

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, June 12

Senior Menu: Tuna salad sandwich, California blend, fruit.

Jr. Legion at Clark Tournament

T-Ball hosts Warner, 6 p.m., Nelson Field

Saturday, June 13

U14 Legion at Platte Tournament

Jr. Legion at Clark Tournament

U12 Baseball at Milbank Tournament

U8 Baseball at Milbank Tournament

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Sunday, June 14

FLAG DAY

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 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.

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

U14 Legion at Platte Tournament

Jr. Legion at Clark Tournament

U10 Baseball at Milbank Tournament (ALL)

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1440

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

SpaceX's Moonshot IPO

Elon Musk's SpaceX priced the largest-ever initial public offering, raising \$75B at a roughly \$1.77T valuation. Shares are set to start trading today, potentially making Musk the world's first trillionaire and turning over 4,400 current and former employees into millionaires.

Founded in 2002 with the goal of colonizing Mars, SpaceX now generates over 61% of its revenue from its satellite internet service, Starlink. The decision to go public is largely driven by a need for capital to deploy AI data centers in space using Starlink infrastructure, which Musk says will overcome power constraints on Earth. Much of SpaceX's success hinges on designing a reusable Starship rocket to reduce launch costs and increase launch cadence. Starship is also a leading contender to carry NASA astronauts to the moon in 2028.

Previously, the largest IPO of all time was the 2019 listing of Saudi Arabian oil company Aramco, which raised today's equivalent of \$38B.

US-Iran Negotiations

President Donald Trump canceled plans yesterday to strike Iran, citing progress in diplomatic negotiations. The announcement came hours after Trump said the US would soon be "taking" Kharg Island, likening the plan to the US operation in Venezuela.

Kharg Island is a coral outcrop roughly 20 miles off the coast of Iran, measuring eight square miles (around one-third the size of Manhattan). The island is critical to Iran's oil infrastructure: around 90% of its oil exports travel through it, mostly via underwater pipelines. Because Kharg Island is surrounded by deep waters, supertankers are able to dock there—in contrast to Iran's coastline, most of which is too shallow. The island exports up to 7 million barrels of oil per day, most of it to China.

Unlike most other islands in the Persian Gulf, Kharg Island is composed of porous limestone, allowing it to maintain its own freshwater and even sustain a population of gazelles.

Spielberg's Alien Disclosure

Steven Spielberg's "Disclosure Day" premieres in theaters today, centering on a global extraterrestrial revelation and starring Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor, Colin Firth, Eve Hewson, and Colman Domingo.

The premiere marks Spielberg's first return to alien sci-fi since "War of the Worlds" (2005) and his first major summer release in a decade. Set on a planet teetering on the edge of global conflict, the story follows leaders, scientists, broadcasters, and religious figures as they wrestle with whether humanity is ready to learn the truth about aliens' existence. The story draws on real-world intrigue, including 2023 congressional hearings on unidentified anomalous phenomena and a 2017 New York Times report detailing a secret Pentagon program.

Spielberg's decadeslong fascination with extraterrestrials—including "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" (1977) and "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" (1982)—often leans on the familiar "gray" alien archetype: pale, large-headed beings with almond-shaped eyes.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Serena Williams exits HSBC Championship, her first professional tournament since 2022, after her doubles partner withdraws due to a knee injury.

"24 Jump Street" is in development, with Channing Tatum, Jonah Hill, and Ice Cube in talks to return for the third installment of the "Jump Street" franchise; plus why "23 Jump Street" was never made.

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FIFA World Cup: Mexico's Julián Quiñones scores tournament's first goal, nutmegging South Africa's goalkeeper (Watch) | Bosnia-Herzegovina faces Canada at 3 pm ET today, while the US faces Paraguay in Los Angeles at 9 pm ET (More, w/schedule)

Science & Technology

Physicists introduce phase contrast to electron microscopes, enabling scientists to observe how molecules function inside living cells, potentially transforming our understanding of diseases.

Researchers discover biological driver of cocaine addiction in the liver, suggesting how the body metabolizes cocaine may predict addiction; most prior research has focused on the brain.

Genes inherited from now-extinct hominins strengthened ancient humans' immunity to viruses and bacteria and continue to influence skeletal development, according to a large-scale study of genomes from Oceania.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.8%, Dow +1.9%, Nasdaq +2.5%) after President Donald Trump calls off Iran strikes.

US wholesale prices rise 1.1% in May, putting annual rate at 6.5%, the highest since November 2022.

European Central Bank raises interest rates for first time since 2023 amid Iran war, becomes first major central bank to do so.

Waymo launches premier subscription tier for \$29.99 a month in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Phoenix; perks include priority rides and 10% back in loyalty credits per trip.

Politics & World Affairs

Pentagon resumes operations after a hazardous materials sensor set off a false alarm, triggering lockdown and partial evacuation, per spokesperson.

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is expected to expire today after Congress did not pass a three-week extension; critics largely cited Bill Pulte's appointment as acting director of national intelligence.

President Donald Trump nominates former Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Jay Clayton to serve as director of national intelligence.

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Transit Fundraiser held

The Groton Community Transit held its annual fundraiser Thursday at the Groton Community Center. In the photo at left, Carol Strom and Katherine Rehfuss serve Diane Warrington, Nancy Larsen and Julie Shilhanek during the meal. In the photo at right, Joel Bierman, Tristian McGannon and David McGannon keep the burgers, brats and hot dogs coming as they work the grill for the event. (Photos by Paul Kosel)

Public Lands Integrity Act ends loophole to allow public land sales

The threats to public ownership of public lands are alive and well, as Secretary of the Interior Doug Bur-gum yesterday defended his efforts to sell off public lands at an event in Grand Junction, Colorado, while Utah Senator Mike Lee pushed through a measure in Congress that will effectively rollback protections for millions of acres of roadless land across America.

Last Summer, Congress nearly sold off millions of acres of America's public lands through a provision from Senator Lee buried in a budget bill, rather than through open debate and regular legislative review. The effort was stopped only after broad bipartisan opposition from hunters, anglers, hikers, ranchers, Tribal communities, and everyday Americans across the West.

The loophole that made that attempted sell-off possible remains in place. Under current reconciliation rules, a provision selling, transferring, or disposing of federal public lands could be included in a budget reconciliation bill and passed with a simple majority in the Senate, bypassing the normal 60-vote threshold and limiting public scrutiny.

The Public Lands Integrity Act is intended to close that loophole.

What the Public Lands Integrity Act Would Do

The Public Lands Integrity Act would amend the Congressional Budget Act's Byrd Rule to clarify that any provision selling, transferring, or disposing of federal public lands is "extraneous" to the budget reconciliation process. In practical terms, future proposals to sell or transfer federal public lands would need to move through regular order and meet the standard 60-vote Senate threshold for major policy legislation.

The bill was introduced in the House by Representatives Gabe Vasquez of New Mexico, Juan Ciscomani of Arizona, Joe Neguse of Colorado, Dina Titus of Nevada, and Ryan Zinke of Montana, and in the Senate by Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado.

What the Bill Does Not Do

The legislation applies only to proposals that would permanently sell, transfer, or dispose of federal public lands through budget reconciliation. It does not affect legitimate land exchanges, grazing, timber management, energy development, permitting, routine public land management, or other regular land management decisions.

It also does not prevent Congress from considering public land disposal proposals through regular legislative order. Instead, it ensures that decisions of that magnitude receive full debate, committee review, public input, and bipartisan scrutiny.

Why It Matters

Public lands support hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, ranching, Tribal cultural practices, wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor recreation economies, and communities across the West.

The outdoor recreation economy tied to public lands contributes \$1.3 trillion in annual economic output and supports 5.2 million jobs nationally, according to the source material.

Once public lands are sold, public access is often permanently lost. Supporters of the bill argue that Americans should not be one partisan vote away from losing access to lands that belong to the public.

Temporary Road Closures Scheduled on U.S. Highway 16A and S.D. Highway 244 for Mount Rushmore Fireworks Event

CUSTER, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) will place temporary road closures to accommodate security needs for the pre-sale ticketed Freedom 250 at Mount Rushmore event scheduled for Friday, July 3, 2026. The temporary road closures on U.S. Highway 16A and S.D. Highway 244 will be in place on Thursday, July 2, 2026, at 11 p.m. (MT) through approximately 11 p.m. (MT) on Friday, July 3, 2026.

The temporary road closure on Highway 16A will be located just west of the Keystone Mall south to Grizzly Gulch Road. A temporary closure is also planned on Highway 244 from the junction with Highway 16A south and west to the Wrinkled Rock Trailhead.

Motorists will not be able to access Iron Mountain Road or Highway 244 from Keystone during the planned closure. However, the routes will be open if accessed from alternate directions.

Additional event Information:

Access to the Freedom 250 at Mount Rushmore event on July 3, 2026, is via pre-sale ticket only. Only ticket holders will be able to attend. On Saturday, July 4, 2026, Mount Rushmore will open at 5 a.m. (MT) to the general public.

Find the temporary road closure map on the SDDOT website at <https://dot.sd.gov/rushmore-250>.

Find additional information about the Freedom 250 at Mount Rushmore event at <https://www.nps.gov/moru/planyourvisit/independence-day-events.htm>.



**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

Silent sirens: 2 South Dakota cities experience weather siren troubles

By Elena Tittel

South Dakota News Watch

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – When computer technicians investigated Aberdeen's weather sirens in mid-April, they noticed something didn't seem right.

Ahead of expected severe weather, at 5:49 p.m. Monday, June 8, Travis Schaunaman, mayor of Aberdeen, announced on Facebook that the tornado siren system was "not operating as intended."

Tanner Jondahl, chief of police for the city of Aberdeen, said it had never happened before, as far as he knew.

"We've had some minor issues here and there but nothing to where the entire system was down that I could think of," he said.

Some people on Facebook were not happy with the news, expressing confusion as to why this was not addressed earlier.

"This seems like it should have been a major priority," one person commented.

According to Schaunaman, the weather alert system is shut off in the fall and remains unused throughout winter, which is how no one realized something was wrong.

Jondahl said it took a few weeks to identify a component that had failed. Initially, the local officials believed fixing that component would get the system operating again but later learned that repairs required an entire software and computer upgrade.

Currently, three out of the city's 18 siren locations are nonfunctional. Four siren locations are in need of attention and two require extra attention from the city.

Aberdeen was not the only city with recent siren issues.

The city of Viborg posted on Facebook Tuesday, June 9, that it was experiencing problems with its siren warning system on the west side of town.

In the post, the city said parts to repair the system have been ordered and it's expected to be fully operating in the next couple of days. The sirens on the east side of town remain functional.

Viborg Mayor John Edelman could not immediately be reached for comment.

Oversight and funding of weather sirens

A part of "Tornado Alley," South Dakota has a long history of being hit by tornadoes, experiencing 28 on average a year, highlighting the importance of reliable weather warning systems.

From 1950 to 2025, South Dakota was hit with 1,938 tornadoes, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Within that time frame, tornadoes have resulted in approximately \$259,177,780 in property damages, 488 direct injuries and 19 fatalities.

According to the National Weather Service, outdoor weather sirens are activated primarily by city or county officials who establish their own guidelines, meaning there is no state standard for outdoor sirens. The only uniform standard across the state is during South Dakota Severe Weather Awareness week in April, when all weather sirens are tested.

For example, in Sioux Falls, outdoor warning sirens are tested at 11 a.m. on the first Friday of the month from March through November, whereas in Aberdeen, sirens are tested weekly on Wednesday evening at 6 p.m.

Projects such as outdoor warning sirens are funded by a combination of federal and nonfederal funds. One source of funding comes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant

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Program (HMGP), which becomes available following a presidentially declared disaster.

HMGP funds may be used to pay up to 75% of the eligible costs, according to a spokesperson from FEMA. However, repairing defective sirens comes directly out of the city's budget.

Because of the potential unreliability of the sirens, people are encouraged to subscribe to multiple weather alert services, such as weather apps, NOAA Weather Radio, local media outlets and Wireless Emergency Alerts.

Looking forward

The Aberdeen Fire Department completed a successful test of the backup activation system Tuesday, June 9, at 1 p.m.

The new equipment, costing approximately \$14,000, has been ordered, but officials have yet to determine a delivery date.

"The real urgency of the issue is being taken care of by the process that we've got in place right now, which will do a suitable job for the time being," Schaunaman said.

South Dakota News Watch is an independent nonprofit. Read, donate and subscribe for free at sdnewswatch.org. Elena Tittel's internship was funded with support from the Nonprofit Newsroom Internship Program created by The Scripps Howard Fund and the Institute for Nonprofit News. Contact: elena.tittel@sdnewswatch.org.

Groton Locke Electric Fall After Strong Showing By Aberdeen Circus Baseball

By GameChanger Media

Groton Locke Electric couldn't keep up with Aberdeen Circus Baseball and fell 14-7 on Wednesday at Groton.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball got on the board in the first inning after Kelly Coates singled, scoring one run.

Groton Locke Electric took the lead in the bottom of the third inning after Brian Hansen singled to center field, and Korbin Kucker walked, each scoring one run.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball jumped back into the lead in the top of the fourth inning after Talan Dutenhoefer tripled to center field, and Groton Locke Electric committed an error, each scoring one run.

Tyler Clapp earned the win for Aberdeen Circus Baseball. The pitcher surrendered five hits and five runs over four and two-thirds innings, striking out eight and walking nine. Nick Morris took the loss for Groton Locke Electric. The starting pitcher went four innings, giving up six runs (four earned) on six hits, striking out one and walking three.

Brevin Fliehs led Groton Locke Electric with two hits in six at bats from the leadoff position. Morris went 1-for-3 at the plate and led the team with two runs batted in. Ty Sieber led Groton Locke Electric with four walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 13 walks for the game.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball piled up 10 hits in the game. Kris Kwak and Jordan Foss were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected two hits for Aberdeen Circus Baseball. Kwak provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Aberdeen Circus Baseball with three runs batted in. The 3-hole hitter went 2-for-4 on the day. Michael Babcock led Aberdeen Circus Baseball with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 10 walks for the game. Aberdeen Circus Baseball didn't commit a single error in the field. Coates had the most chances in the field with 13.

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Aberdeen Circus Baseball 14 - 7 Groton Locke Electric

📍 Home 📅 Wednesday June 10, 2026

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
ABRD	1	0	0	2	3	3	2	3	0	14	10	0
GRTN	0	0	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	7	7	5

BATTING

Aberdeen Circus...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
W Thorson (LF)	4	2	1	0	2	0
M Babcock (SS)	2	3	1	0	3	0
K Kwak (RF)	4	2	2	3	1	0
J Foss (1B)	5	1	2	0	1	1
K Coates (C)	4	3	1	1	2	0
J Babcock (CF)	5	1	1	0	0	2
T Dutenhoefer (3B)	5	1	1	2	0	2
R Soler (2B)	4	1	1	1	1	1
J Ladner (DH)	5	0	0	0	0	3
Totals	38	14	10	7	10	9

2B: K Kwak, J Foss, **3B:** T Dutenhoefer, **TB:** K Kwak 3, R Soler, J Foss 3, T Dutenhoefer 3, K Coates, J Babcock, M Babcock, W Thorson, **HBP:** K Kwak, T Dutenhoefer, J Babcock, M Babcock, **SB:** W Thorson, **LOB:** 11

PITCHING

Aberdeen...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Clapp	4.2	5	5	5	9	8	0
J Foss	4.1	2	2	2	4	5	0
Totals	9.0	7	7	7	13	13	0

W: T Clapp, **P-S:** J Foss 87-45, T Clapp 127-64, **WP:** T Clapp 4, **HBP:** J Foss 3, T Clapp, **BF:** J Foss 22, T Clapp 29

Groton Locke El...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs #1 (CF)	6	0	2	1	0	4
T Sieber #24 (3B)	2	1	0	0	4	0
B Althoff #4 (LF)	4	1	0	0	2	2
B Althoff #27 (SS)	4	1	1	0	0	2
B Hansen #11 (1B)	5	1	1	1	1	0
P Boyd #7 (RF)	2	2	0	0	2	2
K Kucker #9 (2B)	4	1	1	0	1	1
W Locke #25 (DH)	1	0	0	0	1	1
N Morris #45 (P)	3	0	1	2	0	1
R Groebmlin... #0 (C)	3	0	1	1	1	0
C Cama... #10 (C)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Totals	34	7	7	5	13	13

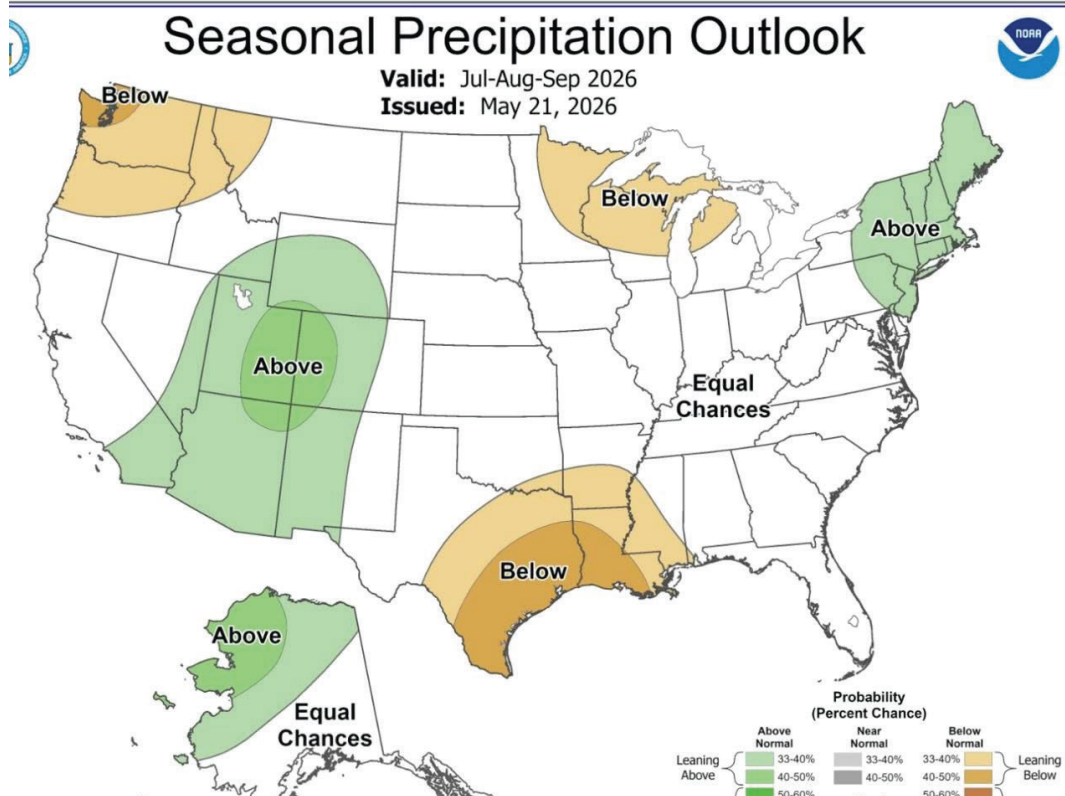
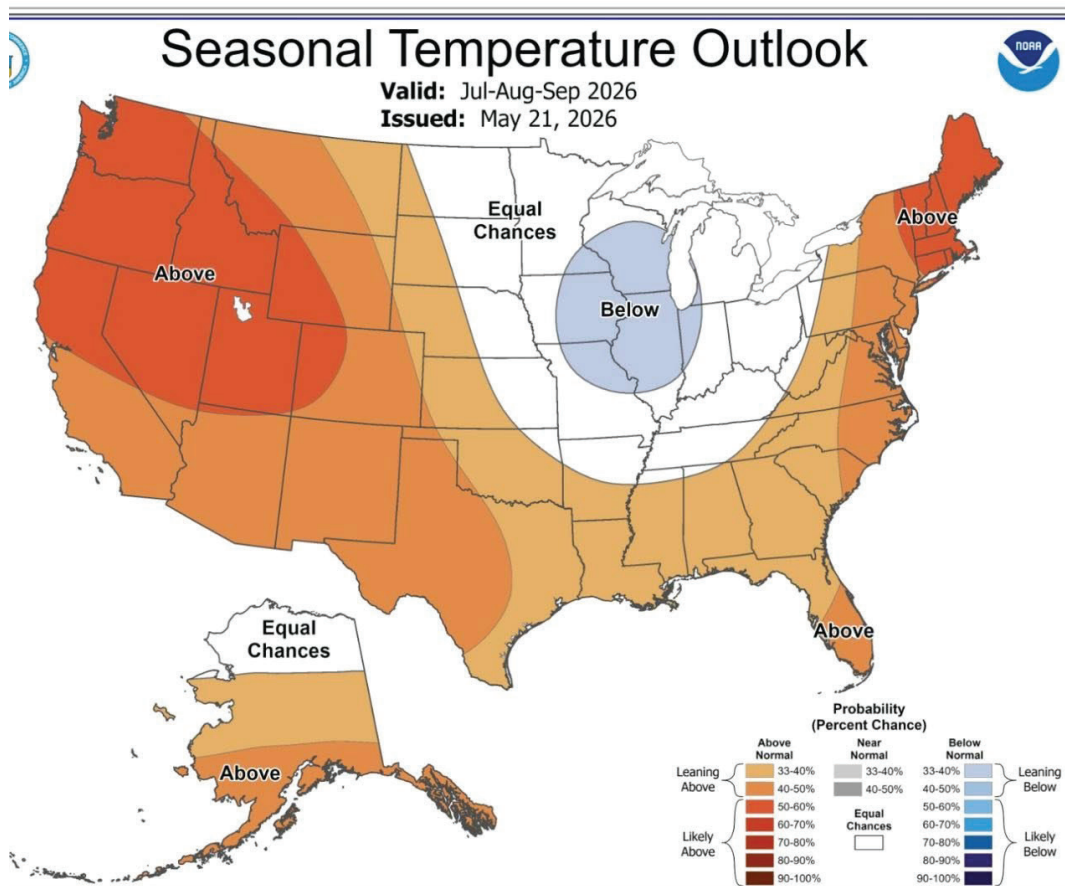
2B: K Kucker, **3B:** B Fliehs, **TB:** B Hansen, N Morris, B Fliehs 4, B Althoff, K Kucker 2, R Groeblichhoff, **HBP:** P Boyd 2, B Althoff 2, **LOB:** 17

Groton Loc...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris #45	4.0	6	6	4	3	1	0
P Boyd #7	2.0	3	3	1	1	3	0
B Fliehs #1	3.0	1	5	3	6	5	0
Totals	9.0	10	14	8	10	9	0

L: N Morris, **P-S:** N Morris 92-55, P Boyd 45-26, B Fliehs 72-32, **WP:** N Morris, P Boyd, B Fliehs, **HBP:** N Morris 3, B Fliehs, **BF:** N Morris 25, P Boyd 11, B Fliehs 16, **E:** P Boyd, B Althoff, K Kucker 2, R Groeblichhoff

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota lawmaker charged with felony for allegedly damaging public road on purpose

Newell state representative says he prays that 'everyone will write about it' when 'it all comes out'

BY: JOHN HULT

A Republican state lawmaker from Newell was indicted and arrested on a felony charge of intentional damage to a public road this week.

Rep. Travis Ismay, 48, was arrested Wednesday morning and released on a \$500 bail bond. The crime he's accused of committing is a felony that carries up to two years in prison and a \$4,000 fine.

Ismay declined to offer details Thursday to South Dakota Searchlight on the alleged incident, citing his search for a lawyer and the ongoing nature of the Butte County criminal case.

Ismay said he hopes to tell his side of the story eventually, and he wasn't aware of the existence of the law he's accused of breaking.

"When it all comes out, I pray that everyone will write about it," Ismay said.

Ismay's indictment doesn't offer details on the incident, aside from saying that the crime allegedly occurred on Friday — three days after he won the Republican nomination to seek reelection to his District 28B state House seat. He's unopposed in the Nov. 3 general election.

A Butte County grand jury took testimony from a sheriff's deputy, a highway department employee and a Butte County resident before issuing the indictment.

The law has been on the books since 1877, and was last modified in 1939. It can apply to "every person who intentionally digs up, removes, displaces, breaks, or otherwise injures or destroys any public highway or bridge."

Including Ismay's case, there have been seven such charges filed against five individuals in the past 10 years in South Dakota, according to the Unified Judicial System.

Neither the Butte County sheriff nor Butte County state's attorney immediately returned calls to Searchlight on Thursday.

Ismay has no criminal record in South Dakota beyond a few traffic citations, but he's sparred with Butte County officials.

In 2023, the year before he was first elected to the Legislature, Ismay was among the leaders of a group of Butte County residents who circulated a petition aimed at removing four commissioners from office over the county's handling of medical marijuana ordinances. Ismay would go on to unsuccessfully attempt to put a repeal of the state's voter-backed medical marijuana law on the 2024 ballot, and to introduce a bill in 2025 meant to accomplish the same goal. That medical pot bill failed.

During each of his two years in Pierre, Ismay brought bills to allow citizens to recall county commissioners. During hearings on those bills, Ismay spoke of being ejected from county commission meetings for actions he described as exercising free speech. Both bills failed.

No trial date has been set in Ismay's case.

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

State Supreme court deems turn-signal stop 'unreasonable' in DUI case

Justices also issue rulings clarifying self-defense law

BY: JOHN HULT

The South Dakota Supreme Court has overturned a drunken driving conviction that was predicated on a driver's failure to use his turn signal 100 feet before reaching a stop sign.

In a 5-0 decision, the high court ruled that the Aberdeen police officer's decision to initiate the stop was "objectively unreasonable" and based on an "incomplete" understanding of the law.

State law does not require the use of a turn signal in all circumstances, the court pointed out.

Instead, it requires that a driver must use a "plainly visible" signal "whenever the operation of any other vehicle may be affected" by a turn.

The driver did use his right turn signal in the Aberdeen case, but only after he'd come to a complete stop at a stop sign. The officer was about a block behind him, pulled him over for failing to signal sooner and arrested him for driving under the influence.

The officer was relying on a separate South Dakota law that says, "when required," a turn signal must be used by a driver at least 100 feet before making a turn.

The driver, however, cited the law noting that signals are only required when a turn might affect another vehicle. He claimed the officer had no valid reason to make the traffic stop, because there were no people or other vehicles around. A judge rejected that argument during a court trial, where the driver was convicted of DUI.

The high court sided with the driver. There was no evidence the driver was traveling "in a residential area with pedestrians or multiple vehicles nearby," the opinion says. The officer's vehicle, a block behind the driver, it says, couldn't have been affected by the driver's right-hand turn.

The officer testified at the trial court level that he was unfamiliar with state law on when turn signals are required, so the justices wrote that his decision to pull the driver over was "objectively unreasonable."

"There was no reasonable suspicion justifying the stop," the court ruled.

Stand your ground law

The court released two other decisions on Thursday clarifying the state's "stand your ground" laws, which entitle citizens facing assault or homicide charges to a pretrial immunity hearing. Those who fail to have a case tossed out before trial remain free to make self-defense claims to a jury.

The two newly decided cases involved men who'd failed to earn immunity at their pretrial self-defense hearings, and were later convicted by juries in spite of their ongoing self-defense claims.

Both men claimed that errors had occurred during their immunity hearings. One had already tried unsuccessfully to secure a second pretrial immunity hearing in an appeal to the state Supreme Court that was filed between his initial failure to earn immunity and his jury trial. He raised similar arguments in the post-conviction appeal rejected by Thursday's ruling.

The justices reached similar decisions in both of the cases decided on Thursday, saying in each opinion that a jury's rejection of self-defense claims renders any dispute over pretrial immunity hearings moot.

Attorney General Marty Jackley issued a news release praising the decisions as valuable in clarifying the application of the state's self-defense laws.

"By confirming that immunity challenges can only be raised before trial, the court has given prosecutors, defense counsel, and circuit courts a clear procedural framework moving forward," Jackley said.

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

2% adjustment predicted for state retirees as inflation climbs higher

Retirement system considers redefining goal as members face falling behind rising prices for sixth straight year

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Officials with the South Dakota Retirement System expect next year's cost-of-living adjustment for retirees to fall below inflation — again.

The system's board members heard the projection at a Wednesday meeting in Pierre. They were also told that the adjustment has fallen short of inflation each of the last five years.

Executive Director Travis Almond urged board members to reconsider what the system's cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) goal should be. Almond said people assume the adjustment is supposed to match inflation.

Most state and local public employees, including teachers and state workers, contribute 6% of their pay to the retirement system with a 6% employer match, although some classes of employees contribute more. There are more than 105,000 members in the system.

"We operate on the lowest pension spending in the nation, and in my view I think that makes matching inflation in all periods virtually impossible — if not flat out impossible," Almond said.

Compared to the rest of the country, South Dakota spends the least amount of government funds as a percentage of its overall spending on its pension plan, according to South Dakota Retirement System officials. The state does that while remaining 100% funded as required by state law, which means the system is on schedule to pay future benefits at the current COLA level.

2027 adjustment predicted at 2%

Doug Fiddler, the system's senior actuary, told board members he expects a 2% cost-of-living adjustment beginning in 2027, based on projected investment returns in fiscal year 2026.

The adjustment is designed to match inflation, up to a cap of 3.5%, but can fall short if the system's investments don't meet their long-term return assumption of 6.5%.

Inflation has increased by 2.92% since the Bureau of Labor Statistics last measured it in 2025. If that trend continues, Fiddler said inflation could reach 4.4% later this year.

"We have 2.5 weeks left to go in the fiscal year, with pretty volatile investment results day-to-day," Fiddler said.

The retirement system is on track to finish the year with about 11% in investment returns. The cost-of-living adjustment is also dependent on member demographics, salary trends, retirements, disabilities and mortality.

The South Dakota Retirement System fund has underperformed its investment return benchmark in seven of the last 10 years. That's in part due to the "contrarian" approach the South Dakota Investment Council takes toward state investments — pulling back risk when markets are high and buying when stocks are cheaper. Investment Council Director Matt Clark told South Dakota Searchlight earlier this year that the state's stock investments were set to the "minimum risk position."

The council has recently begun taking on more risk, said Danielle Mourer, senior portfolio manager.

Fiddler said he "gets a little bit worried" about adjustment amounts within the next five years. There's about a 30% chance the system will not issue an annual cost-of-living adjustment in 2031 and will "have to make changes" to its retirement benefits process.

"We're tied to fixed contributions that are essentially the lowest in the nation trying to fund a pension plan," Fiddler said. "So, we're going to have to have something that adjusts and a fair chance that we will have to make changes."

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System evaluates adjustment goals, gaps for some retirees

Fiddler presented a chart showing South Dakota's average annual cost-of-living adjustment outpaced neighboring states, though all fell below inflation.

Compared to plans in states such as California, Missouri and Illinois, South Dakota had lower average adjustments but also lower contribution rates and less pension debt.

Matching the annual cost-of-living adjustment to inflation is "aspirational," Fiddler said. A 1% cost-of-living adjustment amounts to about \$92 million.

"Nobody is able to match inflation with their COLAs around the country," Fiddler said.

Not all retirees are equally affected. Benefits for South Dakota workers who retired between 2016 and 2022 are behind inflation. Benefits for retirees from the 1990s have outpaced inflation. The contrast is due in part to high inflation from 2022 through 2024 that outperformed investments at the time.

"The COLA outcome should be equitable," Almond said. "That means that we're ensuring they do not unintentionally favor one generation of retirees over another at the end of the day."

Board members discussed changing the system's stated goal for the annual adjustment. Board member and state Secretary of Human Resources and Administration Darin Seeley suggested reframing it as "affordable inflation protection."

"You don't set an expectation that we're going to make it," Seeley said. "We're going to do what we can, but we're not going to meet the COLA, and it shouldn't be the expectation that we meet the COLA."

System officials plan to bring proposed changes to the board's next meeting.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Federal government to pay North Dakota \$28M for Dakota Access Pipeline protests

BY: MARY STEURER

North Dakota will receive roughly \$28 million from the federal government in compensation for costs the state incurred during the Dakota Access Pipeline protests as part of a settlement announced Thursday.

The amount is the same as was awarded to North Dakota in 2025 by U.S. District Court Judge Dan Traynor.

The lawsuit, filed in 2019, concerned demonstrations against the construction of the crude oil pipeline, also known as DAPL, that took place in rural south-central North Dakota in 2016 and 2017. North Dakota alleged that the federal government caused the protests to grow in size and intensity by unlawfully allowing demonstrators to camp on federal land.

The United States initially appealed Traynor's judgment to the 8th Circuit, but agreed to dismiss that appeal as part of the settlement.

Attorney General Drew Wrigley said at a press conference at the Capitol Thursday morning that the settlement will prevent both parties from spending more public money litigating the nearly seven-year-old lawsuit. The state spent nearly \$7.5 million in legal fees, which are covered by the settlement, according to Wrigley's office.

The U.S. Department of Justice as part of the agreement issued a statement Thursday afternoon holding President Barack Obama's administration responsible for harms North Dakota incurred during the protests.

The agency said that while it still disagrees with Traynor's legal findings in the case, it "acknowledges in hindsight that, under the Obama Administration, the federal government could have done more to reduce the impacts to the people of North Dakota from the Dakota Access Pipeline protests," according to the statement.

The Department of Justice's statement also notes that some protesters engaged in unlawful behavior, including violent acts.

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North Dakota in the case alleged that federal officials for months allowed protesters to camp on U.S. Army Corps-managed land despite repeated calls from North Dakota leaders to evict them. The Department of Justice in its Thursday statement maintained that the federal government did this for safety reasons.

"To avoid further escalation of unlawful behaviors, the federal government at the time chose not to forcibly remove the protestors from the encampment on federal property," the agency said. "The United States recognizes that this difficult choice had painful consequences for North Dakota and many of its residents."

Wrigley said North Dakota asked for the statement because the state wanted a formal, public acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the federal government.

"An important chapter in our state's history has been rendered indisputable and closed," he said.

As another condition of the settlement, the parties asked Traynor to void his judgment and three other orders in which he ruled against the United States in the suit. That included the court's 120-page ruling from April 2025.

Attorneys for the United States said during a May hearing that they wanted the orders to be vacated because they believed Traynor's legal conclusions would make them more vulnerable to future lawsuits under the Federal Tort Claims Act, the law North Dakota brought the case under.

North Dakota and the Department of Justice in legal briefs said they both believe this trade-off is outweighed by the time and money the public will save by not having the case proceed to appeals. North Dakota will also avoid the risk of having Traynor's judgment overturned.

Traynor voided the opinions in May, and the 8th Circuit has since approved the parties' request to dismiss the appeal.

While state leaders over the course of the lawsuit also placed the majority of the fault on Obama officials, former North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum in a 2022 deposition and on the witness stand during a 2024 trial at times also expressed dissatisfaction with the Trump administration's response.

He testified in the lawsuit that the state asked the Trump administration to send federal agents to help clear out the protest camps in February 2017, but they didn't.

"We had to go ahead without them, more or less, on the cleanup," he said on the witness stand during a four-week trial.

Burgum also testified that at some point after the protests ended, North Dakota applied for a presidential emergency declaration regarding the protest from the Trump administration but was denied.

During the trial, the court also heard testimony from former Gov. Jack Dalrymple, Native activists, federal officials, law enforcement and other witnesses.

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

The settlement money will pay off a loan the state took from the state-owned Bank of North Dakota, Wrigley said.

Winona LaDuke, an Indigenous activist who participated in the protests, testified during the trial that the state could have avoided paying so much for cleanup if officials had afforded demonstrators the time to clear the camps.

"The state of North Dakota did a good job of making a big mess," she said.

The state at the time aimed to clean the area ahead of spring flooding.

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

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently granted the pipeline an easement to cross beneath the Missouri River's Lake Oahe after a yearslong environmental review process. It has been operating for nine years.

North Dakota Monitor reporter Mary Steurer can be reached at msteurer@northdakotamonitor.com.

This story was originally produced by North Dakota Monitor, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit

news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

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

American Prairie, conservation groups appeal bison grazing decision

The federal government revoked grazing leases on BLM land for hundreds of bison

BY: MICAH DREW

American Prairie and other conservation organizations have filed appeals in the federal government's decision to terminate bison grazing leases on Bureau of Land Management parcels in Montana.

As a result of the lease cancellation, American Prairie has halted an annual bison harvest program — which would have issued 17 hunting permits to members of the public this year — and tribal nations argue it will have a negative impact on food sovereignty programs.

The BLM issued its final decision in early May, canceling all seven bison-grazing permits for American Prairie with a September deadline to remove its herds from federal land.

On June 4, American Prairie filed its appeal with the Department of the Interior, and this week conservation organizations Defenders of Wildlife and the Western Watersheds Project also filed appeals.

"BLM's new interpretation has no basis in law and contradicts its own findings," said Pete Frost, attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center representing Western Watersheds. "BLM reversed itself due to politics, not the law, nor the need to restore prairie grasslands."

American Prairie is a nonprofit dedicated to conserving prairie land in Montana and manages more than half a million acres between private holdings and leased land. The organization also has a focus on species restoration, including bison, the national mammal.

The organization has around 900 animals in its herd, and has been grazing them under BLM authorization, with some leased acreage stretching back two decades.

But over the last few years, with appeals filed during the Biden administration, Montana officials have argued bison grazing is a risk to Montana's ranching community.

Montana, along with the Montana Stockgrowers Association and other livestock groups, appealed a 2022 decision that authorized the American Prairie's bison grazing leases, which had followed nearly three years of public scoping and environmental analysis by the bureau.

Under the Trump administration, direct appeals from Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte, Attorney General Austin Knudsen, and the state's congressional delegation saw a response from Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, who "assumed jurisdiction" of the cases dealing with American Prairie's grazing rights.

Conservation groups have said the decision to terminate those leases is political at its core.

Western Watersheds, in a press release, cited reporting by Public Domain pointing out Karen Budd-Falen, now the third-ranking official in the Interior Department, represented some ranching groups in the appeals of the original 2022 decision allowing bison grazing.

Montana officials, on the other hand, argue grazing bison doesn't fit the purpose of those federal lands, and working lands should support ranching families who help feed the country.

Bison productivity requirement

In the May decision canceling the leases, the BLM focused on the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act, the legal framework that governs leases on federal lands. Using a new definition of livestock, the decision states grazing permits are limited to cases where the animals "will be used for production-oriented purposes."

But American Prairie argues it has "contributed hundreds of bison to tribal food sovereignty programs,

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supplied bison as breeding stock to grow bison herds for meat production and economic benefits, and allowed the public to harvest hundreds of bison for meat consumption," arguments that BLM has so far rejected.

"The agency overturned American Prairie's grazing permits on unrelated factors: the organization's conservation goals, management, purpose, and intent," the appeal states. "In other words, BLM set up one standard based on the animal's use and then — ignoring American Prairie's strong evidence meeting that standard — the agency arbitrarily denied the permits on an entirely different basis."

American Prairie notes the cancellation of hunting permits means a loss of \$25,000, but the impacts of the new livestock definition could ripple past American Prairie's lease holdings, with multiple tribal nations concerned it could limit their own ability to manage bison herds.

Earlier this year, the Coalition of Large Tribes — a group representing more than 50 Native American Tribes — protested BLM's proposed decision, saying the new definition of livestock would impact tribal bison herds and "any related bison co-stewardship or surplus programs."

The decision, as written, makes it "unlikely that any tribal government or tribal citizen buffalo herd would ever be eligible for BLM grazing leases," the Coalition wrote in its protest.

According to American Prairie, the organization has supplied 645 bison to entities in eight states plus Washington D.C., including shipping bison to nine tribal nations — five in Montana.

"These animals are going to local tribes for their food sovereignty," said Chamois Andersen with Defenders of Wildlife. "What an incredible opportunity to be managing the bison resource ecologically for Native nations to have that benefit."

"The opportunity to graze on public land should not be exclusive to cattle — they're not native. It should be open to our native grazer, bison," Andersen said in an interview with the Daily Montanan. "They in fact have far more ecological benefits to habitat restoration — which BLM is supposed to do — not just provide forage for bovine cattle, but that the animal is contributing to the health of rangelands."

According to a 2025 BLM infographic about the agency's grazing program, there are 41 grazing permits for bison issued by the Bureau across the country, alongside 18,000 permits and leases overall.

When the decision to rescind the grazing leases was announced, Montana's elected officials praised the federal government for prioritizing Montana ranchers over "an ideological experiment."

"This final decision is a victory for the rule of law and the generations of Montanans who have stewarded our lands with care," Gianforte said.

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

Micah writes about Montana's environment and state and local politics. He's been known to run long distances around the Flathead Valley and Glacier National Park where he lives, works and plays.

Trump says 'great settlement' of Iran war in the works, signing ceremony soon

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced Thursday that administration officials were close to brokering an end to the hostilities with Iran and predicted there could be a signing ceremony in Europe as soon as this weekend.

"We just made a great settlement of the war with Iran and we're going to be subject to finalization of documents, which should get done over the next few days, probably have a signing, maybe in Europe, and it's a great thing," Trump, who has earlier said deals were in the offing that did not come to fruition, said from the Oval Office.

Trump said Iran's Supreme Leader had approved the agreement, which he referred to as "a very strong memorandum of understanding that is a little conceptual." There was no immediate confirmation of the

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agreement on social media accounts on which Iranian leaders often post.

The deal, Trump said, would ensure Iran will not be able to develop or purchase a nuclear weapon and will end the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a main oil shipping route, once signed.

Trump said he didn't plan to attend the signing ceremony himself, but would likely send Vice President JD Vance.

He projected the end of the conflict, which began in late February, would lower gas prices that rose sharply after the United States and Israel began a joint bombing campaign.

Israel not part of deal

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office posted on social media that the country doesn't consider itself subject to the agreement brokered between the United States and Iran.

"President Trump spoke this evening with Prime Minister Netanyahu regarding the emerging memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Iran to enter into negotiations," the post said.

"Even though Israel is not a party to the memorandum of understanding, the Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for President Trump's commitment that the final agreement at the conclusion of negotiations will include the removal of enriched material, the dismantling of enrichment infrastructure, limits on missile production, and the cessation of Iran's support for its terrorist proxies in the region."

The war led to considerable debate on Capitol Hill, where Democrats forced floor votes on several War Powers resolutions, questioning whether Trump had the authority to engage in a protracted bombing campaign without a formal declaration of war or an authorization for use of military force from Congress.

The Trump administration sent a letter to lawmakers on May 1 declaring the war "terminated," but bombing resumed this week after an Iranian drone shot down a U.S. helicopter.

Strikes vowed, then called off

Trump posted on social media a couple hours before his Oval Office appearance that he had "cancelled the scheduled strikes and bombings against Iran this evening."

"Discussions and final points have been, in both concept and great detail, approved by all parties involved, including the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, and others," Trump wrote. "The Naval Blockade will remain in full force and effect until this Transaction is finalized — Time and place of the signing to be announced shortly."

The announcement was a reversal from one Trump posted earlier in the morning, where he wrote the U.S. military planned another round of intense bombing and would seek to control an island in the Persian Gulf.

"At some point in the not too distant future, we will be taking Kharg Island, and other oil infrastructure points, and assume total control of their Oil and Gas Markets, much like we have with Venezuela, which is working out brilliantly for both Venezuela and the United States of America," he wrote.

Trump on Thursday declined to give a firm deadline for when U.S. and Iranian officials would sign a formal end to the hostilities, only saying he believes it will happen "pretty quickly."

Trump said he "might look at" providing financial aid to American farmers who experienced rising costs, including for fertilizer, as a result of the war, though he didn't commit to it.

"The farmers have a problem with fertilizer, but that's all coming down now," he said. "And your fuel is going to be, I think it's going to be lower than it was four or five months ago."

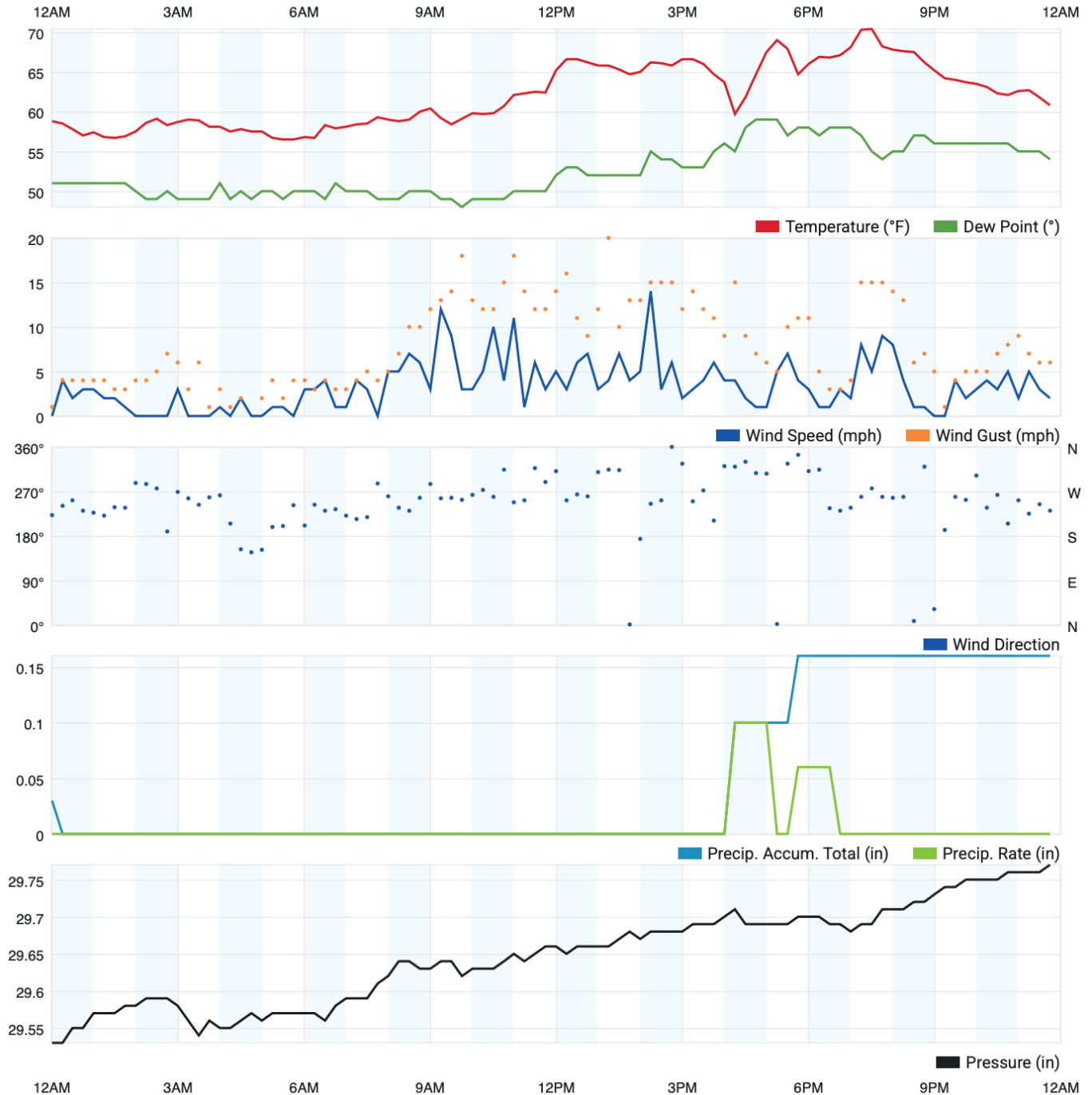
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 11, 2026



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Today



High: 82 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 52 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Saturday



High: 69 °F

Partly Sunny
then Mostly
Sunny and
Breezy

Saturday Night



Low: 45 °F

Mostly Cloudy
and Breezy
then Partly
Cloudy

Sunday



High: 74 °F

Sunny

Today



15-25% chance for scattered
showers and thunderstorms across
east central SD and west central MN
this evening

Highs: 76-89°

Weekend Outlook

Sat



64-74°

Cooler temps and breezy winds
through the weekend.

Sun



68-75°

June 12, 2026 4:21 AM

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



weather.gov/abr

Cooler and drier conditions expected for the weekend with highs in the 60s and 70s. More seasonable conditions today with highs in the upper 70s to 80s. Generally, partly cloudy skies today except across east central SD where a passing shower or isolated thunderstorm is possible this evening.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 71 °F at 7:17 PM

Low Temp: 56 °F at 5:18 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 1:13 PM

Precip: 0.15

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1956

Record Low: 37 in 2012

Average High: 80

Average Low: 54

Average Precip in June.: 1.40

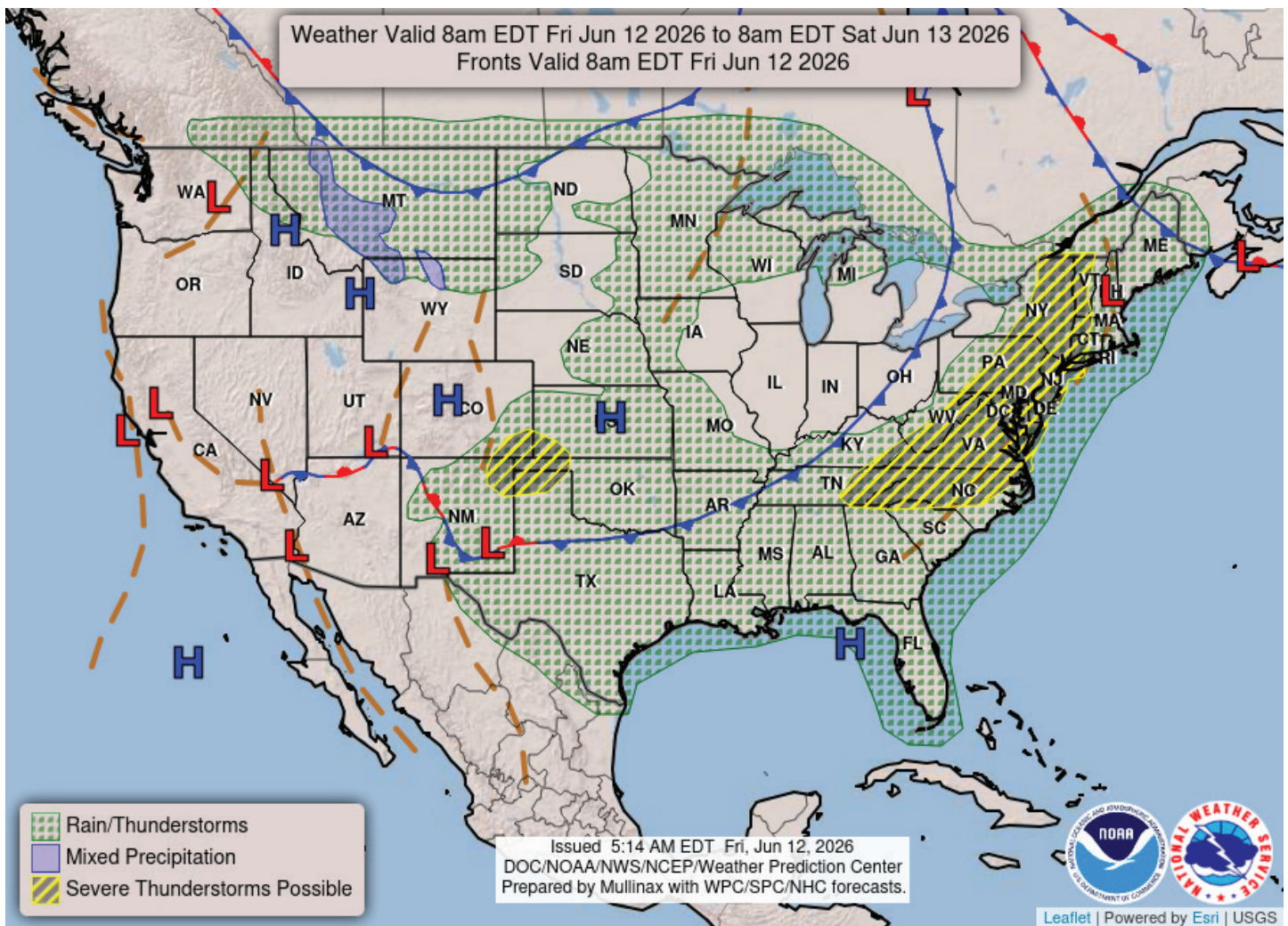
Precip to date in June.: 1.11

Average Precip to date: 8.65

Precip Year to Date: 7.47

Sunset Tonight: 9:21 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43 am



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Today in Weather History

June 12th, 1924: A tornado moved southeast from the southwestern edge of Lake Kampeska, passing southwest of Watertown. Two barns and 20 smaller farm buildings were heavily damaged. This tornado was estimated to have F2 strength.

June 12th, 1983: Lightning struck and killed two cows near Miller in Hand County. Lightning also hit a home six miles north of Aberdeen, breaking a ceramic statue and blowing out light bulbs. Another home in Aberdeen was struck by lightning, rupturing a gas line and starting the house on fire. Also, heavy rains of up to seven inches fall around the area. Some storm total rainfall amounts include 2.00 inches at 2NW of Stephan, 2.40 inches in Miller, 3.03 at 4 miles west of Mellette, and 6.30 inches in Orient.

June 12th, 1994: In Hand County, a thunderstorm caused an estimated 3 million dollars in crop damage. Hail, the most significant being baseball size, was reported in three- to four-foot-high drifts. About 70,000 acres of cropland and pastures were destroyed. The hail killed pheasants and ducks, and many cattle were injured. Many windows were broken in homes, holes were punched in mobile homes, the contents of dwellings were damaged from hail that entered through windows, and many vehicles were extensively damaged.

June 12th, 2013: A line of thunderstorms moving northeast across the region brought damaging wind gusts from 60 to 80 mph to parts of central and northeastern South Dakota. Many branches and several trees were downed. Some buildings were also damaged, with a couple of structures destroyed. An estimated eighty mph wind destroyed a cabin on the east shore of the Missouri River and north-northwest of Pierre. A hundred-foot by seventy-five-foot storage building was flattened south of Doland in Spink County. Tractors, planters, and other equipment in the building were damaged.

1881 — Severe thunderstorms spawned more than half a dozen tornadoes in the Lower Missouri Valley. Five of the tornadoes touched down near Saint Joseph MO. In south central Kansas a tornado nearly wiped out the town of Floral. Hail and high winds struck Iowa and southern Minnesota. In Minnesota, Blue Earth City reported five inches of rain in one hour. (David Ludlum)

1947 — A heavy wet snow blanketed much of southern and central Wyoming, and gave many places their heaviest and latest snow of record. Totals included 18.4 inches at Lander, 8.7 inches at Cheyenne, and 4.5 inches at Casper. (11th-12th) (The Weather Channel)

1969 — Record late season snows covered parts of Montana. Five inches was reported at Great Falls and east of Broadus. Billings, MT, tied their June record with lows of 32 degrees on the 12th and the 13th. (The Weather Channel)

1983 — The state of Utah was besieged by floods and mudslides. Streets in downtown Salt Lake City were sandbagged and turned into rivers of relief. The town of Thistle was completely inundated as a mudslide made a natural dam. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced softball size hail around Fremont and Ames, and 3.5 inches of rain in less than one hour. Four and a half inches in less than an hour caused flooding around Ithica, NE. A tornado destroyed a mobile home near Broken Bow, NE, injuring both occupants. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Fifteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville with a reading of 40 degrees. Drought conditions continued to intensify across the eastern half of the nation. Rainfall at Nashville, TN, was running 12.5 inches below normal. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Tennessee Valley to the Central Appalachians in the afternoon and evening, and produced severe weather in Oklahoma and Texas during the evening and night. Thunderstorms spawned ten tornadoes, and there were 164 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 100 mph at Amarillo, TX, and wind gusts to 110 mph at Denton TX. Hail three inches in diameter was reported at Tucumcari NM. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 — A tornado in Hammond, Wisconsin damaged 22 homes and produced \$3.6 million in damage (Associated Press).



When God Disrupts Our Plans

God can use trials to redirect our path—

what feels like disruption might be divine intervention.

Psalms 119:71-72: 71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Perhaps you've seen a TV show where a man is about to step in front of a moving vehicle. Then someone else races onto the scene, tackling him to prevent catastrophe. Stunned and indignant, the near-victim fumes at the rescuer—until realizing he's just been saved from a far worse outcome.

Our trials can serve a similar purpose. It's easy to get so caught up in daily routines or consumed by chasing a goal that we miss what God has in mind for us. When we're this focused on our own desires, we become more vulnerable to making choices that don't align with His Word.

But our heavenly Father wants the best for His children. He'll go to great lengths to position us for blessing. That's when we may suddenly find ourselves facing unexpected difficulty—a job loss, a health crisis, a broken relationship. We wonder, Why is God letting this happen to me?

Does this sound familiar? It may be that He's protecting you from something you can't see. Or drawing you back to Himself. The psalmist understood this and wrote, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" (v. 71). If you're going through a trial, consider whether God might be redirecting you—disrupting your plans so He can implement His.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.11.26

18 19 25 31 37 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 36 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.09.26

9 30 36 38 40 3

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$413,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 21 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

6 9 23 45 51 6

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$29,530,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 36 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

4 14 16 26 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$129,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 51 Mins 27 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

8 35 41 42 67 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 20 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.10.26

12 31 38 60 66 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$258,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 20 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

How a hospital is helping solve a hometown housing shortage

By BART PFANKUCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

In a first-of-its-kind project in South Dakota, the small hospital in this southern Black Hills town is investing in a subdivision project to provide housing for its employees.

Fall River Health Services, an independent nonprofit medical center in Hot Springs, is paying \$2.3 million of the overall \$3.4 million cost of infrastructure for a subdivision that could create 48 new affordable housing units a few hundred yards from the hospital campus.

Like many South Dakota employers, Fall River Health is enduring a long-range worker shortage that has put pressure on its existing staff and driven up costs due to hiring of expensive traveling, short-term medical employees.

As of May 29, the hospital had 19 job openings, most of them in direct patient care, a shortage of 10% of its needed workforce of 190. In the past couple years, the hospital has lost dozens of prospective health care workers because they couldn't find affordable or suitable local housing, said Jesse Naze, chief financial officer at Fall River Health.

"You can't stop providing care, so we need workforce to care for our local population," Naze told News Watch in an interview. "It's not wages or benefits keeping employees away, it's simply that housing just isn't available."

The hospital's investment in the Cascade Hills subdivision project is part of a growing trend in which South Dakota employers are finding ways to provide housing for their workers.

Wall Drug president Rick Hustead told News Watch in 2025 that he provides mobile homes and other housing for more than 100 seasonal employees who would otherwise have nowhere to live.

Similarly, business operators in Keystone have said they provide recreational vehicles as housing for summer workers who arrive under the H-2B Visa program each year.

However, Chas Olson, executive director of the South Dakota Housing Development Authority (South Dakota Housing), told News Watch he isn't aware of any South Dakota project in which an employer invested money on permanent housing that will benefit the business as well as the community at large for years to come.

The private hospital with 25 beds saved money for years to be able to invest in the proposed housing project in which some homeowners could see a financial benefit if they take jobs at the hospital and stay for at least five years.

"The hospital is fronting the cash to get this infrastructure put in so we can get this project going," Naze said. "There's only so much local workforce, so we need to attract employees, and this should be a big help."

Evidence: Various sizes and price points

South Dakota Housing has high hopes for the Hot Springs project and in October approved a nearly \$1.2 million grant to support the project. The money came from the \$200 million Housing Infrastructure Financing Program approved by the Legislature in 2023.

Olson said the authority had been in discussion with officials from Hot Springs and Fall River Health for several years to generate a plan for an affordable housing project.

"We knew they were having issues recruiting and keeping workers there because the (existing) housing is old and aging," Olson said.

The Cascade Hills project has a solid development plan, highly engaged people managing construction and strong overall community support, he said.

"When you combine all those things, it gave us comfort that the housing will get built," Olson said.

According to a project summary by South Dakota Housing, the infrastructure grant could help lower lot prices by \$30,000 each and allow rents to be up to \$100 a month cheaper. The grants typically help pay expenses such as installation of utilities, streets, and curb and gutter.

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The current plan for the subdivision is to build a mix of single-family and multi-family buildings that will create 48 total housing units with a wide range of square footages and prices, said Dennis Fischer, a former Hot Springs schools superintendent who now serves on the local hospital and housing boards.

Single-family homes of about 1,300 square feet should cost about \$350,000, including the lot. Smaller villas, duplexes and townhomes could come in as low as \$285,000, including lot costs, he said. Any of those prices fall within the South Dakota Housing Authority threshold for "affordable" housing projects.

"We're hoping that isn't out of reach for homeowners," he said.

Project managers are working out details of a special mortgage for hospital employees who buy a home in which lot costs of up to \$54,000 could be returned if they remain employed for five years, Fischer said.

As of May 27, the subdivision site remained open pastureland, though Fischer said infrastructure work could begin any day, with utility installation and road work the starting points. The 11-acre project on state Highway 71 south of the city will include space for a community park, he said.

The housing units will be built by private developers, who are not yet on board, Fischer said.

The local school district has some of the same hiring challenges as the hospital, he said.

"Teachers who couldn't find housing turned down job offers or left after a couple years because they didn't feel like they were getting ahead in terms of home ownership," he said.

The partnership approach to funding the subdivision has expedited the timeline of the project, Fischer said. "The hospital didn't have deep enough pockets to do it on their own."

Fischer said a hopeful timeline for full development and sale of the housing would be in eight to 10 years, though he acknowledged it could be longer.

Insights: Study shows need for new ideas

A 2023 housing study revealed some of the challenges facing Hot Springs, many of which are common in small cities across the state. The city lost 4.5% of its population from 1990 to 2000 and saw another 10.1% decline from 2000 to 2010, falling from 4,129 to 3,395 over that 20-year period, according to the U.S. Census.

Perhaps more alarming and indicative of the city's increasing position as a retirement community is that 60% of the city's population was age 45 or older in 2022, with a loss of 125 people age 14 or under in the decade prior.

Meanwhile, from 2010 to 2020, Hot Springs lost 121 households, roughly 7% of its housing stock, though some data models anticipated household growth in the near future.

The study also noted strengths and weaknesses in the city's current and prospective housing efforts. Strengths include the city's role as a regional economic center, strong educational and health care systems, abundant outdoor recreation, attractiveness to retirees and generally affordable housing.

Negatives include the increasing population age and declining condition of housing, low-pay jobs, commutable proximity to Rapid City and a lack of available infrastructure.

The study ultimately called for development of about 100 local rental units, finding more developable land for single-family homes, and improvement or demolition of dilapidated houses and mobile homes.

Interestingly, the study called directly for two components that would be achieved by the Cascade Hills subdivision: promoting employer involvement in housing development and greater development of twin-home and townhouse units.

Limitations: Holistic housing approach needed

So far, the city of Hot Springs and its residents have been big supporters of the Cascade Hills project, said Aerial Allison, city administrator.

With no significant resident opposition and a unanimous city council vote, the city approved a \$2.3 million tax increment financing (TIF) district to expedite development, she said.

No local tax money is expected to be needed on the project that could generate opportunities for new or existing employers to hire workers and potentially expand, Allison said.

"We've got some job openings (in city government) and I know they've been struggling at the hospital to fill jobs and retain them," she said. "But I think all our employers would see a benefit."

Yet the subdivision is only one part of a larger strategy to increase housing options in Hot Springs, Al-

lison said.

Quality housing has been increasingly hard to come by as the city's reputation as a pleasant retirement community has grown. Adding to the demand is a large number of out-of-state people who moved to Hot Springs and bought homes during and since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Not to blame them for anything, but we're really excited this project is focused on workforce housing," Allison said. "We're trying to get people of working age to come here and bring their family and put their kids in our schools and shop at our local stores."

Meanwhile, the city has become more assertive recently in trying to buy and rehabilitate or tear down dilapidated housing, especially in some aging local mobile home parks. Part of that plan is to find suitable housing for people who leave those aged houses, Allison said.

The city is also trying to connect homeowners with resources to help pay for home improvements or to upgrade their housing status, she said.

"Our jobs here haven't really kept up with other rising costs, and especially housing costs, so people may need some help," Allison said.

If the Cascade Hills project goes well, and houses get built and sold fairly quickly, it could spur more housing development, population growth and economic activity in the city, she said.

"It's a good first step for us, a really big first step," she said.

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What to know about the EU's new rules on migration and asylum as they come into effect

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS, RENATA BRITO and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union is set to implement a new set of rules Friday governing how each of its 27 member states will deal with irregular migration and asylum-seekers.

The European Migration and Asylum Pact is the culmination of years of grueling negotiations that overhauled the previous system, which was widely considered a failure and gave far-right parties a potent issue to win votes.

All EU members were meant to be prepared for Friday's implementation by adapting laws, training staff and beefing up border infrastructure. But even the European Commission admits no member is completely ready.

European Commissioner for Migration Magnus Brunner hailed the pact as a milestone but noted "it is only the beginning and not the end."

Human rights advocates warn the pact could add to the difficulties asylum-seekers face while trying to find safe haven in the EU.

Here is what to know:

Screening and fast-tracking border procedures

Under the new rules, foreigners will be screened at EU borders for up to seven days before they are admitted in line with a common procedure.

"The pact turns 27 different ways of doing things into one," said Hans Leijten, executive director of Europe's border security and coast guard agency Frontex.

Asylum-seekers deemed to pose a "security threat" or from countries listed as "safe" by the EU will go through faster asylum procedures of three months instead of six. Some applicants may be kept at the border while their cases are processed. They will be given only one chance to appeal a rejected application.

The European Commission says some member states still need to implement a new biometric database called Eurodac that will register and store information of adults and children as young as 6.

Many more countries need to set up border facilities to handle screening, asylum processing and detentions. Work also is needed to ensure there is independent rights monitoring at the border, the commission

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said.

Swiftly returning rejected asylum-seekers

One of the pillars of the new pact is to speed up voluntary and forced returns of rejected asylum-seekers by automatically issuing return orders when an application is rejected. A clear political priority of the center and far-right politicians who swept to power in 2024 across the EU is that returnees are slated to be sent to countries deemed safe like Syria and Bangladesh.

The European Agency for Asylum said there were about 802,000 pending first-time asylum applications in March.

Member states also are working with EU lawmakers to allow for the creation of "return hubs" in third countries where they can send migrants who can't be repatriated. Questions about deportation centers are being quietly negotiated between a group of five nations and potential partners abroad.

Sharing the burden between member nations

Among the most contentious issues that has divided EU countries was sharing responsibility for asylum-seekers, especially in times of crisis. Because migrants must apply for asylum in the first EU country they enter, front-line countries along the Mediterranean like Greece and Italy have long complained they bear the weight of irregular arrivals.

Citing their inability to cope under pressure, these countries allowed passage of many migrants to northern and western Europe without permission. This shifted some of the burden onto northern countries like Germany and Sweden that saw asylum applications soar to record levels, bringing their migration systems to the brink of collapse.

The new pact includes a solidarity mechanism to ensure border countries aren't left on their own. Other EU members will either take in a share of asylum-seekers or offer financial support to compensate. Countries can also offset their share if they receive migrants through secondary movements, meaning when a migrant arrives in one country and moves on to another.

Not all member states were happy with the solution. Poland continues to suspend the right to asylum, citing the weaponization of migration on its border with Belarus. Hungary's new prime minister, Péter Magyar, is continuing many of the hard-line immigration policies of his predecessor, Viktor Orbán, including a refusal to accept migrants.

Pact will not bring immediate change

The commission has acknowledged work on implementing the pact will continue after June 12 since no country is fully ready.

"It won't be a like a light switch turning on June 12," said Susan Fratzke, a senior policy analyst with the Migration Policy Institute. "Some of these things will take time."

The lack of clarity and consistency is problematic, said Susanna Zanfrini, director of the International Rescue Committee's Italy office.

That ambiguity "creates uncertainty for both people seeking protection and the organizations supporting them at the very moment they most need clear information about their rights, options, and access to support to survive, recover and rebuild their lives," she said.

Human rights groups cry foul

Human rights advocates have criticized the new rules, arguing they undermine the right to seek asylum by rushing assessments.

They say accelerated procedures introduce racial profiling while denying international protection to applicants with legitimate claims, and they warn of an expected spike in prolonged detentions at EU borders.

Judith Sunderland, senior refugee and migrant rights adviser at Human Rights Watch, said the new pact "slams the door in the face of people who deserve to be treated with dignity and to have a fair hearing of their claims for protection."

Lukas Gehrke, the Brussels chief for the International Organization For Migration, said that while the EU ramps up deportations, it should also provide more, not less, funding for integration programs for the millions legally allowed to stay in the bloc.

Ahead of G7, Carney softens tone toward Trump with trade talks at stake

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney became a symbol of middle power resistance after a celebrated speech earlier this year, but he is expected to be more muted in his criticism of U.S. President Donald Trump at an upcoming summit in Europe.

Carney's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, helped make him an international political star in January, when he declared the global rules-based order over and condemned coercion by great powers on smaller countries. The prime minister received widespread praise and attention for his remarks and upstaged Trump at the gathering.

But the Group of Seven summit of industrialized democracies that begins Monday in France comes ahead of the scheduled July 1 review of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, the latest iteration of the North American free-trade pact that has intertwined the economies of the United States, Mexico and Canada since the early 1990s. It is a crucial moment in trade talks, and Trump said this week that he may not renew the deal.

More than 70% of Canada's exports go to the U.S., so preserving the accord is critical for Canada.

Canadian historian Robert Bothwell said Trump is more of a problem for Carney "than anybody else because we are more exposed to the United States than anybody else."

Trump leaves for the G7 summit right after he hosts UFC fights at the White House on Sunday for his 80th birthday.

The summit will unfold as tensions are ramping up between Trump and Canada. One of the world's most durable and amicable alliances — born of geography, heritage and centuries of common interests — is broken, as seen in several recent examples of tension between leaders.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, the leader of Canada's most populous province, had a reception with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington canceled Monday at the last minute. Vic Fedeli, one of Ford's ministers, said if Trump forced the chamber to cancel, "Ford should be wearing that as a badge of honor."

Trump said again this week that the U.S. doesn't need anything that Canada has. Carney has set a goal for Canada to double its non-U.S. exports in the next decade, saying Trump's trade war is causing a chill in investment.

In other developments, the opening of a major Canadian bridge across the Detroit River that Trump previously threatened to block was delayed Thursday due to unresolved issues.

Trump's actions, including launching a trade war and suggesting Canada become the 51st U.S. state, have infuriated Canadians and created the political environment for Carney to win the job of prime minister after promising to confront Trump.

Trump administration officials keep noting that only two countries, China and Canada, retaliated against America in the trade war. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer says Canada's retaliatory measures are a major issue in talks.

Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal, said Carney seems to have moderated his tone toward the Trump administration to avoid worsening relations.

"There is a clear tension between what Prime Minister Carney said in his Davos speech about middle powers standing up to hegemony and his attempt to nudge the U.S. administration 'in the right direction' with regard to the USMCA review and trade policy more generally," Béland said.

Carney has downplayed Trump's most recent comments about Canada becoming the 51st state.

Canada and Mexico want the USMCA to be renewed for another 16 years. Trump has mused about withdrawing from it. More likely it will be subject to annual reviews for the next 10 years.

Carney arrived in Paris on Friday morning and will meet with French President Emmanuel Macron in the evening, a few days before the summit in Évian-les-Bains, France.

The prime minister will also travel to Ireland this weekend to meet with the Irish prime minister in a bid to diversify trade away from the U.S.

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This is Carney's ninth trip to Europe in the 15 months since he became prime minister in March 2025. The U.S. "will clearly remain Canada's largest trading partner for the predictable future," Béland said, calling it an inescapable reality that Carney "must keep front of mind even as he seeks to make Canada somewhat less dependent on trade with the U.S."

World shares surge and oil prices slip over 4% after Trump claims a breakthrough in Iran war talks

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — World shares advanced on Friday, tracking big Wall Street gains, while oil prices sank more than 4% after U.S. President Donald Trump claimed there was a breakthrough in talks to end the Iran war.

High oil prices have added to inflationary pressures globally as the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for the world's oil and gas transit, remained largely closed.

Expectations that an agreement between the U.S. and Iran may help reopen the strait sent oil prices tumbling.

Brent crude oil, the international standard, fell 4.5% to \$86.31 per barrel. That was still much higher than the roughly \$70 a barrel level it was at before the war began in late February.

Benchmark U.S. crude shed 4.3% to \$83.90 a barrel.

In share trading, the future for the S&P 500 was 0.2% higher, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.4%.

Investors in the U.S. and elsewhere were awaiting the debut Friday on Wall Street of SpaceX, Elon Musk's rocket company, which is set to become the largest IPO on record, raising around \$75 billion.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX picked up 1.8% to 24,654.78, while the CAC 40 in Paris rose 1.9% to 8,356.38. Britain's FTSE 100 added 1.2% to 10,428.98, despite official data that showed its economy contracted by 0.1% in April.

Asian markets logged bigger gains.

South Korea's Kospi jumped 4.6% to 8,123.62, narrowing losses from earlier this month from sell-offs of shares related to artificial intelligence. The Kospi has nearly doubled over the past six months, with a record closing high of 8,801.49 on June 2.

Samsung Electronics, South Korea's most valuable company, advanced 7.9%. Computer chipmaker SK Hynix rose 2.3%.

Tokyo's Nikkei's 225 gained 2.8% to 66,020.04, also led by gains for technology stocks. SoftBank Group, a multinational investment holding company with a strong AI focus, was up 1.5%. Chip equipment maker Tokyo Electron jumped 7.3%.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 1.7% to 24,658.91 and the Shanghai Composite index rose 1.1% to 4,031.51.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 closed 2% higher at 8,804.00.

Taiwan's Taiex gained 2.4%, while India's Sensex advanced 1.4%.

The renewed investor optimism came after Trump said Thursday he had called off military strikes against Iran. He asserted that the U.S. had made "a great settlement of the war with Iran," adding that an extension of the shaky ceasefire between the two sides could be finalized in "the next few days." Few details were offered.

Global markets retreated earlier in the week as tensions between the U.S. and Iran escalated.

"Trump has said many times before that a deal is very close, only for hostilities to resume," ING commodities analysts Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a note on Friday. "However, there does appear to be more positive noise around the deal this time."

"(But) we would be cautious about assuming that the extension of the ceasefire is a done deal," they added. "Even if it is, it could be fragile."

On Thursday, Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 surged 1.8% to 7,394.30, back to where it was in early

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May. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied 1.9% to 50,848.75, and the technology-heavy Nasdaq composite climbed 2.5% to 25,809.66.

Prices of AI and other tech stocks have been volatile the past week in part due to renewed worries that massive investments and soaring share prices are creating a bubble liable to burst. On Thursday, U.S. chipmaker Marvell Technology climbed 11.1%, but technology company Oracle lost 8.5% on worries over its high spending, despite strong-than-expected quarterly results.

In other dealings early Friday, the U.S. dollar rose to 160.04 Japanese yen from 159.93 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1580, up from \$1.1578.

Ukraine hits fuel supplies to Crimea, sparking a fuel crisis on the Russian-held peninsula

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukrainian drone strikes on refineries, depots and pipelines. Tanker trucks attacked and left ablaze along the land corridor from Russia to Crimea. Motorists waiting in long lines at gas stations.

In a new blow to the Kremlin's narrative that Moscow is winning the 4-year-old war in Ukraine, Kyiv's forces have targeted supplies to Crimea, triggering the worst fuel crisis on the Black Sea peninsula since it was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014.

The persistent attacks reflect the growing intensity and efficiency of Ukraine's drone strikes and have caught Russia off guard and struggling for a response.

As the country marks the Russia Day national holiday on Friday, signaling the start of summer vacations, the gas shortages are threatening to cause further disruptions to the tourism-dependent region with its beaches and resorts.

In a rare public acknowledgment, the Kremlin has recognized the scope of the problem and promised to address the issue quickly.

Ukraine's successes have highlighted its ability to inflict painful damage on Russia and change the course of the conflict while Moscow's advances recently have ground to a near halt. On Thursday, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine reached its 1,569th day, surpassing the duration of World War I.

Crimea's importance to Russia

Crimea has been a jewel in Russia's imperial crown since it was seized from Turkic-speaking Tatars in the 18th century after Moscow defeated the Ottoman Empire.

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 when both republics were part of the USSR. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the diamond-shaped peninsula became part of newly independent Ukraine.

Russia kept a naval base in Sevastopol, and when a Moscow-friendly Ukrainian president was ousted by a popular uprising in February 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent in troops to overtake Crimea. Weeks later, Moscow annexed the peninsula following a referendum that most of the world refuses to recognize.

Soon afterward, a Moscow-backed separatist insurgency erupted in eastern Ukraine, and fighting there raged with varying intensity until the February 2022 invasion. Russian troops concentrated in Crimea quickly seized large parts of southern Ukraine early in the war and secured the land route to the peninsula.

Since early in the war, Ukraine has fired missiles and drones to try to dislodge Moscow's hold on the territory. The Ukrainian military sank several Russian warships in the Black Sea and at their Crimean bases, crippling Moscow's naval capability and forcing it to redeploy its fleet to Novorossiysk.

Ukraine also methodically targeted munitions depots, airfields and Putin's prized asset, the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea to Russia. The span was struck by a truck bomb in October 2022 that killed five people, blew up two sections of the bridge and required months of repairs. More attacks on the bridge followed in 2023 and 2025.

Ukraine's attacks on the land corridor to Crimea

Since the Kerch Bridge attacks, Russia has channeled most fuel and other supplies along the highway

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and railroad via the occupied territories along the Sea of Azov coast. Those shipments were interrupted last month, when Ukrainian drones hit fuel trucks on the highway that Moscow once deemed to be safe, leaving behind dozens of burning vehicles.

Other relentless Ukrainian strikes hit refineries, oil depots and pipelines deep inside Russia, hurting its oil exports and causing domestic fuel shortages.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War noted the synergy between the longer-range attacks and those disrupting supplies to Crimea and other occupied regions.

"The long-range strike campaign is therefore reducing Russia's production capacity, while the midrange strike campaign is hurting Russia's ability to transport the gasoline Russia is still able to produce," it said in an analysis.

Making matters worse, Ukrainian drones this week repeatedly hit the Chonhar Bridge, which links mainland Ukraine and Crimea over a shallow strait. Authorities deployed pontoon bridges.

The Ukrainian military said it struck the bridge to disrupt the movement of troops, ammunition and fuel from Crimea.

Queues and gas rationing

It's not immediately clear how the fuel disruptions will affect Russian military operations, but residents of Crimea and other occupied territories are keenly feeling the blow.

The peninsula has had periodic fuel shortages from Ukrainian strikes before, but this crisis is the worst since its 2014 annexation.

At the end of May, authorities restricted the sale of gasoline to 20 liters (5 1/3 gallons) per vehicle owner per week using prepaid coupons. Those were snapped up immediately following their release on an official messaging app channel, and motorists lined up for hours, waiting to refuel.

Social networks have been abuzz with requests and advice on where to find fuel, and authorities launched a hotline for tourists who have found themselves trapped.

While fuel shipments over the Kerch Bridge long have been suspended for security reasons since the Ukrainian attacks, fuel also has been carried by ferries. Those shipments are expected to increase.

Some motorists bring their own gas over the bridge from the mainland, but they are restricted to carrying 100 liters (about 26 1/2 gallons) per vehicle. Some speculators are selling gas at double the market price.

Crimea attracted nearly 7 million tourists last year, and it had hoped to top that number this year. The business daily Kommersant reported that nearly 80% of hotel bookings were canceled in late May and early June.

Some hotels offered gasoline as a bonus for new bookings, offers that were quickly snapped up.

Some travelers were unsettled by a Ukrainian drone attack earlier this week on a passenger train traveling from Moscow to Crimea, injuring its driver and killing his assistant. That led to a brief suspension of service, with passengers taken by buses.

An earlier attack on a commuter train in Crimea killed one person and injured three others, forcing authorities to shift schedules to limit service during daytime hours.

Kremlin pledges action

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged the Crimean fuel shortages earlier this week and promised that "measures were being taken" to deal with them.

The Russian Defense Ministry has been silent about the Ukrainian attacks on the land corridor, while some war bloggers have harshly criticized the military for failing to anticipate the strikes and its slow response.

Some suggested military escorts for fuel trucks while others urged stepping up strikes on Ukrainian bridges, fuel storage sites and other infrastructure.

Amid the fuel crisis and the finger-pointing, Ukraine dealt another symbolic blow to Russia, striking a historic Sevastopol building that houses a huge panoramic painting that depicts the defense of the city during the 19th century Crimean War. The painting was effectively destroyed by fire during the attack, according to Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Kremlin-appointed head of Crimea's largest city.

Given Putin's focus on Crimea, military blogger Valery Shiryayev said the attack would certainly anger the Russian leader.

"It's hard to find another work of art, another part of national heritage, whose destruction would be as painful for Putin," he said.

Disaster drills helped prevent more deaths when powerful quake hit the southern Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine officials said Friday that years of disaster-preparedness drills helped prevent a larger casualty toll when one of the strongest earthquakes in 50 years struck the south and left 55 people dead with 31 others missing.

The 7.8 magnitude offshore quake, which struck Monday off Sarangani province, injured about 1,120 people and displaced more than 45,000 people, about half them still in emergency shelters, after the quake damaged more than 12,600 houses across farming towns and cities.

Many were still too traumatized to return home because of strong aftershocks, officials said.

Days after the earthquake hit, more videos of the chaotic moments have been posted on social media showing horrified crowds witnessing the collapse of small buildings, and flag-raising ceremonies turning chaotic when the ground started to shake on the first day of school after a long summer break.

Students are seen on videos screaming in panic, but staying seated or standing still outside school buildings, with some covering their heads with their hands as teachers admonished them to calm down.

One video, which has gone viral on Facebook with millions of views, showed dozens of grade-schoolers screaming and breaking into tears as they sat on a tree-ringed school ground, which visibly swayed them from side to side. A tin roof shed nearby later collapsed with a loud thud, prompting many to dash away, but were asked by teachers to return and stay seated.

The grade school in the coastal town of Malita in Davao Occidental province reported no injuries from the quake.

"This incident serves as a reminder of the importance of earthquake preparedness and the value of regular disaster response drills," the Mahayahay elementary school said in a statement.

Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said years of disaster-preparedness drills helped people anticipate and brace for extreme events like Monday's quake, one of the strongest to hit the archipelago in a half-century.

He said that it was also fortunate that the quake hit at 7:37 a.m., a few minutes before work and classes were to start indoors.

"It's good that our efforts to educate people on what to do when earthquakes hit somehow paid off," Bacolcol told The Associated Press.

He expressed concern, however, over the collapse of some buildings that he said should have withstood the powerful quake, if construction standards based on the country's building code were followed.

Ednar Dayanghirang, director of the Office of Civil Defense in a quake-hit region of about 5 million people, said that regular disaster-preparedness drills helped reduce casualties in many ways, including by preventing deadly stampedes.

"We required all school principals to take one-day courses on incident management, then they appointed disaster-response teams among teachers to deal with earthquakes, tsunamis," Dayanghirang said. "They listened and they learned."

The Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, is often hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions because of its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the ocean.

Taylor Swift becomes the youngest woman inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame at age 36

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Taylor Swift became the youngest woman ever inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame Thursday night at age 36.

"It was instinctual. No one taught me how to do it," she said of songwriting through a raspy voice she attributed to screaming along to the night's performances and Wednesday night's historic NBA game between the New York Knicks and the San Antonio Spurs.

She told the room about her family uprooting their lives to move her from Pennsylvania to Nashville, Tennessee, as a tween.

"I will never be able to express my gratitude," the singer-songwriter said while holding back tears — crediting their sacrifice for her career.

She offered young songwriters advice: "You really have to prioritize what you love, down to your very core. Because you'll need that."

Steven Spielberg introduced Swift with a surprise speech about the power of songwriting. "There is something undeniable about how songs imprint on our souls," he said, before changing his focus to Swift. "Somehow Taylor knows us all too well."

Swift started her speech by acknowledging Spielberg. "Because of examples like Steven's, I trusted my imagination," she said.

The Gen Z singer Sombr launched Swift's segment by performing "Cardigan" and "Dear John" in front of her.

Swift has brought new eyes to this year's ceremony and undeniably shaped contemporary pop music trends with her songwriting. Swift is the youngest woman inducted, but Stevie Wonder, who started his recording career at 13, was the youngest ever inducted, it was announced on stage.

It was a notable moment in an evening full of them, where Swift, Kiss' Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley, Christopher "Tricky" Stewart, Alanis Morissette, Kenny Loggins and more were honored.

A night of celebrating songwriters

Tamar Braxton opened the gala at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City with a spirited tribute to a new inductee — the game-changing R&B songwriter, producer and rapper Christopher "Tricky" Stewart — with one of the biggest songs he's known for: Beyoncé's "Single Ladies."

He's also responsible for singer-songwriter Rihanna's "Umbrella," Mariah Carey's "Touch My Body" and Justin Bieber's "Baby."

Dallas Austin, a songwriter and producer known for work with Boyz II Men and Madonna, introduced Stewart. "Think about that catalog," he said, listing off those zeitgeist-shifting records. "Those are cultural moments."

Stewart thanked God, his family, artists he's worked with and mentors — giving a special shout out to Grammy award-winning music producer Antonio "L.A." Reid and the iconic singer-songwriter Babyface. "I wanted to be like L.A. and Baby," he reflected.

Kiss founders Simmons and Stanley — two and a half years after the band's farewell — were also recognized for their glam rock classics "Rock and Roll All Nite" and "I Love It Loud." The Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan covered the former, a fittingly fiery introduction for the band. He was joined by Goo Goo Dolls' frontman John Rzeznik for the latter.

Simmons wasn't present; Stanley said that he had a family emergency.

"Songs are the messenger," he said — the foundation of "every show."

Soft rock legend Kenny Loggins ("Footloose," "Danny's Song") and the alt-rock icon Morissette were also inducted.

For the latter, Brandi Carlile performed "Uninvited" alongside SistaStrings, before introducing Morissette.

"Writing to me is not a hobby," Morissette said, it's critical. "It's write or die." Then she performed "Mary Jane" and "You Oughta Know" from her 1995 album "Jagged Little Pill."

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For Loggins, Gavin DeGraw performed "Danny's Song," before Loggins told the story behind the tune in his acceptance speech.

Acknowledging writers and their hits

Taylor Dayne and Madison Cunningham performed Tina Turner classics written by Terry Britten and Graham Lyle in honor of their induction; John Fogerty was honored with the Johnny Mercer Award.

"I got my songs back!" Fogerty said, ending a nearly 30-minute speech, referencing the fact that he won the rights back to his catalog at age 80. Then he ran through a medley of his hits: "Proud Mary," "Fortunate Son," and "Have You Ever Seen the Rain" among them.

The songwriter Walter Afanasieff (Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You") was also recognized, a segment that began with an introduction by actor Jeremy Renner and included a monster medley of his biggest songs by R&B singer Sheléa, kicking off with his Christmas classic six months early.

"I wanted to be The Beatles," he said of falling in love with songwriting in his speech. "Sixty years later, I got to produce Paul McCartney."

An established tradition

British singer-songwriter RAYE received the prestigious Hal David Starlight Award. She ended her speech by stating that songwriters deserve a cut of master royalties.

Last year's inductees included George Clinton, The Doobie Brothers, Ashley Gorley, Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins, The Beach Boys' Mike Love and Tony Macaulay.

The Songwriters Hall of Fame was established in 1969 to honor those creating popular music. A songwriter with a notable catalog of songs qualifies for induction 20 years after the first commercial release of a song.

Some already in the hall include Gloria Estefan, Carole King, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora, Elton John and Bernie Taupin, Brian Wilson, James Taylor, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, Lionel Richie, Bill Withers, Neil Diamond and Phil Collins.

Kennedy Center board seeks pause of ruling ordering removal of Trump's name by Friday deadline

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's handpicked board at the Kennedy Center is mounting a last-minute effort to keep his name on the facade of the iconic performing arts facility before a court-ordered deadline to remove it by Friday.

The board voted Thursday to seek a stay of U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper's May 29 ruling that said Trump's name was illegally added to the Kennedy Center, according to a person familiar with the move who requested anonymity to discuss a private meeting. The formal request was filed late Thursday.

Cooper ruled that only Congress could institute a change to the Kennedy Center's name and ordered references to Trump be removed by Friday. He also blocked the administration from closing the cultural and arts venue for major renovations that had been planned to start in July and last for two years.

The board move marks a shift from a June 4 memo to staff from the Kennedy Center's Office of General Counsel saying email signatures, letterhead and other documents must reflect the name as "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts" or "Kennedy Center."

The Kennedy Center's website has dropped the president's name. And an email earlier this week sent to members offering ticket packages for the June 28 Mark Twain Award for American Humor ceremony came from the Kennedy Center without including Trump's name.

"The Trump administration's 11th hour gambit after waiting nearly two weeks evinces desperation," Norm Eisen, a board member at Democracy Defenders Action, and Nathaniel Zelinsky, senior counsel at the Washington Litigation Group, said in a statement. "That is what they should be feeling because they don't have a legal leg to stand on. We will be vigorously contesting this latest ploy as we have throughout the case on behalf of Congresswoman Beatty and the American people."

They represent Rep. Joyce Beatty, D-Ohio, an ex-officio member of the Kennedy Center's board who

filed the lawsuit seeking to remove Trump's name from the institution.

After ignoring the Kennedy Center for much of his first term, Trump has wielded tremendous influence over the venue during his return to office. Just a month into his second term, he ousted the center's previous leadership and replaced it with a hand-picked board of trustees that named him chairman. He brought in Richard Grenell to serve as president, a position he held until March when Matt Flocia assumed the role.

The center's lineup has included more Trump-friendly programming, serving as the venue for events such as the premiere of first lady Melania Trump's documentary, "Melania."

The board also announced it had renamed the facility the Trump Kennedy Center, a change scholars and lawmakers say must be initiated by Congress, and physically added the president's name to the building's facade.

The fallout from the arts community was swift and intense. Actor Issa Rae, musician Bela Fleck and author Louise Penny were among the numerous artists who withdrew from appearances, while consultants such as musician Ben Folds and singer Renée Fleming resigned. Earlier this month, the executive director of the National Symphony Orchestra, Jean Davidson, left to head the Los Angeles-based Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

In addition to voting on the stay on Thursday, the board backed a resolution recognizing Trump's "commitment to uphold this cherished American institution."

From white knuckles to open barbs, Trump and Macron bring a rocky history to the G7 summit

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The relationship between U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron started simply enough, with a handshake, nearly a decade ago.

But even then, there were signs of strain in their relationship — tensions that could be on full display during next week's G7 summit in France.

Back in 2017, Trump was a brash businessman just elected to America's most powerful office, and Macron was an upstart politician who had won his race in a landslide. At a NATO summit in Brussels, they clinched hands far longer than most people do when they meet for the first time. Neither seemed to want to be the first to break a grip so tight that it exposed white knuckles.

Nevertheless, a friendship was born. And early on, Macron seemed to be the one European leader with a knack for managing his mercurial, three-decades-older counterpart.

Macron invited the Republican president to join him for Bastille Day celebrations in July 2017, including an Eiffel Tower dinner date with their wives. Trump reciprocated by making Macron the guest of honor the following year at his first White House state dinner, the highest diplomatic honor the United States can extend to an ally.

But by the end of Trump's first term, the bromance had faded. And in his second term, the leaders now openly trade barbs, disagreeing over tariffs, Ukraine and the Iran war. That dynamic will be scrutinized next week when Trump and the leaders of Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy and Japan join Macron in the French lakeside resort of Evian-les-Bains for the G7 summit.

Trump's long-simmering frustrations with US allies could be on display

There could be awkward moments between Trump and Macron, as well as among Trump and the other G7 leaders he's criticized for not joining him in Iran.

"But I also think European leaders are quite professionals when it comes to politics, and in some ways diplomacy at this point, and will maybe see it as an opportunity as well," Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said in an interview.

Kurt Volker, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO, said the Trump-Macron relationship has been further complicated by the Iran war and Trump's complaints "that Europeans weren't helping, when they hadn't been consulted, and their interests are very much affected by this."

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"I think that was a negative for Macron," Volker said.

Trump joined Israel in a war against Iran over its nuclear program back in February without consulting other U.S. allies. He then complained publicly when European countries spurned his requests for their help.

Waning support for Ukraine in its war against Russia from the Trump administration "has really irritated the French," Volker said. "They feel this is important and we're not paying attention to it." Macron invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to join the leaders' discussions on Tuesday.

Macron is the G7 member who has dealt with Trump the longest

In Trump's first term, Macron appeared confident that he could persuade and influence the U.S. leader, but the relationship increasingly has come to be defined by their disagreements.

Macron now says he is "careful" about Trump's statements, suggesting he no longer takes them at face value. Their relationship remains cordial as each calls the other "my friend." But the relationship has also experienced some ups and downs.

As president-elect, Trump attended the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in late 2024 at Macron's invitation. After Trump began his second term in 2025, Macron was an early Oval Office visitor. The president wrote on social media that he was "delighted" to welcome Macron back to the White House and said the relationship with France has been "very special."

But at one point during the meeting, the French president publicly corrected Trump after he wrongly suggested that Europe would recover the money it had provided to support Ukraine. With a smile, Macron touched Trump's forearm and replied, "We provided real money."

Macron also condemned as "brutal and unfounded" new tariffs that Trump slapped on steel, aluminum and a broader range of European imports in early 2025.

But there have also been some lighter moments mixed with the tensions.

A documentary aired last year on French television showed Macron telling Trump during a phone call that Zelenskyy had agreed to a U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal. Trump replied, "You're the greatest."

Macron has often said he can reach Trump directly whenever he needs to — and proved his point during last year's U.N. General Assembly session in New York. After police officers blocked the French leader from crossing a street because traffic had been halted for Trump's motorcade, Macron whipped out his cellphone and dialed the U.S. president.

"How are you?" Macron said. "Guess what? I'm waiting in the street because everything is frozen for you!"

'This is not a show,' Macron has said about Trump's NATO ambiguity

Macron has argued that Trump's "America first" policies bolstered his case for a stronger European defense capability that would lessen reliance on the United States.

In April of this year, as Trump sent mixed signals about Washington's commitment to NATO after the start of the war in Iran, Macron delivered some of his sharpest criticism of the U.S. president.

"There is too much talk, and it's going in all directions," Macron said. "We all need stability, calm and a return to peace. This is not a show."

"You have to be serious, and when you want to be serious, you don't say the opposite every day of what you said the day before," he said.

Trump, while mimicking a French accent, recently has taken to reenacting a conversation he says he had with Macron over drug prices and tariffs. Trump also poked Macron by telling a private luncheon in April that his wife, Brigitte Macron, treats her husband badly. The comments were in a video the White House had posted on its YouTube channel before blocking access.

Macron didn't see any humor in Trump's comments. "The remarks I heard were neither elegant nor appropriate," he said. "They do not deserve a response."

Still, Macron has tried to accommodate Trump's schedule to ensure his presence at the summit in Evian-les-Bains, knowing that he has a record of leaving such gatherings early.

Macron originally had set Sunday, which is Trump's 80th birthday, as the opening day of the summit, but he pushed the start back a day because Trump is celebrating the occasion with a UFC show staged on the White House grounds.

Trump is raising expectations that this time he really will close deal with Iran to wind down war

By AAMER MADHANI, FARNOUSH AMIRI and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has long been looking for this weekend to be a big one for his presidency.

The World Cup returns to the U.S. on Friday for the first time in 32 years after Trump threw himself into winning the bid to co-host the soccer tourney during his first term. He'll be feted Sunday, his 80th birthday, during a UFC fight night that's expected to draw thousands to the White House grounds. Hours after the final bout, he's scheduled to jet off to the G7 summit in the French Alps for talks with several world leaders he's been beefing with over war and tariffs.

But Trump set expectations even higher for the coming days when he announced Thursday that the U.S. and Iran could come to terms this weekend on an agreement that would set the pathway to end the three-month-old war that's been broadly unpopular with Americans and has rattled global oil markets. He said he plans to dispatch Vice President JD Vance to the signing of the agreement.

Trump has said on several occasions in recent weeks that he's on the cusp of a deal without anything coming to fruition. A spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry told state television following Trump's comments that mediators were active but nothing had been finalized to end the conflict.

Still, Trump is claiming this time might be different.

The breakthrough comes after he threatened to escalate the conflict with more intense bombardment of Iran and by seizing control of Iran's oil industry, including capturing Iran's vital Kharg Island oil facility. The president's threats followed back-and-forth strikes this week that had rendered a temporary ceasefire agreed to in early April all but meaningless.

"They've taken a pounding like very few people could take," Trump said in an Oval Office exchange with reporters as he explained why he was confident that, this time, a deal would come through. "And they want to make the deal a lot more than I do."

Trump offered scant details about the settlement he says is taking shape, but told reporters that he believed the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who is believed to have been wounded on the first day of the war and has not been seen in public since, is ready to sign off on the deal.

Trump is billing the deal as "very strong," though he says it remains "a little conceptual," and says it would ensure Iran is blocked from ever developing a nuclear weapon.

Trump's heightened threats are aimed at creating an off-ramp

With the conflict intensifying over the past week, Trump's threat to escalate U.S. military action seemed in part aimed at demonstrating to the hawkish flank of his political base that he was willing to play "hard-ball" with the Iranians if they didn't come to a deal soon, said Ali Vaez, Iran director at the International Crisis Group.

Trump in March warned he would target Iran's infrastructure and put American troops on Kharg Island before he ultimately backed down, and the two countries agreed to the temporary ceasefire.

Almost immediately after raising the idea again on social media Thursday, Trump appeared to back away. He called into a morning show on Fox News Channel and questioned whether Americans had the "stomach" for an option that would require putting U.S. troops in harm's way.

Hours later, Trump announced he had decided to cancel orders for "very hard" strikes on Iran and said a deal was close.

Vaez said even as Trump was posting on social media Thursday about escalating strikes, mediators from Pakistan, Turkey and Qatar had been making progress in their talks with Iran.

At the same time, Iran also may have reset the equation for Trump with its decision last weekend to attack Israel directly for the first time since the ceasefire after Israeli forces carried out military strikes on Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

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With the move, Iran signaled that Israel could no longer bomb Lebanon without facing a meaningful reaction and in the process also raised the cost for the U.S. to follow through on its commitment to help safeguard Israel.

"It really does appear to me that Trump wants to bring this to an end, but his real challenge is that he's looking for a victory lap and an exit ramp and those two things are not necessarily compatible," Vaez said. Trump expresses frustration with war narrative

Trump has been boasting since the early weeks of the conflict that he'd already won the war — much of the Islamic Republic's leadership has been killed in the bombings and the Iranian navy and air force have been severely degraded.

But Iran continues to effectively keep the Strait of Hormuz closed, choking a waterway through which about 20% of the world's oil supply passed before the war, and has yet to agree to restart negotiations with the U.S. over its concerns about Iran's nuclear program, the main reason Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave to justify launching the war.

But the real problem, Trump grumbled Thursday, was largely a public relations issue.

"They could wave the white flag of surrender. They could say: 'We surrender, we surrender, we're finished, we've had it. The United States is the greatest power, praise be to Allah,'" Trump said on Fox News. "They could say it loud and clear. And the fake news would say it was a great victory for Iran."

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, a former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Trump has grown impatient with Iran and the renewed strikes and threats on Kharg Island and Iran's energy sector were intended to get the negotiations back to the "right place."

Polls show that the conflict is largely unpopular with Americans. McCaul said he believes the Iranians want to "try to drag this out as long as they can," closer to the midterm elections in November, because they see that as being to their benefit.

War will be high on agenda at next week's G7

Deal or no deal, the war will loom large during next week's talks at the Group of Seven summit in bucolic Évian-les-Bains, France.

Trump has frequently criticized some of the group leaders — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz — for resisting his calls to aid the U.S. and Israeli war effort.

The four leaders have also angered Trump by criticizing how he's gone about executing the war and his lack of consultation with allies before jumping into a conflict that's hurt the global economy as oil prices have surged.

But Trump said he is optimistic he could have an agreement before his talks with leaders in France.

"The strait will officially open as soon as we sign, which could be soon, very soon — maybe over the weekend in Europe," Trump said.

Can the man behind a giant pro-Trump sign ride the president's praise to Congress?

By MICHAEL HILL and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

GLOVERSVILLE, N.Y. (AP) — Republican political candidates routinely highlight their devotion to President Donald Trump. But in upstate New York, Anthony Constantino is taking it to another level.

Constantino, a political newcomer and candidate in the June 23 Republican primary to succeed Rep. Elise Stefanik, boasts a giant "Vote for Trump" sign atop his successful sticker business in the city of Amsterdam. He recorded a hip-hop album titled "Thank you President Trump." He even gifted Trump a big bronze statue of Trump himself last year at his West Palm Beach golf course.

Constantino's antics have not earned him fans among local party officials, who overwhelmingly support his opponent, state Assembly Member Robert Smullen, in the 21st Congressional District race. But Constantino has won over one powerful Republican who still has the power to sway primaries: Trump.

"Anthony is strongly supported by many of the most Highly Respected MAGA Warriors in our Movement,

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including Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Roger Stone!" Trump wrote in an endorsement of Constantino.

The president added: "The sign is still there!"

Constantino's battle against Smullen, a former U.S. Marine Corps colonel, is shaping up to be another test of Trump's pull at the ballot box, pitting the brash MAGA disciple against a more traditional conservative in the solid-red district.

Constantino has relentlessly attacked Smullen, calling him a "Trump hater" and giving him a derisive nickname out of the Trump playbook — "Slimebob." He also doesn't miss a chance to feud with the state's Republican leadership.

"The New York GOP is a failing establishment, it's a losing establishment," Constantino said in an interview. "They reject outsiders. This happened with Donald Trump. The Republican Party tried to keep Donald Trump out, as well, because they knew he was going to reform things."

Smullen has cast himself as the adult in the room, stressing his experience in the state Legislature, his military service, and his own ties to Trump.

"I think I directly represent the vast majority of the people in this district, their values, what they think about issues," he said.

The district is 'not your country club Republican party'

The largely rural district sprawls across most of New York's northern tip and includes the Adirondack Mountains, the U.S. Army's Fort Drum, dairy farms and dozens of small cities, towns and villages.

It's solid GOP territory — Stefanik won her last race by 24 points — with registered Republicans outnumbering Democrats 215,000 to 134,000. Voters there skew older and white, with many prison guards, police officers, farmers and devoutly religious people, according to Jack McGuire, an associate professor of politics at the State University of New York at Potsdam.

"It's not your country club Republican party," he said.

Stefanik shocked the New York political world when she announced late last year that she was suspending her campaign for governor and would not seek reelection to the House.

Her decision came after she didn't get full-throated support from Trump in the governor's race, and it followed an episode where Trump withdrew her nomination to be his ambassador to the United Nations over concerns about Republicans' threadbare majority in the House.

Local Republicans first began angling for the seat after she was tapped to head to the United Nations, only to begin circling again when she launched her run for governor.

A clash of candidates and styles

Smullen, who represents parts of the district in the state Assembly, is running a traditional campaign, chatting up voters at volunteer firehouses and community events.

He highlights a 24-year military career that included three tours of Afghanistan and combat experience, along with his more than seven years in the state Legislature. His 2018 appointment by Trump to serve in the White House Fellows program, along with attending both of Trump's inaugurations, was a go-to line when Constantino moved to cast himself as the Trump candidate during a recent debate.

"The idea that I have never been a supporter of President Donald Trump is a lie, it really is," Smullen said during the debate. "And what's happening here is that if you say it long enough and if you say it hard enough then it's going to be true. But it's not true."

Local GOP officials and committees are backing Smullen, as is the chair of the state Republicans. He also has the support of the state Conservative Party, which guarantees him a line in the general election even if he loses the GOP primary.

Matt Capano, who owns a hardware store in Gloversville, a small city in the district, said he knew Smullen as his local state lawmaker and had to "give him a lot of credit" because of his experience.

Constantino — who found success with his company Sticker Mule — is more of a showman. His style has forced his buttoned-up opponent to let loose. Smullen's campaign launched an anti-Constantino website that excoriates him for, among many other things, his past registration as a Democrat.

"I am the conservative Republican in this race," Smullen said at the debate.

Constantino responded that he registered as a Democrat to vote for a childhood friend who was running

for political office while calling himself a "lifelong conservative."

It didn't take long for him to steer the conversation back toward the president.

"I've always had his back through the whole thing," he said of Trump. "In fact, in 2020, when he nicely exited the White House and a terrible person named Joe Biden entered, I went and I supported the president quietly by buying a Mar-a-Lago membership."

What to know about the growing opposition to Trump family-linked resort in Albania

By ZANA CIMILI Associated Press

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — A massive coastal development project linked to Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump, is facing growing resistance from protesters in Albania.

Thousands of protesters are taking to the streets in nightly protests, blowing whistles and holding up cardboard cut-outs of flamingos — one of the protected migratory bird species that could see their habitats threatened by the proposed luxury resort.

The government says the development on the Adriatic coast would be transformational for the former communist nation as it seeks to enter the high-end tourism market and pushes for European Union membership.

But the venture, spanning an abandoned island and a nearby stretch of seafront on Albania's southern coast, has drawn opposition from environmental campaigners and critics of longtime Socialist Prime Minister Edi Rama.

Outside forces blamed for anger

In an interview with The Associated Press, Rama vowed not to "step back" from the development and defended his administration's environmental record. He insisted the protests were being encouraged by malicious cyber activists overseas.

"There is a lot of manipulation. There are a lot of half-truths that become bigger and bigger lies by the hour," Rama said, accusing Iran of targeting his government.

The allegations, which Rama has made for several years, followed a dispute with Albania after it sheltered members of an Iranian opposition group in 2022. Iran has denied the claims.

Despite Rama's defense of the development, the protests have gathered pace, with supporters in Albanian communities in neighboring Greece and other European countries also holding rallies.

Kushner and Ivanka Trump found the site on a barefoot hike

The luxury project has two components: a coastal development in the Narta Lagoon area, which is a wildlife reserve, and a smaller resort on the nearby uninhabited island of Sazan, a communist-era military base.

The planned development of hotels, apartments, villas and a marina is linked to Kushner and Trump's daughter, Ivanka Trump. An investment firm linked to Kushner has been granted special investor status by Albanian authorities.

In an interview this week with U.S. podcaster David Senra, Ivanka Trump said they discovered the site by accident.

"We were on a friend's boat, and we stopped for a swim. Effectively, that's how we found it," she said. "We swam to the island. We went on a hike, barefoot all the way up to the top, and we were just captivated."

Harsh communist rule and pristine beaches

Albania has 450 kilometers (280 miles) of coast that remained largely underdeveloped during decades of harsh communist rule.

Protest groups fear sections of that pristine coastline could be snapped up by powerful investors. And public anger grew after video showed an activist being dragged by a private security guard while demonstrating at the site.

The development is planned within a nature reserve and one of Albania's most valuable biodiversity areas, a key stopover for migratory birds along the Adriatic coast.

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Since late May, excavators and other heavy machinery have entered the area, opening access routes, digging into the sand, clearing land among pine trees and installing fencing.

Environmental groups from Albania and elsewhere in Europe condemned the work, with one prominent local group charging that long-protected habitats are being "irreversibly destroyed."

A multibillion dollar bonanza?

Albania's state anti-corruption agency has confirmed it opened an investigation related to the project but has not disclosed details.

The government says the land earmarked for the project is privately owned. But competing claims have emerged questioning the privatization.

Rama has committed to the venture, saying it would align with Albania's ambition to become a major global tourism destination.

"Albania should not be a country that fears an extraordinary project like this one, where exceptional partners have come together to invest 4 billion euros (\$4.6 billion)," Rama said.

He added: "There is no chance for this investment to stop as long as I am here."

However, the demise of a similar project in Serbia offers a cautionary tale. In November, Serbia's Parliament passed a special law to enable the building of a luxury complex in the capital, Belgrade, to be financed by an investment company linked to Kushner.

The following month, Serbia's prosecutor for organized crime charged four people, including a government minister, with abuse of office and falsifying of documents to help pave the way for the development.

Kushner later withdrew from the planned multimillion investment that would have replaced a sprawling bombed-out military complex, a designated heritage zone whose legal protection was lifted by the former officials now on trial.

Supreme Court nixes Alabama request for nitrogen execution, which lower court ruled unconstitutional

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

ATMORE, Ala. (AP) — An Alabama man facing the death penalty by nitrogen gas was spared Thursday as the U.S. Supreme Court refused to set aside a lower-court ruling that found the method is unconstitutionally cruel, issuing a brief order that came well after the hour originally planned to initiate Jeffery Lee's execution.

The justices decided not to lift an injunction blocking Alabama from carrying out what would have been the nation's ninth execution by nitrogen gas, rejecting a last-minute legal battle by the state as it sought to carry out the sentence in the evening. A spokesperson for the Alabama Department of Corrections said the execution was off for the evening and the state would not try another method.

The high court voted 6-3 and did not explain its reasoning. Three of the conservative justices — Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Neil Gorsuch — said they would grant Alabama's request to lift the injunction and let the execution go forward.

In a statement the legal team for Lee, 49, hailed the decision and noted that his jury had voted for a sentence of life, which a judge overruled.

"His jury voted for life. Two courts ruled the method unconstitutional. Today, the Constitution prevailed," the statement said. "Now Governor Ivey can finish what the jury started: restore the jury's verdict of life without parole."

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall promised the families of the victims that authorities will continue to seek justice, saying in a statement: "The State is prepared to do whatever is necessary to see Mr. Lee's lawful sentence carried out."

"Tonight's ruling is a miscarriage of justice, not for us, but for Jimmy Ellis and Elaine Thompson, who Jeffery Lee brutally and senselessly murdered and left on the floor of their place of business," Marshall said. Tonight I am also keeping their families in mind, many of whom were prepared to witness the final act of justice be served."

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Prison officials said Lee did not request a final meal Thursday but had potato chips, Skittles, water and a Sprite in the hours ahead of his possible execution.

The ruling was at least a temporary, rare victory for opponents of capital punishment in a state that has had one of the busiest death chambers in the country. And it capped an extraordinary legal back-and-forth over the humaneness of nitrogen gas as an execution method.

Legal challenge wended its way through the courts

Lee filed a lawsuit challenging Alabama's protocol as a violation of the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment, and U.S. District Judge Emily Marks ruled the method constitutional in May.

But a three-judge panel from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed her decision Monday, saying the three minutes it could take for an inmate to lose awareness is an "intolerable" time frame "given the suffering that would likely take place under Alabama's nitrogen hypoxia protocol."

Marks reevaluated the case and ruled again Tuesday saying Lee had shown "that the protocol constitutes cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment." The state appealed to the Supreme Court.

"If that ruling stands, it would be unprecedented in American history. Not only does it portend the first-ever permanent ban on a legislatively enacted method, but it would expand the concept of cruelty well beyond the bounds of the Eighth Amendment," lawyers with the Alabama Attorney General's Office wrote.

Lee's lawyers asked the high court to keep the execution on hold, saying in a response that Alabama was asking it to intervene at the eleventh hour "to allow an execution that has been found unconstitutional to proceed."

The decision blocks Lee's execution in the immediate future, but it is unclear how long the reprieve will last. The state maintains that nitrogen is constitutional, and the lower-court order blocks only that method and other means of execution such as lethal injection and the electric chair, both of which are authorized in Alabama.

Nitrogen executions introduced in the state 2 years ago

Alabama began using nitrogen gas to carry out some executions in 2024. The method involves strapping a respirator to a person's face and replacing breathable air with pure nitrogen gas, causing death from lack of oxygen.

Nitrogen has been used in eight executions in the United States — seven times in Alabama and once in Louisiana. Lee was scheduled to be the ninth.

During the previous Alabama nitrogen executions, the inmates shook, pulled at the restraints and exhibited labored breathing. During the state's last execution by nitrogen gas, 30 minutes elapsed between Anthony Boyd exhibiting signs of being impacted by the gas and state officials closing the curtain to the viewing room to signal the execution was complete.

The state has maintained that the method is constitutional and causes no more suffering than other execution methods.

Lee, who is currently housed at William C. Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, was convicted of two counts of capital murder for killing Ellis and Thompson while robbing a pawnshop on Dec. 12, 1998.

Prosecutors said Lee entered Jimmy's Pawnshop with a sawed-off shotgun and shot Ellis, the owner, and Thompson, an employee.

Alabama no longer allows judicial overrides in capital cases

A jury voted 7-5 to give Lee a sentence of life imprisonment. However a judge overrode that and sentenced him to death.

Alabama ended the practice of judicial override in 2017 and no longer allows a judge to disregard a jury's sentencing decision in death penalty cases.

Bestselling author John Grisham called on Gov. Kay Ivey to honor the jury's decision and commute Lee's sentence to life without parole.

"The practice of a judge overriding a jury was declared unconstitutional and so indefensible that Alabama itself abolished it in 2017," Grisham said in a statement. "Jeffery Lee's jury made its decision, the Alabama Legislature later agreed that juries, not judges, should decide life or death sentences."

Ivey, for her part, said Thursday night: "While I am disappointed the Supreme Court did not allow the state to proceed with Lee's chosen method of execution, I remain committed to ensuring that justice is ultimately served for his victims."

Jury convicts the brother of Massachusetts attorney general of sexual assaults

By The Associated Press undefined

BOSTON (AP) — A jury Thursday convicted the brother of Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell of sexually assaulting women while he posed as a rideshare driver.

Jurors found Alvin Campbell, 45, guilty of 21 out of 22 counts for sex assaults from 2017 to 2019, the Suffolk County district attorney's office said. He was found guilty of charges including aggravated rape, kidnapping and photographing an unsuspecting nude person.

The jury was deadlocked on one of the rape charges.

"We will determine our action, if any, at a future date on that charge," the district attorney's office said in a statement.

Campbell faces up to life in prison for aggravated rape when he is sentenced on June 29.

Campbell posed as a rideshare driver to target women outside bars or other locations, prosecutors said.

His younger sister became the first woman of color to win statewide office in Massachusetts when she was sworn in as attorney general in 2023. A spokesperson for the attorney general's office didn't immediately return an email from The Associated Press late Thursday seeking comment on the verdict.

Andrea Campbell has spoken previously about her family's troubled history in the criminal justice system, including her brother's rape charges.

"One thing I do frequently is share my story because I think there are so many who carry their story with a sense of shame and don't want to talk about it, including the criminal aspects of my family," she said in a previous interview with the AP. "But there is no shame in one sharing their story. There is power in it."

The attorney general is the chief lawyer and law enforcement officer in the state.

After the verdict, Suffolk County District Attorney Kevin Hayden told reporters he hadn't spoken with the attorney general.

Alvin Campbell "deceivingly and calculatedly" preyed upon women in their most vulnerable moments, Hayden said. "I can't imagine what that horror must have been like for them."

Campbell's defense attorney didn't immediately respond to a phone message and email from the AP.

Hayden expressed gratitude to the women who testified: "We're happy that we were able to secure justice and accountability for them and so we thank them."

Trump nominates US Attorney Jay Clayton to be director of national intelligence

By COLLIN BINKLEY, LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday he is nominating Jay Clayton, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York and a former Securities and Exchange Commission chairman, as director of national intelligence.

Trump announced the nomination on social media amid pressure from Congress to name a permanent replacement for Tulsi Gabbard, who announced her resignation last month. Trump faced intense pushback over his decision to name Bill Pulte, head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, as acting director. The job oversees the coordination of 18 intelligence agencies.

The resulting uproar led to a standoff in Congress after Democrats said they would refuse to renew foreign intelligence powers unless Trump pulled Pulte's nomination and named a permanent nominee.

"Few people anywhere in the Legal Community are respected at the level of Jay," Trump wrote. "I en-

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courage the United States Senate to confirm Jay as soon as possible."

Speaking later Thursday in the Oval Office, Trump said he still plans to keep Pulte in the role "for a little while" after earlier saying he wants Pulte to downsize the office. He called Clayton an "incredible talent" and said, "Nobody has better credentials."

As the U.S. attorney in Manhattan, Clayton oversees the most prestigious of the Justice Department's prosecution offices, with a vast portfolio ranging from terrorism and espionage cases to security fraud and public corruption.

He took over from interim U.S. Attorney Danielle Sassoon, who resigned in February after refusing to carry out orders from the Justice Department to drop corruption charges against Mayor Eric Adams. The case was eventually dropped after prosecutors from Washington submitted a request to a judge.

Republicans hope to move quickly on nomination

The Senate Intelligence Committee plans to hold a confirmation hearing for Clayton on Wednesday, according to a person who requested anonymity to discuss it ahead of an official notice.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told reporters that the Senate hopes to receive Clayton's nomination paperwork from the White House as soon as Thursday. "We will move quickly," he said.

Democrats are holding up the renewal of a key surveillance law, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, in protest of Trump's decision to temporarily tap Pulte. They say they won't support an extension of the law, which expires at midnight Friday, until Trump withdraws Pulte's appointment.

Trump previously said Pulte would take over on June 19. It is unclear whether the Senate could move quickly enough to confirm Clayton before that date.

"I don't know what realistic is, but we're gonna probe the limits of it," Thune said.

Connecticut Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said that he has "known and respected" Clayton for decades and that if Trump had named him as the DNI nominee last week, "lots of pain might have been avoided."

"His intelligence, temperament and deep commitment to public service will make him a terrific DNI," Himes said.

Asked about Clayton's nomination, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said, "Pulte has to go."

"He cannot be in the DNI role," Schumer said. "It's too important."

Trump's pick has led SDNY during a tumultuous period

Clayton navigated his way through a 14-month tenure in the Southern District of New York without clashing with the federal judges in the busiest court in the nation, unlike his counterparts in upstate New York and New Jersey. After his interim term expired after 120 days, the judges of the Southern District appointed him as U.S. attorney.

Clayton was sworn in April 2025 on the same day three prosecutors resigned, saying they felt pressured to admit wrongdoing or regret about prosecuting the case against Adams.

Then, weeks later, the office had to withstand controversy over the Trump administration's firing of one of its most respected and successful prosecutors, Maurene Comey. She claims she was fired because of Trump's dislike of her father, former FBI Director James Comey.

Under Clayton, the Manhattan U.S. Attorney's Office facilitated the unsealing of thousands of pages of court records from the prosecutions of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell — documents that were made public as part of the Justice Department's release of records related to the late sex offender and his longtime confidant.

Clayton filed documents with the court explaining the process the government followed in releasing the materials.

Clayton has also overseen the prosecution of former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and Maduro's wife, Cilia Flores, on drug trafficking charges.

Clayton has overseen cases involving national security threats

Several recent terrorism cases brought by Clayton's office touch on the global threats and influences that he'll be navigating if confirmed as director of national intelligence.

They include the May arrest of Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, an Iraqi and Iranian citizen accused of plotting 20 attacks in Europe and Canada and planning to attack a Manhattan synagogue and Jewish centers in Los Angeles and Scottsdale, Arizona, in retaliation for the U.S. war on Iran.

"There are foreign nations and terrorist organizations that see our success as a threat. A threat that they want eliminated," Clayton said at a recent press briefing. "That is a stark truth."

"And don't take my word for it," he added. "Take their words and their actions. When your enemies tell you something, and when they act, you should know that they mean it."

The first Trump administration tried in June 2020 to install Clayton, then the chairman of the SEC, as U.S. attorney in Manhattan, but backed down and instead allowed Deputy U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss to serve in the post. The reversal came after then-U. S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman agreed to step down, following assurances that probes into Trump allies would not be disrupted and that Strauss could lead the office.

At the time, the office was looking into dealings by Rudy Giuliani, who was serving as Trump's personal attorney, and was also investigating the actions of a state-owned Turkish bank.

Former Raider Henry Ruggs denied parole nearly 5 years after deadly car crash

By JESSICA HILL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Ex-NFL player Henry Ruggs was denied parole nearly five years after killing a woman in a car crash in Las Vegas, the Nevada Board of Parole Commissioners ruled Thursday.

Ruggs, a former first-round draft pick and Las Vegas Raiders wide receiver, drove his sports car at speeds up to 156 mph (251 kph) in the city on Nov. 2, 2021, slamming into a vehicle that killed driver Tina Tintor and her dog, Max. Tintor was 23.

Prosecutors at the time said his blood-alcohol level taken within the required two hours after the crash was 0.16%, which is twice the legal limit for drivers in Nevada. Before the crash, he was at TopGolf, a sports entertainment venue in Las Vegas, according to prosecutors.

Ruggs pleaded guilty in May 2023 to felony DUI causing death and misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter. He was sentenced in August 2023 to a three- to 10-year prison sentence. The earliest he was eligible for parole was August 2026.

Ruggs will go before the parole board again three months before Aug. 24, 2027, his mandatory parole release date, according to Kathi Baker, executive director of the Nevada Board of Parole Commissioners.

"Mr. Ruggs, and our office, continue to feel the grief and loss suffered by Ms. Tintor's family," Ruggs' attorneys David Chesnoff and Richard Schonfeld said in a Thursday statement, adding that they were disappointed by the parole board's decision to deny parole.

The attorneys said there is "overwhelming evidence" of Ruggs' accepting responsibility for his conduct and engaging in community outreach efforts related to DUI prevention, including completing educational programs while in custody.

Tintor's family could not be reached for comment.

During the May parole hearing, Ruggs said he took full responsibility for the actions that led to Tintor and her dog's death.

"Not a minute goes by where I don't think of the pain I caused her family, her friends and the Las Vegas community," he said during the hearing, of which the AP obtained a copy.

He said he used his time in custody to educate young people and others about decision-making and the dangers of drinking and driving. He also said he met with Tintor's family to apologize.

"I know I can never alleviate the pain that I caused, but if released I plan to continue to do my work to educate young people on the dangers of reckless behavior and hopefully avoid future tragedies," he said.

Mexico gets off to roaring World Cup start with a 2-0 win over South Africa in the opening match

By CARLOS RODRIGUEZ AP Sports Writer

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico made an immediate impression on the largest World Cup in history, giving the roaring home crowd at the iconic Azteca Stadium a huge jolt of excitement four years after a major disappointment.

Mexico's players understood the intense pressure and high expectations they were facing on Thursday in the opening match of the first 48-team World Cup tournament. But they embraced their role and got off to a winning start by beating South Africa 2-0 in a match that also produced three red cards.

"I made an effort to explain to them what a World Cup and an opening match on home soil meant, but they are young and had to experience it for themselves," said Mexico coach Javier Aguirre, who played for his team the last time Mexico hosted the tournament in 1986. "I can no longer talk about having played in a home World Cup, because they already know what it's like."

Julián Quiñones and Raúl Jiménez scored the goals for Mexico, which is co-hosting the 2026 tournament with Canada and the United States.

The Mexicans rebounded from the massive disappointment of being eliminated after the group stage four years ago in Qatar. That followed seven straight trips to the round of 16 — an achievement that became more of a curse for failing to reach the quarterfinals.

But there is hope this year. Mexico has reached the quarterfinals twice in its history, and both times it was the host country — in 1970 and 1986. Aguirre was on that team in 1986.

In front of a capacity crowd of 80,824, Mexico got working fast and took the lead in the ninth minute when Quiñones scored. Jiménez added the second goal on a header in 66th — his 46th for Mexico but first in three World Cup tournaments.

"We didn't play well in the first half, but we could have gone into the break leading 3-0 and no one would have complained — we were far superior," Aguirre said. "In the second half, it felt like we relaxed a bit, but starting with a win is good, and we can certainly improve."

With his goal, Jiménez moved into a tie with Jared Borgetti for second place in scoring for Mexico's national team. He is six goals shy of leader Javier "Chicharito" Hernández.

Jiménez wears a protective headguard because he was seriously injured in November 2020 while playing for Wolverhampton Wanderers in a Premier League match against Arsenal. He fractured his skull and had to have surgery. He was out for eight months and returned in July 2021.

South Africa players Sphephelo Sithole and Themba Zwane were both given red cards, forcing the team to finish the match with only nine players. Mexico defender César Montes was then given a red card in injury time.

It was the first time there were three red cards given in the opening match of a World Cup tournament. And it's the most in a World Cup game since four were handed out when Portugal played the Netherlands at the 2006 tournament in Germany.

"This level is much higher than whatever level we played before. We played a good team, and we played a good game. I saw a desperate Mexico," South Africa coach Hugo Broos said. "We must improve in the next days. We'll get over the disappointment."

Quiñones, a 29-year-old forward who was born in Colombia, was the top scorer in the Saudi league this season. He was one of six starting players who made their World Cup debut for El Tri.

Mexico now has three points in Group A and will next play South Korea next Thursday in Guadalajara. South Africa will play the Czech Republic on the same day in Atlanta.

"It would be important (to win the group), but right now the only thing we're thinking about is the match against Korea — being better than them and trying to win," Aguirre said. "We're going to take it step by step and see what the future holds."

Man pleads guilty to killing a top Minnesota Democrat and her husband while posing as an officer

By TIM SULLIVAN and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minnesota man who pleaded guilty Thursday to killing a top Democratic lawmaker and her husband admitted he spent months identifying elected officials to target and stalked them before driving to their homes in the middle of the night, dressed as a police officer, with the intention of killing them.

The Minneapolis-area attacks last summer by Vance Boelter, 58, sparked the largest police search in state history and reverberated across the country, with elected officials fearing that escalating threats and polarization could lead to more violence. Boelter pleaded guilty so that federal prosecutors would not seek the death penalty; instead, he agreed to serve two consecutive life sentences, plus 40 years.

Boelter, disguised in a tactical uniform and realistic mask, parked his police-style SUV with emergency flashing lights in the driveway of House Speaker Melissa Hortman's home at around 3:30 a.m. on June 14, 2025. He rang the doorbell, shouting: "Police, welfare check," according to a plea agreement made public Thursday. Mark Hortman, her husband, answered the door.

Mark Hortman told Boelter that his wife was also in the home, and Boelter said he'd need to see her before he could leave, according to the plea agreement. When Mark Hortman asked, Boelter gave him a fake name and badge number and, when Hortman followed up for his jurisdiction, Boelter hesitated before naming a different Minneapolis suburb, the agreement states. Boelter then immediately took out his gun to shoot Hortman multiple times, according to the agreement.

Boelter then "rushed forward through the front door into the home" and shot Melissa Hortman repeatedly "as she attempted to flee upstairs," according to the plea agreement. Both Melissa and Mark Hortman were killed.

Boelter had already been to the home of state Sen. John Hoffman that night, shooting and critically injuring him and his wife, Yvette, while their daughter was nearby.

There were brief sobs from the courtroom gallery Thursday where family members of the Hortmans sat alongside John and Yvette Hoffman as the attacks were described in detail. Again and again Boelter simply said "yes," as his attorney questioned him about his actions, including whether he pressed a pistol to Melissa Hortman's head and fired.

U.S. Attorney Daniel N. Rosen told reporters after the hearing that the death penalty was only taken off the table after Boelter agreed to the longest possible prison sentence for the six federal charges.

"Political violence is a scourge plaguing America," Rosen said. "Those that would commit political violence at any level should take heed: the Justice Department will seek and obtain the longest prison terms available for your crimes."

A statement posted on John Hoffman's Facebook page said there is no justice for the Hortmans, and "there is not justice when our family and our state will never truly heal. While the legal process may provide accountability, true healing requires something more from all of us."

The statement called on Minnesotans and Americans to "treat people with respect, to stop de-humanizing each other, and to stop dividing our country with hate and rhetoric."

Boelter also faces state charges, including two counts of murder and four counts of attempted murder as well as charges of impersonating a police officer and animal cruelty. The Hortman family's golden retriever was gravely injured in the shootings and had to be euthanized. The Hennepin County Attorney's Office said Thursday that the federal plea agreement does not affect the state's case, which had been on hold pending the resolution of the federal case.

Boelter also stopped outside the homes of two other lawmakers in the Minneapolis suburbs that night. At one, he knocked but no one answered. At the other, he was apparently frightened away when a police officer, believing he was a fellow officer, approached him as he sat in his vehicle.

Boelter, wearing his orange jail sweatshirt and sweatpants as he sat in the courtroom between two of his attorneys, listened closely as U.S. District Judge John Tunheim talked through each of the six charges

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and their maximum sentences. Tunheim accepted the guilty pleas and said he would set a date soon for sentencing.

Boelter was captured near his home in rural Green Isle, about an hour's drive from Minneapolis, the day after the shootings, which prosecutors have said were politically motivated but which remain in many ways unexplained.

"Dad went to war last night," Boelter messaged his family that morning. "Words are not going to explain how sorry I am."

Boelter, an evangelical Christian with politically conservative views who had traveled to Congo as a preacher and missionary, spent much of his life in the food service industry. He had been struggling to earn a living before the shootings, after the failure of a security company he'd founded.

John Hoffman said in a lawsuit filed against Boelter in April that his left arm and hand likely would never fully recover and that he also had permanent injuries to his digestive and urinary systems.

Yvette Hoffman was left with permanent physical weakness, the lawsuit said, while their adult daughter, Hope Hoffman, who was there and called 911 but was not shot, suffered severe psychological trauma.

FISA spy powers are almost certain to expire after Congress fails to act

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, LISA MASCARO and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key surveillance tool that allows the United States to collect intelligence abroad appears certain to expire after Congress on Thursday failed to temporarily extend the program, in a protest of President Donald Trump's temporary pick to head the nation's intelligence agencies.

Trump had doubled down on his choice of Bill Pulte for acting director of national intelligence, even though the federal housing finance regulator has little experience for the job. Democrats said they would not support the renewal of Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, known as FISA, unless the Republican president withdrew Pulte's appointment and nominated a permanent replacement as director of national intelligence.

The House vote collapsed in bipartisan fashion, with 19 Republicans and nearly all Democrats rejecting the temporary measure, 198-218. The Senate tried to approve its own versions, but also failed, dimming the chances to prevent what could be rare lapse of spy powers. The law expires Friday at midnight.

After those votes, Trump announced he was tapping Jay Clayton, a U.S. attorney who previously served as chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, as his permanent pick as intelligence director. But the president's move did not seem able to break the standoff over Pulte before the deadline.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, when asked about Clayton, said, "Pulte has to go."

"He cannot be in the DNI role," said Schumer, D-N.Y. "It's too important."

The impasse could soon result in limitations on what intelligence the U.S. government can collect abroad just as World Cup games begin in cities around the country and ahead of celebrations for the nation's 250th anniversary. While the provision has expired briefly before, this would be the first lengthy lapse, at a time when the U.S. and Iran have been engaged in missile strikes that are testing a fragile ceasefire in the war.

A lapse would not automatically deprive the government's authority to conduct surveillance, but could open the door to court challenges of the program. That could lead to stale intelligence, lawmakers said, including the type of information included in the president's daily briefing.

"We have done everything we possibly can," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, who blamed Democrats for the breakdown and said he would not be recalling lawmakers back to Washington as they left for a weeklong recess. "It is detestable, it is dangerous, it is going to jeopardize the security of the American people."

Democrats said Trump and the Republicans are the ones putting national security at risk by installing Pulte to the job. Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said Pulte has "weaponized" his position in the federal government to go after Trump's critics.

Jeffries said it was a window into the White House's thinking that Trump "could put Bill Pulte forward and

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the country wouldn't react adversely to it." He said the president must "come to the table and demonstrate leadership so we can reopen good faith negotiations about how best to extend surveillance authority."

Trump has said he wants Pulte to begin downsizing intelligence agencies.

GOP leaders lobby the White House, to no avail

Congressional Republicans have lobbied Trump all week to quickly nominate a permanent replacement.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Republican leaders had "made our views known" to the White House. But on Thursday he blamed Democrats for the FISA impasse. "This critical tool is set to go dark on Friday, and what the consequences of that will be, we cannot predict," he said.

Thune praised Trump's choice of Clayton and said the Senate could move "fairly quickly" to confirm him.

Trump had said he was interviewing five candidates for intelligence director after the resignation of Tulsi Gabbard but he wouldn't let Democrats "extort us" over the pick.

The president wants Pulte to serve in a "sort of renovation role," Johnson said, to help the Office of the Director of National Intelligence be "renovated and downsized."

But Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee, led by Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut, said in a letter to the president that Pulte is a "uniquely poor choice" to serve even in the acting capacity.

Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers skeptical of Pulte have pointed to his lack of intelligence experience and his record at the Federal Housing Finance Agency. In that position, he has been linked with criminal referrals over allegations of mortgage fraud by public officials Trump sought to punish, including New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat; Sen. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.; and Lisa Cook, a board member of the Federal Reserve.

Himes also welcomed Trump's pick of Clayton as a "terrific DNI," saying had he been nominated earlier, "lots of pain might have been avoided."

FISA will lapse at midnight Friday

Section 702 of FISA allows agencies such as the CIA, National Security Agency and FBI to collect communications from foreign targets overseas without a warrant.

While members of both parties who cite privacy issues have long wanted to limit the authority, there was broad bipartisan support to renew it, especially after Republicans and Democrats recently worked out a compromise bill.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, has worked with Republicans on the compromise legislation to renew the authority. But he called Pulte's appointment to replace Gabbard "a live hand grenade" disrupting the process.

"Let me be clear -- while I am glad to see the president finally come to his senses, before the Senate can take up a FISA extension there needs to be a clear guarantee that Mr. Pulte will not serve as acting DNI," Warner said in a statement.

Warner said either Gabbard must remain in place or the administration must designate her Senate-confirmed principal deputy, Aaron Lukas, as the acting head through any transition.

Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, have warned the administration to prepare "for a potential significant gap in foreign intelligence collection."

More than 30 lawsuits filed against aerospace company in California over damaged chemical tank

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

More than 30 lawsuits have been filed against GKN Aerospace after one of the company's tanks containing a highly flammable chemical overheated and threatened a catastrophic explosion last month, forcing the evacuation of about 50,000 residents in California's Orange County.

Debbie Cohan, who lives about 500 feet (152 meters) from the aerospace facility in Garden Grove, wasn't told to evacuate until several hours after the leak started, according to her complaint. Her suit said she experienced nausea and headaches for several days afterward.

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Melanie Rose Burciaga of nearby Westminster had just given birth to her first child and had to leave the hospital when the evacuation orders came in, her lawyer said in a lawsuit.

And Juan Diego Orozco was part of a street repair crew working in Garden Grove on the day the overheating started. He said he suffered a headache and went to the hospital due to difficulty breathing and vomiting, his lawyer said.

More than 100 individuals — including some families with pets — as well as local businesses are suing GKN Aerospace, saying the U.K.-based company was negligent in maintaining a safe facility, especially since it's located in a large population center.

Ten of the cases were filed as class actions in federal court, while 21 are in state court and cover one to 31 plaintiffs. The suits seek compensatory and punitive damages.

A spokesperson for GKN Aerospace told the AP in an email Thursday: "GKN respects the legal process and will respond to these lawsuits in due course."

Adam Zimmerman, a professor at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law who is not involved in the litigation, said the federal cases will likely be consolidated and the state cases will likely be moved under one judge, to ensure they are handled efficiently. Some of those state lawsuits may be moved to federal court, he said.

Pressure on the company increased on Wednesday when FBI agents served a search warrant at the facility to collect documents and records related to the "storage, use, or disposal" of methyl methacrylate, the chemical inside the affected tank.

The Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday that it had joined the FBI to "search for and seize evidence of potential federal environmental crimes." The agency declined to provide more information, saying it doesn't comment on criminal investigations.

GKN Aerospace makes cockpit windows, canopies and windshields. The tank that overheated starting on May 21 contained 6,000 to 7,000 gallons (22,700 to 26,500 liters) of methyl methacrylate, which is highly flammable. The liquid is used in the manufacturing of plastics and coatings, such as Plexiglas.

Health officials said no contamination or fumes were released, and they plan to monitor the air for several months. Exposure to the chemical can cause serious respiratory problems, neurological issues and irritation to the skin, eyes and throat, according to the EPA.

Although the tank did not explode, tens of thousands of residents were evacuated from the area for three to five days until crews were able to stabilize the tank.

Blodgett said that the company was cooperating with federal authorities.

GKN Aerospace senior vice president Steve Carlin spoke at a community meeting Tuesday, saying he was sorry that the event occurred, and that it was especially unsettling because the company has a long history with the community.

Many of the lawsuits say the company had a duty to maintain the tank, cooling system, valves and monitoring systems to keep the community safe.

The complaints say the residents were forced to leave their homes and had to pay for hotels, food and other daily needs, which created a financial burden. They also said they experienced anxiety during the evacuation process and continue to be concerned about exposure to chemicals.

Businesses in the area also suffered. The emergency happened over Memorial Day weekend — a time when many restaurants and food service companies bring in some of their best revenue of the year.

"Our data shows approximately 3,000 businesses were forced to shut down because of the evacuation, and at least another 3,000 businesses right outside the evacuation zone while not forced to close, but had their revenue dropped considerably because of the tank failure and evacuation," said lawyer Richard McCune, who has filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Big Rob's Pizzeria and Fruit Caboose Concessions.

Lawyers say the FBI investigation will help their legal cases.

"We trust that the search will uncover important information and materials related to this crisis," said lawyer Sean Litteral, who represents Jonathan Sanchez, a father of two children, including an infant born just days before the incident.

Lights! Camera! Cage match! The White House lawn's Octagon is ready for Trump's 80th birthday bash

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It looks from afar more UFO than UFC.

Maybe it's the kind of contraption that has carried space aliens to the White House to force a meeting with America's leader.

But come closer and you'll see the contours of the eight-sided cage, 30 feet (9 meters) in diameter and shaped, with careful precision, like the MMA league's signature Octagon.

That is, a STOP! sign flipped on its edge, with wire-mesh sides and padded corners fitted with different sponsors' logos: Morgan & Morgan, Bud Light, Dodge Ram, Corona Extra and Polymarket, which identifies itself as the world's largest prediction market.

Overhead looms The Claw, a four-sided mass that arcs more than 90 feet (27 meters) into the air and features lights, speakers, thick snakes of wiring and four large screens so fans not seated right next to the Octagon can follow the cage fighting below.

Think more of the four-sided, metal grabby thing that tries to grasp stuffed animals at a video arcade rather than what house cats have — hence the extraterrestrial vibes.

And surrounding all that are risers filled with gray folding chairs forming a temporary arena expected to seat 4,000-plus people for the seven UFC fights being staged on Sunday to celebrate the 80th birthday of President Donald Trump and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence's signing.

'Quite attractive to a lot of people'

For non-UFC fans, all of this might be disorienting under any circumstances. But the temporary arena is covering nearly the entirety of the White House's South Lawn, where Marine One usually lands to ferry the president to out-of-town trips and gobs of kids scramble in the grass during the Easter Egg Roll every spring.

More than \$60 million and tens of thousands of hours of labor have been poured into building the arena, according to a court filing from the National Park Service, which oversees the South Lawn and is contesting a lawsuit meant to block the event.

The White House says the UFC is covering the costs, though the filing states that seven agencies — including the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Aviation Administration — have "allocated significant resources and manpower."

Fighters, their entourages and assorted support staffers are expected to take over the driveway and part of the West Wing when they're not fighting. But they'll enter the arena via curtained-off walkways with access to the Octagon.

They, as well as ordinary attendees of Sunday's spectacle, will have picturesque views of the White House's Executive Residence and its storied Truman Balcony on one side and the Washington Monument towering in the distance on the other. All of it will be accentuated by swirling spotlights, and perhaps even sweat and blood pouring off the fighters pummeling each other.

A packed pre-event schedule includes a press conference at the Lincoln Memorial with UFC chief Dana White and the fighters on Friday night.

There's also a ceremonial weigh-in for combatants on Saturday at the Ellipse, a park near the White House, where organizers expect 120,000-plus visitors to watch Sunday night's proceedings on large screens after winning free tickets in a lottery.

Stunt athlete Travis Pastrana is also set to do a potentially death-defying backflip on a dirt bike on the White House lawn as part of the preshow extravaganza.

Trump has called the Octagon and its Claw "quite attractive to a lot of people." He's even suggested that maybe the temporary structure could become permanent, like the Eiffel Tower, which he notes was originally built as part of the 1889 World's Fair but then was never taken back down.

Only the president knows how serious that suggestion really is.

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The fights will go on rain or shine — despite a lack of covering

Work on the arena began May 20 and has continued for weeks. During a walk-through for reporters on Thursday, construction noises — particularly sanding and hammering — could be heard. Giant cranes were carrying materials around overhead, though that was for the \$400 million ballroom that Trump is building nearby, not the UFC fight.

The remaining grassy lawn around the arena, on the other sides of the White House, has been fitted with supplemental spotlights. But the grass that normally grows between the White House and the start of the risers for the arena is now gone, with nothing but dusty dirt that will need to be resodded when this is all over — unless the president really does decide to leave the arena up permanently.

There's also a large Freedom 250 logo standing between the White House and the arena. Nearby, crews removed the tables and yellow patio umbrellas from Trump's refurbished Rose Garden and were power-washing that space, as well as the colonnade to the Oval Office, in preparation for the fights.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio signed a cooperation agreement with UFC that will see both institutions provide fight training and health and diet regimens, while promoting teamwork and leadership among youth around the world.

"We are so polarized," Rubio said. "There are only a handful of things that bring people together in one place at one time, united by their interest in one thing. We need more of those."

Later Thursday, crews began testing the sound system, unleashing a deep rumbling — and sometimes unsettling bass notes — throughout the West Wing. During a subsequent Oval Office event, the music from the lawn was loud enough that the 1970s hit "Boys are Back in Town" rollicked in the background as Trump spoke.

Sunday's event starts at 8 p.m. ET. As darkness falls, crews will illuminate The Claw in red, white and blue, and the mass of lights will offer projections that make it seem as though the entire structure has been enveloped in a twirling stars and stripes pattern.

The weather forecast calls for hot and muggy conditions with thunderstorms possible. The underside of The Claw's tower features an overhead cover that should keep the fighters reasonably dry should it rain — and Trump is also likely to watch from a protected, covered area.

But everyone else would almost certainly get wet.

White has vowed that even heavy lightning — when The Claw might make a conspicuous target for bolts — wouldn't stop the show.

"I don't care if it snows," White said.

US stocks jump to their best day in 2 months on hopes for a deal to get crude flowing globally again

By STAN CHOIE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks rallied to their best day in two months, and oil prices fell Thursday after President Donald Trump called off his threat to bomb Iran in the evening. That raised hopes for a potential deal that could get the global flow of oil going again.

The S&P 500 jumped 1.8%, coming off a back-to-back drop that had yanked it back to where it was in early May. The Dow Jones Industrial Average leaped 929 points, or 1.9%, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 2.5%.

Stocks immediately veered higher in midday trading after Trump said on his social media network that "discussions with the Islamic Republic of Iran have been brought to the highest level of Iranian leadership and approved" and that the time and place of a signing will "be announced shortly."

A deal to end the war with Iran could reopen the Strait of Hormuz and allow oil tankers to carry crude again from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide. The price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude sank 2.6% to \$87.71. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 2.9% to \$90.38, though it's still above its roughly \$70 price from before the war.

Worries had been high because the United States and Iran launched attacks over the past several days

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threatening a more than monthlong tenuous ceasefire.

High oil prices caused by the Iran war have sent inflation painfully upward, and a report on Thursday showed that prices at the U.S. wholesale level increased by more in May than economists expected. The effect is worldwide, and the European Central Bank on Thursday became the first major central bank to raise interest rates in response.

Higher rates can keep a lid on inflation. But they also slow economies and undercut prices for all kinds of investments, including stocks and cryptocurrencies. They hit investments seen as the most expensive in particular, and some critics are calling the artificial-intelligence industry a bubble where investment inflated too far.

Big swings for AI stocks have been yanking the U.S. stock market up and down over the last week, as they went from roaring to records to suddenly turning lower. The big concern is whether such stocks shot too high, too fast because of AI mania, and their careening moves have sometimes reversed direction by the hour.

AI stocks had already been rolling back up their roller coaster early Thursday, before Trump made his announcement on Iran.

Marvell Technology climbed 11.1%. It's coming off a manic stretch where it plunged 16.7%, soared 9.6% and then fell more than 5% for two straight days. Just before that, it had a one-day surge of 32.5% that was its best in history when Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang suggested it could be "the next trillion-dollar company." It was worth a bit more than \$190 billion at the time.

Companies involved in the making of chips, meanwhile, jumped to some of the market's biggest gains. Lam Research leaped 12.7%, and KLA climbed 12.9%.

They helped offset an 8.5% drop for Oracle. It reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected, but it also said it expects to raise \$40 billion in cash this fiscal year through borrowing and sales of its stock. That comes after it raised \$48 billion last fiscal year to help pay for AI investments.

Other companies' stocks have also been punished recently for announcing heavy spending on AI, as the question remains whether such investments will produce the profits and productivity that AI proponents are promising.

All told, the S&P 500 jumped 127.31 points to 7,394.30. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 929.97 to 50,848.75, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 640.16 to 25,809.66.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased sharply as falling oil prices meant less upward pressure on inflation. The yield on the 10-year Treasury dropped to 4.45% from 4.55% late Wednesday, which is a significant move for the bond market.

A sustained drop in oil prices could allow the Federal Reserve to keep its main interest rate on hold this year, instead of hiking it as many traders suspected it may have to because of high inflation and a solid U.S. job market. Following Trump's announcement, traders ratcheted back their bets for a possible increase to the federal funds rate this year, according to data from CME Group.

The Fed could even resume its cuts to interest rates under its new chair, Kevin Warsh, if inflation pressures subside enough. Trump appointed Warsh, and Trump has been loudly calling for lower interest rates.

Stocks of smaller companies can feel the biggest benefit from easier interest rates because many need to borrow money to grow, and the Russell 2000 index of the smallest U.S. stocks jumped a market-leading 3%.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose modestly in Europe following a mixed finish in Asia.

London's FTSE 100 rose 0.5%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.7% for two of the world's bigger moves.

A look at the SpaceX IPO by the numbers

Associated Press undefined

Elon Musk is all about big numbers — millions, billions, even trillions — and there are plenty of them associated with SpaceX and Musk's plans to take the rocket maker public.

The prospectus for the SpaceX stock debut shows spending at a massive scale — greater than the economic output of some countries — and about to grow much larger as Musk races to make good on his

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promise to hurl people to distant planets. Money to be raised in the initial public offering — estimated at \$75 billion — will help finance those futuristic, fantastical plans.

Assuming the IPO goes off without a hitch, it will rank as the largest ever. It also could make Musk, a major SpaceX owner and already the world's richest man, the first trillionaire.

Aside from the eye-popping numbers, the prospectus in part reads like a script for a Hollywood sci-fi movie as Musk details how he hopes to use his rockets to save the human race from extinction by making it an interplanetary species.

First, Musk will send people to the moon to establish a base. Eventually he hopes to colonize Mars.

A look at the lofty numbers behind Musk's outsized ambitions.

\$1.77 trillion

This would be SpaceX's market value if the shares it's selling to the public trade at the offering price of \$135 each. With the amount of interest SpaceX is drawing among investors, the price could easily go higher on Day One. Nvidia, a maker of computer chips, is now the world's most valuable public company at around \$4.9 trillion. A value of \$1.77 trillion would put SpaceX equal with Broadcom at No. 6 on the most valuable list, based on Wednesday close of trading.

\$794.6 billion

Elon Musk's net worth as of the close of trading on June 11, according to Forbes. Depending on how much the SpaceX IPO boosts the value of Musk's stake in the company, he could become the first-ever trillionaire. The combined net worth of billionaires two through five on the Forbes list - Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergei Brin, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Oracle Chairman Larry Ellison - is \$1.04 trillion.

\$75 billion

The proceeds SpaceX will reap from selling 555,555,555 shares at \$135 each in the IPO, more than double the previous record IPO haul of \$26 billion by the Saudi oil giant Aramco back in 2019.

100,000

That's the number of next-generation Starlink satellites Musk says SpaceX aims to put into orbit. Starlink currently has about 9,600 satellites in space. By comparison UPS says it has 135,000 delivery vehicles — including motorcycles — in its fleet.

82.4%

The voting power Musk will hold at SpaceX by virtue of his owning more than 90% of the company's Class B shares, which give the holder 10 votes for every share held. He also owns a 12.3% stake in the Class A shares, which carry one vote apiece.

At least 1 million

That's how many inhabitants Musk needs to have living in a colony on Mars for him to receive a part of his SpaceX compensation package. There are no current capabilities of transporting one person to Mars, let alone 1 million. Global cities with populations of around 1 million include Ottawa, Prague and San Jose, California.

\$20.7 billion

How much the company spent in 2025 for all its units, which include rockets, satellites and artificial intelligence technology. The bulk of the spending, at just under \$11.4 billion, came from its connectivity unit that includes its Starlink satellites. By comparison, NASA's budget for 2026 is \$24.4 billion.

\$131 million

That's how much SpaceX spent in 2025 on Cybertrucks from Musk's other public company, Tesla. The base model of a Cybertruck costs \$69,990. At that price \$131 million gets the buyer 1,871 vehicles. Musk's businesses often interact, which has raised speculation that Tesla and SpaceX could eventually merge.

30%

The estimated amount of shares being sold in the IPO to smaller-pocketed investors, also known as retail investors. Typically, only about 5% to 10% of the IPO shares go to such investors.

Iran's Kharg Island is key to its oil exports. Targeting it carries major risks

By SAM METZ Associated Press

Iran's Kharg Island, home to a terminal through which the country exports most of its oil, has emerged as a focus of the war launched in late February by the United States and Israel.

Strikes on oil infrastructure on Kharg — or a ground invasion — would severely curb Iran's oil exports, a key source of revenue for the Islamic Republic. An assault would also mark a major escalation that could provoke even heavier retaliatory attacks on Gulf Arab infrastructure and further drive up oil prices. The skyrocketing cost of fuel is already threatening the world economy.

U.S. President Donald Trump said strikes in mid-March "obliterated" Kharg's military assets but did not target the island's oil infrastructure. He warned that if Iran continued disrupting traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, he would reconsider the decision to spare energy targets on the island.

Then on Thursday, Trump said in a social media post that the U.S. would "assume total control" of Iran's oil and gas industries, including the Kharg Island terminal, in the "not too distant future."

Trump later said he called off new military strikes on Iran, just hours after saying the U.S. would hit Iran "VERY HARD TONIGHT." He suggested that progress had been made in talks to extend the fragile ceasefire.

The president made the threats as escalating attacks between the countries pushed the Middle East closer to the resumption of full-scale war. His latest remarks emerged at a time when efforts to negotiate an end to the war appear to be stuck.

The island is on the other side of the Persian Gulf from U.S. bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. A U.S. occupation of it would put American troops in a stationary position just 33 kilometers (21 miles) off Iran's coast. That's well within range of Iranian drones and missiles, if the Islamic Republic is willing to inflict damage on its own territory.

The small coral island is especially important because Iran's coastline is mostly too shallow for tanker ships to dock. The U.S. has imposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports, which has impeded Iran's efforts to export oil, mainly to China, through the Strait of Hormuz, even as Iranian attacks have closed the vital waterway to most traffic.

The destruction or loss of the island would deny the government a major revenue source, but it would also remove even more oil from world markets at a time of soaring prices. The destruction of the terminal would further damage Iran's already weakened economy and undermine any efforts at postwar reconstruction.

Iran has continued to exert control over the strait, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passed before the war. Meanwhile, the U.S. has sent thousands of soldiers and Marines to the region.

Kharg Island has storage tanks and housing for thousands of workers. Gazelles roam freely near the refineries and depots. It also is home to a medieval Portuguese fortress and the ruins of one of the oldest Christian monasteries in the Persian Gulf.

US puts up \$750K to evacuate an American who was aboard hantavirus cruise ship from remote island

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration put up \$750,000 to charter a private yacht to evacuate a single American citizen from a remote South Pacific island after she had been aboard a cruise ship at the center of a deadly hantavirus outbreak, a move that has further strained the State Department's emergency budget.

The woman, who may have been exposed to the virus while aboard the Dutch MV Hondius cruise liner in April, had gotten off the ship and then flown to San Francisco before traveling to the isolated British territory of Pitcairn Island through Tahiti, according to two U.S. officials and an internal government document obtained by The Associated Press.

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The exact amount of the total evacuation payment is still being assessed because the operation is still underway. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a medical case covered by U.S. privacy laws.

The costly effort to pick up the woman has added to the expense of rapid evacuations for diplomats and private U.S. citizens from the Middle East since the start of the Iran war as well as preparations for possible evacuations from Ebola-stricken countries. All have stressed the State Department budget for unforeseen emergencies, known as the "K Fund," and brought its balance to the lowest level in seven years.

State Department emergency budget strained by multiple evacuations

Another internal document said the State Department is looking at transferring as much as \$50 million into that emergency fund from other accounts — \$35 million from the budget for embassy security, construction and maintenance and an additional \$15 million from an account that pays for broader diplomatic programming. No decision on the transfers has yet been made.

One of the officials said the State Department has another option, to ask Congress to replenish the fund. However, the official said the department is expected to be able to handle payments for both ongoing and "emerging contingency needs."

The official would not say what the potential shortfall is but insisted that the department is "well positioned" to support diplomats, other U.S. government employees and private Americans who have been forced to leave the Middle East because of the Iran conflict, as well as U.S. citizens who may need assistance due to developments such as the Ebola outbreak in Africa.

How the US is evacuating an American exposed to hantavirus from a remote island

The State Department declined to comment on the specifics of the woman's case on Pitcairn Island but said that "when an American is at risk abroad and unable to access commercial transportation, the Department of State seeks to provide appropriate assistance to get them home to the United States or to another safe location."

After the woman departed the cruise liner where the hantavirus outbreak occurred, the ship continued to other destinations in the South Atlantic, with some passengers falling ill and at least three dying. The unidentified American woman was stuck on Pitcairn, an island with only about 50 inhabitants, no airport and infrequent maritime options to depart.

Pitcairn is well-known as the island on which Fletcher Christian and other British mutineers from the HMS Bounty took refuge after the 1789 events that toppled Capt. William Bligh, which have entered into the public lexicon with books and films about the "Mutiny on the Bounty." Their descendants make up most of the island's current population.

Complicating matters, British authorities had sought urgent American assistance in evacuating the woman from the island, which is their territory, according to the government document about the cost of the evacuation and the second U.S. official.

But initial attempts to send her to Tahiti, a French dependency, about 1,350 miles (2,160 kilometers) — or a 30-hour sea journey — from Pitcairn, were rejected by French Polynesian authorities. They did not want to allow her in because she had not disclosed her exposure when she transited the island on her way to Pitcairn.

The U.S. is transporting the woman, who was not symptomatic, from Pitcairn to Easter Island, another remote location in the Pacific about 1,400 miles (2,253 km) away, which is a territory of Chile and has direct flights to Santiago, so she can return to the United States for any necessary treatment.

All of those factors mean the process of getting her moved from Pitcairn to Easter Island took many weeks to arrange, the officials said.

The government document, which was confirmed as accurate by the two officials, said moving the woman from Pitcairn eventually was arranged via the "Titaina Explorer" trimaran yacht owned by a wealthy Frenchman, who uses it for personal exploration in the South Pacific. Pitcairn has no airport and only limited sea access.

The officials said the woman had no political or celebrity connections and they did not know exactly

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when she will return to the U.S. Maritime tracking sites show that the Titaina Explorer departed Pitcairn Island on June 5. The voyage to Easter Island can take up to 10 days depending on the speed of the boat and the weather.

Melania Trump unveils a spinoff of Trump Accounts for children in foster care

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — First lady Melania Trump and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Thursday announced the launch of Fostering the Future Accounts, a spinoff of the Trump Accounts investment funds meant to give \$1,000 to every newborn whose parent opens one.

Building on her work helping foster children, Trump said the new federal guidance will give child welfare agencies the ability to act as a guardian for children in foster care for the purposes of opening an account.

The first lady, speaking at a news conference at the Treasury Department, said the move “gives foster children the same chance at asset ownership and long-term wealth as every other child.”

The accounts will be open for contributions on July 4. To qualify for an account, a child must also be a U.S. citizen born between Jan. 1, 2025, and Dec. 31, 2028.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers estimates that a Trump Account balance for a baby born in 2026 will be \$5,800 by age 18 and \$18,100 by age 28 if no other contributions are made.

The first lady said 23 governors, all Republicans, have pledged to allow state agencies to begin the process of enrolling children in the program. “I urge every governor and business leader to help fund these accounts,” she said.

There are roughly 330,000 children in the U.S. foster care system, according to the National Council for Adoption. One in 5 of them is at risk of homelessness after aging out of foster care, and only half gain employment by the time they are 24, the National Foster Youth Institute says.

“Those outcomes are unsettling, but we refuse to accept them as inevitable,” Bessent told the news conference. “We are affirming that the American dream belongs to every child.”

A provision of President Donald Trump’s tax and spending legislation that he signed into law last summer created Trump Accounts. Under them, the Treasury Department gives \$1,000 to babies so long as their parents open an account. That money is then invested in the stock market by private firms, and the children can access the money when they turn 18.

Employers and billionaires across the country have pledged to make matching Trump Account contributions for employee benefits. Among them are Michael and Susan Dell, who announced a \$6.25 billion donation, and hedge fund founder Ray Dalio and his wife, Barbara, who pledged \$75 million for kids under 10 in Connecticut, where the Dalios live.

El Nino is here and scientists fear it’ll be big, bad and costly with heat, floods, droughts, fires

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — El Nino, Nature’s chaotic climate agent, has formed in a warmed-up Pacific Ocean and is expected to grow to historic strength, meteorologists announced Thursday.

Experts said the El Nino, a natural warming cycle, should further heat a globe already warming from fossil fuel pollution and will likely turbocharge extreme weather across the planet. Meteorologists forecast it will rival — or exceed — a record El Nino that began in 1997 and helped trigger billions of dollars in damage from heat waves, floods, droughts, tornadoes and wildfires.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officially confirmed the existence of the El Nino, which is a warming of the Pacific near the equator that affects weather patterns across the globe. NOAA’s announcement said there’s a 63% chance that the El Nino will get so intense this late fall and early winter that it “would rank among the largest El Nino events in the historical record going back to 1950.”

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The warm, deep waters of an El Nino affect weather patterns by bringing "a lot of extra heat to the surface, fueling a lot of extreme events for a lot of places around the world," said Clark University climate scientist Abby Frazier.

She said, especially in the Pacific, "it can get dire very quickly."

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres described El Nino as an "urgent climate warning."

"El Nino conditions will pour fuel on the fire of a warming world," Guterres said in a video message.

El Nino's impacts spawn winners and losers

The weather pattern's effects vary by region. El Nino often dampens — but doesn't eliminate — Atlantic hurricane season activity, but increases it in the Pacific. So while the U.S. East and Gulf coasts may get a break, Hawaii and other islands are more in danger, Frazier said.

The drought-stricken Middle East could benefit, climate scientists said. Other places are looking at more danger. Parts of western South America — where the first El Ninos were noticed decades ago — often get heavy rain and floods, along with an extra warm summer. India faces more intense heat waves, while drought, wildfires and heat threaten Australia.

Northeastern Africa is likely going to get weather whiplash from intense drought to dangerously heavy rains, said Columbia University climate scientist and El Nino expert Muhammad Azhar Ehsan.

In the U.S., El Ninos can cause more intense storms with heavier rainfall in the South, but they also tend to generally benefit the U.S. agriculture industry, said Jon Gottschalck, operational branch chief at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

Michael Ferrari, meteorologist and head of research at the investment research firm Moby, said conditions for grains and seed, especially soybeans, look favorable in 18 major growing states, but are more mixed when it comes to dairy and cattle.

The northern Rockies and Southwest — where there's an "off the charts" snow drought — could get some strong summer rains, Gottschalck said. The biggest effect in the U.S. is often in the winter, when the south can get wetter and the Pacific Northwest warmer and drier.

But overall, temperatures raised by the weather pattern can dampen American economic growth, said Stanford climate economist Marshall Burke. Several climate scientists forecast that 2027 will be the hottest year on record because of lagging effects of this El Nino, which is expected to peak in the fall or winter.

"We have pretty clear evidence that the U.S. economy grows more slowly when temps are above normal," Burke said.

Strong early signs

The weather extremes caused by an El Nino also depend on when it develops.

Usually El Ninos form in the summer, peak in the late fall or early winter, and peter out the next spring, scientists said.

However, Ehsan's team forecasts that this El Nino will peak a month or two earlier based on strong early signs from recent weeks. Princeton University climate scientist Gabriel Vecchi said large El Ninos like these also tend to last longer.

The early indications — including warmer water pushing toward the surface of the Pacific — have been so strong and noticeable that forecasters have all been predicting the same ultra strong El Nino, Vecchi said, adding that El Nino forecasts often are all over the place at this time of year.

Scientists predict stronger El Ninos as the world warms from the burning of coal, oil and gas, Frazier and others said. But she said it is too early to say if this El Nino is part of that.

Even before it officially formed, this El Nino has gotten nicknames ranging from "super" to "Godzilla."

"Instead of scared, we can ask people to be prepared," Columbia's Ehsan said

US producer prices spike in May as soaring energy prices fuel largest yearly jump since 2022

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. producer prices climbed last month at the fastest pace since November 2022, fueled by a surge in energy prices after the start of the Iran war.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that its producer price index — which captures inflation before it reaches consumers — jumped 6.5% from May 2025. It rose 1.1% from April, as it did the previous month. Wholesale gasoline prices surged by more than 23% from April to May, and nearly 70% from a year earlier.

Inflationary pressures, intensified by the energy shock caused by the Iran war, are frustrating Americans five months before midterm elections that will determine whether President Donald Trump's Republicans keep full control of Congress.

Gasoline prices have been falling in recent days, but the cost of a gallon of regular gasoline has been above \$4 since March, according to motor club AAA. And the U.S. driving season, which pushes prices higher each year, has just begun.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core wholesale prices rose 0.4% from April and 4.9% from May 2025.

The wholesale inflation numbers came out a day after the Labor Department reported that consumer prices rose 4.2% in May from a year earlier, most in three years. Gasoline prices were up nearly 41% from May 2025. Airfares were up almost 27%.

Inflation is running well ahead of the Federal Reserve's 2% target. The central bank is expected to leave its benchmark interest rate unchanged as its meeting next week. But financial markets expect the Fed could raise rates by the end of the year in an effort to curb price increases.

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Economists also watch it because some of its components, notably health care and financial services, flow into the Fed's preferred inflation gauge — the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, index.

Stephen Brown, chief North America economist at Capital Economics, wrote that the producer prices "that feed into the PCE price calculation rose by much more than we expected ... It supports our view that the Fed will hike interest rates toward the end of the year."

After the United States and Israel attacked Feb. 28, Iran shut the Strait of Hormuz, causing the biggest disruption in oil supplies in history. Energy prices rocketed. S&P Global Energy warned Thursday that U.S. crude oil inventories are drying up as the summer driving season approaches.

"The bottom line is that U.S. inventory levels remain above estimated minimum operating thresholds," said S&P Global Energy's Aaron Brady. "However, with continued disruption to Middle East flows, draws are likely to extend into the third quarter, even in the event of a near-term diplomatic resolution." More big, sustained drops in inventories "would likely signal entry into a 'danger zone' for the U.S. refining system."

The Spurs are still believers, but it's the Knicks who are 1 game from winning the NBA title

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Victor Wembanyama surely knew he was overstating the obvious, when he pointed out that there are two possible outcomes for Game 5 of the NBA Finals on Saturday night.

— San Antonio wins and extends the series.

— New York wins and becomes NBA champions.

That's it. It's one or the other. After 1,321 games — 1,230 in the regular season, 84 in the playoffs, six more in the play-in tournament and one between the Spurs and Knicks that decided the NBA Cup — it really is that simple. If Wembanyama and the Spurs win in San Antonio, the season lives for at least one more game. If the Knicks win, all that'll be left in this season will be a parade.

The Spurs trail the series 3-1 and Wembanyama understands the reality. Of the previous 38 teams that

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trailed 3-1 in the NBA Finals, 37 wound up watching the other team celebrate the title. And if that bit of history didn't look daunting enough, the Spurs will try to climb out of this 3-1 hole after the biggest collapse in NBA Finals history — wasting a 29-point lead in a Game 4 loss at New York.

"I think it's going to go one of two ways," Wembanyama said shortly after Wednesday's 107-106 loss in Game 4, a game where the Spurs were outscored 55-25 in the final 21 1/2 minutes. "One of two ways. A bad one and a good one. The bad one would be giving up. The good one would be getting stronger through this, getting more together. I know this is what we're going to do."

Thursday was an off day for the teams, at least in terms of formal practices. Both sides are scheduled to practice in San Antonio on Friday, and then Game 5 is there on Saturday night — with the Knicks one win away from what would be their first championship in 53 years.

New York won Games 1 and 2 of the finals in San Antonio — rallying from double-digit deficits in both games — to take command of the series. The Knicks, with a win Saturday, would become the first team since Houston in 1995 to go 3-0 on the Spurs' floor in a single postseason series.

"Our mentality has to be 0-0, the way it's been," Knicks guard Jalen Brunson said, repeating the mantra he's cited time and time again in this postseason run. "It has to be that way, and I feel like us moving forward with that mindset can really benefit us. There's nothing to celebrate. It's not over yet, not even close."

It's common sense for the team with a 3-1 lead to hold off on celebrating. But in this case, there's also some truth to what Brunson is saying.

Yes, the 3-1 deficit has been proven to be virtually insurmountable in NBA history; the only team that successfully escaped its grip in the finals was LeBron James' Cleveland Cavaliers in 2016, when they rallied to beat the Golden State Warriors for that title.

This series, however, isn't exactly a statistical runaway.

The Knicks have outscored the Spurs by a total of eight points over the four games. Shooting is basically even; the Knicks are at 44%, the Spurs at 43%. The Knicks have made 52 3-pointers, the Spurs 49. Free-throw percentage, Knicks 79%, Spurs 78%. The Knicks have three more rebounds and both teams have exactly 90 assists through four games.

"Just take this one game at a time," said Spurs guard De'Aaron Fox, who took heavy criticism for electing to try a layup — which was blocked — in the final seconds of Game 4 instead of taking time off the clock with a one-point lead. "It obviously looks like a steep hill, but this is something that's happened before. Take this thing one game at a time. We've been in a position to win all these games. We've been up double digits. We have to figure out what we need to do to be able to put some of these games away."

It has been a baffling problem for the Spurs.

They led Game 1 by one with 1:51 left, then lost after the Knicks finished on an 11-0 run.

They had the ball in a tie game with 11 seconds left in Game 2, then lost after Wembanyama threw a pass that Stephon Castle never saw and became a turnover that led to Brunson's game-winning free throw.

And now, this — a 29-point lead wasted in Game 4, and they still led by one until Anunoby's tip-in with 2.1 seconds left.

"We have to try to put this behind us," Fox said.

If they don't, the Knicks' 53-year wait for a title could end Saturday night.

FDA's e-cigarette authorization: Fruity vapes not significantly better than tobacco ones

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fruit-flavored e-cigarettes recently authorized by the Food and Drug Administration were not significantly better at helping smokers quit than tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes, according to a new memo that's likely to stir more questions about the agency's decision.

The FDA last month gave its first OK to fruit-flavored vapes — essentially endorsing them as a less-harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes. The decision came despite the agency's longstanding position

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that such flavors appeal to children and must show extra health benefits to warrant approval for adults. Health groups and Washington lawmakers quickly condemned the decision and have called for an explanation.

A six-page FDA memo released this week provides more details about the agency's rationale. In it, FDA regulators appear to sidestep previous statements about the risks of sweet vaping flavors while acknowledging shortcomings in the data submitted by vape manufacturer Glas Inc.

To meet federal standards, companies must show that their products benefit public health. In practice, that means demonstrating that their vapes help adult smokers switch or quit cigarettes, while not attracting underage use by teens.

Smokers who tried Glas vapes were much more likely to completely switch from cigarettes over the course of a three-month study, according to the memo.

But the data did not show "statistically significant differences" between adults using the company's mango and blueberry flavors and those using a tobacco-flavored e-cigarette.

That means the new vapes failed to meet the same bar as a handful of other flavored products previously sanctioned by the FDA, including menthol-flavored vapes from Juul and NJOY. Those companies showed that adults who used menthol were significantly more likely to cut down or quit cigarettes compared with those vaping tobacco flavors.

Elsewhere, FDA regulators explained that the Glas flavored vapes "did not have to demonstrate added adult benefit," because young people were unlikely to use them. Glas requires users to unlock each e-cigarette with an age-verifying cellphone app.

The agency's authorization also runs counter to recent FDA guidelines advising companies that fruit and dessert flavors would have to meet "a high evidentiary burden" for adult use, given their risks to children. Tobacco-flavored products are not popular with teens and generally face lower regulatory hurdles at the FDA.

The FDA document is also unusual in its brevity.

Previous FDA memos on new vaping products typically run dozens of pages. For example, last year's document authorizing Juul's menthol e-cigarettes was more than 90 pages and included detailed scientific data from research involving 50,000 people.

The short memo on Glas does not include key details, such as how many smokers the firm studied.

Previously, the FDA almost always posted such memos immediately after announcing an authorization. The document on Glas appeared on the agency's website more than a month after regulators OK'd the products.

The agency has faced questions from members of Congress about the decision. Last month, 10 Democratic senators sent a letter to the agency requesting more information about the authorization, calling it a "shortsighted and reckless decision."

The application from Glas, which also included menthol and tobacco-flavored vapes, followed a winding path to authorization. The small, Los Angeles-based company submitted a marketing request to the FDA in 2021.

In February, FDA scientists authorized several of the flavors. But that decision was blocked by a senior official reporting to then-FDA Commissioner Marty Makary, according to internal memos later released by the agency.

The mango- and blueberry-flavored products were finally OK'd during Makary's last full week leading the agency. He resigned the post after months of criticisms from industry stakeholders, including tobacco companies that have lobbied President Donald Trump's Republican White House for looser regulations on vaping flavors.

A spokesperson for the company could not immediately provide comment when reached Thursday morning.

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Elon Musk's SpaceX is about to make its debut on Wall Street

Associated Press undefined

Elon Musk's rocket company SpaceX will make its debut on Wall Street Friday and both institutional and retail investors are expected to gobble up the 555.6 million shares going up for sale at \$135 apiece. Musk, already the world's richest man, could become its first trillionaire.

SpaceX is likely to become the biggest IPO ever, with proceeds of around \$75 billion. SpaceX hopes to become the first company to send people to Mars. In fact, part of Musk's future compensation depends on SpaceX eventually establishing a colony of at least 1 million people on the red planet.

Why SpaceX is going public now

In a video conference on Musk's social media platform X, he told JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon that people have suggested for the last 10 years that he take SpaceX public. He's doing it now because the company plans to put 100,000 next-generation Starlink satellites into orbit. Deploying AI data centers in space is a "massive new growth base and you need capital for that," he said.

Going public provides access to the capital that SpaceX needs. But it also exposes it to more scrutiny from shareholders and more regulatory oversight. That includes filing quarterly financial reports, which critics say incentivizes short-term thinking over longer-term planning and creates unnecessary costs for a company. Securities regulators are currently soliciting public comment on a proposal to require public companies to file the financial reports only twice every year.

How the IPO impacts the company

Musk will hold the majority of a special class of shares, giving him control over decisions related to company strategy, finances and personnel. On the latter, because of his ownership of most of these Class B shares, the only person who can fire Musk as CEO ... is Musk.

The company credits Musk with being the "driving force" behind its growth, innovation and success. But what happens if Musk is no longer in the picture? SpaceX warns that the loss of Musk could disrupt its ability to execute its strategy as well as hurt its "reputation and relationships with customers, partners and other stakeholders."

The company also warns that finding a replacement with the same skills and experience as Musk would be time-consuming, if not nearly impossible. As Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives wrote Wednesday, "At the end of the day Musk is SpaceX and SpaceX is Musk."

Some big investors are unhappy. Officials from pension funds for firefighters, teachers and other workers in California and New York sent a letter to SpaceX last month decrying some of the provisions in its IPO, including the "super voting shares," mandatory arbitration of shareholder claims instead of the possibility of lawsuits and how much power Musk will hold over the company.

They said they could become owners of SpaceX stock because they hold index funds, which automatically buy stocks after they get included in certain indexes.

What could make or break SpaceX

Currently in the test phase, the gigantic reusable Starship rocket is key to SpaceX realizing Musk's ambitions. Much of the commercial space business hinges on SpaceX developing Starship's capability to be fully reusable and hearty enough for a quick turnaround between flights. If that doesn't happen, SpaceX warns that putting data centers and satellites in space will take longer and cost more money, meaning it risks customers bailing on the company.

Analysts say that by pioneering reusable rockets, SpaceX has established a clear lead on competitors such as Blue Origin, led by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. The Starlink satellite business competes with, among others, AST SpaceMobile – which is relying on a SpaceX rocket to send its latest generation of satellites into orbit next week.

The prospectus filed last week says SpaceX's biggest potential market is the sale of business-oriented artificial intelligence products designed to transform how people get work done. It's an opportunity SpaceX predicts would be worth \$22.7 trillion if it could somehow dominate rivals like Anthropic, OpenAI and Microsoft in a highly competitive industry. But the prospectus shows no clear path to profitability for the xAI business, which merged with SpaceX earlier this year.

Why Wall Street is paying attention

If the SpaceX IPO is as successful, the stock could quickly join the Nasdaq 100, a widely followed index that tracks the 100 largest non-financial companies in the composite. That's important because some popular funds, such as the \$460 billion QQQ exchange-traded fund, mimic the index and will automatically buy whatever is listed in the index.

Nasdaq recently changed its rules to allow select companies to enter the Nasdaq 100 after just 15 trading days.

S&P Dow Jones Indices, on the other hand, is sticking to established and more traditional thresholds that will not allow SpaceX or other companies with gargantuan IPOs faster entry into its S&P 500 index. That means even high-profile companies will still need to wait for their stocks to trade a full 12 months before they can enter the index.

Companies want to be in the S&P 500 in particular because it's arguably the most important index on Wall Street, with trillions of dollars either mimicking it exactly or benchmarked against it. Vanguard's VOO fund that tracks the S&P 500 has roughly \$950 billion invested in it, for example.

Pope slams world's indifference to migrants while visiting onetime 'dock of shame' in Canary Islands

By NICOLE WINFIELD, HELENA ALVES and RENATA BRITO Associated Press

ARGUINEGUÍN, Spain (AP) — Pope Leo XIV traveled to a once-notorious epicenter of the European migration debate on Thursday, challenging countries to uphold migrants' rights while shaming those leaders, including Christians, who turn them away with indifference.

Leo issued an impassioned plea to recognize the dignity of migrants from the port of Arguineguín, in the Canary Islands. In 2020, the port was dubbed "dock of shame" because of the squalid conditions migrants were forced to live in for months during a spike in arrivals.

"Human dignity has no passport and does not lose its value when crossing a border," Leo said, with rescue ships docked behind him and a simple wooden cross made from a shipwrecked migrant boat nearby.

Leo is spending the final two days of his weeklong trip to Spain in the Canary Islands, a Spanish archipelago closer to Africa than the Iberian Peninsula and a key point of entry for migrants who make the perilous Atlantic crossing from West Africa.

He is fulfilling a wish of Pope Francis to visit the islands to commemorate the thousands of lives lost at sea.

With two migrants standing by him, Leo threw a bouquet of flowers into the sea. The gesture recalled one Francis made in 2013, at the start of his pontificate, when he visited another migration flashpoint in Lampedusa, Sicily and denounced the "globalization of indifference" that the world showed migrants.

A visit to the 'dock of shame'

The Canary Islands have long been a stepping stone for migrants trying to reach Europe from West Africa and Morocco. Some experts consider the Atlantic route they take to get here more deadly than the more well-known central Mediterranean smuggling route from Libya and Tunisia to Italy.

Migrant arrivals in the Canary Islands peaked in 2024 at nearly 47,000. Following pressure and deals between the European Union, Spain and the governments of several West African nations, arrivals have fallen dramatically, with just over 3,000 people landing there in the first five months of 2026.

Upon his arrival, Leo went straight to the port in Arguineguín, where in 2020 arrivals reached such numbers that migrants were forced to sleep on the dock in makeshift camps in the open air.

Many spent weeks just a blanket and no showers. Potential asylum seekers had no proper access to legal advice and some people were held for weeks, much longer than the three days that the law allowed. The ombudsman later forced the government to shutter the makeshift camp and relocate the migrants in hotels that had been emptied by COVID-19.

A challenge to uphold dignity

At the port on Thursday, Leo sat under a shaded platform while a fierce midday sun baked down on the migrants and aid workers. He heard testimonies from rescue workers, humanitarian workers and

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the personal story of a Nigerian victim of human trafficking. Nearby a banner, recalling the port's former nickname, rebaptized it "Dock of Hope."

"Dear migrants, before saying anything else to you, I want to bow before your dignity," Leo said to them, bowing his head slightly.

Addressing the Nigerian woman and other women who have been trafficked and forced into prostitution, Leo assured them: "If others have put a price on your body, know that God has never ceased to recognize your inestimable worth," he said.

He urged countries of origin to create the security and economic conditions so people are not forced to flee, and for transit countries to protect migrants so they don't fall prey to smugglers. And he appealed to the "conscience of Europe, which cannot claim to uphold human dignity while growing accustomed to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic becoming unmarked graves."

In one of the most powerful speeches of his pontificate, dedicated entirely to migration, Leo listed the rights of migrants to flee or remain. But he didn't mention the right of nations to control their borders or limit asylum requests as he has done in the past. And significantly, he insisted that if one is Christian, one cannot ignore the plight of migrants.

"May history not accuse us of turning the pain of those who suffer into a common sight along our shores," he said. "Today, here by the sea, every individual that arrives asks us what remains of our humanity. Sooner or later, it will be known whether we protected life or whether we yielded to indifference."

Among the migrants waiting for Leo was Mame Amandou Neang, a 56-year-old who arrived in the Arguineguin port from Senegal earlier this year.

"This is a great honor," said Neang. "We hope that if we see him, all our problems will stay behind us, we will forget our problems, because we have many things to forget for the moment."

The International Organization of Migration's Missing Migrants Project has recorded some 6,600 deaths on the Atlantic route from West Africa since it began keeping record in 2014. But it admits their estimate is a vast undercount due to the lack of information on the route and the phenomenon of "invisible shipwrecks."

Since 2020, Spanish migrants rights group Walking Borders estimates more than 25,000 dead or missing trying to reach the Canary Islands.

Leo follows in Francis' footsteps in prioritizing migrants

Francis had made the plight of refugees a hallmark of his papacy, following the Gospel mandate to "welcome the stranger."

Leo has followed suit, insisting especially on the dignity of migrants in his native United States amid the Trump administration's crackdown and mass deportation program.

Next month, on July 4, the American pope will spend U.S. Independence Day on the island of Lampedusa, where Francis in 2013 first denounced the "globalization of indifference" the world shows migrants.

What to know about the stabbing that set off fiery riots in Northern Ireland

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A savage knife attack on a Northern Ireland street set off two nights of fiery riots stoked by anti-migrant rhetoric.

The suspect, a 30-year-old Sudanese man who had claimed asylum in the United Kingdom, has been charged with attempted murder, threatening to kill a second person and carrying a knife.

Protests over the attack flared into violence in Belfast and several other areas. Masked men set fire to several homes they believed to house immigrants, torched a bus and pelted police with rocks and other objects.

The government said more than two dozen people lost their homes and 12 police officers were injured in what Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn on Thursday called "racist thuggery."

Here are some things to know about the attack and its aftermath:

A video captured the stabbing

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Hadi Alodid used a kitchen knife to blind Stephen Ogilvie in the left eye and carved deep wounds on his head, face and back, police said. Graphic footage of the stabbing, and the response of passersby who subdued the attacker, spread quickly on social media.

As Alodid was being treated for a hand wound, he threatened to kill a radiologist.

"I've killed someone, I don't know if they are dead," Alodid told medical staff, according to a detective who spoke in court.

Police have not revealed a motive for the attack but said it's not believed to be terrorism.

Alodid did not enter a plea during a court appearance Wednesday and was ordered held until his next hearing.

Arrest leads to protests and violence

Officials aghast at the crime urged protesters to maintain order and civility, but groups dressed in black hoods and masks threw bricks, rocks and stones at police, set fire to trash bins, and burned vehicles and homes.

"When the attack happened on Monday night, we knew this would be coming," Twasul Mohammed, a Sudanese refugee who helped families forced from their homes Tuesday, told the BBC. "Everyone is terrified, we are keeping our kids at home."

Violence flared again Wednesday, though on a smaller scale. Police blasted water cannons at protesters outside Belfast who hurled bricks, hunks of stone at them that they had torn from garden walls and patios. Two officers in Carrickfergus were injured by fire bombs, police said.

Politicians from both parts of Northern Ireland's power-sharing government condemned the violence.

Riots have followed other stabbings in the UK

The violence was reminiscent of riots that swept England and parts of Northern Ireland two years ago after a teen killed three girls and seriously wounded 10 other people in a stabbing rampage at a dance class near Liverpool.

The Belfast violence broke out a week after protesters clashed with police in the southern England city of Southampton over the sentencing of a man for the fatal stabbing of a university student.

All three crimes featured Black or Asian suspects and victims who were white.

The families of the victims all called for peace in the wake of the attacks and said they didn't want violence waged on behalf of their loved ones.

Other factors were also at play in whipping up anger.

In the case of the girls killed in Southport in 2024, the suspect was wrongly identified on social media as a Muslim asylum seeker. Even after police said he was a British citizen born in Wales (later revealed to be raised by Christian parents from Rwanda), protests were mostly aimed at migrants and Muslims.

Outrage over the Southampton stabbing focused on the fact that police who arrived at what had been reported as a racist assault mistook the victim, Henry Nowak, for the perpetrator. They initially dismissed Nowak's pleas that he had been stabbed and couldn't breathe and handcuffed him as he was dying.

Vickrum Digwa, who was carrying a ceremonial knife worn by Sikhs but used a longer dagger to stab Nowak, lied to police when he said Nowak attacked him, Judge William Mousley said in sentencing him to life in prison.

Nigel Farage, leader of the anti-immigration Reform UK party, said Nowak's killing was an example of so-called two-tier policing — a popular far-right talking point that suggests ethnic minorities are better treated than white people.

Government officials and police have denied such a bias exists and many experts say policing in Britain favors white people. A report three years ago found the Metropolitan Police, the largest force in the U.K., was riven with institutional racism.

Politicians and far right seize on crimes to drive their agenda

Reaction to the stabbings reflects a broader rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in parts of the U.K. and Europe, fueled by political debate over asylum seekers, small-boat crossings and pressure on public services and heightened by often extreme online debate.

Protesters have been called to action on social media by U.K. far-right activists, including Stephen

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Yaxley-Lennon, also known as Tommy Robinson, and rallied by influential international figures including tech mogul Elon Musk.

Musk tweeted more than 100 times about British politics with a strong focus on Nowak's killing around the time of Digwa's trial and offered to bankroll a private prosecution of the local police force.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance, in a post on X, blamed Nowak's killing on "the mass invasion of migrants, many of whom despise the West and the people who love it."

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer snapped back at Musk and Vance, criticizing people "trying to interfere in our democracy and seeking to stir up division on our streets."

Mark Rowley, the head of London's Metropolitan Police, said online misinformation and disinformation is "right at the center of the challenges for us with public disorder."

Some blame the open border between Ireland and Northern Ireland

Some political figures pointed to the largely open border between Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K., and the Republic of Ireland, where the suspect arrived in Dublin from Paris before heading north.

The border is a sensitive political issue. Allowing the free flow of people is a major pillar of the peace process that largely ended decades of violence known as "The Troubles." The conflict involving Irish Republican and British Loyalist militants and U.K. security forces left almost 3,600 people dead before a 1998 peace accord.

Today in History: June 12, 49 people killed in Pulse nightclub shooting

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, June 12, the 163rd day of 2026. There are 202 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 12, 2016, a gunman opened fire at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, leaving 49 people dead and 53 wounded in what was then the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history; the gunman, Omar Mateen, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group during a three-hour standoff before being killed in a shootout with police.

Also on this date:

In 1939, the Baseball Hall of Fame was dedicated in Cooperstown, New York.

In 1942, Anne Frank, a German-born Jewish girl living in Amsterdam, received a diary for her 13th birthday, less than a month before she and her family went into hiding from the Nazis.

In 1963, civil rights leader Medgar Evers, 37, was shot and killed outside his home in Jackson, Mississippi. (In 1994, Byron De La Beckwith was convicted of murdering Evers and sentenced to life in prison, where he died in 2001.)

In 1964, eight South African anti-apartheid activists, including Nelson Mandela, were sentenced to life in prison for committing acts of sabotage against South Africa's apartheid government.

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Loving v. Virginia*, unanimously struck down state laws prohibiting interracial marriages, ruling that such laws violated the Fourteenth Amendment.

In 1978, David Berkowitz was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for each of the six "Son of Sam" killings committed in New York City over the previous two years.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan, during a visit to the divided German city of Berlin, exhorted Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall."

In 1991, Russians went to the polls for their first-ever presidential election, which resulted in victory for Boris Yeltsin.

In 1994, Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were found dead outside Simpson's Los Angeles home. (O.J. Simpson, Nicole Brown Simpson's ex-husband, was later acquitted of the killings in a criminal trial but was eventually held liable in a civil action.)

In 2018, President Donald Trump met with Kim Jong Un in Singapore, marking the first time a sitting U.S. president had met with a North Korean leader. The two would meet again twice in 2019.

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In 2025, an Air India plane bound for London crashed in a residential area of Ahmedabad shortly after takeoff, killing 241 people on board and 19 on the ground. One passenger who was thrown from the plane survived.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Sonia Manzano is 76. Actor-director Timothy Busfield is 69. Olympic track gold medalist Gwen Torrence is 61. Actor Rick Hoffman is 56. Actor-comedian Finesse Mitchell is 54. Actor Jason Mewes is 52. Blues musician Kenny Wayne Shepherd is 49. Actor Timothy Simons is 48. Singer-songwriter Robyn is 47. Model Adriana Lima is 45. Actor Dave Franco is 41. Country musician Chris Young is 41. Country singer Ashley Cooke is 29.