

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, June 18

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library, 10 a.m.

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

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

Sr. Legion at Heritage Tournament, Milbank

U10 Baseball at Sisseton, DH, 5:30 p.m. (B&W)

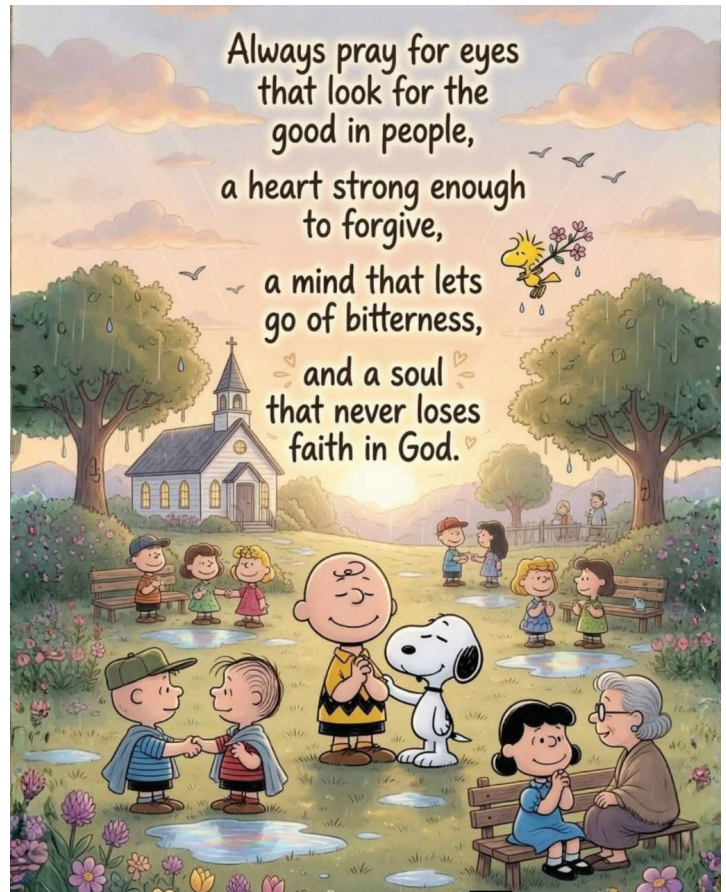
U8 Baseball at Clark, DH, 5:30 p.m. (Blue)

U8 Baseball host Britton, DH, 6 p.m. (Red), Falk Field

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



U18 Softball hosts Hub city, 6 p.m.

U12 Softball at Sisseton, DH, 6 p.m. (W&G)

U10 Softball at Sisseton, DH, 6 p.m. (B&W)

T-Ball hosts Columbia, 5 p.m., Falk Field

Friday, June 19

JUNETEENTH

SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney and Dinner at the Olive Grove Golf Course, 11 a.m.

Sr. Legion at Heritage Tournament, Milbank

Jr. Legion at Volga, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 20

Groton Triathlon

Sr. Legion at Heritage Tournament, Milbank

U10 Baseball - Groton Tournament (ALL)

U12 Softball at Mobridge Tournament (ALL)

U10 Softball at Mobridge Tournament

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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.

Iran Deal Signed

The US and Iran have remotely signed their deal to end hostilities, reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and launch negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear program, Pakistan's prime minister said yesterday. Read the 14-point memorandum of understanding [here](#).

The agreement covers the return of ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and is predicated on an end to the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Details surrounding Iran's nuclear program and existing stockpile of enriched uranium are slated to be negotiated over a 60-day period. Trump said the US Space Force will monitor whether Iran tries to recover materials from its bombed nuclear facilities. At a minimum, Iran promises to down-blend its uranium in the presence of international observers.

The text outlines a \$300B plan for Iranian reconstruction, and the US will issue waivers for its oil sanctions against Iran. The deal does not cover Iran's missiles, around 70% of which are reportedly still intact.

Artifacts of Independence

An archaeological dig to uncover artifacts from a fort critical to the Battle of Bunker Hill ended yesterday, on the 251st anniversary of the fight. Archaeologists found musket balls, teacups, tobacco pipes, and even a wig curler. Watch the excavation process [here](#).

Although the Americans ultimately retreated, the Massachusetts-based battle is said to have bolstered colonists' confidence. The night before the battle, more than 1,000 people dug a 3-foot-deep, 6-foot-wide trench protected by a 6-foot-high wall, a structure that proved critical to slowing the British advance. The dimensions, recorded two months after the battle by cartographer Henry Pelham, were confirmed by the dig. Archaeologists did not find human remains, despite nearly 150 soldiers dying in the fort.

The city of Boston carried out the dig in partnership with American Veterans Archaeological Recovery, a nonprofit introducing veterans to careers in archaeology.

Gilgo Beach Sentencing

Serial killer Rex Heuermann was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole yesterday. The 62-year-old former architect admitted to killing eight women from 1993 to 2010. Their remains were discovered in or near Gilgo Beach on New York's Long Island.

Many of the victims were sex workers with whom Heuermann had made plans to meet. While police discovered the remains of four victims in December 2010, it took over a decade for them to link their deaths to Heuermann. Ultimately, investigators zeroed in on Heuermann from a witness description and cellphone data, and were able to match DNA from a discarded pizza crust near his Manhattan office to hair found with the remains. Heuermann was arrested in 2023. His series of killings is the subject of multiple media adaptations.

True crime is a multibillion-dollar industry. See a poll on Americans' perceptions of the genre [here](#).

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

BBC News to cut 550 jobs and ax "The World Tonight"—a 56-year-old radio show; 1,800 to 2,000 cuts expected over the next three years to drive nearly \$670M in cost savings.

US Open Golf Championship begins today, with record \$22.5M in prize money, matching the Masters Tournament purse.

WNBA to expand regular-season schedule from 44 to 50 games per team next year, the most in league history.

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Democratic Republic of the Congo draws World Cup favorite Portugal after scoring its first-ever tournament goal.

Second round of group-stage matches begins as Canada takes on Qatar in Vancouver at 6 pm ET.

Science & Technology

Electronic nose detects odors linked to spoiled food and common allergens; developers say the technology could one day be integrated into refrigerators.

Oldest-known plague outbreak likely began after hunter-gatherers ate raw marmots, according to evidence from roughly 5,500-year-old cemeteries in southeastern Siberia.

Honey bees regulate their feeding to avoid overconsuming certain essential nutrients in pollen and make optimized baby food for their young.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.2%, Dow -1.0%, Nasdaq -1.3%) after Fed holds rates steady, signals at least one rate hike this year.

Fed Chair Kevin Warsh unveils overhaul of the central bank's operations; see highlights.

Allbirds rebrands to Smartbird, announces new CEO as the former shoemaker continues pivot into AI infrastructure firm; shares close up 39%.

JetBlue to reduce operations at Newark Liberty International Airport and LaGuardia Airport while expanding in Fort Lauderdale, where JetBlue is the top carrier.

Politics & World Affairs

US military strikes boat it says was carrying drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing one person and leaving two survivors; at least 208 people have been killed in alleged drug boat strikes by the US since September.

Tropical Storm Arthur forms near Texas, marking the first named storm of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season; the storm is expected to bring heavy rainfall across the South in the coming days.

Small jet crashes on Texas highway, killing one person after pilot reports mechanical problems and requests emergency landing at a nearby airport.



A promotional poster for a live music performance. It features a photograph of a smiling woman with blonde hair wearing sunglasses. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with a guitar neck and the text "LIVE MUSIC AT THE LEGION!". The name "LIZZY HOFER" is written in large, bold, white letters with a red flame graphic to the left. Below the name, it says "PLAYING FRIDAY JUNE 26" in green and pink. To the right, it indicates the time "9 P.M. TO 1 A.M." and the location "GROTON AMERICAN LEGION". At the bottom, it says "GREAT MUSIC ★ COLD DRINKS ★ GOOD TIMES" and "EVERYONE WELCOME!" in orange and pink.

LIVE MUSIC
AT THE LEGION!

LIZZY
HOFER

PLAYING
FRIDAY
JUNE 26

9 P.M. TO 1 A.M.
GROTON
AMERICAN LEGION

GREAT MUSIC ★ COLD DRINKS ★ GOOD TIMES
EVERYONE WELCOME!

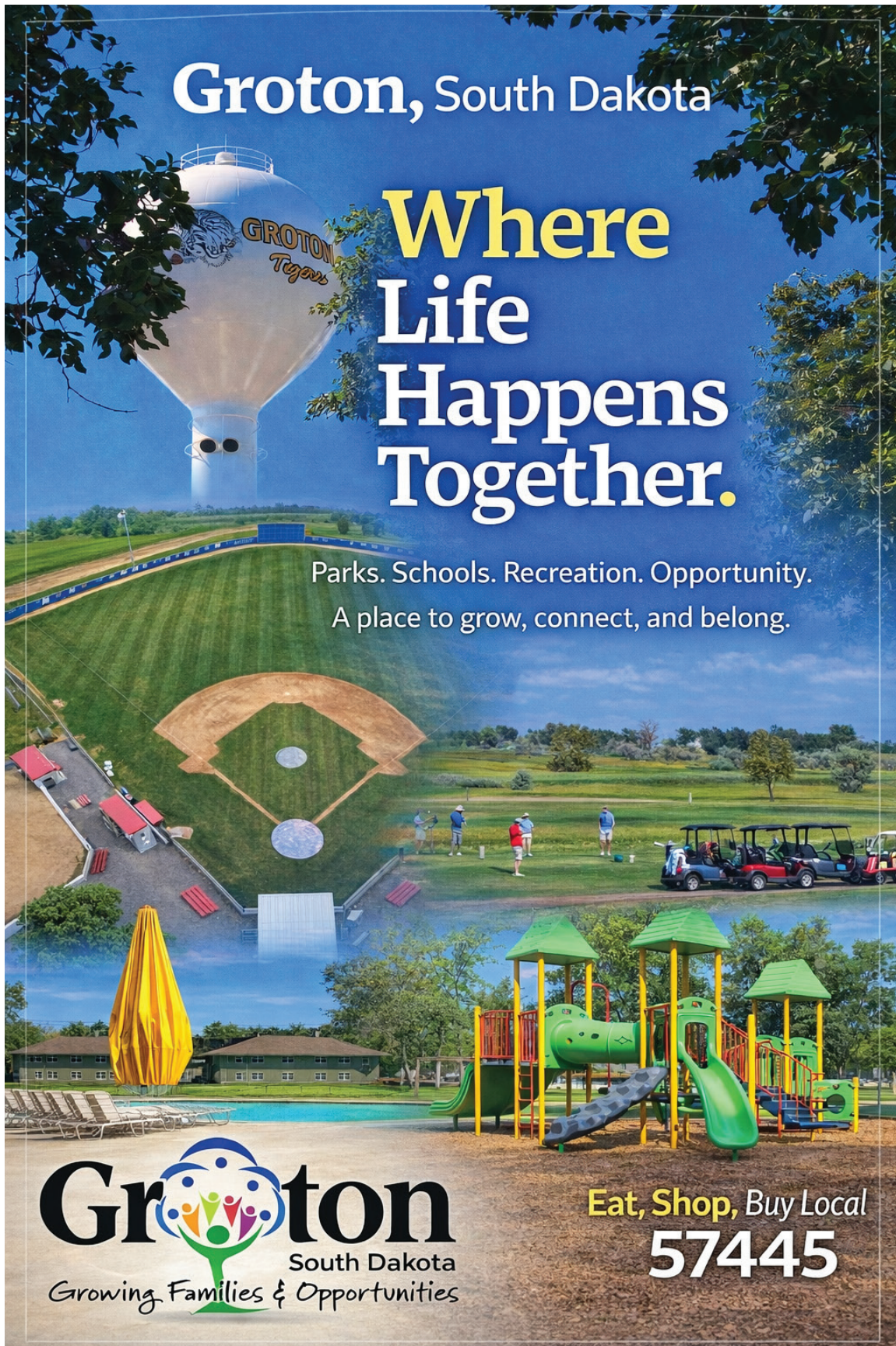
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Groton, South Dakota

Where
Life
Happens
Together.

Parks. Schools. Recreation. Opportunity.
A place to grow, connect, and belong.



Groton
South Dakota
Growing Families & Opportunities

Eat, Shop, Buy Local
57445

The show must go on for live All-State Band auditions

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — Live auditions will continue for South Dakota students who want to be in All-State Band. However, an online platform for auditions is lurking in the wings.

At its meeting on Wednesday, June 17, the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association determined that live auditions will continue while the staff researches an online platform that could take over when live auditions aren't available.

The board was reviewing a policy that started two years ago for the January auditions. The policy called for the auditions to happen over six days. Auditions start in Huron on a Wednesday, followed by three days of auditions in Sioux Falls, a day for travel and a day of auditions in Rapid City.

The policy calls for SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Brooks Bowman to determine on the Tuesday prior to auditions if bad weather will keep auditions from taking place at any of the audition sites. If it looks like bad weather, Bowman and a committee of band directors are empowered to call off the live auditions and have all the students record their auditions.

Bowman has talked to the board in the past about the inequities he sees in the system. Two years ago, bad weather kept students from attending the live auditions in Rapid City. Those students had the luxury of more practice and choosing the best recording of their audition.

That's an "inequity which is against our mission statement," Bowman said.

Bowman doesn't like being called on to predict the weather, telling the administrators on the board that he would never expect them to call off school a week in advance.

Band directors and school activities directors are in favor of the live auditions. A May survey of 82 band directors found that 78% were in favor of live auditions with 9% preferring recorded and 12% with no preference. A survey of 53 activities directors found that 55% favored live auditions, 23% favored recorded and 17% had no preference.

After a discussion about the policy at the board's April meeting, Bowman was tasked with researching the availability of an online platform that could meet the needs of band directors. Bowman told the board that a site called HeartOut had all the attributes required to offer online band auditions.

Admitting that live auditions were best for students, Bowman told the board that his recommendation would be to use the HeartOut app for All-State Band auditions. "That's going to eliminate the weather issue," Bowman said.

At the meeting, the board heard from four high school band directors who offered a united front when it came to favoring live auditions. Wendy Thorson, the band director at Northwestern, pointed out that not all schools have the same recording equipment. She compared her appearance before the board to the live auditions for young musicians. "It shows how they can handle nerves."

Two years ago, when the Rapid City auditions had to be cancelled because of bad weather, SDHSAA staff heard from angry band directors and parents.

"People say they're fine with it (the policy) until they're not fine with it," said SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos.

Board member Chris Long of Lyman High School said arranging live auditions in South Dakota's January weather was inviting hard feelings if everyone wasn't treated the same.

"We're kind of destined to making somebody feel like they're getting the raw end of the deal," Long said. "I feel like it's eventually going to go online."

The board voted to continue the policy of live auditions while researching online platforms like HeartOut for use if bad weather causes some or all of the auditions to need to be recorded. The vote was 8-1 with Long dissenting.

S.D. Public Broadcasting remains committed to SDHSAA state events

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — Despite national attempts to defund public television, South Dakota Public Broadcasting remains committed to covering state athletic and fine arts events.

On Wednesday, June 17, the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association learned about that commitment during the annual report from representatives of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Brad Van Osdel, assistant general manager and director of content, told the board that broadcasting SDHSAA events was “one of our proudest moments, one of our favorite things to do.”

South Dakota Public Broadcasting purchases the rights to state events. According to Van Osdel, every statewide athletic event and fine arts event receives some sort of coverage.

State events that are live-streamed and broadcast include soccer, cheer and dance, All-State Chorus and Orchestra, football, volleyball, wrestling, basketball, All-State Band and All-State Jazz Band. Events that are primarily live-streamed include gymnastics, esports, track and girls’ softball. Events with photos and results include golf, tennis, cross-country, journalism, oral interp, debate, student council and the visual arts contest.

Van Osdel’s report said that in the last school year, using its website and YouTube, S.D. Public Broadcasting reached more than 491,000 users with 2.8 million views and more than 818,000 hours watched.

—30—

Hartmann to lead SDHSAA board

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — Pierre School Board member Randy Hartmann has been elected chairman of the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association. Hartmann was elected at the board’s meeting on Wednesday, June 17.

Elected as vice chairman for the next school year was Ryan Rollinger, the principal of Harrisburg High School. Hartmann and Rollinger will take on their new roles at the board’s July meeting.

The board also accepted the results of the vote by member schools on three constitutional amendments. One amendment clarified that eligibility for high school activities starts with the completion of the eighth grade. Some parents try to “reclassify” or “red shirt” their children in the hope that they can start their high school eligibility when they are a year older and a year stronger. The amendment was passed on a vote of 145-4.

A second amendment clarified when students may transfer in the event of a school closure. Rumors of a school closing often get parents to try to transfer their children too soon. That amendment passed with a vote of 146-3.

A third amendment clarified that eligibility for high school activities ends when a student graduates. That amendment was approved with a vote of 147-2.

Member schools were unanimous in their approval of the election of Jeff Kusters of Frederick Area High School to a five-year term on the board of directors. Kusters is already on the board but was eligible for election to a full term since he was serving out the term of someone who had left the board.



for Ida Hannon's 90th Birthday

Ida will be turning 90 on July 7th! While a party isn't possible this year, we still want to make her day extra memorable. We'd like for her dearest friends and family (that's you!) to send her a card or gift this year. Include a message, old memories, photos, or simply birthday wishes.

Help us make her day one that she won't forget.

We will gather the cards and gifts for her to have on her big day.

please mail your card/gifts to:

Ida hannon (granddaughter
Michelle)

1208 appollo ave
Aberdeen SD, 57401

by July 11th

*thank you
for making this day extra special for my
grandma.*





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Wounded Knee descendants vow to keep pressing for medal revocations as Senate committee seeks info

Bill report cites concerns about review process and calls for disclosures from Defense Department

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

For Violet Catches, the Defense Department's decision not to rescind the Medals of Honor awarded to soldiers who were at the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre was a gut punch.

"I cried," said Catches, a descendant of survivors and a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Catches said one of her great-grandfathers was killed at the massacre and buried in the mass grave. Other relatives survived and shared stories of the carnage.

"This is not an easy story to tell," Catches said through tears.

But Catches and other descendants of survivors and their advocates plan to continue pushing to revoke the medals, even though the recent decision by the Department of Defense was another setback after multiple past attempts at congressional action failed.

"We are not going to quit," Catches said. "We want healing for our youth, for our grandkids."

The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee boosted the effort this week in a report about the committee's version of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2027. U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, said in a news release that the report's language directs the secretary of defense to "provide the full report and unredacted materials" from the department's recent review of the medals.

The committee report says the department "has announced the results of the review but not explained what it did and did not consider as part of the review process."

"Numerous stakeholders, including descendants of the Wounded Knee victims, have expressed concern about precisely which historical sources, experts, and bodies of law were considered in this review," the committee report says. Further language in the report directs the secretary of defense to provide a briefing about the medals review to both congressional Armed Services committees by Feb. 1.

OJ Semans, a Rosebud Sioux Tribe member, has supported past congressional efforts to rescind the medals and has worked to educate individual members of Congress about the massacre. He plans to continue doing that.

"Until they're able to read about that injustice, or read about those atrocities, there will be no justice," Semans said.

A step forward and back

The latest setback came after what appeared to be a step forward.

In 2024, the Department of Defense under President Joe Biden created a panel to review the medals. At the time, the department said about 20 soldiers who were at the massacre had received a Medal of Honor for their actions. The number is debatable because records associated with some of the medals are incomplete or unclear.

The department did not announce or publish the panel's findings or recommendations before Biden left office.

In September, President Donald Trump's defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, announced in a social media video that the medals will not be rescinded. He called the massacre a "battle" and said the soldiers "de-

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serve those medals.”

The five-member panel included three people appointed by the Department of Defense and two appointed by the Department of the Interior. In a written report obtained recently by South Dakota Searchlight, the panel’s Defense-appointed chairman wrote, “While the actions of leadership were suspect, circumstances chaotic, and non-combatants tragically killed, three of the five panel members believe that individual soldiers distinguished themselves in action and found no disqualifying information.”

One of the Interior-appointed panelists, Wizipan Little Elk Garriott, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, told Searchlight that the Defense panelists “were looking for evidence that individuals committed war crimes, essentially.”

“The broader question — that this was a massacre in which women and children were killed and therefore not deserving of medals — was simply not part of the conversation,” Garriott said.

‘Purposeful yet indiscriminate killing’

Wendell William Yellow Bull, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe whose great-grandfather survived the massacre, said Hegseth’s use of the word “battle” reflected a lack of understanding.

“You don’t disarm people and then call it a battle,” Yellow Bull said.

Brad Upton, of Colorado, is a descendant of Col. James Forsyth, commander of the 7th Cavalry at Wounded Knee. Upton supports revocation of the medals and also sees a need for more education.

“It’s horrific,” he said. “First of all, the U.S. government has never stopped calling it a battle. It was not a battle. It was a massacre.”

The massacre occurred after decades of hostilities, during which the U.S. government agreed to an 1868 treaty recognizing Lakota authority over western South Dakota. Under pressure from reports of gold in that region’s Black Hills, the government broke the treaty in the 1870s and eventually forced Lakota people onto smaller reservations.

On the morning of Dec. 29, 1890, a band of about 370 Lakota people was camped near Wounded Knee Creek in southwestern South Dakota while traveling to the Pine Ridge Reservation. The mix of men, women and children hoped to find safety there, according to historian Jerome Greene, author of “American Carnage: Wounded Knee, 1890.”

About 470 members of the Army’s 7th Cavalry — the unit that had been wiped out by Native American warriors at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 — intercepted and surrounded the Lakota band near Wounded Knee Creek.

Soldiers attempted to disarm the camp, and although “eyewitness accounts differ on particulars,” Greene wrote, somehow a shot rang out. Chaotic shooting ensued.

“However unpremeditated their actions may have been,” Greene wrote of the soldiers, what happened at Wounded Knee “evolved quickly into purposeful yet indiscriminate killing. It became a full-fledged massacre.”

As many as 200 and perhaps more Lakota people died during the massacre or afterward from their wounds, according to Greene. The Army left the bodies to freeze on the ground for several days and then worked with a contractor to bury many of them in a mass grave. Military casualties, including some from friendly fire, numbered 30 killed and another 36 wounded.

Congress passed a resolution expressing “deep regret” for the massacre in 1990, but the medals awarded to soldiers have never been rescinded.

Options for future action

Catches said the apology from Congress is incomplete without rescinding the medals.

“I’m not going to feel like there’s any justice until that happens,” Catches said. “There was nothing honorable about that day.”

Marlis Afraid of Hawk, a Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe member, is the granddaughter of the late Richard Afraid of Hawk, who survived the massacre as a child.

“We’re not going to give up,” she said. “There has to be another way, another avenue, to correct the

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wrong, what the United States government did, what the 7th Cavalry did to our relatives.”

Dwight Mears, an Army veteran from Oregon with a doctorate in history, has written scholarly articles about the massacre. He said there are several possible ways to rescind the medals.

The Defense Department maintains that the medals are awarded at the president’s discretion. But in a polarized political environment, one administration could revoke a medal and another could restore it, Mears said, making presidential action potentially impermanent.

Mears said Congress could pass legislation to revoke the medals, but that would conflict with laws vesting authority over the adjudication of the Medal of Honor in the executive branch, raising separation-of-powers problems.

Nevertheless, there have been numerous attempts in Congress over the years to rescind the medals. In the current Congress, there are bills from Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, and Rep. Jill Tokuda, D-Hawaii.

South Dakota’s all-Republican congressional delegation has not supported those efforts. But this week, Sen. Rounds highlighted the Armed Services Committee’s call for more information on the medal review process, including it in his list of “South Dakota victories” in the committee’s version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Rounds’ office sent a statement from him in response to South Dakota Searchlight questions about the committee report. The statement described the Defense Department’s decision to uphold the Wounded Knee medals as “final,” but added that “many people with a vested interest in this conflict may legitimately question what sources and materials the department used to come to that judgment. This provision would require a report and a briefing on these materials.”

South Dakota’s delegation also supported a bill signed into law recently that protects the massacre site from being sold, taxed, gifted or leased without approval by Congress and the Oglala Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes, which jointly purchased the land several years ago.

Mears said Congress has additional options if it decides to pursue the medals issue further. It could propose a change in law giving Congress a veto over military valor awards. That’s unlikely to pass, he said, because it would be unclear how two different branches of government could simultaneously wield the same authority to revoke medals.

Mears said he believes Congress should order another review of the medals with mandated scholarly advice, more historical research and new guidelines for the review.

He said Congress could also pass a law to codify procedures for medal revocation, which would place the process “on firmer footing so that subsequent administrations are unable to unilaterally restore revoked medals out of simple disagreement.”

Efforts to summarily revoke all the medals have not worked, Mears pointed out. He said the best path forward is a careful, case-by-case review.

“Virtually all scholars agree that Wounded Knee was an atrocity and that medals should not have been awarded,” Mears told South Dakota Searchlight in 2024. “I can’t find any Ph.D. claiming otherwise who’s alive.”

He also warned that some medals could survive such a review for lack of specific, disqualifying evidence about an individual soldier. Mears said the bar for awarding a Medal of Honor was much lower at the time. Some of the medals for Wounded Knee were awarded on the basis of a brief note from a commanding officer, leaving little for a modern review panel to consider.

South Dakota Searchlight’s Seth Tupper contributed to this report.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Rounds releases list of South Dakota priorities in US Senate defense bill

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

The version of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2027 approved by the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee this week includes South Dakota priorities such as a combined \$43.7 million for National Guard construction projects in Sioux Falls and Sturgis, according to the office of U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds.

Rounds, a South Dakota Republican, is a member of the committee. The bill now goes to the full Senate. "The NDAA is the hallmark piece of legislation that the Armed Services Committee works on each year, and it's always an honor to have a role in crafting it at the committee level," Rounds said in a news release.

The release said the bill includes provisions specific to South Dakota, including the following:

Fully authorizes the B-21 Raider bomber plane development program, which will be housed at bases including Ellsworth Air Force Base in western South Dakota, with \$3.23 billion for total procurement and an additional \$4.25 billion in research and development.

Authorizes \$146.8 million for B-1B Lancers, which are stationed at bases including Ellsworth.

Authorizes \$40 million for an Aircraft Maintenance Hangar for the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing in Sioux Falls.

Authorizes \$3.7 million for a Vehicle Maintenance Shop for the South Dakota Army National Guard in Sturgis.

Authorizes \$10 million for Cold Regions Advanced Materials and Manufacturing research being done at South Dakota Mines in Rapid City.

Authorizes \$10 million for Large Area Additive Deposition work being done on large area additive manufacturing by VRC Metal Systems and South Dakota Mines.

Authorizes \$5 million for Innovate High Energy Density Sodium Battery research being done by South Dakota Mines.

Authorizes \$30 million for the University Consortium for Cybersecurity including Dakota State University in Madison.

Requires the Army and the Air Force to provide the congressional defense committees a briefing on the resources needed for environmental restoration activities on the Pine Ridge Reservation, which was formerly the site of a bombing range, and encourages the secretary of the Army, secretary of the Air Force, and Army Corps of Engineers to conduct government-to-government consultation with the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Requires the secretary of the Air Force and the commander of U.S. Strategic Command to reevaluate the B-21 Raider program of record and provide an assessment of the number of B-21 aircraft necessary to meet the nuclear and conventional mission requirements in the fiscal year 2026 National Defense Strategy, with a plan for producing the necessary number of aircraft (it is likely, Rounds' office said, that many of the aircraft purchased beyond the initially planned 100 B-21s will make their way to Ellsworth.)

Requires the secretary of defense to provide the full report and unredacted materials used in the review of the Medals of Honor provided to soldiers for their conduct at Wounded Knee Creek in December 1890.

White House discloses outline of deal to end Iran war, open Strait of Hormuz

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The White House on Wednesday read to reporters a 14-point memorandum of understanding with Iran to stop the ongoing war and allow for further negotiations, but did not release the exact text.

The 60-day MOU outlines the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, sanctions relief and reconstruction funds for Iran, and the promise of negotiations on Iran ending its nuclear program. Senior administration officials say economic and sanctions relief will only occur if Iran is on "good behavior."

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"If we think that they're just dragging us along and kind of bull- -- -ting us, then we'll be very quick to pull the plug on it and go back to tightening the screws on them very, very aggressively," a senior administration official who did not want to be identified said on a Wednesday afternoon call with reporters.

President Donald Trump told reporters in France he "might" stay in Europe for the ceremonial signing of the memo, but doubted it.

"This is a memorandum of understanding. It's very important, but it might not be the kind of a document that I should be signing," Trump told reporters at his final press conference of the G7 summit, a meeting of the world's wealthiest capitalist economies.

Earlier Wednesday he told reporters at the G7, "If I don't like it, we'll go back to shooting at them, dropping bombs on their head."

Trump announced Monday he had reached a ceasefire agreement with Iranian officials to temporarily end the war, which has lasted longer than 100 days, but the administration had not released any part of the agreement until Wednesday. Members of the U.S. Senate complained they had not seen the details and some said they wanted to vote on a final agreement.

Iran's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif confirmed in a social media post Monday that a deal had been reached.

Iranians requested the United States not release the text until language was finalized, according to a second senior administration official who added "it was obviously unfortunate we weren't able to put it out right away."

"We were trying to accommodate their domestic messaging and their domestic politics. We're trying to build trust with them, and that's what they asked us to do, so we agreed to do it."

Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi warned on social media June 12 against speculation on the deal which "has never been closer" and said details would be shared with the public "in due course."

Nuclear weapons

The 14-paragraph "Islamabad memorandum of understanding between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran," which the second senior administration official read on the call, declares an "immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon."

The White House declined to provide a written copy of the MOU to reporters.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not agreed publicly to withdraw forces from Lebanon, which emerged as a second front of the war that the U.S. launched in tandem with Israel in February.

The U.S. and Iran have 60 days, "extendable with consent" to reach a final deal.

According to the agreement, Iran "reaffirms that it shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons."

The document charges the U.S. and Iran to agree on how to deal with Iran's buried stockpile of enriched uranium, with the minimum arrangement being the "down blending" of the material on site under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"The two parties also agreed to discuss the issue of enrichment and other mutually agreed matters related to the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear needs based on a satisfactory framework being agreed upon in the final deal," according to the MOU.

In 2018, Trump pulled the U.S. out of a previous nuclear agreement brokered by former President Barack Obama's administration.

Obama appeared skeptical Saturday of Trump's nuclear negotiations with Iran.

"It is doubtful that any agreement that arises is going to be significantly different or a significant improvement from the deal that we had in the first place and had worked for, for a long stretch of time before we, the United States, pulled out of it," he told ABC News' Robin Roberts.

Reopening Strait of Hormuz

The agreement also commits the U.S. to "immediately" begin the removal of its naval blockade on Iranian ports, with a full and final stoppage to occur within 30 days.

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The U.S. will also have to remove military forces from the vicinity of Iran, meaning the American forces "will return our force posture in the region to that which existed before the conflict started," according to the administration official.

Roughly 40,000 troops were in the region prior to the war. That number increased to approximately 50,000 after Feb. 28.

For its part, Iran must "make arrangements using its best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels with no charge for 60 days only from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and vice versa," according to the agreement.

However, the MOU continues: "The traffic of commercial vessels will immediately start in considering the need for removing the technical and military obstacles, and demining by the Islamic Republic of Iran will be instated within 30 days."

From there, Iranian officials agreed to negotiate a plan with the sultan of Oman and Persian Gulf states on "future administration and maritime services in the Strait of Hormuz."

The war's de facto closing of the strait has rocked economies across the globe, as 20% of the world's petroleum exports passed uninterrupted through the narrow waterway prior to the conflict. Oil prices reached \$120 per barrel during the height of the conflict but have fallen to roughly \$79 this week.

Article 38 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea declares passage through straits a right that should not be impeded, though neither the U.S. nor Iran are party to the international agreement.

\$300B in reconstruction funds

In perhaps one of the most "controversial" parts of the MOU, according to the senior official, Iran could see up to \$300 billion in reconstruction funds.

The White House official was quick to downplay the prospect of Iran reaping billions of U.S. dollars.

"Note that it doesn't require us to do anything to, one, to ever pay a cent of money to the Iranians, (and) to ever contribute money to this reconstruction fund," the official said.

"What it says is that if we get to a final deal, and if the Iranians behave, we will permit the sanctions relief that would allow, for example, the Emiratis to build a power plant in Iran. That's all it says. If they do what they have to do, we will permit the investment and the reconstruction of their country," the official said.

Additionally, upon the signing of the MOU, the U.S. Department of Treasury will immediately issue waivers for the export of Iranian crude oil and other petroleum products, as well as associated activities, including bank transactions and insurance, according to the document.

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

FEMA nominee pressed on whether Trump favors disaster funding requests from GOP states

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the Federal Emergency Management Agency testified before a U.S. Senate committee Wednesday that if confirmed he would ensure natural disaster recovery efforts are "objective" and "fair."

Cameron Hamilton, who worked as acting head of the agency before being fired and ultimately nominated for Senate confirmation by the president, faced criticism from members of both political parties about the agency's response time.

But it was Democrats who repeatedly pressed Hamilton about whether states controlled by Republicans should receive a disproportionately higher number of disaster declarations than blue states.

"I certainly appreciate your concern," Hamilton said. "What I can tell you is that if confirmed, my focus will be to ensure that FEMA is objective, is fair and reasonable, follows the law, and is consistent in the approach to how we adjudicate and process claims and requests for disasters."

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Hamilton was the acting head of FEMA earlier in the Trump administration but was ousted after he testified before Congress that he didn't believe the agency should be eliminated.

Almost exactly a year after being pushed out, Trump formally nominated Hamilton to become the FEMA administrator by sending his paperwork to the Senate without any fanfare.

Trump has repeatedly raised grievances with how the federal government prepares for and responds to natural disasters during his second term, saying he believes much of the responsibility should be moved to states.

"We want to wean off of FEMA and we want to bring it down to the state level," Trump said in June 2025. "We're moving it back to the states so the governors can handle it. That's why they're governors. Now, if they can't handle it, they shouldn't be governor."

A review council established by Trump to propose overhauls to FEMA released its recommendations in May, calling on state governments to carry more of the responsibility. Lawmakers, so far, haven't taken any significant actions to implement any of the proposals.

Red state favoritism?

Senators on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee didn't ask Hamilton about his ousting during the confirmation hearing, though they did question him about staffing reductions at FEMA and why the Trump administration seems to favor Republican states.

Michigan Democratic Sen. Gary Peters, the committee's ranking member, referenced a news article Politico published in March that concluded Democratic states had 23% of their disaster funding requests approved, compared to 89% for Republican-controlled states.

"No other president has created such a disparity in states that receive federal disaster aid," Peters said. "Denying over 75% of requests from states that are led by representatives of another party is unconscionable."

New Hampshire Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan also questioned Hamilton about the disparity, saying it's "unacceptable" that federal disaster aid would be approved based on how people voted.

"The idea that Americans, who need help in the wake of a tornado, or a flood, or a hurricane, should be treated differently based upon politics is shameful," she said.

Hassan then asked Hamilton if he agreed "that politics and partisan considerations should play no part in approving disaster assistance."

Hamilton said he did, later adding that he doesn't believe Trump would withhold disaster declarations or aid for political reasons.

Hawley finds FEMA 'slow' and 'often ill-informed'

Democrats weren't the only members of the committee to voice frustrations with FEMA during the confirmation hearing.

Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley showed an enlarged photograph of St. Louis following tornadoes, saying it took FEMA far too long to provide aid for residents.

"As you can see, the devastation is absolutely unbelievable," Hawley said. "I walked these streets myself. You've got buildings completely destroyed, homes absolutely razed to the ground, churches whose roofs were lifted off, whose sanctuaries were completely destroyed, streets that were ripped up. And the problem is that many of these neighborhoods don't look a lot different now because in some cases they're still waiting for relief."

Hawley said that wasn't an isolated incident and that he finds FEMA's response to natural disasters is "slow" and "often ill-informed."

Hamilton said he believes the agency's "disaster declaration process and also the federal mentorship that goes into it needs to be improved."

"I believe states need to receive better customer service. I have full faith and confidence in the FEMA workforce, but we can do better," Hamilton said. "And there's a significant amount of areas where that

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process should be simplified, better understood and we owe you answers, I think, much faster.”

Positions being restored

Connecticut Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal pressed Hamilton about whether staffing reductions “jeopardize the response of FEMA.”

“I think certainly FEMA operates in a unique environment where there are challenges and setbacks that impact our ability to respond,” Hamilton said.

Blumenthal then asked whether Hamilton believed there are enough employees at FEMA and whether lower staffing could lead the agency to lose more people.

“I would agree that the FEMA workforce needs to be scalable in such a way to best meet the needs of the agency and the execution of the program and mission,” Hamilton said.

Blumenthal pressed again, asking whether agency leadership needs “to restore the staff levels essential to their morale as well as their responsiveness.”

Hamilton said that Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin had approved bringing back nearly 350 positions “to fill critical vacancies in key program offices and key responsibilities.”

Western states need different approach

Arizona Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego urged Hamilton, if confirmed, to approach aid to Western states that hold large swaths of federal land differently than states on the East Coast.

“I just want to make sure I emphasize, the one-size-fits-all approach to disaster response just is not working for the West,” he said. “And this is not a red state versus blue state or anything like that.”

Gallego urged Hamilton to ensure the agency considers states’ special characteristics, saying when his state gets hit by a wildfire, it needs FEMA to replant trees so there isn’t severe flooding.

“Sometimes FEMA does not pay for the replanting and reseeding of our forests, which end up causing even greater disasters a year from now,” he said.

Hamilton said that he understood the “unique paradigm” some states face since he grew up on the West Coast and has “family who’ve lost homes from fires and other significant natural disasters out West.”

Hamilton said he believes FEMA’s pre-disaster grants, which are intended to reduce risk and prepare states for future natural disasters, “should be uniquely suited to handle the challenges and threats facing each state on the nuanced issues.”

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.

Lawmakers demand info on Trump use of national park fees to pay for D.C. repairs

BY: AMELIA TWYMAN

WASHINGTON — U.S. House and Senate Democrats, mostly from Western states, are demanding transparency from the Interior Department after media reports revealed the Trump administration redirected roughly \$90 million in national parks fees to help fund renovations and upcoming celebratory displays in Washington, D.C.

The administration’s use of fee revenues to pay for fountain repairs, statue upgrades and fireworks shows in preparation for America’s 250th birthday on July 4 diverts money from national parks in desperate need of billions of dollars in maintenance, lawmakers wrote in two separate early-June letters to Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum.

“The public deserves to know how their park fees are being spent, and Congress cannot conduct appropriate oversight without basic information about these transactions,” Rep. Gabe Vasquez of New Mexico and seven other Democratic representatives wrote in their letter, dated June 12.

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A group of 11 Senate Democrats, led by Sen. Adam Schiff of California, sent a similar letter to Burgum on June 10.

According to a DOI spokesperson, the National Park Service “has not only been focused on beautifying the district but has also been working on many deferred maintenance projects throughout the country,” pooling money from “endowment funds” and the sale of park passes.

How the funding stream works

The National Park Service, housed within Interior, gets a portion of its funding from entry fees and visitors’ purchase of recreational passes. Under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, at least 80% of the fee money must go back to the national park where it is collected.

The remaining 20% is available for overall Park Service use, a policy meant to help support parks that do not charge entry fees or only make a small amount of revenue, according to NPS. Just over 100 parks charge an entrance fee out of the more than 400 that make up the National Park System.

The National Mall in Washington and various memorial sites are part of the crop that do not charge visitors to enter, meaning it is legal for the DOI to spend leftover revenue on projects in its own backyard.

But the amount the department has allocated to renovations so far this year appears to greatly exceed how much it has put toward maintaining the district’s public spaces in the past, according to Tony Irish, a former Interior senior attorney under Trump and attorney under earlier presidents who is now senior counsel with the nonprofit Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

Reflecting pool repair

Multiple news outlets, including The New York Times and The Washington Post, reported NPS is using at least \$60 million in fees paid by parkgoers to fund the repair of nine ornamental fountains across Washington, D.C.

Documents showed an additional \$7 million was redirected to help pay for the renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, while more will be put toward funding a \$1.6 million Fourth of July fireworks display.

“While other administrations have let the city fall into decay, President Trump has made Washington, D.C. Safe and Beautiful again and we should all be grateful,” the Interior spokesperson said in an emailed statement on June 16.

In their letters to Burgum, lawmakers also demanded clarity on the reported use of revenue from the sale of digital park passes—called “America the Beautiful Passes”—as there is no current law that requires those funds be spent in a specific place.

“Credible sources with direct knowledge of these matters have now reported to Congress that much, if not all, fee revenue from online America the Beautiful Passes is being used to fund the President’s ‘beautification’ projects in Washington,” they wrote.

Along with Vasquez, the House letter was signed by Reps. Sarah Elfreth of Maryland, Darren Soto of Florida, Adelita Grijalva of Arizona, Dina Titus and Susie Lee of Nevada, Joe Neguse of Colorado and Jill Tokuda of Hawaii.

Joining Schiff in signing the Senate letter were Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Luján of New Mexico, Angus King of Maine, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Ron Wyden and Jeffrey Merkley of Oregon, Edward Markey of Massachusetts, Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper of Colorado.

Delayed park maintenance

Many critics are pushing back against the Trump administration for not channeling fee funds back into the national parks that need them, including popular travel destinations such as Grand Teton and Yellowstone.

“Last month, I was in Joshua Tree exploring one of our beautiful national parks and was again reminded what a treasured legacy these lands represent,” said Schiff in a June 17 statement to States Newsroom.

“This is just the latest scheme by the President to put himself before the American people, and it will

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have devastating impacts on parks that millions of people visit every year," he added.

The National Park System is backlogged with about \$24 billion worth of repairs to buildings and infrastructure, according to NPS.

Vasquez said New Mexico's Carlsbad Caverns National Park, which runs through his district, "has over \$45 million in deferred maintenance" alone.

"The Administration is choosing to let roads, trails, and wastewater systems in the park fall into disrepair amidst the peak summer visitor season so it can paint statues gold in Washington," he said in a June 15 statement to States Newsroom. "This is unacceptable, and I am demanding action from the Department of Interior to correct course."

Irish also said the DOI's current use of fee revenues for D.C.-area renovations could lead to more money being spent in the long run because of the rush to complete some projects, like the \$14 million reflecting pool. Completed just at the beginning of June, the reflecting pool has already amassed clumps of green algae.

"Not only are we displacing higher-priority needs right now, but we're still going to have unmet needs in the future at an additional cost to the taxpayer, the fee payers within that," Irish said.

Vasquez and his colleagues in their letter asked that NPS restore funding to national parks to help preserve them for future generations.

U.S. senators went even further, including a list of detailed questions about park funding in their letter for the DOI to respond to by June 23.

Amelia Twyman is an intern at States Newsroom's Washington bureau. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she now studies journalism and creative writing at the University of Maryland. She works as an assistant news editor at the university's independent student newspaper, The Diamondback. Amelia is set to graduate in 2028.

Local election officials reel over 'logistical nightmare' of Trump's vote-by-mail order

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

As election officials across the country steel themselves for the midterm elections in less than five months, President Donald Trump's executive order restricting voting by mail threatens to upend their preparations.

The executive order instructs the U.S. Postal Service to refuse to deliver ballots in states that don't provide lists of voters or meet other requirements. It has created a sense of deep uncertainty and concern among election officials as they consider how to comply, according to a review of court documents and interviews with election officials and experts on election administration.

The March 31 executive order, and a proposed Postal Service rule published June 2 that would put the order's requirements into effect, raise serious logistical and procedural challenges for those running elections, they say. Rural areas with limited resources are especially at risk, but jurisdictions of all sizes could be forced to scramble.

The executive order is the latest step taken by Trump to assert control over state-run elections, along with the stalled SAVE America Act, which would require voters to provide documents proving their citizenship. The Justice Department, under Trump's control, is also trying to obtain state voter rolls.

"This is just another death by a thousand cuts that clerks have been experiencing since the 2020 elections," said Barb Byrum, the Democratic clerk of Ingham County, Michigan, which includes Lansing.

First-ever national voter list

The order and the rule require states to provide lists of mail-in voters if they want the Postal Service to deliver ballots, marking the first time the federal government has created a national voter list.

Mail ballot envelopes must meet certain design standards. And federal agencies have to compile lists of voting-age citizens to share with each state in an effort to root out noncitizen voters.

But Democratic states and voting rights groups argue the executive order — and the accompanying

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proposed rule — represent an illegal overreach by Trump because states administer elections under the U.S. Constitution. Trump and his Republican allies say the restrictions are necessary for election security and to combat noncitizen voting, which occurs extremely rarely.

The Postal Service didn't respond to questions from States Newsroom. The agency has said the rule "will facilitate the faithful execution of federal law."

Multiple lawsuits have been brought against the order, but a federal judge in Washington, D.C., in May declined to halt it, partly because the Trump administration hadn't taken enough action to implement its requirements. Another federal judge in Massachusetts is weighing a separate request to block the order.

With the executive order still in effect, at least for now, election officials and experts who work with them are taking the ramifications of it and the proposed Postal Service rule seriously.

"We don't have a national voter registration list. We don't have, currently, a list of sanctioned, authorized voters to vote by mail at the federal level," said Tammy Patrick, chief programs officer at Election Center, operated by the National Association of Election Officials. "That's a big, big change in the way elections have always been conducted."

Sweeping changes very quickly

In court papers filed in May, local election officials and local governments representing 26 jurisdictions across the country warned the executive order would "severely disrupt" local election administration and force the implementation of sweeping changes within months. Implementation of the order's requirements will largely fall on local election officials, they argued.

Byrum was among the officials to sign onto the brief, along with others in Boston, and counties in Pennsylvania, Washington, Wisconsin and elsewhere.

Under the executive order, states that want to send ballots through the mail must provide the Postal Service with lists of voters they intend to provide a mail ballot. Local election officials will play a large role in helping states develop these lists, according to the court papers, and will have primary responsibility to help voters address any errors.

And Trump wants it all in place before November. The executive order's proposed timelines "present a logistical nightmare for local election officials," the officials warn.

"The general rule is don't make changes before a big election because there's always something you didn't think about," said Carolina Lopez, executive director of the Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions, a nonpartisan organization for election officials in jurisdictions of at least 250,000 people.

The proposed Postal Service rule says the agency would launch a portal where states would submit voter lists and make updates. But a number of questions remain, said Lopez, who previously spent a decade administering elections in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

The portal poses the potential for bottlenecks in the election system and it's unclear what would happen if it was ever offline. The United States has a decentralized election system, with states each running their own elections. By contrast, the Postal Service portal would create a single point of failure, raising concerns about the security of information on tens of millions of voters.

Additionally, while every state maintains a voter registration list, there is no nationwide standard for the formatting of that data. It's unclear whether the portal will accept data in a variety of formats — the proposed rule only says the Postal Service wouldn't alter the data provided by states.

"It looks a little different across the country and therefore normalizing the data will be a process," Lopez said.

Struggle for small, rural counties

The Department of Justice initially said in a court document that the Department of Homeland Security planned to obtain voter data from the Postal Service before backpedaling a few days later. Still, Homeland Security continues to have "preliminary conversations" about data sharing, the Justice Department said in a subsequent court filing.

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DHS operates the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE, system that can scan voter data to identify possible noncitizens. The Justice Department has sued 30 states in an effort to force them to turn over their unredacted voter rolls, which include sensitive personal data such as dates of birth, driver's license and full or partial Social Security numbers, for the purpose of running the information through SAVE.

The proposed Postal Service rule also imposes standards on ballot envelopes that states must meet if they want to send ballots through the mail.

Envelopes must include an election mail logo, be automation compatible and have a bar code that allows for tracking. These are already considered best practices — and many jurisdictions across the country already follow them — but the rule would make them mandatory.

Election offices in small, rural counties may struggle to comply. In many places, a single person is in charge of elections and may not even be on the job full time, Patrick said.

"There's rural offices all across the country, some of them don't have their own computer in their office — they are sharing it with the tax assessor or whatever — they don't have the ability to generate those serialized tracking codes, intelligent mail bar codes," Patrick said. "Because they're physically hand-writing these envelopes out or they're using a rubber stamp with their address on it."

Neither the executive order or the proposed Postal Service rule include any federal funding for implementation, something that would likely have to be appropriated by Congress.

Some Republican states have championed the executive order. A dozen GOP state attorneys general filed court documents defending the order and arguing that it "will enhance the security of absentee voting."

"It is vital to the strength of our republic that we ensure only American citizens vote in our elections and that mail-in and absentee ballots are secure and reliable," South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson said in a statement earlier this spring.

But Matt Crane, a Republican who is the executive director of the Colorado County Clerks Association, said the executive order and the proposed rule mark an overreach by the federal government into duties best left to states and local governments.

The biggest reaction among Colorado clerks, he said, has been, "why?"

"No offense to our friends at the post office," Crane said, "but I trust our processes more than I trust theirs."

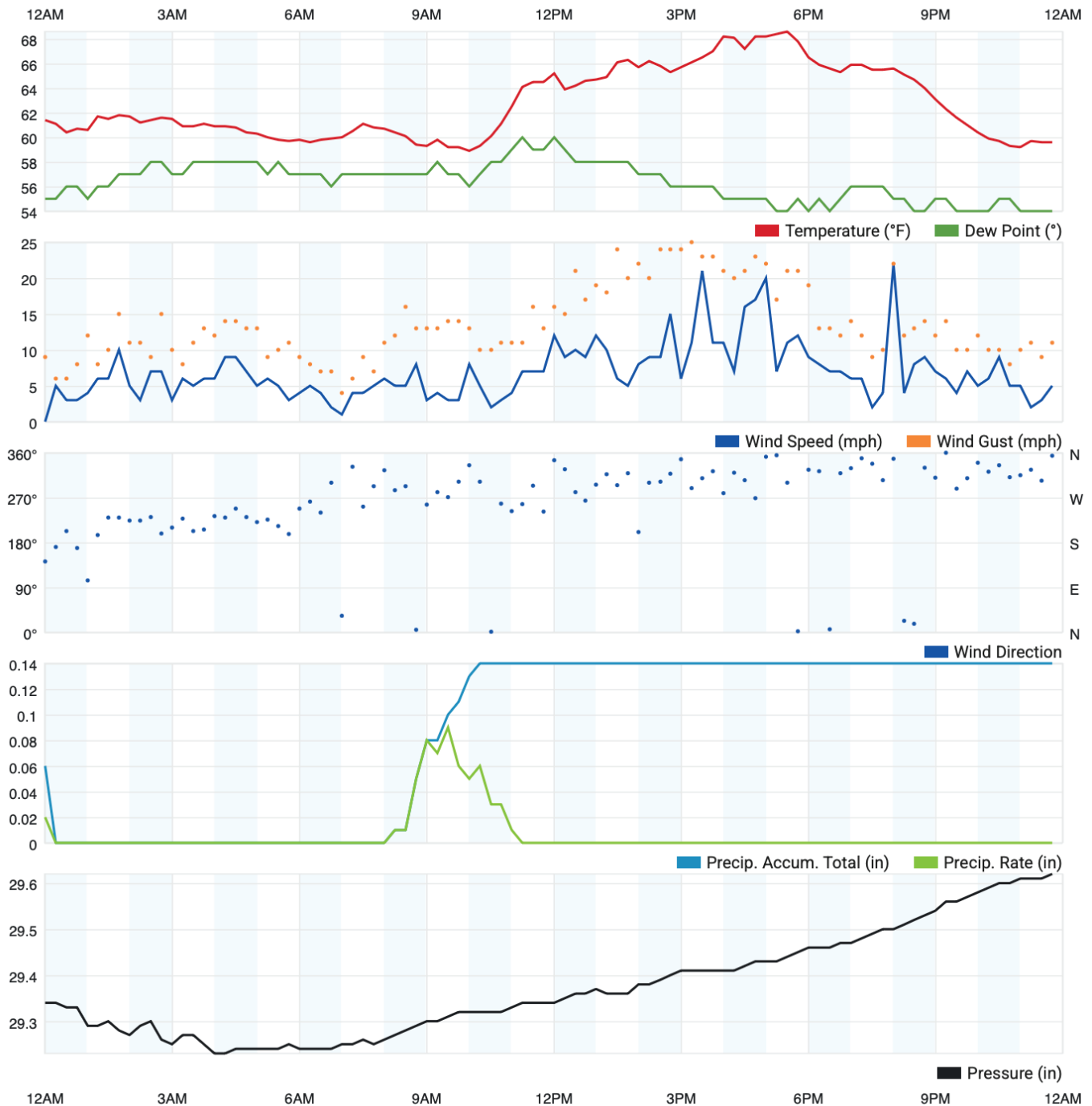
Jonathan Shorman covers democracy for States Newsroom. Based in Kansas City, his coverage area includes elections and voting rights, fights over state and federal power, civil liberties and more. An alumnus of the University of Kansas, he previously covered politics for The Kansas City Star.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 17, 2026



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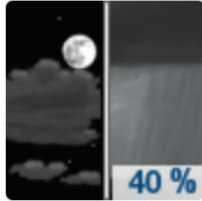
Today



High: 73 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 49 °F

Partly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers

Juneteenth



High: 76 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Sunny and
Breezy

Friday Night



Low: 47 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 76 °F

Mostly Sunny

Cool and Unsettled Weather to End the Work Week

***Storm coverage is isolated to scattered
mainly north of Hwy 212**

***Severe weather is not expected**

Forecast

Today



68-76°

Tonight



48-52°

Friday



72-79°



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

June 18, 2026 3:41 AM

Cooler than average temperatures continue through Friday. Generally, partly cloudy weather is expected over the region today, though there is a 15 to 20% chance for some afternoon storms around and east of Watertown. Showers and thunderstorms move west to east north of Hwy 212 tonight into Friday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 5:17 PM

Low Temp: 59 °F at 9:55 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 3:12 PM

Precip: 0.14

Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1933

Record Low: 38 in 1902

Average High: 81

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in June.: 2.16

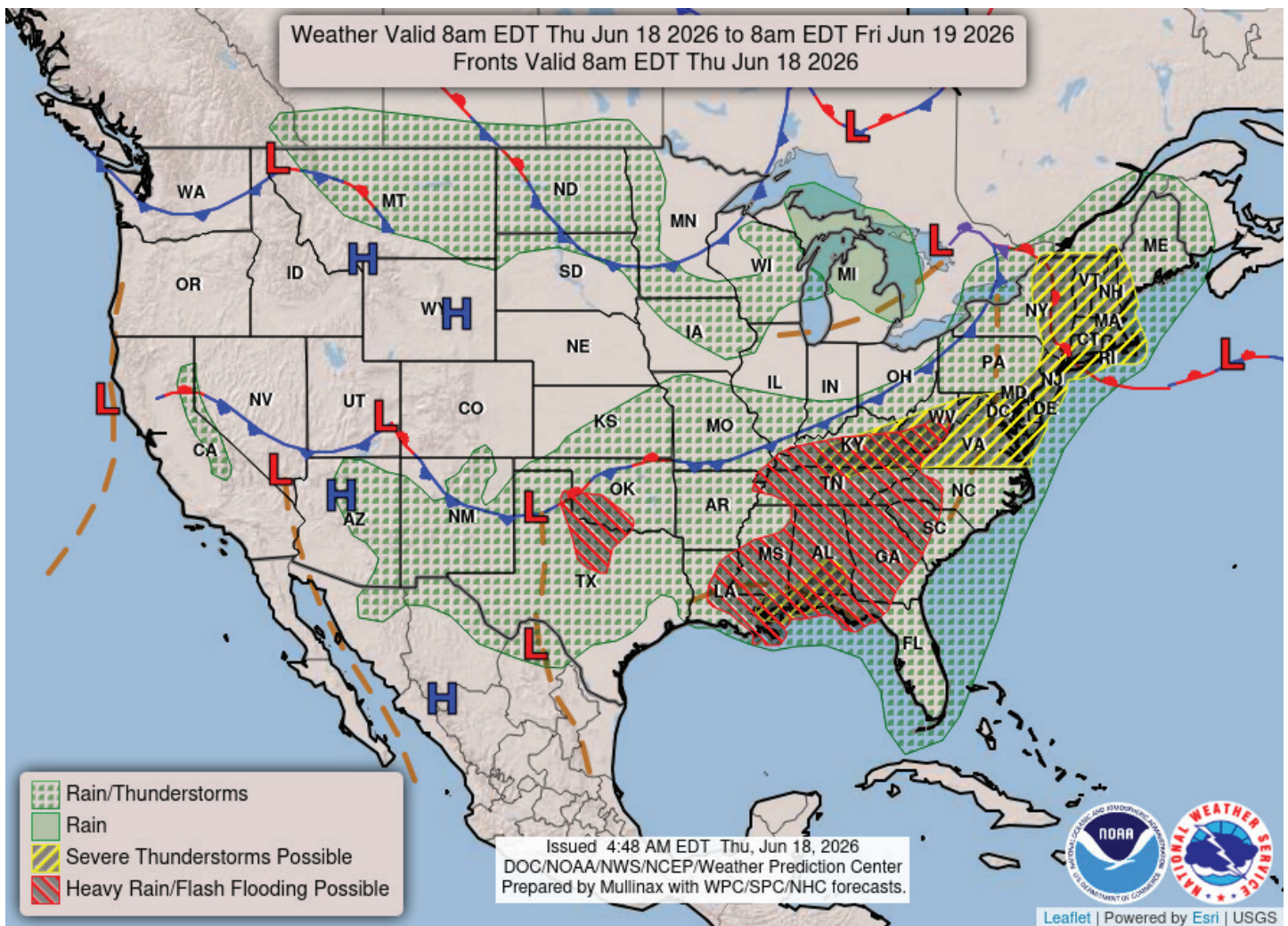
Precip to date in June.: 1.37

Average Precip to date: 9.41

Precip Year to Date: 8.13

Sunset Tonight: 9:23 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43 am



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Today in Weather History

June 18th, 1964: A tornado moved from SSW to NNE, damaging three farmsteads between Hoven and 8 NNW of Bowdle. This tornado was estimated to have F2 strength. An estimated five inches of rain fell in three hours near Bowdle, causing soil erosion just before the tornado hit.

Another storm moved from south to north and intensified as it moved northward. Winds between 50 and 100 mph were reported. The highest damage was in McPherson County, where an estimated 2 million dollars in crop damage occurred. Heavy rain was also observed on this day. Some storm total rainfall includes 6.73 inches in Eureka, 4.28 in Roscoe, 3.75 in Leola, 2.68 in Shelby, 2.45 in Britton, and 2.31 inches in Ipswich.

June 18th, 1991: Large hail, up to 2 inches in diameter, broke windows and caused widespread tree damage in Watertown and its vicinity. Extensive damage was caused to surrounding soybean and corn fields. Approximately 25,000 acres of crops were destroyed. Thunderstorm winds of 55 mph uprooted trees and downed power lines, primarily in the Revillo area. Trees fell on cars, and an apartment complex was damaged.

1875 — A severe coastal storm or possible hurricane struck the Atlantic coast from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia. Eastport ME reported wind gusts to 57 mph. (David Ludlum)

1958 — Hailstones up to four inches in diameter killed livestock as a storm passed from Joliet to Belfry in Carbon County MT. (The Weather Channel)

1970 — Wind and rain, and hail up to seven inches deep, caused more than five million dollars damage at Oberlin KS. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — It was a hot day in the Upper Great Lakes Region. Nine cities in Michigan and Wisconsin reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 90 degrees at Marquette, MI, marked their third straight day of record heat. Severe thunderstorm in the Northern and Central High Plains Region spawned half a dozen tornadoes in Wyoming and Colorado. Wheatridge, CO, was deluged with 2.5 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Severe thunderstorms in eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota produced hail three inches in diameter and spawned four tornadoes in Steele County. Thunderstorms also produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Clearbrook MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. In Arizona, afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Winslow, 113 degrees at Tucson, and 115 degrees at Phoenix were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotion

Helping Others Learn to Pray

Our prayers open doors for others to encounter God more deeply.

Luke 11:1-4: 1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

3 'Give us each day our daily bread.

4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

After hearing the Lord pray, the disciples recognized they had much to learn about communicating with the Father. So they asked Jesus to teach them. With the Lord as our role model, we can try to motivate our loved ones to develop a prayer life that will endure. Since an example can be even more effective than an explanation, it's beneficial for them to see and hear us as we talk intimately with God.

When we bring our concerns to the Lord, our family and friends will see how He answers prayers. They'll also recognize that He's our provider, protector, and guide. Learning how God responds to our requests can encourage people to take their concerns to Him as well (Philippians 4:6-7).

Fellow believers also need to understand that prayer is not just a list of requests. Rather, it's a conversation that builds a relationship with the Lord. When they hear us praise and exalt Him, they'll realize praying should be God-focused rather than self-focused. And as they observe us reading the Bible and letting it guide our requests, they'll learn to pray according to God's will.

Sometimes prayer can be challenging, but remain committed. Never forget that you can influence others through your example of faithful prayer.

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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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

2 4 7 16 21 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT 16 Hrs 53 Mins 53
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.16.26

12 20 53 67 70 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$452,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 38
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

11 16 18 33 51 9

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$30,230,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 53
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

8 11 12 25 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$140,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 8
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

10 17 44 63 67 24

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 37
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.17.26

3 26 49 53 61 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$302,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 37
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the **AP** Associated Press

US and Iran sign initial deal to end war, ease sanctions and open strait as nuclear talks continue

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, MATTHEW LEE, JON GAMBRELL, SAMY MAGDY and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed an agreement with Iran on Wednesday that calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and waives U.S.-backed sanctions on the country, immediately allowing Iran to sell its oil freely in a major concession from Washington, according to details released by both countries.

The initial deal to end the war takes “immediate effect” after leaders from both countries signed it, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who helped mediate the agreement, said online.

The agreement calls for a permanent end to hostilities and starts a 60-day negotiating clock to reach a final deal on the future of Iran’s nuclear program, though Trump left the door open to resume attacks. It appears to offer Iran several benefits up front while extracting little in return.

The deal has been shrouded in secrecy and confusion for days. U.S. officials refused to disclose the terms even after saying Trump and Vice President JD Vance digitally signed it over the weekend. Trump signed a physical copy Wednesday while dining with French President Emmanuel Macron at Versailles, the palace where many historic agreements have been signed over the centuries, ending wars or territorial disputes.

The White House had planned a signing ceremony on Friday in Switzerland, but its fate is now uncertain, with conflicting information from the U.S., Iran and Pakistan.

“It’s signed,” Trump said as he left the dinner at Versailles, which followed his trip to the Group of Seven summit in France.

In a video posted online by a White House aide, Trump was seen seated at a table next to Macron signing a paper copy of the agreement. Trump then handed the document and pen to Secretary of State Marco Rubio as people in the room applauded.

“This was not easy,” Trump said right before he signed it, according to a video posted to social media by Macron.

In Tehran, a stone-faced President Masoud Pezeshkian signed the deal on behalf of Iran, according to the state-run IRNA news agency, which posted an image of him holding up the deal with his signature and Trump’s.

Text of the agreement still has not been formally released by the Americans. U.S. officials dictated draft language to journalists after days of secrecy, speaking on condition of anonymity. Iranian state media has released text that largely tracked what the U.S. put out.

The deal will stop the fighting and start more negotiations

Much of the agreement would restore the status quo before the war, including ending hostilities, restarting talks between the U.S. and Iran over Tehran’s nuclear program, and reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial passage for the world’s oil and natural gas whose closure created a historic energy crisis.

The agreement opens the strait without tolls for two months, but does not preclude fees in the future, according to the drafts from both countries.

In return, the U.S. will move to waive, but not eliminate, some wide-ranging sanctions against Iran.

The deal also affirms a commitment to Lebanon’s territorial integrity in the face of Israel’s invasion against the Hezbollah militant group. That is one of the most delicate parts of the agreement because Israel has maintained it will continue to defend itself and to occupy vast swaths of Lebanon. Iran has said Israel must withdraw under the deal, a condition Israel has already rejected.

The U.S. and Israel went to war Feb. 28 in part to prevent Iran from ever getting a nuclear weapon. Trump has cited various goals for the war, including at times vowing it would end Iran’s nuclear and missile programs and its support for Hezbollah and other proxy groups. He also suggested it could lead to

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toppling the Iranian government.

The interim deal falls short of all those goals, but Trump hailed it as "very strong."

He also opened the door to abandoning it: "It's a memorandum of understanding, and if I don't like it, we'll go back to shooting at them, dropping bombs."

The U.S. agreement to immediately allow Iran to sell its oil freely and the offer to eventually lift all sanctions are major concessions that go beyond the terms of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Trump withdrew America from that Obama-era pact in his first term, declaring it the "worst deal ever."

Iran maintains its nuclear program is peaceful, though it is the only country to enrich uranium to 60% purity without a weapons program, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. The interim deal calls for the IAEA to monitor the "downblending" of that uranium in Iran, without elaborating.

The accord likely will draw intense opposition in Washington, and it appears to be a major setback for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has come under criticism at home from the media, his opponents and even some allies as details emerge.

Under the Obama-era nuclear agreement with Iran that Trump pulled out of, Iran also agreed to restrictions on its nuclear program and promised never to build an atomic weapon in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Major concessions have been offered to Iran

Some concessions to Iran — including the full lifting of sanctions and the release of frozen assets — would happen gradually and be linked to progress in the nuclear talks, according to Pakistani officials. They outlined some of the deal's major points on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

But in the meantime, the U.S. will issue waivers to sanctions that allow Iran to sell oil freely.

The Islamic Republic's oil export revenues in 2024 were more than \$46 billion. Its main buyer of oil, China, is believed to have bought at below-market prices because of its willingness to ignore the sanctions.

Granting oil waivers at the start of the 60-day talks strips the U.S. of a major point of leverage. Only at the conclusion of the overall deal in 2015 were sanctions on Iran's oil lifted.

The interim deal also opens the door to ending all sanctions Iran faces from the U.S. and at the U.N. — including those over Tehran's weapons programs and human rights abuses — though it says the schedule for that will be worked out later. Still, that far surpasses the 2015 deal, which only lifted some sanctions in exchange for Iran drastically reducing its enrichment and stockpile of uranium.

The accord would also provide Iran with at least \$300 billion to rebuild — an extraordinary figure and another major benefit for Iran. The money also appears dependent on the progress of further negotiations.

Vance has said Gulf Arab nations would invest that amount. But Gulf countries would likely be reluctant to help Iran after Iranian attacks in the war destroyed oil facilities and other sites in their territory.

Trump reiterated Wednesday that the U.S. would not contribute and said it was up to other countries if they wanted to invest.

The pact would provide relief to the global economy

The initial deal provides a major win for the global economy — the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas once passed before the war began. Since then, Iranian attacks on shipping and the threat to vessels effectively shut the strait.

The strait's closure drove up energy prices around the world and made many basics, including food, more expensive. Iran let through some vessels that paid tolls, something never done before in the strait, which has long been considered an international waterway. The U.S. later provided military support to get other tankers out, but traffic was nowhere near levels before the war.

The deal also says the U.S. will lift a blockade imposed on Iranian ports and that the strait will return to its prewar traffic levels in 30 days, while acknowledging Iranian mines may need to be destroyed.

Pentagon chief lashes out at NATO allies and announces a review of US forces in Europe

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth lashed out at NATO allies on Thursday, announcing a six-month Pentagon review of American forces in Europe whose outcome will depend on how fast the Europeans take responsibility for their own security.

"This will be a real review. It will be designed to ensure that NATO is moving fast and irreversibly toward Europe leading, stepping up to take primary responsibility for the defense of Europe," he told his NATO counterparts in Brussels.

Hegseth lambasted European allies for failing to provide U.S. forces access to bases in Europe to launch attacks on Iran, calling it "shameful."

"These allies, they put America's sons and daughters, our sons and daughters, at risk by denying them the predictable access, basing and overflight that never should have been in question at all," he said.

Taking the microphone at the top of the meeting, Hegseth also railed against migration and gender equality policies in Europe, in remarks reminiscent to those of Vice President JD Vance in February last year that angered many Europeans.

"Instead of tanks and fighters and air defenses, the focus has been on gender equity and climate change and defense austerity. Europe's borders flew wide open, welfare states expanded, defense budgets cratered. Along with Europe's belief in itself and its civilization," Hegseth said.

Hegseth's comments largely mischaracterized European policies today. On defense, European allies and Canada have launched an unprecedented effort to boost defense spending and expand their armed forces. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte noted on Thursday that they spent \$90 billion more on defense last year, a 20% increase over 2024. And while Europe accepted large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers more than a decade ago, most countries have tightened their borders since.

The Trump administration now wants a reboot of the 32-nation organization to turn it into a "NATO 3.0" capable of deterring any threat, Hegseth said.

Hegseth's remarks came a few weeks after the United States told its allies that it would no longer supply certain warships and aircraft if one of them comes under attack. European allies and Canada are trying to work out how to plug the gaps.

NATO's supreme allied commander, an American, is working on backup plans to defend Europe after the U.S. signaled on June 3 that it would no longer supply an aircraft carrier and support ships, aerial refueling planes and dozens of fighter jets, among other military assets, in a crisis.

The Trump administration insists that it needs to be able to plan for two simultaneous conflicts and wants more military resources at hand should a conflict break out with China in the Indo-Pacific region.

Under NATO's collective security guarantee – Article 5 of its founding treaty – the 32 allies pledge that an attack on one of them will be considered an attack on all. It does not oblige them to provide military support, although many likely would.

In essence, the United States is scaling back how it might help should an ally trigger Article 5. The U.S. has by far NATO's biggest armed forces. It does not intend to withdraw its nuclear weapons in Europe, which are key to NATO's deterrence.

To underscore that point, NATO's Nuclear Planning Group issued its first statement in 19 years after it had assembled at Thursday's meeting.

In the statement, it "recalled that the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance remain the supreme guarantee of Allied security and underpin NATO's extended deterrence architecture."

The ministers "agreed to continue enhancing NATO's nuclear deterrence mission by modernizing NATO's nuclear capabilities, strengthening its nuclear planning capacity, and adapting to achieve its security interests."

Ukraine hits Moscow oil refinery and disrupts commercial flights with major drone attack

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukraine hit a major Moscow oil refinery for a second time in a week and disrupted commercial flights at Moscow airports in one of its biggest drone attacks since Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago, Russian officials said Thursday.

The attack came hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had held "an important coordination call" with U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron that may "bring about significant change."

Zelenskyy said Wednesday his country had won key pledges of further support from world leaders attending the G7 summit in France, including the United States.

Images and video released by the Russian media showed massive fires raging at the Moscow Oil Refinery, located about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the Kremlin. Thick black clouds of smoke rose over the city.

The Moscow Oil Refinery is one of Russia's biggest refineries, according to its official website, and accounts for more than a third of the fuel market of the capital region. It was last attacked by Ukrainian drones on June 16, catching fire, but officials said the blaze was swiftly put out.

Ukraine has repeatedly targeted Russia's oil facilities, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for the war and make Russians feel the consequences of the invasion.

Flights from four Moscow airports were temporarily halted, transport and aviation authorities said.

In the surrounding Moscow region, a drone hit a residential building in the town of Zhukovsky, and the building was being evacuated, according to Gov. Andrei Vorobyov.

Elsewhere in the region, drone debris hit private houses, a car, a fitness center, an unspecified industrial facility and a large mall, whose roof caught fire, Vorobyov said. One woman was injured, he said.

Ukrainian drone attack embarrasses Putin again

The Russian Defense Ministry said that its air defenses overnight shot down 555 Ukrainian drones over multiple regions, with almost 200 intercepted as they were approaching the Russian capital.

That was roughly double the number of drones that Russia launched at Ukraine overnight, according to the Ukrainian air force.

The attack was the latest embarrassment for Russian President Vladimir Putin, after a Ukrainian drone attack on his hometown of St. Petersburg earlier this month just as he held a showcase economic forum in the city with foreign VIP visitors.

Putin on Thursday was in Kazan, some 700 kilometers (430 miles) east of Moscow, hosting leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as Russia seeks to bolster business and other ties with the nations of the regional bloc.

Zelenskyy said the attack on Moscow was part of Ukraine's efforts to force Putin to the negotiating table.

"This is a fully justified response to Russian attacks on our cities and communities, and another important result of our warriors' work against facilities that sustain Russia's war machine," the Ukrainian leader said on social media. "It is time the war ended, and Russia must take the necessary steps in diplomacy."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on X: "One of the most popular questions asked by Muscovites this morning is 'What is going on?' I can answer. Your country started a war of aggression against ours. For years, it has been killing our people. Now that you know what's going on, ask Putin when he is planning to end it."

Ukraine disrupts Russian supply lines with drones

As well as gaining pledges of more diplomatic and military help from Western supporters at the G7 summit, Ukraine recently has gained momentum on the battlefield against Russia's bigger army thanks to its high-tech drones, Western officials and analysts say.

As well as disrupting Russian oil production, longer-range drone strikes are choking Russian supply lines in occupied regions of Ukraine.

Macron said the G7 summit was "very important for Ukraine" because its supporters — crucially including

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the United States — vowed to help it, although the French president provided no details. The U.S. under Trump has cut back assistance to Ukraine, leaving the Europeans as the biggest suppliers of military and financial aid. Trump and Zelenskyy have had an at times strained relationship.

"America is with us on Ukraine, that is very important," Macron said.

"And now we will continue to advance to help Ukraine to resist" and to build up its "capacity to defend itself and capacity to counterattack," Macron told reporters as he and Trump left the Palace of Versailles near Paris.

World shares are mixed following signing of US-Iran deal on ending the war

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — World shares were mixed on Thursday, with benchmarks in Japan and South Korea setting fresh records, after the U.S. and Iran signed their initial agreement ending the war.

The rally in Asia followed a retreat Wednesday on Wall Street driven by speculation the Federal Reserve may raise interest rates this year to curb inflation.

U.S. futures were higher early Thursday, while oil prices fell.

Leaders from the U.S. and Iran signed the deal on a permanent end to hostilities that starts a 60-day negotiating clock to reach a final deal on the future of Iran's nuclear program. In the meantime, it calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

The deal waives U.S.-backed sanctions on the country, immediately allowing Iran to sell its oil freely in a major concession from Washington, according to details released by both countries.

The news came after U.S. markets closed with losses for the day.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX edged 0.2% higher to 24,987.35, while the CAC 40 in Paris edged 0.1% lower, to 8,424.47. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 0.8% to 10,422.40.

The future for the S&P 500 was up 0.9%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.6%.

During Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 resumed its climb, gaining 1.7% to a new closing high of 71,053.49. It topped 70,000 for the first time this week and is still gaining thanks to hopes for an end to the war and strong buying of high-tech shares due to the artificial intelligence boom.

"This is very broad-based rally, I believe it's actually showing some confidence that the Japanese economy is going to recover further from the ... the end of the war, and presumably the oil prices in the near future," said Neil Newman, head of strategy at Astris Advisory Japan.

South Korea likewise has been setting records, gaining 2.3% to 9,063.84. The Kospi has roughly tripled in the past year, helped by gains for computer chipmakers Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix. Samsung's shares rose 4.6% and those of SK Hynix gained 6.5%.

Taiwan's Taiex jumped 1.3%.

In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng lost 2.1% to 23,792.35, while the Shanghai Composite index edged 0.4% lower to 4,090.48.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.6% to 8,911.10.

On Wednesday, the S&P 500 slumped 1.2% after the Fed released projections showing nearly half its policymakers foresee at least one increase to its main interest rate in 2026.

The Dow dropped 1% and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.3%.

Higher interest rates can tap the brakes on inflation, but they also slow the economy and hurt prices for investments. For much of the past year, the expectation has been that the Fed would be cutting rates.

In his first news conference as head of the U.S. central bank, Kevin Warsh, did not give a forecast for where the federal funds rate may end 2026. He said he's considering a revamp of how the Fed communicates with financial markets and U.S. households and businesses.

One of his first moves was to end the inclusion of hints in Fed statements about where interest rates may be heading in the future.

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In the stock market, SpaceX erased an early gain and fell 4.9% for its first loss since its ballyhooed debut on the U.S. stock market last week.

Drops of 3.8% for Microsoft, 3.5% for Amazon and 1.3% for Nvidia were three of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500.

A report said revenue at retailers across the country grew at a faster pace in May than economists expected.

Oil prices were steadier Wednesday following slides earlier in the week on optimism about the tentative U.S.-Iran deal to get the global flow of oil going again. Iran is set to take steps to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, allowing oil tankers to deliver crude from the Persian Gulf again and hopefully relieve inflationary pressures.

Early Thursday, the price for a barrel of Brent crude oil fell 1.9% to \$78.05. It's still above its roughly \$70 price from before the war, but it's well below its \$100-plus price from a few weeks ago.

U.S. benchmark crude slipped 2.1% to \$74.43 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar fell to 160.63 Japanese yen from 160.65 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1510, up from \$1.1501.

Los Angeles warehouse fire prompts shelter-in-place orders due to hazardous air

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A fire at a massive warehouse blackened the skies near downtown Los Angeles on Wednesday afternoon, prompting shelter-in-place orders in the area due to the risk of hazardous air.

Los Angeles firefighters responded around 2:30 p.m. to the blaze, which was sending large plumes of dark smoke into the air in the Boyle Heights neighborhood. Local news stations showed smoke billowing from the burning roof of the warehouse, which was covered in solar panels.

Officials issued an alert to the area shortly after, warning of "hazardous materials nearby." Residents were told to close all windows, doors and vents, turn off air conditioning and bring people and pets to an inside room.

Los Angeles Fire Department spokesperson Jennifer Middleton said there was previous concern over the fire burning an ammonia line, but that danger had "dissipated." The roof blaze had been extinguished by late afternoon and firefighters were entering the building to assess the interior, Middleton said.

The building at the address is listed online as a cold storage warehouse owned by Lineage Logistics for the transport of frozen or other temperature-controlled goods. It contains 491,000 square feet (45,600 square meters) of warehouse space, according to its website. The company did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Mamdani tests his political clout in New York's primary as he looks to reshape the Democratic Party

By STEVE PEOPLES, ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and MATT BROWN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Not long ago, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani was demonized by leaders of both political parties. Today, just six months after taking office, the 34-year-old democratic socialist's political strength is surging.

Always a darling of the far left, he has earned praise from both President Donald Trump and former Democratic critics like New York Gov. Kathy Hochul. He has emerged as the face of the region's sports renaissance. And days before New York's primary elections, Mamdani is testing the limits of his newfound political muscle in a bid to reshape the Democratic Party — in his state capital and in Washington — even if it means challenging his own party's leadership.

Mamdani will join Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. at a get-out-the-vote rally in Brooklyn on Thursday. The event is designed to elevate a slate of candidates aligned with Mamdani's values, including two running against Democratic incumbents in Tuesday's primary.

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"He's seeing that opportunity — that we can radically change the Democratic Party," said Faiz Shakir, a senior adviser to Sanders and a friend of Mamdani's. "Like Bernie, he's not saying I'm doing this out of spite against you, dear leadership. He's saying, I am supporting these candidates who have a better vision, and I am prepared to lose if it has to be the case."

The Mamdani slate

Establishment Democrats are not pleased with the mayor's decisions.

Mamdani endorsed political organizer Darializa Avila Chevalier over Rep. Adriano Espaillat, the chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, in New York's 13th District, which includes parts of upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

He is also backing former New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, who is running against incumbent Rep. Dan Goldman in New York's 10th District. And in New York's 7th, he's supporting democratic socialist state Assembly Member Claire Valdez against outgoing Rep. Nydia Velazquez's handpicked successor.

The Mamdani slate, in addition to several state Assembly candidates, will be featured at Thursday's rally.

Valdez says the election is about advancing the political movement Mamdani ignited on his way to City Hall.

"Right now there's really mass dissatisfaction with the way the party leadership has been operating and not standing up strongly enough to Trump," she told The Associated Press, contrasting the malaise to the way the mayor energized voters last year.

She said she hopes to "bring a partner to Zohran to Washington."

Valdez's primary opponent, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, said he feels like the underdog in the race, even though he was endorsed by the outgoing incumbent. He said Mamdani "has a celebrity status that we haven't seen the likes of since I've been alive."

"He's going to be our champion for the foreseeable future and he's doing a great job, and when he says that he's endorsing someone, it matters," Reynoso said in an interview. "I believe that this community has seen me work, they know I'm a progressive champion, and in any other circumstance I would be a favorite to win this race, but I'm not because he has tipped the scale."

The candidates are largely aligned on the biggest issues, although there are modest differences.

Israel's war with Gaza has featured heavily among the Mamdani slate, with Lander, Valdez and Avila Chevalier casting their Democratic opponents as too soft on Israel. They're echoing the mayor's steadfast criticism of the country's leaders and harnessing what they believe could be a driving force in this year's elections.

The mayor's candidates have also sought to replicate much of the platform that sent him to City Hall, focusing on the city's high cost of living and framing themselves as fresh faces not beholden to powerful business interests.

The view from Washington

On Capitol Hill, Democrats are pleasantly surprised that Mamdani has become less of a political liability for the party in swing district seats than they once feared.

But Mamdani's endorsements have aggravated intraparty fissures, especially among moderates who worry that Mamdani's far-left brand may eventually tarnish the entire party.

And House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, a fellow New Yorker, has tried to push back against the Mamdani-backed democratic socialist challengers, endorsing and campaigning for the embattled incumbents in a proxy fight with the mayor.

But Jeffries and Mamdani have opted to wrestle only in primaries rather than bicker publicly and feed into GOP narratives of Democratic disarray.

"Democrats must understand, and both the leader and Mamdani appreciate this, how to yell in areas where we agree and whisper in areas where we diverge," said Antjuan Seawright, a Democratic strategist who works with House Democrats.

For now, Jeffries' allies acknowledge that Mamdani has energized Democratic voters and may be able to reach some Americans who have checked out of the political process. They also prefer that Mamdani is hyper-focused on New York City's governance rather than traveling across the country nationally.

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Republicans, however, have plans to elevate Mamdani's profile whether Washington Democrats want them to or not.

The GOP hasn't made Mamdani a central feature of its broader national messaging as it once threatened, but Republican operatives have sought to link Mamdani to Democratic House candidates in swing districts across California, Colorado and Wisconsin. They also believe the specter of the New York City mayor will loom large in pivotal House races in New York and New Jersey.

The Republican bet is that vulnerable Democrats cannot afford to break with Mamdani too cleanly for fear of alienating progressive voters, even as they cast him as a radical.

"Zohran Mamdani's socialist brand is as toxic as it comes," said Mike Marinella, a spokesperson for the National Republican Congressional Committee, House Republicans' campaign arm. "And during a time when Democrats don't have a leader or a message, he's exactly the kind of bogeyman we can use against Democrats to truly show who is leading their party and the crazy policies they all support."

Meanwhile, Sanders' adviser Shakir encouraged the Republicans to try. He noted that Sanders mentions Mamdani in almost every speech as he tours the nation rallying voters ahead of the midterms.

"The crowd just goes nuts," Shakir said. "He certainly is not a political liability."

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But Jeffries and Mamdani have opted to wrestle only in primaries rather than bicker publicly and feed into GOP narratives of Democratic disarray.

"Democrats must understand, and both the leader and Mamdani appreciate this, how to yell in areas where we agree and whisper in areas where we diverge," said Antjuan Seawright, a Democratic strategist who works with House Democrats.

For now, Jeffries' allies acknowledge that Mamdani has energized Democratic voters and may be able to reach some Americans who have checked out of the political process. They also prefer that Mamdani is hyper-focused on New York City's governance rather than traveling across the country nationally.

Republicans, however, have plans to elevate Mamdani's profile whether Washington Democrats want them to or not.

The GOP hasn't made Mamdani a central feature of its broader national messaging as it once threatened, but Republican operatives have sought to link Mamdani to Democratic House candidates in swing districts across California, Colorado and Wisconsin. They also believe the specter of the New York City mayor will loom large in pivotal House races in New York and New Jersey.

The Republican bet is that vulnerable Democrats cannot afford to break with Mamdani too cleanly for fear of alienating progressive voters, even as they cast him as a radical.

"Zohran Mamdani's socialist brand is as toxic as it comes," said Mike Marinella, a spokesperson for the National Republican Congressional Committee, House Republicans' campaign arm. "And during a time when Democrats don't have a leader or a message, he's exactly the kind of bogeyman we can use against Democrats to truly show who is leading their party and the crazy policies they all support."

Meanwhile, Sanders' adviser Shakir encouraged the Republicans to try. He noted that Sanders mentions Mamdani in almost every speech as he tours the nation rallying voters ahead of the midterms.

"The crowd just goes nuts," Shakir said. "He certainly is not a political liability."

With a sledgehammer and a shovel, volunteers raced to save passengers in Texas plane crash

By GENE JOHNSON, AMY TAXIN and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

The business jet barreled cockeyed down the dark highway, knocking down one light pole after another, an orange glow of sparks trailing it.

From a distance, Ivan Franco thought it must be a car. But as he approached in his tow truck, he saw it was a plane — broken in half, its fuselage resting on its side, bright fire beginning to rise above. He stopped and rifled through the rescue kit his company keeps in the truck, grabbing a sledgehammer as well as three fire extinguishers, which he handed off to police officers.

"At that moment, you don't think much about what to do, because I knew the plane could explode since it was on fire," Franco told The Associated Press in Spanish. "My idea was to try to break the windows because the pilots hadn't come out yet."

Franco was one of several motorists who happened across the crash in Laredo, Texas, late Tuesday night and rushed to help — putting their own lives in danger to help those on board escape as smoke filled the cabin.

Passersby helped save lives

Police were also on the scene quickly, and their teamwork with the good Samaritans undoubtedly saved lives, officials said.

"The officers and the good Samaritans that went to the scene, our firefighters that responded — I do also want to commend each and every one of them," Laredo Police Chief Mike Rodriguez said during a news conference Wednesday. He said he asked his staff to track down all the civilians who helped.

The Cessna Citation Latitude twin jet departed Tuesday evening from the Mexican resort city of San José del Cabo and was bound for Austin, Texas, the FAA said in a statement. The plane was operated by NetJets, a company owned by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway that lets people buy part ownership in private jets. NetJets said in a statement that it was cooperating with authorities.

The crash occurred after its pilots reported mechanical problems while requesting an emergency landing at a nearby airport. The fuselage came to rest across a concrete barrier, while its tail broke off and fell to a lower section of roadway.

One person was killed: Joshua Baer, a leader in Texas' technology and startup sectors. Three teenage passengers and two pilots survived, as did a person in a truck struck by the plane as it crashed. Authorities have not released more detail about the passengers' connections to one another.

Investigators combed through wreckage Wednesday for clues to the cause.

It was the third significant aviation accident in as many days in the U.S. A B-52 crashed Monday during a test flight at Edwards Air Force Base in California and killed all eight people aboard, while on Sunday, 12 people were killed when a plane on a skydiving outing in Missouri crashed.

'It looked like part of a movie'

Among the motorists who stopped in Laredo was Zayra Garza, an esthetician who was driving her co-workers home when she saw the wreckage. She recorded video as her husband ran to help.

"It looked like part of a movie. I was in shock," Garza said. Most worrisome was the fire: "I was concerned that it could have just exploded at any time."

Garza saw people leave their cars to try to smash the cockpit glass. Her video shows the aircraft's door popping open slightly from inside as a voice cries "Help! Help! Help!" The rescuers strain to lift the door farther open as the three teenagers dart out, followed quickly by one pilot and then by another.

Franco, a 23-year-old from Laredo, frantically swung the sledgehammer through heavy smoke. Others struck at the window with a shovel and tools from their own vehicles.

Cockpit windows are designed not to shatter

They accomplished little more than spiderwebbing the cockpit window with small cracks: Airplane windshields have multiple layers of glass and are designed to remain structurally sound even if the outer layer shatters. The windows must be able to withstand a bird strike at cruising speed and hold up to extreme

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pressure differences at high altitudes.

"They are basically bulletproof," said retired airline pilot John Cox, who is CEO of Safety Operating Systems. Police officers tried to remove the final person inside — Baer — as the smoke grew thicker. Officers doubled over coughing after turning away from the smoke.

Eventually firefighters with oxygen masks were able to get inside.

Firefighters also removed a dog from the plane that was suffering from smoke inhalation. The dog was turned over to animal control and was expected to survive, said Jose Baeza, an investigator with the Laredo Police Department.

Five officers were treated for smoke inhalation; the five people who survived the crash were also released from a hospital.

As the plane crashed on the northbound lanes of the highway, its wing hit a truck traveling southbound. The driver of that vehicle also survived, Baeza said.

There has been an outpouring of support on social media for those who stopped to help, heralding their bravery and selflessness.

Laredo Mayor Victor Treviño called it "nothing short of a miracle that this tragedy did not become a mass fatality event," thanks in part to the late hour when the crash occurred and the quick action of first responders.

Franco said that as he tried to help, all he could think of was getting people out of the plane. But to do it, he had to conquer another feeling.

"You're in constant fear," he said. "You don't know what situation you're in."

A history of Iran's nuclear program and tensions with the US as an interim deal is signed

By The Associated Press undefined

The United States and Iran have signed an interim deal aimed at ending the war and reopening the Strait of Hormuz. However, questions remain over how further negotiations will go over the next 60 days on Iran's nuclear program.

Here's a timeline of the tensions over Iran's atomic program:

Early days

1967 — Iran takes possession of the Tehran Research Reactor supplied by America under the "Atoms for Peace" program.

1979 — U.S. ally Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, fatally ill, flees Iran as popular protests against him surge. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returns to Tehran and the Islamic Revolution sweeps him to power. Students seize the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, beginning the 444-day hostage crisis. Iran's nuclear program goes fallow under international pressure.

August 2002 — Western intelligence services and an Iranian opposition group reveal Iran's secret Natanz nuclear enrichment facility.

June 2003 — Britain, France and Germany engage Iran in nuclear negotiations.

October 2003 — Iran suspends uranium enrichment under international pressure.

February 2006 — Iran announces it will restart uranium enrichment following the election of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Britain, France and Germany walk out of stalled negotiations.

June 2009 — Iran's disputed presidential election sees Ahmadinejad reelected despite fraud allegations, sparking protests known as the Green Movement and a violent government crackdown.

October 2009 — Under U.S. President Barack Obama, the U.S. and Iran open a secret back-channel for messages in the sultanate of Oman.

July 2012 — U.S. and Iranian officials hold secret face-to-face talks in Oman.

July 2015 — World powers and Iran announce a long-term, comprehensive nuclear agreement that limits Tehran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

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The nuclear deal collapses

May 8, 2018 — U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdraws the U.S. from the nuclear agreement, calling it the “worst deal ever.” He says he’ll get better terms in new negotiations to stop Iran’s missile development and support for regional militias. Those talks don’t happen in his first term.

May 8, 2019 — Iran announces it will begin backing away from the accord. A series of regional attacks on land and at sea blamed on Tehran follow.

Jan. 3, 2020 — A U.S. drone strike in Baghdad kills Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the architect of Tehran’s proxy wars in the Middle East.

Jan. 8, 2020 — In retaliation for Soleimani’s killing, Iran launches a barrage of missiles at military bases in Iraq that are home to thousands of American and Iraqi troops. More than 100 U.S. service members suffer traumatic brain injuries, according to the Pentagon. As Iran braces for a counterattack, the Revolutionary Guard shoots down a Ukrainian passenger plane shortly after takeoff from Tehran’s international airport, reportedly mistaking it for a U.S. cruise missile. All 176 people on board are killed.

July 2, 2020 — A mysterious explosion tears apart a centrifuge production plant at Iran’s Natanz nuclear enrichment facility. Iran blames the attack on Israel.

April 6, 2021 — Iran and the U.S. under President Joe Biden begin indirect negotiations in Vienna over how to restore the nuclear deal. Those talks, and others between Tehran and European nations, fail to reach any agreement.

April 11, 2021 — A second attack within a year targets Iran’s Natanz nuclear site, again likely carried out by Israel.

April 16, 2021 — Iran begins enriching uranium up to 60% — its highest purity ever and a technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Feb. 24, 2022 — Russia launches its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Moscow ultimately will come to rely on Iranian bomb-carrying drones in the conflict, as well as missiles.

July 17, 2022 — An adviser to Iran’s supreme leader, Kamal Kharrazi, says Iran is technically capable of making a nuclear bomb, but has not decided whether to build one.

Mideast wars rage

Oct. 7, 2023 — Hamas militants from the Gaza Strip storm into Israel, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 others hostage, beginning the most intense war ever between Israel and Hamas. Iran, which has armed Hamas, offers support to the militants. Regional tensions spike.

Nov. 19, 2023 — Yemen’s Houthi rebels, long supported by Iran, seize the ship *Galaxy Leader*, beginning a monthslong campaign of attacks on shipping through the Red Sea corridor that the U.S. Navy describes as the most intense combat it has seen since World War II. The attacks mirror tactics earlier used by Iran.

April 14, 2024 — Iran launches an unprecedented direct attack on Israel, firing over 300 missiles and attack drones. Israel, working with a U.S.-led international coalition, intercepts much of the incoming fire.

April 19, 2024 — A suspected Israeli strike hits an air defense system by an airport in Isfahan, Iran.

July 31, 2024 — Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader, is assassinated during a visit to Tehran after the inauguration of reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian. Israel later takes responsibility for the assassination.

Sept. 27, 2024 — An Israeli airstrike kills Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon.

Oct. 1, 2024 — Iran launches its second direct attack on Israel, though a U.S.-led coalition and Israel shoot down most of the missiles.

Oct. 16, 2024 — Israel kills Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar in the Gaza Strip.

Oct. 26, 2024 — Israel openly attacks Iran for the first time, striking air defense systems and sites associated with its missile program.

Trump returns and reaches out

Jan. 20, 2025 — Trump is inaugurated for his second term as president.

Feb. 7, 2025 — Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says proposed talks with the U.S. are “not intelligent, wise or honorable.”

March 7, 2025 — Trump says he sent a letter to Khamenei seeking a new nuclear deal with Tehran.

March 15, 2025 — Trump launches intense airstrikes targeting Houthi rebels in Yemen, the last members

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of Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" capable of daily attacks.

April 7, 2025 — Trump announces the U.S. and Iran will hold direct talks in Oman. Iran says they'll be indirect talks.

April 12, 2025 — The first round of talks between Iran and the U.S. take place in Oman, ending with a promise to hold more talks after U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi "briefly spoke" together.

April 19, 2025 — The second round of talks between the U.S. and Iran are held in Rome.

April 26, 2025 — Iran and the U.S. meet in Oman a third time, but the negotiations include talks at the expert level for the first time.

May 11, 2025 — Iran and the U.S. meet in Oman for a fourth round of negotiations ahead of Trump's trip to the Mideast.

May 23, 2025 — Iran and the U.S. meet in Rome for a fifth round of talks, with Oman saying the negotiations made "some but not conclusive progress."

The Iran-Israel war begins

June 9, 2025 — Iran signals it won't accept a U.S. proposal over the nuclear program.

June 12, 2025 — The Board of Governors at the International Atomic Energy Agency finds Iran in non-compliance with its nuclear obligations. Iran responds by announcing it has built and will activate a third nuclear enrichment facility.

June 13, 2025 — Israel launches its war against Iran. Over 12 days, it hits nuclear and military sites, as well as other government installations.

June 22, 2025 — The U.S. intervenes in the war, attacking three Iranian nuclear sites.

June 23, 2025 — Iran responds to the U.S. attack by targeting a military base in Qatar used by American troops, causing limited damage.

June 24, 2025 — Trump announces a ceasefire in the war.

July 25, 2025 — Iranian and European diplomats hold talks in Istanbul over Iran's nuclear program.

Aug. 8, 2025 — France, Germany and the United Kingdom warn Iran in a letter that it will reimplement U.N. sanctions if there is no "satisfactory solution" to the nuclear standoff by Aug. 31.

Aug. 28, 2025 — France, Germany and the United Kingdom say they've started the process to "snapback" U.N. sanctions on Iran.

Sept. 9, 2025 — Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency reach a deal over potentially starting inspections, but questions remain over its implementation.

Sept. 19, 2025 — U.N. Security Council declines to stop "snapback" sanctions on Iran.

Sept. 26, 2025 — U.N. Security Council rejects China and Russia's last-minute effort to stop "snapback."

Sept. 28, 2025 — U.N. reimposes "snapback" sanctions on Iran barring any last-minute diplomacy.

New protests roil Iran

Dec. 28, 2025: Protests break out in two major markets in downtown Tehran after the Iranian rial plunges to a record low — 1.42 million rials to one U.S. dollar — compounding inflationary pressure and pushing up the prices of food and other daily necessities.

Jan. 3, 2026: Khamenei says "rioters must be put in their place," in what is seen as a green light for security forces to begin more aggressively putting down the demonstrations.

Jan. 8, 2026: Following a call from Iran's exiled crown prince, a mass of people shout from their windows and take to the streets in nationwide protests. The government responds by blocking the internet and international telephone calls to cut off the country from outside influence. An ensuing security force crackdown kills thousands and sees tens of thousands detained.

Jan. 13, 2026: Trump says he has called off any meetings with the Iranians and promises that unspecified "help is on its way."

Jan. 26, 2026: The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and three accompanying warships arrive in the Middle East amid Trump's threats to attack.

Feb. 3, 2026: A U.S. Navy fighter jet shoots down an Iranian drone approaching the Lincoln in the Arabian

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Sea. Iranian fast-attack boats attempt to stop a U.S.-flagged ship in the Strait of Hormuz.

Feb. 6, 2026: Iran and the U.S. hold indirect nuclear talks in Oman, with the head of the U.S. military's Central Command also coming.

Feb. 17, 2026: Iran and the U.S. hold talks in Geneva while Tehran says it has temporarily closed the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes.

Feb. 26, 2026: Iran and the U.S. hold another round of talks in Geneva as America assembles the largest fleet of warplanes and aircraft in the Mideast in decades.

The Iran war

Feb. 28, 2026: Israel and the United States launch a war on Iran, killing Khamenei in the conflict's first moments.

March 9, 2026: Iran names Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, the late supreme leader's son, as country's new paramount ruler.

April 7, 2026: A fragile ceasefire in the Iran war is announced, with talks to continue. Israel is not included in negotiations.

April 8, 2026: Israel bombards Lebanon's capital, Beirut, killing over 300 people in a 10-minute attack.

April 11, 2026: U.S. Vice President JD Vance leads an American delegation to Islamabad, meeting with Iranian team led by parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, the highest-level direct talks between the two nations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The talks end after 21 hours without a deal.

May 31, 2026: Israel's ground invasion of Lebanon makes its deepest incursion in over a quarter century.

June 15, 2026: The United States and Iran reach an initial agreement to open the Strait of Hormuz and further extend a shaky ceasefire in the Iran war.

June 17, 2026: Trump and Pezeshkian each sign the interim deal remotely, with Trump in France and Pezeshkian in Tehran.

Harry Kane ties England's record for World Cup goals in 4-2 win over Croatia

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Hey, Jude, you and Harry didn't let England down.

Harry Kane scored twice to equal the English record for World Cup goals, and Jude Bellingham put England in front for good two minutes into the second half of a 4-2 victory over Croatia on Wednesday.

Martin Baturina and Petar Musa answered each of Kane's first-half goals in a rematch of a 2018 semifinal won by Croatia. Musa's goal came on the final play before the whistle ending the first half.

The even score didn't last long once play resumed.

Bellingham took a long pass from Elliot Anderson and stayed clear of the defender the rest of the way, sending a shot past Dominik Livakovic and in off the far post. Marcus Rashford padded the lead in the 85th minute.

"He just told us to let the shackles off," Kane said of coach Thomas Tuchel's halftime message after Croatia pulled even so late before the break. "The way we conceded that second goal is not the team we want to be. He finally just said, 'What's the worst that can happen? We lose the match, first group game, we get on with it.' We move on. Just go and kind of show the world who we can be."

Kane, who won the Golden Boot at the 2018 World Cup in Russia by scoring six times, is up to 10 World Cup goals, tying Gary Lineker's mark from the 1986 and 1990 tournaments.

The 32-year-old's first goal came on his second chance on a penalty kick after Livakovic's save on the first try was nullified by a video review that showed both his feet off the goal line as Kane was striking the ball.

Kane went the same way toward the right post with the second attempt, while Livakovic lunged the other direction, to his right.

The penalty was called when Luka Modric, the 40-year-old midfielder who extended his Croatian record by appearing in his fifth World Cup, kicked Noni Madueke in the thigh.

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Kane matched Lineker's mark when the Bayern Munich striker easily beat Livakovic with a powerful header off a corner kick from Declan Rice. Kane has 81 international goals.

"We scored two goals that were good actions and good situations, but they were too little," Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic said through an interpreter. "England was very difficult, (we) also have to be strong on the defensive side."

Bellingham almost immediately had another great scoring chance after the Real Madrid player's seventh international goal. Livakovic made that save and about a half-dozen more in a matter of minutes during a frenetic English attack.

"We could have scored probably three goals in that 20-minute spell coming out (after halftime)," Kane said. "In the end, we just had too much for a great team that will probably go far in the tournament themselves."

Musa scored the first World Cup goal for an active player from Dallas of Major League Soccer, which plays its home games about 40 miles from AT&T Stadium.

The retractable-roof venue that is home to the NFL's Dallas Cowboys is giving World Cup fans an air-conditioned reprieve from the muggy Texas heat, this time for white-clad English fans and Croatian supporters who were mostly wearing their country's familiar red-and-white checkered uniforms, not the blue kits the players had on.

Musa tracked a header from Ivan Perisic and put a one-timer past Jordan Pickford, who was also beaten in the 36th minute by Baturina. That shot into the left corner ticked off Pickford's hand.

Bukayo Saka's pass left plenty of room for Rashford as the Barcelona player entered the penalty area, faked a shot with his left foot and scored his 19th international goal with his right.

"I loved the second half, all of it," Tuchel said. "I encouraged them to go for it. To play with more courage, to be brave, to be ourselves. And like I said, I loved their reaction."

England next plays Ghana in Foxborough, Massachusetts, in Group L on Tuesday, the same day Croatia plays Panama in Toronto.

Vance, skeptical of foreign wars, becomes the face of Trump's tentative deal to end war with Iran

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — JD Vance was supposed to be spending the week promoting his new book, the kind of event a potential presidential candidate like the vice president typically uses to speak to a wide audience about his life and values ahead of a campaign.

Instead, the rollout of Vance's second book, "Communion: Finding My Way Back to Faith," has been largely crowded out by something else he's put his name on: the tentative deal to end the Iran war.

The Republican vice president has embraced the role of chief defender of the agreement he and President Donald Trump signed with Tehran, giving a series of interviews touting the memorandum of understanding as a success and releasing a video championing it.

It's a striking emergence for a politician who was known for his skepticism of foreign military interventions and who seemed reluctant to speak on the conflict when Trump launched it in late February.

The vice president is poised to yoke himself further to the conflict's outcome on Friday, when he's expected to travel to Switzerland to kick off a new phase of negotiations with Iran. He was originally expected to attend a formal signing ceremony for the deal, but Trump formally signed it on Wednesday instead.

Vance becoming a hype man for the agreement seems to be an all-in gamble that, should he decide to seek the White House in 2028, voters will reward him for being the face of ending an unpopular conflict.

It's also setting Vance up as the presumptive fall-guy should the deal with Iran falter.

Trump joked about such a possibility on Wednesday.

"If it works out, I'm going to take the credit. If it doesn't work out, I'm blaming JD," Trump said.

Officials release text of the deal after backlash

The White House in a statement called Vance the president's "right-hand man and an invaluable member

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of the President's talented national security team."

"That's why the Vice President was trusted to lead these negotiations alongside Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner," White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales said. "What President Trump and his team achieved on the battlefield and at the negotiating table is nothing short of remarkable and will strengthen American security for years to come."

But backlash, including from conservatives, began growing this week after the U.S. digitally signed the memorandum of understanding with Iran on Sunday.

Luke Schroeder, a spokesman for the vice president, said in a statement: "It's unfortunate that some Republicans are attempting to undermine the President's efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East and ensure Iran never has a nuclear weapon."

Officials gave shifting answers about when they would release the text, but leaked copies of a draft were quickly met with anger and skepticism from Democratic and Republican U.S. lawmakers, as well as Israel and pro-Israel advocates. Their criticisms included concerns that the deal, meant to open a two-month negotiating period, seemed to offer Iran wins up front while guaranteeing little in return, and that Trump's stated reason for launching the conflict, to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, remains unresolved.

Vance has reiterated that Iran must meet its obligations.

"If they don't behave properly, they don't get any of the benefits of this bargain," he said Tuesday on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends."

In response to the backlash and mounting questions, the U.S. on Wednesday provided the text of the agreement to journalists.

The agreement states that Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which is believed to be buried under rubble, must at minimum be diluted under international supervision. It also states that Iran shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons — a commitment it has made previously. But beyond stating that the U.S. and Iran will negotiate over Iran's nuclear program, other commitments still need to be worked out.

Criticism on the right persisted after the text was released.

Conservative radio host Erick Erickson, a hawk who has defended the war, said Wednesday: "This is an American surrender."

Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, a potential 2028 presidential candidate, criticized the agreement and said to reporters, "I think the president, unfortunately, is receiving bad advice."

Trump's 'Operation Epic Fury' has angered wings of his movement

The conflict, which has stretched into its fourth month, has cleaved Trump's broad Make America Great Again coalition and angered both those who favored a harder line against Iran and those drawn to Trump's "America First" foreign policy underscored by a message of "no new wars."

Critics, including Republicans, have already started pointing fingers in Vance's direction, questioning whether the deal resembles the 2015 nuclear agreement struck by Democratic President Barack Obama and whether this new agreement achieves Trump's stated objectives for launching the war.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a Trump ally and Iran hawk, had been skeptical of the agreement and referred to Vance on social media as "the architect of the deal."

After the agreement was released, Graham issued a tepid statement of support, saying, "Whether or not the United States can reach an acceptable, verifiable deal with Iran regarding its nuclear program and other issues is yet to be determined, but I see little downside to trying."

Ben Domenech, The Daily Wire's opinion editor, said on Fox News that everything he was hearing about the deal "seems bad" and appeared to cast blame on Vance by alluding to his first book, "Hillbilly Elegy."

"Are we going to backslide into being some kind of 'hillbilly Obama' kind of GOP?" Domenech said.

GOP allies say Vance can navigate the politics

The Trump administration has not offered formal briefings to Congress on the details of the memorandum, but Vance has quietly started doing outreach to some Republican senators on Capitol Hill.

Sen. Bernie Moreno, R-Ohio, a close ally of Vance's, said the vice president would be able to assuage even critics within his own party who are skeptical of the deal because "JD is just the president's mes-

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senger, and the president's going to prove them all wrong."

Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., said the deal "certainly adds to the national security and geopolitical chops" of Vance, who spent two years as a U.S. senator for Ohio before ascending to the vice presidency.

But Cramer acknowledged the risks if the agreement goes awry.

"I guess the nice thing is, if you're not the No. 1 person, you can take credit and avoid risk, avoid the criticism, but probably not so easily," Cramer said.

Vance argues Iran is not a quagmire like the Iraq war

In interviews this week, Vance has sought to speak directly to the skeptics in his party, a preview of the difficult explanations he may be pressed to make as a candidate on the war.

On Megyn Kelly's show, the vice president said the critics "believe Iranian propaganda" about the deal. But he acknowledged some of the frustrations on the hawkish right while trying to reassure the anti-interventionists that the Iran conflict isn't the war in Iraq, where he served as a Marine.

"We were never going to get the quagmire that a lot of people were worrying about because Donald Trump is just not George W. Bush," he said.

Democrats have stressed that even as Vance becomes the face of the Iran deal, the fate of any administration official who harbors presidential aspirations — particularly hawkish Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who has largely been quiet in the agreement's final phases — will be tied to its outcome.

"I think any member of this administration is going to rise or fall on the basis of the Iran war and the handling of the economy, and I don't think there are exceptions," said Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii.

A special election in the UK could hasten the rise of Andy Burnham and the end for Keir Starmer

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Keir Starmer isn't on the ballot, but the U.K. prime minister's future is on the line in a special election on Thursday.

Voters in the Makerfield district of northwest England are electing a new lawmaker, and the leading contender is Andy Burnham of the governing Labour Party, the current mayor of Greater Manchester and oddsmakers' favorite to be the next prime minister.

If Burnham defeats a candidate from the anti-immigration party Reform UK and wins the seat for Labour, he's almost certain to challenge the embattled Starmer for leadership of the party, and the country.

Burnham has pledged that "if people put their trust in me, I will change politics" — a big promise for a politician who, if he wins, will be just one of 650 lawmakers in the House of Commons.

But the scores of journalists from around the world who have flocked to Makerfield during the campaign are evidence that this is no normal by-election, the results of which are due early Friday.

Starmer struggles since landslide win

About 75,000 people are eligible to vote in Makerfield, a constituency that encompasses several towns and villages on the edge of Greater Manchester, 200 miles (320 kilometers) northwest of London.

They hold in their hands the fate of Starmer, whose popularity has cratered since he led the center-left Labour Party to a landslide election victory in July 2024.

Starmer's government has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living, and been hamstrung by repeated missteps, including his decision to appoint Peter Mandelson, a scandal-tarnished friend of Jeffrey Epstein, as the U.K. ambassador to the United States.

A dismal performance in May's local elections spurred scores of Labour lawmakers to demand Starmer's resignation. He has refused to budge, but senior colleagues are trying to force a change. Wes Streeting resigned as health secretary in May, saying that "where we need vision, we have a vacuum."

Then Josh Simons, the Labour lawmaker for Makerfield, stepped down to trigger a special election and give Burnham the chance to return to Parliament.

Britain's parliamentary system allows governing parties to change leader midterm, with the winner becoming prime minister without the need for a national election. Under Labour rules, a lawmaker can

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challenge the leader if they have backing from a fifth of the party's House of Commons lawmakers — a number that stands at 81.

Streeter said Tuesday that he hopes Starmer will agree to step down, but that if he doesn't, "there will need to be a contest, and I would be prepared to do that."

A Burnham victory will pile pressure on Starmer to quit

Streeter is an assured communicator with a base of support among parliamentary colleagues, but Burnham is considered the more likely successor.

The 56-year-old politician nicknamed the "King of the North" has led Manchester since 2017, overseeing rapid regeneration for the city where the Industrial Revolution was forged. Burnham is pledging to repeat his signature brand of "Manchesterism" on a national scale.

"It's not right, the way the country has been run," Burnham said on the campaign trail last week, claiming "London-centric politics" has failed other regions of the U.K.

Starmer, meanwhile, has tried to keep calm and carry on, insisting during a G7 summit in France this week that he has no intention of leaving his post.

"I will fight if there's a challenge," he said. "We won a significant general election result in 2024, with a mandate to bring about change. I'm not going to walk away from that."

Starmer suggested that he could offer Burnham a Cabinet post if he wins, telling Sky News on Wednesday that "I want him to have a big role in government." Allies of Burnham indicated that he wasn't interested.

Rob Ford, professor of political science at the University of Manchester, said that if Burnham wins convincingly, "the pressure on Starmer will be very hard to resist."

"Starmer can say all that he likes that he wants to carry on," Ford said. "But if the entire Cabinet turns around and says, 'We're not going to serve under you and we think you should go,' then either he'll go with dignity or go without dignity, but he'll end up having to go quite quickly."

Reform UK poses a challenge to Labour

Burnham's victory isn't a given. The Macclesfield area has elected Labour lawmakers for more than a century, but Reform UK has rapidly gained ground in post-industrial northern England, winning big in local elections last month.

Reform candidate Rob Kenyon, a local plumber, is hoping to tap into concerns about immigration — frequently expressed by voters despite relatively low numbers of immigrants in Macclesfield. But Reform faces a challenge from Restore, an even more hard-line, anti-immigration and ethnonationalist party to its right.

A Burnham victory would be bad news for Starmer. But Ford said that a Reform win in Macclesfield would spell "Gotterdammerung, apocalypse, disaster, chaos" for the Labour Party.

"Andy Burnham is miles more popular than every other (leadership) candidate available. Miles better known, miles better liked," he said.

"If Reform take him out, then simultaneously you have a situation where the Reform threat looks much graver, and the best person available to combat the Reform threat has failed."

Tropical Cyclone Arthur weakens to a low pressure area along the upper Texas coast

By DAVID FISCHER and STEPHEN SMITH Associated Press

COVINGTON, La. (AP) — Tropical Storm Arthur was downgraded to a low pressure area along the upper Texas coast Wednesday night but forecasters expected its remnants to bring life-threatening flooding and days of heavy rains to parts of the southeastern United States, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Arthur was the first tropical storm of the season in the Atlantic basin and it's expected to keep weakening as it moves inland over southeastern Texas and western Louisiana, then cross the southeast Thursday through Friday. Maximum sustained winds were around 35 mph (55 kph).

All coastal watches and warnings were discontinued Wednesday night, but flooding was likely through Friday over parts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the Florida Panhandle, the hur-

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ricane center said.

In Louisiana and Mississippi, some communities had set up locations for residents to collect sandbags and cleared debris from drainage systems.

"The main threat from Arthur is going to be a prolonged, multiday, heavy rainfall event that could produce dangerous to life-threatening flash flooding," National Hurricane Center director Michael Brennan said.

The storm spun off the Texas coast on the same day a World Cup match took place in Houston but did not disrupt the contest, which was played indoors. Heavy storms in the Houston area earlier in the week had canceled outdoor watch parties and fan events.

New Orleans Mayor Helena Moreno said police were preparing boats and setting up barricades in known flood areas. Collection points for residents to fill sandbags also sprung up around the state.

"We both decided we got so much rain yesterday at our house that it was probably a good idea just to pick up a few bags," said Luke Barwick, who filled sandbags at a collection center in Covington, Louisiana.

After being inundated with heavy rain earlier this week, parts of central and south Mississippi braced for a second wave of potential flooding.

Officials in Picayune, Mississippi, located about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of New Orleans, declared a state of emergency Tuesday after downpours brought nearly 7 inches of rain in six hours. On Wednesday, city officials gave out thousands of sandbags and put emergency responders on standby.

Arthur is expected to produce rainfall totals of 5 to 10 inches (13 to 25 centimeters), with isolated higher totals near 20 inches (50 centimeters).

Swells generated by Arthur are likely to cause life-threatening surf and rip-current conditions along the northwestern Gulf Coast for the next couple of days, forecasters said. Tornadoes were possible through Thursday.

Arthur formed as some areas along the Texas coast had already been drenched by bands of heavy storms that caused flooding and high waters. Near Houston, a 15-year-old drowned Tuesday after entering the water of a retention pond while playing near a construction zone, according to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. ____ Fischer reported from Miami. Associated Press writer Sophia Bates in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed to this report.

Africa's Ebola outbreaks complicated by victims who prefer traditional healers over hospitals

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

BUNDIBUGYO, Uganda (AP) — Whenever Ebola comes, some of the afflicted choose the road to the nearest hospital. Others take the path to the shrine of a traditional healer, often with devastating consequences.

Many view the onset of hemorrhagic fever as a spiritual affliction and seek out herbs and prayers instead of going to the hospital. This is the case now in Congo, which is suffering its seventeenth outbreak of Ebola since 1976, when the virus was first identified in the rich Congo Basin ecosystem.

Five decades later, the virus continues to mystify many of the sick in Africa while turning religious leaders into first responders in a deadly emergency. The current outbreak's victims include health workers without protective gear as well as pastors and worshippers who gathered while Ebola was spreading, according to humanitarian workers and others who spoke to The Associated Press.

Ebola spreads through close contact with sick or deceased patients' bodily fluids. The current outbreak is particularly worrisome in a region where many are distrustful of health workers and refuse to seek medical care.

In Bunia, a town in Ituri province that is the outbreak's epicenter, misinformation about Ebola has made it harder for health workers to respond to the outbreak that has so far killed at least 181 people. One rumor suggests that Ebola is spread by malicious people who drop magical charms tied to dollar bills down pit latrines.

"Some people still describe Ebola as something mysterious, spiritual, or brought by outsiders, rather than a disease that needs medical care," said Onesphore Bangenza of the aid group Mercy Corps, speak-

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ing from Bunia. "When people do not trust the health system, they often go first to traditional healers, faith leaders, or people they already know. The danger is that many only reach the hospital when they are already very sick."

Uncommon type of Ebola causing the outbreak

The current outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare type of Ebola that has no approved medicines or vaccines to combat it. It is occurring in a remote area of Congo that also faces armed violence by rebel groups as well as displacement. Ebola intensifies the suffering, with its terrifying symptoms that evoke a modern-day plague.

The outbreak was confirmed on May 15. Some experts believe infections may have been occurring in February, but health officials initially tested for a different kind of virus that causes Ebola disease.

The World Health Organization quickly declared the event a public health emergency of international concern. The U.S. government has imposed a temporary ban on the entry of people without U.S. passports who have recently visited Congo, Uganda or South Sudan.

With so many people in afflicted communities seeking spiritual answers to the outbreak, humanitarian workers are urging religious leaders to get involved in combating Ebola.

In a video widely shared among people in Ituri, a catechist leader recently cured of the disease in the Ebola hot spot of Mongbwalu spoke candidly of the mistake that could have cost him his life.

"I don't usually rush to the hospital, so I decided to go to the fields," Deogratias Kasereka said, before explaining how his children compelled him to seek medical treatment.

His symptoms had included muscle weakness and headaches, and he "felt very hot." Ebola in later stages also can bring about internal and external bleeding.

The symptoms are so disturbing — and sometimes shameful — that some victims prefer the privacy of a traditional healer's shrine, said Vincent Isimbwa, an elder among Seventh-day Adventists in a remote community of Ugandans that faced the first-ever outbreak of Bundibugyo in 2007.

"They faced it so rough," said Isimbwa. "The challenge with Ebola is that it is so bad that some people can believe that there are supernatural powers behind it."

That outbreak of Ebola killed at least 36 people and left the community terribly scarred. Many here also regret that the Bundibugyo virus is named for their district, the mountainous homeland of roughly 200,000 people mostly living as farmers.

Mistrust and medical limitations drive sick people to healers

In Bundibugyo two decades later, the Ugandan nurse whose sample of blood confirmed the 2007 outbreak said his symptoms confused those who examined him in the early days of the outbreak. Some thought Samuel Kuule had a case of food poisoning. While others afflicted may have gone to see healers, described pejoratively as witch doctors, he was nursed in a narrow hospital room by caregivers including his pregnant wife, who was never infected.

Kuule recalled that his symptoms — peeling skin, bloodshot eyes and severe headache — terrified him without shaking his Seventh-day Adventist faith, unlike some others who may have felt they were being bewitched.

"For those who are weak in faith, they may (think) that they are being bewitched," he said. "Maybe they can believe it."

Some locals recalled that an early victim of the 2007 outbreak was a woman stretched down the mountains and into the shrine of a traditional healer, an older man who survived but lost three sons to Ebola. Speaking through his presumptive heir, Amon Balinda, the healer said he switched his service from benediction and prayer to the prescription of herbs after he was told Ebola was spreading.

"For us in African traditional societies, in most cases when you fall sick and you go to the hospitals and they give you some injections and there is no improvement, there and then you switch to your neighbor, or anybody, and say maybe he is the one bewitching you," he said. "Then you decide to go to the witch doctor."

In fact, Ebola outbreaks are believed to start with the virus spilling over into humans from an infected

animal such as a fruit bat. These cross-species infections often happen when people handle and eat wild meat, experts say.

The WHO is urging early testing for Ebola, in addition to isolating contacts in the current outbreak.

That's challenging in communities with deep religious faith, Christian but especially traditional. People insist on burying the dead according to established custom, because to do otherwise may deprive the dead of an afterlife. Pastors who stake their authority on the ability to heal the sick are expected to perform. Traditional healers face similar hopes.

This is why Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni rebuked religious leaders in a recent televised speech, saying there was no need to touch the sick in the time of Ebola. He said that Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO chief, told him while visiting Uganda that many victims in Congo are religious people.

"The pastors, the pastors, the pastors," Museveni said, squinting in apparent disappointment. "The people of God — they are the ones who touch patients. ... God is not deaf. You can pray without touching."

'A million years isn't enough': Victims' relatives confront Gilgo Beach serial killer at sentencing

By PHILIP MARCELO and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

RIVERHEAD, N.Y. (AP) — After decades waiting for justice, relatives of women murdered by New York's Gilgo Beach serial killer laid into him Wednesday before he was sentenced to life in prison. He told them: "I am responsible" for the crimes.

"There are no words I can say," said Rex Heuermann, the Long Island architect who lived a secret life of violence for years before admitting he killed eight women. "The words I would say would have no meaning."

The sentencing capped an extraordinary investigation that solved one of New York's most perplexing mysteries. The seemingly unconnected and largely overlooked disappearances of young women became the focus of true-crime documentaries, books and podcasts after police began discovering the victims' skeletal remains in the sandy scrub along a coastal parkway.

Heuermann, 62, will have no possibility of parole.

"A million years isn't enough," Violet Swager, a cousin of victim Jessica Taylor, said. "Nothing will ever make this right."

Judge calls Heuermann 'despicable'

As a series of victims' kin spoke, Heuermann sat with his hands on the defense table, looking straight ahead and lightly tapping his fingers.

Then Amanda Funderburg, victim Melissa Barthelemy's sister, commanded Heuermann to look at her. He glanced in her direction, but his eyes were slightly downcast.

"I hope you suffer," Funderburg said as she recounted a taunting phone call she received from him days after Barthelemy disappeared. Funderburg was 15 years old.

JoAnn Mack, the mother of victim Valerie Mack, told the killer that her daughter "had dreams, and you took them all away from her."

"Justice has been done, but it can't replace what has been taken," Mack said.

Heuermann pleaded guilty in April to charges that he murdered seven women: Barthelemy, Mack, Taylor, Megan Waterman, Amber Lynn Costello, Maureen Brainard-Barnes, and Sandra Costilla.

Heuermann also admitted in court to killing an eighth victim, Karen Vergata, though he was never charged in her death. He said he strangled his victims, many of them sex workers, and dismembered some of their bodies.

"Are you at least a little bit sorry for that?" Judge Timothy Mazzei asked Wednesday in an indignant voice.

Heuermann nodded and said "Yes, I am."

"You are disgusting — a despicable man, if you are a man at all," the judge said, his voice rising. "And you are a coward."

As Heuermann was led away in handcuffs, spectators in the packed courtroom jeered.

Victims' families recount a confounding loss

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Liliana Waterman, who was 3 when her mom vanished, said she has been waiting her entire life to confront her mother's killer.

"She can finally rest in peace," Waterman said outside the courthouse. "He can't hurt anybody else."

Most of the women disappeared between 2000 and 2010 and their remains were all found on Long Island. Most were along Ocean Parkway near Gilgo Beach. Costilla's remains were found in 1993 in the Hamptons, while Vergata's remains were found in 1996 on Fire Island.

Brainard-Barnes' two children, who were 7 and 1 when she disappeared in 2007, underscored Wednesday how her absence shaped their lives and how she never got to know the adults they became.

Her sister, Melissa Cann, sobbed deeply as she described wondering for decades if she could have done more to protect Brainard-Barnes. But, she said, that guilt is "not mine to carry. It is for Rex and Rex alone."

Heuermann's ex-wife and two adult children said they did not attend the sentencing out of respect for the victim's families.

How the Gilgo Beach serial killer was caught

The case spilled into view in 2010, when investigators started to find remains along Ocean Parkway while looking into the disappearance of another sex worker, Shannan Gilbert, whose death was ultimately ruled an accidental drowning.

The case went cold until 2022, when detectives linked Heuermann to a pickup truck that a witness reported seeing when one of the victims disappeared in 2010.

Eventually, they matched DNA from a pizza crust Heuermann discarded in a Manhattan trash can to genetic material extracted from highly degraded hair fragments found on the women's remains.

Investigators amassed other evidence, including cellphone and tracking data showing Heuermann arranged meetings with some victims shortly before their disappearances.

After Heuermann's 2023 arrest, prosecutors recovered what they described as a "blueprint" for the killings from his computer files. Among the documents was a series of checklists with reminders to limit noise, clean the bodies and destroy evidence.

Life behind bars

Heuermann will soon be transferred to a state prison after having spent the past three years alone in a segregated cell at the Suffolk County jail, reading crime novels and striking up a brief correspondence with the infamous "Happy Face Killer."

Calling him "a monster," Suffolk County District Attorney Ray Tierney declared there was nothing Heuermann could say to mitigate his deeds.

"There is no doubt this defendant is sorry," Tierney said. "He is sorry he got caught."

Defense lawyer Michael Brown said Heuermann has shed tears, and there may be "some sincerity in his expressions of remorse." His client appeared "as normal as they come" during their interactions, Brown said, in stark contrast with his crimes.

"He's somewhat of a charismatic figure when you talk to him," Brown said.

As part of his guilty plea, Heuermann has agreed to cooperate with the FBI's behavioral analysis unit to help catch other serial killers.

More than 1,000 people have been killed in Gaza during ceasefire, Palestinian authorities say

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip have killed 1,005 Palestinians since a ceasefire was reached between Israel and the militant group Hamas last October, the Gaza Health Ministry said Wednesday.

The enclave has seen near-daily strikes, as well as shelling and gunfire along the boundary that divides Gaza into Israeli and Palestinian-controlled zones. The most recent deaths were recorded after a series of Israeli drone strikes in the past few days on towns and refugee camps in central Gaza and Gaza City.

Also Wednesday, an Israeli strike killed two Palestinians and wounded six others in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, health officials at Nasser Hospital said. The Israeli military acknowledged carrying out the strike

and said the target was a “terrorist,” but didn’t elaborate. Families at the hospital said the strike targeted a group of people near the beach in the sprawling tent camp of Muwasi, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians live.

Israel has said it is continuing to operate against Hamas and allied militants in Gaza and has expanded the amount of territory it controls inside the strip. Both sides have accused the other of violating the ceasefire.

In a separate statement Wednesday, the Israeli military said that it killed two militants from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in strikes over the weekend.

Gaza’s Health Ministry on Sunday said the death toll from the Israel-Hamas war had surpassed 73,000 in Gaza. The ministry doesn’t differentiate between civilians and combatants. It is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by the international community.

The war erupted when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostage, on Oct. 7, 2023. In response, Israeli leaders promised a punishing offensive on the Gaza Strip to annihilate Hamas and free the hostages.

Takeaways from the G7: Trump’s new attitude toward allies buoyed by their praise for Iran deal

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, SYLVIE CORBET, ROB GILLIES, AAMER MADHANI and JOHN LEICESTER
Associated Press

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, France (AP) — President Donald Trump is not known to be a fan of international gatherings of world leaders, but he changed his tune at this year’s G7 summit at a French Alpine resort, where he was buoyed by support from his counterparts for his tentative agreement with Iran to end the war.

It was an about-face for Trump, who weeks ago had sharply criticized his counterparts for refusing to join the United States and Israel in bombing Iran to force it to abandon its nuclear aspirations — and who last year spent only a day at the G7 summit before cutting out early and going back to Washington.

“We found a great deal of unity here at the G7,” Trump told reporters at the end of the meeting. He said he had heard only positive comments from G7 leaders, who are anxious to see global oil prices drop in the wake of hostilities.

“This meeting could not have come at a better time,” he said.

Here are some takeaways from Trump’s trip this week:

Trump finds his fall guy If the Iran deal doesn’t work out

Trump famously likes to take credit when things work out and avoid blame when they don’t. In the case of the Iran deal, he pointed to Vice President JD Vance as being most likely to be held responsible if things go south.

While Trump was at the G7, Vance was on a media blitz promoting the agreement, which he helped negotiate. He was expected to represent the U.S. at a ceremonial signing in Switzerland on Friday.

Trump was asked by a reporter if there is a scenario in which he looks like a “genius” if he sends Vance to sign the deal and things work out — or he blames his No. 2 if things with Iran ultimately don’t work out.

“I like that idea, sure,” Trump said. “This way, if it works out, I’m going to take the credit. If it doesn’t work out, I’m blaming JD. You better be careful, JD.”

Leaders sing from same song sheet on Iran, Ukraine

The G7 leaders demonstrated notable unity on both Iran and Ukraine, two issues where Trump and his counterparts have been sharply divided.

France’s Emmanuel Macron, Italy’s Giorgia Meloni, Germany’s Friedrich Merz and the UK’s Keir Starmer all had criticized Trump’s decision to launch the Iran war without consulting allies. But in a joint statement on the final day of the summit, the leaders welcomed the tentative deal. They even noted “the strong leadership of President Trump” made it happen.

Meanwhile, the Europeans managed to get Trump to join G7 leaders in offering “unwavering support for Ukraine.”

Trump has long claimed Ukraine has “no cards” in its war with Russia, and needs to make concessions

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to Moscow to bring about an endgame.

But the U.S. president joined his fellow leaders to call on countries "to increase the delivery of air defense capacities, additional systems and interceptors, and long-range capabilities" to Ukraine and commend Kyiv "for its resilience and progress on the battlefield in recent months."

Mixed messages on China

G7 leaders discussed how China is flooding export markets with subsidized products and destroying jobs in their countries.

Macron said Beijing is a key source of global economic imbalances, citing what he described as China's industrial overcapacity, excessive subsidies and weak domestic consumption.

After the summit, leaders issued a statement saying they were united. "We seek to deter and stand ready to take actions, where necessary in a coordinated manner, against economic coercion," the statement said.

But Trump undercut that message when he spent a portion of his closing remarks thanking China and Russia — often allies with Iran — for staying "neutral" in the conflict.

Trump said Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin "could have made it much more difficult for us" if they got involved. He specifically thanked Xi for not giving or selling weapons to Iran. "I just want to thank them," Trump said, "because they made it a lot better."

Talk isn't cheap

The "let's chat" informality that's been a feature of these gatherings since the first one in 1975 proved its worth — notwithstanding the carbon costs of flying in the leaders and their entourages, the security to protect them, the protests they attract and the inconvenience for local people.

By spending nearly three full days with Trump, U.S. allies had ample opportunity to make themselves heard. And the value of that was possibly most evident in their talks on Russia's war in Ukraine.

European leaders who now are the chief suppliers of military and financial aid to Ukraine felt they'd made headway in demonstrating to Trump that Ukraine does hold some cards and that Russia isn't assured of victory -- contrary to what Trump had heatedly told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last year. Macron invited Zelenskyy to participate in the summit.

Macron gets Trump to stay for the whole summit

Seems all it took was an invitation to dine at the opulent Palace of Versailles, southwest of Paris, after the summit.

After all, Trump said it himself: He's a fan of beautiful things and his only plan was to fly back to Washington after the conference anyway.

He left last year's G7 summit in Canada before it was over, but Macron wanted to keep Trump from doing the same thing to him. Their relationship has weathered several ups and downs.

Macron described the dinner as a "convivial" occasion meant to celebrate friendship between France and the United States.

French officials noted that Versailles is where King Louis XVI pledged military support to Benjamin Franklin and the American revolutionaries in 1778.

Macron hosted King Charles III and Queen Camilla there in 2023 for the palace's 400th anniversary, including dinner in the Hall of Mirrors, one of the features of the palace's 2,300 rooms.

Investigators seek clues in small jet crash that killed 1 in Texas, where bystanders rushed to help

By DAVE COLLINS, JOSH FUNK and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Investigators combed through wreckage Wednesday for clues to why a business jet crashed on a Texas highway, killing one person on board after its pilots reported mechanical problems while requesting an emergency landing at a nearby airport.

The fiery crash late Tuesday in Laredo near the Mexican border sent bystanders racing from their cars to help police rescue passengers and crew from the burning aircraft. The crash killed Joshua Baer, a leader in Texas' technology and startup sectors, the president of Baer's company said.

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Video from the frantic scene showed someone trying to smash the cockpit glass with a sledgehammer, while others used makeshift levers as they worked to open the plane's door. Local officials said a firefighter entered the smoke-filled jet to extract one person still inside after the rest had escaped.

"While the loss of life is deeply regrettable, it is nothing short of a miracle that this tragedy did not become a mass fatality event," Laredo Mayor Victor Treviño said during a news conference Wednesday.

Two pilots and three teenagers survived the crash and have since been released from the hospital, according to the Laredo Police Department. A dog on board that suffered from smoke inhalation was also expected to survive, said Jose Baeza, an investigator with the police department.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known. The Federal Aviation Administration was investigating along with the National Transportation Safety Board.

Laredo Police Chief Miguel Rodriguez Jr. said investigators working to reconstruct the crash were at the crash site Wednesday.

Crash victim worked to help entrepreneurs launch startups

Baer, 50, was known as a central figure in Austin's turbocharged evolution as a tech hub. He was the founder and chief executive of Capital Factory, which helps entrepreneurs connect with investors and others to launch their businesses.

"The number of lives Josh impacted in Austin, across Texas, and throughout the technology community is impossible to measure," Capital Factory President Bryan Chambers said in a post on LinkedIn.

Capital Factory executives did not immediately return phone messages Wednesday from The Associated Press.

Baer lived in Austin with his wife and three children, according to his LinkedIn page. He recently taught a student entrepreneur class at the University of Texas at Austin.

"I help people quit their jobs and become entrepreneurs," Baer said on his LinkedIn page.

Pilots reported low fuel and power loss, airport director says

The Cessna Citation Latitude twin jet departed Tuesday evening from the Mexican resort city of San José del Cabo and was bound for Austin, Texas, the FAA said in a statement.

The plane was operated by NetJets, a company owned by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway that lets people buy part ownership in private jets. NetJets said in a statement it was cooperating with authorities.

The jet went down at about 10 p.m. Tuesday on the Loop 20 highway, just a few minutes after its pilots radioed the local airport seeking to make an emergency landing. Their call to air traffic controllers "mentioned low fuel and a power outage," Laredo International Airport Director Gilberto Sanchez said.

"They had mechanical issues and they lost communication with the tower," Sanchez said Wednesday.

Dashcam video posted on social media showed the aircraft careening down the highway and knocking down a light post before stopping near the airport. The jet also barreled into a car, sending one motorist to a hospital in stable condition, Baeza said.

Five officers treated at a hospital for smoke inhalation have since been released, according to Rodriguez.

Experts wonder if jet lost engine power, had fuel leak

NetJets, started as a private jet charter service in 1964, had never had a fatal crash before Tuesday. Aviation safety experts interviewed Wednesday praised the company's safety record.

It shouldn't take investigators long to get a good idea of what caused the crash, in part because both pilots survived, former NTSB investigator Alan Diehl said.

The flight's final minutes suggest the plane may have lost power to both engines and been attempting to glide into the Laredo airport, said Jeff Guzzetti, a former FAA and NTSB investigator.

"I think they just ran out of altitude and airspeed toward the end there," Guzzetti said.

Aviation safety expert Mary Schiavo, a former inspector general for the Transportation Department, wondered if the jet had a fuel leak based on the pilots reporting they were running low. The jet has a range of 3,000 miles (4,800 kilometers), roughly three times the distance of their planned flight to Austin.

Ultimately, Schiavo said, a lack of fuel may have prevented more death and destruction.

"Luckily, the plane didn't explode in a fireball," she said.

The Texas crash was the third significant aviation accident in as many days. A B-52 bomber crashed Monday during a test flight at Edwards Air Force Base in California and killed all eight people aboard, while on Sunday, 12 people were killed when a plane on a skydiving outing in Missouri crashed.

Cargo ship's chief engineer charged in 2024 Francis Scott Key bridge collapse in Baltimore

BALTIMORE (AP) — Prosecutors have filed a criminal charge against the chief engineer of a cargo ship involved in the deadly 2024 collapse of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge, accusing him of failing to notify the U.S. Coast Guard of hazardous conditions on the ship.

Karthikeyan Deenadayalan was charged in U.S. District Court in Maryland on Monday with one count of violating the federal Port and Waterways Safety Act. Deenadayalan's attorneys did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

Prosecutors also filed notice of a "deferred prosecution agreement" with the court, but did not provide details about the terms of that deal. Deferred prosecution agreements are typically used when a defendant has agreed to meet certain conditions — such as providing testimony, or paying restitution — in exchange for the charges against them being dropped.

Prosecutors say in court documents that Deenadayalan was the chief engineer of the container ship when it was in the Port of Baltimore in the days before the deadly bridge collision, and that Deenadayalan willfully failed to notify the U.S. Coast Guard that an improper fuel pump without a backup system was being used to power two of the ship's generators.

The Dali, bound for Sri Lanka, lost power twice in a four-minute span as it moved to sea from the Port of Baltimore, causing it to crash into the Key Bridge in the early hours of March 26, 2024. Investigators say a loose wire in a switchboard likely caused the first power loss that led to its steering failure.

But after regaining power, the ship found itself in trouble again, prosecutors say, because the fuel pump used on the two generators was not designed to automatically restart after the first blackout. That caused a second blackout to occur, and the vessel crashed into a supporting column of the bridge, killing six construction workers who had been filling potholes on the structure. The toll bridge first opened in 1977 and is traveled by millions of cars every day.

The Singapore-based ship operator and another employee were indicted on criminal charges in May, accused of relying on the improper pump and then lying about it to investigators. Synergy Marine Pte Ltd. and Chennai, India-based Synergy Maritime Pte Ltd. and the ship's former technical superintendent Radhakrishnan Karthik Nair, 47, are charged with conspiracy, misconduct causing death, failing to immediately inform the U.S. Coast Guard of a hazardous condition, obstructing the National Transportation Safety Board and making false statements.

A trial in the case against the ship's operator and the technical superintendent has been scheduled for October 2027.

After the indictment, Synergy Marine expressed disappointment and accused the U.S. Justice Department of turning an accident into a crime. Nair's lawyer, David Gerger, had a similar response, saying in May that his client "thinks about this accident every day, but he certainly did not cause it."

In April, a \$2.25 billion settlement was announced between the state of Maryland, Synergy Marine and Grace Ocean Private Limited, the Singapore-based ship owner. Grace Ocean hasn't been charged with any crimes related to the collapse.

Earlier this month, a federal judge agreed to postpone a civil trial over the collapse after a flurry of last-minute settlements resolved most of the remaining claims, including deals resolving all pending claims over the deaths of six construction workers.

Virtually all of the unresolved claims are alleging economic losses by businesses and local governments. None of the remaining parties were asking to start the trial as scheduled this week.

Georgia Republican legislative leaders reject governor's call for

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2028 redistricting

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia's Republican legislative leaders on Wednesday rejected Gov. Brian Kemp's call to redraw congressional and legislative districts during a special session, citing concerns about moving too quickly after a U.S. Supreme Court decision weakened federal Voting Rights Act protections for minority voters.

The aborted effort to reduce nonwhite voters' representation contrasts with other Southern states where Republican majorities moved quickly to redraw congressional boundaries ahead of the November midterms, partly in response to President Donald Trump's pleas to shore up the GOP's fragile House majority.

Civil rights activists and Democrats, especially Black and other nonwhite lawmakers, celebrated the development and claimed victory after exerting weeks of pressure and gathering hundreds of citizens at the Georgia Capitol on Wednesday ahead of the session.

"Today showed that ordinary people don't need to wait until November to make their voices heard and protect our democracy," said U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, the state's first Black senator who returned to Atlanta from Washington to be at the Capitol. "We can stand up and speak right now."

Kemp had not asked his fellow Republicans to reopen Georgia districts ahead of November. Instead, he wanted them to redraw congressional boundaries for the 2028 election. But the governor, in the final months of his second term, also called on lawmakers to redraw their own districts — a move that would have made Georgia the first state to apply the Supreme Court's *Louisiana v. Callais* decision to its legislature.

State House Speaker Jon Burns sent Kemp a letter hours before Wednesday's special session was set to begin, informing him that legislators would not consider redistricting at all during the session. He announced the decision publicly shortly after, as demonstrators filled the Capitol with chants of "Black voters matter!"

Kemp said he believes Georgia's current districts are unconstitutional, and he sees no reason to delay redistricting.

"Legislative districting, however, is the responsibility of the General Assembly, and it is within their discretion to defer the issue until a later date," Kemp said in a statement.

Burns said lawmakers want to take their time after the *Callais* decision, which struck down Louisiana's congressional map as an illegal racial gerrymander and laid the groundwork for legislatures to reduce the number of districts where Black and other nonwhite voters hold most sway.

The speaker said it was more important for lawmakers to focus on economic matters rather than "partisan games." He also cited pending litigation over existing Georgia districts and the need to understand the full ramifications for how race can or cannot be used in redistricting.

Privately, Republicans had expressed concerns that a rushed process that diminished Black and other minority voters' political power could cause a backlash. And they worried that redrawn districts could unintentionally create more competitive jurisdictions that Democrats could win, especially around Atlanta.

Still, Georgia Republicans did not rule out revisiting redistricting later this year.

Conservative justices gave the green light

Before *Callais*, Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act was understood to require maps — for Congress, state legislatures and local legislative bodies — that gave historically marginalized minorities a reasonable chance to select candidates of their choice. Nationally, those so-called "opportunity districts" have disproportionately elected Black and other nonwhite representatives.

About one-third of Georgia's 180 state representatives are Black. Latino, Asian and other minorities bring the total nonwhite share to about 40% — roughly reflecting the state's overall population. Georgia's U.S. House delegation has five districts out of 14 total where the electorate is majority or plurality nonwhite. All elected Black Democrats in 2024.

With the *Callais* ruling, a conservative majority of justices concluded that jurisdictions drawn with racial makeup in mind violate the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause. Justice Samuel Alito's majority opinion declared that apportionment should be "race neutral."

Alito's stated reasoning did not hinge on party interests, and federal courts have said partisan gerry-

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mandering is constitutionally permissible. But in Southern states, party loyalty dovetails considerably with race and ethnicity. So the decision has allowed Republicans to redraw maps to boost GOP districts by redistributing nonwhite voters who tend to support Democrats.

Many civil rights activists argue that makes it impossible for Southern legislatures to be genuinely "race neutral" when drawing boundaries.

Democrats and activists opposed the special session

Minority voting rights are especially salient in Georgia, where the Capitol complex includes a statue of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and sits blocks from where the assassinated civil rights icon lived, preached and led the movement that yielded the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Warnock, who is also minister at the Atlanta church where King once preached, invoked the civil rights icon as he led demonstrators who criticized the Supreme Court's reasoning in Callais that it was discriminatory to draw districts to allow minority voters a chance to elect their preferred representatives.

The senator compared the possibility of scaling back nonwhite representation to the long Jim Crow history of poll taxes and literacy tests. White conservatives in the South once called those policies "race neutral," too, Warnock noted.

Speaking before Burns' announcement, Warnock lamented that some white Republicans who might consider redrawing district lines — or already have in other states — also praise King on his federal holiday each year.

"If you want to redraw maps and you have the power to do it, I guess you can do it," he said. "But keep Dr. King's name out of your mouth."

Trump started the fight before the Supreme Court decision

Nationally, a partisan redistricting battle started last year when Trump urged Republican-controlled states to gerrymander their congressional maps. Texas answered the call first.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Democrats in Sacramento answered with their own gerrymander that voters later approved. A succession of states followed. The outcome would have been close to even had the Virginia Supreme Court, controlled by conservatives, not struck down new Democratic-drawn maps approved voters. All told, Republicans think they could notch a net gain of 10 seats across the multiple states.

That still may not be enough for the GOP to hold a congressional majority, given Trump's lagging approval ratings. But it could mitigate Democratic gains and set Republicans up well for 2028 and beyond.

Military officials identify all 8 victims of fiery B-52 crash at California Air Force base

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER, CLAIRE RUSH and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The eight men killed in this week's fiery crash of a B-52 during a test flight at California's Edwards Air Force Base included four active duty airmen, a reservist and three civilians who were on a team devoted to keeping the bomber flying for decades to come, military officials said Wednesday.

The airfield where the Boeing B-52 Stratofortress crashed shortly after takeoff on Monday remained closed but other base operations have resumed, according to a base spokesperson. No cause has been determined. Officials said it could take six months to complete the investigation.

The victims were identified as: Col. Gregory Watson, 53; Retired Lt. Col. Miles Middleton, 50; Lt. Col. Gabriel Estrella, 40; Maj. Alexander Davis, 34; Maj. Robert Dee, 40; Maj. Brad Hovey, 35; Jeromy Smith, 32; and Christopher Rischar, 41.

"They were dedicated professionals, beloved family members and irreplaceable teammates," Col. Thomas Tauer, commander of the 412th Test Wing at Edwards, said in a statement.

Watson, a weapons systems officer, and Middleton, a pilot, were Boeing employees and the company said their loss "is deeply felt across our teams, and our hearts remain with their families, loved ones and those who worked with them."

Engineer remembered for his passion for flight

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Rischar was a flight test engineer with government contractor JT4 who had worked at Edwards for 10 years, said his wife, Rebecca Rischar. She said he loved going to airplane museums and showing their two children, 15 and 14, different types of aircraft and how they functioned.

She recalled how her husband's father, who also works at the base and had seen the crash, called her to ask if Christopher had been flying.

"I knew he was on that flight," she said Wednesday. "It was routine, and if the plane went up, he was going up with it."

Rebecca and Christopher met at a church youth group while attending the same high school in nearby Lancaster and had celebrated their 17th wedding anniversary in April. He had just started helping their teenage daughter learn how to drive.

"Our marriage is not just for this life here on Earth but for eternity, so we are sealed together," she told The Associated Press.

Bomber was part of a test program

The B-52 that crashed Monday was taking part in a test mission as part of a program aimed at making the 65-year-old bomber fleet operable through at least 2050. The bomber had arrived at Edwards in December after having a modernized radar installed at Boeing's facility in San Antonio, an Air Force press release said at the time.

The plan was to use the bomber as a testbed throughout 2026 to help military officials decide whether to proceed with the B-52 Radar Modernization Program, the Air Force said.

For almost a decade before the plane served as a testing platform, it was based in Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, where the bomber was the flagship of the 307th Bomb Wing.

Its pilot, Col. Bruce Cox — an alumni of Texas A&M -- dubbed the bomber "The Spirit of Aggieland." An Air Force press release from 2015 said that the bomber was "dedicated to former and future cadets that graduated from Texas A&M; University's Corps of Cadets Program."

Cox would go on to take his final flight aboard the bomber in 2017 before retirement, according to the unit's Facebook page.

The crash came quickly

The aircraft took off shortly before noon on a clear day, heading southwest into the prevailing winds. It flew straight and crashed on the same 15,000-foot (4,572-meter) runway. The compact wreckage indicates the plane dropped sharply.

Aviation safety experts have said their first thoughts about what might have caused the crash were about a malfunction in the flight controls or engines, but it is much too early to know. Investigators will consider several factors, including the age and maintenance of the plane.

Aerial footage showed virtually nothing left of the aircraft that went down at the base in the Mojave Desert about 100 miles (161 km) northeast of Los Angeles.

Lauren Smith told Eyewitness News KBAK-CBS and FOX58 that her husband, Jeromy Smith, was a flight test engineer for the U.S. Department of Defense and died doing what he loved.

"It is such a horrible hurt, and I'm still processing everything that happened," she said Tuesday.

The B-52, a long-range bomber that entered service in 1955, is designed to carry both conventional and nuclear weapons. It has been used in conflicts involving the U.S. military from Vietnam to Iran. .

Edwards is home to the 412th Test Wing, which conducts regular developmental testing of all Air Force aircraft, weapons systems, software and components before purchase by the service as well as throughout their life span. Test missions take place at Edwards daily, officials said.

The base is where Air Force test pilot Chuck Yeager reached a speed of Mach 1.05 and broke the sound barrier in 1947.

Federal Reserve policymakers show support for rate hikes as Warsh reins in guidance

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve kept its key rate unchanged Wednesday yet almost half the central bank's policymakers said they could support a rate hike later this year.

The unexpectedly aggressive tilt toward higher rates would disappoint President Trump and suggests heightened concerns about persistent inflation among Fed officials.

In an unusually short statement after their two-day meeting, the officials dropped language that had suggested their next move would be to cut the key rate. The brief statement reflects the influence of new chair Kevin Warsh, who was appointed by Trump. Warsh has previously criticized the Fed for commenting too broadly on the economy.

Still, Warsh's 18 colleagues on the Fed's rate-setting committee sent a clear message in a set of quarterly projections released Wednesday: Nine signaled they supported higher rates this year, with six of those supporting two or more quarter-point increases.

It's a sharp change from March, when no policymakers penciled in a hike and the committee as a whole forecast one cut in 2026. The change is an acknowledgement that inflation is at its highest level in three years and many officials have said in recent speeches that if inflation doesn't decline, higher rates may be necessary in the coming months.

Warsh, in his first news conference as chair, also underscored the Fed's determination to bring inflation down to the central bank's 2% target, suggesting he will take a hawkish approach as chair. "Hawks" typically support higher rates to quell inflation, while "doves" often support lower rates to boost hiring.

"We've missed (on inflation) for five years and we're going to fix that," he said. "When we deliver on our price stability objectives, which we will, the American people will feel as though the hardships that they've been living through ... are in the rear view mirror."

Warsh had supported rate cuts last year while under consideration to be Trump's pick as Fed chair to replace Jerome Powell. Since returning to the White House last year, Trump repeatedly attacked Powell for not cutting rates more deeply.

Warsh did not hint whether he was leaning toward hiking rates, but economists saw his message at the press conference as hawkish.

"The risk that they might need to raise rates has clearly risen given what we got today," Matthew Luzetti, chief U.S. economist at Deutsche Bank, said.

Financial markets agreed. Stock prices fell sharply after the Fed issued its statement and Warsh spoke. Bond yields rose.

Trump, for his part, appeared to accept the Fed's decision.

"We have a very good guy over there now so I'm guided by what he wants to do," Trump said in France, where he attended a meeting of leaders from the world's seven largest economies.

All told, another eight officials signaled they would support keeping the rate unchanged, and one penciled in a cut. Warsh did not submit a forecast for how the Fed might change its key rate.

In another shift, the Fed's post-meeting statement contained no hints about its next moves, or what economists refer to as "forward guidance." Previous Fed chairs, starting with Ben Bernanke, saw such guidance as a benefit to the Fed, because it prodded financial markets to move rates either higher or lower, depending on what the Fed preferred.

Warsh told reporters at a press conference that guidance was not "well suited to the current policy conjuncture." He has previously criticized forward guidance, as well as the quarterly projections, for potentially locking the Fed into a specific rate path.

Warsh also said he is forming five task forces to examine such areas as how the Fed communicates, the sources of data it uses in making policy decisions, and the frameworks it uses to evaluate inflation, all with the goal of making sure the Fed is "clear-eyed and focused on the future."

Diane Swonk, chief economist at accounting firm KPMG, said the use of the task forces indicates Warsh

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is not looking to impose changes on the rest of the Fed, but instead is seeking consensus.

"He wants buy in," she said. "He's not trying to change it by command."

If the Iran war is resolved, gas prices will likely continue to decline and inflation may cool in the coming months. But prices of many goods and services — such as clothes, dental care, and child care — were rising before the Iran war, and inflation has been above the Fed's 2% target for five years, suggesting that there may still be inflationary pressures in the economy.

Warsh also faces a sharply different economic environment than when he appeared to campaign for the job of Fed chair last year. Back then, he was outspoken in favor of lower interest rates, as Trump has demanded. He pointed to the development of AI as a technology that could vastly expand the economy's ability to produce goods and services cheaply, which would over time bring down inflation.

Even then, many economists were skeptical of his claim. At least in the short run, analysts note that soaring investment in semiconductors and computing equipment is contributing to higher inflation.

Indeed, since the Iran war began Feb. 28, inflation has accelerated to a three-year high of 4.2%, lifted mostly by costlier gas stemming from the Iran war. The Fed typically fights higher inflation by raising its key interest rate to cool spending and growth.

Trump has announced a peace agreement that could bring the three-month conflict to an end, but it's not clear if peace will hold. And even if oil flows freely out of the Middle East again, it could take months for prices of gas, groceries, and items such as airline fares, to cool.

At the same time, hiring has picked up in recent months, removing a key rationale for cutting rates. In January, the Fed forecast that it would reduce rates twice this year, as part of its quarterly economic projections. A big reason for those potential cuts is that employers were shedding jobs and policymakers worried that the unemployment rate would rise. The central bank typically cuts its key rate to spur economic growth and hiring.

But earlier this month a government report showed that hiring jumped in May, when employers added 172,000 jobs, the third straight month of solid job gains.

US stocks sink on worries about a possible hike to interest rates this year by the Federal Reserve

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks slumped Wednesday on speculation the Federal Reserve may hike interest rates this year to keep a lid on inflation. Higher rates can tap the brakes on accelerating prices at cash registers, but they also slow the economy and hurt prices for investments.

The S&P 500 dropped 1.2% and erased an earlier, modest gain after the Fed released projections showing that nine of 18 policymakers foresee at least one increase to its main interest rate this year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average went from a gain of 280 points in the morning to a drop of 507 points, or 1%, while the Nasdaq composite sank 1.3%.

One important policymaker at the Fed did not give a forecast for where the federal funds rate may end 2026: Chairman Kevin Warsh. In his first press conference as head of the U.S. central bank, Warsh said he's also considering a revamp of how the Fed communicates with financial markets and U.S. households and businesses.

One of his first moves was to end the inclusion of hints in Fed statements about where interest rates may be heading in the future, something called "forward guidance."

Warsh said he wants Wall Street to react to incoming reports about inflation, the job market and other economic data based on how they should affect prices for stocks, bonds and other investments rather than how traders expect the Federal Reserve to react to them.

As part of that, Warsh said the Fed could make changes to its usual release of projections every three months showing where Fed officials foresee interest rates, the economy and inflation heading.

For now, Wall Street reacted uneasily to Fed officials' latest set of projections, though Warsh cautioned he "didn't hear tons of conviction" behind them. Stocks zigzagged up and down several times following

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the release. The Fed also announced its decision to keep the federal funds rate steady at this meeting, as it has all year so far.

In the bond market, Treasury yields climbed. The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which influences rates for mortgages and other loans going to U.S. households and businesses, rose to 4.49% from 4.43% late Tuesday. The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for Fed action, jumped to 4.21% from 4.05%.

Traders upped their bets for at least one increase to the federal funds rate this year and now see an 84% probability of it, up from 59.5% a day earlier, according to data from CME Group.

High yields in bond markets worldwide caused by worries about inflation have already been threatening to slow economies and undercut prices for all kinds of investments.

In the stock market, SpaceX erased an early gain and fell 4.9% for its first loss since its ballyhooed debut on the U.S. stock market last week.

Drops of 3.8% for Microsoft, 3.5% for Amazon and 1.3% for Nvidia were three of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500.

They helped overshadow a jump of 14.8% for La-Z-Boy, which reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It benefited from revenue made at newly opened stores, though Chief Financial Officer Taylor Luebke said the company continues to have "a measured view" of the broad sales environment.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 91.25 points to 7,420.10. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 507.12 to 51,492.55, and the Nasdaq composite sank 354.69 to 26,021.66.

A report released Wednesday said retailers across the country saw their revenue grow at a faster pace in May than economists expected, offering hope that solid spending by consumers can support the economy. But high inflation has also made U.S. shoppers feel more discouraged about their finances.

Oil prices were steadier Wednesday following slides earlier in the week on optimism about the tentative U.S.-Iran deal to get the global flow of oil going again. Iran is set to take steps to reopen the Strait of Hormuz once the deal is signed, which would allow oil tankers to deliver crude from the Persian Gulf again and hopefully take pressure off inflation.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil rose 0.7% to \$79.55. It's still above its roughly \$70 price from before the war, but it's well below its \$100-plus price from a few weeks ago.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed across Europe and Asia.

South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.6%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.7% for two of the world's bigger moves.

The interim US-Iran deal leaves the fate of Tehran's nuclear program still to be negotiated

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The interim deal between the United States and Iran is supposed to usher in a two-month period that would address the most divisive issue between the longtime adversaries — Tehran's nuclear program.

Preventing Iran from attaining a nuclear bomb is a key reason that President Donald Trump said he launched the war alongside Israel in February, but the tentative agreement he has trumpeted leaves little runway to negotiate the long-running sticking point. The previous nuclear pact between Iran and world powers, from which Trump pulled the U.S. in his first term, took many months to negotiate.

Under terms of the initial deal, Iran would immediately take steps to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to global oil shipments and would be allowed to sell its oil without restrictions, senior U.S. officials said Wednesday.

The accord, due to be officially signed Friday in Switzerland, also envisions Iran receiving at least \$300 billion to rebuild after the war and says the U.S. would work to end all American and U.N. sanctions imposed on Tehran. That is if a final agreement addressing Iran's nuclear program is reached after the opening

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of a 60-day period for talks. The draft says the sides agreed to resolve "the disposition" of Iran's highly enriched uranium during that period.

Still, there is deep skepticism among both Republican and Democratic lawmakers, pro-Israel advocates and Israel itself that the deal is realistic, workable or would have any effect on subsequent nuclear talks.

"My skepticism is Iran itself. What would a good deal look like? No enrichment. And we'll see if we can get there," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a close Trump ally and longtime Iran hawk, said Tuesday. "But whether or not we can get phase 2, I don't know."

A nuclear deal takes commitment to the details

David Schenker, director of the Arab Politics Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said "this administration has proven that it has a hard time keeping its attention on these issues."

Schenker, who served as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs in the first Trump administration, questioned whether the current administration would have the wherewithal to reach a nuclear deal even if the agreement is signed Friday.

"This is the kind of thing that requires dogged attention, attention to detail and numerous technical experts involved," he said. "Trump loses his attention, moves on, and so does the administration. It's like they don't understand Iran's strategy. They didn't get it the first time, or the second."

The Republican administration has maintained its confidence. Trump said Wednesday that Iran would work with the U.S. to turn over its highly enriched uranium believed to be in largely inaccessible underground facilities that the U.S. bombed in June 2025.

Because of that, Trump insisted it did not need to be done quickly and that the U.S. has "cameras on every inch of it" in the meantime.

If Iran tries to move it, the U.S. will attack and "they'll be gone. And they know that," Trump said at a closing news conference at the Group of Seven summit in France.

There is a general agreement on what to do to "downblend" the uranium that is buried in the rubble of the bombed facilities, but details of who would excavate the material, who would dilute it and where the resulting material would go remain to be negotiated.

Asked how the deal ensures that Iran is permanently prevented from getting a nuclear weapon, Trump responded, "If it's not permanently, we will bomb them."

The draft deal says "the minimum methodology" would be dilution of the material on site under the supervision of the U.N. nuclear agency. Iran has long maintained its nuclear program is peaceful.

It took over a year and a half to get the previous nuclear deal

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, took more than 18 months to negotiate, starting with secret talks between U.S. and Iranian officials in Oman at the end of Democratic President Barack Obama's first term.

They required dozens of direct high-level interventions from Secretary of State John Kerry and Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, not to mention a team of dozens of technical experts traveling to Europe and elsewhere before the conclusion of the negotiations in Vienna.

Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018 before most of its more contentious concessions had come into effect, and there is no indication now that Iran is willing to offer much more.

The JCPOA relied on very technical language and understandings, including limits on uranium enrichment, advanced centrifuges and heavy water production. In exchange, Iran was granted significant sanctions relief, amounting to billions of dollars.

As unhappy as critics were about the JCPOA — Trump called it the "worst deal ever negotiated," while all Republicans and a number of prominent Democrats voted against it — all sides acknowledge it took more than 18 months to get to an even imperfect agreement.

Republicans say Congress must approve any deal

Republicans say any nuclear deal with Iran should be brought to Congress, as required by law. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, has said he "would certainly anticipate that" the Senate will get the final say.

Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., said he had little confidence Iran would abide by any agreement.

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But Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kan., one of a handful of senators who has spoken to Vance about the agreement, said the shortened timeline could be an advantage.

"Iran's modus operandi is to negotiate for the purpose of delaying, so they can rearm themselves," Marshall said Tuesday. "I think the president has to give them some type of a finite amount of time, or there's going to be consequences. So I think it can be done."

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., noted that what could help Trump's negotiators to hammer out a nuclear agreement in such a truncated timeline is that there is "a base" to work from following the Obama-era talks.

Still, the JCPOA "took years to put together. You had allies and even adversaries — China and Russia — around the table, you had the IAEA at the table, the Obama chief negotiator had a Nobel Prize in physics, Ernie Moniz," Kaine said. "I don't know that either Jared Kushner or Steve Witkoff have a Nobel Prize. So it's going to be hard."

Trump envoys Witkoff and Kushner, neither of whom had any prior experience in nuclear negotiations, made numerous but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to reach an agreement under Omani mediation during the first months of Trump's second term.

There also is uncertainty about other issues besides nuclear that have been of concern to Arab countries, Israel, Europe and the United States. Issues such as Iran's ballistic missile program, its support for militant proxies in the region or repression of its own people do not appear in the interim agreement.

It includes major concessions, such as Iran selling its oil freely, beyond the terms of the JCPOA. Only at the conclusion of the overall deal in 2015 were sanctions on Iran's oil lifted.

"A deal is better than more fighting, but the war America and Israel prosecuted against Iran has fallen short of achieving its stated objectives," said Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute. "This agreement is mostly about cleaning up an unnecessary mess and putting the best face on it."

G7 leaders back Trump's deal to end Iran war as more details of it emerge

By AAMER MADHANI, SYLVIE CORBET and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, France (AP) — Leaders at the Group of Seven summit on Wednesday threw their support behind U.S. President Donald Trump's tentative agreement with Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz and extend a shaky ceasefire.

Closing the three-day summit, French President Emmanuel Macron called it a "very good deal," adding that U.S. allies in the G7 support it "because it's an agreement that puts a stop to a situation of great instability that had terrible consequences for our economies."

At his own press conference, Trump hailed the deal as "historic" and said other G7 leaders say "they love this deal because they want to see it over."

U.S. officials meanwhile dictated the text of the deal to journalists, with details released after the summit ended.

The accord, due to be formally signed in Switzerland on Friday, lays out that the U.S. would work to end all U.S. and United Nations sanctions imposed on Tehran if a final agreement addressing Iran's nuclear program is reached.

"I think it'll be done. They want to sign. They want to get back to a normal life," Trump said earlier Wednesday.

The final day of G7 talks at a lakeside resort in the French Alps started late with Trump, the last to arrive, saying "I'm the boss" as he entered and sat next to Macron. The assembled leaders laughed, and Trump grinned.

The formal talks of the leading industrial democracies closed with sessions on the future of artificial intelligence and fostering economic growth. They discussed concerns that China is flooding export markets with subsidized products, unfairly out-competing their own industries and destroying jobs. Leaders of India, South Korea, Kenya and Brazil joined the meeting.

Trump later attended a glitzy dinner at the Palace of Versailles outside Paris before he was scheduled to

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return to Washington. Before entering the palace, Trump complimented both Macron and his wife, Brigitte, whom the U.S. president greeted with a kiss on the cheek and called "amazing."

Resuming traffic on the Strait of Hormuz is key

Trump still has to sell the deal to some members of his own Republican party who doubt it will defang Iran's nuclear program. At the same time, he faces an anxious international community looking for him to follow through on his promise that the deal will reopen the Strait of Hormuz to oil tanker traffic and keep it open.

The G7 leaders said an international maritime mission led by France and the U.K. "can play an important role to facilitate the resumption of maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz by protecting merchant vessels, reassuring commercial shipping operators, and supporting verification that all mines are removed."

Iran effectively closed the strait early in the war that began on Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli attacks.

The deal also calls for an immediate end to all fighting in Lebanon between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah. That is one of the most delicate parts of the agreement because Israel has maintained it will continue to defend itself and to occupy vast swaths of Lebanon.

The agreement that U.S. officials dictated to journalists on Wednesday also has provisions to ensure "territorial integrity" of Lebanon after Israel's latest attacks against Hezbollah in Lebanese territory.

In their declaration, G7 leaders said they supported "through an immediate robust ceasefire" Lebanese efforts to disarm Hezbollah, and protect Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed nearly 4,000 people and displaced more than 1 million since fighting there began on March 2.

"Israel's fighting Hezbollah too long, and too many people are being killed," Trump said.

Leaders vow to support Ukraine, tackle global drug gangs

In a flurry of unanimously agreed declarations, the G7 leaders stressed their support for Ukraine as it battles Russia's invasion and agreed to increase deliveries of air defense systems. They also said they would bolster sanctions on Moscow, including on Russia's oil and gas industries.

Trump called the conversations on ending the war in Ukraine "productive" and said both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy want to "do something."

"They just don't know how," he said.

Leaders also pledged to step up the fight against the multibillion-dollar international drug trade.

Trump has been waging his own battle against drug traffickers. United States military strikes on alleged drug-carrying boats transiting in Latin America have killed more than 200 people since September, when the Trump administration began an operation it has justified as necessary to stem the flow of drugs.

Critics have questioned the legality of the strikes.

In a separate declaration, the G7 leaders reaffirmed their efforts to halt migrant smuggling and human trafficking, which they said "constitute serious transnational crimes that erode the sovereign right of States to control their borders and expose smuggled and trafficked persons to life-threatening risks."

Trump calls Modi 'most beautiful-looking man'

Trump said Wednesday after meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the U.S. is "very close" to reaching a trade deal with India, and then went on to lavish praise on Modi as "a very tough negotiator."

"He's the most beautiful-looking man. He looks so nice. He's like an angel. But actually, he's as tough as he's a killer," Trump said.

The meeting with Modi came at a choppy moment in the U.S.-India relationship, in part because of the war in the Middle East. On June 10 three Indian sailors were killed in a U.S. military strike on a tanker in the Gulf of Oman in the midst of the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports.

Modi alluded to the incident at their meeting, saying the safety of Indian mariners "is of utmost importance to us." He added he was "confident" the issue of seafarers "will be a top priority during implementation of the agreement between the United States and Iran."

Luigi Mangione will assert psychiatric defense in murder case in UnitedHealthcare CEO's killing

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Luigi Mangione plans to assert a psychiatric defense at his state murder trial, claiming he was suffering from extreme emotional disturbance when he gunned down UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, a judge said Wednesday. It wouldn't absolve him of the Dec. 4, 2024, killing, but could free him from prison sooner.

If a jury accepts that defense, the panel would convict Mangione of manslaughter and he would face up to 25 years in prison. Alternatively, the jury could reject the extreme emotional disturbance defense and convict him of murder, which carries a potential life sentence. That defense isn't available in his federal case.

Judge Gregory Carro announced the decision in court Wednesday, two weeks after holding a secret hearing on the matter at the defense's request. He said he will release a transcript from that hearing and other records once redactions are made.

'Nothing is going to be a surprise,' judge warns

Carro said Mangione's lawyers first notified him in a sealed letter last September that they planned to pursue a psychiatric defense and confirmed the decision at the June 3 hearing.

But, the judge warned, they're "coming close to not being able to put forth that defense" after prosecutors complained that Mangione's lawyers had yet to give them details about what they say triggered their client's extreme emotional disturbance. Prosecutors need to know that before they have their own psychological expert evaluate him, Carro said.

"Nothing is going to be a surprise," Carro told Mangione's lawyers. "I'm not going to let you surprise the People on the eve of trial. So, get it done."

Carro said he didn't expect the development to delay Mangione's trial, which is scheduled to start Sept. 8. The federal trial, which involves stalking charges, is set to begin on Oct. 13.

Mangione, 28, has pleaded not guilty in both cases.

Sitting between his lawyers and wearing a blue suit, he tried to block his face with a large envelope as news photographers crowded near him at the start of Wednesday's hearing. He didn't appear to have any reaction as Carro spoke about the planned psychiatric defense.

At a February hearing, Mangione had railed against the prospect of two trials, telling Carro: "It's the same trial twice. One plus one is two. Double jeopardy by any commonsense definition."

An emotional disturbance defense is not the same as a not guilty by reason of insanity defense, which would allow a defendant to go to a psychiatric facility instead of prison.

Circumstances of case could hamper defense, expert says

To establish an emotional disturbance defense, Mangione's lawyers must demonstrate that the disturbance was so extreme it robbed him of self-control; that, in his mind, there was a reasonable explanation for the disturbance; and that it influenced him to kill Thompson.

Heather Cucolo, a New York Law School professor and expert in mental health law, said Mangione's lawyers could try to accomplish that by having a psychologist testify about his mental state at the time of the killing and the extent of any trauma, abuse or emotional instability he's suffered. But, she said, they aren't required to show any proof of a mental illness or show he was in danger.

The circumstances of Mangione's case could make it tough for his lawyers to convince jurors to accept a defense that people often associate with crimes of passion or a sudden outburst where someone is given shocking information that evokes a strong response, Cucolo said.

Prosecutors say Mangione planned the attack, wrote in a notebook about wanting to "wack" a health insurance executive and traveled from out of state to ambush Thompson, 50, as the CEO walked to a Manhattan hotel for an investor conference. "Delay," "deny" and "depose" were written on the ammunition, police said, mimicking a phrase describing how insurers avoid paying claims.

"People want to view this within a relatively short period of time and they want it to be simply laid out," Cucolo said, giving the example of a spousal killing over infidelity. As time passes, she said, "people are

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not as willing to accept this emotional response that ends up in the death of a human being.”

Mangione’s lawyer, Karen Friedman Agrifilo, protested Carro’s decision to unseal materials related to his psychiatric defense, saying it will be “prejudicial to his defense to the exact same facts” in his federal case.

Last month, Carro ruled that the notebook and a 3D-printed pistol, which prosecutors say matches the gun used to kill Thompson, can be used as evidence against Mangione. But he said a loaded gun magazine and other items were seized during an “improper warrantless search” when he was arrested in Pennsylvania five days after the killing.

On Wednesday, Carro dismissed a charge related to the magazine.

Trump delays his own national intelligence nominee, fueling tension with fellow Republicans

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, ERIC TUCKER and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday derailed the confirmation process of his own nominee to head the nation’s intelligence agencies, an extraordinary move that upended Senate efforts to renew a crucial surveillance program and fueled fresh tensions with fellow Republicans on Capitol Hill.

In an overnight social media post from the Group of Seven summit in France, Trump declared he was delaying the nomination of federal prosecutor Jay Clayton as director of national intelligence just hours ahead of his scheduled hearing, despite bipartisan praise for the nominee and Republican efforts to speed him through the confirmation process.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Tom Cotton, R-Ark., said Republicans would go ahead with the Clayton hearing anyway, “unless the president directs him not to appear or withdraws his nomination.” But later he postponed the hearing, saying it was “regrettable” that Trump had directed Clayton not to appear.

“Mr. Clayton is a patriot and a highly qualified nominee, as the president has said repeatedly,” Cotton said. “While today’s hearing is now unfortunately postponed, I look forward to proceeding with his confirmation in the near future.”

Trump’s attempt to delay Clayton makes it more likely that his temporary pick for the intelligence job, top housing official Bill Pulte, will take over when outgoing director Tulsi Gabbard leaves office on Friday. Republicans and Democrats in Congress have sharply criticized Pulte, a Trump loyalist who has no known national security experience and has used his current administration perch to target perceived adversaries of the president.

Trump has defended Pulte, calling him “fair” and “talented” in his social media post. Speaking to reporters in France, Trump called the speedy process to get Clayton formally installed a “rush act by the Democrats.”

“Why are they afraid of this guy? They’re so afraid of him,” Trump said, referring to Pulte. “They’ll do anything not to have Pulte go in there.”

Caught in the middle is the renewal of Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, bipartisan legislation that aims to prevent terrorist attacks by monitoring the communications of targeted foreigners located outside the United States. Democrats had said they would not provide the necessary votes to pass the bill unless Pulte’s temporary appointment was withdrawn. The current surveillance authority expired last week.

Further complicating matters, Trump said in his social media post that he would not sign the FISA renewal without his legislation to require proof of citizenship for all voters — which does not have enough votes to pass the Senate — and that he does not want to remove Clayton from his current position as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York until his replacement, James McDonald, is approved.

Trump’s post sent Senate Republicans scrambling, and it was unclear if and when Clayton’s nomination would move forward.

“We’ll just have to take it a day at a time until we get more clarity on what the White House position is on this,” Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told reporters Wednesday morning. He said he didn’t know why Trump was holding up the effort.

“Good question,” he said.

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Escalating tensions between White House and Capitol Hill

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, called Trump's move an "extraordinary display of dysfunction from a president who seems determined to turn America's national security into a political bargaining chip."

"The biggest obstacle to resolving these issues has not been Senate Democrats or Senate Republicans," Warner said. "It has been the chaos and confusion coming from the White House itself."

It was just the latest in a series of standoffs between Trump and Senate Republicans this year.

A funding bill for Trump's immigration agencies was delayed several weeks when Republicans revolted over a \$1.776 billion "anti-weaponization" fund and a \$1 billion security request for the White House, including his new ballroom. The bill passed after acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said the settlement would not move forward, and GOP leaders decided to drop the security money from the bill.

Trump then appointed Pulte as interim intelligence director just as the FISA renewal was moving toward passage, upsetting bipartisan talks. Republicans urged the White House to pull the appointment, to no avail.

Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina said that Trump's recent moves are "undermining the results he wants."

"Jay Clayton was on the brink of having a very good hearing and probably getting some Democrat support, and now we're in a posture to where it may be the reason that 702 doesn't get reauthorized," Tillis said. "That's a mistake."

Tillis called Pulte a "sycophant" to Trump.

"How could anybody think he was going to be a credible choice?" he asked.

Democrats say Trump is distracting from other issues

Democrats say that Trump is undermining Americans' safety as he makes demands of the Senate and tries to put loyal allies in national security positions.

Pulte's appointment "should send a shiver down the spine of every American," said Democratic Sen. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, a former CIA analyst and national security official. "The only thing more dangerous than letting FISA lapse is putting Bill Pulte at the head of 17 intelligence agencies."

Sen. Angus King, an independent from Maine, said he may have supported Clayton, with whom he met on Tuesday. "It's unfortunate because he nominated this guy," King said of Trump.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said she thinks Trump is also trying to divert attention from the war in Iran.

Murray said Clayton was on track to be confirmed because "most Democrats felt that allowing Pulte to go in office was a really bad idea, and most Republicans agreed."

Consequences for FISA's lapse

National security officials across both major political parties have for years described Section 702 as vital for gathering intelligence that can disrupt terrorist attacks and espionage operations, though some lawmakers and civil liberties advocates have raised concerns over the government's use of information about Americans that is incidentally collected through the program.

A court order from March certified that the program could continue for an additional 12 months, though it is possible that communications companies could challenge the government's authority to force them to cooperate and share data.

Trump's delay of Clayton "shows he has no interest in getting FISA done," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

World Cup hat tricks: Messi's was the latest, an American scored the first and other key facts

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — At age 38 and playing in his sixth World Cup, Lionel Messi has his first hat trick in soccer's biggest tournament and Argentina's defense of the trophy is off to a flying start.

Messi's three goals in the 3-0 win over Algeria on Tuesday saw him become the joint highest scorer in men's World Cup history alongside Germany's Miroslav Klose with 16 in total. It was also the first hat trick

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of this year's tournament and the 55th in World Cup history.

Hat tricks used to have a very different meaning

The term "hat trick" is well-known to sports fans in the United States and, just like soccer, it is used in hockey to describe when a player scores three goals in one game. But it was originally used in cricket and is widely regarded to date back to 1858 when English bowler H.H. Stephenson took three wickets off consecutive balls. It is said that a collection was made and Stephenson was presented with a hat to mark the feat.

The term has since spread to other sports to not only describe three goals, but anything from three consecutive wins, championships or even defeats.

According to the NHL, "hat trick" was used by newspapers as early as the 1930s and the Hockey Hall of Fame traces it back to a promotion by Toronto businessman Sammy Taft offering a free hat to a player who scored three goals in an NHL game in the city.

Messi joins a list of greats to score World Cup hat tricks

Perhaps the biggest surprise is that it took Messi so long to record the latest feat in his trophy-laden career.

The game against Algeria was his record-extending 27th in the World Cup, two more than Germany's Lothar Matthäus. His first appearance was in 2006.

Messi became the oldest player to score a World Cup hat trick and joined a list of greats that include Pelé, Eusebio, Gerd Müller, Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappé.

The next target will be to join an even more elite list of players to have scored multiple World Cup hat tricks.

Only four players have achieved that feat: Sándor Kocsis, Just Fontaine, Müller and Gabriel Batistuta.

The first World Cup hat trick was scored by an American

It was at the first edition of the World Cup in 1930 that American Bert Patenaude scored the competition's first hat trick in a 3-0 win over Paraguay. But it took several decades for it to be officially recognized by FIFA because there was a dispute over the scorer of one of the goals.

According to the U.S. soccer federation, historian Colin Jose helped to convince FIFA to amend its records.

For a long time, England's Geoff Hurst was the only player to score a hat trick in a World Cup final as the Three Lions were crowned champion in 1966.

Mbappé emulated that feat in 2022, but he ended up on the losing team in Qatar against Messi's triumphant Argentina.

World Cup hat tricks are becoming less common

The most hat tricks in a single World Cup was eight in the 1954 edition. The only edition in which none were scored was in 2006.

The last time there were more than two hat tricks at a World Cup was back in 1986 when there were four.

Retail sales up a strong 0.9% in May, underscoring the resilience of the US consumer

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Shoppers stepped up their spending in May and surpassed expectations as temperatures warmed and gasoline prices leveled off.

Retail sales rose 0.9%, up from a revised 0.4% gain in April, according to Commerce Department data released Wednesday. Sales got a boost from generous government tax refunds in both April and May, though economists say that cash cushion is starting to fade.

Excluding sales at gas stations, retail sales in May rose 0.7%.

The figures aren't inflation-adjusted so higher prices likely helped boost sales. But economists point to healthy spending with increases that were broad-based. Business at clothing, accessory and furniture stores all posted sales gains. Online sales rose 1.5%.

There were a few weak spots. Electronics and appliance stores and department stores both registered

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slight sales declines.

The data offers only a snapshot of consumer spending and doesn't include activities like travel and hotel stays. The lone services category – restaurants – registered a 0.1% decline. That might have reflected how high gas prices forced shoppers to cut back on driving to eating establishments, according to Sam Tombs, chief U.S. economist at Pantheon Macro.

But the so-called control group—which excludes food services, autos, building materials and gas station sales and is used to calculate economic growth—rose 0.7%. That suggests solid spending, economists said.

Consumers are the engine of the American economy, driving most of the nation's economic growth. And the latest retail sales report underscores that spending has remained resilient so far this year despite rising prices. Solid increases in hiring have also buoyed spending, economists said.

"The stronger-than-forecast and broad-based gains in May retail sales show that consumers continued to spend strongly despite higher gasoline prices in the month," Nationwide Chief Economist Kathy Bostjancic writes. "The large tax refunds and overall tax reductions for households this year and the recent strengthening in employment growth helped buffer the negative drag from higher gasoline prices."

Tombs was more cautious about the spending outlook.

"Consumption regained some momentum over the spring, but the sugar rush from bigger-than-usual tax refunds will wear off soon," Tombs wrote in a report.

Rising gas prices pushed inflation to its highest level in three years, U.S. data showed last week, with consumer prices rising 4.2% in May, compared with last year. On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.5% last month, after big gains of 0.6% in April and 0.9% in March.

There is a tentative deal to end the Iran war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, but even after oil starts flowing again from the Middle East it could take awhile for the supply crunch to ease.

Gas prices fell about a penny overnight to \$4.02, down 11% from a month ago, according to motor club AAA. The national average for a gallon of gasoline has not been below \$4 since March, according to AAA.

"While the deal is encouraging, our industry is still holding its breath," said Steve Lamar, the CEO of trade group American Apparel & Footwear Association. "Our question now is, will this agreement be strong enough for our global industry to begin recovering?"

Lamar noted that unplanned costs continue to squeeze profit margins, with companies facing higher expenses for ocean freight, air cargo and packaging. He said that even under the best-case scenario, it will take time to stabilize.

The spike in gas prices this year due to the Iran war may alter some behavior, peace deal or not.

Even as gas prices continue to retreat, analysts say some shoppers will stick to habits they picked up as prices soared, like filling up the car at big box stores where they can get discounts.

Visits to gas stations operated by big box chains like BJ's, Costco and Sam's Club, which offer discounts to members, began to accelerate in early March, aligning with a sharp rise in fuel prices, said R.J. Hottovy, the head of analytical research at Placer.ai, which tracks people's movements based on cellphone usage.

Lionel Messi ties men's World Cup goals record with a hat trick as Argentina tops Algeria

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Lionel Messi used the front of his white-and-blue, sweat-soaked jersey to wipe the tears from his eyes, a flood of emotions cracking his usually calm, confident demeanor after he gave Argentina an early lead in its World Cup opener against Algeria.

Then he scored again. And again.

Suddenly, any questions about Messi's hamstring injury, or whether he could help Argentina become the third team to win consecutive World Cups — even as his 39th birthday approaches next week — had been answered. With a brilliant hat trick in a 3-0 win over Les Fennecs, Messi moved into a tie with Germany's Miroslav Klose for the career scoring record at the men's World Cup.

"My tears after the first goal? I've had some tough days. It wasn't related to football. And those feelings

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were because of that," Messi said afterward, without elaborating. "I thank my teammates, the coaching staff and the delegation for helping me."

Messi scored that emotional first goal in the opening minutes on a nifty feed from Inter Miami teammate Rodrigo De Paul, the second off an opportunistic rebound early in the second half, and the third on a crisp strike moments before subbing out to a standing ovation from a crowd of 69,045 tilted heavily toward the three-time World Cup champions.

"At a loss for words about Leo. What can I say?" Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "He's incredible."

Messi has starred in the World Cup for two decades

His incredible trio of goals came 20 years to the day that Messi made his World Cup debut in a match against Serbia and Montenegro — he scored in that one, too — and made the pride of Rosario only the second player to score in five editions of the men's tournament.

Messi has 16 goals in his record six World Cup appearances overall, and it seems inevitable that Klose's record will fall in the coming weeks. The hat trick was the 61st of Messi's career, his 11th while playing in his national team colors and his first in the World Cup.

It also was the fifth straight World Cup game in which Messi has scored.

"It makes me very happy to have lived through everything that came my way. What I'm living through now is the cherry on top," Messi said. "I'm very happy and grateful for this wonderful group. I enjoy it so much."

Messi upstaged two of soccer's other stars — Kylian Mbappé of France and Erling Haaland of Norway — who had big games of their own on Tuesday. Mbappé scored twice in France's 3-1 win over Senegal to move into a tie for fourth on the men's World Cup goals list with 14, while Haaland scored twice for Norway in its 4-1 victory over Iraq.

"Messi is a madman," Haaland said in a post on Snapchat during Argentina's game.

Shaking off injury, Messi remains Argentina's engine

Messi had been dealing with a minor hamstring injury with Inter Miami that slowed him in the lead-up to the World Cup. But the eight-time winner of the Ballon d'Or, which honors global soccer's best player, had no problems in a tuneup last week with Iceland, scoring on a penalty kick while playing 20 minutes in a sharp performance.

"This is my sixth World Cup, and I still feel like I'm in good shape," Messi said. "Fortunately, I'm doing well, and today we managed to win a tough match. It's important to start the tournament with a victory in the first game, as that's never easy in a World Cup."

Messi's appearance against Algeria was the 200th of his international career, which began in 2005 at age of 18. The only players with more are Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, who will play his 229th on Wednesday, and Bader al-Mutawa, who played in 202 for Kuwait.

Messi and Ronaldo are the only men to have scored in five World Cups.

"Class is permanent," Algeria coach Vladimir Petkovic said. "He's fortunate to have the privilege that the entire Argentina team works for him, and supports him, and for a number of years now — decades — he's done incredible things."

Fans flock to Kansas City for a glimpse of the GOAT

Argentina is among four national teams making their base camps in the Kansas City metro. And much as it has the rest of the world, Messi-mania has swept through the area ever since La Albiceleste's arrival in the Heartland about two weeks ago.

On match day, thousands of fans wearing his No. 10 jersey trekked into the home of the NFL's Chiefs on the outskirts of Kansas City, singing odes to their hero. Meanwhile, during a watch party at the downtown Power & Light District, a goat accompanied by former NFL quarterback-turned Fox broadcaster Jameis Winston came on stage wearing an Argentina jersey.

The humorous moment seemed to have foreshadowed a big night for Messi when he scored an hour later, and the argument that he's soccer's GOAT — the greatest of all time — is becoming no argument at all with every match he plays.

"It's an advantage to have Leo because of how he handles the group and pushes it forward. Because of who he is," De Paul said. "He doesn't care about individual records. He prioritizes the group, and for

us it's incredible."

Zelenskyy says G7 leaders pledge more vital help for Ukraine against Russia

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday his country has won key pledges of further support from world leaders in defending itself from Russia's full-scale invasion, now in its fifth year.

Leaders attending the Group of Seven summit in France promised to strengthen Ukraine's air defenses and ensure its energy supply, as well as step up international economic pressure on Moscow.

"The G7 Summit in France delivered important results for Ukraine. Most importantly, we agreed on additional strengthening of Ukraine's air defense," Zelenskyy, who attended the gathering, said on X.

"Our partners will ensure support for our defense and energy resilience," he said, adding they will also introduce new sanctions on Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the summit at the lakeside resort of Evian-les-Bains produced "unprecedented convergence" among G7 leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump, on maintaining support for Ukraine. Trump and Zelenskyy have had a sometimes strained relationship.

Zelenskyy has spent a lot of time since the war began in 2022 trying to secure international support and isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin diplomatically.

Zelenskyy was expected at a European Union summit in Brussels on Thursday. Ukraine on Monday officially started its EU membership negotiations, launching a process that could take years even as it fights Russia.

The Iran war has distracted Washington from its largely fruitless effort to end the fighting in Ukraine, and Zelenskyy sought to engage with Trump at the G7 gathering where key European leaders were also present.

Putin has tried to cut out Europe and Kyiv and negotiate Ukraine's future directly with Washington.

G7 leaders praise Ukraine's battlefield progress

The leaders of Japan, the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Canada and the U.S. threw their support behind Ukraine in a joint statement published overnight.

"We commend Ukraine for its resilience and progress on the battlefield in recent months and emphasize there is now a new momentum" in Kyiv's resistance, it said.

Ukraine's performance against Russia's bigger army has improved markedly in recent months, Western officials and analysts say.

High-tech Ukrainian drones are pinning down Russian troops on the front line, choking Russian supply lines in occupied regions of Ukraine and disrupting oil production deep inside Russia that provides vital revenue for Moscow. That has made the war, which Moscow refers to as a "special military operation," more visible to Russians and increased pressure on Putin.

But Ukraine is short of U.S.-made Patriot air defense missiles, in part because of American stocks being depleted by the Middle East conflict, leaving it vulnerable to Russia's ballistic missiles.

The G7 statement promised Ukraine more air defense capabilities, without specifying what type of weapons.

The leaders also said they would consider granting Ukraine licenses for it to manufacture Western weapons. Kyiv has asked for permits to make Patriot missiles itself.

The summit outcome shows that G7 backing for Ukraine is "as strong as seldom before" and sends a clear signal to Moscow, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said.

Russia says Ukraine attacked a children's bus but Kyiv denies it

In Russia's Bryansk region, which borders both Ukraine and Belarus, Gov. Egor Kovalchuk said a Ukrainian drone struck a bus carrying a children's soccer team. A woman among the 44 passengers, which authorities said included 28 children, was killed, according to Kovalchuk. Eight people, including six children, were

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wounded as the bus traveled to Russia from Belarus, he said.

But Ukraine's General Staff dismissed the Russian allegation, calling it a "fabrication," and saying its forces did not conduct drone operations in the Bryansk region at the time. Its statement reiterated that soldiers aim only at military targets.

In other attacks reported Wednesday, a Russian drone struck an equestrian sports school for children in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region, hitting a stable and killing horses, a regional official said.

Staff at the school were not hurt in the nighttime attack, according to preliminary information, said Oleh Hryhorov of the Sumy regional military administration.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said that air defenses downed 157 Ukrainian drones from late Tuesday until early Wednesday.

Ancient teeth from Siberia rewrite the plague's timeline, dating back to over 5,500 years ago

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have found the oldest known evidence of the plague, which sparked deadly outbreaks dating back about 5,500 years ago — some 200 years earlier than previously thought.

The disease has sickened humans for thousands of years and wiped out a significant chunk of Europe's population in the 14th century during what's known as the Black Death. Though rare, the plague is still around today and is treated with antibiotics.

"To understand our own history, we believe that understanding the history of plague is extremely important," said study co-author Eske Willerslev, an evolutionary geneticist with the University of Copenhagen in Denmark.

Willerslev and other researchers looked for traces of plague-causing bacteria in remains from four cemeteries near Siberia's Lake Baikal. They found remnants of plague DNA in teeth from 18 ancient hunter-gatherers.

Dating the carbon in the bones revealed that the plague triggered two outbreaks, with the first cases detected around 5,500 years ago.

The team found that the prehistoric plague developed in stages and infected several small families. It likely spread from marmots — large native rodents — when people ate their raw organs or touched infected hides during butchery. The disease also traveled between people through coughing and sneezing, the authors said.

Many of those who died were young children aged 8 to 11. Three young girls were buried side by side, two of whom were likely cousins. An aunt and nephew were found together, but her niece was in a different shared grave, according to the study published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

"People were around to bury the dead who knew who these people were when they were alive. And that's a really human element to all of the scientific work," said study co-author Ruairidh Macleod, who studies ancient DNA at the University of Oxford.

Kids may have been at greater risk because their immune systems weren't as strong, researchers said.

The presence of multiple victims suggests that the prehistoric plague was capable of causing both individual cases and outbreaks, said geneticist Aida Andrades Valtueña with the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. She had no role in the study.

Researchers found that this type of ancient plague evolved long before bubonic plague, which was responsible for the Black Death that struck medieval Europe. But there's evidence that earlier plagues were just as deadly. The disease decimated not only crowded cities, but also small, nomadic hunter-gatherer groups.

Knowing this can help us "understand the steps that the bacterium took to become the deadly pathogen we know today, and that can provide clues on how pathogens may emerge in the future," Andrades Valtueña said in an email.

FACT FOCUS: Trump says illegal immigration increased car insurance premiums. Experts say otherwise

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

President Donald Trump this week credited his tough immigration policies for a drop in car insurance premiums, falsely blaming illegal immigration during his predecessor's time in the White House for a prior increase.

In a Monday post on Truth Social, Trump shared a graphic showing the year-over-year change in premiums from 2021 to 2026. It rises sharply from 2021 to 2023 and begins dropping in 2024, culminating with negative growth so far in 2026. The graphic cites a Council of Economic Advisers' analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Car Insurance Premiums rose to RECORD HIGHS, forcing Law-abiding American Citizens to subsidize the 'free riding' Biden Illegals," the post reads. "After over a year of ZERO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, and our highly successful efforts to REVERSE the Biden Invasion, Car Insurance Premiums have come tumbling down."

But experts say that although the data in the graphic aligns with industry trends, it was chiefly the COVID-19 pandemic — not illegal immigration — that caused the uptick.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: Trump's tough immigration policies have led to a drop in car insurance premiums, after a spike under the Biden administration caused by illegal immigration.

THE FACTS: This is false. Experts say that increased costs were primarily due to effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as riskier behavior on the roads and supply chain disruptions that led to higher repair costs. Now that insurers are on a better financial footing, they are cutting rates to stay competitive. There is no evidence to suggest that illegal immigration played a significant role in either the rise or the fall of insurance premiums.

"This claim is pure fiction," Michael Clemens, a professor of economics at Johns Hopkins University and a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said of Trump's claim. "It does not arise from any study by the White House, by the auto insurance industry, or even by anti-immigration pressure groups. It has no basis in anything but inflammatory statements that juxtapose two unrelated trends."

Driving decreased during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was declared in March 2020, as people began social distancing and working from home became the norm. According to experts, this led to fewer accidents and therefore fewer claims, leaving insurance companies with high profit margins that they used to cut rates and compete for new customers.

When people began driving again in large numbers, starting in 2022 as the country recovered, that meant more accidents and more claims. Experts said factors like reckless driving and distracted driving also contributed. At the same time, supply chain issues made auto parts and other materials more expensive — costs insurance companies passed on to drivers in their premiums.

In 2024, rates began going down again as accidents declined and insurers found themselves in a better financial position.

"Over the past two years, the auto insurance industry has generated an underwriting profit following the implementation of significant rate actions to offset losses," said Mark Friedlander, a spokesperson for the Insurance Information Institute, a leading industry association. "Average auto insurance premiums have begun to stabilize, and replacement costs are more in line with the U.S. inflation rate. We are seeing average rate decreases being implemented across numerous states, as well as dividends being paid to policyholders by major auto insurers such as State Farm and USAA."

Asked to provide evidence that people who entered the U.S. illegally caused car insurance premiums to increase, White House spokesman Kush Desai said: "Thanks to the Trump administration's commonsense law and immigration enforcement policies, traffic fatalities have dropped dramatically, with eased congestion in high-immigration cities and the removal of more than 20,000 non-English-speaking commercial truck drivers who posed safety risks on our roadways. These objective facts are lowering risks for American

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drivers on American roads — and thus lowering car insurance premiums.”

A 2023 study published in the Journal of Insurance Issues found that populations with a higher number of people who entered the U.S. illegally have a higher number of uninsured drivers, who do raise car insurance premiums. However, the link only exists in states where people in the country illegally are not allowed to obtain driver’s licenses, generally a prerequisite for being insured to drive a vehicle.

Clemens said that this link also cannot account for the approximately 50% increase in car insurance premiums seen after the COVID-19 pandemic. He estimated that the surge in illegal immigration during the Biden administration can explain only about a .07% increase in premiums.

In his Truth Social Post, Trump also repeated his regularly debunked claim that Biden’s immigration policies let tens of millions of criminals into the U.S. from prisons and mental institutions.

World Cup what to know: Ronaldo looks to make history by scoring in 6th World Cup

By STEVE REED AP Sports Writer

Cristiano Ronaldo, your turn.

The 41-year-old is set to enter the World Cup on Wednesday when Portugal meets Congo after impressive performances by the tournament’s other top stars.

France’s Kylian Mbappé and Erling Haaland of Norway each had two goals as they opened their World Cup campaigns on Tuesday, while Lionel Messi scored a hat trick for Argentina. That gave Messi 16 career goals in the World Cup, tying him with Germany’s Miroslav Klose for the all-time record.

Ronaldo is also looking to make history by becoming the first player to score in six World Cups. Messi, too, is playing in his sixth World Cup but failed to find the net in 2010.

“Well, I wish him the best — I hope that he scores but not against us,” Congo coach Sébastien Desabre said of the Portugal forward.

Ronaldo’s focus has been on his team’s success.

“We go match by match, but not with the expectations of winning it all,” Ronaldo told reporters in Portugal last week before the team’s departure. “It has to be step by step. A good start is the most important thing,”

Some Portugal supporters question whether the aging star will be a help or a detriment to the team.

After scoring just once in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Ronaldo was upset after he subbed off against South Korea and benched for the club’s first knockout-stage match against Switzerland. He also failed to score in the 2024 European Championship — the first time that has happened at a major international tournament.

But Ronaldo has also shown signs of his old productivity.

He scored eight goals during Portugal’s 2025 UEFA Nations League title, including an equalizer in the final against Spain. And, he recently won his first Saudi Pro League title with Al-Nassr, scoring a club-high 28 goals.

What to watch on June 17

- Portugal vs. Congo, 1 p.m. EDT in Houston (Fox/Telemundo/Peacock)
- England vs. Croatia, 4 p.m. EDT in Arlington, Texas (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Ghana vs. Panama, 7 p.m. EDT in Toronto (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)
- Uzbekistan vs. Colombia, 10 p.m. EDT in Mexico City (FS1/Telemundo/Peacock)

Kane, England seek strong World Cup start vs. Croatia

Harry Kane, one of the world’s dominant goal scorers, leads England into its first match against Croatia with the Three Lions seeking their first World Cup title since 1966, when they won on home soil.

Kane has been a force over the past year with 61 goals in 51 matches for Bayern Munich across all competitions. The 32-year-old striker has eight goals in two previous World Cups and won the Golden Boot in 2018 by scoring six times in Russia.

But he didn’t score in England’s semifinal loss to Croatia in 2018. In 2022, he missed a penalty late against

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France in a 2-1 semifinal loss in Qatar when he sent the ball over the crossbar.

Kane's eight World Cup goals are two shy of Gary Lineker's England record.

Ghana to be without Partey for opener after appeal denied

Ghana will play its opening match against Panama without midfielder Thomas Partey after a Canadian judge on Tuesday rejected a bid to allow him into the country as he awaits trial on rape charges.

Partey's visa application was denied last week.

He will remain in the United States while his teammates play in Toronto on Wednesday. He will be eligible to play in Ghana's next two matches — both in the U.S.

Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had criticized the visa denial, calling it a "high-handed and extremely unfair decision." Its appeal was heard by the court earlier Tuesday.

Partey is awaiting trial in Britain while facing allegations from several women dating to his time playing for Arsenal from 2020-25. He has pleaded not guilty.

England's Livramento will miss tournament with injury

England fullback Tino Livramento was ruled out of the World Cup on Tuesday because of a calf injury, forcing coach Thomas Tuchel into a late squad change ahead of his team's opener against Croatia.

Chelsea defender Trevoh Chalobah was called up as a replacement and due to head to the England training camp in Kansas City. Livramento was injured during training on Sunday.

"A subsequent scan and medical assessment on Monday unfortunately confirmed he could play no further part in England's tournament," it said in a statement.

Uzbekistan ready to make World Cup debut

Uzbekistan will mark the biggest moment in the country's soccer history on Wednesday when it participates in its first World Cup, facing Colombia.

Coached by Fabio Cannavaro, Italy's 2006 World Cup-winning captain and a former Ballon d'Or winner, Uzbekistan finished second in Asian qualifying to earn its way into the expanded 48-team field.

Colombia is back in the World Cup after failing to qualify in 2022.

More World Cup news

— France striker Kylian Mbappé scores 13th and 14th World Cup goals, moving into tie for 3rd all time

— US official says Iran knew team would have to leave shortly after match

— Social media star Tim Payne leaves New Zealand for Paraguay's Olimpia

— Tunisia fires coach Sabri Lamouchi after 1 match at the World Cup and appoints Herve Renard

— US forward Christian Pulisic practices on his own in calf injury rehab, team says he is 'day to day'

— This Sweden defender at the World Cup isn't your typical soccer player: He's a baron!

— Highlights from Day 6 in photos

Stats of the day

England has struggled against European opposition at the global showcase, losing six of its last eight matches. Its overall record versus UEFA teams at the World Cup includes 14 wins, 12 losses and 13 ties.

Today in History: June 18, War of 1812 begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, June 18, the 169th day of 2026. There are 196 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 18, 1812, the War of 1812 began as the United States Congress approved, and President James Madison signed, a declaration of war against Britain.

Also on this date:

In 1778, American forces entered Philadelphia as the British withdrew during the Revolutionary War.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated in the Battle of Waterloo as British and Prussian troops defeated the French Imperial Army in Belgium.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter and Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev signed the SALT II strategic arms limitation treaty in Vienna.

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In 1983, astronaut Sally Ride became America's first woman in space as she and four other NASA astronauts blasted off aboard the space shuttle Challenger on a six-day mission.

In 1986, 25 people were killed when a twin-engine plane and a helicopter carrying sightseers collided over the Grand Canyon.

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Georgia v. McCollum*, ruled that criminal defendants could not use race as a basis for excluding potential jurors from their trials.

In 2007, nine firefighters died when they were overwhelmed by a fast-spreading fire in a furniture showroom and warehouse facility in Charleston, South Carolina. It was one of the deadliest days for firefighting since the 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

In 2018, President Donald Trump announced he was directing the Pentagon to create the Space Force as an independent branch of the United States Armed Forces.

In 2023, the submersible vessel Titan, on an undersea expedition to view the wreck of the Titanic in the North Atlantic Ocean, imploded, killing all five people aboard.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Paul McCartney is 84. Actor Carol Kane is 74. Actor Isabella Rossellini is 74. Singer Alison Moyet is 65. Football Hall of Famer Bruce Smith is 63. Hockey Hall of Famer Martin St. Louis is 51. Actor Alana de la Garza is 50. Country musician Blake Shelton is 50. Football Hall of Famer Antonio Gates is 46. Actor Jeremy Irvine is 36. Actor Bailey Bass is 23.