "misgivings" about returning to full-on military conflict, especially because of

Gulf Arab anxieties about Iranian retaliation and the volatility in the energy markets, with its political implications in the U.S.

Rich Goldberg, an Iran hawk and former National Security Council official in both of Trump's administrations who is now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank, insisted that Trump is still operating from a position of strength, including with the Strait of Hormuz.

Goldberg, who has a special interest in American energy dominance, said that while reopening the strait would ease the "pain at the pump" felt by many Americans, it was not critical.

"The short-term pain at the pump is distracting people from U.S. overall energy dominance," he said. "This is not a permanent crisis."

## **Police were searching for teens behind San Diego mosque shooting before the bloodshed began**

By JULIE WATSON and EUGENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Before the first shot rang out at a San Diego mosque in a deadly shooting that would leave three men dead, police were already scrambling to find two teenagers who would ultimately be responsible.

The search began after a mother of one of the teenagers reported her son was suicidal and had run away, according to San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl, who said weapons were missing from the home and her vehicle was gone.

Two hours later, the shooting began at the Islamic Center of San Diego, just blocks away from the home.

The suspects, ages 17 and 18, were found in a vehicle after killing themselves a few blocks from the site of the shooting.

Authorities planned to execute search warrants related to the investigation Tuesday as they piece together how and why the shooting unfolded. There was no specific threat made against the Islamic center, but authorities found evidence that the suspects engaged in "generalized hate rhetoric," Wahl said, noting that the shooting is being investigated as a hate crime.

The center, which said it was closed until further notice, is the largest mosque in San Diego and typically holds five daily prayers.

"These were men who put themselves on the line for our masjid and our community," the center wrote in a Facebook post, using the Arabic word for mosque. "Men of courage, sacrifice, and faith. Their absence leaves a void that can never truly be filled."

On Monday morning, the search for the missing teen intensified as law enforcement began to gather more details. Police learned he had dressed in camouflage and was with an acquaintance. Officers used automated license plate readers to track the car and went to a mall in the area. They also alerted a school where at least one of the teens had been a student and continued interviewing the mother, Wahl said.

When reports of the shooting came in, police responded within four minutes of being called. Three men were dead when they arrived, Wahl said.

Among those killed was a security guard, who police believe "played a pivotal role" in keeping the attack from being "much worse," Wahl said.

"It's fair to say his actions were heroic," the chief said at a news conference. "Undoubtedly he saved lives today."

A family friend identified the guard as Amin Abdullah, a well-known face at the mosque who had worked there for more than a decade.

"He wanted to defend the innocent so he decided to become a security guard," said Shaykh Uthman Ibn Farooq, who spoke with Abdullah's son.

The family could not immediately be reached for comment.

The center called him "a courageous man who put himself on the line of the safety of others, who even in his last moments did not stop protecting our community."

The mosque is in a neighborhood of homes, apartments and strip malls with Middle Eastern restaurants

and markets. The center includes the Al Rashid School, which offers courses in Arabic language, Islamic studies and the Quran for students ages 5 and up, according to its website.

Aerial TV footage showed more than a dozen children holding hands and being walked out of the center's parking lot as it was surrounded by scores of police vehicles.

Imam Taha Hassane, the mosque's director, called it "extremely outrageous to target a place of worship," adding that the center focused on interfaith relations and community building.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, one of the largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy groups in the U.S., condemned the shooting.

"No one should ever fear for their safety while attending prayers or studying at an elementary school," CAIR-San Diego Executive Director Tazheen Nizam said in a statement.

President Donald Trump called the shooting a "terrible situation."

## **Mark Fuhrman, former LA police detective convicted of lying during OJ Simpson murder trial, has died**

By REBECCA BOONE and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Former Los Angeles police detective Mark Fuhrman, who was convicted of lying during testimony at the O.J. Simpson murder trial, has died. He was 74.

Fuhrman was one of the first two police detectives sent to investigate the 1994 killings of Simpson's ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ronald Goldman, in Los Angeles. He reported finding a bloody glove at Simpson's home but his credibility came under attack during the trial as the defense raised the prospect of racial bias.

Under cross-examination, Fuhrman testified that he had never made anti-Black racial slurs in the past decade, but a recording showed he had done so repeatedly.

Lynn Acebedo, the chief deputy coroner in Kootenai County, Idaho, said that Fuhrman died May 12. The county does not release the cause of death as a rule.

Alan Dershowitz, a prominent lawyer and law professor who was a legal strategist on Simpson's defense "Dream Team," said Fuhrman was a "much better detective than he was a witness."

"He's very smart, and you know, a very, very aggressive detective. Ultimately his actions helped us win the O.J. case because of his use of the 'n' word," Dershowitz said Monday evening. "I got to know him later, after it was all over, and we had a cordial relationship."

Fuhrman retired from the Los Angeles Police Department after Simpson's 1995 acquittal. He subsequently moved to Idaho with his family and set up a 20-acre (eight-hectare) farm, raising chickens, goats, sheep and llamas.

In 1996, Fuhrman was charged with perjury and pleaded no contest. He later became a TV and radio commentator and wrote the book "Murder in Brentwood" about the killings.

A criminal-court jury found Simpson, a former star NFL running back and actor, not guilty of murder in 1995, but a separate civil trial jury found him liable in 1997 for the deaths and ordered him to pay \$33.5 million to relatives of Brown and Goldman. He served nine years in prison on unrelated charges and died in Las Vegas of prostate cancer in 2024 at the age of 76.

Kato Kaelin, a friend of Brown who also testified in the murder trial, wrote in a post on X that he wanted to respectfully acknowledge Fuhrman's death and that he hopes Fuhrman's loved ones can find peace.

"While we were never close personally, our lives were indelibly linked through our roles in the O.J. Simpson trial over thirty years ago. It was a deeply complex and painful chapter for everyone involved, but any loss of life is a time for reflection and solemnity," Kaelin wrote.

Fuhrman's father left when he was 7 years old, and Fuhrman often cared for his younger brother while his mother worked. As an adult, he joined the Marines and then the Los Angeles Police Department.

## Lawyers for the man accused of killing Charlie Kirk ask to seal evidence and parts of a key hearing

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Lawyers for the man accused of killing Charlie Kirk will make their case Tuesday to close portions of a key hearing and seal some evidence after a judge rejected their request to ban news cameras from court.

Tyler Robinson's defense has argued that broadcasts of the proceedings create a media frenzy that often misrepresents him and could bias potential jurors. They hope to keep private portions of his preliminary hearing, scheduled for July 6-10, when prosecutors must show they have enough evidence against Robinson to proceed to trial.

The July hearing will mark the most significant presentation of details to date in a case that has focused largely on public access in its first eight months.

Prosecutors intend to seek the death penalty if Robinson, 23, is convicted. He is charged with crimes including aggravated murder in the Sept. 10 assassination of the conservative activist on the Utah Valley University campus. Robinson has not yet entered a plea.

Prior to his death, Kirk and the conservative youth movement he founded, Turning Point USA, emerged as a major force in U.S. politics that was considered instrumental in getting President Donald Trump elected to a second term.

As public attention has swirled, state District Judge Tony Graf has taken steps to protect Robinson's rights in court, but he declined earlier this month to shut out cameras.

During the preliminary hearing, prosecutors say they plan to introduce forensic analyses, surveillance video, recordings of witness statements, autopsy findings and alleged messages from Robinson admitting to the crime.

Defense attorneys have asked the judge to seal dozens of those exhibits to "prevent infecting the potential jury pool," according to a court document filed Monday.

Prosecutors argue the preliminary hearing should remain open, but they agree that media should be restricted from viewing or copying some exhibits that could be used in a future trial.

Prosecutors have said Robinson left a note for his romantic partner hidden under a keyboard that said, "I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk and I'm going to take it." They have also said he wrote in a text message about Kirk: "I had enough of his hatred. Some hate can't be negotiated out."

Authorities have said DNA consistent with Robinson's was found on the trigger of the rifle used to kill Kirk, the fired cartridge casing, two unfired cartridges and a towel used to wrap the rifle.

Deputy Utah County Attorney Chad Grunander said in court documents that some evidence they plan to present in July is "reliable hearsay," or statements made outside of court that are considered highly trustworthy. Such statements are typically allowed in preliminary hearings but not at trial, where standards are stricter.

Robinson's attorneys worry the statements will spread widely after the preliminary hearing, harm their client and then not be admissible at a trial.

Prosecutors disagree, saying in a court filing, "There is nothing to suggest that the substance of the evidence is inadmissible."

## Federal judge bans most arrests by federal agents in immigration courts in New York

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal agents can no longer make arrests without exceptional circumstances in and around three Manhattan buildings where immigration proceedings occur, a judge ruled Monday.

The decision by U.S. District Judge P. Kevin Castel brings an abrupt halt to a practice begun under the Trump administration that enabled agents to take into custody individuals who follow requirements to ap-



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pear before immigration judges.

The arrests have resulted in dramatic scenes in courthouse hallways as those being detained were sometimes pulled away from emotional family members.

Castel said in a written decision that while there was "a strong governmental interest in enforcing immigration laws," there also was a serious interest in letting individuals attend removal proceedings and pursue asylum claims before a judge "without fear of arrest."

He noted that federal agents still can detain individuals at locations away from immigration courts and also can make arrests at immigration courthouses when there are serious threats to public safety.

He said the boundaries set out in federal policy five years ago can remain in effect, but a court case before him was likely to result in a finding that a withdrawal of that policy after President Donald Trump took office was "arbitrary and capricious."

Castel also noted that government lawyers recently reversed their position, saying they've learned that 2025 policies regarding arrests in and around courthouses set by the Trump administration did not apply to immigration courts after all.

The judge, who last year had declined to ban the practice, said the new position by government lawyers meant it was necessary to "correct a clear error and prevent a manifest injustice."

The ruling came in a lawsuit brought by the New York Civil Liberties Union, the American Civil Liberties Union, Make the Road NY and others.

It was praised by Amy Belsher, director of the NYCLU's Immigrants' Rights Litigation.

She called it "an enormous win for noncitizen New Yorkers seeking to safely attend their immigration court proceedings."

Messages seeking comment from the Department of Homeland Security were not immediately returned. A spokesperson for Justice Department lawyers declined comment.

Castel's decision, which did not apply nationwide, pertained to immigration courts at 26 Federal Plaza, 201 Varick Street and 290 Broadway in Manhattan. New York's FBI headquarters is also located at 26 Federal Plaza, a large building across from two federal courthouses near City Hall.

The organizations first brought the lawsuit last August on behalf of immigrant advocacy groups African Communities Together and The Door.

"In the face of this administration's ongoing targeting of our young members, this decision brings us hope," said Beth Baltimore, deputy director of The Door's Legal Services Center.

"Our staff continues to work tirelessly to support Door members who were terrified to go to their required court appearances. We stand with our members to fight for those impacted by courthouse arrests, including those who remain detained, and other cruel policies," Baltimore said in a release.

## **What to watch in Tuesday's primaries as Trump's endorsement is put to the test**

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Is there a future in politics for Republicans who cross President Donald Trump?

The signs this year suggest no, and Trump has convinced his voters to defeat his adversaries again and again. The next test of the president's power to extract retribution is on Tuesday, when Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky faces a Trump-backed primary challenger.

Massie has been a thorn in the president's side for pushing for the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files, opposing the war with Iran and voting against Trump's signature tax legislation last year.

Here are some things to watch as voters in Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Oregon and Pennsylvania cast ballots on Tuesday.

Will Trump's endorsement continue to carry the day?

Trump has repeatedly shown that Republican primary voters will follow his lead, even as his popularity wanes with the broader electorate.

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In Kentucky, he's supporting first-time candidate Ed Gallrein over Massie, who has been in office since 2012. Massie is trying to convince Republicans that they can support both himself and Trump at the same time, a proposition that has been tried unsuccessfully in other races around the country.

On Saturday, Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana failed to even make the runoff, unable to repair his relationship with Trump five years after voting to convict him during his second impeachment trial. And earlier this month, Trump successfully dislodged five of seven Indiana Republicans he targeted for voting against his redistricting plan.

Trump is flexing his influence in other places on Tuesday as well.

In the race for Georgia governor, Trump is backing Lt. Gov. Burt Jones in an unexpectedly ugly battle for the Republican nomination. Jones, who comes from a wealthy Georgia family, has given his campaign \$19 million. But billionaire Rick Jackson, a health care tycoon, has put more than \$83 million of his fortune into the race. Trump's endorsement power has rarely been tested against that level of lopsided spending.

Trump stayed on the sidelines of Georgia's Senate race, leaving a crowded field of hopefuls seeking to take on Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff, who's running unopposed for his party's nomination. But in Alabama, Trump endorsed Rep. Barry Moore for Senate to replace Tommy Tuberville, who is running for governor.

A test for Shapiro in Pennsylvania

It's no secret that Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro may run for the White House.

But on Tuesday, the Democrat's political clout will be tested in his home state, where he's working to elect a slate of House candidates that he thinks will give his party the best chance to flip Republican seats in the fall.

Shapiro's endorsed candidates include Paige Cognito, mayor of Scranton; Bob Brooks, president of the state firefighters' union; and Janelle Stelson, a former television news personality who narrowly lost two years ago.

As popular as he may be, Shapiro's endorsements haven't scared off Democratic rivals, who are fighting to defeat the governor's picks — and perhaps send a message that he's not as strong as he'd like to be with the 2028 presidential contest looming.

Politically homeless in Georgia?

Georgia is about to feature a fresh case study in the divergent paths available to Republicans who defy Trump.

Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and former Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan were among the few Republicans to speak out against Trump's attempt to overturn his 2020 loss.

Both are now running for governor — Raffensperger as a Republican and Duncan as a Democrat — and both are trying to convince voters to look past things they said in the past.

Raffensperger is spending millions of his own money trying to reintroduce himself to Republicans by reminding them of his long career in conservative politics before defying Trump.

Duncan, meanwhile, is trying to convince Democratic voters that they can trust him after renouncing his prior opposition to abortion rights, gun control and the expansion of Georgia's Medicaid program.

The primaries will go to a runoff on June 16 if nobody gets 50% of the vote on Tuesday.

Chaos in Alabama?

Confusion may reign across Alabama on Tuesday as votes cast in four of the state's seven congressional districts may not be counted.

That's because Republican Gov. Kay Ivey moved just last week to postpone the primaries until Aug. 11, emboldened by the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that hollowed out the Voting Rights Act. Republicans across Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee are now scrambling to redraw congressional boundaries to eliminate some majority-Black U.S. House districts to maximize their political advantage.

Over the weekend, thousands of civil rights activists rallied in Alabama against the changes, but the redistricting plan is moving forward.

That means that ballots cast Tuesday in primaries for Alabama's 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th congressional districts will be voided, the secretary of state says, while state officials restore a previous set of Republican-drawn district boundaries.

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You'd be excused for being confused. Alabama voters will still choose nominees Tuesday as planned for the 3rd, 4th and 5th congressional districts, as well as for U.S. Senate and a full slate of state and local offices.

Rep. David Scott's death is a reminder of Democratic gerontocracy

The late Rep. David Scott, D-Ga., was the fourth Democrat to die in office this term, fueling a growing restlessness on the left over the party's aging leadership. Scott, who was 80 when he died, was seeking a 13th term.

Scott's name will appear on the ballot alongside five other candidates running in the Democratic primary, but votes for him will not be counted. Whether someone wins on Tuesday or the race goes to a runoff on June 16, the Democratic nominee is almost certain to win the general election in a district that tilts overwhelmingly toward the Democrats.

A special election on July 28 will decide who finishes the remainder of Scott's term, with a runoff on Aug. 25 if nobody gets a majority.

## **OpenAI avoided a costly court loss to Elon Musk, but neither side is unscathed**

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — After prevailing in its court fight with Elon Musk, OpenAI — the ChatGPT maker valued at \$852 billion — remains on track for what could be one of the largest initial public offerings in history.

Musk had been seeking the ouster of his fellow OpenAI co-founder, CEO Sam Altman, among other changes to the company. But with testimony from witnesses who called Altman dishonest, he's hardly emerged unscathed.

At a time of growing concern about artificial intelligence's impacts, the landmark trial also shed new light on the flaws and outsize ambitions of the small number of billionaires steering the development of the breakthrough technology.

The trial was a reminder, said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute, "of how much the future of AI still depends on a remarkably small group of powerful tech figures and their personal rivalries."

"The trial highlighted not just a dispute between Musk and Altman, but a broader disconnect between the people building these systems and many of the people increasingly expected to live and work alongside them," Kreps said.

Musk had accused OpenAI, Altman and his top lieutenant Greg Brockman of betraying a shared vision for it to remain a nonprofit dedicated to guiding AI's development for the good of humanity. Altman, in turn, accused Musk of trying to hobble the ChatGPT maker for the benefit of his own AI company.

On Monday, the nine-person federal jury in Oakland, California, found that Musk waited too long to file his lawsuit and missed a statutory deadline. After a three-week trial that included hundreds of pieces of evidence and some of tech's biggest names on the stand, the jury deliberated less than two hours before returning a verdict essentially on a technicality.

Musk said he will appeal and called Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who oversaw the trial, a "terrible activist Oakland judge, who simply used the jury as a fig leaf" to create a bad precedent. "She just handed out a free license to loot charities if you can keep the looting quiet for a few years!" Musk wrote on his social media platform X.

It was the second major courtroom loss for Musk in less than two months.

Gonzalez Rogers made it clear early on in the trial that she did not want it to become a debate over AI's dangers. But the unresolved questions about the risks AI poses for job losses, mental health issues and even humanity's extinction served as a backdrop for the proceedings, with protesters decrying both Musk and Altman becoming a regular presence outside the federal courthouse.



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Demonstrators' signs declared the real losers were regular people whose lives are being upended by an industry controlled by out-of-touch billionaires who can't get along.

"This is a funny microcosm of this moment where we have this hugely important technology that's being developed by for-profit corporations run by people like Musk and Altman and not as the part of some government-led initiative," said Columbia Law School professor Dorothy Lund.

The trial laid bare some of Silicon Valley's messy inner workings, with emails, diary entries and sometimes embarrassing text message exchanges shown as evidence. Texts between Altman and a former OpenAI executive became meme fodder and the subject of parody songs.

The trial shed light on Altman's removal from the OpenAI board in 2023, before he returned to his role a few days later. Several witnesses including two ex-board members, Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley, said there were concerns about Altman's truthfulness.

Throughout the trial, OpenAI brushed off Musk's allegations of betrayal as an unfounded case of sour grapes aimed at undercutting the company's rapid growth and bolstering Musk's own artificial intelligence company, xAI, which is now part of SpaceX.

Both Musk's SpaceX and OpenAI are planning massive initial public offerings, as is Anthropic, which was formed by a group of seven ex-OpenAI leaders.

"It's a lot of dirty laundry that doesn't look very appealing, I suppose, and so that may hurt their reputation and may have downstream effects on all kinds of things that you can't even anticipate," said University of Richmond Law School professor Carl Tobias. "But you know, AI is likely to come forward and continue even if it isn't OpenAI."

## **Timeline of recent US-Cuba relations amid heightened tensions in Trump's second term**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States began ratcheting up pressure on communist-controlled Cuba after the military action in Venezuela early this year resulted in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro.

The Justice Department is preparing to seek an indictment of former Cuban leader Raúl Castro. A criminal charge against Castro would have to be approved by a grand jury and could escalate tensions with Havana.

It would come amid rising tensions this year between President Donald Trump's administration and Cuba's government. Meanwhile, the U.S. is in the midst of an uneasy ceasefire in the U.S. war against Iran.

Here's a closer look at developments over the year between Cuba and the U.S.

Jan. 4

A day after the operation in Venezuela that captured Maduro, Secretary of State Marco Rubio declared Cuba's government was "in a lot of trouble," as the president renewed calls for an American takeover of the Danish territory of Greenland.

Jan. 11

Trump fired off a warning to the government of Cuba as the close ally of Venezuela braced for potential unrest after Maduro was deposed. Trump called for the Cuban government "to make a deal BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE."

Cuba's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, responded, "Those who turn everything into a business, even human lives, have no moral authority to point the finger at Cuba in any way, absolutely in any way."

Jan. 30

Trump signed an executive order to impose a tariff on any goods from countries that sell or provide oil to Cuba, a move that could further cripple the island.

Feb. 27

A day before the war in Iran began, Trump said the U.S. was in talks with Havana and raised the possibility of a "friendly takeover of Cuba," though he didn't offer any details.

Trump said Rubio was in discussions with Cuban leaders "at a very high level."

Trump didn't clarify his comments but seemed to indicate that the situation with Cuba, among Wash-

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ington's bitterest adversaries for decades, was coming to a critical point.

Sometime in February

Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, the grandson of Castro known as "Raúlito," secretly met with Rubio on the sidelines of a Caribbean Community summit in St. Kitts in February.

March 13

Díaz-Canel said Cuba and the U.S. held talks, marking the first time the Caribbean country confirmed widespread speculation about discussions with the Trump administration amid an energy crisis.

He said the talks "were aimed at finding solutions through dialogue to the bilateral differences between our two nations. International factors facilitated these exchanges."

March 31

A sanctioned Russian oil tanker arrived in Cuba, the first time in three months fuel reached the island.

April 9

Díaz-Canel said he would not resign.

April 12

Díaz-Canel said in an interview he would not step down and that the U.S. has no valid reason to carry out a military attack against the island or to attempt to depose him.

Speaking in the interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," the president said an invasion of Cuba would be costly and affect regional security.

April 16

Díaz-Canel spoke during a rally that drew hundreds of people to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the declaration of the Cuban Revolution's socialist essence.

"The moment is extremely challenging and calls upon us once again, as on April 16, 1961, to be ready to confront serious threats, including military aggression. We do not want it, but it is our duty to prepare to avoid it and, if it becomes inevitable, to defeat it," Díaz-Canel said.

April 17

News emerged that an American delegation recently met with Cuban government officials, marking a renewed diplomatic push. This was at least the third meeting with Rodríguez Castro.

A senior State Department official met with Rodríguez Castro earlier in the month, according to a department official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

The official did not say who from the U.S. met with Rodríguez Castro, whose grandfather is believed to play an influential role in the Cuban government despite not holding an official post. A second U.S. official said Rubio was not part of the delegation that visited Havana.

April 23

A Cuban diplomat speaking at the United Nations said Havana will not abide by any American "ultimatums" to release political prisoners as part of new talks.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Cuban Ambassador to the U.N. Ernesto Soberón Guzmán said internal issues regarding detainees "are not on the negotiating table." The release of political prisoners was a key U.S. demand as the longtime adversaries held discussions in Cuba for the first time in a decade.

April 28

Senate Republicans rejected legislation from Democrats that would have required Trump to end the U.S. energy blockade on Cuba unless he receives approval from Congress.

The vote on the war powers resolution showed how Republicans continue to stand behind Trump as he acts unilaterally to exert American force in a range of global conflicts, including Venezuela, Iran and Cuba — one of the U.S.'s closest neighbors.

May 7

U.S. officials say the United States was not looking at imminent military action against Havana despite Trump's repeated threats that "Cuba is next" and that American warships deployed in the Middle East for the Iran conflict could return by way of the island.

The officials involved in preliminary discussions with Cuban authorities also told the AP that they are not

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optimistic the communist government will accept an offer for tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid, two years of free Starlink internet access for all Cubans, agricultural assistance and infrastructure support.

But they say Cuba has not yet outright refused the offer, which comes with conditions that the government has long resisted, even after the Trump administration imposed new sanctions on Havana.

May 14

U.S. and Cuban officials said CIA Director John Ratcliffe met with Cuban officials including Raúl Castro's grandson during a high-level visit to the island.

Ratcliffe met with Rodríguez Castro, Interior Minister Lázaro Álvarez Casas and the head of Cuban intelligence services, and discussed intelligence cooperation, economic stability and security issues. A CIA official confirmed the meetings to the AP.

May 15

The Justice Department is preparing to seek an indictment against Castro, three people familiar with the matter told the AP.

One of the people said the potential indictment is connected to Castro's alleged role in the 1996 shoot-down of four planes operated by the Miami-based exile group Brothers to the Rescue. Castro was defense minister at the time.

All three people spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation. The Cuban government did not respond to a request for comment on the potential indictment, which was reported earlier by CBS.

## **What to know about a deadly attack by teen gunmen on a San Diego mosque**

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Police raced Monday to catch an armed teenage runaway before he and another teen opened fire on a San Diego mosque, killing three men and then themselves.

About two hours after one boy's mother called to warn police that he had run away with her weapons and vehicle, shots rang out at the Islamic Center of San Diego, and a mosque security guard and two others were killed, San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said.

The gunmen, ages 17 and 18, were found dead of apparent self-inflicted gunshot wounds, the chief added.

The shooting is being investigated as a hate crime, he added.

Here's what is known about the attack:

Search for suspects began hours before attack

Wahl said the mother, who called the police around 9:40 a.m., had described her son as suicidal. The search for the boy took on more urgency as police learned that he was dressed in camouflage and with an acquaintance — facts that were not consistent with someone about to die by suicide, the chief said.

Police used automated license plate readers to try to find the teens, dispatched authorities to a nearby mall and alerted Madison High School, where at least one suspect was a student, Wahl said. Officers were still interviewing the mother about places the teens might be when they received reports of a shooting at the largest mosque in San Diego County.

As police arrived, gunshots rang out a few blocks away where a landscaper was shot at but uninjured. The shooters were soon found dead in a vehicle stopped in the middle of a road nearby, Wahl said.

Suspects engaged in 'generalized hate rhetoric'

There was no specific threat made against the the Islamic Center of San Diego but authorities found evidence that the suspects engaged in "generalized hate rhetoric," Wahl said. He declined to immediately share more details.

The mosque's director, Imam Taha Hassane, said the center focused on interfaith relations, and that a group of non-Muslims had been touring the mosque earlier Monday to learn about Islam.

The white mosque is surrounded by homes, apartments and strip malls with Middle Eastern restaurants and markets. It is home to the Al Rashid School, which offers courses in Arabic language, Islamic studies and the Quran for students ages 5 and up, according to its website. No students were harmed, Hassane



said, and aerial TV footage showed the school children holding hands as they were led out of the parking lot surrounded by police vehicles.

Security guard remembered as 'heroic'

Police have not yet released the names of the victims. But a family friend identified one as Amin Abdullah, a security guard whom Wahl said "played a pivotal role" in preventing the attack from being more deadly.

Shaykh Uthman Ibn Farooq said he had spoken with Abdullah's son. The family could not immediately be reached for comment.

"He wanted to defend the innocent so he decided to become a security guard," he said.

Wahl credited Abdullah with saving lives.

"It's fair to say his actions were heroic," the chief said at a news conference.

## **Teenage gunmen open fire on San Diego mosque, killing 3 men and then themselves**

By JULIE WATSON and EUGENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two teenage shooters opened fire at a San Diego mosque on Monday and killed three men — then killed themselves a few blocks away — in an attack police are investigating as a hate crime.

There was no specific threat made against the Islamic Center of San Diego but authorities found evidence that the suspects engaged in "generalized hate rhetoric," San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said. He declined to give more details, but said the "circumstances that led up to this" would come out in the days ahead.

Before the attack, officers were already looking for one of the teenagers since his mother called police concerned that her son was suicidal and had run away, Wahl said. There were weapons missing from the home and the mother's vehicle was gone, he added.

The search took on even more urgency as police learned that he was dressed in camouflage and with an acquaintance — details that were unexpected for someone about to die by suicide, he said.

Police began using whatever technology they could to find the 17- and 18-year-old, including automated license plate readers. The department dispatched authorities to a mall near where the car had been tracked by police, and officers alerted a school where at least one of the suspects had been a student, Wahl said.

As officers continued interviewing the mother about places the teens might be, they got reports of a shooting at the mosque.

Among those killed was a mosque security guard, who police believe "played a pivotal role" in keeping the attack from being "much worse," Wahl said.

"It's fair to say his actions were heroic," the chief said at a later news conference. "Undoubtedly he saved lives today."

A family friend identified the guard as Amin Abdullah, a well-known face at the mosque who had been working there for more than a decade.

"He wanted to defend the innocent so he decided to become a security guard," said Shaykh Uthman Ibn Farooq, who had spoken with Abdullah's son. The family could not immediately be reached for comment.

The center is the largest mosque in San Diego County and includes the Al Rashid School, which offers courses in Arabic language, Islamic studies and the Quran for students ages 5 and up, according to its website.

Police responded within four minutes of being called, Wahl said. As they arrived, gunshots rang out a few blocks away where a landscaper was shot at but uninjured. The shooters were found dead in a vehicle stopped in the middle of a road nearby, he said.

Aerial TV footage showed more than a dozen children holding hands and being walked out of the parking lot of the center as it was surrounded by scores of police vehicles. The mosque is in a neighborhood of homes, apartments and strip malls with Middle Eastern restaurants and markets.

Parents were directed to a nearby area to retrieve their children.

The mosque's director, Imam Taha Hassane, called it "extremely outrageous to target a place of worship."

"All the places of worship in our beautiful city should always be protected," he said.

He added that the center focused on interfaith relations and community building, and that a group of non-Muslims had been touring the mosque earlier Monday to learn about Islam.

The Islamic Center's website says its mission is to not only serve the Muslim population but also to "work with the larger community to serve the less fortunate, to educate, and to better our nation." Five daily prayers are held there, and the mosque works with other organizations and people of all faiths on social causes.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, one of the largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy groups in the U.S., condemned the shooting.

"No one should ever fear for their safety while attending prayers or studying at an elementary school," said CAIR-San Diego Executive Director Tazheen Nizam in a statement. "We are working to learn more about this incident and we encourage everyone to keep this community in your prayers."

President Donald Trump called the shooting a "terrible situation."

## **Ketanji Brown Jackson says Supreme Court risks being seen as political after voting rights decision**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said Monday that the Supreme Court risks being seen as political in the wake of a major voting rights decision.

She spoke after writing a solo dissent from the court's decision allowing Louisiana to move quickly to use new maps after the court's conservative majority struck down a majority-Black district and weakened the Voting Rights Act.

"Public confidence is really all the judiciary has," she said at a talk before the American Law Institute in Washington, D.C.

"Everyone believes the court system is outside the political sphere. I think that means it's incumbent on us to do things, to act in ways, that shore up public confidence," she said.

Polling has shown public trust in the Supreme Court at historic lows in recent years, and Chief Justice John Roberts has separately bemoaned a perception that the justices are "political actors," calling it a misunderstanding.

Jackson has become a frequent dissenter on the Supreme Court, joining her liberal colleagues last month to oppose the 6-3 decision that hollowed out the Voting Rights Act and later writing for herself to protest an order allowing Louisiana to use new maps even though early primary voting had already begun. She said the court had "spawned chaos" amid a fierce nationwide redistricting battle.

Three of her conservative colleagues on the court forcefully disagreed, calling her criticism "baseless" and saying accusations of partisanship aren't justified. The alternative, they wrote, would have been to allow an election under a map found to be unconstitutional.

## **Negotiators reach a deal to end strike on North America's busiest commuter rail system**

By PHILIP MARCELO and KATHY MCCORMACK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Negotiators on Monday reached a deal to end the strike that stalled service on the Long Island Rail Road, the busiest commuter rail system in North America.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said the deal won't increase fares or taxes and will give employees fair wages. She said she's not at liberty to disclose specific details while the new contract terms are considered and voted on by union members.

"Negotiations are rarely easy, but I have a lot of respect for the collective bargaining process that unfolded over the last few days," she said during a news conference Monday evening.

The deal comes years after the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and leaders of the five labor unions

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started bargaining for a new contract. The unions went on strike at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, stalling service for roughly 250,000 commuters who use the rail system that connects New York City to its eastern suburbs every weekday.

Robert Free, LIRR's president, said that the system's major commuter lines will begin running trains by noon Tuesday, with full service to all branches by the afternoon rush hour.

"Time to get back to work," he said.

Kevin Sexton, the vice president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, said the unions believe this is a fair deal, but he wouldn't disclose any specifics about what the railroad promised its workers. Union officials said later that more details would be shared soon with rank and file members.

"We are looking forward to our members getting back to work doing what they do best, which is serving the region," Sexton said at a news conference.

The unions, representing about half the train system's workforce, had demanded raises they said were needed to help workers keep up with inflation and rising living costs. The MTA argued that the unions' initial demands would lead to fare increases.

Gerard Bringmann, chair of the rider advocacy group Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council, said he'd reserve judgement until he sees more details about the deal and how it might impact future fare hikes.

"This will be a relief to our daily riders who experienced a very difficult day today getting to work and home," he said.

The LIRR urged riders to work from home again Tuesday if possible.

Deal was years in the making

Unionized workers had picketed in front of major LIRR hubs, chanting slogans and holding up signs that read: "No contract. No work," and "Equal work. Equal pay."

The MTA, which runs the railroad, offered free but limited shuttle buses during the morning and evening rush hours starting Monday, leaving most commuters to navigate the gauntlet of car, bus and subway routes. Hochul had urged LIRR riders to work from home, if possible.

Union officials and the MTA negotiated Sunday afternoon into the early morning hours Monday after prodding from the National Mediation Board, which is the federal agency that governs labor relations for railroads and airlines.

The two sides had been negotiating a new contract since 2023. The Trump administration got involved in September after the unions asked for the appointment of a panel of experts. The move temporarily averted a strike, but the two sides still couldn't reach a deal after months passed.

The LIRR serves hundreds of thousands of commuters who live along a 118-mile-long (190-kilometer-long) land mass that includes Brooklyn and Queens in New York City and the Hamptons, a summertime playground for the rich and famous near its eastern tip.

Most of its riders live outside New York City in two Long Island counties populated by nearly 3 million people.

Before this latest walkout, LIRR workers last went on strike in 1994.

Ridership lighter, but impact still felt

Ridership was lighter than expected on the free but limited shuttle buses the MTA provided from a handful of locations on Long Island to New York City subway stations.

During the morning commute, more than 2,000 people took advantage of the shuttle service, the agency said. It had prepared for about 13,000 riders.

Hallie Kessler, a 24-year old speech therapist, had expected her usual one-hour commute home from a public school in the New York City borough of Queens to double in length because of the strike.

Instead, it tripled. And rather than just one LIRR train, she took two trains and then a shuttle bus.

"I'm tired. I'm ready for a nap," Kessler said as she stepped off the bus at the Hicksville LIRR station where she parked her car. "Not thrilled about having to do it again tomorrow."

The first impacts of the walkout were felt over the weekend as baseball fans had to find other ways to get to Citi Field in Queens to see the New York Mets take on their crosstown rivals the New York Yankees.

Hochul said the deal ensures the same fate won't befall basketball fans looking to catch the New York



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Knicks continue their playoff run on Tuesday. Madison Square Garden, where the Knicks play their home games, is located directly above the railroad's Penn Station hub in Manhattan.

"Knicks fans will be able to take the train to MSG tomorrow in time for game one of the Eastern Conference Finals," she said. \_\_\_\_

This story has been corrected to show that the body in charge of the LIRR is the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, not the Metropolitan Transportation Agency.

## Congo opens more centers to treat rare type of Ebola that has killed nearly 120

By JEAN-YVES KAMALE, MONIKA PRONCZUK and WILSON MCMAKIN Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Congo will open three Ebola treatment centers in the eastern Ituri province, and the World Health Organization is sending a team of experts to the country, following an outbreak of a rare type of the virus that has killed nearly 120 people.

An American doctor in Congo is among the newly confirmed cases of the virus with no approved vaccines or medicines, Congolese officials said Monday, as details emerged about the government's delayed response to the outbreak.

The WHO on Sunday declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. As of Monday, there were over 118 deaths and 300 suspected cases in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, and one death and one suspected case in neighboring Uganda. Experts say the number of cases is likely to rise as health officials conduct more surveillance.

The Bundibugyo virus spread undetected for at least a few weeks, health experts and aid workers said. Cases have now been confirmed in Bunia, North Kivu's rebel-held capital of Goma, Mongbwalu, Butembo and Nyakunde.

"Because early tests looked for the wrong strain of Ebola, we got false negatives and lost weeks of response time," said Matthew M. Kavanagh, director of the Georgetown University Center for Global Health Policy and Politics. "We are playing catch-up against a very dangerous pathogen."

He criticized the Trump administration's earlier decision to withdraw from the WHO and make deep cuts in foreign aid — "the exact surveillance system meant to catch these viruses early," he said.

After delayed response, Congolese prepare

The severity of the symptoms and the rising caseload are fueling a growing sense of panic in the neighborhoods of Bunia.

"I know the consequences of Ebola, I know what it's like," said Noëla Lumo, a resident of Bunia. She previously lived in Beni, a region hit by former Ebola outbreaks. As soon as she heard about the latest outbreak, Lumo began making protective masks by hand.

Congo has said the first person died from the virus on April 24 in Bunia, and the body was repatriated to the Mongbwalu health zone, a mining area with a large population.

"That caused the Ebola outbreak to escalate," said Congo's health minister, Samuel Roger Kamba.

When another person fell ill on April 26, samples were sent to Kinshasa for testing, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control. On May 5, the WHO was alerted of about 50 deaths in Mongbwalu, including four health workers. The first case was confirmed on May 14.

Samples from Bunia were initially tested for the more common type of Ebola, Zaire, Congolese officials said. They came back negative, said Dr. Richard Kitenge, the Health Ministry Incident Manager for Ebola.

The first confirmation of Ebola came on May 14, and Bundibugyo was confirmed the next day.

"The situation is quite worrying and is evolving pretty quickly," Esther Sterk with the Medecins Sans Frontieres aid group told the AP. "It was detected quite late." But she said that was often the case with outbreaks of Ebola, which has similar symptoms to other tropical diseases.

An American doctor tests positive

The American doctor is among the cases in Bunia, the capital of Ituri province in eastern Congo, said

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Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, medical director of the country's National Institute of Bio-Medical Research. Dr. Peter Stafford had been treating patients at a hospital there when he developed symptoms, Serge, the organization he works for, said in a statement.

Three others employees of Serge were working at the same hospital — including Stafford's wife — but are not showing symptoms.

Seven Americans, including the one who tested positive, are being transported to Germany for monitoring, Dr. Satish Pillai of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a call with reporters. Pillai said the American developed symptoms over the weekend.

CDC officials did not immediately respond to follow-up questions about the American doctor's condition. The CDC, which has said the risk to Americans was low, issued travel advisories urging Americans traveling in Congo and Uganda to avoid people with symptoms like fever, muscle pain and rash.

The CDC said that, for the next 30 days, the U.S. would ban entry of all foreign nationals who had visited Congo, Uganda and South Sudan over the past three weeks, and take measures to identify individuals with Ebola symptoms at ports of entry.

This is a rare type of Ebola

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare but severe and often fatal.

"Ebola is very much a disease of compassion in that it impacts the people who are more likely to be taking care of sick folks," said Dr. Craig Spencer, an associate professor at the Brown University School of Public Health who survived Ebola more than a decade ago after contracting the disease in Guinea.

"I suspect that the number of cases is going to go up pretty dramatically in the coming weeks as we do better surveillance and end up finding there were a lot more cases and probably a lot more deaths than we recognized," he said.

Although more than 20 Ebola outbreaks have taken place in Congo and Uganda since 1976, this is only the third time that the Bundibugyo virus has been detected.

The U.S. CDC says it causes fever, headache, muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and unexplained bleeding or bruising.

The Bundibugyo virus was first detected in Uganda's Bundibugyo district during a 2007-2008 outbreak that infected 149 people and killed 37. The second time was in 2012, in an outbreak in Isiro, Congo, where 57 cases and 29 deaths were reported.

The Africa CDC chief, Dr. Jean Kaseya, told Sky News on Sunday he is in "panic mode" due to a lack of medicines and vaccines, but some candidate treatments are anticipated in the coming weeks.

The region already grapples with a humanitarian crisis

Ituri's Mongbwalu is in remote eastern Congo, with poor road networks more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the capital, Kinshasa.

Eastern Congo long has grappled with a humanitarian crisis and the threat of armed groups that have killed dozens and displaced thousands in Ituri in the past year.

U.N. staff have been asked to work from home and avoid physical contact and crowded areas, said a Bunia-based U.N. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the subject.

Ituri has over 273,00 displaced people, according to the U.N.

Rwanda closed its land border with Congo on Sunday. Ugandan authorities said there was no evidence that Ebola was spreading within the country, and said that surveillance has been heightened along its border with Congo.

## What to know about Trump's nearly \$1.8B fund to compensate allies claiming political targeting

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's allies who believe they have been wrongly investigated and prosecuted could soon have access to a nearly \$1.8 billion compensation fund, the Justice Department announced Monday in a move slammed by Democrats as unconstitutional and corrupt.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a statement that the "Anti-Weaponization Fund" will represent "a lawful process for victims of lawfare and weaponization to be heard and seek redress." Blanche's statement made no mention of how investigations and prosecutions of Trump's political opponents under his watch have exposed the Justice Department to the same claims of politicized law enforcement that he has said he opposed.

The fund was announced as part of a deal to resolve Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns.

The fund is in keeping with Trump's long-running claims that the Justice Department during the Biden administration was weaponized against him, even though then-President Joe Biden himself was scrutinized during that time. The fund would represent not only a highly unorthodox resolution but also a further demonstration of the Trump administration's eagerness to reward allies who were investigated and in some cases charged and convicted.

Trump told reporters at the White House on Monday the fund is dedicated to "reimbursing people who were horribly treated."

Democratic lawmakers opposed to the move argue that it will become a taxpayer-funded "slush fund" for Trump allies and supporters who claim political persecution. They also question whether the president should be able to direct money for the fund without explicit congressional approval.

Here's what to know about the fund:

Justice Department casts fund as redress for political targeting

The fund was announced after Trump, his sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr., and the Trump Organization agreed to drop their lawsuit against the IRS and the Treasury Department. The lawsuit alleged that a leak of confidential tax records caused them reputational and financial harm and negatively affected their public standing, among other allegations.

According to the Justice Department announcement, the fund is meant to provide a formal process for people or entities who say they were unfairly targeted by the government for political, ideological or personal reasons.

"The use of government power to target individuals or entities for improper and unlawful political, personal, or ideological reasons should not be tolerated by any administration," Justice Department official Trent McCotter said in the statement announcing the fund.

The money itself would come from the federal judgment fund, which pays out court judgments and compromise settlements of lawsuits against the government.

The fund will be able to review claims of alleged government political targeting, issue formal apologies and award monetary compensation to approved applicants, the Justice Department said.

The claims of a weaponized Justice Department during the Biden administration overlook the fact that Biden himself was investigated for the potential mishandling of classified information, and his son Hunter was charged with gun and tax crimes.

Justice Department has not said who could qualify for compensation

The Justice Department did not identify anyone by name who could theoretically benefit from the fund, but there were multiple investigations of Trump allies during the Biden administration where targets could look to obtain payouts.

Prosecutors, for instance, charged about 1,500 people in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol. Trump on his first day in office of his second term either pardoned them, commuted their prison sentences or dismissed the cases.



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It's unclear whether those entitled to compensation would include Jan. 6 defendants who were convicted of attacking officers with makeshift weapons such as flagpoles, a hockey stick and crutch. More than 250 people were convicted of assault charges, with the attacks in many cases captured on surveillance or body camera footage.

Asked Monday if individuals who committed violence that day should receive compensation from the fund, Trump said, "It'll all be dependent on a committee." He added: "I didn't do this deal. It was told to me yesterday."

Other prominent Trump supporters who were investigated and charged include Steve Bannon, who served a prison sentence for defying a congressional subpoena, and Peter Navarro, who was similarly convicted of contempt. Both have denied wrongdoing.

Blanche-appointed commission would oversee claims

The Justice Department says the fund will receive \$1.776 billion from the federal judgment fund, to operate through Dec. 15, 2028, and will be overseen by a five-member commission appointed by Blanche, with one member chosen in consultation with congressional leadership. According to the Justice Department, the president can remove any member.

It was unclear how the commission would determine who should be awarded compensation.

Critics warn fund could reward Trump loyalists

Democratic lawmakers and ethics watchdogs slammed the creation of the fund, saying it was corrupt, opaque and had the potential to become a "slush fund" for the president and his allies.

A group of nearly 100 members of Congress filed a brief teeing up a legal challenge to the case.

"This case is nothing but a racket designed to take \$1.7 billion of taxpayer dollars out of the Treasury and pour it into a huge slush fund for Trump at DOJ to hand out to his private militia of insurrectionists, rioters, and white supremacists, including those who brutally beat police officers on January 6, 2021, and sycophant accomplices to his election stealing schemes," Rep. Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., called the fund "corruption on steroids."

Last month, she and a group of other Democratic lawmakers introduced the Ban Presidential Plunder of Taxpayer Funds Act, which would ban the sitting president and vice president from collecting settlement payments from the U.S., among other things.

## **Justice Department announces nearly \$1.8B fund to compensate Trump allies in a deal to drop IRS suit**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN, ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration announced Monday the creation of a nearly \$1.8 billion fund to compensate allies of the Republican president who believe they have been unjustly investigated and prosecuted, an arrangement that Democrats and government watchdogs derided as "corrupt" and unconstitutional.

The "Anti-Weaponization Fund" of \$1.776 billion is part of a settlement that resolves President Donald Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns. It will allow people who believe they were targeted for prosecution for political purposes, including by the Biden administration Justice Department, to apply for payouts, creating what acting Attorney General Todd Blanche called "a lawful process for victims of lawfare and weaponization to be heard and seek redress."

"The machinery of government should never be weaponized against any American, and it is this Department's intention to make right the wrongs that were previously done while ensuring this never happens again," Blanche said in a statement that made no mention of how investigations and prosecutions of Trump's political opponents under his watch have exposed the Justice Department to the same claims of politicized law enforcement that he said he opposed.

Blanche is expected to be pressed on the fund when he testifies Tuesday on Capitol Hill about the Justice Department budget.

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Nearly 100 Democrats in the House of Representatives signed onto a legal brief urging a judge to block what they described as an unprecedented resolution that they said would unjustly enrich people close to the president with taxpayer dollars and open the door to meritless claims of political persecution.

"This is one of the single most corrupt acts in American history," Donald Sherman, the president of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, said in a statement.

The fund would represent not only a highly unorthodox resolution but also a further demonstration of the administration's eagerness to reward allies of Trump who have long insisted that they have been unjustly investigated and in some cases charged and convicted. Most notably, the president on his first day back in office pardoned or commuted the sentences of supporters who rioted at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. His Justice Department since then has approved payouts to supporters entangled in the Trump-Russia investigation and investigated and prosecuted some of his perceived adversaries.

Trump's attorneys suggested in their court filing seeking to dismiss the case that the resolution would not be reviewable by a judge. But a group of 93 members of Congress filed a brief teeing up a challenge.

"This case is nothing but a racket designed to take \$1.7 billion of taxpayer dollars out of the Treasury and pour it into a huge slush fund for Trump at DOJ to hand out to his private militia of insurrectionists, rioters, and white supremacists, including those who brutally beat police officers on January 6, 2021, and sycophant accomplices to his election stealing schemes," Rep. Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement.

Trump has long raised 'weaponization' claims

The Justice Department did not name specific individuals who might stand to benefit from the fund, but said there were no "partisan requirements" for applicants and that anyone who believes they've been unfairly persecuted could seek a payout as well as an apology. A five-member commission appointed by Blanche will oversee the fund.

The creation of the fund is in keeping with Trump's long-running claims that the Justice Department during the Biden administration was weaponized against him.

He has cited as proof the since-abandoned criminal charges he faced between his first and second terms of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and of retaining classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. As a condition for resolving the lawsuit, Trump has agreed to resolve administrative claims in which he sought compensation over the Mar-a-Lago investigation and a separate probe into ties between his 2016 campaign and Russia, an inquiry that unfolded during his first term in office and that he has long railed against.

At the White House on Monday afternoon, Trump was asked if individuals who committed violence on January 6th should receive compensation from the fund. "It'll all be dependent on a committee," Trump said, adding, "I didn't do this deal. It was told to me yesterday." He said the fund was dedicated to "reimbursing people who were horribly treated."

Merrick Garland, who served as attorney general during the Biden administration, has repeatedly denied allegations of politicization and has said his decisions followed facts, the evidence and the law. His Justice Department investigated prominent Democrats too, most significantly by appointing a special counsel who scrutinized President Joe Biden for his handling of classified information. Another special counsel brought tax and gun charges against Biden's son Hunter.

Nonetheless, Trump's current Justice Department has actively pursued the president's retribution campaign, bringing criminal charges against some of his political opponents and initiating a wide-ranging investigation that aims to establish a yearslong conspiracy between law enforcement and intelligence officials against Trump.

In defending the deal, the Justice Department pointed to a fund established by the Obama administration to compensate Native American farmers who said they had experienced racial discrimination. But that fund was not created with a goal of benefiting allies of the president who had been previously investigated for potential criminal conduct.

Trump's lawsuit followed the leak of tax returns

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Trump alleged in a lawsuit filed in Florida earlier this year that a previous leak of his and the Trump Organization's confidential tax records caused him reputational harm and unfairly tarnished his business reputation.

The president's sons Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump also joined the suit.

In 2024, former IRS contractor Charles Edward Littlejohn, who worked for Booz Allen Hamilton, a defense and national security tech firm, was sentenced to five years in prison after pleading guilty to leaking tax information about Trump and others to two news outlets between 2018 and 2020.

The outlets were not named in the charging documents, but the description and time frame align with stories about Trump's tax returns in The New York Times and reporting about wealthy Americans' taxes in the nonprofit investigative journalism organization ProPublica. The 2020 New York Times report found Trump paid \$750 in federal income tax the year he first entered the White House, and no income tax at all some years, thanks to reported colossal losses.

In the first sign that a settlement was coming, lawyers for the president asked a judge last month to pause the case for 90 days while the two sides work to reach a settlement or resolution.

Kathleen Williams, the judge handling the lawsuit, dismissed the case Monday and in her filing admonished the government agencies, notably the Justice Department, for not being transparent about the settlement deal.

She said no agency "submitted any settlement documents nor filed any documents ensuring that settlement was appropriate where there was an outstanding question as to whether an actual case or controversy existed."

Williams had previously assigned a group of attorneys to determine whether there was a conflict in the case since, as sitting president, Trump was suing "entities whose decisions are subject to his direction."

The lawyers group wrote the court this month expressing concerns about whether the Justice Department was properly insulated from the president's control of the case.

## **Trump says he's called off Iran strike planned for Tuesday at request of Gulf allies**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he is holding off on a military strike on Iran planned for Tuesday because "serious negotiations" are underway to end the war.

"There seems to be a very good chance that they can work something out. If we can do that without bombing the hell out of them, I'd be very happy," Trump said at the White House on Monday evening, after first making the announcement in a social media post.

Trump said he had planned "a very major attack" but put it off — "for a little while, hopefully, maybe forever." He said America's allies in the Gulf asked him to wait for two to three days because they feel they are close to a deal with Iran.

Trump has been threatening for weeks that the ceasefire reached in mid-April could end if Iran did not make a deal, with shifting parameters for striking such an agreement. Over the weekend he warned, "For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them."

The president has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off. But he's also previously indicated he would hold off on military action to allow talks to continue — only to turn around and launch strikes. That's what happened at the war's outset, when he ordered strikes in late February shortly after indicating he would let talks play out.

Trump said the current pause for negotiations was a "very positive development," while acknowledging there were times in the past when a deal seemed close but nothing came of it. "But this is a little bit different," he said.

Trump credits Gulf allies

The president, who had not previously disclosed that he was planning a strike for Tuesday, did not offer details about the planned attack but said in his social media post he had instructed the U.S. military "to

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be prepared to go forward with a full, large scale assault of Iran, on a moment's notice, in the event that an acceptable Deal is not reached."

Trump said he was calling off the attack at the request of allies in the Middle East, including the leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran and allied Shiite militias in Iraq have launched drone attacks targeting the Gulf Arab states in the war. The United Arab Emirates has recently accused Iran of launching drone and missile attacks despite the ceasefire. On Sunday, a drone strike sparked a fire on the edge of the UAE's sole nuclear power plant in what authorities called an "unprovoked terrorist attack" while not assigning blame.

Trump in recent days has also spoken with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Chinese President Xi Jinping about the Iran war.

Oil prices affected

Trump's post quickly caused a fall in the price of oil, which had been rising on the prospect of a prolonged standoff that would keep the Strait of Hormuz effectively closed.

Minutes before the president's announcement, petroleum futures had been trading at \$108.83 a barrel. His word about negotiations almost instantly shaved more than \$2 off the price, but it crept up again and ended on Monday at \$107.25 a barrel.

Shortly after Trump's post, Iranian state TV called it a "retreat" based on "fear" in its broadcast ticker and on its X account.

It reported earlier that defense systems were activated late Monday on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. It added the situation was "under control" there, the largest Iranian island in the Persian Gulf, home to about 150,000 people and a water desalination plant.

Major sticking points remain

Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the shipment of oil, gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products. The U.S. is blockading Iranian ports and has redirected 85 commercial vessels from mid-April through Monday, U.S. Central Command said in a social media post.

Earlier Monday, Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said the immediate concern of the negotiations between the U.S. and Iran was keeping the Strait of Hormuz open, but Iran's nuclear program remained a central issue.

Speaking during a joint news conference with his German counterpart in Berlin, Fidan said much of Iran's enriched uranium that could potentially be used for a nuclear weapon was buried under collapsed tunnels following attacks in June that the U.S. launched with Israel. The U.S. has said it is closely monitoring any movements around the stockpile.

"At present, there isn't a situation that poses a real threat," Fidan said. "But for this to continue, the parties must reach and conclude a nuclear negotiation among themselves."

The Turkish minister said he believes Iran is not opposed in principle to complying with nuclear conditions, but added: "the question is what will be given in return, in what order, and under what conditions."

With talks at a standstill last week, Iran's foreign minister said Friday that a lack of trust was the biggest impediment to negotiations.

Iran, which says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, was said to have included some nuclear concessions in its latest proposal to end the war. But Trump dismissed the proposal as "garbage."

## **Police: Two suspects kill 3 people at a San Diego mosque before killing themselves**

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two teenage suspects killed three men in a shooting at a San Diego mosque Monday before killing themselves a few blocks away, authorities said. Police Chief Scott Wahl said a security guard at the Islamic Center of San Diego was among those killed and that the case is being investigated as a hate crime.

About two hours before the attack, the mother of one of the suspects called police to report that her son was missing, Wahl told a news conference. She feared he might be suicidal, and she eventually real-



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ized that several of her weapons were missing, along with her vehicle.

The case became even more urgent when police learned that he was dressed in camouflage and that he was in the company of an acquaintance, and officers began using whatever technology they had available to locate the teens, including automated license plate readers.

Wahl said that's when police began getting reports of a shooting.

The Islamic Center is the largest mosque in San Diego County, according to its website. It's about 9 miles (15 kilometers) north of downtown San Diego.

Here is the Latest:

Wahl says suspect's mother who contacted police found a note

He did not disclose its contents but said of the case, "There was definitely hate rhetoric that was involved."

He says there was no specific threat against the Islamic Center.

Wahl says the teenager whose mom contacted police was a student at Madison High School, about a mile away from the Islamic Center.

Police have not released the names of the teenagers.

Authorities continue to review the security guard's role

But Wahl said that "it's fair to say his actions were heroic."

"Undoubtedly he saved lives today," the police chief said.

The guard's identity has yet to be released.

Police say there are indications it was a hate crime

There had been no specific threat made against the Islamic Center of San Diego, but San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said investigators were aware of "generalized hate rhetoric" in the case and are investigating the attack as a hate crime.

Wahl noted that the mother of one of the suspects found a note he left behind, but the chief declined to disclose its contents.

Police chief: Mother of one suspect reported him to police as a runaway

Wahl says that about two hours before the attack, the mother of one of the suspects called police to report that her son was missing.

Wahl told a news conference the she feared he might be suicidal, and she eventually realized that several of her weapons were missing, along with her vehicle.

The case became even more urgent when police learned that he was dressed in camouflage and that he was in the company of an acquaintance, and officers began using whatever technology they had available to locate the teens, including automated license plate readers.

Wahl said that's when police began getting reports of a shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego. Responding officers found the three victims at the mosque and the two teens dead of apparently self-inflicted gunshot wounds in a vehicle nearby.

One person with a non-firearm-related injury was transported to hospital

That's according to Sharp Memorial Hospital spokesperson Erica Carlson.

Carlson says the hospital did not expect to receive additional patients but was staying in contact with the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services.

The hospital declined to provide additional details.

Center's Al Rashid School offers courses in Arabic language, Islamic studies and the Quran for students ages 5 and up

That's according to the center's website.

Aerial TV footage showed more than a dozen children holding hands and being walked out of the parking lot of the center as it was surrounded by scores of police vehicles.

Parents were directed to a nearby area to retrieve their children.

The white mosque is in a neighborhood of homes, apartments and strip malls with Middle Eastern restaurants and markets.

Students at mosque are safe, police say

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"All of the kids are safe," Wahl said, appearing emotional. "Our hearts go out to the families that are in this moment being notified of what has happened to their loved ones."

Mosque director: 'Extremely outrageous to target a place of worship'

Imam Taha Hassane also said at a news conference that "all the places of worship in our beautiful city should always be protected."

Muslim civil rights group condemns the shooting

Tazheen Nizam of the Council on American-Islamic Relations in San Diego says that "no one should ever fear for their safety while attending prayers or studying at an elementary school."

Nizam says in a statement that CAIR is "working to learn more about this incident and we encourage everyone to keep this community in your prayers."

The security guard who was killed 'played a pivotal role in assisting from this being much worse'

That's according to Chief Wahl.

Police chief says suspects were found dead in a vehicle

Wahl says that as officers responded to the mosque, they also fielded reports of gunfire a few blocks away, where a landscaper was shot at but was uninjured.

He says the suspects were found dead in a vehicle stopped in the middle of a road nearby.

Center's director says the mosque focuses on interfaith relations

Imam Taha Hassane says it also works to build relations in the community.

He told a news conference that a group of non-Muslims had been touring the mosque earlier Monday to learn about the Muslim faith.

Security guard for the mosque is among those killed

That's according to San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl.

Police chief says 3 men were killed and that both suspects are dead

Chief Scott Wahl says both suspects are believed to be teens and that the case is considered to be a hate crime.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's office says he is being briefed

"We are grateful to the first responders on the scene working to protect the community and urge everyone to follow guidance from local authorities," his office posted on the social platform X.

## **Bolivia protesters allied with ex-leader Morales clash with police as unrest widens**

By CARLOS VALDEZ and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Supporters of Bolivia's influential ex-President Evo Morales clashed with police on Monday in the capital city as they called on the president to resign, joining a nationwide protest movement fueled by the worst economic crisis in a generation.

Thousands of Morales' followers converged on the plaza outside the government headquarters as Bolivia remains paralyzed by road blockades that have strangled cities and triggered food and fuel shortages in the last two weeks.

The unrest presents the biggest challenge yet for President Rodrigo Paz, a business friendly centrist who came to power six months ago as a wave of conservative electoral wins swept the region.

Security forces pushed back protesters who tried to break police ranks with canisters of tear gas before they could reach Congress or the presidential palace. Dynamite blasts rumbled, forcing staffers and lawmakers to evacuate. "Homeland or death, we will win!" demonstrators chanted, ripping shop doors off their hinges and setting fire to looted sofas used as barricades.

The public prosecutor announced 90 arrests.

"They can march if it's peaceful, but we will take action if they commit crimes," said Deputy Interior Minister Hernán Paredes.

A new president's balancing act

Paz's shock victory last year highlighted Bolivians' disillusionment with two decades of political domination

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by Morales' Movement Toward Socialism, or MAS, party, as the country reeled from its worst economic crisis in 40 years. But his victory over more right-wing candidates also revealed the nation's unwillingness to support drastic austerity measures.

As Bolivia's first elected conservative leader since 2006, Paz has sought to balance belt-tightening with the need to placate Morales' powerful allies who could disrupt his presidency.

To rein in a massive budget deficit, he eliminated fuel subsidies that represented a pillar of the MAS economic model. But he maintained social welfare programs and offered new benefits to informal workers to blunt the blow of inflation.

That wasn't enough for many Bolivians. The protest movement began with the national labor union demanding wage hikes. Then farmers furious about poor quality fuel joined. Then miners strapped for dynamite piled on pressure. Now loyalists of Morales want Paz gone.

"Small things have been accumulating — the wage issue, the economic crisis, dirty gasoline that people say is ruining their cars, diesel shortages," said Veronica Rocha, a Bolivia political analyst. "There's a huge portion of the population that feels orphaned politically. They don't trust anyone anymore, and because of that, anything can happen."

Challenges mount with road blocks

Paz accuses Morales of orchestrating the unrest to undermine his administration. Road blockades have long been a main weapon of social movements tied to Morales that claim to represent Bolivia's rural Indigenous majority.

Over the past 16 days, the protest tactic has stranded around 5,000 trucks on highways, leaving supermarket shelves empty and hospitals without some medical supplies. Critics say it's a perverse way to protest economic pain — business chambers report the blockades cause over \$50 million in losses a day.

Paz has negotiated with some protest groups, reaching deals in recent days with striking miners and teachers who agreed to end their demonstrations. He deployed thousands of police and military officers across La Paz to try to break the blockades over the weekend.

But the crisis continues, worrying the wider region. Eight allied Latin American governments, from Chile to Costa Rica, released a joint statement rejecting "any action aimed at destabilizing the democratic order." Neighboring Argentina said it would start a weeklong humanitarian airlift to alleviate shortages in the country.

The United States, now rebuilding relations with Bolivia after years in which Morales defined the country in opposition to Washington, said it supported Paz's efforts "to restore order for the peace, security and stability of the Bolivian people." The State Department issued an alert this week urging U.S. citizens traveling to Bolivia to be vigilant.

Morales marshaled the latest march from his hideout in Bolivia's remote tropics. He has been holed up in the highlands for the past year and a half, evading an arrest warrant on charges relating to his sexual relationship with a 15-year-old girl. He says the allegations are politically motivated.

Right-wing politicians have seized on the protests to demand authorities arrest Morales, who was held in contempt of court last week after he failed to appear for a trial.

But Morales' enduring influence "is only one piece of the puzzle," Rocha said. "If the government wants to survive politically, it will have to make drastic changes."

## **What to know about the Bundibugyo virus, a species of Ebola causing an outbreak in Congo**

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

The species of Ebola virus causing an outbreak in Congo that has killed nearly 120 people is less common than other Ebola viruses, which is complicating the response because there are no specific treatments or vaccines.

"There's nothing even close to ready for clinical trials," said Dr. Celine Gounder, an infectious disease specialist and epidemiologist who treated patients in West Africa during the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic.

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"And so that means responders, healthcare workers and other aid workers are really back to the basics." Here's what to know about Bundibugyo virus, the rare species behind the outbreak of what public health officials call Ebola virus disease.

Bundibugyo virus has caused two other outbreaks

Bundibugyo has caused two other outbreaks, all in the same region of the Congo River basin, said Dr. Tom Ksiazek, a University of Texas Medical Branch virologist and veterinarian. He directed the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Special Pathogens Branch, which first identified the virus in 2007.

How Bundibugyo virus is spread

The virus is spread the same way as other Ebola viruses: through close contact with sick or deceased patients' bodily fluids, such as sweat, blood, feces or vomit. Healthcare workers and family members caring for sick patients face the highest risk, experts said.

"So very often we see doctors and nurses among the first to be infected and to die," said Gounder, editor-at-large for public health at KFF Health News.

Bundibugyo may be less lethal than other Ebola species but it is still extremely dangerous

From the few outbreaks health experts have seen, Bundibugyo might be slightly less deadly than what is often called Zaire virus, the most common species.

"I think a 30%-plus mortality rate is still quite scary, but it's hard to say with a lot of precision because we don't have a lot of experience," Gounder said.

How people with Bundibugyo are cared for if there are no treatments or vaccines

In the other two Bundibugyo outbreaks, initial cases were identified early, Ksiazek said, allowing for a quick public health response: getting healthcare workers proper protective equipment, finding and isolating people who were exposed and offering supportive medical care to patients. Proper medical care "reduces mortality significantly," he said.

That includes giving patients lots of IV or oral fluids, Gounder said.

How public health workers are trying to contain the outbreak

Health workers are now working to find and isolate cases, trace their contacts and educate people about how to avoid the virus. In the West African epidemic, ensuring safe methods of burial was key to stopping the spread, said Gounder, because people were getting sick from preparing their loved ones' bodies for funeral rites. Making sure health workers have proper protective equipment is also critical, experts said.

"Of course, it's problematic because vaccines are some of our best tools for combating infectious diseases," said Lina Moses, an epidemiologist and disease ecologist at Tulane University. But other public health tools — public education, contact tracing, quick testing — still work, she said.

"It's important to keep in mind that every single Ebola outbreak that has occurred in the (Democratic Republic of the Congo) — we're on our 17th now — has been stopped," she said.

## **Minnesota county charges an ICE officer in a nonfatal shooting during Trump's immigration crackdown**

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minnesota county prosecutor on Monday announced charges against an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer in the nonfatal shooting of a Venezuelan man during the Trump administration's crackdown in the state.

The officer, Christian Castro, is charged with four counts of second-degree assault and one count of falsely reporting a crime in the Jan. 14 shooting of Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis, Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said at a news conference. A warrant was issued for his arrest.

"Mr. Castro is an ICE agent, but his federal badge does not make him immune from state charges for his criminal conduct in Minnesota," Moriarty said, adding that Sosa-Celis never posed a threat and that her office received no cooperation from the federal government. "There is no such thing as absolute immunity for federal officers who commit crimes in this state or any other."

Castro, 52, fired through a home's front door and shot Sosa-Celis in the thigh after Castro and another



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officer chased a different man, Alfredo Alejandro Aljorna, to the Minneapolis apartment duplex where he and Sosa-Celis lived, Moriarty said, noting that both Sosa-Celis and Aljorna were legally in the U.S.

Federal authorities initially accused Sosa-Celis and Aljorna of beating an officer with a broom handle and a snow shovel during the confrontation. But a federal judge later dismissed the charges, and ICE and the Justice Department opened a joint investigation into whether two immigration officers lied about what happened.

In a statement, ICE said the U.S. Attorney's Office is investigating statements from officers, who could face disciplinary action including being fired and criminally prosecuted. ICE called the Hennepin County attorney's action "unlawful and nothing more than a political stunt."

One of several cases being investigated

The Trump administration sent thousands of officers to the Minneapolis and St. Paul area as part of President Donald Trump's national deportation campaign and considered Operation Metro Surge a success. But tensions mounted during the weekslong campaign, and the shooting deaths of U.S. citizens Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal officers sparked mass unrest and raised questions about officers' conduct.

Minnesota leaders and the Trump administration have clashed over who has the authority to investigate and prosecute federal officers for on-duty conduct, with the administration suggesting that state officials don't have jurisdiction.

State officials, though, have said they don't trust the federal government to investigate itself or hold officers accountable.

"There's no modern precedent for what happened to the people here in Minnesota," Moriarty said Monday. "So it requires a lot of us to dig in and look at ways to hold people accountable that we probably never thought we would be looking at in our careers."

Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis, has been investigating multiple incidents that occurred during the crackdown. Moriarty's office last month charged Gregory Donnell Morgan Jr. with two counts of second-degree assault for allegedly pointing his gun at people in a car on a highway, but he is still at large. She said Monday that her office has made "substantial progress" in apprehending him.

The county is also investigating Good's and Pretti's killings, and sued the administration in March to gain access to evidence in the two cases and the one involving Sosa-Celis. Although Moriarty hasn't charged anyone in either killing, she has said she's confident her office's investigations will bring transparency, even if doesn't bring charges.

Video captured the Sosa-Celis confrontation

The cases against Aljorna and Sosa-Celis were dropped after a highly unusual motion from the chief federal prosecutor for Minnesota, U.S. Attorney Daniel Rosen, who said "newly discovered evidence" was "materially inconsistent with the allegations" that were made in the criminal complaint and with evidence presented at their preliminary hearing. He said dismissal with prejudice, which meant the charges couldn't be refiled, "would serve the interests of justice."

Minneapolis last month released video showing the moments before Sosa-Celis's shooting, captured from a distance by a city-owned security camera.

The video appears to show a person standing with a snow shovel outside the house, near the street, then retreating toward the house and tossing the shovel into the yard. This happens as a person being chased by another person runs up from the street, falls on the sidewalk, gets up, and keeps heading toward the house.

The three appear to scuffle near the front steps for about 10 seconds. The exact moment when Sosa-Celis is shot isn't clear. A car with flashing lights pulls up, and another person walks up.

Castro fired from the yard through the home's front door knowing there were people who had just run inside, Moriarty said. "The bullet traveled through the door and struck Mr. Sosa-Celis's leg before making its final impact in the wall of a child's room."

She said her office would continue to prosecute the case even if Castro's defense tries to move the case from state court to federal court. She also noted that a presidential pardon would not be possible for the state charges even if Castro were to be found guilty in a federal court.

## What to know about a midair collision between 2 Navy jets at an Idaho air show

By REBECCA BOONE and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — After the two Navy jets collided in midair, the planes sandwiched together, all four crew members were able to eject and deploy their parachutes, floating down to safety as the aircraft careened into a field, exploding into a fireball.

The collision happened Sunday during the "Gunfighter Skies" air show at the Mountain Home Air Force Base some 57 miles (92 kilometers) southwest of Boise.

Here are some things to know about the crash.

Just one crew member was injured

Only one of the four crew members on the two planes was injured and was being treated at a hospital, Cmdr. Amelia Umayam, spokesperson for Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, said Monday. The injury was not life-threatening.

The fact that all four were able to safely eject and make it down without landing in the wreckage is "truly remarkable," said Billie Flynn, a former F-35 senior test pilot and demonstration expert.

"It is astonishing considering the way the airplanes impacted each other — incomprehensible even," Flynn said.

The two U.S. Navy EA18-G Growlers were from the Electronic Attack Squadron 129 in Whidbey Island, Washington. Each held two crew members.

The EA-18G Growler, measuring just over 60 feet (18.5 meters) long, made its first flight in August 2006 and was the first newly designed electronic warfare aircraft produced in more than 35 years, according to the Navy.

The planes appeared sandwiched together before falling

Videos taken by spectators show one of the jets was slightly behind the other before impact, and the two aircraft then appeared to become sandwiched together, with the belly of one jet just behind and to the side of the top of the other jet.

The jets then twisted and rocked together, pointing straight up for a moment before turning downward and diving to the ground. The impact resulted in a fireball and sent black smoke skyward.

The crew members ejected quickly, their parachutes opening just as the jets were pivoting toward the ground.

The cause of the crash is not yet known

Videos of the collision suggest human error is to blame, Flynn said. Before colliding, Flynn said the video shows they were trying to line up closely — wing tip to wing tip — but failed to safely rejoin in formation, a routine maneuver.

Officials have not yet released any information about what may have contributed to the crash. Umayam said the investigation is ongoing amid efforts to recover the damaged aircraft.

"Our priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of our personnel, as well as security of the aircraft during the recovery," Umayam told The Associated Press in an email.

The skills used in air show performances are different from those used in day-to-day routine flying or flying in combat, Flynn said. He calls it "the difference between showmanship and airmanship."

That's why most military air show crews are assigned to just do display flights during the show season, he said.

The Growler display flight crews are all flight instructors from Whidbey Island. Their core duties generally include training pilots and electronic warfare officers from the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force.

Ejecting is a complicated process

Ejection seats use a complex system of motors and parachutes to propel crew members away from a plane in an emergency. First the canopy is pushed away from the aircraft with a blast so it poses no danger

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to the crew. Then the seat is launched upward and out of the plane, using solid rocket motors, before the parachute deploys and the seat drops away as the crew member descends to the ground.

"You've got to have enough altitude, you've got to be clear of any obstacles and then even after all that's successful, you can injure your back," said aviation expert Jeff Guzzetti. "Just the massive, propulsive force of the ejection seat can compress the spine, or your limbs may flail."

Guzzetti said ejections are sometimes not possible during midair collisions because the damage to aircraft can be too extensive. But the way the two Navy planes came together may have allowed the opportunity to eject, he said.

"If they had hit each other at a faster speed, they would have done structural damage and the airplane would have come apart," he said.

The two Growlers were using a seat manufactured by the U.K.-based company Martin-Baker, the company said. Martin-Baker described itself as the leading manufacturer of ejection seats, including seats used by the Navy since 1958. The company says its seats have saved the lives of more than 2,000 Navy crew members since then.

The explosiveness of an ejection puts tremendous force on the crew member -- as much as 20 times the force of gravity, said Michael O'Donnell, a former Federal Aviation Administration official who also worked on ejection seats in the Air Force. That's enough force to temporarily make a person up to an inch shorter after ejection, he said.

"A really, really bad roller coaster ride is not even close to that," O'Donnell said.

The Growlers are irreplaceable

The plane remains the Navy's most advanced airborne electronic attack tool, according to the Electronic Attack Squadron (VAZ) 129's website. The squadron is stationed at the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, where it maintains 55 of the specialized planes.

But Boeing stopped building new Growlers several years ago.

"These are invaluable national assets," Flynn said. "There is no newer version of these — they are a very special, very powerful electronic warfare platform, and there's never enough of them. And now we've lost two."

Air shows are inherently dangerous

Pilots who perform at air shows are among the best, but there is little room for error, said aviation safety expert John Cox, CEO of Safety Operating Systems.

"Air show flying is demanding. It has very little tolerance," Cox said. "The people who do it are very good and it's a small margin for error. I'm glad everybody was able to get out."

The air show industry has been working to improve safety for years at the roughly 200 events held annually in the U.S. The last fatal crashes at an air show came in 2024 when two people were killed in separate accidents at different events.

## FACT FOCUS: Trump distorts recent revisions of scientific projections of global warming

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump recently blasted the accuracy of global warming projections in a Truth Social post that itself painted a distorted view of the science, projections and how the international community discusses climate policy.

Every several years, the United Nations produces massive scientific reports on what's happening and likely to happen with human-caused global warming. Scientists update some of the scenarios used to make future projections. One key control knob, which determines the amount and impact of future climate change, is carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. The more carbon pollution, the more global warming, so scientists base their projections on a buffet of potential scenarios.

Those scenarios triggered the president's social media post over the weekend. Here's a closer look at

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the facts:

TRUMP: "GOOD RIDDANCE! After 15 years of Democrats promising that 'Climate change' is going to destroy the Planet, the United Nations TOP Climate Committee just admitted that its own projections (RCP8.5) were WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!"

THE FACTS: Trump was referring to a set of projections from 2011 from a group of scientists associated with the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that were updated in a study published in a scientific journal this spring. The update found that the old worst case scenario — called RCP8.5 — was implausible.

The changes prompted scientists and non-scientists who downplay the harms or even deny the science of climate change to criticize in social media the international panel of climate scientists' decades of work, which won a Nobel Prize. And it prompted mainstream climate scientists to explain the necessity for including unlikely scenarios and to point out that the change also reflects how the world has dramatically increased cleaner energy use, such as solar and wind power and electric cars. That has caused soaring carbon emissions to practically flatten.

Even when it was created 15 years ago, that worst case scenario was unlikely — there were other scenarios that were considered more likely. But the most extreme scenario was still possible if the world went on a fossil fuel heavy binge, in particular continuing to use coal, the most dirty fossil fuel, in a big way. It projected an end of the century warming of about 8 degrees Fahrenheit (4.5 degrees Celsius) compared to the mid 1800s.

It was not alarmism, said climate scientist Detlef Van Vuuren of Utrecht University, lead author of the new study laying out future scenarios, and Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Even with the lowest amount warming projected "we enter danger," Rockström said. "We enter danger both from extreme events (such as floods, heat waves and droughts) but also from risks of crossing tipping points" such as loss of coral and glaciers.

The now-jettisoned scenario was "a relevant low-probability high-risk scenario" with a role to help governments "be prepared with the possible risks of climate change. For instance, living in the Netherlands — a country possibly vulnerable to flooding — I would not like my government to only look at the best-guess scenario, but also explore what the risks are," Van Vuuren said.

"The risks of climate change have not disappeared. The good news is that we did not follow the most dramatic emission pathway. However, we are still heading towards a future with significant climate impacts; a future that we should avoid," Van Vuuren added.

It's a future of suffering and more deaths, but was never about outright destroying the planet, said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald.

Nine out of 10 climate scientists interviewed by The Associated Press said the worst case scenario that was jettisoned was unlikely but still plausible when it first came out. But they said that has changed because of a boom in carbon-free wind and solar energy technologies that has made them cheaper at times than fossil fuels.

Dropping the old worst case scenario is because "we are making progress in slowing climate change with a well-established affordable range of solutions — especially, solar, wind, battery storage, and electrified transportation," said University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck.

TRUMP: "My administration will always be based on TRUTH, SCIENCE, and FACT!"

THE FACTS: A signature Trump administration move on climate was initially justified by a report that was presented as a scientific document that scientists said was inaccurate and was then ditched.

In July 2025, the Trump administration announced it would repeal an Obama-era scientific finding by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that climate change was endangering America's public health. To back it up, the Department of Energy issued a 151-page report by its Climate Working Group, saying climate change was not that harmful.



Dozens of scientists told the AP that the Trump justification document was filled with errors, bias and distortion.

The National Academy of Sciences, created by President Abraham Lincoln to advise the federal government on science issues, issued a quick report disputing the Trump document and saying "human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases and resulting climate change harm the health of people in the United States." Separately, a group of 85 scientists wrote a letter saying the Trump claims "are misleading or outright wrong."

When the Trump administration officially revoked the EPA endangerment finding in February, it did not include the science justification from the Department of Energy that scientists had criticized.

## Argentina's icy outpost at the end of the world fears the hantavirus will chill tourism

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

USHUAIA, Argentina (AP) — Travelers hoping to catch a glimpse of Magellanic penguins and humpback whales have journeyed in greater numbers every year to Ushuaia, the main Antarctic cruise hub at the southernmost point of Argentina.

The wind-lashed city that bills itself as the "end of the world" now fears for its future. In the last week, the remote outpost has found itself at the center of speculation about the source of a deadly hantavirus outbreak on an Atlantic cruise after Argentina's Health Ministry said it was examining whether the outbreak's first victims, a Dutch couple who died in April, contracted the rat-borne virus there.

Argentine scientists searching for the source of the outbreak arrived on Monday in Ushuaia, the capital of left-leaning Tierra del Fuego Province, which has frequently clashed with the country's libertarian President Javier Milei. Their research institute said they would capture and analyze rodents over the next few days in areas linked to the couple's itinerary in the city.

Questions surround the investigation. Authorities in Ushuaia say they're victims of a smear campaign. The Argentine Health Ministry says it can't rule out any destination visited by the Dutch bird enthusiasts during their monthslong road trip through Argentina and Chile before boarding the ship in Ushuaia.

Despite a lack of any evidence to suggest the outbreak started in Ushuaia, people here whose livelihoods depend on foreign visitors say they are feeling the effects.

"This is a place that we've tried to promote as being as far away as possible from all the world's problems — war, racism, health problems, too," said Julio Lovece, the former tourism secretary of Ushuaia. "There's concern because our main attraction is clean and pure landscapes, the imaginary idea of the end of the world."

Hantavirus anxieties cause some travelers to reconsider

The arrival of winter has emptied Ushuaia save for a trickle of Brazilian tourists in puffy jackets and big hoods bobbing down the sleet-slick streets like the penguins they've come to visit.

"We got a little worried this was something similar to what we experienced with COVID," said Vinícius Pezzini, 38, an investment banker from São Paulo on his honeymoon. "But from what it seems, everything is functioning normally."

As the subpolar Patagonian wind blows in off the Beagle Channel, tour operators already are looking toward the next high season starting in October, when deep-pocketed passengers plan cruises to Antarctica. Several travel agents said that fears about the Andes variant of the hantavirus have already caused some Americans and Europeans to scrap cruise bookings for next season. They declined to say how many.

"We have seen a number of passengers canceling trips, but my main concern is not the cancellations but people who were thinking about going to Ushuaia but had two or three destinations to choose from and now may go to Southeast Asia or Africa," said Ángel Brisighelli, owner of the Ushuaia-based Rumbo Sur travel agency. "That damage won't be visible until much later."

It's a reminder of just how fragile the tourism economy remains, especially for cruises occupying an

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outsized place in the public imagination when it comes to infectious disease.

Some officials in Tierra del Fuego are subscribing to the philosophy that all press is good press.

"We suffered a loss of prestige, yes. But this is also a chance to show that Ushuaia is one of the safest places in the world," said Juan Pavlov, the secretary of foreign affairs at the Tierra del Fuego Tourism Institute.

Antarctica tourism turned Ushuaia into a boomtown

Many residents of Tierra del Fuego, lured in the 1970s by tax breaks to the rugged archipelago split between Argentina and Chile, remember when Antarctic travel meant naval patrols and research expeditions. Today, the white continent routinely tops bucket lists of vacationers from around the world.

A decade ago, just over 38,400 Antarctic cruise passengers set out from Ushuaia, a city of 80,000. In the 2025-2026 season, more than 135,000 did, according to Argentine port authorities, many hoping to experience the world's largest ice sheets before they melt.

Ninety percent of Antarctic cruises depart from Ushuaia, and the city says it relies on tourism for over 25% of its revenue. Any drop in visitors, however small, can have ripple effects throughout the economy, said Patricio Cornejo, head of local travel agency Tierra del Fuego Aventura.

"Everything would exist in a different reality without the dynamism that tourism creates here, especially when other industries fail to generate momentum," he said.

Under Milei, Tierra del Fuego has weathered a series of economic blows. The government's scrapping of trade barriers has battered its mainstay electronics production, while its strengthening of the local currency has given Argentines more spending power abroad, discouraging tourism at home that keeps Ushuaia afloat during the low season.

Questions hang over Argentina's investigation

Argentina's apparent lack of urgency in hunting for the origin of the outbreak has perplexed experts overseas.

Officials are still struggling to fill the gaps in the late Dutch couple's itinerary. Monday's start of field work to detect the possible presence of the hantavirus in a province that has never registered a case of it comes nearly two weeks after Argentina's Health Ministry first announced the scientists would travel.

"The investigation is going to be key for us to see what we can learn from the outbreak," said Mark Loafman, a family medicine doctor and public health expert at Cook County Health in Chicago. "We'd like to see hypotheses based on science, and not on concern over tourism."

The Pan American Health Organization — to which Argentina is party despite withdrawing from the World Health Organization last year — defended Argentina's response and said it was working with its government to "strengthen the detection and follow-up of potential cases."

"While the ongoing investigation remains important, its broader public health relevance for the Americas is limited, given that the disease is endemic in the region," the organization said in response to questions on whether the lagging investigation caused concern.

Here in Ushuaia, authorities argue the most logical source of contagion is the Patagonian region that spans southern Chile and three Argentine provinces, where the same Andes hantavirus identified in the cruise outbreak circulates.

But health officials say they have no record of the Dutch couple visiting those endemic areas during the incubation period for the virus — estimated to be between nine and 45 days before the arrival of symptoms on April 6.

In recent days, they've stressed that all is well in Argentina's treasured tourist destinations.

"Tourism operators tell us that many trip reservations have been canceled, so we must make this clarification," announced José Contreras, mayor of the village of Epuyén where a 2018 hantavirus outbreak killed 11 people. "Epuyén has no hantavirus this season. People should feel at ease and continue to visit."

## Federal court rejects Elon Musk's claims against OpenAI, saying he filed his lawsuit too late

By BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — A federal court on Monday dismissed claims filed against OpenAI and its top executives by Elon Musk, who accused them of betraying a shared vision for it to remain a nonprofit dedicated to guiding artificial intelligence's development for the good of humanity.

The nine-person jury found Musk waited too long to file his lawsuit and missed a statutory deadline. After a three-week trial, the jury deliberated less than two hours.

Musk, the world's richest man, was a co-founder of OpenAI, which launched in 2015 and went on to create ChatGPT. After investing \$38 million in its first years, Musk accused OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and his top deputy of shifting into a moneymaking mode behind his back.

The jury served in an advisory role, but Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers accepted the verdict Monday as the court's own and dismissed Musk's claims.

Musk posted on his social media platform X that he would file an appeal. He said the judge and jury never weighed in on the merits of the case, just "a calendar technicality."

"There is no question to anyone following the case in detail that Altman & Brockman did in fact enrich themselves by stealing a charity. The only question is WHEN they did it!" he wrote.

Musk's lawyer, Steven Molo, said Musk's feud with OpenAI was far from resolved. He compared Monday's verdict to moments in U.S. history like the Siege of Charleston and the Battle of Bunker Hill which were "major losses for Americans, but who won the war?"

OpenAI argued it came down to a business rivalry

The trial in Oakland, California shed light on the bitter falling-out between the two Silicon Valley titans and the beginnings of OpenAI, now a company valued at \$852 billion and moving toward potentially one of the largest initial public offerings in history.

Altman and OpenAI claimed there was never a promise to keep OpenAI a nonprofit forever. In fact, they argued, Musk knew this and filed his lawsuit because he couldn't have unilateral control over the fast-growing AI developer.

OpenAI argued the lawsuit aimed to undercut the company's rapid growth and bolster Musk's xAI, which he launched in 2023 as a competitor.

Outside court Monday, OpenAI lawyer William Savitt told reporters that jurors determined the lawsuit was an "after-the-fact contrivance" that amounted to Musk trying to sabotage a competitor and "to overcome a long history of very bad predictions about what OpenAI has been and will become."

Microsoft, an OpenAI investor and a co-defendant in Musk's lawsuit, said it welcomed the decision and remains "committed to our work with OpenAI to advance and scale AI for people and organizations around the world."

Musk was seeking damages to be paid to the altruistic efforts of OpenAI's charitable arm as well as Altman's ouster from OpenAI's board. Musk's decision to stop funding the company contributed to the rift between the former allies. Musk says he was responding to deceptive conduct that OpenAI's board picked up on when it fired Altman as CEO in 2023 before he got his job back days later.

The trial saw testimony from Musk, Altman and his top lieutenant Greg Brockman, along with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and a slew of others in the tech titans' orbit.

Musk told jurors on his first of three days on the stand that, fundamentally, "I think they're going to try to make this lawsuit ... very complicated, but it's actually very simple," Musk said. "Which is that it's not OK to steal a charity."

Musk's lawsuit claimed that, in addition to "breach of charitable trust," Altman and Brockman unjustly enriched themselves from the windfall as the ChatGPT maker soared in valuation. Brockman revealed during the trial that his stake in OpenAI is worth about \$30 billion.

The trial detailed a clash between tech titans

Altman and Musk both vied to be OpenAI's CEO in its early years. In his testimony, Altman said he had

concerns about Musk's attempts to gain more control over OpenAI, which was aiming to safely build a better-than-human form of AI called artificial general intelligence.

"Part of the reason we started OpenAI is we didn't think AGI could be under the control of any one person, no matter how good their intents are," Altman said.

The trial also shed light on Altman's removal from the OpenAI board in 2023, before he returned to his role a few days later. Several witnesses including two ex-board members, Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley, said there were concerns about Altman's truthfulness.

Near the end of his testimony, Altman said that before things turned sour, he had thought very highly of Musk.

"I felt like he had abandoned us, not come through on his promises, put the company in a very difficult place, jeopardized the mission, didn't really care about the things I thought he cared about," Altman said. "It's been an extremely painful thing for me ... to have someone that I respected so much not acknowledge that and continue to publicly attack us."

## **Israeli troops intercept a flotilla off Cyprus as it tries to breach the Gaza blockade**

By SUZAN FRASER and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Israel's navy intercepted an activist flotilla in international waters off Cyprus on Monday, halting the latest attempt to challenge a naval blockade of Gaza and draw attention to the grim living conditions for Palestinians in the war-battered coastal territory.

More than 50 vessels departed from the port of Marmaris, Turkey, last week in what the organizers of the Global Sumud Flotilla described as the final leg of their planned journey to Gaza's shores.

The activists' livestream showed them putting on life jackets and raising their hands as a boat carrying Israeli troops approached. When the troops boarded, the livestream abruptly ended.

Other footage showed Israeli forces on speedboats approaching and instructing the activists to move to the front of the boat. At least 31 boats were intercepted in the operation by Monday evening, according to Global Sumud Flotilla's tracker.

The interceptions took place well outside Cypriot territorial waters that stretch 22 kilometers (14 miles) from the island's coastline, at a location some 167 kilometers (104 miles) away, according to the national center responsible for search and rescue operations there.

The center said it had not received any distress calls from the area. Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides also said that Israel did not inform Cypriot authorities of its intention to intercept the flotilla.

Israeli troops boarded the flotilla vessels in broad daylight

Organizers said the boats were intercepted 250 nautical miles (463 kilometers) from the shores of Gaza. Unlike previous interceptions, which mostly took place under the cover of night, the Israeli military boarded the boats in broad daylight.

Israel has maintained a sea blockade of Gaza since the Palestinian militant group Hamas took control of the territory in 2007, and it intensified that blockade in the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks on Israel which killed around 1,200 people and saw more than 250 taken hostage. Critics say the blockade amounts to collective punishment.

Israel has said the blockade, which restricts the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, was meant to prevent Hamas from arming itself. Egypt, which has the only border crossing with Gaza not controlled by Israel, has also greatly restricted movement in and out of the enclave.

The flotilla organizers said they expect the activists to be taken to the port of Ashdod, in southern Israel. Activists on previous flotillas were brought to the same port, where some were processed and immediately deported, while others were detained before they were deported.

Italy said Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani has repeatedly asked the Israeli government for assurances regarding the safety and well-being of detained Italian activists aboard the flotilla.

Indonesia's Foreign Ministry urged Israel to release all the detained activists and confirmed two of its



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nationals, including a journalist, were aboard the flotilla.

Spain's Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said he had summoned Israel's chargé d'affaires in Madrid on Monday over what he called "a new violation of international law barely 15 days after the previous interception." He estimated there were around 45 Spanish nationals in the flotilla, of which between 10 and 20 were being detained.

Israel calls the flotilla a provocation

Earlier, Israel's Foreign Ministry called on activists to "change course and turn back immediately."

"Once again, a provocation for the sake of provocation: another so-called 'humanitarian aid flotilla' with no humanitarian aid," the ministry posted on X.

The ministry later posted a video of what it said were activists "hugging after being transferred to Israeli vessels" and said no aid had so far been found on their boats.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commended the soldiers for "thwarting a malicious plan designed to break the isolation we are imposing on Hamas terrorists in Gaza."

Netanyahu was supposed to be in court on Monday to testify in his ongoing corruption trial, but requested a cancellation due to all-day security meetings.

Hamas condemned Israel's interception of the flotilla as a "full-fledged crime of piracy" and called on the international community to pressure Israel to end its blockade.

Turkey echoed Hamas' piracy accusation and called on Israel to immediately halt its operation and release the flotilla participants.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan described Israeli actions as "piracy and banditry" that were carried out with a "fascist mentality." He said in a televised address Monday that his country stands with the people of Gaza and those who help the Palestinian territory.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Ankara was working with international bodies and other governments to ensure the safe return of Turkish citizens on board the flotilla.

Another flotilla was intercepted last month

Israeli forces intercepted more than 20 boats from a flotilla near the southern Greek island of Crete on April 30, detaining about 175 activists initially. Israeli officials said they had to act early in international waters because of the high number of boats involved.

Israel took two of the activists — Saif Abukeshek, a Spanish-Swedish citizen of Palestinian origin, and Brazilian citizen Thiago Ávila — back to Israel, where they were interrogated and detained for several days. The activists accused Israeli forces of torture, which Israel denied. Brazil and Spain condemned Israel for "kidnapping" their citizens. The two were deported from Israel after about a week in detention.

Organizers say the latest efforts involved a regrouped fleet joined by additional boats. Nearly 500 activists from 45 countries were taking part.

Previous flotillas failed to reach Gaza

The activists' attempt comes less than a year after Israeli authorities foiled a flotilla of about 50 vessels and around 500 activists, including Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, Nelson Mandela's grandson Mandla Mandela and several European lawmakers.

The Israeli actions have raised questions on whether a blockade in international waters is allowed under international law.

In 2010, Israeli commandos raided the Turkish boat Mavi Marmara that was part of a Gaza-bound aid flotilla. Nine Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American on board were killed. The last time an activist boat succeeded in reaching Gaza was in 2008.

Flotilla aims to draw attention to the situation in Gaza

The ceasefire in the latest Israel-Hamas war remains fragile and progress has stalled over the issue of disarming Hamas, with both sides trading accusations of violations.

Despite the ceasefire, around 2 million Gaza residents still live with severe shortages of housing, food and medicine.

Gaza has seen near-daily Israeli fire with more than 850 people killed in the territory since the ceasefire went into effect last October, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry says Israel's offensive, launched in response to Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel that started the war, have killed more than 72,700 people. The ministry, part of Gaza's Hamas-run government, does not give a breakdown between civilians and militants.

The flotillas have been criticized for bringing minute amounts of aid on tiny ships. The Israeli defense body overseeing humanitarian aid to Gaza claims that sufficient aid is entering the territory, with around 600 trucks bringing in humanitarian assistance daily, similar to prewar levels.

## **Pelicans hire ex-Orlando coach Jamahl Mosley as New Orleans' next coach**

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The New Orleans Pelicans hired former Orlando coach Jamahl Mosley as their next coach on Monday, ending interim coach James Borrego's candidacy to retain his job on a permanent basis.

Mosley heads to New Orleans after spending the past five seasons with Orlando, which fired him this month after the Magic's seven-game, first-round playoff loss to the Detroit Pistons. The Magic had a 3-1 lead in that series, as well as 24-point lead in Game 7.

"Jamahl has earned tremendous respect across the NBA for his leadership, professionalism, and the strong relationships he develops with players and staff," Pelicans basketball operations chief Joe Dumars said. "His teams reflect his coaching style through their defensive intensity, effort, preparation, and commitment to playing the right way."

Mosley went 189-221 with Orlando. His teams qualified for the NBA playoffs in each of the past three seasons and won the Southeast Division twice, but were eliminated in the first round each time.

Borrego was the Pelicans' interim coach for 70 games, taking over a 2-10 team after the firing of Willie Green.

In what was his second interim job and third chance overall to lead a staff, Borrego went 24-46 with the Pelicans, who missed the postseason for a second straight season.

Borrego also had coached the Charlotte Hornets from 2018 to 2022. His teams earned Eastern Conference play-in spots in 2021 and 2022, but did not advance to the NBA playoffs in either of those seasons.

When the 2025-26 regular season ended, Borrego said he wanted to keep the Pelicans' job on a permanent basis, and said he was confident that with a full offseason in charge, he could put a more consistent winner on the court.

Dumars said Borrego was indeed a candidate, but that he would also look "outside the building" for his next coach.

Mosley becomes the Pelicans' third coach since Dumars took over as executive vice president of basketball operations before last season.

Dumars' decision to hire Mosley gives him an experienced hand to coach a team that took two players in the first round of the 2025 NBA Draft — guard Jeremiah Fears and forward Derik Queen — to augment a lineup led by forward Zion Williamson, wing Trey Murphy and guard Dejounte Murray.

Mosley "has consistently demonstrated an ability to develop young talent while establishing teams that compete with toughness, discipline, and togetherness," Dumar said.

Mosley got the nod over several other candidates considered by Dumars, including former player Rajon Rondo, Brooklyn Nets assistant Steve Hetzel and former Los Angeles Lakers coach Darvin Ham, who is now a top assistant with Milwaukee. San Antonio Spurs assistant Sean Sweeney also was reportedly under consideration.

Before Mosley took his only previous head coaching position with Orlando, he spent seven seasons as one of then-Dallas Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle's top assistants, a stint that overlapped with the development of Luka Doncic, who began his NBA career in Dallas before being traded to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Before working in Dallas, Mosley was with the Cleveland Cavaliers for four seasons.

While Mosley, a former standout college player at Colorado, did not play in the NBA, he did play professionally in Australia, Europe and Asia before starting his NBA career in player development and scouting

with Denver in 2005.

## Judge allows gun and notebook as evidence at Mangione's trial in UnitedHealthcare CEO's killing

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A gun and notebook that prosecutors say link Luigi Mangione to the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson can be used as evidence at his murder trial, a judge ruled Monday, rejecting a defense argument that they were seized illegally.

Judge Gregory Carro's decision, five months after he held a hearing to examine how police came upon the items, is a major win for prosecutors, enabling them to show jurors a possible murder weapon and motive. That mirrors an earlier ruling in Mangione's federal case.

But Carro also excluded items officers pulled from Mangione's backpack before his arrest at a McDonald's restaurant in Altoona, Pennsylvania. He said the loaded gun magazine, cellphone, passport, wallet and computer chip resulted from an "improper warrantless search." He also excluded some statements he made to police before he was handcuffed.

The judge did allow items found as officers inventoried the backpack's contents later at a police station — including a 3D-printed pistol prosecutors say matches the one used to kill Thompson, and a notebook that describes wanting to "wack" a health insurance executive. Carro said such inventory searches are an exception to the U.S. Constitution's protections against unreasonable searches and seizures. Police obtained a search warrant hours later.

Mangione was arrested on Dec. 9, 2024, five days after Thompson was killed outside a Manhattan hotel. Altoona is about 230 miles (370 kilometers) west of Manhattan.

Mangione, 28, didn't speak as Carro summarized his decision. About two dozen of his supporters, some wearing "Free Luigi" T-shirts, crowded the courtroom's gallery.

Mangione's state murder trial is set to begin on Sept. 8, and his federal trial, which involves stalking charges, on Oct. 13. The federal judge ruled all of backpack's contents into evidence.

Mangione has pleaded not guilty to all the charges, and could spend his life in prison if convicted in either case.

Both sides win something in this ruling

Mangione's lawyers argued that the searches were illegal because officers had no warrant when they looked through the backpack.

Prosecutors argued that the initial search at the McDonald's was legal because it was conducted in conjunction with an arrest and because officers followed Altoona police protocols requiring them to check for dangerous items. But Carro said New York law applies, and that officers had eliminated the justification for an immediate safety search by moving the backpack outside Mangione's "grabbable area" as other restaurant customers passed nearby.

Citing body-worn camera video, Carro also ruled out some statements Mangione made when he was effectively in custody but not yet apprised of his right to remain silent.

Mangione told police early on he didn't want to talk, but officers engaged him for almost 20 minutes before getting him to admit that he had given them a fake name and phony New Jersey driver's license. An NYPD lieutenant testified in December that the shooter had used the same name — Mark Rosario — to buy a bus ticket to New York and stay at a Manhattan hostel.

Surveillance video showed a masked gunman shooting Thompson from behind on Dec. 4, 2024, as the executive walked to his company's annual investor conference. Police say "delay," "deny" and "depose" were written on the ammunition, mimicking a phrase used to describe how insurers avoid paying claims.

Officer's decision to pause search may have tilted ruling

Mangione was not yet under arrest, let alone subject to a judicial search warrant, when officers initially responded to a 911 call about a man who looked like the suspect in Thompson's killing. They began searching his backpack, but stopped after finding the gun magazine wrapped in a pair of underwear. They also

found the notebook, Carro noted, but did not open it or see the writings at that point.

"It's him, dude. It's him, 100%," Altoona Police Officer Stephen Fox said on body-worn camera video before telling his colleague to pause the search and resume at the station. "Let's just take it back," he said.

That momentary decision likely preserved the prosecution's ability to use the gun and notebook as evidence at trial. Carro said evidence logged in the subsequent inventory search, including apparent to-do lists and getaway plans, is admissible.

Prosecutors have quoted extensively from Mangione's handwritten diary in court filings, noting his praise for Unabomber Ted Kaczynski and his musings about rebelling against "the deadly, greed fueled health insurance cartel."

## **Summer travelers who relied on Spirit Airlines may struggle to find budget alternatives**

By RIO YAMAT AP Airlines and Travel Writer

Days after Spirit Airlines shut down in the middle of the night, a lawyer for the defunct budget carrier stood before a bankruptcy judge and apologized to the price-conscious customers who might struggle to find affordable flights in its absence.

"We apologize most specifically to those Americans who may now be priced entirely out," Spirit lawyer Marshall Huebner said in court, thanking all the passengers who relied on the airline during its 34-year run, many of whom, he said, "could not otherwise have afforded air travel."

Spirit's May 2 demise is not the only curveball confronting people planning trips a week before the summer travel season has its traditional U.S. launch on Memorial Day. Rising jet fuel costs tied to the Iran war have pushed up airfares and associated fees across the commercial aviation industry. Two of the remaining U.S. budget carriers just finalized a merger.

The uncertain outlook for economical air travel reflects how difficult it has become for low-cost, no-frills airlines to operate while squeezed by volatile fuel prices, inflation and increasingly fierce competition. While budget airlines appeal to customers motivated by fare prices alone, traditional carriers can more easily generate revenue to offset fuel costs through premium cabins, membership rewards, corporate travel programs, add-on charges and pricing algorithms.

"Dynamic pricing has taken away one of the last structural advantages that low-cost carriers had," said Shye Gilad, a former airline captain who now teaches at Georgetown University.

For decades, low-cost carriers thrived by offering fares that traditional airlines often couldn't match without losing money. But that edge has weakened as the "big three" — American, Delta and United — got better at tailoring prices to different travelers, and as JetBlue, Southwest and other airlines that long positioned themselves as less expensive alternatives began chasing higher-paying customers.

Today, big airlines can sell a handful of bare-bones seats at Spirit-level prices while still charging more for standard and premium tickets elsewhere on their planes. That has made it harder for budget airlines to compete solely on price.

"They can't just be the cheapest airline anymore," Gilad said. "They have to be the smartest low-cost airline."

Like gasoline and diesel prices, the price of jet fuel has jumped since the Iran war put a chokehold on Middle East oil shipments 11 weeks ago. The strain prompted the Association of Value Airlines, a U.S. trade group representing Allegiant Air, Avelo Air, Frontier Airlines, Spirit Airlines and Sun Country Airlines, to ask the Trump administration in late April for \$2.5 billion in temporary financial aid.

Airlines for America, the trade group for Alaska Airlines, American, Delta, JetBlue and Southwest, opposed the idea, saying that federal help would give the budget airlines an unfair advantage.

"Government intervention on behalf of those airlines would punish other airlines that have engaged in self-help in order to deal with increased costs and reward airlines who haven't made those tough decisions," Airlines for America said in a statement. "And, in the long-term, sustaining businesses that cannot earn their cost of capital harms competition and consumers by making it more difficult for other airlines



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to compete.”

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy rejected the request the day Spirit stopped flying.

Even before the latest run-up in fuel costs, consolidation was already underway in the budget airline sector. Alaska Airlines completed its \$1 billion purchase of Hawaiian Airlines in September 2024 after the two carriers agreed to maintain the level of service on key routes within Hawaii and between Hawaii and the U.S. mainland where they didn't face much competition.

Spirit was an unsuccessful merger target of both Frontier and JetBlue as its losses mounted after the coronavirus pandemic.

Allegiant said last week it had finalized its roughly \$1.5 billion acquisition of Sun Country, a deal first announced in January. The combined airline brings together passenger service with Sun Country's cargo operations and charter business serving sports teams, casinos and the U.S. Department of Defense.

“Consolidation is a signal” of weakness in the industry, Gilad said. “If you can remove a competitor and improve your product offering, you might be able to eke out more profit.”

Other experts note the diversity within the budget airline sector, a factor that could make some carriers more resilient to spiking fuel costs and market disruptions than others.

“Budget airlines are a pretty peculiar creature,” Vikrant Vaze, an aviation systems expert at Dartmouth College's engineering school, said, describing a category that has encompassed struggling carriers like Spirit to giants like Southwest Airlines, which grew from a low-cost pioneer into one of the largest U.S. airlines.

“Even though they can be clubbed together as budget airlines, if you want a big umbrella term, they're very different from each other,” Vaze said. “They have very different levels of budget-ness.”

Allegiant's focus on leisure travel centers on smaller airports with less direct competition. JetBlue, a hybrid low-cost carrier, leans more heavily on premium seating and loyalty perks than Spirit ever did.

Frontier comes closest to Spirit's model as an ultra low-cost carrier, though analysts say it entered this period of volatility with stronger liquidity and could benefit from Spirit's exit. It has already begun expanding in former Spirit-heavy markets that include Las Vegas, Detroit and the Florida cities of Orlando and Fort Lauderdale.

Gilad sees echoes of his own experience working as a pilot and flight-training instructor at Independence Air, a short-lived low-cost airline that previously served as a regional carrier for United and Delta. The airline, which launched in mid-2004 as fighting between U.S.-led forces and insurgents in Iraq sent fuel prices soaring, shut down during bankruptcy proceedings in January 2006.

“They burned through almost \$200 million in 18 months,” Gilad said. “It was just that quick that they were gone.”

He said the same structural pressures remain in place today, but there are fewer remaining budget airlines to share them.

## **Ukraine's attack on Moscow is another sign the war is not so distant anymore for Russians**

By The Associated Press undefined

It's getting harder for officials in the Kremlin to cast the war in Ukraine — now in its fifth year — as something so distant that it doesn't affect the daily routines of Russian civilians.

From irritating internet disruptions to this month's scaled-down Victory Day parade and a massive weekend aerial attack in the Moscow region that killed three people, Russia's full-scale war no longer seems a distant conflict.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cast the attack in Moscow's suburbs as a just retribution for the relentless and deadly Russian missile and drone strikes on the capital of Kyiv and other cities last week.

All these assaults have come only days after President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump both suggested that the war in Ukraine was nearing its end.

One of the biggest attacks by Ukraine so far

The Russian Defense Ministry reported Sunday its air defenses downed 1,054 Ukrainian drones in the

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previous 24 hours, one of the biggest tallies reported by the military. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin reported 81 drones were downed by the capital's air defenses from late Saturday to early Sunday.

The attacks killed three near the Russian capital, injured 12 others, damaged multiple apartment buildings and destroyed several private homes.

One drone hit on the territory of a Moscow refinery but didn't derail production, Sobyenin said. Another hit an oil tank at a storage facility, causing a blaze that blanketed the area in black smoke.

Several Moscow airports suspended operations, with dozens of flights delayed or diverted. One Ukrainian drone fell on the grounds of the capital's Sheremetyevo airport but didn't cause any damage, authorities said.

Ukraine's growing drone arsenal

Ukraine's ability to pierce Moscow's dense air defense cover reflected the growth in the number of its drones, along with its enhanced tactics. Kyiv has steadily ramped up its drone raids, focusing on energy facilities and arms factories, but the capital has presented a tougher target.

"The Moscow region is the most heavily saturated with Russian air defense systems," Zelenskyy said in a speech to the nation, adding that "our long-range capabilities are significantly changing the situation — and, more broadly, the world's perception of Russia's war."

The weekend attack on Moscow was a justified response to "Russia's prolongation of the war and attacks on our cities and communities," Zelenskyy said.

"We are clearly telling the Russians: Their state must end its war," he said in a social media post.

The deadliest attack last week in Ukraine saw 24 people killed as a Russian missile leveled a nine-story apartment building in Kyiv.

A scaled-back Victory Day

The attacks followed a brief U.S.-brokered three-day ceasefire that failed to end the fighting but led to a pause in long-range attacks, allowing Moscow to hold an annual May 9 military parade commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

Concern over Ukraine's longer-range drone attacks led Russian authorities to scale down the parade. Unlike in years past, no tanks, missiles or other hardware rumbled through Red Square.

After the parade, Putin said the war in Ukraine was nearing its end, although he didn't explain that statement or offer any timetable. He has insisted on his maximalist demands for ending the war, including that Ukraine must pull out its troops from the four regions that Moscow has annexed but never fully captured. Kyiv has rejected the demand.

Trump also claimed last week that the end to the war was "getting very close," even though U.S. efforts to help broker an end to the fighting have failed to make any significant progress are effectively on hold since the start of its war in Iran.

Growing domestic discontent in Russia

The Moscow attacks come at a time when tensions are rising in Russia over the growing cost of the war and increasingly restrictive government policies that have dented Putin's traditionally high popularity.

Some military bloggers and social media influencers who had been loyal to the Kremlin have started openly questioning some government's policies.

A move by the authorities to restrict cellphone internet and blocking popular messaging apps has caused massive losses to businesses and disruptions to everyday life for millions of Russians, triggering public outrage.

The government defended its action by citing the need to thwart attacks by Ukrainian drones, some of which rely on mobile internet for targeting. Critics denounce the shutdowns as the latest move by authorities to tighten control over the internet.

The growing frustration over the restrictions led the public to file petitions to the presidential administration and to try to organize protests that were quickly blocked.

As the tensions mount, Putin on Tuesday is starting a two-day visit to China.

Controlling the message and threatening retaliation

State TV stations sought to play down the Moscow attacks, which received only a brief mention on some

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newscasts. They focused instead on a successful test last week of a new intercontinental ballistic missile that is intended to be a key part of Russia's nuclear forces.

Several war bloggers said the weekend attack exposed vulnerabilities in air defenses that must be fixed quickly. Some urged the Kremlin to ramp up attacks on Ukraine and target its government.

"The time has come to hit the decision-making centers," wrote Alexander Kots of the daily Komsomolskaya Pravda.

Pro-Kremlin political commentator Sergei Markov wrote that he woke up to the sound of explosions over the weekend as air defenses fired on the attacking drones. He blamed Kyiv's allies for helping Ukraine boost its drone output, alleging "it was Europe that tried to hit Moscow."

"As long as Europe believes it's safe, such attempts will continue," Markov said.

Russian hawks long have urged the Kremlin to respond to the growing Ukrainian attacks by striking Kyiv's allies in Europe.

Last month, the Defense Ministry published a list of factories in Europe that it said were involved in producing drones and their components for Ukraine. It warned that attacks on Russia involving drones manufactured in Europe are fraught with "unpredictable consequences."

Asked Sunday by a state TV commentator why Moscow tolerates being "bitten" like that, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded that its nuclear deterrent is intended to fend off threats to Russia's existence.

## **Lebanon death toll reaches 3,000 in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah**

BEIRUT (AP) — The death toll in the latest round of fighting between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon surpassed 3,000, Lebanon's health ministry said Monday.

The ministry said the toll is now 3,020 killed in the Israeli strikes, including 292 women and 211 children. Fighting began on March 2 with the Hezbollah militant group firing at Israel, two days after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran. Attacks from both sides have not stopped despite a fragile ceasefire.

Israel has since invaded southern Lebanon and bombarded the capital, Beirut, and other areas, saying it is targeting Hezbollah efforts to rearm. Hezbollah, also a powerful political entity in Lebanon, has resisted pressure, including by the Lebanese government, to disarm.

More than a million people have been displaced in Lebanon by the fighting, with some sheltering in tents along roads and the sea in Beirut. Israel, meanwhile, has struggled to halt frequent Hezbollah drone attacks targeting both their troops on Lebanese soil and in northern Israeli border towns.

Israeli strikes on Lebanon have continued daily, even after groundbreaking ongoing talks between Lebanon and Israel in Washington produced a ceasefire that began on April 17 and has been extended into June. Israeli troops remain in large swaths of southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah, however, is not part of the talks and has opposed them. The group, instead, backs its key ally Iran in its own talks with the United States mediated by Pakistan.

The neighbors have been officially in a state of war since Israel was created in 1948.

Negotiations press on despite fighting

Israeli military Arabic spokesperson Avichay Adaree called on residents in several towns near the southern coastal city of Tyre on Monday to evacuate ahead of airstrikes. Meanwhile, the militant Palestinian Islamic Jihad group said one of its officials was killed in an Israeli strike on his house at midnight alongside his daughter in the city of Baalbek near the Syrian border.

Israeli officials have focused on disarming Hezbollah and described the negotiations as a precursor to a potential normalization of diplomatic relations.

Lebanese officials have said they seek a security agreement or armistice that would stop short of normalization, focusing on Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanon, while maintaining their commitment to disarming the Iran-backed group.

Despite the ongoing attacks, the two sides agreed Friday to extend the ceasefire by 45 days and an-

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nounced that military delegations will take part in direct talks of their own on May 29.

U.S. President Donald Trump has publicly called for a meeting between Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. However, Aoun has declined to go to Washington to meet or speak directly with Netanyahu at this stage — a move that would likely generate blowback in Lebanon, where talks with Israel were met with protests.

Twenty Israeli soldiers, two Israeli civilians inside Israel and a defense contractor working in southern Lebanon have been killed on the Israeli side since the latest fighting started.

U.N. peacekeeping forces in southern Lebanon have also been caught in the crossfire and six have been killed.

## **What to know about the political chaos engulfing the UK's Labour Party and efforts to unseat Starmer**

By BRIAN MELLEY and SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer tried to strengthen his grip on office Monday, saying he was getting on with the job after taking blame for the Labour Party's disastrous election results that have put his leadership in jeopardy.

Starmer sounded like he was giving a campaign speech but his audience was made up of workers at Labour's headquarters. He thanked them for their hard work despite the party's losses in the May 7 local and regional elections.

"The election results were not the ones that we wanted, they were really tough. But you worked your socks off," Starmer said. "It's not been easy circumstances in the last 10 days."

Indeed, the last two weeks have been bruising for Starmer, who led the party to a landslide victory two years ago. Dozens of party members have called for him to resign and former allies are plotting how to oust him.

One senior Labour lawmaker, Wes Streeting, resigned as health secretary last week and announced he will stand in a Labour leadership contest with Starmer if one is triggered.

Another would-be rival, Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham, has been cleared to stand in a special parliamentary election expected within weeks. If he wins, Burnham could join the leadership race and pose a serious threat to Starmer.

Starmer pledged his full support Monday for "whoever" runs for the open seat for Labour, but said he would not resign if Burnham wins.

A looming local election with huge consequences

The question of who could succeed Starmer as Britain's next prime minister could be decided by some 76,000 voters in a small election in northwest England.

All eyes are on Makerfield, near Manchester, where Burnham is expected to run.

Until this week, the popular mayor wasn't eligible to challenge Starmer because he is not a House of Commons lawmaker.

That changed after Josh Simons, the Labour lawmaker holding that seat, stepped down to make way for Burnham.

Burnham has said he will run for Parliament in the Makerfield special election. He said that if he wins that seat, he will take his work representing voters in northern England to the national level and turn Labour's fortunes around.

"If I get to stand, a vote for me will be a vote to change Labour, because Labour needs to change if we are to regain people's trust," he said in a speech Monday. "I know what my party has offered in the past has simply not been good enough."

British media report that the Makerfield election could be held on June 18.

Applications for Labour's candidacy close on Monday, and the party's ruling body will endorse a candidate on Thursday.



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Brexit rears its head again

While hugely popular and an experienced Labour politician, the 56-year-old Burnham is by no means certain to win the seat.

The constituency was long a safe Labour seat, but like many parts of the U.K. it has seen growing numbers of voters turn to the anti-immigrant, EU-skeptic Reform UK party.

Many voters in Makerfield backed leaving the EU in the Brexit referendum a decade ago. In recent local elections, Reform won all the wards in the constituency and secured around half the vote.

Burnham's position is made tougher after Streeting, the other leading rival to unseat Starmer, on Saturday described Brexit as a "catastrophic mistake" and said the U.K. should one day rejoin the EU.

Streeting's speech was widely seen as a direct challenge to Burnham, who has previously expressed support for eventually rejoining the EU but must tread a fine line if he wants to win in Makerfield.

Reform is likely to focus on immigration in the upcoming special election, and its leader Nigel Farage, who played a key role in campaigning for Brexit, wasted no time in attacking Burnham. Writing in the Daily Express Monday, Farage said Burnham "wants to drag you closer to the EU."

Burnham tried to shut that down, saying: "The last thing we should do right now is rerun those arguments."

Labour turmoil prevents it from capitalizing on rival party stumbles

News of Starmer's troubles overshadowed the woes of his rivals on the right and left.

A parliamentary watchdog last week opened an investigation into whether Farage failed to report a 5 million pound (\$6.7 million) gift from a donor.

Farage has said the money from Thailand-based cryptocurrency investor Christopher Harborne came before he ran for Parliament, was not related to politics and was for his personal security. He later told the Sun tabloid the gift was for campaigning for Brexit.

Sky News reported that Farage bought a 1.4 million pound (\$1.9 million) house after receiving the money. But Farage said he bought the house with money earned from being on the reality show, "I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!"

Meanwhile, the leader of the Green Party, which has also siphoned a share of Labour's vote, admitted he didn't vote in the recent local elections.

Zack Polanski was moving at the time and ran out of time to register at a new address, a party spokesperson said.

Polanski is also facing scrutiny for not paying taxes on a houseboat where he had lived in east London.

He has also admitted he wrongly claimed to be a spokesman for the British Red Cross during a 2022 campaign to be the deputy party leader.

## Italy's foreign minister says divers found bodies of 4 Italians in Maldives sea cave

By MOHAMED SHARUHAAN and GIADA ZAMPANO Associated Press.

MALE, Maldives (AP) — Italy's Foreign Ministry said Monday that rescuers have located the bodies of four Italian divers deep inside an underwater cave in an atoll in the Maldives, four days after they were reported missing.

Searches had resumed on Monday after being suspended following the death of a local military diver during a perilous mission to try to reach them.

The government of the Indian Ocean island nation confirmed the bodies were spotted in the innermost part of the cave by three Finnish diving experts, supported by the Maldives police and the military.

"As was previously thought, the four bodies were found inside the cave, not only inside the cave but well inside the cave into the third segment of the cave, which is the largest part," said Ahmed Shaam, a Maldives government spokesman.

He said the four were found "pretty much together."

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"The plan is they will try and recover two bodies tomorrow and possibly the other two the following day," Shaam said in a voice clip sent to the media.

The Divers' Alert Network Europe, which deployed the three Finnish divers, said on its website that they are technical and cave divers with international experience in search and recovery missions, including operations in "deep overhead environments, confined spaces, and high-risk scenarios."

The team used advanced technical systems, including closed-circuit rebreathers, a system that recycles exhaled breathing gas and removes carbon dioxide through a chemical scrubber, allowing for "significantly longer dives," the organization explained.

The body of a fifth Italian — a diving instructor — was found earlier outside the cave. The five were exploring a cave at a depth of about 50 meters (160 feet) in Vaavu Atoll on Thursday, according to Italy's Foreign Ministry. The recreational diving limit in the Maldives is 30 meters (98 feet).

Three Finnish divers, experts in deep and cave diving arrived in the Maldives on Sunday.

Maldives presidential spokesperson Mohamed Hussain Shareef said earlier that the search was suspended after Mohamed Mahudhee, a member of the Maldivian National Defense Force, died of underwater decompression sickness after being transferred to a hospital in the capital on Saturday.

Rough weather has repeatedly hampered rescue efforts.

Initial teams had already dived to identify and mark the entrance to the cave system where the Italians disappeared. The cause of the deaths remains under investigation.

## **3 young people arrested in series of random shootings across Austin that left 4 injured**

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Three young people were in custody following at least 10 random weekend shootings in Austin, Texas, that left four people injured, city officials said.

Driving around the city in stolen vehicles, at least two of the suspects fired at two fire stations, apartment buildings and houses during a string of robberies and shootings from Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning, Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis said Sunday.

Two boys, ages 15 and 17, were apprehended after they were pulled over in a stolen car and attempted to run. A third person who had been in the car also ran and was detained Sunday night at a gas station in Manor, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) northeast of Austin. Police said the person was a juvenile, but did not provide an age or any other details.

Davis said earlier that the firearm that was used in the shootings had earlier been stolen by the 15-year old, and that the 17-year old was wanted for a separate firearm theft.

The city ordered residents of a large part of the southern area of Texas' capital city to shelter in place Sunday while they were searching for the suspects. With two suspects in custody, the order was later lifted.

Four victims were taken to hospitals, including one with critical injuries, officials said.

The suspects stole at least four vehicles as they traveled around the city, Davis said.

"We don't have any specific motive that has been identified. In fact, these actions appear to be random," Mayor Kirk Watson said.

## **4 crew members eject safely after two Navy jets crash during air show in Idaho**

By REBECCA BOONE and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — All four crew members ejected safely after two Navy jets collided and crashed Sunday during an air show at the Mountain Home Air Force Base in western Idaho, officials said.

The collision involved two U.S. Navy EA18-G Growlers from the Electronic Attack Squadron 129 in Whidbey Island, Washington, said Cmdr. Amelia Umayam, spokesperson for Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The aircraft were performing an aerial demonstration when the crash occurred, Umayam said in a statement. The four crew members from both jets safely ejected and the crash was under investigation, she said.

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The crew members were in stable condition, base officials said.

Nobody at the military base was hurt, said Kim Sykes, marketing director with Silver Wings of Idaho, which helped to plan the air show.

"Everyone is safe and I think that's the most important thing," Sykes said.

Planes fell to the ground together

The base said in a social media post that it was locked down immediately following the crash. The remainder of the air show was canceled.

Videos posted online by spectators showed four parachutes opening in the sky as the aircraft plummet to the ground near the base about 50 miles (80 kilometers) south of Boise.

The EA-18G Growler is a variant of the F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jet with sophisticated electronic warfare systems. Each one of these planes cost roughly \$67 million.

Shane Ogden said he was filming the two jets as they came close together. A video he captured shows the two aircraft appear to make contact and then spin in tandem as the crew members eject and their parachutes open. The planes then fall together, exploding into a fireball upon impact as the crew members drift to the ground nearby.

"I was just filming thinking they were going to split apart and that happened and I filmed the rest," Ogden said in a text message. He said he left soon after the crash because he did not want to get in the way of emergency responders.

Organizers said the popular air show that includes flying demonstrations and parachute jumps is a celebration of aviation history and a look at modern military capabilities. The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds demonstration squadron headlined the show both days.

The National Weather Service reported good visibility and winds gusting up to 29 mph (47 kph) around the time of the crash.

Little room for error

It was remarkable both crews were able to eject from their planes, and aviation safety expert Jeff Guzzetti said that may have been possible because of the way the planes collided and appeared to remain stuck together in midair before falling to Earth. Crews usually don't have a chance to eject in a midair collision, he said.

"It's really striking to see," Guzzetti said. "It looks like they struck each other in a very unique fashion to cause them to remain intact and kind of stick to each other and that very well could have saved them."

"It appears to be a pilot issue to me. It doesn't look like it was a mechanical malfunction," he added. "Rendezvousing with another airplane in formation flight is challenging, and it has to be done just right to prevent exactly this kind of thing."

Aviation safety expert John Cox, who is CEO of Safety Operating Systems, said the pilots who perform at air shows are among the best, but there is little room for error.

"Air show flying is demanding. It has very little tolerance," Cox said. "The people who do it are very good and it's a small margin for error. I'm glad everybody was able to get out."

This year's Gunfighter Skies event was the first at the base since 2018, when a hang glider pilot died in a crash during an air show performance.

In 2003, a Thunderbirds aircraft crashed while attempting a maneuver. The pilot, who was not hurt, was able to steer the plane away from the crowd and eject less than a second before it hit the ground.

The air show industry has been working to improve safety for years at the roughly 200 events held each year in the U.S. The last fatal crashes at an air show came in 2024 when two people were killed in separate crashes at different events. John Cudahy, president and CEO of the International Council of Air Shows, said that there used to be an average of 3.8 deaths a year at a U.S. air show from 1991 to 2006. That number has been steadily improving and since 2017 there have only been an average of 1.1 deaths per year even including a crash in Dallas in 2022 that killed six when two vintage planes collided. There were no air show deaths in 2025 or 2023, and a spectator hasn't been killed at an air show in the U.S. since 1952. "Safety wise we've enjoyed really an unprecedented term of few accidents," Cudahy said.

Investigators may be able to quickly get an idea of what happened in Sunday's crash because the crews of both planes survived and will be able to tell investigators what they saw and experienced before the collision. The Navy will lead the investigation, so there won't be as much information shared publicly as in civilian crashes.

The Iran war has led to the cancellation of some air shows this year at bases where military units are flying missions related to the conflict.

## China agrees to boost trade for US beef and poultry following Trump-Xi summit

By DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — China has agreed to ramp up trade for U.S. agricultural products such as beef and poultry, buying at an annualized rate of \$17 billion per year for 2026 and at that level for 2027 and 2028, the White House announced Sunday, two days after President Donald Trump returned from a high-stakes summit in Beijing where he sought to ease the impact on American farmers from the trade war he launched last year.

China would restore market access for U.S. beef and resume imports of poultry from U.S. states determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to be free of the bird flu, the White House said. The deals are on top of China's soybean purchase commitments last year.

The agreements offer some hope to American farmers harmed by the trade war as they saw a major export market for soybeans and other products dry up. Farmers also are feeling new pressure from Trump administration policies — the war that the U.S. and Israel launched against Iran has curtailed shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital trade corridor that has restricted global fertilizer supplies and sent those prices soaring.

There was no immediate confirmation of the terms from Beijing.

China's Ministry of Commerce on Saturday said the two sides would "resolve or make substantial progress toward resolving certain non-tariff barriers and market access issues" regarding agricultural goods.

The U.S. would "actively work" to address China's concerns regarding detention of its dairy products, seafood, the export of potted bonsai, and the recognition of Shandong province as a bird-flu-free zone, while the Chinese side will "likewise actively work" to address U.S. concerns regarding the registration of beef processing facilities and the export of poultry meat from certain states to China, a ministry spokesperson said.

The two sides also agreed to expand trade, including that of farm goods, through measures such as reciprocal tariff reductions on "a specific range of products," though the spokesperson did not specify the products.

China, recognizing the link between food security and national security, has diversified its sources of imported soybeans, beef and other farm goods, turning increasingly to Brazil, Argentina and other countries over the U.S.

China sharply cut back US imports during the trade war

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture show China's imports of U.S. agricultural goods peaked in 2022 with \$38 billion but fell to \$8 billion in 2025. These figures include nearly \$18 billion in soybean purchases in 2022 and \$3 billion in 2025.

It's not immediately clear how much more China would buy from American soybean farmers, who were hit especially hard in the trade war. China, traditionally the largest foreign buyer of American soybeans, stopped purchasing them altogether last year after Trump hiked tariffs on Chinese goods.

The latest agreement builds on a trade truce Trump reached with Chinese President Xi Jinping in October in which China agreed to resume buying U.S. soybeans. The White House said then that China committed to buying 12 million metric tons in the current marketing year and 25 million metric tons for each of the next three years.



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According to the White House, hundreds of U.S. beef plants, including those run by Tyson and Cargill, also will be able to export again to China, though it's not immediately clear how much beef American businesses will be selling to China.

China let licenses for hundreds of U.S. beef plants expire last year, and the import value for 2025 fell to less than \$500 million, according to USDA figures. China's purchases of U.S. beef had peaked at \$2.14 billion in 2022, the government data shows.

The U.S. export of poultry meats and products to China was \$286 million in 2025, down from more than \$1 billion in 2022.

Trump and Xi used summit to find areas of economic cooperation

During the summit last week, Trump and Xi discussed ways to enhance economic cooperation, including expanding market access for American businesses in China and increasing Chinese investment into U.S. industries, the White House had said. The two leaders agreed to set up separate boards of trade and investment — though offered few details on the proposals or how they would differ from existing trade dialogues.

The Board of Trade will allow the two governments to manage trade of "non-sensitive goods," and the Board of Investments would provide a venue for the two sides to discuss investment-related issues, according to the White House.

China's Ministry of Commerce said the two bodies would address respective concerns regarding trade and investment. The Board of Trade, the ministry spokesperson said, would allow the two sides to discuss issues such as tariff reductions on specific products. "In principle, the two sides agreed to reduce tariff on products of respective concern at equivalent scale," the spokesperson said.

Xi said last week that China's door of opportunity will open wider when he met with U.S. business leaders joining Trump on the trip. Among those who traveled to Beijing was Brian Sikes, CEO of the agricultural giant Cargill.

Soybeans, which are used for livestock feed and biofuels in China, are among the top U.S. agricultural exports. Soybean exports to China in the past had accounted for about half of U.S. exports of agricultural goods to the Asian nation.

USDA data shows the U.S. exported 10.9 million metric tons of soybeans to China as of May 7, putting China on track to fulfill its previous commitment by the end of the marketing year on Aug. 31. This is well below the 25 million to 30 million metric tons that China purchased in past years.

Before Trump's initial planned trip to Beijing in late March — which was postponed by the Iran war — the American Soybean Association urged him to prioritize soybeans in the trade talks with Xi.

Scott Metzger, president of the association, said Thursday the group would like to see "additional soybean purchases this marketing year, as well as continued progress toward fulfilling future purchase commitments."

"Greater certainty and consistency in the marketplace help provide farmers with the confidence they need as they make decisions for the year ahead," he said.

## **Today in History: May 19, West Virginia's Matewan Massacre**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, May 19, the 139th day of 2026. There are 226 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 19, 1920, 10 people were killed in a gunbattle between coal miners, who were led by a local police chief, and a group of private security guards hired to evict them for joining a union in Matewan, West Virginia.

Also on this date:

In 1536, Anne Boleyn, the second wife of England's King Henry VIII, was beheaded at the Tower of London after being convicted of adultery.

In 1883, William Cody held the first of his "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" shows in Omaha, Nebraska.

In 1921, President Warren G. Harding signed the Emergency Quota Act, which established national

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quotas for immigrants.

In 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House, where the two leaders agreed on May 1, 1944, as the date for the D-Day invasion of France (expansion plans for the invasion caused the date of the landing to be delayed by a month).

In 1962, film star Marilyn Monroe sang "Happy Birthday to You" to President John F. Kennedy during a Democratic fundraiser at New York's Madison Square Garden.

In 1974, Hungarian architecture professor Ernő Rubik debuted the Rubik's Cube, his multicolored invention that would make the leap from classroom teaching tool to a global phenomenon with over 450 million of the 3D puzzles sold.

In 1991, Croatians voted overwhelmingly for independence in a public referendum, triggering a formal breakup from Yugoslavia in June and a war leading to widespread ethnic cleansing and thousands of deaths.

In 2018, Britain's Prince Harry wed American actor Meghan Markle in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

In 2024, a helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, the country's foreign minister and other officials crashed in Iran's northwest mountains. Their bodies were recovered a day later after hours of searching in a fog-shrouded forest.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality David Hartman is 91. Musician-composer Pete Townshend (The Who) is 81. Singer-actor Grace Jones is 78. Former racing driver Dario Franchitti is 53. Basketball Hall of Famer Kevin Garnett is 50. Country musician-producer Shooter Jennings is 47. Comedian-actor Michael Che is 43. Singer Sam Smith is 34. Country singer Lainey Wilson is 34. Celebrity chef Nick DiGiovanni is 30. Actor Carmen Sánchez is 25. Media personality-singer JoJo Siwa is 23. Actor Saylor Curda is 22.