

# Groton Daily Independent

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## **Sunday, May 31**

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., at Zion, 11 a.m.

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

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

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

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

## **Monday, June 1**

Senior Menu: BBQ Chicken breast, au gratin potatoes, coleslaw, fruited Jell-O, whole wheat bread.

State Golf Meet in Sioux Falls

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

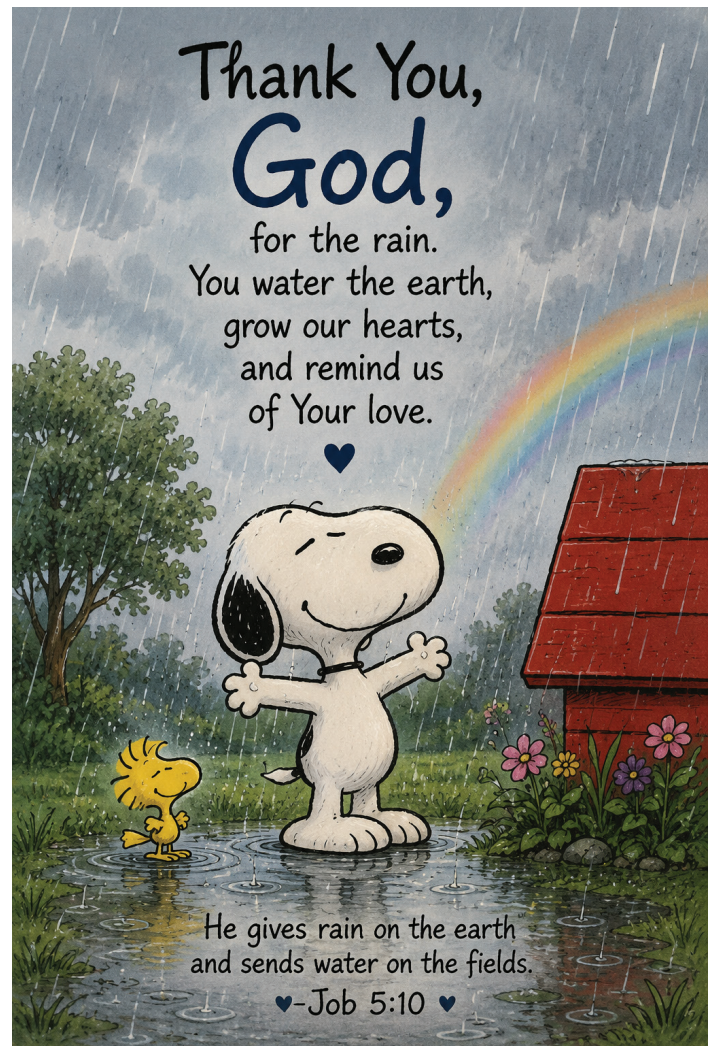
Jr. Legion hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m.

## **Groton Daily Independent**

**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**

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

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U12 Baseball hosts Roslyn, DH, 5:30 p.m., Falk Field

T-Ball Practice, 6 p.m., Nelson Field

## **Tuesday, June 2**

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, mixed vegetables, fruit, breadstick.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

2026 Tiger Skills Workouts, 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Arena

GBB Open Gym, 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., GHS Gym

State Golf Meet in Sioux Falls

JVT Practice, 6-9 p.m., Arena

U14 Legion at Britton, 5:30 p.m.

Sr. Legion hosts Sisseton, 5:30 p.m.

U10 Baseball hosts Columbia, DH, 5:30 p.m. (R&B)

U8 Baseball host Columbia, DH, 5:30 p.m. (Red)

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## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

### From Suicide Pact to Faustian Bargain to Art of the Deal

The evolution in America of apologies for the cascading growth of presidential powers, which began in earnest in the post-war world and followed a trajectory through the expression of the Imperial Presidency before reaching new heights in President Donald Trump's authoritarian pretensions, have long found foundation in the misappropriation and misuse of Justice Robert H. Jackson's famous aphorism, "the Constitution is not a suicide pact." Apologists for a sweeping scope of executive power—both Democrats and Republicans—found sustenance in imagining a world in which U.S. national security interests were imperiled if the projection of presidential power was handcuffed, depriving the chief executive of the latitude to act with "speed and dispatch," yet another misappropriation of a famous aphorism, this one from Alexander Hamilton's writing in the Federalist Papers.

The assertion during the early days of the Cold War of a presidential emergency power, succored by the purported need to act on a moment's notice, particularly in the realm of international relations, stilled the objections of the few politicians willing to challenge claims of power that threatened the metes and bounds of the Constitution, lest they face career-ending accusations of being soft on communism. The purchase of silence from members of Congress and many in the academic community, spurred the growth of unilateral executive warmaking in Southeast Asia and beyond, and fed the springs of executive privilege in domestic affairs. At all events, the claims of presidential power were ascendant, while congressional power was in retreat.

President Trump's predecessors in the Oval Office, adept at warnings about the threats to the nation of a diminished presidency, however, typically adhered to at least notional understandings of the separation of powers, checks and balances and the rule of law, despite their interest in expanding the scope of executive power. In turn, the growing interest of congressional representatives in careerism and longevity in Washington, combined with aims and hopes for some legislative successes that required presidential support, trimmed their appetites for challenging the president. In time, Trump's domination of the Republican Party and, with it the raw power to "primary" and defeat GOP incumbents, as demonstrated in the election losses suffered by Sens. Bill Cassidy and John Cornyn, of Louisiana and Texas, respectively, has revealed the futility of the Faustian Bargain that GOP Senators have struck with Trump and the exercise of untrammelled power executive power that has flattened constitutional limits.

Sens. Cassidy and Cornyn, typical of GOP Senators, including Wyoming Senator John Barrasso, the number two man in the party, have been Trump accommodationists, bowing to his demands and conditions at nearly every turn. Their loyalty to Trump—the Faustian Bargain-- however, was never repaid. They certainly now understand the Art of the Deal.

The loss of an election, and the rare opportunity of a sitting U.S. Senator to genuinely promote the health and welfare of the nation, however, hardly compares to the abject surrender of the constitutional authority of Congress, in both foreign and domestic affairs, in the face of authoritarian power grabs that have defaced republican principles. Congressional acquiescence and thus complicity in President Trump's soaring assertions of absolute, unilateral power in the realms of foreign relations and national security, which have sacrificed American leadership, credibility, stability and safety, will tattoo resumes and careers.

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Trump's war of choice in Iran, from which there is no viable exit strategy that will allow him to save face, reveals the infliction of pain on everyday Americans, as measured alone by soaring gasoline prices and rising costs of groceries, will render our nation less, not more, secure. If nothing else, Trump has taught the Iranians what was previously an unarticulated, indeed, unmentionable lesson, one that was simply a matter of supposition, that Iran could, indeed, convert the Strait of Hormuz into a strait jacket on the world's economy.

Trump, moreover, has pursued for Russia what Vladimir Putin has tried, but failed to do, in hollowing out NATO, which has proved to be America's, indeed, the world's greatest defense alliance. Trump, without formality, has surrendered American leadership in NATO and convinced Europeans that the United States is no longer a credible and reliable partner.

Participation in a Faustian Bargain--by congressional representatives and community leaders—does not serve the Madisonian constitutional principles, but rather leads to constitutional corruption and collapse.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.



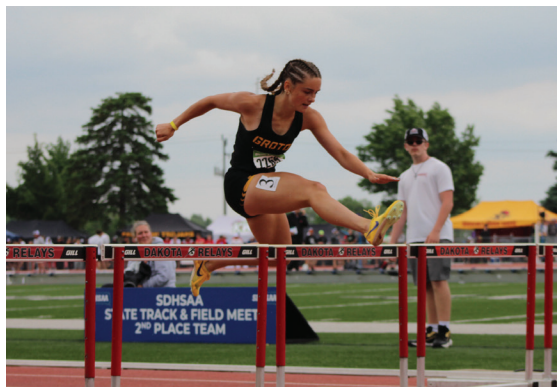
## Tracy captures state title in 400 meters; Tigers earn multiple medals on final day in Sioux Falls

Groton Area senior Keegen Tracy closed out his high school track and field career in championship fashion Saturday, winning the Class A state title in the 400-meter dash and leading a strong final-day performance for the Tigers at the SDHSAA State Track and Field Meet at Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls.

Tracy raced to the Class A championship in the 400 meters with a personal-record time of 49.54 seconds. The victory gave Groton Area its lone state title of the meet and capped an outstanding weekend for the senior standout.

Tracy also earned a fifth-place medal in the 100-meter dash, crossing the finish line in 11.26 seconds, and later added another fifth-place finish in the 200 meters with a time of 22.89 seconds.

On the girls side, Groton Area's 4x200-meter relay team continued its record-breaking season with a fourth-place finish in the state finals.



**Hurdling ace McKenna Tietz places 7th in the 300m Hurdle finals.** (Photo

courtesy Bruce Babcock)



**Groton Area 4x400m relay team places 6th L-R McKenna Tietz, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, and Makenna Krause.** (Photo courtesy

Bruce Babcock)

ish in the state finals. The quartet of McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy and Makenna Krause clocked a school-record time of 1:45.88 during Friday's preliminaries before returning Saturday to place fourth among the state's best

Class A relay teams with a time of 1:47.21.

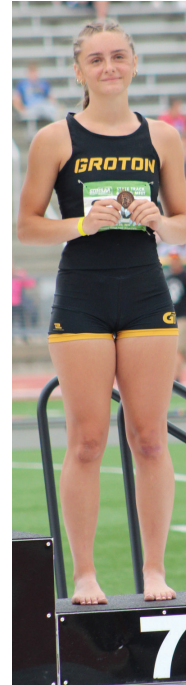
Tietz also earned an individual state medal in the 300-meter hurdles. The junior placed seventh in the finals with a time of 46.48 seconds, adding to her strong state-meet performance after qualifying for the finals earlier in the week.

The same group of Tietz, Traphagen, Krause and Tracy closed out the meet with another podium finish in the 4x400-meter relay. The Tigers placed sixth in the Class A finals, with a time of 4:10.31.

Distance runners Ryelle Gilbert and Jayden Schwan also represented Groton Area in Saturday's finals.

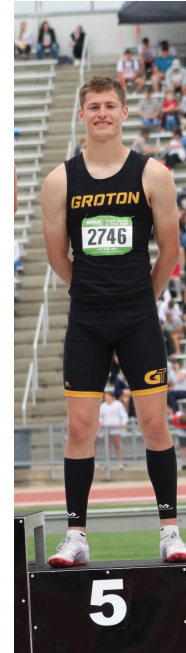
Gilbert, a sophomore who turned in a personal-best performance in the girls 1,600-meter run. She placed 11th overall with a time of 5:25.72, knocking off 11 seconds off her personal best time.

Schwan competed in a loaded boys 1,600-meter field and finished 13th with a time of 4:38.28.



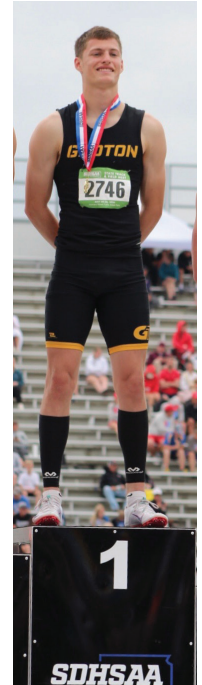
**McKenna Tietz is awarded 7th place in the 300m Hurdle finals.** (Photo

courtesy Bruce Babcock)



**Keegen Tracy is awarded 5th place in finals of the Class A 200m race.** (Photo courtesy

Bruce Babcock)



**Senior Keegen Tracy is the champion in the Class A 400m final.** (Photo courtesy

Bruce Babcock)

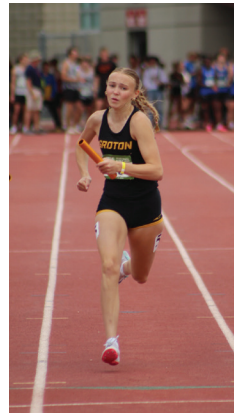


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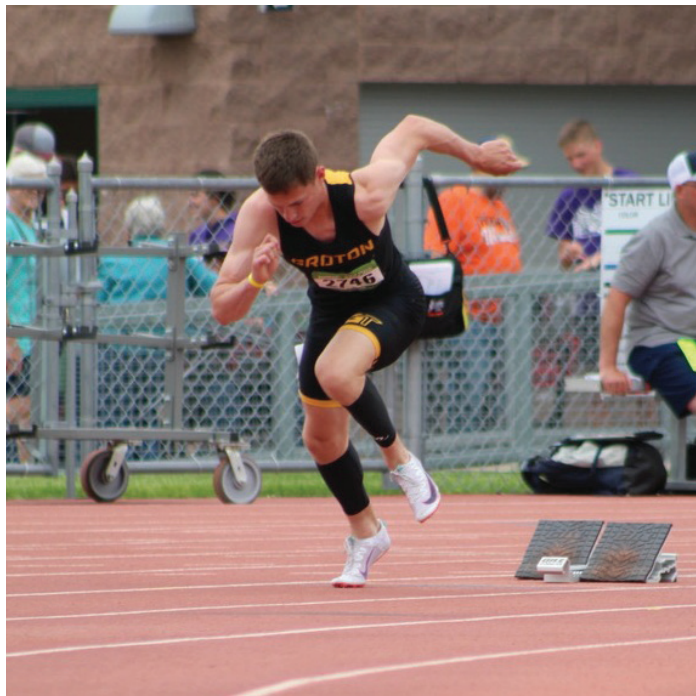
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Day 3 of the South Dakota State track meet's start was delayed 1 hour due to early morning showers. Shown are workers drying the track surface prior to the start. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Groton Area girls 4x200m relay team placed 4th with McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, and anchoring Makenna Krause. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Keegen Tracy sprints out of the blocks in the 400m dash. (Photo courtesy Groton Area Facebook Page)



Sophomore Ryelle Gilbert competes in the 1600m (mile) race. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



**Paula Jensen**  
Senior Vice President



## Stop "Should-ing" All Over Each Other: A Rural Reality Check

**By Paula Jensen, The Community Coach**

Spend enough time in a small town and you'll hear it everywhere—sometimes whispered over coffee, sometimes declared at the city council meeting, sometimes baked into the way we talk about our neighbors:

"They should've handled that differently."

"She should be more involved."

"He should know better."

It's practically a local dialect: "should-ing." And while it often comes from a place of care or community standards, all that "should-ing" can quietly do more harm than good.

There's an invisible burden placed on people when we "should" all over them. In rural communities, where everyone knows everyone (and their parents, and their grandparents), expectations run deep. There's a shared sense of identity—how we work, how we show up, how we take care of each other.

But "should" turns those shared values into rigid rules. It stops being: "We value helping out." And becomes: "You should be doing more." That subtle shift carries weight. It can feel like judgment instead of invitation. Pressure instead of belonging. Assumption instead of curiosity.

So, why do we "should" all over each other? Let's be fair—we're not out here trying to tear each other down. "Should" often comes from pride in the community, a desire to preserve traditions, a dream for the future, frustration when things change, or concern for someone we care about. In small towns, people notice when something feels off. That attentiveness is part of what makes rural life meaningful. But noticing isn't the problem. It's how we respond.

When "should" takes over, here's what often gets lost in translation: 1) People pull back. Nobody loves feeling judged or called out in the grocery aisle. 2) Conversations shut down. Advice or feedback sound like criticism, even when it's not meant that way. 3) New ideas struggle. "That's not how we do things" can quietly block growth. Ironically, the same instinct that's meant to protect the community can start to erode it.

I believe there's a better way: What if we swapped "should" for something a little more curiosity-focused? Instead of saying, "They should be more involved." Try saying: "I wonder what's keeping them busy lately." Instead of saying, "He should've handled that better." Try saying: "That must've been a tough situation."

Eliminating "should" from our community conversations is going to take some new awareness and a little practice. It's not about lowering our standards. It's about leaving room for context—for the things we don't see on the surface of every issue.

Rural communities are built on so much good: resilience, generosity, and showing up when it matters. You don't need "should" to keep that alive—it's already there. In fact, the strongest communities aren't the ones with the strictest expectations. They're the ones where people feel: safe to be imperfect; welcome even when they're different; and supported, not scrutinized. So, let's drop the "should" and keep the good.

*The Community Coach. Having a passion for rural community leadership and development is what drives Paula Jensen's personal and professional life. Paula lives in her hometown of Langford, South Dakota, population 318+. She serves as a Strategic Doing practitioner, grant writer and community coach with Dakota Resources based in Renner, South Dakota. Dakota Resources is a mission-driven 501c3 Community Development Financial Institution working to connect capital and capacity to empower rural communities. Contact her at [paula@dakotaresources.org](mailto:paula@dakotaresources.org). Read more at <https://paulajensenblog.wordpress.com/>*



## EARTHTALK

### The Planetary Health Diet: Healthy You, Healthy Earth by Nitya Dani

Dear EarthTalk: Since the food we eat is an important environmental factor in our health, what foods are the healthiest for our bodies and the planet?  
-- Jan Harmon, New York, NY

In a world increasingly aware of climate change and public health crises, our food choices and diet have become a focus. The foods we eat not only affect our health but also the health of our planet. From the moment a crop is harvested to when it reaches our plates, every step, including processing, packaging, transport and storage, leaves a footprint on the environment. Meat production, in particular, requires large tracts of land and undergoes ample processing, making carnivorous diets detrimental to the environment.

A plant-based, whole-food, and minimally processed diet is typically both human- and planet-friendly. As per scientific evidence, the EAT-Lancet Commission, a global scientific collaboration of researchers which formed to define a "Planetary Health Diet," concluded that foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts are less processed, use fewer resources, and generate fewer emissions. Moreover, these nutrient-rich foods are packed with essential fibers and minerals that improve digestion and reduce inflammation. Food habits of a vegetarian diet center on going meat-free, but with the inclusion of dairy and eggs. Vegan diets go one step further, eliminating all animal products and relying completely on plant-based foods. The Mediterranean diet, rich in vegetables, whole grains, beans and lentils, is considered to be gut-friendly and sustainable while also being quite flavorful. Lastly, the flexitarian diet, as the name suggests, offers a flexible and approachable move to sustainable eating by emphasizing plant-based foods while still allowing eggs, fish and occasional meat.

Transitioning to a new diet can be challenging due to various factors, including habit and availability. But taking some simple and gradual steps can make this goal achievable. Choosing more plant-based foods is one of the most effective ways to reduce one's carbon footprint, as it also remarkably reduces meat intake. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the transportation of food is a bigger contributor of greenhouse gas emissions than agriculture itself. Hence, to minimize these effects, eating locally and seasonally is the way to go, as this reduces lengthy transport. One major concern when changing diets is meeting protein needs; however, this can be addressed with nutrient-rich alternatives like tofu, lentils and legumes. According to Dr. Stephen Devries from the American Medical Association, "We know from a health standpoint that replacing beef with plant sources of protein is associated with a whole host of health benefits, from reduced risk of diabetes to lower risk of cardiovascular disease."



**Explore the planetary health diet and its benefits for both your health and the environment through conscious food choices.** Credit: Pexels.com.



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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Lord, you understand; remember me and care for me.  
Avenge me on my persecutors.  
You are long-suffering – do  
not take me away; think of  
how I suffer reproach for your  
sake. When your words came,  
I ate them; they were my joy  
and my heart's delight, for I bear  
your name, Lord God Almighty.*



JEREMIAH 15:15,16

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## BIBLE

## TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Balaam in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Genesis 8, what was the first thing Noah did after leaving the ark? Burned the ark, Built an altar, Performed a marriage, Hiked to mountains

3. What group did John the Baptist exhort to be content with their pay? Priests, Zealots, Judges, Soldiers

4. From Genesis 17, who said, "Shall a child be born unto him that is a 100 years old"? Adam, Abraham, Aaron, Agrippa

5. Which king of Israel had a reputation as a wild chariot driver? Joash, Jehoash, Jehu, Jeremiah

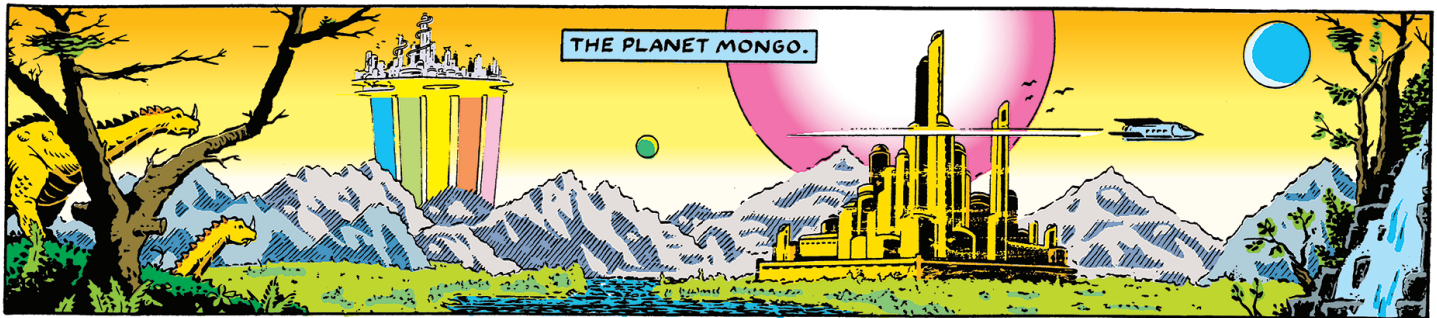
6. Whose biblical name means "eagle"? Nehemiah, Timothy, Aquila, Miriam

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Built an altar; 3) Soldiers; 4) Abraham; 5) Jehu; 6) Aquila

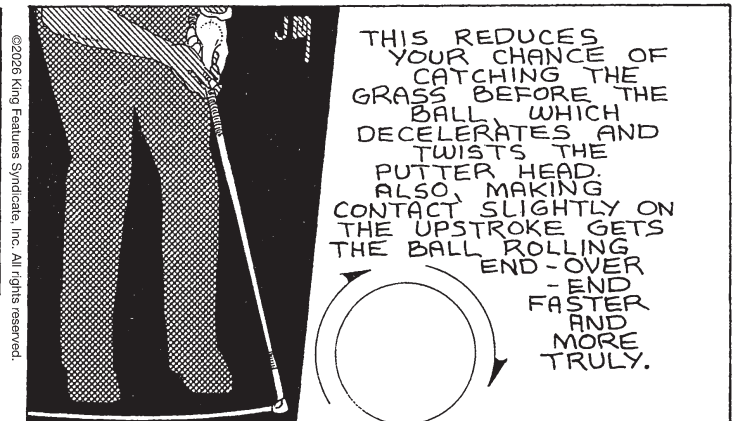
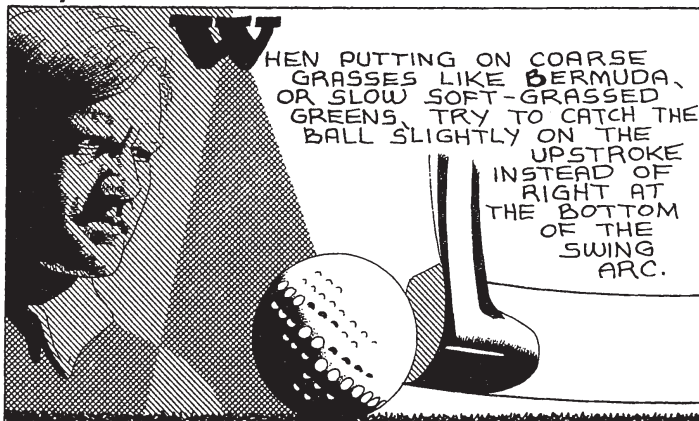
*More than 1,200 brand-new trivia questions in Wilson Casey's latest book "Quest for Bible Knowledge" available in bookstores and online.*

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## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS







## What Is the Correct Amount of Water Humans Should Drink?

DEAR DR. ROACH: Please write about the correct amount of water that people should drink. There's so much misinformation! -- E.N., MD

ANSWER: There's so much misinformation because a simple answer like "more is always better" is easier than a nuanced answer. It depends on your age, activity level, the temperature and humidity, any medications you might be taking, and whether your kidneys have any issues. However, the simplest answer, which is true for most people, is that your body has a built-in system called the thirst reflex to make sure that you're getting enough fluid. There are only a few times when you should override this system.

The most important exception is in older people who sometimes have a decreased thirst mechanism. This is particularly the case in people who live in long-term care facilities or those who have physical or cognitive disabilities. As such, reminders to drink a reasonable amount (1.6 liters or about seven 8-ounce glasses for women; 2 liters or eight 8-ounce glasses for men) of all liquids during the day can be helpful. (Alcohol, of course, isn't helpful and can be harmful to a person's fluid status.)

People who are taking diuretics don't need more water. In fact, excess water drinking while on most diuretics can lead to abnormally low sodium levels. Another way to tell if you're getting enough water is the volume and concentration of your urine. People should generally void every few hours, and the color of the urine shouldn't be dark.

Needing to urinate less frequently or having concentrated urine should be an indication for a person to drink a few glasses of water.

\*\*\*

DEAR DR. ROACH: What's a good general wellness supplement to take? I'm a 47-year-old female, and I've always taken a multivitamin, collagen with biotin, probiotics, decaffeinated green tea pills, and my usual prescriptions (losartan, levothyroxine and metformin). I'm looking for more natural ways to lower my weight and cholesterol. Sometimes I take oregano oil and apple cider vinegar. Any good suggestions? -- C.A.

ANSWER: I don't know of any over-the-counter supplements to lower weight or cholesterol that are both effective and safe, so I don't recommend any of them specifically for these purposes. You might be taking decaffeinated green tea extract for this, but a clinical trial didn't show significant changes in weight or waist size (although green tea extract with caffeine did show a small benefit).

Metformin, which is normally used for diabetes, has much larger effects in promoting weight loss, but it does have a higher potential for side effects, particularly gastrointestinal ones.

I'm concerned about the combination of biotin and levothyroxine. My concern isn't an interaction between them; it's that the blood tests to check thyroid levels can be misleading in people who take biotin. I hope your doctor has advised you to stop taking biotin at least a couple of days before receiving your blood tests.

A recent study on multivitamins did show an improvement in "global cognition," but there wasn't a reduction in the incidence of mild cognitive impairment or dementia during the time period of the study. Previous trials haven't shown an improvement in cognition. A mostly plant-based diet and moderate exercise has larger effects on the body than any supplement, and most people would benefit more from a diet change over a supplement.

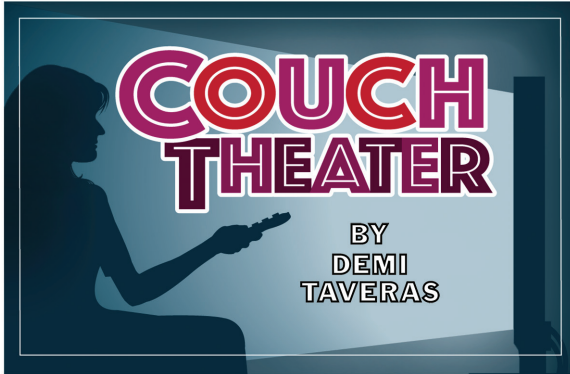
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

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**"The Roses" (R)** -- This black-comedy film, led by Oscar winner Olivia Colman ("The Favourite") and Oscar nominee Benedict Cumberbatch ("The Phoenix Scheme"), is a reimagining of the 1989 film called "The War of the Roses." The original

film starred Michael Douglas, Danny DeVito and Kathleen Turner and was directed by DeVito; but the remake went under the radar during its theatrical release this past August. Colman and Cumberbatch, respectively, play Ivy and Theo Rose, an ambitious married couple whose marriage begins to collapse after Theo loses his job. Tension and resentment between the spouses build due to their different parenting styles and Theo's jealousy of Ivy's success, leaving viewers watching between their fingers as the Roses duke it out in their own personal war. Out now. (Hulu)

**"Off Campus" (TV-MA)** -- This romantic-drama series, based on Elle Kennedy's books, premiered in May and has already generated a huge fan following online. Ella Bright, who once played a young Kate Middleton in "The Crown," portrays music student Hannah at the fictional Briar University. When hockey team captain Garrett (Belmont Cameli) needs help studying, Hannah volunteers to help him under the guise that he pretends to be her fake boyfriend so she can impress the guy she truly likes. (Ah, young love!) Of course, anyone who's seen anything with a similar plot knows where this is going. Steve Howey ("Shameless") and Antonio Cipriano ("The Alto Knights") co-star in the series, and all eight episodes are out now with a second season already in the works! (Amazon Prime Video)

**"Margo's Got Money Troubles" (TV-MA)** -- This comedy-drama series has quite the cast to carry its interesting plot off the ground: Elle Fanning ("A Complete Unknown") leads the series with Nick Offerman ("Parks and Recreation"), Michelle Pfeiffer ("The Madison"), and Nicole Kidman ("Scarpetta") rounding out the rest of the main cast. Fanning plays the titular character -- 20-year-old Margo -- an aspiring writer and new mom who turns to OnlyFans for financial support after the birth of her baby. Although some people don't approve of her stream of income, Margo is successful and suspends all logic of what she "should be" doing in life so that she can figure out who she really is inside. All eight episodes are out now to stream. (Apple TV+)

**"Office Romance" (R)** -- This sexy rom-com hitting Netflix on June 5 stars Jennifer Lopez ("Kiss of the Spider-Woman") and Brett Goldstein ("Shrinking"), who also co-wrote the screenplay. Lopez plays Jackie Cruz, president and CEO of the airline Air Cruz, and she's a no-nonsense type of executive with most of her employees fearing her, a la Miranda Priestly. When new lawyer Daniel (Goldstein) starts working at the company, his warm, kind energy pierces the chilly ice queen in an impactful way. Because of this new relationship with Daniel, Jackie's finally able to turn over a new leaf in life and learn that there's more to it than work and financial success. (Netflix)

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**Jennifer Lopez and Brett Goldstein star in "Office Romance."** (Photo Credit: Courtesy of Netflix)

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1. Name the artist who released "She's Out of My Life."
2. Which group released "Motorcycle Mama"?
3. What was "The Gypsy Cried" about?
4. Johnny Preston was best known for which song?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I gotta be cool, relax, get hip, Get on my tracks, Take a back seat, hitch hike, And take a long ride on my motor bike."

Answers

1. Michael Jackson, in 1980, on his "Off the Wall" album. Four singles were released from the album, and all of them reached the Top 10 chart.
  2. Sailcat, in 1972. It reached No. 12 on the Billboard Hot 100.
  3. In Lou Christie's 1962 song, when a boy was having his future told after having romance troubles, the gypsy cried over how sad it was.
  4. "Running Bear," in 1959.
  5. "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," by Queen, in 1979. The song was the group's first chart-topper in the U.S., and it stayed at No. 1 on the Hot 100 for four weeks.
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## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



## GRIN and BEAR IT <sup>Wagner</sup>

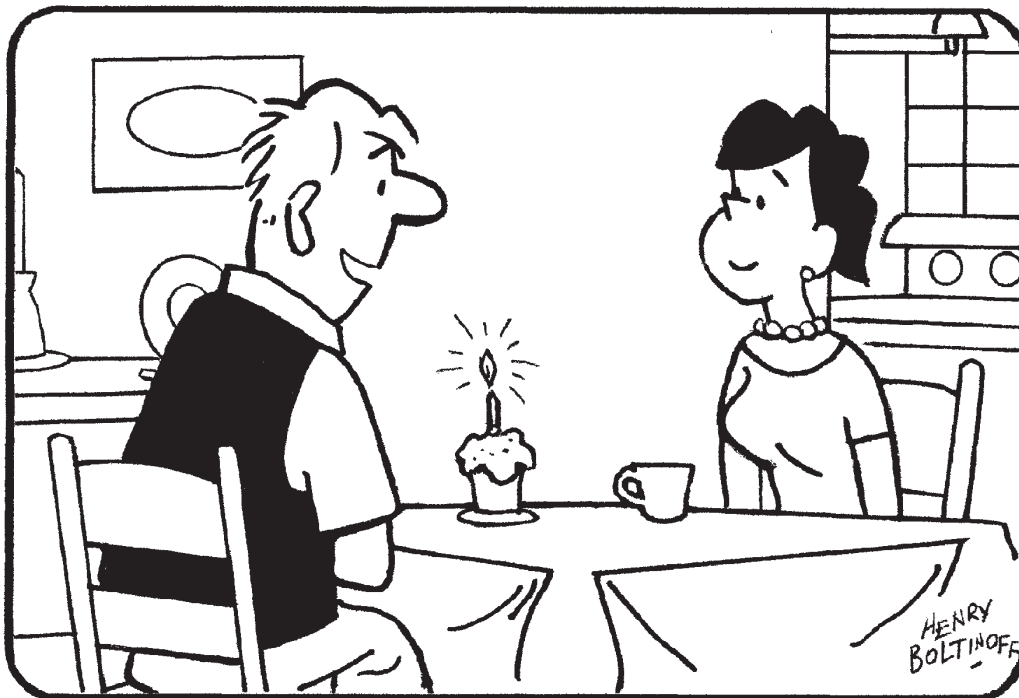


"We're saving a fortune at the gym!"

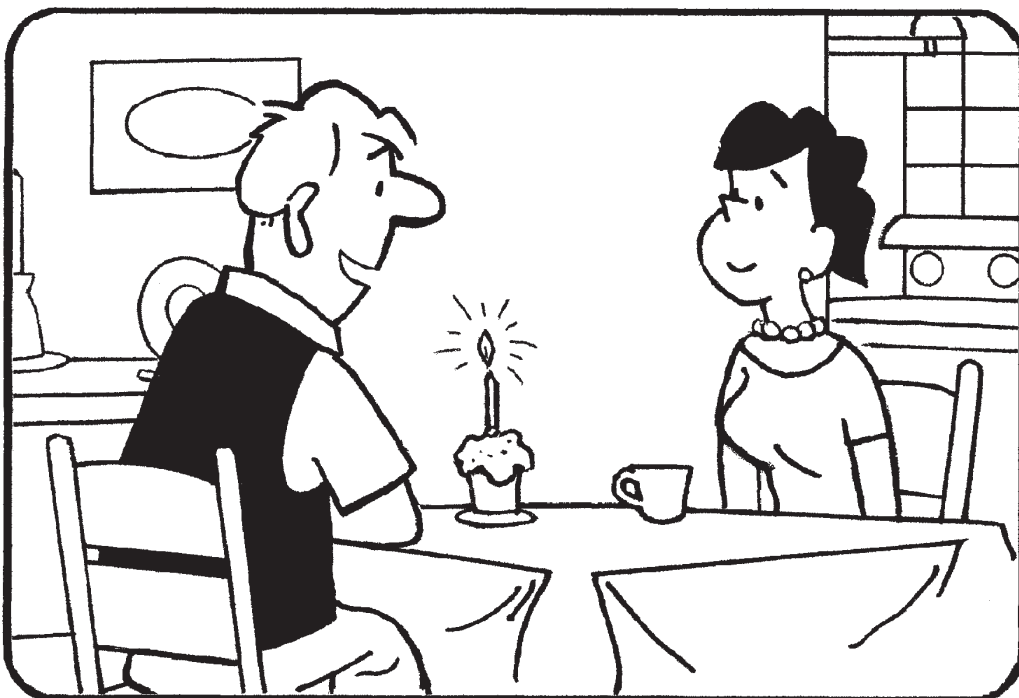


## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Candle is taller. 2. Arm is resting on table. 3. Back of chair is different. 4. Dial on stove is moved. 5. Light is shorter. 6. Hair is different.

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\* "Clean and save takeout food containers rather than purchasing commercial plastic containers. They are all the same basically, and you will not be at a loss if you need to throw one away, leave it behind or send leftovers home with a guest." -- M.W. in Nevada

\* To preserve your battery life on your smartphone, remember to close out applications that you are not using. Shut down and restart your phone from time to time as well.

\* "Got too many coffee cups? Add potting soil and a small flower to give as gifts to brighten someone's day!" -- B. in North Carolina

\* In a pinch, you can use liquid correction fluid to cover up nail holes in a white wall. Dot and smudge as it dries.

\* "After you clip the coupons you want to keep from your Sunday paper inserts, pass them along to your neighbors. They may use different products and so may want your coupons!" -- I.L. in Georgia

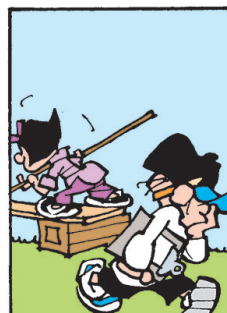
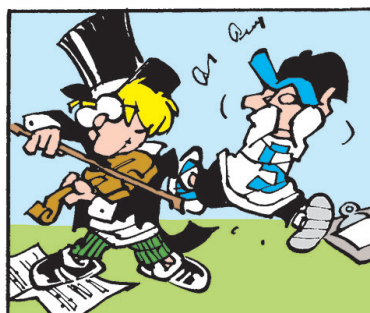
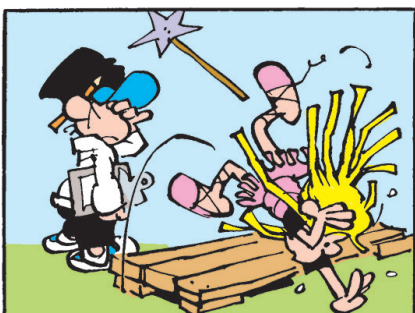
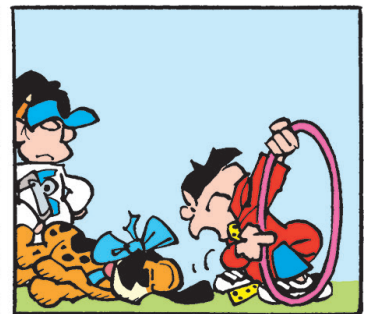
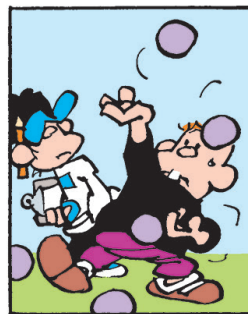
\* Want to eat your nine servings of fruits and veggies a day? Keep fresh fruit out and in view to increase the amount you eat. Cut and otherwise prepare vegetables and store them front and center in your refrigerator. Plan your meals around the vegetables instead of the protein!

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 1800 Pembroke Dr., Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32810.

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**TIGER**

by BUD BLAKE



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# Groton Daily Independent

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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Idle of Monty Python  
5 Homer's lament  
8 Grate  
12 Sprint  
13 Geological period  
14 Intro studio class  
15 Met melody  
16 Knee cartilage  
18 Cough drop flavor  
20 Valerie Harper sitcom  
21 Light brown  
22 Fluffy neck-piece  
23 Streep of "The Post"  
26 Patching up  
30 Lab eggs  
31 Witty one  
32 Wrigley product  
33 Proteges  
36 Accra's country  
38 Stein filler  
39 Zadora of "Hairspray"  
40 Huge success  
43 H.L. — (The Sage of Baltimore)  
47 Cites  
49 Comic actor Danny

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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- 50 Oklahoma tribe  
51 Nonsense  
52 French 101 verb  
53 Military VIPs  
54 GI's address  
55 Marsh plant

### DOWN

- 1 Dutch cheese  
2 Exceptional  
3 "The doctor —"  
4 Talkative  
5 Fiend  
6 Pitcher  
7 Solo in space

- 8 Actress Phylicia  
9 With the bow, musically  
10 Poker type  
11 Galileo's birthplace  
17 Pressing need  
19 Actor Linden  
22 Plead  
23 Soccer —  
24 Prior night  
25 Campaigned  
26 More, to Manuel  
27 Polish tennis star Swiatek  
28 Convent head  
29 "Today" rival, briefly

- 31 Pint-sized  
34 Flavors  
35 K thru 12  
36 Tom Collins liquor  
37 Website invader  
39 Green sauce  
40 Urban haze  
41 Apportion  
42 Shortly  
43 L-Q bridge  
44 Designer Spade  
45 Literary Jane  
46 Must have  
48 British singer Rita



# Groton Daily Independent

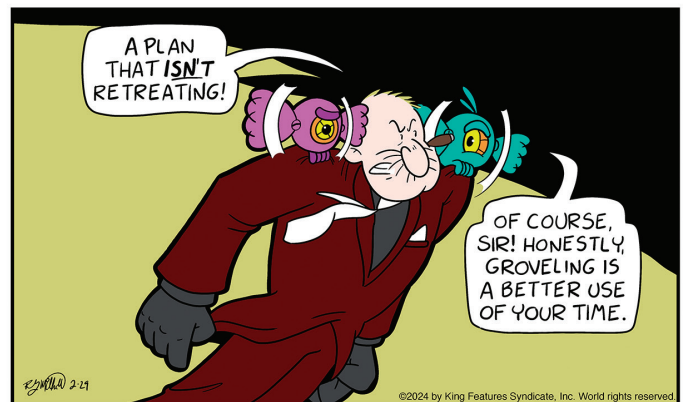
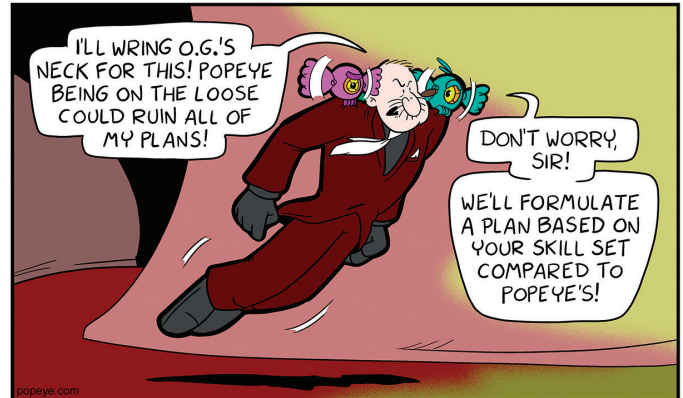
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## — King Crossword — Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

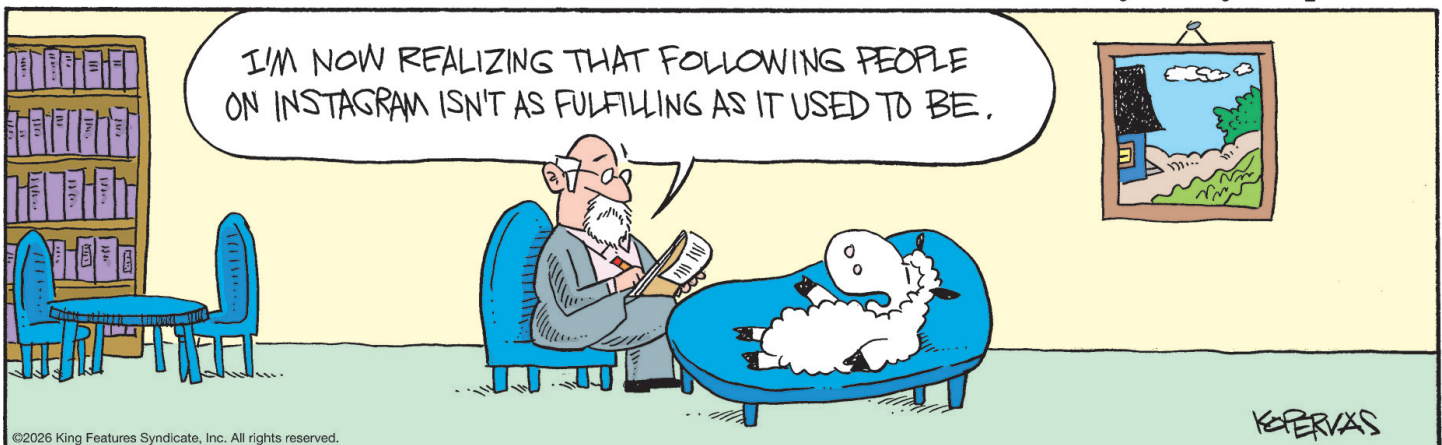
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Olive



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas

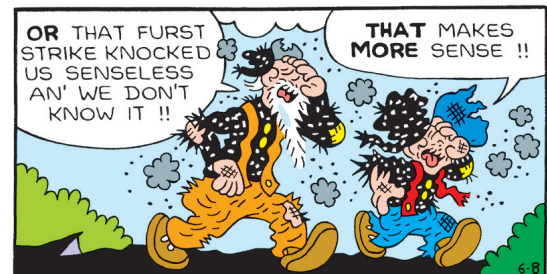
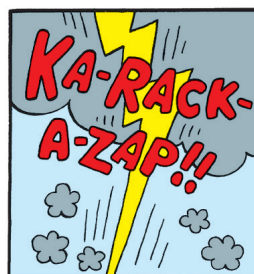
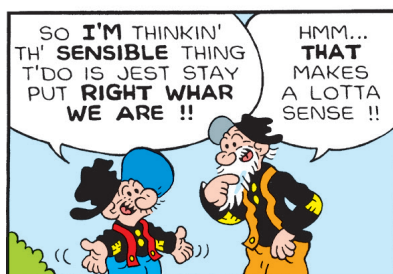
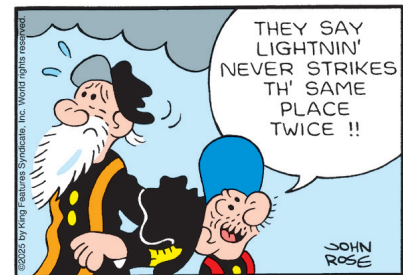
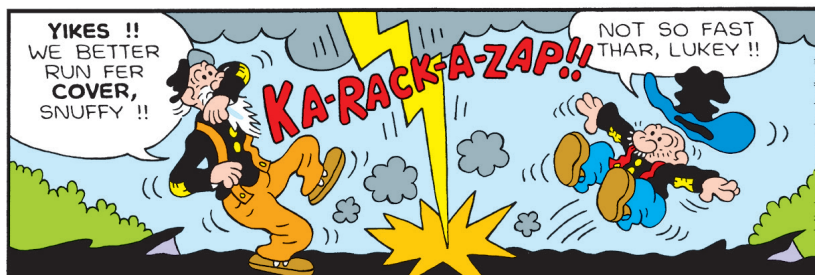
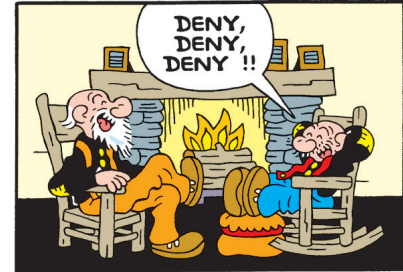
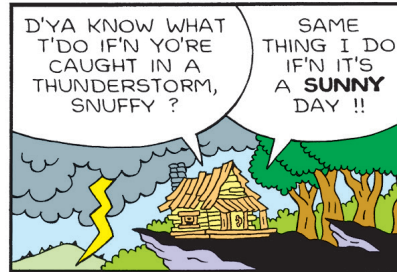
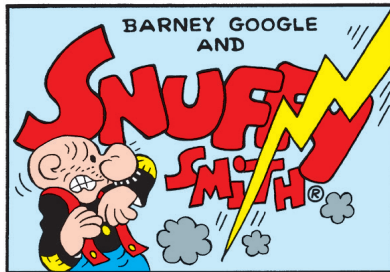
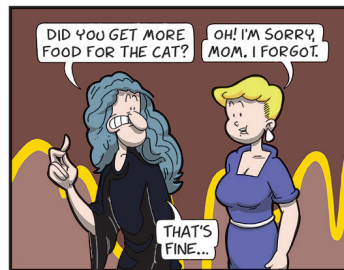
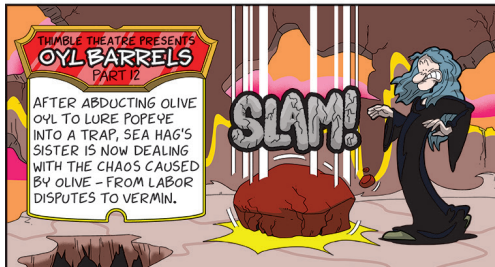
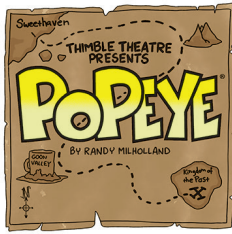


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KOPERVAS

# Groton Daily Independent

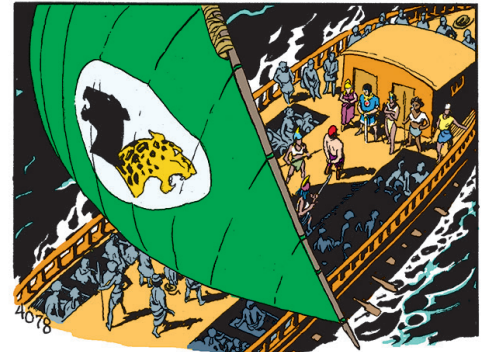
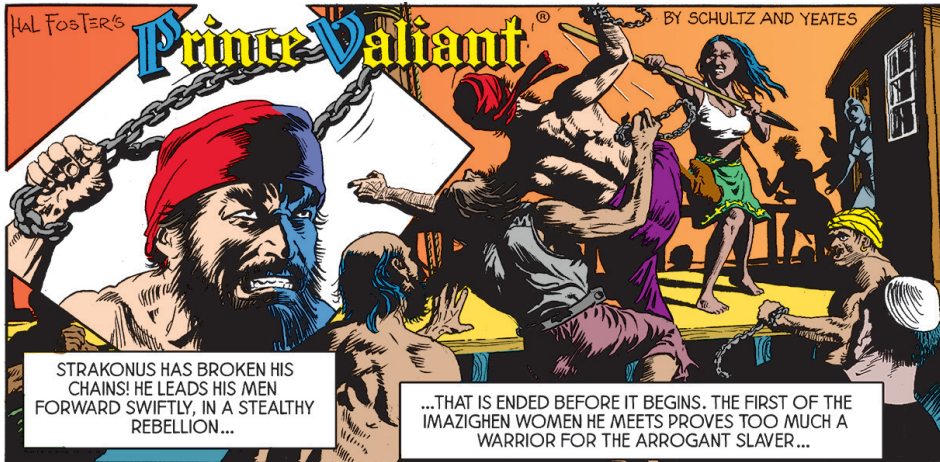
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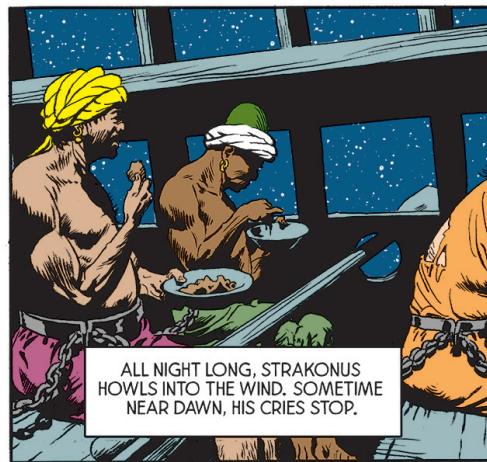


... AFTER WHICH HIS CREW BECOME LESS ENTHUSIASTIC. PERHAPS THEY HAVE BECOME TOO ACCUSTOMED TO THE UNUSUALLY TASTY MEALS THEY HAVE BEEN RECEIVING. THE PIRATE CAPTAIN IS BROUGHT BEFORE ZULFA AND VAL: "STRAKONUS, AS SUCH A FINE LEADER OF MEN...

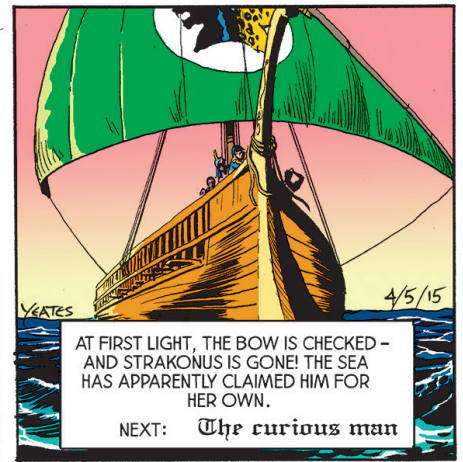


"... PERHAPS YOU SHOULD LEAD THE ENTIRE SHIP." STRAKONUS IS TIED SCREAMING TO THE BOW. WITH THIS EXAMPLE, HIS CREW RETURN MEEKLY TO THEIR CHAINS, AND ARE REWARDED WITH MORE EXCELLENT FOOD.

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ALL NIGHT LONG, STRAKONUS HOWLS INTO THE WIND. SOMETIME NEAR DAWN, HIS CRIES STOP.



AT FIRST LIGHT, THE BOW IS CHECKED - AND STRAKONUS IS GONE! THE SEA HAS APPARENTLY CLAIMED HIM FOR HER OWN.

NEXT: **The curious man**

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### FBI report on senior scam losses

This is painful to write: The FBI's 2025 report says that seniors lost over \$7.7 billion to scams -- in one year. Complaints to their Internet Crime Complaint Center (also called IC3) showed losses had increased by 59% -- again, in one year.

The information was grim. Where IC3 used to get a few thousand complaints per month, they were seeing 3,000 per day. Over the course of the year, seniors logged over 201,000 complaints. The average loss was over \$38,500, with phishing/spoofing, tech/customer service and investment scams heading the list. Following on the list were personal data breaches, confidence/romance scams and non-payment/non-delivery.

Dollar amounts for all age groups put investment losses clearly at the top of the list, by a wide margin: over \$8 billion. Even at the very bottom of the long list of types of crimes, charity losses were nearly \$8 million.

Where seniors were scammed with romance fraud, the losses were over \$548 million, money that they'll likely never get back. We were scammed by tech/customer support to the tune of \$1 billion, and seniors topped the list of all age groups with \$4 billion in cryptocurrency losses.

To see the whole FBI report, go to [www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2025\\_IC3Report.pdf](http://www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2025_IC3Report.pdf). As you scroll through the 66 pages of the report, note the sections with advice, especially the section on recovery scams and thieves impersonating the FBI while pretending to help you recoup your losses.

Note the section that compares 2023, 2024 and 2025 for all types of senior complaints. With the exception of extortion, which had a short pause in 2024, all categories rose over the years.

An important sentence near the top of the report: "It has never been more important to be diligent with your cybersecurity, social media footprint and electronic interactions."

There's our warning. We must be diligent.

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Senior Citizens 65+  
Physical Therapy.

**\$20 a month**

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1. Goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury won three Stanley Cup titles (2009, 2016 and 2017) with what team?

2. Name the Kenyan runner who became the first man to run an official marathon in under two hours when he finished the 2026 London Marathon in 1:59:30.

3. In 1947, the Detroit Tigers' Roy Cullenbine set the Major League Baseball record for consecutive games with a walk with how many?

4. What placekicker from South Korea made 37 of 39 field goal attempts and led the Atlanta Falcons in scoring with 144 points in the 2020 NFL season?

5. What is the official mascot of San Jose State University's athletic teams?

6. Name the actor and martial artist from Sweden who played Soviet boxer Ivan Drago in the 1985 sports drama film "Rocky IV."

7. In November 2025, what troubled former Major League Baseball star received a presidential pardon for a 1995 tax evasion conviction?



## Answers

1. The Pittsburgh Penguins.

2. Sabastian Sawe.

3. 22.

4. Younghoe Koo.

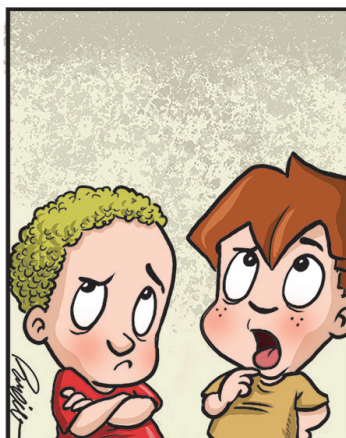
5. Sammy the Spartan.

6. Dolph Lundgren.

7. Darryl Strawberry.

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## Amber Waves



by Dave T. Phipps





## Don't forget your pets: Hurricane prep that could save their lives

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I live in Florida, and each year I check and replenish my "hurricane kit." This is a system I put together that my wife and I can grab and throw in the car, and it includes necessities and key documents for the two of us, AND our two dogs. Because your pets need to come with you in an evacuation.

Thirty-four years ago, as a teenager, I survived Hurricane Andrew. Our entire neighborhood was destroyed. In the aftermath, I saw so many lost pets wandering through the wreckage and debris. Several days passed before those pets were collected by rescue groups. Many more pets did not survive. I pledged right then that I would never leave pets behind when a hurricane

approaches.

Please tell your readers to include their pets in emergency evacuation plans. -- Carter D., Homestead, Florida

DEAR CARTER: You told them, and I agree. Even if you live in an area that is not affected by hurricanes or wildfires, having an emergency evacuation kit and a plan is absolutely essential. And that plan includes your pets.

When planning your kit, list your pets and what each of them needs should you have to put them in the car and flee. What foods do they eat? Which snacks are their favorite? Do they have to take medications?

The kit should include an extra collar and leash for each of your furry pets. Copies of their veterinary records and vaccinations are essential; you may need them to access a shelter or a hotel room. A first-aid kit just for your pets should be included.

Keep this kit next to your pets' carriers. Make a plan for leaving quickly and rehearse it at least once to work out the kinks.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

\* Police officers in Thailand can be forced to wear Hello Kitty armbands as punishment for transgressions such as illegal parking or arriving late to work.

\* Historians cite runaway inflation as a major cause of ancient Rome's fall.

\* During World War II, the SS ran a wiretapped brothel named "The Kitty Salon" in Berlin where prostitutes would glean information from clients through seemingly innocuous conversations.

\* "Hoover wagons," named after President Herbert Hoover, were broken down cars pulled by mules during the Great Depression.

\* Actor Jimmy Stewart was rejected by the military after he was drafted, for being too thin.

\* When Napoleon attacked Vienna in 1809, Beethoven hid in his brother's basement and covered his ears with pillows, afraid the noise would destroy his remaining hearing.

\* The FIFA World Cup is the world's most-watched sporting event.

\* Most tornadoes in the Southern Hemisphere rotate clockwise, while their Northern Hemisphere counterparts rotate counterclockwise.

\* When serving as a lawyer, Abraham Lincoln only argued one case in front of the U.S. Supreme Court -- which he lost.

\* In ancient Egypt, chief embalmers often wore a mask of the god Anubis.

\* Soccer is known as "football" everywhere except America. The name refers not to the fact that it's played with the feet, but that it's played on one's feet, rather than on horseback.


\* About two-thirds of the world's lowest literate adults are women.

\* Before the year 1000, all chess pieces were male figures or animals. The queen made her debut when the game was introduced in southern Europe.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him ... The moral: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut." -- Will Rogers

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**The Garden Bug**

Found throughout North America, this plant has had many uses in native American culture. Parts of it have been used as a food source, to make medicine for skin ailments and insect bites, and to make face-paint for ceremonies.

**Prairie Sunflower**

The vigor of these plants in an area was seen as an indicator of whether the area sustained enough rainfall and could support crops.

- Brenda Weaver  
Source: [herb.umd.umich.edu](http://herb.umd.umich.edu)



by Freddy Groves

## Volunteering at a Stand Down

The summer and fall of 2026 could well be the most rewarding you've had in a long time, especially if you want to step up and help other veterans at a Stand Down.

Stand Downs are often the highlight of the year for homeless veterans. Begun in 1988, these are one-, two- or three-day events in numerous places around the country. At a Stand Down a homeless veteran can get a haircut, clean clothes, legal advice, a hot shower, a visit to a dentist, something to eat, help with a VA claim or housing and mental health counseling. Add to that employment search assistance and help from veteran service organizations.

And they always need volunteers. That's where you come in, if you're willing.

Many of the homeless veterans don't have a ride to the event. You might volunteer to drive the van and pick up a half dozen veterans to get them to the Stand Down in your area. Maybe you'll want to work in the food area and feed the hundreds of people who show up.

If you have special skills and training, such as dental assistant, attorney or barber, speak up when you call to volunteer. If you're not sure what you can contribute, ask what they need. Even if it's sorting the clothing that's been donated, dashing to the store to pick up another 50 lbs. of ground beef to grill another 200 hamburgers or standing at the entrance and directing veterans to the various areas, your help will be most appreciated.

The best place to look for Stand Downs in your area is online at [www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp). You'll find a long list with contact names, phone numbers and email addresses. Also search online for Stand Downs in your state.

Whether you want to volunteer or you are a veteran in need of the services at a Stand Down, make the call. You'll be most welcome no matter your status.

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## Wishing Well®

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D	R	F	S	O	S	N	U	J	N	O	D	Y

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. TELEVISION: What are the names of the three girls in the animated series "Powerpuff Girls"?
2. GEOGRAPHY: Which ocean lies between Australia and Africa?
3. MATH: What is the Arabic equivalent of the Roman numerals MMXXVI?
4. MUSIC: Who won Best New Artist at the 2026 Grammys?
5. U.S. STATES: Which state is an archipelago?
6. MOVIES: Which classic movie has the tagline, "From the moment they met it was murder"?
7. GAMES: How many basketball players can be on the court at the same time?
8. SCIENCE: What is the heliosphere?
9. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What is vexillology?
10. HISTORY: Who was the only English king to be executed for treason?

### Answers

1. Blossom, Buttercup and Bubbles.
2. Indian Ocean.
3. 2,026.
4. Olivia Dean.
5. Hawaii.
6. "Double Indemnity."
7. 10, five from each team.
8. The Sun's solar winds and magnetic fields create a protective bubble around our solar system.
9. The study of flags.
10. Charles I in 1649.

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South Dakota Governor



**Larry Rhoden**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## The People Rule

"Under God, the People Rule" is much more than a slogan in South Dakota. It's how our government operates. Here, we serve people and protect their freedoms. And South Dakota has become a beacon to the nation of what's possible when we trust the people to exercise their own freedom and personal responsibility.

South Dakota is the freest state in America, and we're keeping it that way.

But as President Reagan famously said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." The men and women in uniform sign up to serve and protect our freedoms abroad, but it is just as much the responsibility of each and every American citizen to protect those freedoms here at home.

Elections are how we do that.

The people rule, but our Founding Fathers wisely created a system where not every person has to vote on every issue. Instead, we choose elected representatives from among us to serve on our behalf and represent our interests.

I think South Dakota does representative government especially well. Here, we truly have a citizen legislature. Every two years, citizens in 35 different districts across the state choose the people who they believe will best represent them in Pierre. Those representatives serve for a short period of time each year – less than 40 days. And at the end of session, they have to go home and live with the laws they passed. If there's anything that needs fixing, they come back next year and fix it.

Beyond that, every bill that a legislator introduces gets a hearing, and every bill that passes committee gets a floor vote. That's out of respect for the rule of the people. If the people's elected representative has an idea to make South Dakota better for their constituents, then that idea deserves a fair opportunity for public feedback.

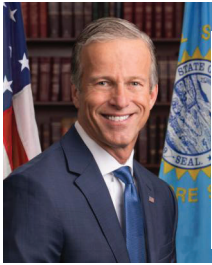
I served under that system for 16 years in the Legislature, and it's a good one. I've often bragged about it to folks in other states where the legislative process doesn't work nearly so well. But here's the secret sauce: South Dakota's people. Our people are pretty special. They see through the fog better than in most other places. And they remain engaged with their government. That's the only way that "Under God, the People Rule" can continue to work in practice – and that we can pass freedom down to the next generation.

South Dakota's primary elections are on June 2. If you're reading this in your local newspaper, they may have already taken place! But regardless of the outcome, it is incumbent on all of us as citizens – and on each of the elected leaders who we choose to govern on our behalf – to wake up the morning after election day and continue to defend our freedoms.

If we do that, then "Under God, the People Rule" will remain true for our kids and grandkids – and for generations after them.

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**JOHN THUNE**  
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

## South Dakota's Great Outdoors

The month of June is Great Outdoors Month, and it's a good thing because just one day, or even a whole week, would hardly be enough to celebrate South Dakota's natural treasures. From the ponderosa pines to the prairies and the Palisades, there's so much to see in South Dakota. And with school out for the summer and long summer days ahead, it's the perfect time to explore all that our state has to offer.

Tourism is one of our state's leading industries due in large part to South Dakota's rich natural beauty. Tourists may come to see Mount Rushmore, but they quickly discover that that iconic monument is just the start of what there is to see in South Dakota. There are beautiful lakes like Mina Lake and Sand Lake up north, Sylvan Lake in Custer State Park, and Lake Oahe on the Missouri River. The Badlands, where the views make you feel like you've gone to another planet. And there are trails to be conquered in state parks from Black Elk Peak in Custer State Park to the Perimeter Loop in Sica Hollow State Park, and so much more.

Last year, nearly 15 million people visited South Dakota. They came to see our mountains and monuments, to hike our trails, relax on our rivers and lakes, and to enjoy some of the best hunting and fishing around. All told, tourism brought \$5 billion to our state's economy, supporting our restaurants, hotels, outfitters, tour guides, and many other local businesses.

I know from experience how important the summer travel season is to small businesses that rely on tourists. Growing up in Murdo at the crossroads of Highway 83 and I-90, we saw our fair share of tourists passing through on their way to the Black Hills, and I served a lot of them at the Star Family Restaurant. I know a lot of workers in the restaurant, hospitality, and tourism industries look forward to this busy season and the extra dollars that come with it. And thanks to Republicans' Working Families Tax Cuts legislation, they're able to keep more of that hard-earned money because that bill allows workers to deduct income from tips and overtime pay on their taxes, resulting in significant tax savings.

I know South Dakotans don't wait for it to be Great Outdoors Month to enjoy our state's natural beauty. We know that we have something special here in South Dakota, and we enjoy it every chance we get. With longer days ahead of us, we have more time to spend on the trail, at the lake, or gathered round the campfire. So let's go outside!

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

## Just Pinch A Nickel Until The Buffalo Screams

Every so often, something happens reminding me of my father, who passed away over 16 years ago. Thinking back, he was the epitome of frugality. If I were to look up in the dictionary the meaning of frugality, I would not be surprised to find my father's name.

His favorite saying was, "Just pinch a nickel until the buffalo screams."

When I first heard him say that, I did not understand what he meant.

I try to be frugal and not spend money I do not need to. I got that from good old dad.

Thinking of my father and his frugal attitude, I remembered when he generously picked up the lunch tab, then left a nickel tip for the waitress.

At first, I could not believe it. I thought maybe it was a joke, and I was waiting for the punch line. Unfortunately, it never came. He actually tipped the waitress a nickel. I was tempted to ask him about that, but I figured it was none of my business.

I do not need to have the latest gadget on the market. I do not have to update my cell phone every year to have the latest model. I've had my truck for 20 years and I'm not planning to trade it in for a newer model anytime soon. If that old truck gets me to where I need to go, that is all I really need.

Years ago, I had a friend who traded in his car every two years for a brand-new one. I do not know whether he paid the car off before trading it in. He had to have a new car, which made him feel like a big man.

Some relatives of mine, whom I will not name, are very obsessed with having the latest gadget. They like to flaunt it all the time.

I do not interfere in their business. If they do not want to be frugal with their money, that's their business, not mine. However, I think it is very important for me to be frugal with my spending. After all, I am retired and live on a limited budget.

I'm never going to win that \$10 billion lotto because I'm too frugal. I cannot tell you how many phone calls I received claiming I had won \$10 million in some lottery. All I have to do is pay \$ 1,500 in processing fees.

If my anti-frugal friends are willing to pay a \$ 1,500 processing fee out of pocket, that is none of my business. To get that out of my pocket would be more impossible than anything I can think of at the time.



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I do not live an extravagant lifestyle by any means. Fortunately, for me, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage does not live an extravagant lifestyle either. We are not in it for the money, but for the time we can spend together.

If you walk by me sometime and hear a buffalo scream, you will know what I'm doing: pinching a nickel.

Another area where I try to be frugal is with my time. I want to feel in control of my days and use my time meaningfully, avoiding wasting my time, and focus on what truly matters.

As a teenager, I knew how to waste time as well as anybody else. It took me a long time to realize I needed to be frugal with my time and make the most of it.

My parents were snowbirds and spent the winter in Florida. The last time they were in Florida, my father was really in a serious health situation. He had been in a coma for a week or so. Then one day, he woke up as though he had never been sick in his life.

I am so glad I was there when he woke up. When he saw me, he actually got out of bed and sat with me in the living room. The first thing he said was: "Son, I want to go back home to Pennsylvania as soon as possible. Do you think we can do it in the next couple of days?"

I agreed with him, and one of Dad's friends was there, took me out to the garage and said, "Don't you know your father is sick and may not live much longer?"

Looking at him, I said, "Friend, I know my father has maybe two days left to live. I do not want the last of my time with him arguing about going back to Pennsylvania. I want to have a good conversation with him because I know this is the last one I'll have with him."

The next day, my father passed away, I was so grateful I spent the time I had with him before he passed, and that time was not spent arguing about anything.

I want to be frugal with every aspect of my life, not just my money.

Jesus addressed this subject in Luke 14:28-30.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

I have learned that being frugal enables me to finish what I start, which is so satisfying.

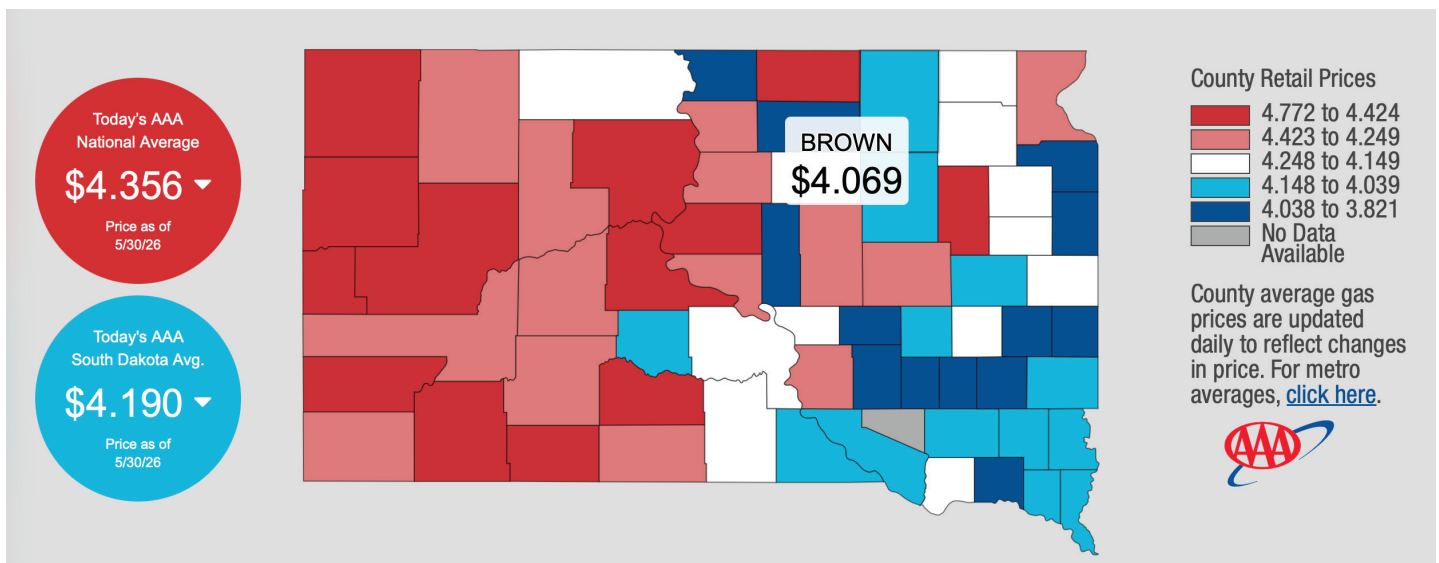
# Groton Daily Independent

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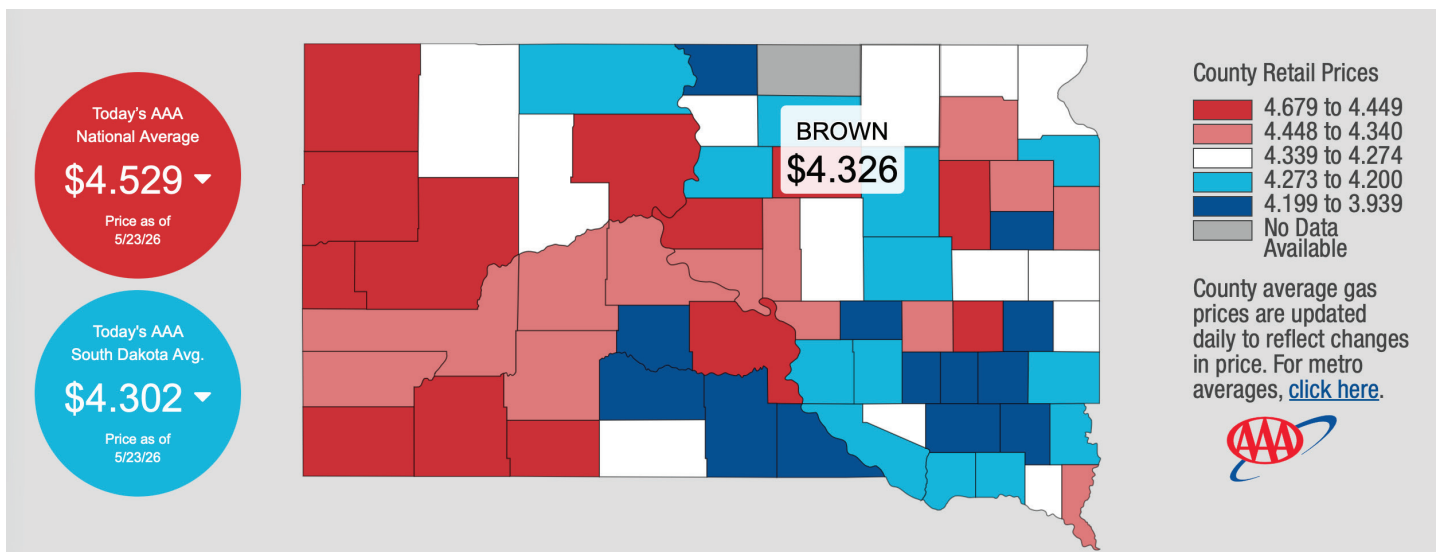
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$4.190	\$4.395	\$4.890	\$4.971
Yesterday Avg.	\$4.219	\$4.415	\$4.905	\$5.027
Week Ago Avg.	\$4.302	\$4.497	\$4.987	\$5.144
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.945	\$4.074	\$4.590	\$4.902
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.983	\$3.180	\$3.649	\$3.213

### This Week



### Last Week



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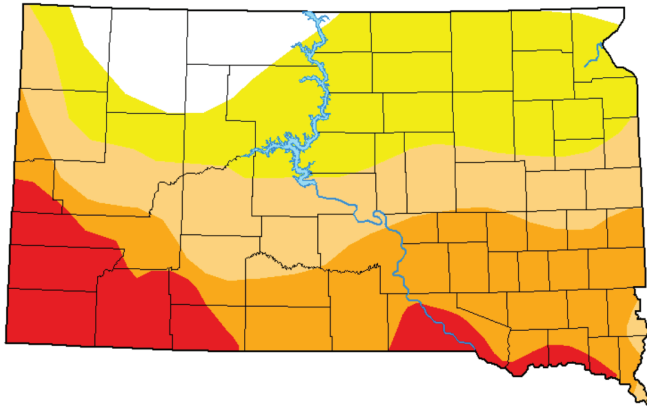
## Drought Classification

None  
D0 (Abnormally Dry)  
D1 (Moderate Drought)

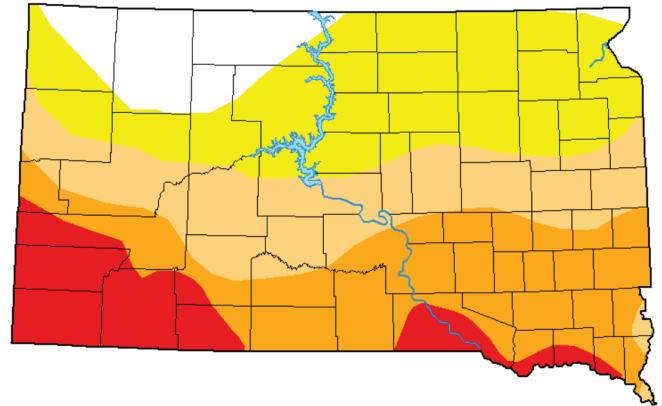
D2 (Severe Drought)  
D3 (Extreme Drought)

D4 (Exceptional Drought)  
No Data

## Drought Monitor



May 26



May 19

As below-normal temperatures transitioned back to a hot pattern across the High Plains, widespread precipitation moved through the region. Areas of convection brought up to 2 inches of rain to portions of eastern Nebraska and eastern Colorado, while amounts were generally an inch or less elsewhere. This precipitation was sufficient to bring some drought reduction across northern and northeastern Colorado, but drier conditions across southeastern Colorado and Kansas, coupled with hot temperatures, resulted in degradation. A sharp cutoff in precipitation was also noted across the far western Dakotas, where small areas of degradation were noted along the borders with Wyoming and Montana.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### COMMENTARY

## South Dakota's corrections system needs a new direction, not just a new prison

by Laura Boesen

Day after day, the seats in my South Dakota penitentiary classroom filled up. I wasn't offering shortcuts or promises. People kept coming back because the environment was different: a space where they were treated with respect, where they could think, contribute and take ownership of their time. Whether I was teaching employment readiness, GED courses, or creative writing, I saw how quickly people respond when they're given even a small amount of trust and purpose.

South Dakota's prison system is at a crossroads right now. State leaders are breaking ground on a new men's prison while the Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force examines how to improve outcomes inside correctional facilities and after release. Those conversations offer some promise, but are also a cause for urgency. A new facility will not solve the deeper cultural problems that have long defined corrections in South Dakota and across the country. Real change will require a willingness to rethink what prisons are supposed to accomplish. If the goal is public safety, then incarceration should leave people better prepared to return to society — not simply warehoused until the day they walk out the door.

There are already signs of what that shift can look like. At the South Dakota State Penitentiary, a newly created peer companion program trains incarcerated people in Mental Health First Aid so they can support others inside the facility. Although the program only launched this year, it reflects a promising recognition of the value of giving incarcerated people responsibility and a stake in the environment around them. Other states are putting similar ideas into practice in ways that are producing measurable results.

In Maine, incarcerated individuals are now working fully remote jobs for outside employers. About 45 people are employed full time from inside state facilities, earning competitive salaries. They're using their hard-earned money to pay restitution, support their families and build real work histories before release.



**Cells at the South Dakota State Penitentiary.** (Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Corrections)

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The idea behind the program is straightforward. If we expect people to eventually return to society, they should have opportunities to prepare for it while they are still incarcerated. Giving people the chance to build skills, earn meaningful income, and establish stability before release is common sense, even if many prison systems are only beginning to embrace it.

In Minnesota, administrators at the Stillwater Correctional Facility took a similar approach to another longstanding prison reality: tattooing. For years, prisons responded to underground tattooing with punishment, even as it continued in unsafe conditions and contributed to the spread of diseases like hepatitis C.

Stillwater chose a different path. The prison created a regulated tattoo apprenticeship program where participants complete training hours, follow safety standards, and in some cases leave with professional licenses and jobs already lined up. The program reduced rule violations while turning a risky underground activity into a legitimate trade. Other state prison systems have begun following Stillwater's lead.

In Pennsylvania, change is happening at the unit level. Inside the Little Scandinavia unit at SCI Chester, administrators created a more normalized environment with shared spaces, consistent routines, and more interaction between staff and residents. Officers are encouraged to build relationships and take an active role in shaping the climate of the unit.

The unit has seen significantly lower levels of violence and stronger relationships between staff and residents. Accountability still exists, but it is reinforced through communication and consistency instead of constant escalation.

These programs may look different, but they are built on the same basic idea. When people are given purpose, responsibility and opportunities to build stability, behavior changes. When staff have more tools than punishment alone, facilities become easier and safer to manage. And when incarcerated people leave prison better prepared for life outside, communities benefit, too.

None of this means abandoning accountability or lowering standards. It simply means using common sense about what actually improves safety inside prisons and beyond them. Facilities built around constant tension and deprivation will continue producing the same outcomes. But prisons that invest in stability, problem-solving and human dignity are showing there is a better path forward.

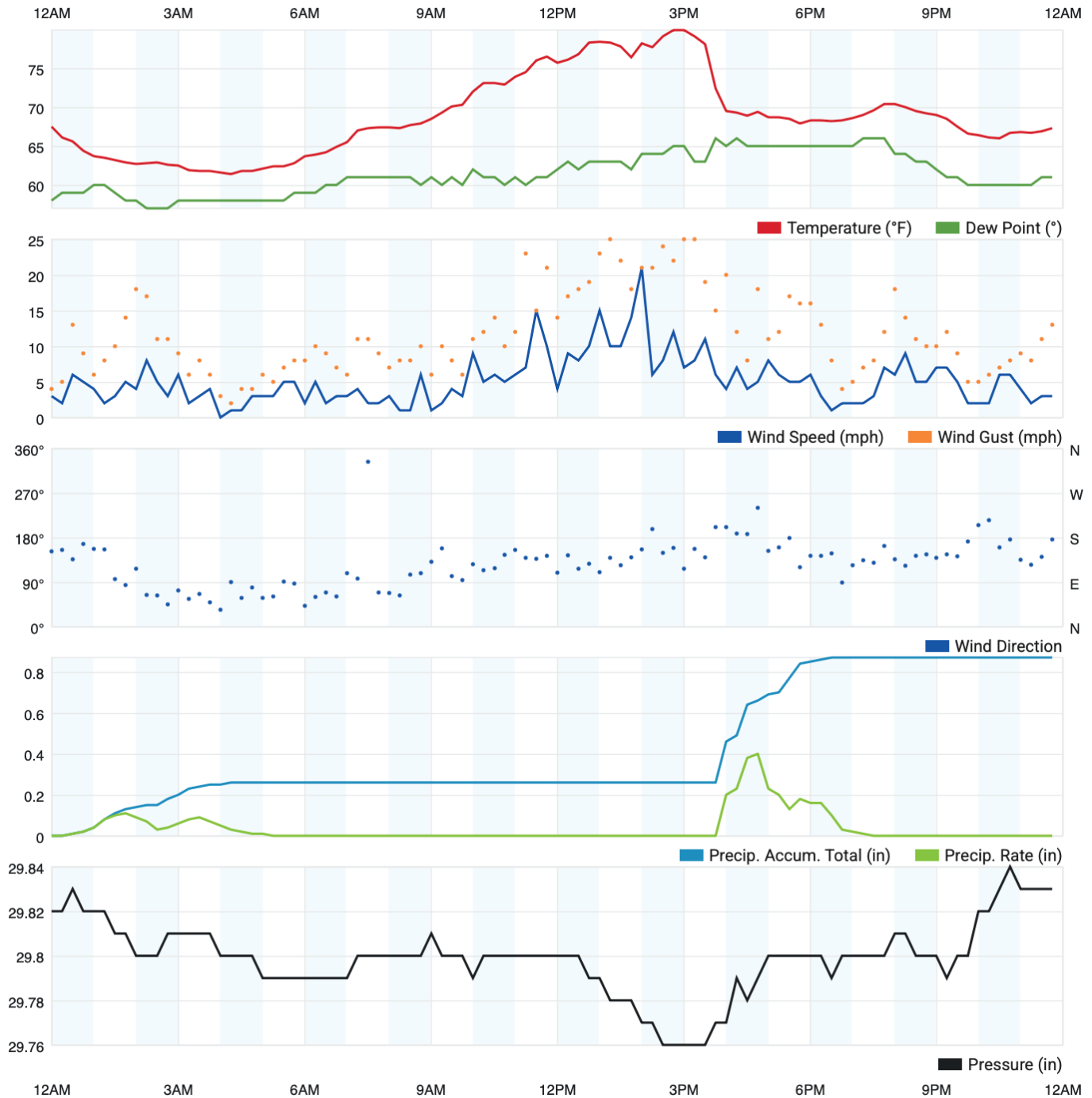
South Dakota now has an opportunity to decide which direction it wants to take. Building a new prison will not solve the deeper problems that have long defined corrections. Real progress will depend on whether the state is willing to realign its approach around the kinds of strategies already proving effective elsewhere — emphasizing stability, responsibility, rehabilitation, and human dignity alongside accountability. Without that broader shift in mindset, we risk re-creating the same problems inside a newer building.

*Laura Boesen is a program associate for Legislation and Ally Relations at Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), where she works to advance policy solutions rooted in shared safety, accountability and community trust. She also develops curriculum and facilitates educational and reentry programming inside prisons and local jails, with experience across the Midwest. She holds master's degrees in behavior analysis and modification and leadership psychology.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Broton Daily Independent

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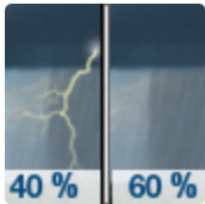
Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday

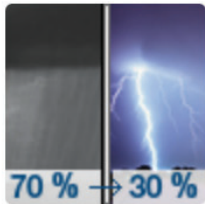
Monday Night

Tuesday



High: 77 °F

Chance  
T-storms then  
Showers  
Likely



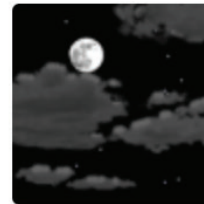
Low: 54 °F

Showers  
Likely then  
Chance  
T-storms



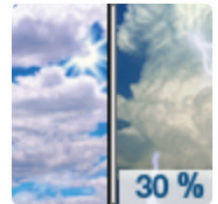
High: 79 °F

Becoming  
Sunny



Low: 51 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 85 °F

Partly Sunny  
then Chance  
T-storms

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

### HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:  
Isolated Severe Storms  
Possible

**This Evening Into  
The Overnight**

### PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL of 1"  
in diameter

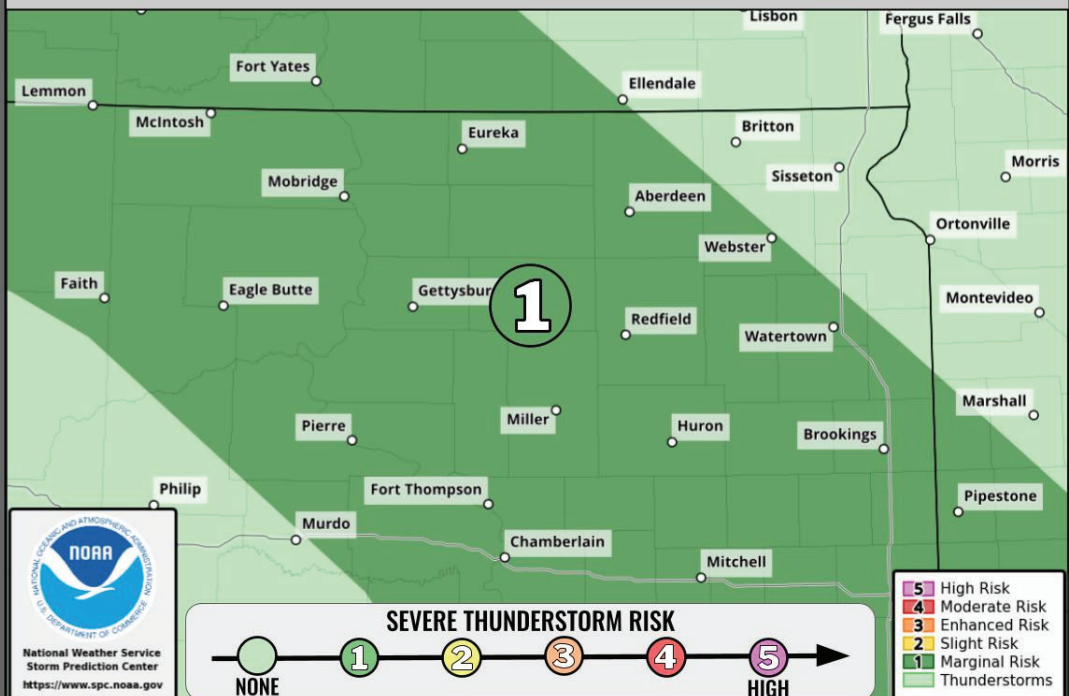


DAMAGING  
WIND GUSTS  
of 60-70 mph

NWS  
Aberdeen, SD



## Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Sunday, May 31st



There is a marginal risk (level 1 out of 5) of severe weather extending from the Missouri River valley region out into northeast South Dakota this afternoon into this evening. The primary threats will be damaging wind gusts to 65 mph, and hail up to an inch in diameter.

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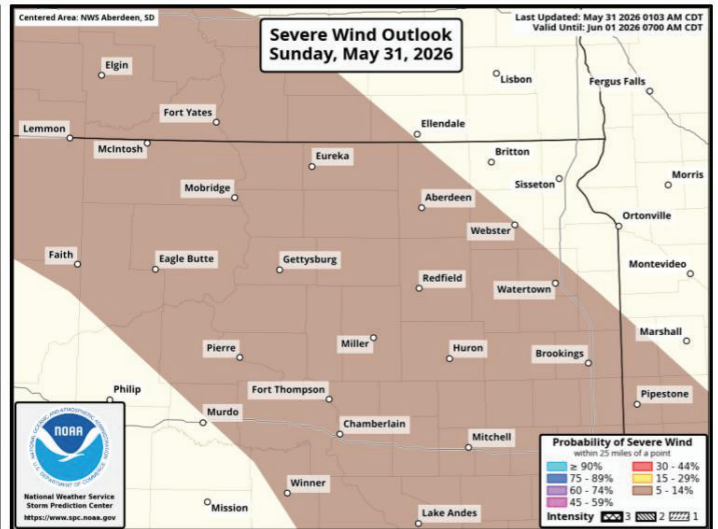
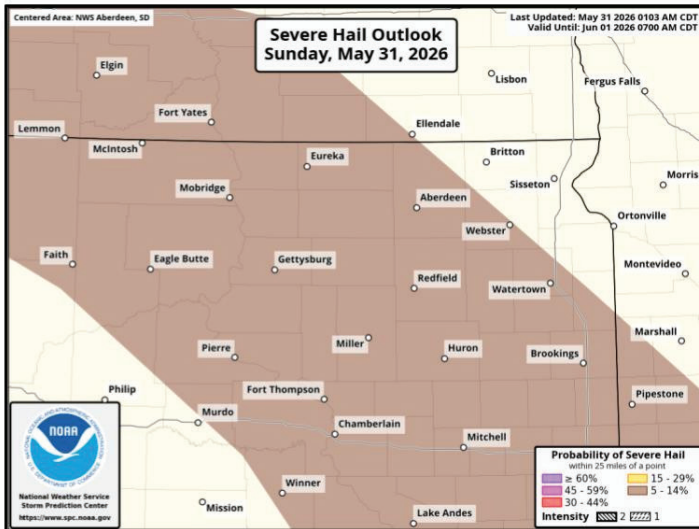


## Hail and Wind Threat This Afternoon And Evening

May 31, 2026  
3:19 AM

Large Hail And Localized Damaging Winds Are Possible

Large Hail of 1" in diameter possible over portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota.  
Severe Wind Gusts to 65 mph possible over portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota.



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

### THREAT ASSESSMENT

#### HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:  
Isolated Severe Storms Possible

**Sunday Afternoon  
Into Late Sunday  
Evening**

#### PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL of 1" in diameter

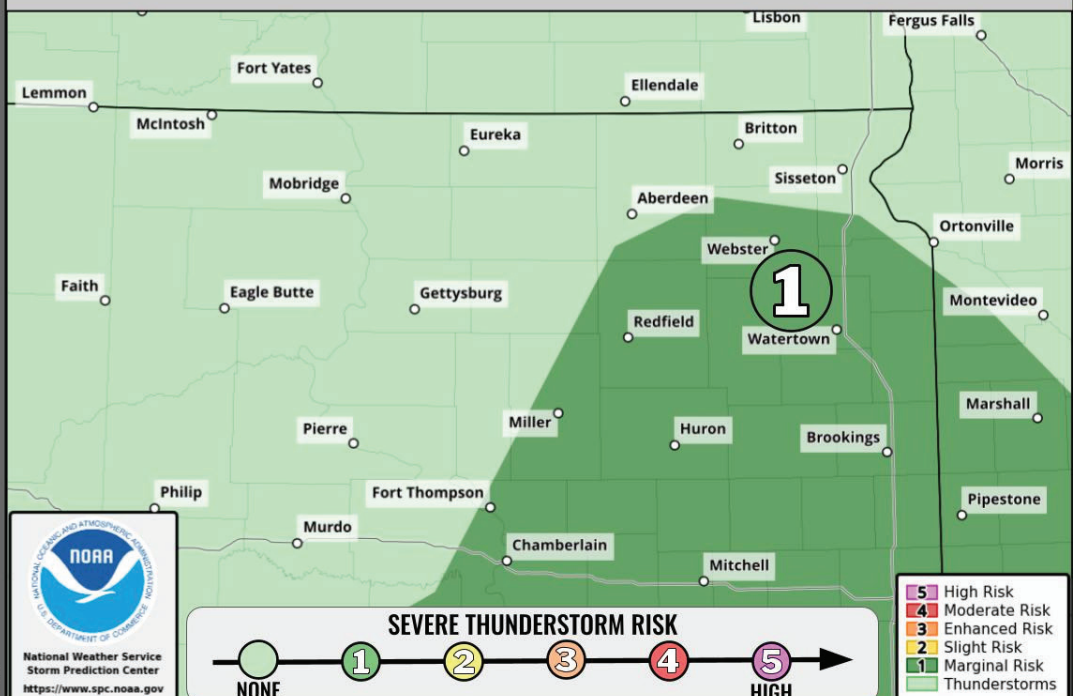


DAMAGING WIND GUSTS of 60 mph

NWS  
Aberdeen, SD



### Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Monday, June 1st





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## Off And On Rain Chances Through Friday, June 5th

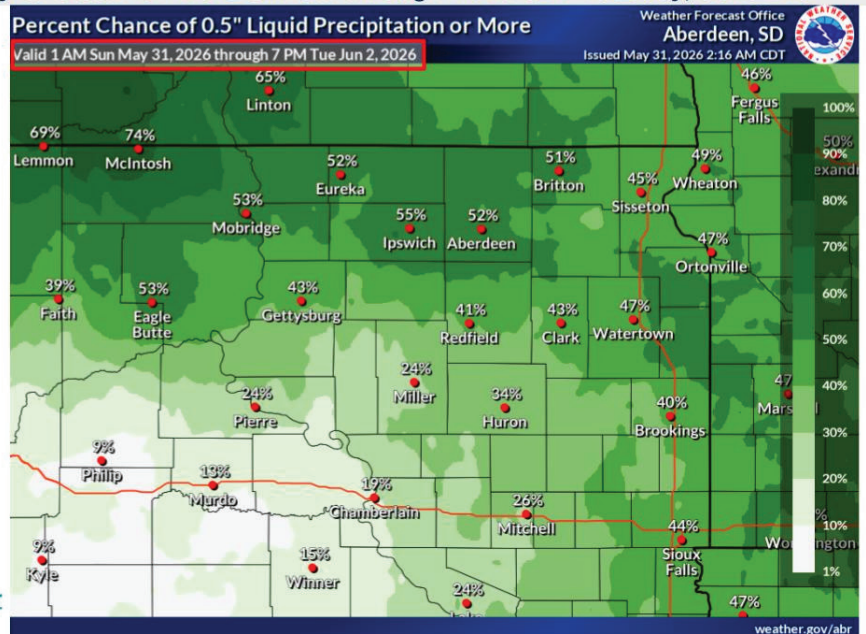
May 31, 2026

3:24 AM

\*\*\*This Map Depicts The Probability Of 0.50in Or More Of Rain through 7 PM CDT Tuesday, June 2nd\*\*\*

- Isolated/scattered showers and thunderstorms today into this evening.
- There is a **risk of severe thunderstorms this afternoon into this evening**, mainly throughout the Missouri River valley region, over into northeast South Dakota.
- **Combining** forecast rainfall amounts for today through the end of the day Tuesday, the resulting **likelihood of a half-inch or more of rainfall** is shown in the image on the right.

For specific precipitation probabilities for your area, check out: <https://www.weather.gov/crh/pqpf?sid=abr>



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Rainfall is possible at various times and locations over the next 5 or so days. The image shows the likelihood of 0.5" or more through early Tuesday evening.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 80 °F at 2:49 PM**

**Low Temp: 61 °F at 4:12 AM**

**Wind: 26 mph at 3:16 PM**

**Precip: Total Rain: 1.08**

## Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1934

Record Low: 23 in 1897

Average High: 76

Average Low: 51

Average Precip in May.: 3.28

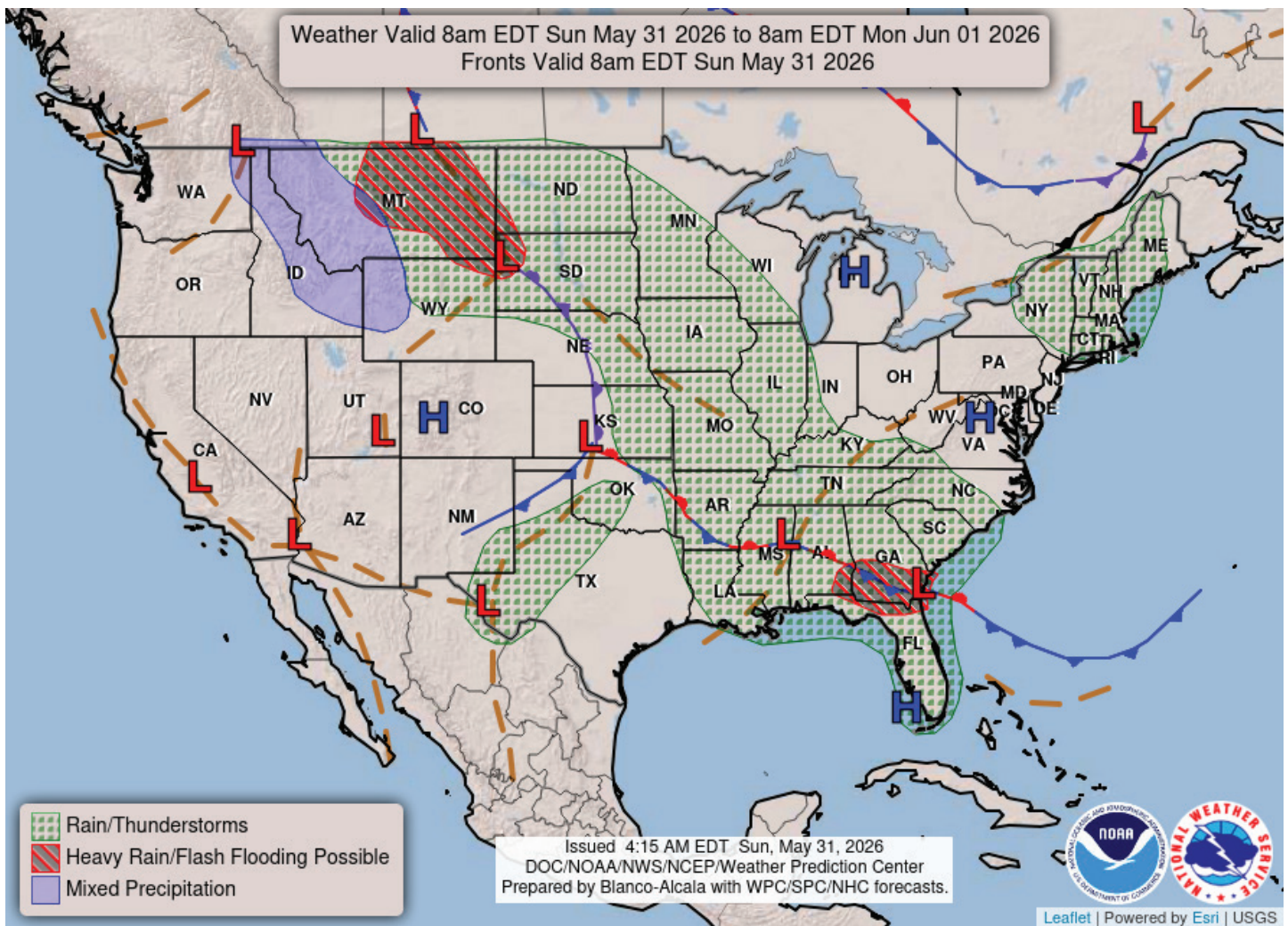
Precip to date in May.: 2.81

Average Precip to date: 7.25

Precip Year to Date: 5.93

Sunset Tonight: 9:12 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:47 am



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## **Today in Weather History**

May 31st, 1960:

A late evening thunderstorm cut a path of destruction, principally from high winds from Beadle County, northeast to Roberts and Grant Counties. Twelve heads of cattle were electrocuted for a downed tension wire that occurred at Wolsey. Winds with 65 to 75 mph gusts were observed at Huron and Watertown. A grain elevator tipped over, and a windmill was destroyed near Willow Lake. The winds at Hayti blew over a steel corn crib and damaged other farm buildings and implements.

1889 — The Johnstown disaster occurred, the worst flood tragedy in U.S. history. Heavy rains collapsed the South Fork Dam sending a thirty foot wall of water rushing down the already flooded Conemaugh Valley. The wall of water, traveling as fast as twenty-two feet per second, swept away all structures, objects and people. 2100 persons perished in the flood. (David Ludlum)

1941 — Thunderstorms deluged Burlington KS with 12.59 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour rainfall record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1985 — Severe thunderstorms spawned forty-one tornadoes across the Lower Great Lakes Region and southeastern Ontario which killed 74 persons. (Storm Data)

1987 — Thunderstorms in New England produced wind gusts up to 90 mph at Worcester, MA, and Northboro, MA, and hail an inch and a half in diameter at Williston, VT. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Portland, ME, was a record for the month of May. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Hot and humid weather prevailed in the eastern U.S. Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Cape Hatteras, NC, reported their first ninety degree day in May in 115 years of records. "Dust buster" thunderstorms in northwest Texas drenched Amarillo with more than three inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather and torrential rains in northern Indiana, northern Ohio and southern Lower Michigan. Saint John IND was drenched with four inches of rain in two hours, and Woodland MI was deluged with two inches in twenty minutes. Pittsburgh PA reported a record 6.55 inches of rain for the month of May, with measurable rain reported on twenty-five days during the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from northwest Texas to southeastern Louisiana. The thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, including thirteen in northwest Texas. One tornado hit the town of Spearman, TX, causing more than a million dollars damage, and seven other tornadoes were reported within twenty-five miles of Spearman. Thunderstorms over northwest Texas also produced baseball size hail at Monahans, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Paducah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotion

## A Love That Transforms

**Loving difficult people isn't natural, but it's one of the ways others see Christ in us.**

Matthew 5:43-45: 43 ``You have heard that it was said, `YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

44 ``But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

If we responded simply from natural impulses, we'd be kind to those who are kind to us and vengeful toward those who hurt us. It's human nature.

Jesus clearly teaches us to love even our enemies. And He lived out what He taught: Christ loved us enough to die for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8-10). He offered His love without waiting for us to be deserving of it.

When we respond to hostility with love, something remarkable happens. First, the Father is pleased, which brings His children joy, peace, and deep satisfaction. Second, we get to watch how God moves in the relationship. Sometimes hearts soften. Sometimes reconciliation happens. Sometimes we simply become more like Jesus in the process.

There's also an internal transformation. We become aware that the Holy Spirit is working from within, enabling divine love to flow through us in ways we couldn't manufacture on our own. Galatians 5:22-23 lists nine qualities of spiritual fruit that He produces in believers—and love is the first one mentioned.

Loving difficult people isn't natural—it's supernatural. And it's one of the clearest ways others see Christ in us.

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



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## The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.30.26

5 14 22 28 30 1

TOP PRIZE:

**\$1,000,000/year**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.29.26

19 24 47 59 65 7

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$346,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.30.26

5 8 9 11 15 4

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$28,220,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.30.26

4 6 7 22 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$113,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.30.26

4 27 65 66 69 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.30.26

1 27 35 44 52 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$180,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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

### **Israeli army captures strategic castle in Lebanon in deepest incursion into country in 26 years**

By BASSEM MROUE, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israeli troops have captured a strategic mountain topped with a Crusader-built castle in southern Lebanon in the deepest incursion of the country in more than a quarter-century, the military said Sunday.

The capture of Beaufort castle, near the city of Nabatiyeh, came after days of airstrikes and intense fighting in nearby villages where Israeli troops fought Hezbollah members in the rugged area.

Its capture marks a major development in the latest Israel-Hezbollah war, which began on March 2 when Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel two days after the U.S. and Israel attacked its main backer, Iran.

Israel has since launched a ground invasion, capturing dozens of Lebanese villages and towns close to the border. Hezbollah has launched thousands of missiles and drones at Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.

The Israeli push came despite a nominal ceasefire that has been in place since April 17 and just days before the next round of direct talks are set to be held at the State Department on June 2 and 3 between Lebanon and Israel.

A historic and strategic fortress

The Israeli military's Arabic spokesperson, Avichay Adraee, posted a photograph on X showing Israeli troops walking outside the castle, and Defense Minister Israel Katz wrote on X that they had raised an Israeli flag over the castle. Israeli troops previously captured the castle in 1982 and held it until they withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.

The Beaufort fortress, perched high atop Lebanon's rolling green hills and overlooking the Litani River, has been a strategic military asset for many armies over almost 1,000 years.

Built as a Crusader castle around the 12th century on top of previous fortifications, it has been used by the Crusaders, Saladin's Jerusalem army, Mamlukes, Ottomans, the French mandate, the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Israeli military until 2000, when it was partially restored and opened to visitors. The Crusaders named it Beaufort which is Old French for "beautiful fortress."

The 1982 capture of the castle from the Palestine Liberation Organization was a major victory for the Israeli military that was led at the time by Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, who later became the country's prime minister. At the time, the Israeli army pushed all the way north and occupied Beirut.

During the previous Israel-Hezbollah war in 2024, UNESCO gave enhanced protection to 34 cultural sites in Lebanon including Beaufort Castle to safeguard it from damage.

The castle is a few kilometers north of the Israel border and overlooks wide parts of southern Lebanon and northern Israel. In Arabic, it is called Al-Shaqif castle, an old Syriac word referring to the formidable rocky area.

The Israeli military said in a statement that it launched an operation a few days ago in the Beaufort Ridge and the Suluki valley further south with the aim of dismantling Hezbollah infrastructure and removing direct threats to Israeli civilians.

The statement said the army is ready "to expand the operation if needed."

Beaufort is symbolic across the region, including in Israel, where it was one of the most well-known places Israel controlled during the 18 year occupation. One of Israel's most well-known war films, "Beaufort," explores the moral questions and reservations and the futility of war, in the last days before the military withdrew.

Israel expands invasion in Lebanon

In recent days, Israel has expanded the scope of its operations in Lebanon, sending troops across the Litani River, which previously served as a de-facto boundary, and demanding that residents leave much



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of southern Lebanon.

Israel has designated the area from the Litani up to the Zahrani River a combat zone. Some residents have already left the area due to the intense strikes in recent days, but people remain in many of the area's towns.

Israeli troops have been advancing for days in villages close to Beaufort castle. They are now about 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the city of Nabatiyeh, a major center in southern Lebanon, and have called on all its residents to leave, as well as the residents of the coastal city of Tyre, the country's fourth largest city, and its surroundings.

There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah or the Lebanese government on the Israeli push.

Exchanges of fire across the border continue

Hezbollah overnight claimed two attacks targeting Israeli troops and a Merkava tank in the southwestern town of Bayada near the border. In recent days, the group has said it has clashed with Israeli troops in several towns just north of the river near Nabatiyeh and the strategic castle.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported airstrikes on different villages in southern Lebanon, saying they inflicted casualties without giving a breakdown. Hezbollah on Saturday fired salvos of rockets into northern Israel, including Kiryat Shmona, the largest city in the area.

Hezbollah's use of hard-to-detect fiber optic drones has been deadly for the Israeli military, which is struggling to respond. There have been nearly 200 alerts for Israeli civilians across northern Israel warning of drones and missiles in the past 24 hours, according to Israel's military.

The latest round of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has killed 3,350 people in Lebanon and displaced more than 1 million people.

According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, at least 25 Israeli soldiers and a defense contractor have been killed in or near southern Lebanon, including one on Saturday. Two civilians have also been killed in northern Israel.

## **American allies warn division weakens deterrence in calls for global unity to meet new threats**

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — American allies stressed the need for unity at a top defense conference Sunday, saying that as threats increasingly transcend regions, cooperation is more important than ever, even as Washington has become more critical of its traditional friends.

U.S. President Donald Trump has been extremely harsh about NATO, and the comments at the Shangri-La conference came the day after U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth again chided Western European allies at the forum for not devoting enough resources to defense.

Japan pushes for unity, saying it strengthens deterrence

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi praised Hegseth for his commitment to the Indo-Pacific, but at the same time stressed the continued need for strong coalitions globally.

"Division weakens deterrence, unity strengthens deterrence," he told the conference, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"If gaps emerge among the United States, Europe, and allies and like-minded countries, forces which take it as an opportunity will surely come in," he said. "We must prevent such a situation. We must keep our cooperation going on. Now is the time to make our cooperation even stronger."

Philippines, Japan remain critical of China despite softer US approach

As China has been rapidly expanding and modernizing its military, Japan has been reshaping its own defense policy. Last month, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports, a major change in its postwar pacifist policy.

China criticized the change, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun saying China would "resolutely resist Japan's reckless moves toward a new type of militarism."

Koizumi scoffed at that accusation as ironic, coming from China.

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"Think about it, there is a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers," he said, speaking in English. "Japan has neither of such weapons, and yet Japan is labeled new militarism. Isn't it strange?"

He said that transparency comes from "discussion and dialogue" and lamented that China had not sent its defense minister to the conference.

At this year's conference, Hegseth toned down his comments from the previous year on China, when he had warned of rapidly developing threats from Beijing and cautioned it was "actively training" for a possible invasion of Taiwan.

This year's conference came only about two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump visited Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing, however, where Hegseth said the two had agreed to "build a constructive relationship of strategic stability." His comments were met with praise from China's delegation in Singapore.

On Sunday, Philippines Defense Minister Gilberto Teodoro Jr., whose country has clashed repeatedly over competing maritime claims with China, told a small group of reporters that he wasn't concerned with the change in tone from his most important ally.

"The situation with the United States is different than that from the Philippines," he said. "They can talk to China that way in a position of parity, if not superiority, while the Philippines cannot."

He added, however, that he had no intention of following suit.

"If China doesn't change its behavior, my tone won't change," he said.

Australia defends need for rules-based approach to defense

In his speech Saturday, Hegseth applauded many Asian partners for their efforts to step-up defense spending, while reiterating criticism of European allies, who he suggested got "distracted by empty globalist rhetoric about the rules-based international order, while European capitals threw open their borders and hollowed out their militaries."

"You can have all the rules you want and rules are great," Hegseth said. "But if you can't back them up with hard power, the rules are not worth the paper they are written on."

Many NATO countries failed for years to meet alliance defense spending commitments, but since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many dramatically increased military expenditures and plan more in the future.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the conference Sunday, Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles, said he agreed with Hegseth's point that "the rules based order needs to be underpinned by power," but at the same time said strong rules were "more important today than they have ever been."

"We are all committed to a rules based system, because that is actually what gives middle powers like Australia or smaller countries agency," he said.

He also said alliances remain critical to the region's defense.

"This is a collective challenge and it demands a collective response, which is actually what the rules based order is all about," he said.

Dutch defense minister pushes for shared response to global conflicts

Netherlands Defense Minister Dilan Yesilgöz-Zegerius said the current conflicts have global implications and demand a shared response.

"A war in Europe involves drones from Iran, soldiers and ammunition from North Korea and various types of support from China," she said. "The lesson is clear: regional tensions are no longer regional. Our security is interconnected."

She said that if middle powers do not work together, they risk becoming spectators or the "subject of conversations," but with coalitions they can help preserve stability.

"The fact that international rules are being violated does not mean we should abandon them," she said.

"On the contrary, it means we must defend them more constantly and more courageously. International law may be imperfect, but history teaches us that the alternative is far worse."

## Heavy rains threaten to delay search for 2 people missing in Laos cave

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Heavy rains threatened to delay the search for two people missing in a flooded cave in Laos on Sunday, after the rescue of five other people who were trapped underground for over a week.

Finnish diver Mikko Paasi, one of the first international rescuers to arrive at the site, told The Associated Press that rains had filled the cave up to the second chamber, preventing divers from entering the cave until pumps can lower the water level.

The seven villagers reportedly entered the cave last week to look for valuable minerals before being trapped by a flash flood that blocked their way out. One other villager escaped and alerted the authorities.

Rescue teams from Laos and neighboring Thailand have been working together in the past week at the site in a rugged area in the central province of Xaisomboun, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of the capital, Vientiane. They were joined by divers from countries including Finland, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, France and Australia.

Several of the rescuers previously took part in the complicated 2018 cave rescue in northern Thailand that saved 12 schoolboys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave.

The rescued men are being treated at a local hospital and are doing well, Malaysian diver Lee Kian Lie, who's taking part in the operation, told the AP on Sunday.

"We interviewed them about how the deeper part of the cave looks like. We will continue to search based on the information we have, and perhaps we will be able to get to the other two," he said.

According to rescuers, they have navigated more than 200 meters into the cave and discovered five chambers in the system. The five people rescued so far were found in the fifth chamber.

Paasi told the AP that the survivors said there's a narrow crack in the fifth chamber that could be a passage leading to a deeper part of the cave system.

"This was the only place that we haven't checked in the mine, where the two lost miners could still be," he said during a video interview.

"Now there's a theory that, through that small crack, it still continues, and there's a sixth chamber, which gives us hope now that, if we could penetrate that small restriction, we might be able to reach the sixth chamber and then see what is there."

The five people who have been rescued were first found Wednesday. They were identified by their first names as Khamla, Mued, Ee, Ing and Laen.

The first man was safely evacuated on Friday, guided through a narrow flooded passage by an expert diver. The remaining four left the cave on Saturday after the water receded enough for them to walk out on their own, rescuers said.

Videos posted online Saturday by rescuers at the site showed emotional moments as the men emerged one by one from the cave. Some collapsed on the ground at the cave's entrance, and were hugged by a group of workers who cried in joy. Later moments showed them lying on a stretcher, wrapped in foil blankets and fitted with an oxygen mask before being transported out of the site.

## Iran war forces farmers to seek fertilizer alternatives from cow dung to compost

By JACK THOMPSON, SIBI ARASU and FABIOLA SANCHEZ Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — When Senegalese farmer Abou Sow first watched U.S. missiles strike Iran on social media, he had a sinking feeling it would soon affect agriculture in the West African nation. Since the war began on Feb. 28, fertilizer prices have risen by 40%.

Sow was better prepared than most. Eight years ago, he gave up chemical fertilizers for organic compost and other natural sources. He now rallies farmers in Senegal to buy manure from local herders and gives advice on how to make a rich compost, picking out wriggling worms — a healthy sign.



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"We can't afford to wait for a ceasefire," Sow said. "It's risky to depend on chemical fertilizers." Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz has affected the supply of natural gas, essential for making chemical fertilizer, as well as global shipping.

The Gulf region produces 30% of globally traded chemical fertilizer, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute, and global prices have increased by 50%, according to the World Bank's fertilizer price index.

"The clock is ticking very hard," said Maximo Torero, chief economist at the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, as concerns grow about food security.

Experts say a shift away from chemical fertilizer could have wider benefits, as its production and usage create significant greenhouse gas emissions, the main driver of climate change.

Natural fertilizers, by contrast, can sequester carbon in the soil and create fewer problems like runoff that can pollute waterways.

"It's good for the planet because you're weaning food production off fossil fuels," said Susan Chomba, member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, a think tank.

In Senegal, some are grateful for sheep manure

Senegal annually imports 125,000 tons of fertilizer. The minister of agriculture, Mabouba Diagne, has said the state sourced enough chemical fertilizer for the current season, but farmers said it is increasingly difficult to find.

Farmer Aliou Fall blamed U.S. President Donald Trump for the soaring fertilizer costs. "He brings war to the world and he doesn't even think about it. Now farmers are suffering," Fall said.

Annually, Sow applies six tons of compost instead. He said he is fortunate to be near a town where manure is plentiful because residents rear sheep for religious holidays.

In rural areas and remote fields, however, it is challenging to source and transport large quantities of manure, and Sow fears that some people will abandon their fields in this difficult time.

One alternative is the industry in biofertilizers, products containing bacteria and other microorganisms to help plants absorb nitrogen, a crucial nutrient for growth, from the air and soil. A growing number of companies in Africa make industrial quantities of compost with municipal waste, decomposing food waste into fertilizer.

Senegal's government announced in April it would subsidize and distribute 30,000 tons of organic fertilizer products to help farmers. Sow said that's not enough.

Governments around the world spend \$700 billion annually on agricultural subsidies according to the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, with a large share spent on providing chemical fertilizer. Chomba said that makes alternatives more expensive and less competitive.

"You're incentivizing the wrong sort of products," she said.

In Brazil, the biofertilizers sector is growing

Brazil is a leading exporter of soybeans, coffee, sugarcane, beef and poultry. But the nation imports over 80% of its fertilizer, said Joana Colussi, assistant professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

The price of fertilizer has increased by 50% since the Iran war began, according to Luis Barbieri, founder of the Folio Institute, a Brazilian organization that connects farmers, scientists and researchers.

"Whenever we have a war, farmers' use of biofertilizers is turbocharged," Barbieri said.

Despite the widespread adoption of chemical fertilizers in Brazil in the 1970s, they are less effective in the tropical climate because high rainfall and high temperatures cause runoff.

The biofertilizer sector grew 15% in Brazil from 2023 to 2024, according to the state-run Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, Embrapa. And patent laws mean that farmers can make their own biofertilizers at much lower cost.

In Mexico, however, very little progress has been made due to government subsidies promoting chemical fertilizer use and a lack of funding for alternatives, said Gerardo Noriega, a research professor at the Autonomous University of Chapingo and one of the country's leading advocates for organic fertilizers.

But he suggested the current crisis "may force (farmers) to adopt organic fertilizers more quickly than

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they had imagined.”

In India, the prime minister encourages natural farming

In India’s southern Indian state of Telangana, Manohara Chari has been making jivamrita, a potent mix of cow dung, urine, flour, soil and sugar to replace the chemical fertilizer he used to apply.

“We do not depend on companies,” said Chari, one of 1.7 million farmers in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states who have shifted to natural farming, which embraces natural fertilizers, integrates livestock waste and plants a diversity of crops to improve soil health.

Farmers and experts say the Iran war and chemical fertilizer shortage make the approach more attractive. On May 10, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a “national mission” to adopt natural farming and cut fertilizer use by 50%.

India imports 60% of its fertilizer from the Gulf. The government has rushed to source supplies and subsidized it to keep prices low, at significant expense to the state.

“There’s certainly been more interest this year in natural farming, especially after the Middle East conflict began,” said G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, agricultural scientist at the Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Some farmers have dedicated part of their land to assess the approach.

The switch requires additional labor, and farmers face a transition period. Chari said the government could help instead of subsidizing chemical fertilizers: “If even a fraction of that support is given to natural farmers, more people will shift towards it.”

## Venice’s growing flamingo population finds refuge in recovering wetlands

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Perhaps nothing better illustrates the flamingo’s status as a newcomer to the Venetian Lagoon than the fact that the local dialect has no word for them.

But the pale pink birds — called “fenicotteri” in Italian — are now flocking to Venice in record numbers, as ecological efforts to restore damaged wetlands could help expand their habitat and possibly induce them to nest in the lagoon.

Flamingos — which most famously nest in Spain and France — started showing up in the vast Venetian Lagoon in the early 2000s, mostly in fishing valleys and mudflats in the lagoon’s furthest reaches, with only rare sightings in the canaled historic center of Venice that is most frequented by global tourists.

Venice Lagoon becomes an unlikely flamingo haven

Environmentalists say their arrival in Venice as the European flamingo’s range expands is a sign of the lagoon’s health and suitability as a feeding ground.

Last year, the number of wintering flamingos in Venice peaked at a record of nearly 24,000. That is 8,000 more than the previous year, numbers “that position the Venetian Lagoon as one of the most important wintering spots in its entire habitat range,” said ornithologist Alessandro Sartori.

Sartori surveys the lagoon weekly by boat for signs of nesting, which would indicate a self-sustaining Venetian colony. So far there are no fresh signs after two nesting attempts, in 2008 and 2013, in northern lagoon fishing valleys suffered serious setbacks, including violent hail that killed dozens of birds.

More than 90% of the birds counted in last year’s census were in the northern lagoon, which contains a large area of natural salt marsh. The flamingos are also attracted by the traditional fishing valleys, semi-natural embanked wetlands that provide abundant food but can also bring them into conflict with human activity.

Venice seeks to recover its lost marsh

A project to reconstruct salt marshes in the more isolated southern lagoon — past the historic center and the industrial port — raises prospects that flamingo numbers will increase there as well by offering a new habitat in an area of the lagoon where wetland erosion has been especially severe. It could also draw the birds away from competing human uses in the north.

The Venetian Lagoon, covering an expanse of 550 square kilometers (more than 200 square miles), was

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originally nearly half salt marsh. Today the area of salt marsh — or “barene” in the Venetian dialect — is just about 7%, about half of it reconstructed, said Jane da Mosto, the executive director of We Are Here Venice, the local partner in the EU’s 23.6 million euro (\$27.5 million), 5-year WaterLANDS project to restore wetlands across Europe.

The damage is especially stark in the central and southern lagoon, due to the combination of natural erosion and the dredging of shipping channels to access the Marghera industrial port in the 1960s.

“And since then, there’s been much more widespread erosion and loss of sediments from the lagoon to the point that Venice is now on a trajectory to becoming a marine bay,” said da Mosto. The wetlands reconstruction project “is specifically to show that it’s possible to address this trend and change the course of history.”

Rebuilding the salt marshes increases the lagoon’s ability to capture carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas and driver of climate change, and mitigates the effects of rising sea levels. But da Mosto said much larger areas would need to be restored to produce meaningful climate benefits. The goal of the EU project is to make salt marsh reconstruction scalable.

Flamingos can also benefit as biodiversity increases.

Da Mosto’s team is researching ways to increase biodiversity on the reconstructed marshes, including planting species that can help reduce erosion and make the wetlands more resilient.

The mudflat where they are working contains signs of flamingo activity, chiefly stray pink feathers. On a recent day, a flock of some 30 were perched in the distance — scattering when a pair of squawking oystercatchers alerted them to visitors.

Already, Sartori believes that the reconstruction has begun to draw more flamingos to the area. Over the last three years, he has seen their numbers in the southern lagoon grow from just a handful to as many as 300 to 400 in certain periods.

“The hope is that they can find — as they have found in other parts of the Mediterranean — right here on these barene, places where they can nest,” Sartori said.

Venice’s pink newcomers could draw a different kind of visitor

The flamingos’ presence in the lagoon underlines the importance of the Venetian ecosystem and offers a new way for visitors to interpret the canaled city and outer islands through their ecological — and not just historical and artistic — significance.

Still, visitors to Venice who hope to casually spy flamingos will probably be disappointed, and AP reporters recently had to travel by boat for an hour to spot any. The flamingos inhabit shallow, difficult-to-access reaches of the lagoon where navigating safely requires close attention to tides and channels. Even at a distance, the birds are easily disturbed and quick to take flight.

Sartori predicts flamingo spotting — already a possibility from the shores of the small lagoon islands of Murano and Burano but rare in the historic center — could become more common as their numbers continue to grow.

“Obviously this should always be done with respect for the animals, keeping a safe distance and not interfering with their daily lives,” he said.

## Concerns mount that Belarus could be a launchpad for a new Russian offensive in Ukraine

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

Over four years ago, Belarus’ authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko allowed longtime ally Russia to use his territory to invade Ukraine. Now officials in Kyiv are warning that Lukashenko could again allow his land to serve as a launchpad for more attacks by the Kremlin’s forces.

While Belarus has not contributed troops to battle, Lukashenko has backed President Vladimir Putin’s war effort by hosting Russia’s nuclear weapons and military infrastructure, as well as producing components for Moscow’s military industries. Earlier this month, the countries held joint drills of nuclear forces involving Russian weapons deployed in Belarus.



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Lukashenko, in power for over three decades, has ruled the nation of 9.5 million with an iron fist, relentlessly cracking down on dissent and relying on its close ties with Russia, as well as subsidies from the Kremlin's coffers, to counteract repeated Western sanctions.

Military cooperation between Moscow and Minsk is increasingly worrying Ukraine's allies.

Belarus' role in Ukraine

When Putin began the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, Russian troops that gathered in Belarus under the guise of drills dashed toward Kyiv, only about 90 kilometers (56 miles) south of the border.

Putin's hope of capturing Kyiv quickly was shattered by staunch Ukrainian resistance, and convoys of Russian tanks stretching along narrow roads became easy prey.

A little over a month after the invasion, Russian troops that suffered heavy losses and struggled to maintain their supply lines pulled back from Kyiv and other areas they captured in northeastern Ukraine in what the Kremlin cast as a "goodwill gesture."

When Moscow tried to negotiate a quick end to the conflict weeks after its start, Belarus hosted the first talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations. The talks moved to Istanbul but failed to produce a deal.

As the conflict became a war of attrition, Belarus has played a key role in supporting Moscow's war effort. Belarusian plants have produced important components, including microchips and other electronics, optical guidance systems, artillery munitions and heavy trucks that carry Russian ballistic missiles.

Ukraine's presidential envoy on sanctions policy, Vladyslav Vlasuk, said fragments of an Oreshnik ballistic missile that Russia fired at Ukraine on May 24 contained microchips from Belarus. He urged Western allies to tighten sanctions enforcement against Belarus.

Belarus also provided training grounds for Moscow's troops, hosted joint drills and offered its hospitals to treat wounded Russian soldiers.

BELPOL, a group of former military and law enforcement officers who oppose Lukashenko, said the Belarusian industries have effectively been integrated into the Kremlin's war machine. It says that over 500 Belarusian industrial plants are involved in manufacturing weapons and ammunition, repairing military equipment and providing logistics.

"Lukashenko's regime is quite seriously involved in the war," BELPOL head Uladzimir Zhyhar told The Associated Press. "Lukashenko is helping Russia in every way he can."

In the Gomel region that borders Ukraine, construction has begun of a big firing range and barracks for large numbers of troops, Zhyhar said. Ukraine has been forced to maintain many forces at the border with Belarus, he added, keeping them from fighting Russian troops along the more than 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line.

Under Russia's nuclear umbrella

Belarus, which also borders NATO members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, has hosted some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons. In December, Russia announced that its latest intermediate range nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile system entered service in Belarus.

Russia has used a conventionally armed version of the Oreshnik to strike facilities in Ukraine three times — in November 2024 and then again in January and earlier this month.

In 2024, the Kremlin revised its nuclear doctrine, placing Belarus under the Russian nuclear umbrella. Putin has said that Moscow will retain control of its nuclear weapons deployed in Belarus but would allow its ally to select the targets in case of conflict.

Earlier this month, Russia and Belarus held massive drills that included the delivery of nuclear warheads to missile units and launch preparations. As part of the exercise, a Belarusian missile crew test-fired a nuclear-capable Iskander missile from a range in southern Russia.

"Belarus lacks military sovereignty, and as soon as Moscow sees it as necessary for its strategy, Moscow will naturally use Belarus as a launchpad for a new invasion of Ukraine or some kind of armed conflict with NATO countries," Zhyhar said, noting that Belarus offers a "very convenient springboard" for such an invasion.

Zelenskyy warns of an attack from Belarus

Last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his intelligence services had learned Moscow

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recently stepped-up efforts to “draw Belarus much deeper into the war and launch additional aggressive operations precisely from Belarusian territory.” He said the target could be along the Chernihiv-Kyiv area or against a NATO country bordering Belarus.

Zelenskyy said he ordered the military and security agencies to prepare a response and strengthen northern defenses.

Lukashenko has denied any aggressive plans, declaring Belarus will not enter the conflict unless attacked.

Sergei Shoigu, Russia’s former defense minister and now secretary of its Security Council, also rejected Zelenskyy’s claim, describing it as a scare tactic to attract more Western aid for Kyiv.

But in a sign of growing Western concern, French President Emmanuel Macron spoke to Lukashenko on May 24 to underscore the risks for Belarus of being dragged into the war, their first call since the invasion began. Lukashenko said that next week he will host a French envoy for talks on European security and prospects of easing EU sanctions.

Andrii Demchenko, a spokesman for Ukraine’s Border Guard Service, said last week that while intelligence data indicate that Russia has increasingly pressured Belarus to directly enter the war, Ukrainian forces haven’t yet spotted any buildup of troops and weapons near the border.

Belarus’ opposition leader-in-exile, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, visited Kyiv last week and emphasized that “Belarus must never again become a springboard for aggression.”

“Russian tanks must never again march through Belarus to Chernihiv, Zhitomir, Rivne, or Kyiv,” Tsikhanouskaya told AP. “Ukraine is fighting for itself and for all the peoples who have lived in the shadow of empire for too long. It is fighting for the right to live in peace. And the fate of my country, Belarus, also depends on Ukraine’s success.”

According to official data, Belarus’ armed forces have 48,600 troops, a tiny force compared with Russia’s 1.5 million. In case of war, Belarus is prepared to mobilize 290,000, but they would need weapons and training to become combat-ready.

“The Belarusian army is unfit for offensive action,” said Alexander Alesin, a Minsk-based military analyst. “An attack from Belarus would require ... mobilizing up to 500,000 troops.”

That would mean taking all the men from the national economy and then finding arms for them, he said, adding: “I consider this option unlikely.”

Ukraine has built heavy fortifications on the border with Belarus and planted mines that would easily stymie any attempted incursion, he said.

“Even with a small force, the Ukrainians can easily defend themselves and inflict heavy losses on the Belarusian army,” Alesin said. “From a military perspective, it’s impossible to launch an attack from Belarusian territory without suffering heavy losses.”

Lukashenko is comfortable with Belarus’ position as a key supplier of military equipment and would strongly oppose direct involvement in the war, he added.

“The last thing Lukashenko wants is to fight, and he’ll cling to his current position at any cost, so he can avoid fighting while profiting handsomely from the war,” Alesin said.

## **Here are the top candidates for California governor in Tuesday’s primary**

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

One of the country’s messiest and most consequential governor’s races is hurtling toward an inflection point on Tuesday in California.

Voters are looking for a replacement for Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, and their decision will help determine the future of a state government that is a testing ground for progressive ideas and a punching bag for Republican President Donald Trump. California is not only the nation’s most populous state, it has one of the world’s largest economies and is home to Hollywood tastemakers, Silicon Valley disrupters and Central Valley farmers.

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The race was upended in April when Rep. Eric Swalwell, who had been consolidating support among establishment Democrats, was accused of sexual assault and dropped out.

California eliminated partisan primaries in 2010 in favor of a "jungle primary." All voters will get the full list of candidates, and the top two finishers will advance to the general election regardless of party.

Two polls conducted in mid-to-late May suggested that Democrat Xavier Becerra and Republican Steve Hilton each have the support of about 2 in 10 likely voters. In one of the polls, Democrat Tom Steyer landed closer to Becerra and Hilton, with Republican Chad Bianco and Democrat Katie Porter trailing further behind, but similar shares of voters were supporting Steyer, Bianco and Porter in the other poll. None of the other candidates were polling in double digits in either poll.

Among the 61 names on the ballot, money and attention have accumulated around a handful of candidates with track records in politics. Here's a look at those top contenders.

**Xavier Becerra, Democrat**

Becerra has a 35-year history in California and national politics. He was a member of Democratic leadership in the U.S. House when then-Gov. Jerry Brown picked him to be California attorney general after Kamala Harris was elected to the U.S. Senate. He used that perch to aggressively fight Trump and his agenda in court during the president's first term.

He later served in President Joe Biden's cabinet as secretary of Health and Human Services.

That experience is at the core of his pitch to voters as a steady hand to guide California and stand up to Trump. It has also invited scrutiny.

Some Biden administration alumni have disparaged his record as health secretary, and he has faced persistent questions since a former top aide was convicted of stealing his campaign funds.

After Swalwell dropped out, Becerra consolidated support from many of California's Democratic power players, including major labor unions, Planned Parenthood and the LGBTQ rights group Equality California.

**Steve Hilton, Republican**

Trump's endorsement gives Hilton a leg up with Republicans and perhaps the clearest path of any of the candidates into the general election. But it could be a liability in November in a state that voted overwhelmingly against the Republican president. Hilton largely avoided mentioning Trump unless prompted during a series of debates.

Hilton is a conservative commentator and former Fox New host. Originally from England, he advised former British Prime Minister David Cameron.

In a nod to the dominance of Democrats in California, he is urging voters to elect a Republican as a check on the majority in Sacramento. In contrast with Bianco's focus on cultural issues, Hilton's message is tied more closely with the traditional Republican focus on lower taxes and smaller government. He has pledged to make people's first \$100,000 of income tax free and to dramatically lower gas prices.

**Tom Steyer, Democrat**

The billionaire founder of a San Francisco-based hedge fund, Steyer — or his face, at least — is everywhere ahead of the primary. His record-breaking spending, mostly from his personal fortune, has made his advertising inescapable. That has helped him become one of the race's frontrunners.

Steyer, who has never held elected office, first made a name for himself as a donor to Democratic politicians and groups committed to fighting climate change. He bankrolled a campaign calling for Trump's impeachment during his first term, and he later financed his own campaign for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination but dropped out after a disappointing showing in early-state primaries and caucuses.

Steyer is running as a progressive populist, railing against the political power wielded by special interests and corporations. His message has endeared him to unlikely allies for a billionaire financier, including the Bernie Sanders-aligned group Our Revolution.

**Matt Mahan, Democrat**

As mayor of San Jose, Mahan is a moderate Democrat rooted in the pro-innovation ethos of Silicon Valley. His business-friendly pitch and his own background as an entrepreneur have made him a favorite with some in the tech world.

Mahan says California should get "back to basics," emphasizing technocratic problem solving over factional



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skirmishes. He entered the race late as an outsider to Sacramento leadership, building a statewide profile mainly by criticizing Newsom and the Legislature's response to homelessness and crime.

His backing from tech executives — and their millions of dollars — has been controversial in some corners of the party, particularly among labor unions and populists worried Silicon Valley elites wield too much power.

Still, he has struggled to consolidate support on the pro-business left, and even some of his benefactors are hedging their bets. Google co-founder Sergey Brin and Palantir co-founder Joe Lonsdale also gave to Republican Steve Hilton.

Katie Porter, Democrat

Once a college professor, Porter made a name for herself with a whiteboard and simple policy messages during three terms representing Orange County in Congress. Her verbal sparring with business executives testifying on Capitol Hill went viral.

Porter is leaning on her populist, anti-corporate background, arguing that she can fight on behalf of normal Californians against powerful interests. Before running for office, she was California's independent monitor of banks in the national mortgage settlement following the 2008 financial crisis.

Her grasp of policy has helped her amass support from newspaper editorial boards. But she has battled an image as a mercurial leader. Leaked videos showed her berating an aide who could be seen behind her in a Zoom video and threatening to walk out of a television interview. She has apologized and pledged to treat people more respectfully.

Porter ran for Senate in 2024, but she failed to make it through the primary.

Antonio Villaraigosa, Democrat

The former mayor of Los Angeles and speaker of the state Assembly has struggled to gain traction after more than a decade out of public office.

A one-time union organizer, Villaraigosa was the first Latino mayor of Los Angeles in more than a century, a role he filled from 2005 to 2013.

Villaraigosa is pitching his experience in LA and the state Capitol, running as a pragmatic, centrist problem solver in an implicit contrast with his Democratic rivals emphasizing their commitment to a progressive ideology.

Villaraigosa's roots are in the Southern California political ecosystem, which would be a contrast after four terms of Brown and Newsom, both governors from the San Francisco Bay Area.

He ran for governor in 2018 but finished third in the primary.

Chad Bianco, Republican

Bianco is the sheriff of Riverside County and is emphasizing his three-decade career in law enforcement, pledging to tackle crime and homelessness.

A staunch Trump supporter, Bianco stoked national notoriety when his office seized 1,000 boxes of election material including more than a half million ballots from a 2025 special election on redistricting. He says it is part of a legitimate criminal investigation, but critics see it as a nod to discredited conspiracy theories that have motivated Trump's base. The state Supreme Court in April ordered him to halt the probe.

The seizure put him at odds with California's Democratic attorney general and raised his profile among Republicans.

## **NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani will skip annual parade celebrating Israel but pledges big police presence**

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani will not attend an annual parade honoring Israel on Sunday, breaking with a decades-long political custom because of his support of Palestinian rights.

Though it has gone by different names over the years, the Israel Day parade has always been a must-attend event for mayors, governors and other political leaders eager to win over the throngs of flag-waving

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revelers who congregate on Fifth Avenue to celebrate the birth of the Jewish state in 1948.

Not so for Mamdani. Two weeks ago the mayor's office released a video commemorating the Nakba, an Arabic word for "catastrophe" that is used to describe the displacement of an estimated 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment.

"I said on the campaign trail that I wouldn't be attending the parade, and I've made my views on the Israeli government abundantly clear," Mamdani said at a news conference Thursday.

But he also promised a robust police presence to make sure it went off "seamlessly and peacefully."

"While I will not be attending, our administration has been preparing for weeks to ensure the parade is safe for all those who take part," he said.

The city's police commissioner, Jessica Tisch, who is Jewish, told reporters she would attend.

"It is the mayor's decision not to march, and it is my decision to march proudly," she said as she stood alongside Mamdani at police headquarters.

The mayor's absence, though long expected, has given fresh fuel to opponents who view his criticism of the Israeli government as antisemitic.

Rabbi Marc Schneier, founding senior rabbi of The Hampton Synagogue on Long Island and president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, which advocates for better relationships between Jews and Muslims, called Mamdani's decision to not attend the parade "a slap in the face to all Jewish New Yorkers."

"Do us a favor, stay home," he said. "We don't need you. We don't want you."

Schneier also slammed Mamdani's Nakba video as "propaganda," echoing concerns from other Jewish leaders who said it excluded context about Jewish peoples' displacement during the period.

The video, which appeared to be the first such recognition from a sitting New York City mayor, featured the story of a woman who was displaced at 9 years old, interspersed with text about the Nakba, as she described a feeling of missing home, saying "it's the soft hills of Palestine that actually touched me."

"I've lived in different places, and I've always been an outsider," said the woman, Inea Bushnaq.

Supporters of Israel were outraged, saying the video should have acknowledged the mass displacement of Jews from Muslim-majority countries or the role that the mass slaughter of Jews in the Holocaust played in the drive to establish a Jewish state.

Mayors in New York City, which has America's largest Jewish population, have long been visible supporters of Israel, often visiting the country.

Support for Israel among Americans has deeply eroded in recent years, though, a trend that accelerated amid the outcry over Israeli military action in Gaza..

Mamdani, the city's first Muslim mayor, has remained steadfast in his pro-Palestinian advocacy.

He has said he believes Israel has a right to exist but not as a hierarchy that favors Jewish citizens. Simultaneously he has pledged to protect Jewish New Yorkers and highlighted the work of the city's Office to Combat Antisemitism.

## Ethiopia heads to the polls for an election expected to be dominated again by Abiy's ruling party

By The Associated Press undefined

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Ethiopia heads to the polls on Monday in an election that the ruling party is predicted to win by a landslide due to a fragmented and weak opposition.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party currently holds more than 500 seats in the House of Representatives and is expected to win a majority in this election, securing him another five-year term.

Some 50 million people, out of a population of 130 million Ethiopians, are expected to vote for members of the House of Representatives, but insecurity in the most populous regions, including Amhara and Oromia, is expected to affect turnout.

Ethiopia's electoral system allows voters to select their representatives, who then vote for a prime minister. Ethiopians will also vote for members of their local regional government councils.

This year's election themes include national reconciliation due to the fighting seen in regions such as

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Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara, and there is also a development theme as the government pledges to undertake major projects.

Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who helped facilitate the Tigray peace talks, is leading 73 observers from the African Union.

Arriving in Ethiopia on Saturday, Kenyatta emphasized the importance of Ethiopia's elections for the continent, as the country hosts the African Union headquarters. "Ours is to call for peaceful situation as Ethiopians are known for," he said.

Abiy's administration has been accused of human rights violations against critics and journalists despite the promise of democracy and peace he made in 2020.

During his tenure, Ethiopia has been through the Tigray war in the north of the country, where hundreds of thousands of people died as the federal security forces clashed with the regional forces. A peace deal was signed in November 2022.

Abiy won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for solving a long-standing conflict between Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea, though the two countries are currently at loggerheads, with Addis Ababa accusing Asmara of supporting rebel groups to destabilize it.

There are fears that the situation could escalate and drag the volatile Tigray region into a proxy war, even as relief agencies warn of a dire humanitarian situation on the ground.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front — the dominant political party in Ethiopia's far northern region of Tigray — has been outlawed as the party maintains control of the regional government and threatens to cancel the 2022 peace agreement, which the federal government sees as an attempt to trigger another conflict.

For the second time, the region will not take part in the national election, denying it a federal voice in Ethiopia's 547-seat parliament and further pushing it to the margins amid escalating famine and conflict, combined with the alleged denial of resources by the central government.

Tigray has been excluded from federal representation for the last six years.

This election is likely to be fair due to the "technological advancements in the electoral process" and increased public awareness, according to Bayu Samuel, an Addis Ababa-based political analyst.

Some opposition parties have, however, decried the ruling party's unfair advantage.

The electoral process is "far from genuine and democratic," says Mistresilasie Tamerat, the youngest candidate and head of the opposition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.

"The system favors the ruling party, and we can't even freely operate (or) meet with our constituents," she said.

Eyoel Solomon, a spokesperson for the main opposition Ezema party, said it is dedicated to ending ethnic-based politics.

"We have seen citizens being attacked because of their identity. We have seen them being persecuted simply for living in areas deemed by others not to be 'theirs'," he said.

With much of the campaigning taking place in Addis Ababa, there has been a heavy military presence in the metropolis in recent days.

The vote has dominated local conversation across the city, even though campaigning has been unusually quiet, with fewer rallies and little door-to-door outreach.

The electoral body has declared Monday a national holiday, with government offices closed to encourage citizens to vote.

## **Colombia's presidential election pits outgoing leader's ally against pro-Trump candidates**

By MEGAN JANETSKY and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTÁ, Colombia (AP) — Colombians are casting ballots on Sunday in the first round of the South American nation's presidential election, choosing between candidates with radically diverging visions for



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the future of peace in a country haunted by decades of armed conflict.

The vote, seen as a referendum on outgoing President Gustavo Petro's policies, comes 10 years after Colombia signed an historic peace pact with guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

That agreement offered hope to break the nation out of a vicious cycle of fighting between rebel groups and the government but violence has roared back since then, coming to a head in the lead-up to the presidential vote. Criminal groups have increasingly launched drone strikes, armed attacks have plagued the race and last June, 39-year-old politician and presidential hopeful Miguel Uribe Turbay was fatally shot at a political rally.

In a country where the fight for peace has long been a part of the political ethos, the question of how to address the conflict is once again dividing the country.

Three top candidates have starkly different approaches

There are 14 candidates on the ballot, but the election has basically turned into a three-horse race.

Senator and peace-builder Ivan Cepeda — a Petro ally — has led the polls and promises to carry on with Petro's "total peace" initiative to negotiate with the country's remaining rebel groups and sign peace agreements with them in an effort to resolve the persistent crisis.

While the peace plan has largely failed as criminals have taken advantage of ceasefires with the government, Cepeda and Petro have maintained strong support among many because of progressive policies pushed forward under Petro, such as boosting the minimum wage.

Running against Cepeda are Abelardo de la Espriella and Paloma Valencia, who have vowed to come down on armed groups with a heavier hand.

De la Espriella — a bombastic lawyer known as "The Tiger" — has particularly gained traction among voters in recent weeks for pitching himself as an outsider keen on emulating the heavy-handed tactics used in El Salvador's war on gangs, which sharply reduced gang violence but fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

Valencia is considered the political protege of Colombia's former president and strongman Álvaro Uribe, who governed from 2002 to 2010 with strong support from the United States and whose government beat back FARC rebels in an offensive that took a massive civilian toll.

Both de la Espriella and Valencia have touted their affinity for U.S. President Donald Trump even as he has taken a more aggressive stance toward Latin America than any U.S. president in decades and has pressured nations like Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico to more forcefully crack down on criminal groups.

If no candidate wins at least 50% of the vote — something extremely rare in Colombia — the two top vote-getters will face a runoff in June.

Colombians also disagree on how best to tackle the violence

Maria Eugenia, a 57-year-old seamstress who was stitching a pair of jeans on Friday in downtown Bogotá, Colombia's capital, said she welcomed an all-out offensive on an expanding slate of criminal groups, regardless of the human cost.

While she approved of Petro's pushes to improve the country's medical infrastructure, she said she was voting for de la Espriella because violence in rural areas of the country has gotten out of hand.

"Of course, whenever you come down with a heavy hand, there's always going to be debate," she said. "But some people are going to have to fall to clean up what needs to be cleaned."

Others, like 26-year-old Cristian Morales, who strolled outside her shop, shook his head.

While Petro's peace plan has failed on many fronts, he said, making changes to a plan seeking to break the country out of cycles of violence was far better than swinging to another extreme.

He said he planned to vote for Cepeda, placing the candidate's push to protect Colombia's biodiversity and expand access to education over bold promises to unravel the country's deeply entrenched conflict. That would be something Morales said he thinks is "impossible" to do in just four years of a president's term.

"The solution to this conflict isn't aggressive confrontations. It will only end in more bloodshed," he said. "It's so difficult because it's either dialogue or arms, and an internal conflict isn't good for anyone."

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## Wembanyama, Spurs win the West, topple Thunder 111-103 in Game 7 to head to NBA Finals

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Victor Wembanyama and the San Antonio Spurs started the Western Conference finals with a win in Oklahoma City, then ended the series the same way.

The champions are dethroned. Wembanyama and the Spurs are headed to the NBA Finals.

Wembanyama scored 22 points, Julian Champagnie got 18 of his 20 off of 3-pointers and the Spurs beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 111-103 on Saturday night — bucking heavy odds to win a Game 7 on the road.

"This feeling, I can't explain it," Wembanyama said. "It's so powerful."

Stephon Castle scored 16 points and De'Aaron Fox had 15. Dylan Harper added 12 and Keldon Johnson and Devin Vassell each finished with 11 for the Spurs, who are headed to the NBA Finals for the first time since 2014.

They will host the New York Knicks in Game 1 on Wednesday night.

"Back in October, we knew we had a chance to be pretty good," Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said.

Correction — the Spurs have a chance to be great. Championship-level great.

A huge moment came midway through the fourth, when San Antonio's Luke Kornet blocked Oklahoma City's Isaiah Hartenstein at the rim — denying a fast-break score that would have gotten the Thunder within four.

It felt like the last gasp for the Thunder. Kornet played six minutes, missed all three of his shot attempts and finished with only two points, but the block was an epic moment.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 35 points and nine assists, but for the eighth consecutive season the NBA will have a new champion. Cason Wallace scored 17 points, while Jared McCain and Alex Caruso had 12 apiece for the Thunder.

"You have to grow from every experience, including the tough ones," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "And it's the NBA — there are tough ones. We can also be really disappointed. ... There's nobody that we don't think we can beat, respectfully."

After four straight games that were largely decided going into the fourth quarter — the Thunder led Game 3 by 11, the Spurs led Game 4 by 18, the Thunder led Game 5 by 10 and the Spurs led Game 6 by 26, those leads all holding up with relative ease — this one was different, worthy of a Game 7.

Spurs 80, Thunder 77 was the score going into the fourth, a bit of a back-and-forth contest where the Spurs led by as many as 14 in the first half and then by as many as 11 in the third, only to see the Thunder come roaring back both times.

"The players did what they've been doing all year and they met the biggest moment," Johnson said.

The Spurs pulled away in the fourth again, daring the Thunder to try to come back one more time. The champions — short-handed, with Jalen Williams sidelined with a bad hamstring — just didn't have anything left.

"Winning an NBA championship is very hard in itself to do one time," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "So to do it all over again would just only make it harder."

San Antonio won eight of the 12 meetings against the Thunder this season — and in the end, the only matchup that really mattered.

"We want four more," Wembanyama said. "We're not done."

## Soaring prices during the Iran war jeopardize travel to tourism-dependent countries in Asia

By ANTON L. DELGADO and CHAN HO-HIM Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — With summer around the corner, soaring prices and other complications from the war with Iran are straining the tourism-dependent economies of countries in Southeast Asia, including

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Thailand and Vietnam.

The region's peak tourist summer season is at risk as elevated jet fuel costs coupled with ceasefire uncertainties prompt flight cancellations and higher ticket prices.

Tourism in Asia has yet to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, many countries are coping with the war's repercussions for global energy supplies and prices, which hit Asia first and hardest. Some families are pulling back on travel as visiting gas stations and grocery stores gets more expensive worldwide. Crowds have thinned at some places once synonymous with travel.

"With gasoline prices rising and tourism declining, how can we make money?" asked Siv Pech, a 58-year-old tuk-tuk driver in Siem Reap, home to Cambodia's centuries-old Angkor Wat temple complex.

Tourism is an economic lifeline for many developing nations. It contributes nearly 13% of gross domestic product in Thailand and nearly 9% in Vietnam, and it underpins millions of jobs in Cambodia. Travelers bring in much-needed foreign currency for import-dependent economies such as the Philippines and Nepal.

Those tourism dollars are more critical than ever as war-driven spikes in oil prices push up the cost of fuel imports, especially for parts of the world that relied on the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast as a conduit for much of their oil and gas.

The war will determine which tourism businesses can survive long enough to benefit from the eventual return of travelers, said Jitsai Santaputra of The Lantau Group, an energy industry consulting firm. "This, happening within five years of each other, first the pandemic and now the war, is horrible for the tourism industry," she said.

Iran war raises travel costs

Jet fuel shortages and surging costs have led Vietnam Airlines, the Malaysia-based AirAsia group, Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific and other carriers to cut flights or re-adjust schedules.

European carriers face a squeeze from similar issues.

Airspace closures across the Persian Gulf early in the war and the intermittent closures of certain Gulf airports cut off key layover locations for Asia-bound flights or forced commercial airplanes to take longer, costlier routes.

Airfares have jumped, with airlines like Air India and Cathay Pacific implementing sharp increases in fuel surcharges.

Cathay Pacific's fuel surcharge for medium-haul flights has jumped to 633 Hong Kong dollars (\$80) from 264 Hong Kong dollars (\$34) before the war. For long-haul flights, it increased to 1,362 Hong Kong dollars (\$174) from 569 Hong Kong dollars (\$73).

"Jet fuel prices remain at highly elevated levels" and have increased cost pressures, said Lavinia Lau, Cathay's chief customer and commercial officer. Travelers are booking closer to their departure dates, she said, indicating growing unease.

Sandra Awodele, a freelance travel writer in the Washington area, often plans year-round international trips and hoped this summer would finally be the one she crossed Asia off her bucket list.

In March, she began planning a long-awaited vacation to Thailand, envisioning one to two weeks of exploring. Her plans hit a wall when she checked airfares.

"I looked at flight options and that's where it ended," Awodele said.

On the ground, rising fuel costs in tourism-dependent Southeast Asia are squeezing taxi and ride-hailing app drivers.

Pech, the Cambodian tuk-tuk driver, said he used to earn up to \$20 a day toting tourists around Siem Reap. That's plummeted to about \$5 a day.

His gas bill eats half of that. The rest goes to food. "Some days, I don't earn even a cent," he said.

Southeast Asia could face a slow summer

Tourism is vital for many regional economies, accounting for nearly 11% of economic activity in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2019, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

An analysis by Moody's Analytics estimated effects from the war would likely reduce economic growth across the Asia-Pacific region by 0.1 to 0.4 percentage points in 2026.

"The conflict will weigh on growth mainly through higher production costs and consumer prices, along



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with weaker external demand from trade and tourism,” said Albert Park, chief economist at the Asia Development Bank.

Higher airfares and weaker travel confidence can quickly spill over into household livelihoods and public revenues in economies where visitor arrivals are a major source of jobs, income and foreign exchange, according to a recent report by the United Nations Development Program.

Travel is often the first expense people cut when the economy worsens, said Le Tuyet Lan, who runs bed-and-breakfast properties in Vietnam’s Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

In times of crisis luxury travelers tend to shift toward midrange options, midrange travelers move toward budget hotels, and the cheapest tier of the market becomes the most vulnerable.

“This will disrupt the whole industry,” she said.

Tourism-dependent nations bear the brunt

Tourism in Thailand is “a big industry and we are feeling it,” said Santaputra with The Lantau Group in Bangkok, one of Southeast Asia’s most visited cities.

The number of visitors to Thailand fell 7% year-on-year in April, while European arrivals fell almost 16% and Middle Eastern arrivals sank 57%, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

In neighboring Cambodia, Sokha Sambo, owner of the popular Sambo Khmer & Thai Restaurant in Siem Reap, said the rising price of liquefied petroleum gas used for cooking has strained her budget, hindering her ability to dish out her signature green curries.

“I’m worried about gas and goods inflation. It makes the business less profitable and difficult to cover employees’ salaries,” said Sambo, who has 14 staff members.

In the first four months of 2026, the number of recorded international and domestic visitors to Siem Reap dropped by 37.5% compared to the same period last year, according to the province’s tourism department.

“This has greatly affected all of us,” Sambo said.

## **Crash kills 5 in Virginia including family of 4 traveling to wedding. Bus driver charged**

By ED WHITE Associated Press

A family of four from Massachusetts who were killed when a bus crashed into multiple vehicles in Virginia were traveling to a wedding with a carload of homemade desserts for the celebration.

The family wedding will go forward Sunday in South Carolina, but it also will be a time to mourn the loss of Dmitri and Ecaterina Doncev and their two children, Emily and Mark, a relative said Saturday.

“A son, a father — the whole family — everyone that has been dear to us,” Carolina Bublik said.

The Doncevs were killed when a motorcoach caused a chain-reaction crash with vehicles that had slowed down for a work zone on Interstate 95 in Stafford County around 2:35 a.m. Friday, authorities said.

The bus struck a Suburban, which then hit an Acura carrying the Doncev family, police said. Priscilla Mafalda, 25, of Worcester, Massachusetts, was in the Chevrolet SUV and also died.

More people were treated for injuries, including one who was in critical condition, though most were discharged, Mary Washington Healthcare said.

The bus driver, Jing S. Dong, 48, of Staten Island, New York, was charged with two counts of involuntary manslaughter, and additional charges were likely, Virginia State Police said. The prosecutor’s office in Stafford County said Dong was arrested and would be in custody while he is treated for his injuries at a hospital.

Prosecutors said in a statement that Dong’s first court appearance will not be scheduled until he is discharged but a magistrate approved holding him without bond until that time. It also said prosecutors saw enough probable cause to believe Dong was “driving in a criminally negligent manner.”

It was unclear whether Dong has an attorney who could speak on his behalf. The case did not yet appear in the state’s online court records, and a call to the area’s public defender went unanswered at a closed office Saturday.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash, a monthslong task separate from the work of state police. NTSB board member Tom Chapman revealed few new details but said the bus

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was moving at a high rate of speed.

"It seems fairly clear that if there was any braking there wasn't much, because of the speed and severity of the collision," Chapman said.

The bus, which was taking people from New York to North Carolina, was operated by E&P Travel Inc., based in Kings Mountain, North Carolina.

Chapman said the driver's language proficiency would be part of the NTSB investigation. U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, citing police, said on social media that Dong, a native of China, does not speak English.

Dmitri Doncev, 45, was a nurse who worked at Holyoke Medical Center. Ecaterina Doncev, 44, was a hairstylist who spent days making desserts for the family wedding, Bublik said.

They emigrated to the U.S. from Moldova in 2008 and settled in Greenfield, Massachusetts, she said.

Dmitri and brother Iuri tried to stay together while traveling in separate vehicles to South Carolina.

"At some point they ended up getting separated," Bublik said. "Dmitri said, 'You go ahead. I'll catch up later.' It was a big shock when Iuri arrived at the house. Dmitri should have arrived around the same time. When his car did not show up, and he wasn't picking up the phone — that's when the family started panicking."

## **Trump vents about judge who blocked the Kennedy Center renovation and fumes over his legal setbacks**

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Saturday branded the federal judge who blocked his renovation of the Kennedy Center as "an anti Trump Hater" and predicted that the nation's premier performing arts center he wanted to shutter for a two-year overhaul will "soon be closed, probably never to open again."

In a lengthy post on his Truth Social platform, Trump fumed about the Friday decision from U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper who also ordered Trump's name removed from the center. Clearly angered by his latest legal setback, he said it was "impossible for me to be treated fairly," tying Cooper's ruling to earlier losses, including the Supreme Court's rejection in February of his sweeping tariffs.

His post aimed to make the case for the project even as he says he's giving up on it. Hours after Cooper's decision, Trump said he was backing away from the renovations and making arrangements to relinquish control to Congress of what, until the Republican president's second term, had been known as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

In another post on Saturday, Trump invoked the Kennedy Center episode as he addressed a spate of musicians backing out of a celebration for the country's 250th anniversary.

"Cancel it," Trump wrote, "just like I canceled my involvement with the failing and unsafe to be in Kennedy Center, because a Highly Conflicted, Crooked Federal Judge, said that I should not be allowed to spend my time and money in order to MAKE THE CENTER GREAT AGAIN."

The White House did not immediately say whether Trump would keep serving as the center's board chairman.

Trump's signal that he's retreating from the center gave hope to artists who had been alienated by his takeover, said Norm Eisen, a former White House ethics lawyer who is involved in a lawsuit challenging Trump's Kennedy Center plans.

"I have already heard from artists and from audience members alike who are excited about the Kennedy Center returning to non-partisan normality," Eisen told The Associated Press in a text message on Saturday. "It's early days yet but as and when the court's order is implemented, including Trump's name coming off the building and the Board otherwise complying with the law, I'm optimistic that the Center will begin the long journey back."

Trump cites judge's wife

Without offering evidence, Trump suggested that Cooper's wife, lawyer Amy Jeffress, was to blame in

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part for the ruling. The president noted that Jeffress, a partner at the Hecker Fink law firm, is a former federal prosecutor who served as a counselor to Attorney General Eric Holder during the administration of Democratic President Barack Obama. Cooper was nominated for the bench by Obama.

Trump also noted that Hecker Fink is representing former President Joe Biden in a lawsuit against the Department of Justice to block the release of audio recordings and transcripts from the Democrat's interviews with a ghostwriter that were obtained in an investigation into Biden's handling of classified documents from his time as a senator and as vice president.

Trump asserted that the Kennedy Center, named for the late Democratic president and opened in 1971, was "rusted, rotted, and rat and bug infested" and that the "new Building would have been incomparable."

Cooper said in his ruling that the center board's March 16 vote to close the venue was "ill-informed and seemingly preordained" with no regard for its legal obligations. The administration had announced the work would begin in July and last approximately two years. Cooper's ruling halts those plans for now.

The judge also found that the board "overstepped its statutory bounds" by adding Trump's name to the center. Congress gave the Kennedy Center its name, and only Congress can change it, he said. Cooper ordered that Trump's name be removed within two weeks.

President defends adding name to the center

Trump on Saturday said it was the board, not him, that added the Trump name to the center. "They thought it would be good for this dying Institution," he wrote.

Shortly after returning to office in January 2025, he ousted the center's previous leadership and replaced it with a handpicked board of trustees that named him chairman.

Cooper held hearings in late April for parallel lawsuits challenging the project. One lawsuit was filed by a group of cultural and historic preservation organizations. The other was brought by Rep. Joyce Beatty, an Ohio Democrat who serves as an ex officio member of the board through her position in Congress. He ruled in favor of Beatty's request but rejected the other challenge.

Trump, in his post, also noted that Jeffress' firm represented E. Jean Carroll, the longtime advice columnist whose claims against Trump won her a \$5 million award in 2023 for sexual abuse and defamation after a jury agreed that Trump sexually abused her in a New York department store dressing room in 1996. Another jury in 2024 awarded Carroll an additional \$83 million for defamation. Both awards are under appeal.

Jeffress did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## **Coco Gauff's French Open title defense ends while Naomi Osaka's fashion show continues in Paris**

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — A minor car crash couldn't sidetrack Coco Gauff before she began her French Open title defense.

It took a player who could match the American's court coverage in long baseline rallies to mark the end of the road for Gauff in Paris.

That player was Anastasia Potapova, who produced a 4-6, 7-6 (1), 6-4 victory over Gauff in the third round on Saturday.

"She was able to finish the points and I wasn't," Gauff said. "Just not capitalizing on certain shots."

The match was played before mostly empty stands inside Court Philippe-Chatrier as French fans stayed away to watch the Champions League soccer final.

Gauff's second Grand Slam title came with a victory over top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in the final at Roland Garros a year ago.

Before her opening victory over Taylor Townsend on Tuesday, Gauff was involved in a car accident on the way to the tournament grounds. She wasn't injured, but the car wasn't drivable anymore.

The 30th-ranked Potapova, who was born in Russia but now represents Austria, improved to 3-2 in her career against Gauff. She's having quite a clay season after reaching a final in Linz, Austria, and the semifinals of the Madrid Open as a qualifier.



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The fourth-ranked Gauff was coming off a run to the Italian Open final. She was beaten in Rome by Elina Svitolina — another player who can match her on long rallies.

"I lost the same way in Rome as I did here," Gauff said. "You never want to lose the same way back-to-back times."

When Gauff shanked a forehand wide on Potapova's first match point, Potapova fell on her back and covered her eyes as she stuck her feet up in the air in celebration. Gauff waved to the crowd and quickly walked off court when it was finished.

"Coco is such a champion. I respect her so much," Potapova said. "I've been fighting for the last point and here I am."

It wasn't a matter of mistakes for Gauff — she hit three double-faults to her opponent's eight and had 46 unforced errors to Potapova's 56. It was more that Potapova controlled more in the longer rallies and wore Gauff out.

Gauff ran a total of 2,309 meters (yards) to Potapova's 2,090.

Osaka's fashion statement

Earlier, Naomi Osaka beat 18-year-old American opponent Iva Jovic 7-6 (5), 6-7 (3), 6-4 after nearly three hours — in her 100th Grand Slam match — to set up a round-of-16 meeting with top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka.

Sabalenka beat Daria Kasatkina 6-0, 7-5.

For her second-straight match, Osaka wore a metallic gold bomber jacket over a sequined gold playing dress during her walk-on. But this time her outfit was offset by a tannish-gold colored train that stretched all the way down to the red clay on Court Suzanne-Lenglen.

"It's a surprise every time," Osaka said of her fashion choices.

"For me, it would be weirder to wear a normal tennis kit, almost, at this point. It's the fun of it. For a long time, I didn't have fun for a little bit. And you guys know that period of time in my life," Osaka added, referring to how in 2021 she withdrew from the French Open because of issues with anxiety and depression. "Now I just want things to be fun, and I want to make it exciting for myself."

Osaka's outfits are planned a year and a half in advance and require at least four fittings.

"We have so many fittings throughout the year because your weight can fluctuate or the fabric can change a little bit," she said. "There is a lot of effort that goes into it."

Heat wave ending

For the seventh straight day of the tournament, it was hot and humid, with the temperature rising to 34 degrees Celsius (93 degrees Fahrenheit). The heat is expected to break for Sunday and the second week.

In men's action, Alejandro Tabilo ended the run of 17-year-old Frenchman Moise Kouame with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (9) victory. Tabilo next meets Felix Auger-Aliassime, who beat American opponent Brandon Nakashima 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (1).

At No. 4, Auger-Aliassime is the highest-seeded player remaining in the top half of the draw after Jannik Sinner's defeat two days ago.

Juan Manuel Cerundolo followed up his stunning victory over top-ranked Sinner with another five-set victory, beating Martin Landaluce 6-4, 6-7 (7), 7-6 (4), 6-7 (4), 7-6 (8) in 5 hours, 58 minutes — the longest French Open match in six years.

Cerundolo will next meet 2021 Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini, who required 5 hours, 13 minutes to defeat Francisco Comesana 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (13).

Flavio Cobolli beat Learner Tien 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 and will next meet unsung American Zachary Svajda, who defeated Francisco Cerundolo 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-3.

Another American advancing was Frances Tiafoe, who came back to beat Portuguese qualifier Jaime Faria 4-6, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (4), 6-1, 6-2 in his second consecutive five-setter. He next meets Matteo Arnaldi.

## PSG wins back-to-back Champions League titles after shootout victory against Arsenal

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Winning the Champions League was so nice, Paris Saint-Germain had to do it twice.

PSG became back-to-back European champion by beating Arsenal 4-3 on penalties in a dramatic final in Budapest that ended 1-1 after extra time on Saturday.

"It's incredible," captain Marquinhos said. "From the very first day of this season, the coach said it's hard to win, and winning twice is even more difficult. So we all had to get back to work. That was the mentality."

Arsenal defender Gabriel Magalhaes fired the last of his team's penalties over the bar to hand PSG the shootout win.

The French giant is only the second team to retain the trophy in the modern era after all-time king of Europe Real Madrid.

Luis Enrique became a three-time winner as a coach and has moulded a team that is simply too good even for the best the continent has to offer. That includes an Arsenal team that won the Premier League last week and topped the first stage of the Champions League with a perfect winning record, finishing 10 points and 10 places ahead of PSG.

That mattered little in Puskas Arena as PSG reaffirmed its status as the dominant force in European soccer.

"It's even more special because we knew before the match how difficult it would be," Luis Enrique said. "I think it's deserved over the course of the whole season, even if the final was very closely contested."

After demolishing Inter Milan 5-0 in last year's final, PSG endured a tougher foe as Arsenal sat deep and relied on the best defense in the competition.

PSG dominated possession but created little after going behind to a Kai Havertz goal in the sixth minute. It took an Ousmane Dembélé penalty in the 65th to level the score and take the final to extra time for the first time in 10 years.

PSG coach in elite company

By going back to back, Luis Enrique achieved what his good friend Pep Guardiola could not after winning Champions Leagues at Barcelona and Manchester City. Luis Enrique joined Carlo Ancelotti, Bob Paisley, Zinedine Zidane and Guardiola in an elite group of coaches with at least three European Cups.

The next target will be to emulate Madrid's three in a row under Zidane from 2016-18. And with a starting lineup in Budapest with an average age of less than 24, Luis Enrique has built a team that has the potential to dominate for years.

"It's crazy, it's crazy. We're going to enjoy it first, and after we're going to work and work again because we want more. We are really hungry. We are a young team, and we know we are really ambitious. So next season we have to go again," Désiré Doué told broadcaster TNT Sports.

Having waited 22 years to get its hands back on the Premier League trophy, Arsenal's wait in Europe goes on.

This was its 226th game in the European Cup or Champions League without lifting the trophy. No other team has played so many without being champion.

"First of all you have to go through that pain, digest it and then turn it into fuel and improve and reach a different level because it will demand a different level with the quality that is around Europe," manager Mikel Arteta said.

"I want to congratulate PSG because they are, in my opinion, the best team in the world. What they are able to do with the ball, individual actions, I haven't seen it (before)."

Arsenal comfortable defending

There were times when it looked as though Arsenal's Champions League losing streak would be snapped. Especially when PSG looked so short of ideas after going behind to Havertz's breakaway early goal.

By scoring so early the tone was set and Arsenal was comfortable sitting back and soaking up pressure. PSG struggled to find openings and looked edgy in possession.

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On an evening that kicked off with a pre-match show by rock band The Killers that sounded off in the acoustics of the stadium, PSG also fell a little flat and registered just one shot on target in the first half.

It was given a way back into the final when Cristhian Mosquera brought down Khvicha Kvaratskhelia in the box and referee Daniel Siebert pointed to the spot.

Ballon d'Or holder Dembélé made no mistake, firing low to the left as Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya dived the wrong way.

Red flares were lit by PSG fans, likely as much in relief as celebration.

There were rare chances for PSG to win in regulation. Kvaratskhelia hit the post in the 77th after a rapid breakaway and substitute Bradley Barcola wasted another opportunity to seal it at the death when firing wide.

Arsenal was limited to a 24.7% possession average — the lowest in a final since records began in 2004, according to stats provider Opta. But Arteta's dogged and determined team pushed PSG all the way, even in the shootout.

Eberechi Eze missed an earlier spot kick for Arsenal but Raya saved from Nuno Mendes to keep the score level.

Lucas Beraldo converted the last of PSG's spot kicks, meaning Gabriel had to convert to take it to sudden death. But he blasted high over the bar into a section of PSG fans, who erupted in celebrations along with their new two-time champion team.

It was a familiar sight as Marquinhos got his hands on the trophy for a second time and raised it aloft in the center of the field as gold confetti and fireworks exploded around the team.

French President Emmanuel Macron posted his congratulations on X: "A new star is shining over Paris!" and told PSG players they were "making all of Europe dream. France is proud."

## **WHO chief visits epicenter of the Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo as cases outpace response**

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization on Saturday visited eastern Congo's Bunia, a city at the heart of an outbreak of a rare type of Ebola, where the virus is spreading faster than the response despite better-organized health facilities and new aid arrivals.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed the importance of building community trust, ensuring safe burials to prevent the spread of the outbreak and urged countries to reconsider travel bans and border closures, saying they "discourage transparency."

"The Democratic Republic of Congo has faced Ebola before, 16 times, and has ended every outbreak. This is the 17th. That history gives me real confidence," Tedros said during a news conference Saturday alongside Congo's health minister.

The health organization said Friday latest official figures showed 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths. Neighboring Uganda has confirmed nine cases and one death, the Ugandan Health Ministry said Friday.

The Bundibugyo virus, the current species of Ebola, has no approved treatment or vaccine.

Medical aid donated by the European Union arrived in Bunia in Ituri province on Thursday. More shipments are expected in the coming days. The U.S. announced \$80 million in additional aid on the same day, bringing its total commitment to more than \$112 million.

Response efforts at Bunia's Rwampara and General hospitals appeared more organized, with additional staff, protective gear and medical supplies, though patients continue arriving around the clock, according to an Associated Press reporter.

The response has not kept pace with one of the fastest-spreading outbreaks on record, Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, warned on Saturday.

"Never before has an Ebola outbreak recorded so many cases so soon after its declaration," Dr. Alan Gonzalez, MSF's deputy director of operations, said in a statement. "Nobody knows the true scale and



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severity of this outbreak.”

Gonzalez called for an immediate expansion of testing, faster deployment of aid workers and sustained access for medical supplies.

The dangers faced by health workers have been heightened by anger among residents over the stringent medical protocols for handling the victims’ bodies, which clash with local burial rites. Residents have launched at least three attacks against health centers.

“We are not here to tell people what to do, we are here to listen,” Tedros said Saturday. “Building trust takes time, and it starts with listening.”

“I understand how painful it is to lose someone, and how much it means to honor them properly, but certain practices, including touching the bodies of those who have died from Ebola, can spread the virus further,” Tedros said.

Attacks in Ituri by the Allied Democratic Forces, a rebel group allied with the Islamic State group, and a coalition of ethnic militias have also hindered the response. The illness also has been reported in the Congolese provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, south of Ituri, where the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group controls many key cities, including Goma and Bukavu. The rebels have reported two cases.

Uganda and Rwanda have closed their borders, while the Trump administration last week banned entry of non-U.S. passport holders who had recently visited Congo, Uganda or South Sudan.

“I would also ask countries that have imposed travel bans or border closures to reconsider,” Tedros said, saying such measures “discourage the transparency that saves lives.”

## **Venezuela’s opposition candidate Edmundo González calls for presidential elections**

CARACAS (AP) — Venezuela’s former opposition candidate Edmundo González called on Saturday for presidential elections as the five-month mark of interim President Delcy Rodríguez’s administration approaches in the wake of the U.S. military intervention that ousted Nicolás Maduro in early January.

The 76-year-old former diplomat was recognized by several countries as the legitimate winner of the July 2024 elections amid a post-election crisis and street protests as the opposition alleged fraud.

Electoral records that showed González’s victory over Maduro were deemed credible by international observers.

In a message posted on social media, González stated that it is time to “build the conditions for holding presidential elections that serve as citizen instruments for change” and contribute to the re-institutionalization of the country and lay the foundations for a stable government.

His message comes just shy of the five-month anniversary of Rodríguez assuming power on Jan. 5, following the arrest of Maduro and his wife, who are being prosecuted in the United States.

Maduro’s former ally Rodríguez was recognized as president by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, and the two countries have since made progress on a series of agreements that include the lifting of sanctions and negotiations in the oil and energy sectors, as well as the normalization of diplomatic relations.

Neither Caracas nor Washington has given any indication that elections are imminent in Venezuela. The U.S. has recognized Rodríguez as Venezuela’s sole head of state, allowing her to reestablish ties with Western banks and more freely work with U.S. investors.

According to González, an electoral process must have “independent referees,” national and international observation and political pluralism, among other conditions, with the release of political prisoners and “an end to the persecution” being non-negotiable.

The opposition leader asserted that he is the “guardian” of the mandate of his constituents, who chose “freedom” for Venezuela in the 2024 election. Since September that year, González has been in exile in Spain after Maduro’s administration issued an arrest warrant for him on charges of conspiracy, usurpation and the falsification of public documents — charges that he has vehemently denied.

González gained prominence when he was named as the substitute candidate for opposition leader María

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Corina Machado, who was barred from participating in the elections.

Corina Machado recently met with opposition leaders in Panama, advocating for a democratic transition in Venezuela. She insisted she would return before the end of the year to run for president.

## US says it struck a commercial ship trying to breach blockade and reach Iran

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military stopped a merchant vessel trying to break through its blockade of Iranian ports by firing a missile into its engine room, the U.S. Central Command said on Saturday.

The Gambia-flagged cargo ship Lian Star ignored more than 20 warnings from U.S. forces overnight as it tried to enter an Iranian port, the military said. The ship remained adrift in the Gulf of Oman and U.S. forces have not boarded it, said a U.S. official with knowledge of the situation, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

With the latest action, U.S. military has stopped six ships trying to breach the blockade. One was allowed to proceed. Another 116 ships have been redirected, the military said.

The U.S. launched the blockade on April 17 in response to Iran effectively closing the strait after the war in the Middle East began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28. A fragile ceasefire has held since April 7. Now the region awaits word on whether a deal can be reached to extend it by 60 days while talks would be held on Iran's disputed nuclear program.

Events in the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway between Iran and Oman, have shaken the global economy. Shipments of significant amounts of oil, natural gas and related supplies like fertilizer are largely stranded, increasing the strain on consumers and food producers.

The U.S. blockade seeks to limit Iran's own shipments and further weaken its access to cash, creating more pain for its long-weakened economy.

U.S. President Donald Trump met with advisers on Friday but has yet to decide on whether to move ahead with a deal to extend the ceasefire and reopen the strait. Iran has said the deal had not been finalized.

Commercial traffic has quietly continued to flow through the strait, despite Iran's assertions that it must approve any transits, though at a much lower volume than before the war.

"Any violation of these regulations will place the security of their passage at serious risk," Iran's joint military command said Saturday in a statement carried by state TV, warning that any military vessels trying to interfere with that would be targeted.

Iran has even charged tolls for transit as high as \$2 million, which experts have called a violation of a principle of international maritime trade: freedom of peaceful navigation.

Qatar's deputy prime minister, Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali Al Thani, said on Saturday said that the Gulf nation opposes charging fees to transit, "but for certain times when they say they are going to use it for mine clearing or some usage of the fees for a temporary time, this is something that is negotiable, and it could be something that will help the transit of the Strait of Hormuz to be back to normal stage."

The U.S. official previously told The Associated Press that the U.S. has not found or destroyed any mines in the strait.

## In a California Chinese enclave, a mayor's guilty plea stokes fears of Beijing's influence

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In 2024, voters in the Southern California city of Arcadia elected the first all-Asian city council in the city's history.

Now, one of those politicians has pleaded guilty to being an illegal agent of the Chinese government. Former Arcadia Mayor Eileen Wang's plea, entered in federal court Friday, continues a saga that some resi-

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dents of the area worry could bring unfair scrutiny on the broader Chinese and Asian American community.

Arcadia has gone under rapid demographic change in the last two decades as immigrants from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong flocked to the San Gabriel Valley east of Los Angeles. After Wang's case was made public May 11, the news made national headlines and filled the unassuming suburban city with anger, disappointment and murmurs of quiet concern. On social media, fears about spies and Chinese Communist Party influence abounded.

"We cannot allow this moment to become an excuse for people to paint entire communities with one brush or weaponize ethnicity for political gain," acting Mayor Paul Cheng said in a statement.

## Shock in heavily Chinese community

Wang agreed in April to plead guilty to doing the bidding of Chinese officials by sharing articles favorable of Beijing on a news website she ran, without notifying the U.S. government as required by law.

The 56-year-old was elected in November 2022 to a five-person City Council, from which the mayor is selected on a rotating basis. She was born in Chengdu, China, and immigrated to the U.S. in 1995.

The San Gabriel Valley is home to the largest concentration of residents of Chinese and Taiwanese descent in the United States. Beginning in the 1970s, real estate developers marketed the region as "Chinese Beverly Hills" to woo affluent immigrants. As the population grew, it became a haven for newer immigrants who could go about life without needing English, access business opportunities, and avoid putting their children through China's intensely competitive education system. Arcadia's population of about 53,000 is majority Asian, like many other cities in the region.

Ted Tseng, 52, arrived in Arcadia from Taiwan nearly 40 years ago with his parents, who emigrated because they feared potential conflict between Taiwan and China.

Tseng was concerned Wang's indictment would deepen animosity against Asian Americans and discredit their contributions to the region. Fears of anti-Asian racism, though hate crimes are down since the COVID-19 pandemic, still linger.

"I'm just worried our image has been damaged," Tseng said.

## Feds crack down on Chinese espionage

The U.S. Department of Justice has escalated efforts in recent years to combat Chinese espionage. In April, a man accused of running a secret Chinese spy outpost in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood was convicted of acting as an illegal foreign agent.

Wang has suggested that she was misled by her former fiance, Yaoning "Mike" Sun, who pleaded guilty to the same charge last year and is now serving a four-year prison sentence. Sun was the treasurer for Wang's 2022 election campaign.

A statement shared by Wang's lawyers references her "trust and love for apparently the wrong person who ultimately led her astray."

April Verlato, a former City Council member who served with Wang, said Wang and Sun lived together, and Sun accompanied Wang wherever she went.

Verlato said Wang should have stepped down as soon as she came under investigation.

"She was being selfish, getting sworn in as mayor and not resigning when she knew she was going to be pleading guilty to something," Verlato said.

Gene Sun, a long-time lawyer in Arcadia, agreed.

"I don't understand how she could have continued being a City Council member," he said.

## Beijing seeks influence overseas

It is not surprising that the Chinese government would attempt to exert political influence in the region, especially given the increased political tension and economic rivalry between China and the U.S. in recent years, said Wei Li, a professor of Asian Pacific American Studies at Arizona State University.

"A lot of countries, if they have the will and if they have the means, will try to influence their diaspora," Li said.

According to his federal criminal complaint, Sun was in contact with John Chen, who also pleaded guilty to being an illegal agent of the Chinese government, regarding local politicians that Beijing could influence.

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In reports to Chinese officials, Sun and Chen called Wang a "New Political Star" and bragged about her contacts with mainstream U.S. politicians.

They also wrote of combatting "anti-China forces" such as Taiwan independence and the Falun Gong, an exiled anti-communist spiritual movement.

In a January 2023 message from Chen to Wang referenced in Sun's criminal complaint, Chen said: "You are doing a good job, I hope you can continue the good work, make Chinese people proud."

Some fear political repercussions for Asian Americans

Not only was the news of her guilty plea like a "slap in the face," the reaction from some community members has also been painful, said Cheng, the acting mayor.

Some residents at a May 19 City Council meeting blamed remaining council members for enabling Wang and called for their resignations.

"I've been called more names, been told to go back to China although that's not where I'm from," said Cheng, who came to the U.S. from Taiwan at age 2.

For many Arcadia residents and workers, life was as usual the day after the news broke. Many smiled apologetically when asked about the issue, saying they don't pay attention to politics.

Aliza Mo, who emigrated from China six years ago for her children's education, said she first thought the headlines must be exaggerated.

"A lot of people wondered if it was discrimination," she said.

When she learned what Wang pleaded guilty to, she changed her mind.

"I think it would be improper for anyone to be doing something like that," she said.

## **Israeli launches strikes near ancient heritage castle site in southern Lebanon**

By AHMAD MANTASH Associated Press

ADLOUN, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli air force and artillery strikes were reported on Saturday near the strategic mountain site of a Crusader-built castle in southern Lebanon as fighting raged in villages close to the city of Nabatiyeh.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported airstrikes and artillery shelling near the Crusader-built Beaufort castle that is about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the Israeli border and overlooks wide parts of southern Lebanon. The strategic castle was held by Israeli troops for 18 years until they withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000.

Separately, an Israeli airstrike on the Gaza Strip killed a nurse, the latest death since last year's shaky ceasefire.

Israel's military issued evacuation warnings for more than a dozen villages in southern Lebanon, a day after Lebanese and Israeli military officials held their first direct talks in decades at the Pentagon.

The situation in southern Lebanon was discussed during a meeting on Saturday between Lebanon's president and prime minister who later said in a statement that they will intensify their contacts to make Israel stop demolition and bulldozing of homes and historical sites as well as its evacuation warnings.

Later on Saturday, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam used a televised speech to criticize Israeli airstrikes and its invasion of Lebanon. He accused Israel of "implementing a policy of total destruction of cities and towns" and of carrying out mass displacements.

He said Israel is trying to "uproot Lebanon's memory and erase the people's history," adding that the government will do all it can to achieve a ceasefire, an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and the return of displaced people to their homes.

Salam said the direct negotiations are not guaranteed to produce results and at the same time they don't mean a surrender for Lebanon. "They are currently the least costly option," Salam said. Another round of talks are scheduled to take place in Washington on Tuesday.

Israel will not gain security and stability through the "scorched earth policy," Salam said.

Israel and Hezbollah exchange strikes despite ceasefire



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Israeli troops have been advancing for days in villages close to Beaufort castle, including Yohmor and Zawtar al-Sharqieh, near the city of Nabatiyeh, after they crossed the strategic Litani River, which the Israeli military has used as a de facto boundary.

The incursion is the deepest by Israeli troops since the withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

Large areas to the south are under Israeli military control, despite an April 17, U.S.-brokered ceasefire.

The National News Agency reported airstrikes on different parts of southern Lebanon, including in the village of Ansar that killed three people. A drone strike on a road linking the village of Ebba with Nabatiyeh wounded two Lebanese soldiers, the army said in a statement.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said its fighters fired rockets at northern Israel's largest city, Kiryat Shmona, on the border with Lebanon. The group said its attack was in retaliation for airstrikes that killed civilians in Lebanon. Hezbollah later said it also fired rockets toward the northern city of Safed.

Among those killed in southern Lebanon on Friday was Qais al-Bakir, his pregnant wife and their six children. The Syrian family died in an Israeli airstrike on the coastal village of Adloun, north of the city of Tyre.

The family, which belonged to Syria's minority Alawite sect, had fled to Lebanon from the central province of Hama after the fall of Bashar Assad in Syria in December 2024. Some members of Assad's Alawite sect have been subjected to revenge attacks by members of Islamist groups who removed the former president from power.

The family had been living in a sheep farm and they received no warning in advance of the strike on the village, said Ali al-Bakir the brother of the man killed. He said the family plans to send the bodies for burial in their hometown in Syria.

"He worked in farming and all he cared about was to feed his children," his brother said.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war started on March 2, when Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel two days after Israel and the U.S. attacked Iran.

It has left 3,350 people dead in Lebanon and over 1 million people displaced.

Further strikes in Gaza

In the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian nurse was killed in an Israeli strike on Saturday, hospital authorities said. The strike hit a Hamas-manned police point in the central city of Deir al-Balah. At least three other people were wounded, according to the city's Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital, which received the casualties.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The nurse was identified as Jamal Abu Aoun, who worked at Yafa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. His funeral was held at noon in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital's courtyard.

He was the latest fatality among Palestinians in the coastal enclave since a fragile October ceasefire deal attempted to halt a more than two-year war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

While the heaviest fighting has subsided, the shaky ceasefire has seen almost daily Israeli fire. Israeli forces have carried out repeated airstrikes and frequently fire on Palestinians near military-held zones, killing at least 929 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry.

The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by United Nations agencies and independent experts. But it does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants.

Militants have carried out shooting attacks on troops, and Israel says its strikes are in response to that and other violations. Four Israeli soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire.

## **Iowa Democrats hoping to flip a US Senate seat are torn over which of 2 hopefuls has the best shot**

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

AMES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa Democrats say they want to vote in Tuesday's U.S. Senate primary for the candidate who gives the party its best chance to flip a Republican-held seat in November.

Some just haven't decided which of the two state lawmakers in the race fits the bill.

"I am having a lot of trouble," said Mike Lazere, a 65-year-old Democrat who always votes on Election Day.

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State Rep. Josh Turek and state Sen. Zach Wahls are seeking the nomination for the seat held by retiring Sen. Joni Ernst in the state where Republicans have an advantage but Democrats think they could have a chance.

It means the primary choice carries high stakes for Iowa's Democratic voters, who haven't had many recent examples of successful statewide candidates to help guide their decision. The last Democrat to win federal office statewide was President Barack Obama in 2012. All six members of the federal delegation are Republicans, and the GOP has had a statehouse trifecta for nearly a decade. Iowa's most recent Democratic senator, Tom Harkin, was elected to his fifth term in 2008 and retired from office six years later.

U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson is running for the GOP nomination, and a Republican-aligned political group has already pledged \$29 million to defend the seat.

Turek and Wahls say the differences between them are clear, but voters still weighing their options disagree.

"They both have strong legislative records. They both have compelling stories. I think they both share my values," Lazere said Thursday outside of the Ames public library, where Story County Democrats had just held their monthly meeting.

"Since they're so close, I just want the candidate who is more likely to have a chance," he said. "It's an uphill battle, probably, in Iowa still."

Turek says he can win independents and GOP voters

At the Des Moines Farmers' Market last weekend, where both candidates waded through the crowds, Sundie Ruppert shouted her support for Turek as he passed by her tent, saying he had her vote.

Ruppert called the race an "embarrassment of riches," something that's been rare as of late. She said the two stand for "virtually everything the same," so for her, it's a matter of who can win the crossover support to get over the finish line in November.

Turek, a four-time wheelchair basketball Paralympian born with spina bifida, says his story of overcoming adversity and his politics appeal to independent and moderate Republican voters. He represents a state House district that supported President Donald Trump.

Turek said he's laser-focused on securing a livable wage, health care access and drinkable water, not the culture-war issues that he said Republicans use to distract voters from the core problems they are facing.

"I'm not gonna get dragged down the rabbit hole of worrying about these distraction issues," Turek said in an interview.

"I think that if we are going to win again in a state like Iowa, it is going to be a message of economic populism," he said. "It is going to be that we as a Democratic Party stand for the workers and for the middle class. That's the way forward."

Ruppert said she thinks general election voters are more likely to vote for Turek, even if they "have to hold their nose."

"We've got to get the independents," she said. "I do believe that Josh in a red district has better pull than Wahls."

Wahls says he will stand up to leadership in both parties

About 37 miles (60 kilometers) north in Ames on Thursday, Shellie Orngard said she's heard that logic and doesn't buy it.

Orngard said both are good people and strong candidates, but Wahls strikes her as "somebody with real character behind his convictions."

"I think that whether you're Democrat or Republican or independent, you appreciate authenticity and real values," Orngard said. "I think Zach Wahls just seems to have the character that I feel he's the person that I want to put my vote behind."

Wahls says he's the candidate willing to defy leadership in both parties, and he has criticized Turek for not rejecting Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer as caucus leader.

He says his anti-establishment message is winning back the working-class voters, especially common across eastern Iowa, who supported Obama before they pivoted to Trump.

"We're not just talking about building a coalition that can win in November, we are already doing it,"

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he said. "These are voters who are not hardcore MAGA Trump Republicans. A lot of them are just really frustrated with both parties, they don't trust Washington, they don't trust the establishment."

"And what we hear from people all the time is, 'Even if we don't agree on every issue, if you are willing to take them on, you've got my vote,'" Wahls said.

Iowa will be a tough win for either Democrat

Iowa has shifted considerably since Obama's win in 2012, voting for Trump in the last three presidential elections. Democrats lag Republicans by roughly 200,000 registered voters statewide.

Rob Sand, state auditor and candidate for governor, was the only Democrat to win statewide in 2022.

Nearly 30,000 Democrats have already cast their ballots as of Friday, according to data from the secretary of state's office. Still, in Ellston on Wednesday, many of the two dozen southwest Iowa Democrats waiting to hear from Turek said they'd rely on a gut feeling.

"As far as I'm concerned, Ashley Hinson has got to be beat," said Lynne Wallace, a 67-year-old from Mount Ayr. The staunch Democrat said she'd support either candidate in the general election, already eager to make calls and knock on doors, but added that she's got "shaky faith" that either Democrat can pull it off.

Lois Rose, 77, and her 79-year-old husband, John, said at the Des Moines farmers' market that they might not vote in the primary at all since they, so far, hadn't been able to make up their minds on whether one candidate is stronger than the other.

She suggested the pair could also coordinate their votes, each casting a ballot for one of the two. John liked the idea.

"They're both so qualified," said Lois Rose of West Des Moines. "They're both very genuine, hence the difficulty."

## DOJ seeks recusal of judge from Georgia election case over reported attendance at Fani Willis event

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The U.S. Department of Justice is asking a judge to recuse herself in a fight over Georgia election records, arguing that she attended an event honoring Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who prosecuted President Donald Trump, raising questions about the judge's ability to be impartial.

A federal judge in 11th Judicial Circuit received a "private reprimand" after a court investigation found that the judge had sex in the courthouse with a high-ranking uniformed police officer within earshot of staff, attended a partisan event and then initially lied to deny the allegations.

The court's investigation did not publicly identify the judge or the court location within the 11th Circuit's jurisdiction, which includes Alabama, Florida and Georgia. The Justice Department is relying on media reports that identify U.S. District Judge Eleanor Ross in Atlanta as the judge in question.

The Associated Press has not independently confirmed the judge's identity. A person who answered the phone in Ross' chambers Friday said the judge was unavailable and referred questions about the allegations to the court's media office which said, "Judge Ross has no comment right now." The media office did not immediately respond Saturday to a second email seeking comment about the Justice Department motion seeking Ross' recusal.

Federal judges are appointed for life but can be subject to disciplinary action, including censure, public or private reprimands and temporary withholding of cases. They can only be removed through impeachment by Congress.

Ross was nominated in January 2014 by then-President Barack Obama, a Democrat, and she was confirmed by the Senate in November of that year. She had previously served as a state court judge in DeKalb County, which includes a small part of the city of Atlanta, since 2011. Prior to taking the bench, she had worked as a state and federal prosecutor, mostly in Atlanta, for more than a decade.

The election records fight

Ross is overseeing the election records case filed by the Justice Department against Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger.

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The Justice Department has sued multiple states seeking statewide voter lists. Raffensperger has said that Georgia law prohibits the release of voters' confidential personal information unless certain qualifications are met and that the federal government hadn't met those conditions. He has said that he sent the public part of the voter roll to the Justice Department in December.

Ross has scheduled a hearing in the case for Wednesday, though the Justice Department has asked to delay that hearing because of its request for the judge to recuse herself.

The judicial discipline case

In the disciplinary case against the unnamed federal judge, the Judicial Council of the 11th Circuit chose in a February order to impose a private reprimand that kept the judge's name secret. The Committee on Judicial Conduct and Disability of the Judicial Conference of the United States on May 22 affirmed that order.

An investigation report attached to the order says the judge went to an event hosted by a district attorney's campaign. The judge acknowledged having gone to the event to visit with former colleagues in the district attorney's office at a private mixer but said it was held in the same place but was separated from the prosecutor's victory party. The investigative committee found that the mixer was part of the larger partisan event that was sponsored by the district attorney's campaign or donors and that the judge should not have attended the event.

Ross previously worked in the Fulton County district attorney's office and overlapped with Willis there before Willis was district attorney.

The 2020 Georgia election case

Willis began investigating Trump and others for possible interference in the 2020 election in Fulton County soon after becoming district attorney in January 2021. Among the things she looked at was a January 2021 phone call in which Trump urged Raffensperger to help "find" the votes needed to overturn Democrat Joe Biden's win in Georgia in the 2020 presidential election.

Willis in August 2023 obtained an indictment against Trump and 18 others, accusing them of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to overturn Georgia's 2020 election results. That case was ultimately dismissed in November after an appeals court found an "appearance of impropriety" created by a romantic relationship Willis had with the outside lawyer she had hired to lead the prosecution.

The Justice Department's arguments

"A judge who attended a party celebrating the election of a Democrat best known for prosecuting a Republican President for alleged election interference cannot then preside over a case concerning that President's efforts to ensure election integrity," Justice Department lawyers wrote in their filing Friday.

The Justice Department argued that any "objective reasonable observer" would see Ross' presence at Willis' election night party as an endorsement of her election and her actions in office.

"If Judge Ross is indeed the Subject Judge, that conduct gives rise to an appearance of bias, which requires Judge Ross to recuse herself from this election-related case," the Justice Department filing says.

The Justice Department filing makes passing mention of the allegations of improper sexual activity with a police officer in the judge's chambers and the subsequent false statements the judge made to deny those allegations, but says "those are not the subject of this Motion."

Separately, the Atlanta Police Department has said it has opened an investigation to determine whether the "high-ranking law enforcement officer" found to have had sex with a federal judge in the judge's chambers is a member of their department.

## **Rescuers free 4 men who had been trapped in a flooded Laos cave, search for 2 still missing**

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Rescue workers in Laos said Saturday they have safely evacuated four villagers trapped in a flooded cave for 10 days, the day after another one was successfully extracted. Two men remain missing.

Lao and Thai rescue groups posted about the successful operation on social media, along with photos



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of the men lying on stretchers, wearing oxygen masks and being wrapped in foil blankets.

The villagers had reportedly entered the cave last week to look for valuable minerals before being trapped by flash flooding that blocked their way out. One other villager escaped in time and alerted the authorities to the seven left behind.

Lao organization Rescue Volunteer for People said on its Facebook page that the water level inside the cave receded low enough for them to leave with divers who had gone in to deliver food and water. They said they will continue their search for the two who remain missing.

A video posted online by a Thai rescuer at the scene, Chakkit Taengtang, showed the men being assisted one by one out of the cave's entrance, bodies covered in mud. After they got out, some collapsed on the ground and were hugged by a group of rescuers who cried in joy.

The first of the trapped group was safely evacuated on Friday. According to rescuers, that operation took about 30 minutes. Videos showed the moment he emerged from the water alongside a diver, catching his breath before struggling to crawl through a narrow, flooded passage and rising unsteadily to his feet.

The villagers had reportedly entered the cave last week to look for valuable minerals before being trapped by flash flooding that blocked their way out. One other villager escaped in time and alerted the authorities to the seven left behind.

Five of them were found alive Wednesday. They were identified by their first names as Khamla, Mued, Ee, Ing and Laen.

Rescue teams from Laos and neighboring Thailand were joined by Japanese and Malaysian colleagues. Indonesian, French and Australian specialists also reportedly arrived at the site in a rugged area in the central province of Xaisomboun, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of the capital, Vientiane.

Several of them had taken part in the complicated 2018 cave rescue in northern Thailand of 12 school-boys and their soccer coach.

Rescuers are also preparing to search for the two villagers who remain missing.

Kengkaj Bongkawong, head of the Thai rescue group Metta Tham Rescue Kalasin, said Friday that the team plans to explore an area deeper inside the cave, about 20 to 25 meters (yards) beyond where the survivors were found. However, he cautioned that the section is heavily flooded.

## **Hegseth tones down warnings about China but says US remains committed to Pacific security**

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth assured Pacific allies on Saturday that Washington remained committed to the region, but toned down previous comments calling China a threat.

Speaking to a group of world leaders, diplomats and top security officials at the Shangri-La defense conference in Singapore, Hegseth said that the region "has profound implications for U.S. security and prosperity" and that Washington's priority was to "achieve a lasting and favorable balance of power in the Pacific."

It was his second time addressing the forum, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Last year, he raised the ire of Beijing by warning of rapidly developing threats from China, particularly its aggressive stance toward Taiwan. He said China is no longer just building up its military forces to take Taiwan, it's "actively training for it, every day."

This year, however, the meeting comes only about two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump visited Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing, following which Trump called Xi a "great leader" and said that they were going to have a "fantastic future together."

Hegseth says China won't be allowed to dominate the region

Hegseth, who was with Trump in Beijing, said the two leaders had agreed that China and the U.S. should "build a constructive relationship of strategic stability, based on fairness and reciprocity, reaffirming that while our nations will vigorously protect our respective interests, we can secure practical, mutually beneficial agreements where our interests align."

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However, he said it was still an American priority to ensure that China is not allowed to dominate the Indo-Pacific.

"There is rightful alarm regarding China's historic military buildup and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond," he said.

"We share a clear-eyed assessment of that security environment and a mutual understanding that a Pacific dominated by any hegemon would unravel the regional balance of power and undermine the equilibrium we all seek to preserve."

Later in the day, Chinese Maj. Gen. Meng Xiangqing praised Hegseth's remarks about the meeting between Xi and Trump, saying the consensus the leaders reached "should provide strategic guidance for China-U.S. relations over the next three years and beyond."

"During his meeting with President Trump, President Xi Jinping made it clear that such constructive strategic stability should be a positive form of stability centered on cooperation, a healthy form of stability in which competition remains within reasonable bounds, a normal state of stability in which differences are managed and kept under control, and a lasting form of stability that offers the prospect of peace," he said.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, part of a congressional delegation to the conference, accused the Trump administration of "cozying up" to China.

"I worry that this administration is being distracted into wars that they've started in other parts of the world at the expense of our commitment here in the Indo-Pacific," the Illinois Democrat told reporters on the sidelines.

"I am concerned that it seems like our president is entering into, you know, policies where he's doing what Beijing wants him to do," she added.

After the meetings between Xi and Trump, the American president raised questions about Washington's willingness to defend Taiwan, calling a new \$14 billion arms package that he has yet to greenlight "a very good negotiating chip for us" with China.

China claims the democratic self-governing island as its own, and Xi has not ruled out using force to take it. The U.S. is required by law to help provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, though follows a policy of "strategic ambiguity" on whether it would intervene militarily if China were to attack the island.

Hegseth told the forum that there was "no change in our status" toward Taiwan, but would not comment on the arms deal.

"Any decision about future Taiwan arms sales, as the president said, will rest with him," he said.

US praises countries that spent more on defense

He underscored the Trump administration's insistence that allies increase defense spending, saying "we need partners, not protectorates."

He lauded several countries in Asia for their efforts, while reiterating criticism of European allies, without naming names, who he suggested got "distracted by empty globalist rhetoric about the rules-based international order."

"Our partners in Asia have long understood that the bedrock of a durable partnership is not based on idealistic values but on the concrete alignment of national interests," he said.

"When our interests diverge, we adjust pragmatically, without the drama or the moralizing," he added. "I think Western Europe might take note — this is a mindset we fully embrace."

Hegseth did not mention either the war in Ukraine or Iran war in his speech. When asked about Iran, he only said that Trump had assured him that when negotiations with Tehran had concluded, "any deal will be a good deal."

Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles, whose country was among those Hegseth praised for increased military spending, said that while the international rules-based order is not perfect, the "task before us, all of us, including the great powers, is the renovation of that order, not its dismemberment."

"When the rules apply, smaller states have agency," Marles said in a speech that followed Hegseth's. "When the rules yield to power, sovereignty becomes, as others have put it, the purview of the powerful, and no state in this room today, whatever its size, is well served by that outcome."

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UK, US and Australia announce new undersea drone initiative

At an event held outside the conference, Hegseth, Marles and British Defense Secretary John Healey announced a new initiative in their AUKUS partnership, whose primary focus has been the development and construction of nuclear-powered submarines.

Under the so-called second pillar of AUKUS, the three said they would together invest in the development of improved capabilities for underwater drones.

"Together we produce a range of cutting-edge sensors or weapons systems for undersea drones," Healey said, adding it will help detect threats including to underwater cables and pipelines.

## **Today in History: May 31, the Tulsa Race Massacre begins**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, May 31, the 151st day of 2026. There are 214 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 31, 1921, a two-day massacre erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as white mobs began looting and burning the affluent Black district of Greenwood over reports a Black man had assaulted a white woman in an elevator; though the exact number remains unknown, as many as 300 Black Tulsans were killed during the riot.

Also on this date:

In 1790, President George Washington signed into law the first U.S. copyright act.

In 1889, over 2,200 people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, died when the South Fork Dam collapsed, sending 20 million tons of water from Conemaugh Lake rushing through the town.

In 1949, former State Department official and accused Soviet spy Alger Hiss went on trial in New York, charged with perjury (the trial ended with a hung jury, but Hiss was convicted in a second trial.)

In 1970, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck the Ancash region of Peru; the quake, combined with the landslide it triggered, killed an estimated 67,000 people.

In 1977, the 800-mile-long (1,300-kilometer) Trans-Alaska oil pipeline was completed after three years of construction.

In 2005, Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein confirmed a Vanity Fair magazine report naming former FBI official W. Mark Felt as the Watergate scandal informant previously known only as "Deep Throat."

In 2009, Millvina Dean, the last survivor of the 1912 sinking of the RMS Titanic, died in Hampshire, England at 97.

In 2014, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier held prisoner in Afghanistan, was freed by the Taliban in exchange for five Afghan detainees from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (Bergdahl, who'd gone missing in June 2009, later pleaded guilty to endangering his comrades by walking away from his post in Afghanistan; his sentence included a dishonorable discharge but no prison time.)

In 2019, a longtime city employee opened fire in a municipal building in Virginia Beach, Virginia, killing 12 people on three floors before police shot and killed him; officials said DeWayne Craddock had resigned by email hours before the shooting.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-filmmaker Clint Eastwood is 96. Football Hall of Famer Joe Namath is 83. Actor Tom Berenger is 77. Actor-comedian Chris Elliott is 66. Actor Lea Thompson is 65. Musician Corey Hart is 64. Rapper Darryl "DMC" McDaniels is 62. Actor Brooke Shields is 61. TV host Phil Keoghan is 59. Jazz musician Christian McBride is 54. Actor Archie Panjabi is 54. Actor Colin Farrell is 50. Singer Normani is 30. Tennis player Iga Świątek is 25.