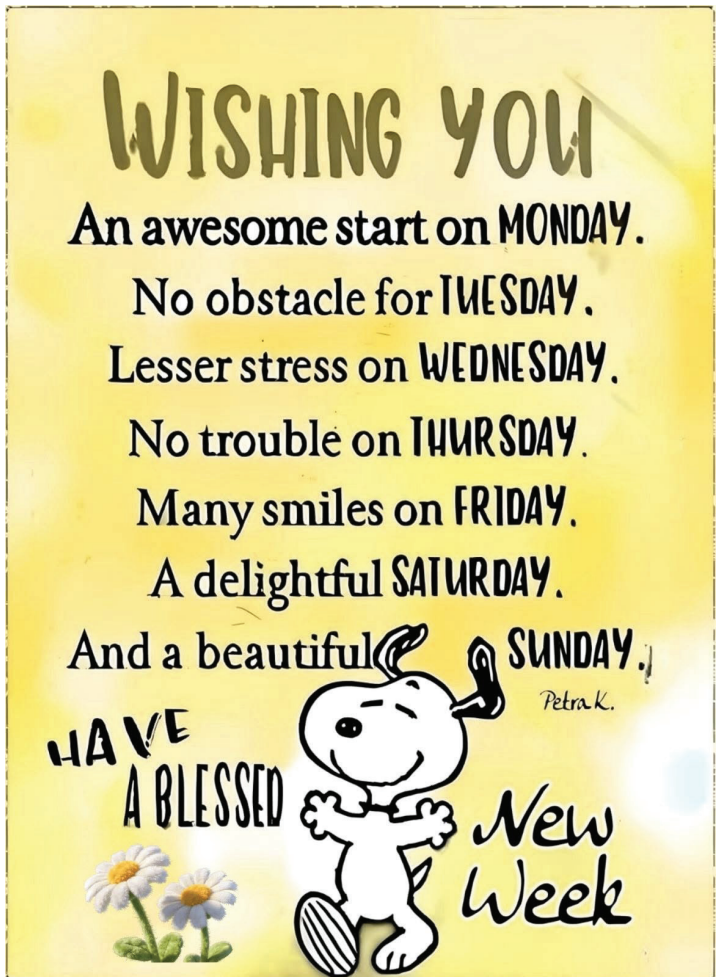


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Monday, June 22

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread, sherbet.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck at noon

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

Rumble in the Jungle Boys Basketball Team Camp, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Arena/Gym

Jr. Legion at Sisseton, 5:30 p.m.

U12 Softball hosts Clark, DH, 6 p.m., (B&G)

U10 Softball hosts Clark, DH, 6 p.m., (W&G)

T-Ball girls at Brentford, 6 p.m.

T-Ball boys at Brentford, 7 p.m.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

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Tuesday, June 23

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, capri blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Rumble in the Jungle Boys Basketball Team Camp, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Arena/Gym

U14 Legion at Watertown, 5 p.m.

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

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

U12 Baseball hosts Warner, 7 p.m., Nelson Field

U10 Baseball hosts Warner, 5:30 p.m., Falk Field (W&R)

U8 Baseball host Warner, 5:30 p.m. (Red), Falk Field

U14 Softball at Warner, 5:30 p.m.

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1440

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

Introducing Air Force One

President Donald Trump unveiled the Boeing 747-8 Friday, which will serve as the new Air Force One beginning next month after a July 4 flyover. The luxury jetliner was gifted by Qatar and modified for US security needs at an estimated cost of less than \$400M.

The rollout comes as the US awaits the delivery of two Boeing 747-8 planes procured in 2018 to replace jets from the 1990s. Those older planes were state-of-the-art at the time, designed to evade heat-seeking missiles and withstand the electromagnetic pulses of a nuclear explosion. The newer planes are delayed and not scheduled to be operational until 2028, near the end of Trump's term. He says the Qatari jet will be retired to his presidential library at that time.

US presidents have flown in office since 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt secretly attended the Casablanca Conference.



A VC-25B Bridge aircraft sits at Joint Base Andrews on the day President Donald Trump will view the Boeing 747-8, gifted by Qatar and set to be used as Air Force One, in Maryland, June 19, 2026.

U.S. Air Force, Via REUTERS

TV Sitcom Legend Dies

Legendary TV sitcom director James Burrows died Friday at age 85. Called the "Steven Spielberg of Sitcoms," Burrows directed more than 1,000 episodes of "Cheers," "Friends," and other hit TV shows.

The Los Angeles native began directing episodes of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" in 1974. He then worked on "The Bob Newhart Show," "Taxi," and others before cocreating "Cheers" in 1982. Burrows directed nearly 90% of the episodes, including the 1993 series finale, which became the second-most-watched finale in television history after "M*A*S*H."

Burrows went on to direct episodes of "Friends," "Frasier," "Will & Grace," and "The Big Bang Theory," among others. In all, he directed 75 pilot episodes that became series, winning 11 Emmy Awards. He was renowned for navigating multicamera situational comedies. Explore the enduring popularity of laugh tracks in sitcoms.

Reflecting Pool Repairs

The Trump administration will likely carry out a second round of repairs on the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, President Donald Trump said over the weekend, alleging vandals were responsible for algae buildup and large swathes of peeling paint. An original \$14M effort was intended to paint the pool's bottom surface "American Flag Blue"—officials have not provided additional information on any arrests as of this writing.

Situated on the western third of the National Mall, the reflecting pool was completed in 1923, built on

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marshland backfilled with material from the nearby Potomac River, including No. 7). It gradually sank and saw significant leakage, requiring renovation and new structural support in 2010. The cause of the peeling paint remains unknown, though scientists say the darker color may have helped raise water temperatures, accelerating algae growth.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Wyndham Clark wins US Open at Shinnecock Hills, defeating Scottie Scheffler to earn second major championship of his career.

"Toy Story 5" earns \$160M at the domestic box office, a franchise record and the best debut so far this year.

Lamine Yamal scores his first World Cup goal as Spain smothers Saudi Arabia 4-0; watch the moment.

Reigning champion Argentina takes on Austria at 1 pm ET; Kylian Mbappé's France hosts Iraq at 5 pm ET in Philadelphia.

Science & Technology

Nobel Prize winner François Englert, who helped develop the theory predicting the Higgs boson (also known as the "God particle"), dies at age 93.

Robotic exoskeleton with virtual connection to a therapist helps stroke survivors relearn muscle activation, including regaining the ability to walk.

Soil bacteria adapt under stress conditions, producing compounds to improve nutrient absorption; research reveals new ways to improve crop resistance.

Business & Markets

Iran begins loading oil at Kharg Island export terminal after US lifts blockade.

US average gas price drops to \$3.93.

Billionaire Frank Stronach found guilty of sexual assault and indecent assault in two cases in Canada; allegations against the 93-year-old auto parts magnate spanned the 1970s to the 1990s, sentencing scheduled for Sept. 17.

Claude Guillemot, cofounder of video game giant Ubisoft, dies in plane crash in western France alongside one other victim.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump says UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will resign; speculation grows after Starmer's rival in the Labour Party was elected to British Parliament.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) declares state of emergency over a dayslong fire at a warehouse facility in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles.

France bans public alcohol consumption in about half the country, including Paris, where there is a red alert in effect due to high heat.



A promotional poster for a live music performance. The top half features a photograph of a smiling woman with long, wavy blonde hair wearing round sunglasses. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with a guitar neck and the text "LIVE MUSIC AT THE LEGION!". The bottom half of the poster has a black background with white and pink text. The name "LIZZY HOFER" is written in large, bold, white letters, with a red flame graphic to its 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 venue "GROTON AMERICAN LEGION". At the very bottom, a banner reads "GREAT MUSIC ★ COLD DRINKS ★ GOOD TIMES" followed by "EVERYONE WELCOME!" in 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! ★

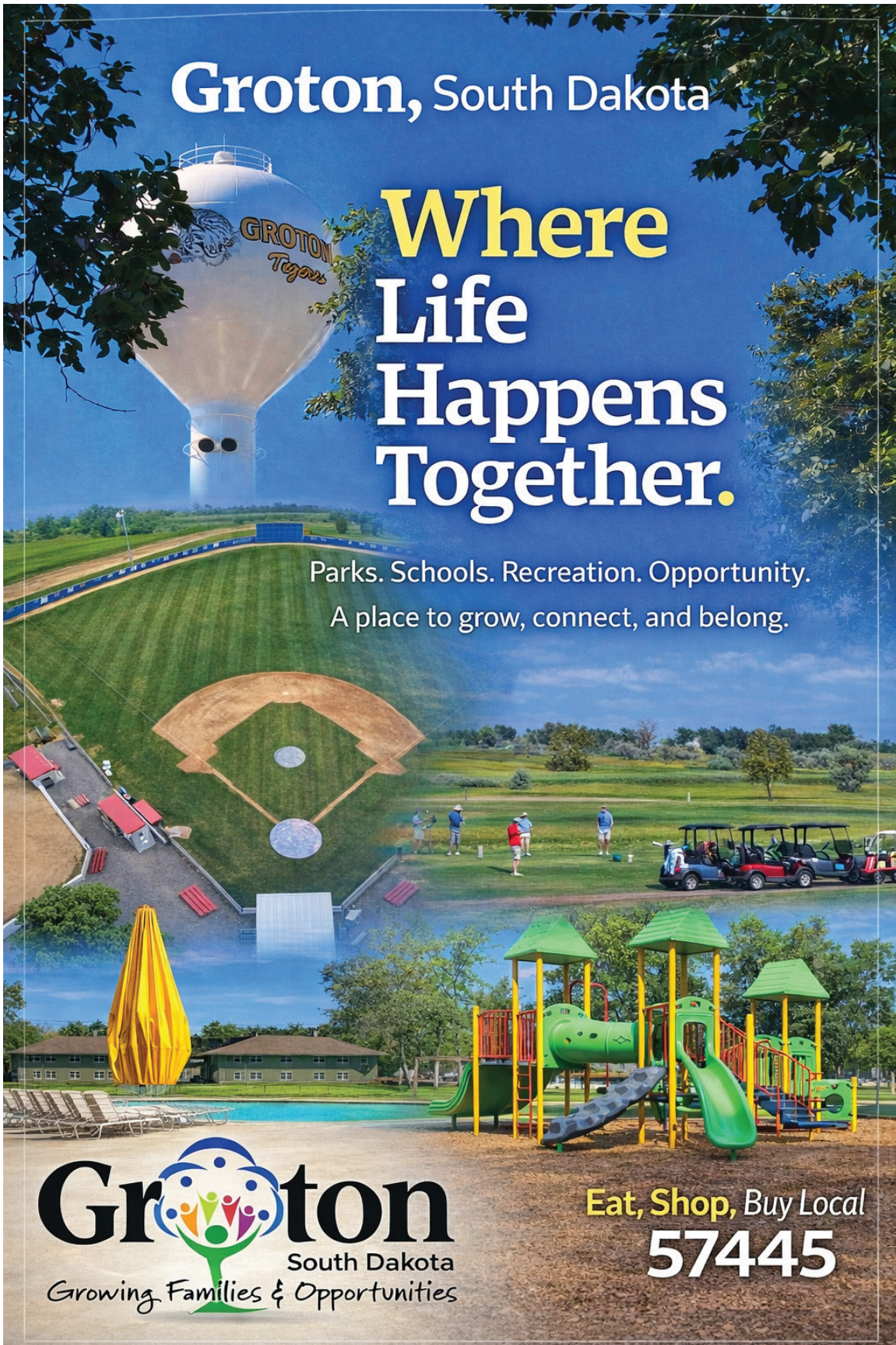
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Groton, South Dakota

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

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Groton teams enjoy successful Sunday with four wins

Groton baseball teams put together a strong Sunday, highlighted by a Senior Legion victory over Sisseton, a doubleheader sweep by the Groton Post 39 14U squad over Clark, and an amateur win by Groton Locke Electric over the Northville Merchants.

Groton Legion Post 39 picked up a 6-4 victory over Sisseton Post 50 Senior Legion in Milbank. Groton struck first in the second inning when Jarrett Erdmann doubled home a run. Sisseton answered with two runs in the third before Post 39 responded with a three-run bottom half of the inning. Carter Simon delivered an RBI double, TC Schuster added a sacrifice fly, and Nick Groebelinghoff singled home a run as Groton took a 4-2 advantage.

Schuster led the offense by going 2-for-3 with two RBIs, while Groton showed patience at the plate with six walks. Alex Abeln earned the victory, tossing two scoreless innings of relief while striking out two. Groebelinghoff worked the final 3 1/3 innings, allowing two runs while striking out two. Levi Nelson paced Sisseton with two hits.

The Groton Post 39 14U squad completed a sweep of Clark in a home doubleheader.

The opener provided plenty of drama as Groton rallied for a 7-6 walk-off victory. Trailing 6-5 entering the bottom of the seventh inning, Groton tied the game on a wild pitch before Keegan Kucker lined a single to score two runs and end the contest.

Kyson Kucker opened the scoring with an RBI single in the first inning. Trayce Schelle contributed a pair of sacrifice flies, helping Groton stay within striking distance before the seventh-inning comeback. Keegan Kucker, Asher Zimmerman, and Kyson Kucker each collected two hits. Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, and Kyson Kucker each drove in two runs. Groton also showed aggressiveness on the bases, stealing seven bags, including multiple steals by Keegan and Kyson.

Tucker Leicht started and pitched six strong innings, allowing four runs, three earned, while striking out four. Keegan Kucker earned the win with a scoreless inning of relief.

The nightcap was less stressful as Groton rolled to a 12-5 victory. Clark scored first with two runs in the opening inning, but Groton immediately answered with four runs in the bottom half. Trayce Schelle drew a bases-loaded walk, Tucker Leicht delivered a two-run single, and a passed ball plated another run.

Groton added three runs in the second and exploded for five more in the third to pull away. Leicht drove in three runs and finished with two hits, while Schelle also knocked in three runs. Rylan Blackwood added two hits, and Groton pounded out 12 hits as a team.

Owen Tewksbury earned the win on the mound, working 4 2/3 innings while allowing five runs. Groton played error-free defense and turned a double play.

Meanwhile, Groton Locke Electric earned a 9-7 amateur baseball victory over the Northville Merchants.

Bradin Althoff powered the offense with four RBIs, highlighted by a two-run homer in the third inning and a two-run single later in the contest. Groton built a comfortable lead before holding off a late Merchants rally.

Brian Hansen enjoyed a huge day at the plate, collecting five hits in five at-bats. Ty Sieber, Alex Morris, Jonah Schmidt, Brevin Fliehs, and Ben Althoff also recorded multiple-hit games as Groton piled up 18 hits.

Palmer Boyd earned the victory, throwing six scoreless innings while allowing just three hits and striking out nine. Fliehs added relief work as Groton improved with the hard-fought road win.

The successful Sunday gave Groton baseball fans plenty to celebrate, with Post 39, the 14U squad, and Locke Electric combining for four victories on the day.

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Groton Locke Electric 9 - 7 Merchants

📍 Away 📅 Sunday June 21, 2026

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	3	0	0	1	1	3	1	9	18	1
MRCH	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	7	8	3

BATTING

Groton Locke El...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs #1 (LF)	5	1	2	0	1	1
B Althoff #4 (SS)	4	2	2	2	0	0
T Sieber #24 (3B)	5	0	2	0	1	2
J Schmidt #21 (CF)	6	3	2	0	0	1
B Althoff #27 (RF)	5	2	3	4	0	0
A Morris #13 (C)	4	0	2	1	1	0
B Hansen #11 (1B)	5	0	5	1	0	0
N Morris #45 (DH)	2	0	0	0	0	1
W Locke #25 (DH)	3	0	0	0	0	0
R Groebli... #0 (2B)	4	1	0	0	1	1
Totals	43	9	18	8	4	6

2B: T Sieber, **HR:** B Althoff, **TB:** J Schmidt 2, T Sieber 3, A Morris 2, B Fliehs 2, B Hansen 5, B Althoff 6, B Althoff 2, **SF:** B Althoff 2, **SB:** J Schmidt, B Fliehs, **LOB:** 13

PITCHING

Groton Loc...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
P Boyd #7	6.0	3	0	0	1	9	0
B Fliehs #1	3.0	5	7	5	1	4	0
Totals	9.0	8	7	5	2	13	0

W: P Boyd, **P-S:** P Boyd 85-52, B Fliehs 72-44, **WP:** P Boyd, B Fliehs, **HBP:** B Fliehs 4, **BF:** P Boyd 22, B Fliehs 20, **E:** J Schmidt

Merchants	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Simes #1 (CF)	5	0	0	0	0	0
B Kirsch #14 (LF)	5	0	1	0	0	2
A Remily #22 (P)	4	1	1	0	0	0
G Heyne #11 (2B)	4	0	0	0	0	0
K Stahl #2 (C)	2	2	0	0	0	2
D Ward #20 (RF)	4	1	1	0	0	2
M Waltm... #29 (1B)	2	1	2	1	2	0
E Beyers #34 (3B)	2	1	1	1	0	1
C Bahr #6 (SS)	4	1	2	3	0	2
K Kirsch #6 (2B)	4	0	0	0	0	4
Totals	36	7	8	5	2	13

2B: B Kirsch, **TB:** E Beyers, C Bahr 2, A Remily, B Kirsch 2, M Waltman 2, D Ward, **HBP:** E Beyers 2, K Stahl 2, **LOB:** 8

Merchants	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Remily #22	4.0	9	3	3	2	4	1
M Walt... #29	3.0	4	2	1	0	0	0
K Stahl #2	2.0	5	4	4	2	2	0
Totals	9.0	18	9	8	4	6	1

L: A Remily, **P-S:** A Remily 80-47, K Stahl 43-26, M Waltman 46-28, **WP:** K Stahl, **BF:** A Remily 22, K Stahl 13, M Waltman 14, **E:** K Kirsch, C Bahr, A Remily



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.*



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Every NFL offseason brings optimism. Every fanbase convinces itself the rookies will hit, the free agents will work out, and this is finally the year everything comes together. But before the season starts and hope takes over, it's worth taking a hard look at the roster as it actually exists today.

Over the next ten weeks, we'll break down every position group on the Vikings' roster and rank them from the group I have the most confidence in to the one I trust the least entering the 2026 season. We'll look at the projected starters, depth pieces, offseason additions, and biggest questions each group faces.

Coming in at number 9 last week was the TE group. This week is a group that surprised me in the rankings... running back.

Confidence level: 90%

Current projected starters: Jordan Mason, Aaron Jones, Max Bredeson (FB)

Competing for a roster or practice squad spot: Demond Claiborne, Xavier Scott, Kejon Owens

Why I'm confident: When I was creating this list, I had to keep reminding myself this isn't a list of which groups I think will be the best. This is a list of which groups I have confidence in. Confidence that they'll go out there and we'll know what to expect. No question marks. No roller coaster rides. That almost perfectly describes the running back group. There's a reason the Vikings brought back Jones, who will be 32 years old this season. He's consistent. Jordan Mason? Consistent. And consistency brings confidence.

Last season the Vikings had a fairly even split of the snaps. Jordan Mason got 41% of the snaps, Aaron Jones got 37%. Mason had 173 total touches, averaging 4.7 yards per touch. Jones had 160 total touches, averaging 4.7ypt. I expect the Vikings will continue to follow that model until age finally catches up to Aaron Jones.

Cause for concern: If we're strictly talking about concerns when it comes to my confidence in the position, the biggest concern has to be the age of Aaron Jones. He is entering year 10 in the NFL and will turn 32 during the season. Running backs rarely produce over the age of 30, and when they fall off, it's usually a steep decline. But that concern is mitigated by the presence of Jordan Mason. If Jones is out, the Vikings will lose a receiving threat out of the backfield. Luckily, as we've already established, the Vikings have one of the best WR and TE groups in the league.

Another question mark is at fullback. The retirement of C.J. Ham created a hole which the Vikings are attempting to fill with a rookie, Max Bredeson. Rookies are always a question mark, but considering Ham had a grand total of five total touches in 2025, I'm not too worried.

Potential upgrades: The free agent market for running backs is slim. There aren't any players who would be a clear upgrade over Jordan Mason and Aaron Jones. However, there are a few players who could come in and handle the starting role if either player misses a significant chunk of time this season. Joe Mixon, Najee Harris, and Antonio Gibson all have some tread left on their tires, while Nick Chubb and Austin Ekeler are both on the wrong side of 30 but could fill in just fine for a few games. And hey, worst case scenario, the Vikings could always bring back Cam Akers, who always seems to find a way to end up in purple and gold.

At the end of the day, I'm not expecting the Vikings' RB group to strike fear into the hearts of opposing defenses. But we know what we're getting with them, which is why they are so high on this list.

"Dementia and Home Safety: Tips for Caregivers"

Caregivers of people with dementia are often tasked with keeping their loved ones safe at home. Unpaid family members or friends, referred to as care partners or caregivers, dedicate significant time and resources to assist the person with dementia as their needs intensify. Caregivers may find themselves providing increased assistance with everyday tasks like cooking and cleaning, and self-care tasks like dressing, bathing and toileting. This is often due to a decline in the person with dementia's awareness of time and place, ability to solve problems or assess situations, strength and mobility, and senses (vision, hearing or depth perception). These declines also put people living with Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias at increased risk of injury, especially as the disease progresses.

Caregivers can take steps to create a safe home environment that minimizes the risk of injury or harm while maximizing the person's independence for as long as possible. First, organize important information, including insurance information, names and contact information for healthcare providers, medications and allergies, emergency contact numbers, legal papers (living wills, advance directives and power of attorney), and contact information for friends and family members. Next, assess the home and outdoor spaces for potential barriers, such as uneven terrain or thresholds, poor lighting, chemicals or other potentially hazardous items. Once safety concerns are identified, caregivers can implement helpful strategies and adaptations to keep their loved ones safe, including:

- Checking the temperature of food, beverages and bathwater
- Removing throw rugs, cords or other items that could cause someone to fall
- Installing adaptive equipment in the bathroom, like grab bars or shower chairs
- Adding extra lighting or nightlights in entryways, stairwells, bathrooms and hallways
- Using a hidden breaker or gas valve, or removing knobs to limit use of the stove when unattended
- Storing hazardous items or tools in a secure location
- Locking up medications and supplements

Some people living with dementia may exhibit wandering behaviors, such as forgetting how to get to familiar places in the home or community, talking about past obligations like going to work, restlessness or pacing, or being nervous in crowded or new locations. Structured routines, exercise or movement, deadbolts or locks on upper doors and cabinets and increased supervision or support can decrease the risk of wandering.

While the journey with dementia brings many challenges, creating a safe home can help foster peace of mind for everyone involved. A sense of purpose and connection through participation in familiar routines, favorite activities and nurturing relationships with family and friends can promote safety, comfort and quality of life for people living with Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias.

If you or someone you love is impacted by Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias, resources are available through organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association and the Veterans Affairs, as well as state agencies such as the Department of Human Services. No one needs to face this journey alone. These organizations provide education, home safety checklists and recommendations, extra help in the home and support groups. Check with your state to see what resources may be available to you.

Ranelle Nissen, Ph.D., OTR/L, serves as an associate dean and associate professor in the School of Health Sciences at the University of South Dakota. Nissen is a licensed occupational therapist in South Dakota. She has helped families and individuals affected by dementia through both her professional work and her volunteer work with the South Dakota Alzheimer's Association.

Allison Naber, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L, is the academic fieldwork coordinator and an associate professor in occupational therapy at the University of South Dakota. Naber is a licensed occupational therapist in Minnesota and South Dakota. She volunteers for the South Dakota Alzheimer's Association as a support group facilitator and community educator. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).



Allison Naber, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L and Ranelle Nissen, Ph.D., OTR/L

Soilless Farming: Better For The Planet? by Enhao Yuan

Dear EarthTalk: What is "soil-less" farming and is it better for the planet?

—B.R., via email

EARTHTALK

Farming is far from friendly to the environment. According to Our World in Data, 26 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from food production and 50 percent of the world's habitable land is used for agriculture. The Green Revolution solved the food shortage problem, but now, we humans need a new revolution to preserve and conserve natural resources—a "soil-less" revolution.

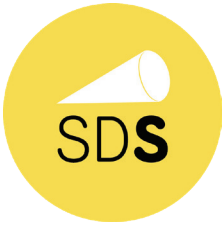
Three main types of soil-less farming are in practice today: hydroponics, aeroponics and aquaponics. Hydroponics, like its name suggests, cultivates crops in a nutrient-rich water supported by an inert medium such as perlite, coconut coir or rock wool. In aeroponics, plants are suspended in air and their roots are misted with a nutrient solution. Aquaponics has its roots in ancient China and Babylon. Essentially, it combines hydroponics and aquaculture in a symbiotic relationship. Fish and crops are raised together: fish waste fertilizes plants and plants purify water for fish.

A shift to soil-less farming can revert our current environment into a healthier, more balanced one. According to the World Wildlife Fund, "greenhouse hydroponics uses only 10 percent of the water needed for traditional farming." Additionally, soil-less cultivation yields more crops and produces fresh fruits and vegetables on a year-round basis, thanks to the controlled growing environment. With reduced exposure to pests and diseases, crops require little to no herbicide, lowering the amount of toxic water run-off. Finally, soil-less farming is more compact. Acres of land once used for cultivation can be returned back to nature, increasing biodiversity.

However, challenges persist in making the switch. For one, the initial cost is tremendous. Soil-less farming relies more heavily on technology; in consequence, equipment and set-up costs run in the tens of thousands (\$50k for 500 sq. ft.). Hydroponics, aeroponics and aquaponics also need more attention and technical expertise. Farmers must learn to manage new high-tech equipment and keep a watchful eye on the delicate nutrition balance. Besides the cost and human capital needed, soil-less farming is a high energy investment, which may offset any environmental gains. One study by World Wildlife Fund shows that the carbon footprint of lettuce grown on a traditional farm in California is less than that of a soil-less agricultural system. With more efficient technology, though, energy input can be reduced. Soil-less cultivation is the future for cleaner and more sustainable agriculture. Curious how plants can grow without soil? Try it yourself! Search up "at home hydroponic systems" and plenty of online resources can help you get started to an eco-friendly future.



Growing crops without soil is a dream that researchers are turning into a reality. Credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

The urgent need for Congress to renew critical funding for South Dakota's national parks

by Marissa Marshall and Diana Nielsen

Badlands National Park is home to some of America's most iconic landscapes, a masterpiece of the American West. Yet, our stewardship of this national wonder risks falling behind unless Congress — including the Senate under our very own Majority Leader John Thune — re-authorizes critical funding that helps keep our national parks and public lands safe, accessible and thriving.

At Badlands National Park, for more than two decades, staff were forced to operate out of a collection of deteriorating, temporary trailers that had long outlived their intended lifespan. And down the road, Cedar Pass Lodge, which serves as the primary base camp for more than a million visitors each year, suffered from severe electrical, mechanical and plumbing failures.



A view of Badlands National Park in South Dakota from Sheep Mountain Table. (Photo by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

Fortunately, Badlands National Park is one of the beneficiaries of the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF), created by the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020 to address critical infrastructure needs like these across our national parks. In its first five years, the LRF tackled nearly 400 priority projects in national parks and public lands across all 50 states, at no cost to the taxpayer.

But in September 2025 the LRF expired. Without swift, bipartisan congressional action to renew this investment, the progress we've made will stall. Urgent repair projects will be shelved, construction costs will multiply, and the visitor experience will inevitably degrade as facilities fall into disrepair and become less safe.

The \$15 million LRF investment for Badlands National Park contributes to real, long-lasting success, resulting in a permanent, appropriately sized headquarters for park staff and a rehabilitated visitor center. This project also addressed deferred maintenance in our national parks, helping reduce backlogs from ballooning further and ensuring long-term preservation of key visitor-facing structures.

The LRF has invested a total of \$134.1 million in essential infrastructure projects across South Dakota — redeveloping visitor walkways to manage overcrowding at Mount Rushmore, restoring a historic Civilian Conservation Corps log cabin at Jewel Cave National Monument, and rebuilding flood-damaged trails and

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public boat ramps at Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge, to name a few.

At the parks, the benefits are clear. But failing to renew the LRF's funding soon is also a direct threat to the larger South Dakota economy. In 2024 alone, South Dakota's national parks welcomed 3.9 million visitors who generated over \$525 million in local spending and supported roughly 5,200 jobs. Maintaining our parks helps sustain the South Dakota communities and local businesses that rely on this thriving ecosystem and keep our state strong.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of American independence, the duty to steward these national treasures for future generations has never felt more urgent. Recently, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously approved the America the Beautiful Act, cosponsored by 64 bipartisan senators, to renew the LRF. The House of Representatives is also considering the Great American Outdoors Act 250 – bipartisan legislation to reauthorize this common-sense support for our parks and public lands.

With this legislation, Senator Thune and the Senate can reaffirm our collective promise to the Badlands, Mount Rushmore and the public lands across South Dakota, ensuring they remain magnificent and welcoming for America's next 250 years.

As executive director of the Badlands National Park Conservancy, Marissa leads initiatives to expand its impact through fundraising, strategic partnerships, and projects such as the new visitor center, observatory and International Dark Sky Park designation. Marissa resides in Washington, D.C.

Diana Nielsen is the CEO of the Mount Rushmore Society, a nonprofit partner to the National Park Service, where she has led the organization since 1999 to support the iconic landmark through donor stewardship, youth engagement programs and operational leadership. Diana resides in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Trump to visit North Dakota on July 1; no announcement on July 3 Rushmore event

BY: AMY DALRYMPLE AND SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

President Donald Trump will visit the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in western North Dakota on July 1, Freedom 250 announced this weekend.

Meanwhile, no official announcement has been made about Trump's possible attendance at a Mount Rushmore fireworks display two days later in western South Dakota.

Trump will join other "distinguished guests" at the North Dakota library in Medora, the weekend announcement said. The library is set to open to the public on July 4 in conjunction with the nation's 250th birthday.

"As we celebrate our country's 250th anniversary, it's a tremendous honor for our 45th and 47th President to cut the ribbon at the library and National Park honoring the President who led our nation during its 125th anniversary," Interior Secretary and former North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum said in the announcement.

Trump and all living past presidents have been invited to the opening of the presidential library near Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The dedication is expected to celebrate the time Roosevelt spent in the North Dakota Badlands and the influence that had



President Donald Trump speaks during a rally on Sept. 8, 2023, at The Monument ice arena in Rapid City, South Dakota. (Photo by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

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on his life, including inspiring his conservation efforts.

North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong signed an executive order authorizing state agencies to assist with the July 4 grand opening. North Dakota's National Guard will activate 50 troops to assist with the presidential library opening.

"I'm excited to welcome President Trump to North Dakota and Medora for this historic event," Armstrong posted to social media on Sunday. "The fact that the president is visiting only solidifies the importance of such a monumental moment in North Dakota's history and will be a fantastic kickoff to all the celebrations surrounding America's 250th birthday."

In South Dakota, state officials have invited Trump to the July 3 fireworks display at Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Earlier this month, NBC news reported that Trump is considering a flight to the South Dakota event for the inaugural voyage of the new Air Force One jet gifted to him by Qatar. NBC sourced the report to "a senior White House official and a source familiar with the plans."

Trump attended the last fireworks display at Mount Rushmore in 2020, when there was a Native American-led protest against the event that resulted in a physical clash with law enforcement and multiple arrests. The charges were later dropped.

The Black Hills, where Mount Rushmore is located, were formerly controlled by Lakota tribes under an 1868 treaty that was broken by the United States, and all nine tribes in South Dakota support efforts to return federally owned land in the Black Hills to tribal ownership. Lakota spirituality also includes sites in the Black Hills that correspond with celestial features.

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

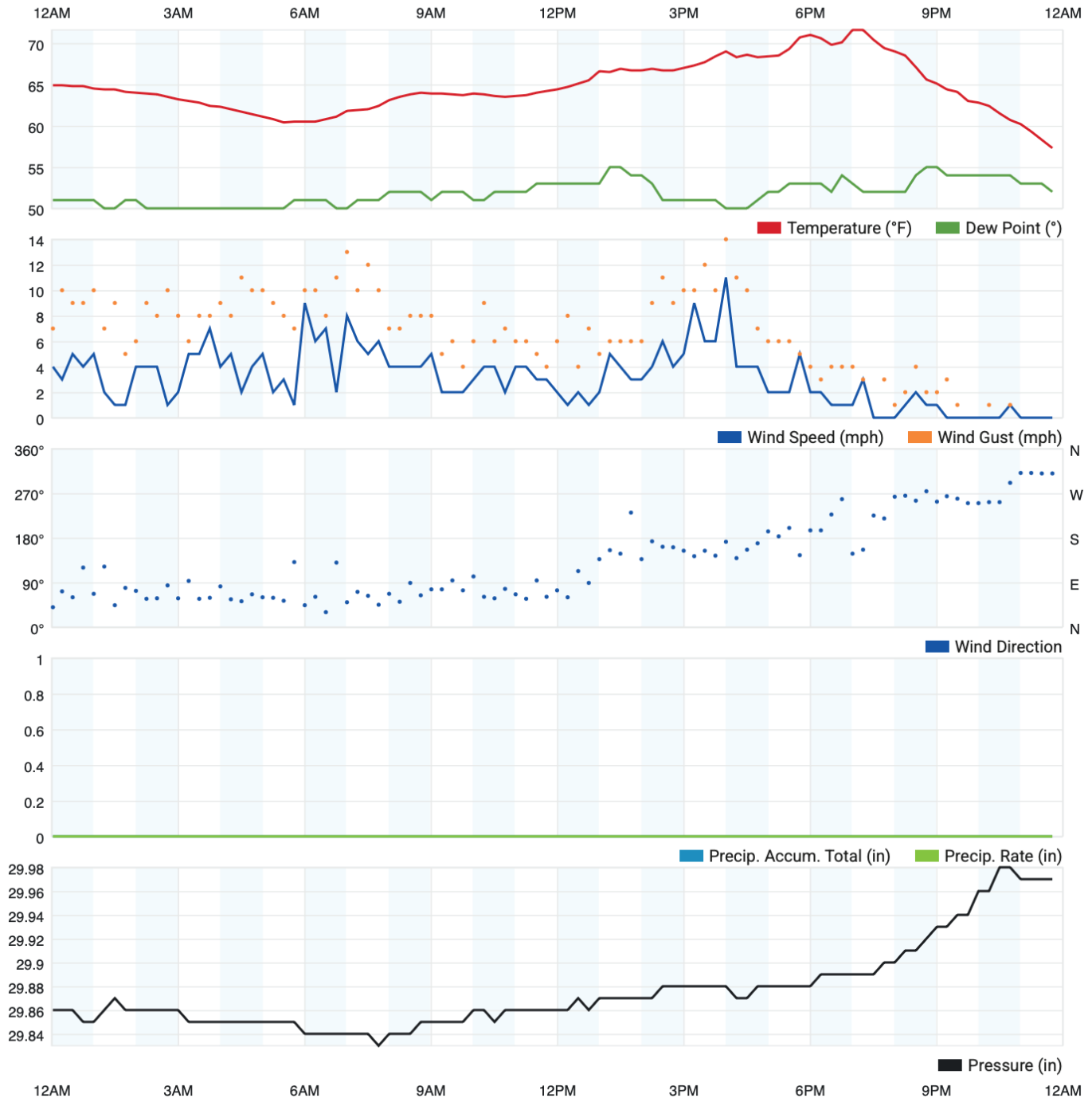
Amy Dalrymple is editor-in-chief of North Dakota's States Newsroom outlet. She previously was editor of The Bismarck Tribune and a newspaper journalist in Williston and Fargo. You can reach her at adalrymple@northdakotamonitor.com.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

June 21, 2026



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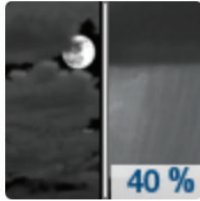
Today



High: 77 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 54 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers

Tuesday



High: 79 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Chance
Showers

Tuesday Night



Low: 52 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 74 °F

Mostly Sunny

Forecast through Tuesday

Today: 70s



Mainly dry. An isolated shower or thunderstorm can't be ruled out in the afternoon.

Tonight: mid 50s



40-60% chance of evening showers and isolated thunderstorms over central SD, expanding over northeastern SD/west central MN overnight.

Tuesday: 70s



30-70% chance of showers and thunderstorms over south central SD to northeastern SD/west central MN during the day. **A few strong to severe storms possible mainly east of the James River.**

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Today will be mainly dry with highs in the 70s. Temperatures tonight will fall into the mid 50s under a cloudy sky. There is a 40 to 60% chance of showers and isolated thunderstorms tonight, over central South Dakota this evening and expanding to northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota overnight. Thunderstorms will linger from south central to northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota Tuesday. A few strong to severe storms will be possible mainly east of the James River Tuesday afternoon.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

**Tuesday, mainly
3 PM - 7 PM**

PRIMARY THREATS



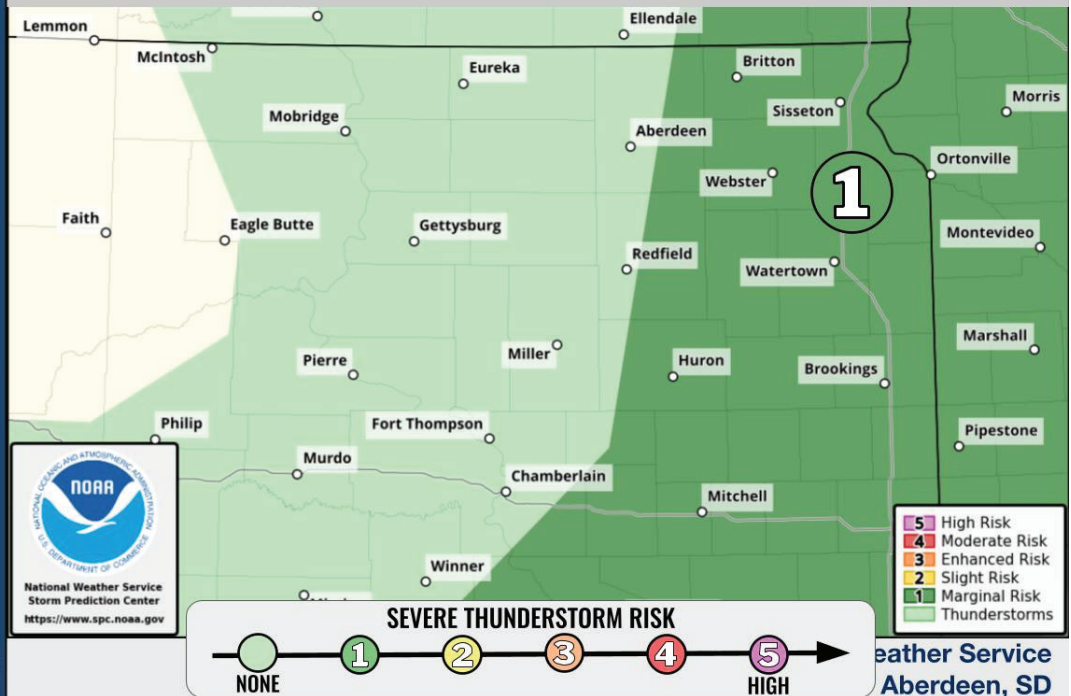
LARGE HAIL
of 1" in
diameter



DAMAGING
WIND
GUSTS
of 60+ mph

NWS
Aberdeen, SD

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Tuesday



Isolated severe storms are possible mainly east of the James River Tuesday afternoon, primarily from 3 PM to 7 PM. The main concern with the strongest storms will be damaging winds to around 60 mph and hail the size of quarters.

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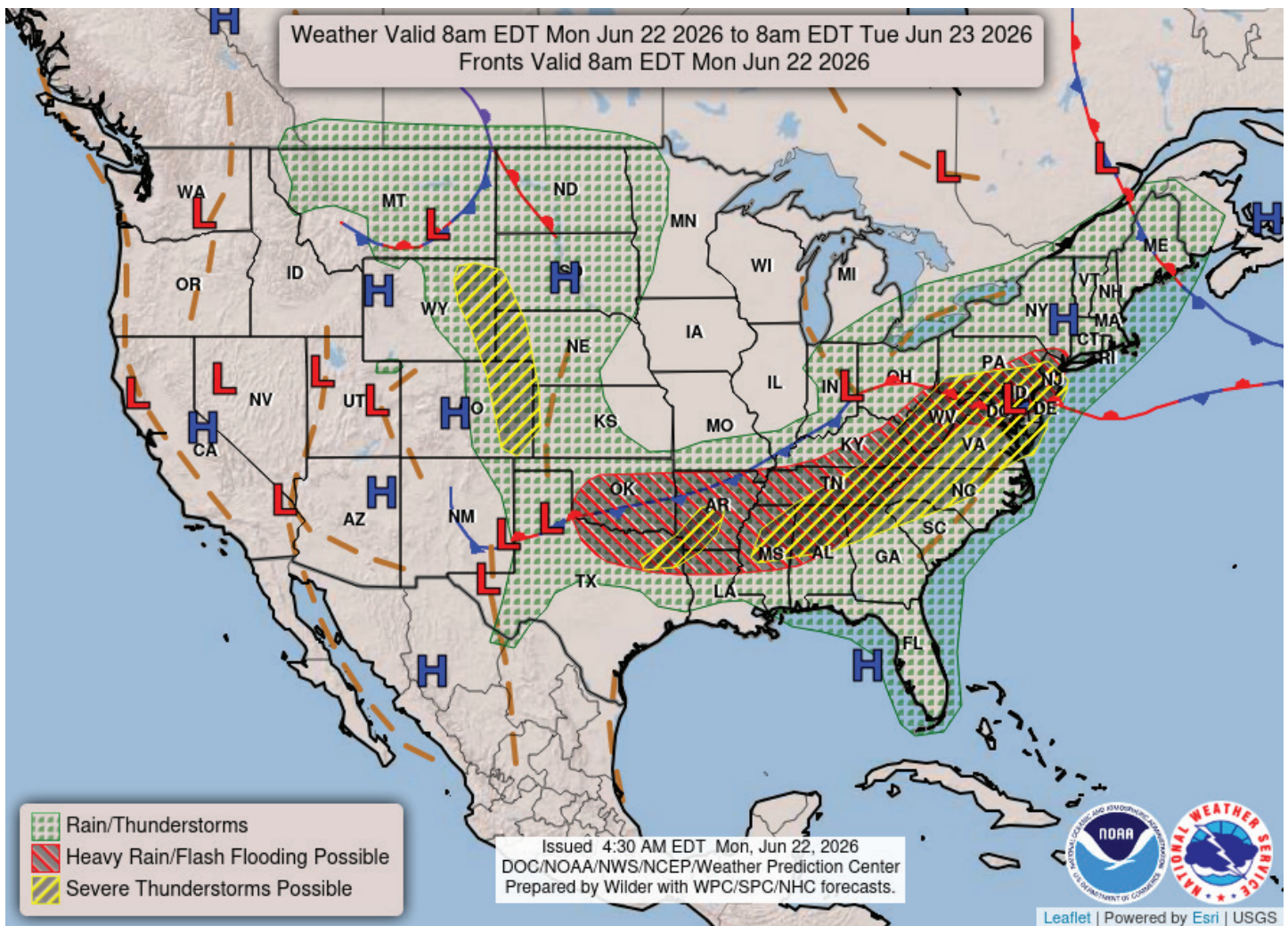
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72 °F at 7:01 PM
Low Temp: 58 °F at 11:27 PM
Wind: 14 mph at 3:59 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1922
Record Low: 39 in 1905
Average High: 82
Average Low: 57
Average Precip in June.: 2.69
Precip to date in June.: 1.37
Average Precip to date: 9.94
Precip Year to Date: 8.13
Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44 am



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Today in Weather History

June 22nd, 1916: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast from 4 miles east of Willow Lakes to east of Vienna, in Clark County. A farmhouse was picked up and thrown into a granary. A boy was smothered to death by grains as a barn collapsed on him one mile south of Vienna.

June 22nd, 1919: The second deadliest tornado in Minnesota's history occurred on this day, as an estimated F5 killed 59 in Fergus Falls. The storm damaged 400 buildings. The tornado sent a blank check 60 miles away. Four hundred buildings were destroyed. Of the 59 victims, 35 were guests of the Grand Hotel.

June 22nd, 1996: From the morning through the late afternoon hours, several supercell thunderstorms moved southeast along a strong, warm front from eastern Corson County to southwest Deuel County. These storms produced tornados, large hail, heavy rains, and damaging winds. Hail up to the size of baseballs and winds gusting to 70 mph damaged and destroyed thousands of acres of crops and broke windows in homes, buildings, and vehicles. Many roofs were damaged, and trees were downed near Mobridge, Redfield, and Toronto. The most extensive crop, building, and tree damage occurred around Redfield, Vienna, Naples, Hazel, Bryant, Henry, Lake Norden, Castlewood, Estelline, and Toronto, all south of Highway 212. The hail swaths of destruction were as much as 10 miles wide. Some farmers said you could not tell what was planted because the crops were destroyed. Hail piles of one to two feet were reported in some areas. Also, most of the area from Redfield to Toronto received one to three inches of rain, which caused flooding problems.

1947 — Twelve inches of rain fell in forty-two minutes at Holt, MO, establishing a world rainfall record. That record was tied on January 24-25, 1956, at the Kilauea Sugar Plantation in Hawaii, as their state record was established with 38 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1972 — Hurricane Agnes deluged Pennsylvania and New York State with torrential rains resulting in the most costly flood in U.S. history. In the Middle Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania, 24 hour rainfall amounts were generally 8 to 12 inches, with up to 19 inches in extreme southwestern Schuylkill County. At Wilkes-Barre, PA, the dike was breached destroying much of the town. Flooding resulted in 117 deaths and 3.1 billion dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1981 — A young woman from Lubbock, TX, was struck by lightning. The bolt of lightning struck just above her right shoulder near her neck, and passed right to left through her body, tearing her warm-ups, causing her tennis shoes to explode, and lifting her two feet into the air. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms in southern Texas produced wind gusts to 116 mph near Quemado. Thunderstorms in New York State produced 5.01 inches of rain in 24 hours at Buffalo, an all-time record for that location, and produced an inch of rain at Bath, PA. The temperature at Fairbanks AK soared to 92 degrees, establishing a record for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Sixty-five cities in twenty-four states reported record high temperatures for the date. Tucson AZ reported an all-time record high of 114 degrees, surpassing the previous record of 112 degrees established a day earlier. Highs of 98 degrees at Pittsburgh, PA, and 100 degrees at Baltimore, MD, tied records for the month of June. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Record cold temperatures were reported in the High Plains Region. Rapid City, SD, reported a record low of 39 degrees, in sharp contrast to their record high of 102 degrees two days earlier, on the 20th. (The National Weather Summary)



The Reasons We Serve

As you work today, remember you are serving the Lord.

Colossians 3:23-24: 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

In His Word, God commands us to serve one another (Galatians 5:13). However, in life there will inevitably be people and situations that make this calling a challenge.

Thankfully, a biblically based understanding of service can help us obey the Lord's instruction no matter who the recipient is or how problematic things can get. The reason? God is actually the One whom we serve.

When we have this motivation underlying everything we do, it will impact the quality of our work and keep us from becoming discouraged. Then, whatever our task—whether we drive a truck, lead a company, or teach children—if our goal is to glorify God, we will do our best in His strength. And we can trust Him to use us for His purposes, even if our labor might appear fruitless to us or to others.

Whomever the Lord calls us to serve and whatever He tells us to do, we can obey with joyful hearts when it's done for Him. If this is our motivation, we won't need worldly approval or evidence of impact. The only thing we need to know is that our heavenly Father is pleased and promises to reward those who serve wholeheartedly (Ephesians 6:7-8).

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.21.26

2 6 7 13 37 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.19.26

13 16 21 26 50 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$467,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 15 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.20.26

8 14 31 41 52 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$30,280,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 30 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.20.26

2 9 15 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$145,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 45 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.20.26

11 12 25 42 57 20

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 14 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.20.26

16 20 44 48 50 15

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$312,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 14 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Starmer announces he'll resign as UK prime minister as Burnham confirms bid to succeed him

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Monday he is stepping down as leader of the governing Labour Party and will leave office within weeks, forced out by his own party scarcely two years after being elected in a landslide.

Starmer says he will remain caretaker prime minister until the party chooses a new Labour leader — with expectations growing that it will be former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, following his victory in a special parliamentary election last week.

Burnham confirmed in a social media post that "I will put myself forward as part of this process." Former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who was considered his main rival for the top job, said he will back Burnham.

That makes it more likely that Burnham will be selected without a leadership contest. He returns to Parliament after nearly a decade as Manchester mayor and will be sworn in as a lawmaker later on Monday. Only members of Parliament can stand for the party leadership.

Starmer is the sixth prime minister in a decade to stand outside 10 Downing Street and announce a premature departure. His statement comes the day before Britain marks the 10th anniversary of its vote to leave the European Union, a decision that still roils the country's economy and politics.

After weeks of insisting he would fight to keep his job, Starmer conceded to growing pressure to hand over to a new leader who can try and revive the government's flagging fortunes. He led Labour to a landslide election victory in July 2024, but since then his popularity and that of the party have plummeted.

A new leader in place within weeks

Starmer made the announcement outside his official 10 Downing St. residence, the spot where he delivered his first speech as prime minister two years ago.

His voice choked with emotion near the end of the brief statement, which was watched by a group of staff, Cabinet ministers and scores of journalists.

"The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election," Starmer said. "I have heard the answer of my parliamentary party to that question, and I accept that answer with good grace."

He said he spoke to King Charles III, Britain's constitutional monarch, to inform him of the decision.

Starmer spent the weekend pondering his future following Burnham's special election victory.

It's unclear whether Burnham, who is due to be sworn in as a member of Parliament on Monday, will now face a coronation or a challenge. Starmer said nominations for a leadership contest will open on July 9, and the new leader will be in place by the time Parliament returns from its summer break on Sept. 1.

If Burnham is the only candidate, the change could come by mid-July.

Starmer struggled to fulfill election pledges

Starmer has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living. He has 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.

Labour is losing liberal voters to the growing Green Party and facing a rising Reform UK, the Nigel Farage-led anti-immigration party that consistently leads in nationwide opinion polls.

U.S. President Donald Trump weighed in even before an announcement, linking Starmer's potential exit to two of his recurring bugbears: immigration and renewable energy.

"Keir Starmer will resign as Prime Minister of The United Kingdom. He failed badly on two very important subjects- IMMIGRATION AND ENERGY (OPEN NORTH SEA OIL!). I wish him well! President DJT," Trump posted on his social media platform.

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Starmer's initially warm relationship with the president has soured in recent months over issues including the Iran war, which the U.K. didn't join.

He won praise on the world stage

In contrast to missteps on the domestic front, Starmer has won praise for his international role, notably in rallying European support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion, and working to mitigate the economic and political turmoil unleashed by the Iran conflict.

A NATO summit in Turkey next month may be his last foray on the world stage as Britain's leader.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen praised Starmer's legacy.

"It can take many leaders years to grow into the statesman you became in just two years," she said on X. "European and Ukrainian security is stronger because of you. Thank you, dear Keir."

While many Labour lawmakers have rallied behind Burnham, some have said that Starmer had been treated unfairly. London legislator Neil Coyle railed on X against "the prospect of an utter stitch-up & the media circus being rewarded.

"When the next leader cannot change Trump, Iran, Ukraine, Putin, Musk, broadcast editorial & algorithm bias overnight they'll bay for his blood too. Better keep that guillotine sharp," he wrote.

2 students in custody after shooting at high school in Philippines kills 3

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Two students armed with hand guns opened fire in a high school in the central Philippines on Monday, killing three fellow students and wounding another seven, police said.

The suspects, aged 14 and 15, were arrested. The suspects and the victims were students of the San Jose National High School in Tacloban city, where the mid-morning shooting happened, regional police chief Brig. Gen. Jason Capoy said.

An investigation was underway to determine the cause of the shooting in the government-run school, which has more than 1,500 students. Capoy said that the suspects, who were close friends, said in initial questioning that they were bullied in school. He did not elaborate.

They have no criminal records. One of the suspects got the 9 mm pistol he used in the attack from an aunt, a police officer, who was now being investigated. The other suspect used a cal. 38 revolver. They managed to bring the guns onto the campus because there was only one guard on duty at multiple entrances and exits, Capoy said.

"The suspects barged into two rooms because after the shooting in the first, the children scampered and the suspects apparently ran after some victims into another room," Capoy told reporters.

Most of the dead and wounded were female students, he said. Police recovered at least 40 shell casings at the scene of the attack.

In a video posted online, students hiding under desks in a shut classroom can be heard screaming and weeping as gunshots are heard outside. Some called their mothers. Other videos show visibly terrified students streaming out of the school campus, some holding and embracing each other.

One of the suspects was arrested in the school after the attack but the second fled and hid in a house nearby. He was found by police who were alerted by residents, police said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered a thorough investigation of the shooting and asked law enforcers to boost security in all schools, workplaces and public areas, Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said.

"The president was saddened by this incident. Anybody, especially the parents of the victims, will feel sad and terrified," Castro said.

The suspects were to be turned over to government welfare officers after the investigation since they are minors. The 14-year-old would be exempt from criminal prosecution under a 2006 Philippine law, which sets the minimum age of 15 for a minor to be criminally liable and only if authorities determine that a suspect was clearly aware of the crime that was committed and its repercussions.

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The national police have urged the public to remain calm and cooperate with authorities by providing any information that may aid the ongoing investigation.

Crimes involving the use of firearms are prevalent in the Philippines, partly due to the proliferation of unlicensed firearms, but school shootings are relatively rare.

In 2022, a man armed with pistols opened fire at an upscale university in the Manila metropolitan area ahead of a graduation ceremony, killing a former Philippine town mayor with whom the suspect had a long-running feud, and two others in the brazen attack. The gunman was arrested.

France sizzles in a week of punishing heat as red alerts spread

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France gritted its teeth Monday for a week of record-busting temperatures, sweltering under a grueling heat wave that combines daytime highs above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) and sleep-robbing sweaty nights.

The national weather service, Météo France, said that most of the country — the largest in the European Union and second most populated — is entering what is described as a “plateau” of unrelenting heat-wave conditions that isn’t forecast to start easing before Friday at the earliest.

Multiple towns in western and central France, including the major port of Saint-Nazaire on the Atlantic seaboard, with an overnight low of 23.2 C (73.8 F), experienced their hottest night ever Sunday to Monday, Météo France said.

Paris baked through its hottest night for a month of June, not getting below 24.2 C (75.5 F) — a half-degree hotter than the previous record from 2017. The weather service warned of even hotter nights.

“This will continue through the end of the week, with heat levels never before recorded across more than three-quarters of the country on Wednesday and Thursday.”

In a country without widespread air-conditioning, people, businesses and services tried to adapt as best they could. Hundreds of schools were closed on Monday and many hundreds more were canceling some classes, the education minister said.

Broadcasts on the Paris transport network urged commuters to hydrate. Medical specialists took to the airwaves to warn of the potentially deadly cocktail of drinking alcohol in extreme heat. Authorities cracked down on alcohol consumption in public. Multiple drownings were reported as people sought relief in rivers, despite warnings about currents and other dangers.

Human-caused climate change is tied to increasing extreme weather, and U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years should shatter more heat records.

A growing swath of France, spreading on Monday to more than half of its regions, was under a “red alert” for heat, with larger areas forecast to suffer highs busting past 40 C and nights not dropping below 20 C.

In the United Kingdom, the weather office also issued an “extreme heat” warning for much of southern England and parts of Wales from Monday until Thursday. It said temperatures could reach 38 C (100 F). The current record for a June day is 35.6 C (96 F), reached in 1976.

Over the last four years, more than 200,000 people across Europe died from heat-related causes, and most of the fatalities were preventable, the World Health Organization’s Europe office said this month. More above-average temperatures are expected this summer, which can cause heat exhaustion and life-threatening heat stroke.

US and Iran wrap second day of talks after rough start

By AAMER MADHANI, JAMEY KEATEN and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

OBBERGEN, Switzerland (AP) — Senior negotiators from the U.S. and Iran on Monday wrapped up a lengthy round of initial talks aimed at solidifying a permanent end to the war between the countries.

The mediation effort in Switzerland started Sunday and had rocky moments. But it also led to some agreements between the two sides.

Mediators Qatar and Pakistan hailed what they called “encouraging progress” made during the talks as

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Iran and the United States agreed to create a "de-confliction cell" to address the fighting in Lebanon. A senior U.S. diplomat claimed progress on multiple fronts, including the establishment of "mechanisms" to ensure the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for global energy shipments, remains open and that a ceasefire in southern Lebanon holds.

Yet the talks between the U.S. and Iran, who were accompanied by Qatari and Pakistani officials, was jolted by blistering statements from U.S. President Donald Trump, who from thousands of miles away from the Swiss negotiating venue at a mountainside resort near Lake Lucerne was firing off comments that offended the Iranians.

Iranian state media said talks had paused after the "publication of an insulting message by the U.S. President." The Iranian delegation then met with Qatari mediators and left the negotiating site, state media said. The senior U.S. diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity to brief journalists on the ongoing talks, said late Sunday that the Iranians remained on site and the negotiations were on.

Iranian state television reported Monday that the Iranian delegation had left the summit site to head to the airport in Zurich to fly back to Tehran.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had vowed to "never back down from the right to enrich uranium," according to state media, and Trump later told Fox News in a phone interview that Pezeshkian should watch what he says and also threatened to take over Iran, according to one of the news channel's correspondents.

Trump also continued to issue warnings against Iran on social media, posting as negotiators worked: "Iran must immediately stop their highly paid PROXIES in Lebanon from causing trouble. If they don't, we'll hit Iran very hard again, just like we did last week, only harder!!!"

The chief negotiators for the U.S. include JD Vance, the vice president; special envoy Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of the president. Iran is represented by Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Iran's parliamentary speaker, and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

It's unclear when Vance will depart Switzerland, although he told Fox News in an interview Saturday that he anticipates staying only a "day or two." Kushner and Witkoff are handling much of the technical details on behalf of the U.S. delegation.

In a joint statement, Pakistan and Qatar said the high-level talks had ended and that technical negotiations would continue in Switzerland for the rest of the week. The statement said the sides had agreed to establish a "communication line" to ensure safe passage of ships in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as a mechanism to bring about an end to the fighting between Israel and the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The U.S. offered no immediate comment, while Iran praised the mediators' work.

Araghchi wrote on X that Pakistani and Qatari mediators delivered "major progress to end the Lebanon War." He added that the first "real test" of negotiations would be whether the mechanism succeeded in halting the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

The senior U.S. diplomat said among the issues discussed was Iran's messaging as it related to the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran's military said it closed Saturday in response to continued fighting in Lebanon. U.S. Central Command has disputed that Iran closed the strait again.

The interim deal to end the fighting in Iran, signed last week by the leaders of the U.S. and Iran, outlines a 60-day period for negotiators to settle the future of Tehran's nuclear program amid concerns that it wants to use it for military purposes, a claim Iran denies. The fate of frozen Iranian assets, among other thorny issues, are also on the agenda.

Though the talks will encompass a vast array of complex matters, Iran first wants to focus on addressing the fighting in Lebanon.

Saturday's renewed ceasefire in Lebanon appeared to be holding, and Israel's military said it would lift movement restrictions for residents near the Israel-Lebanon border on Monday morning. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah is a signatory to the U.S.-Iran deal.

There was cautious calm Monday in Lebanon, with no Israeli strikes reported overnight after a day of quiet Sunday. Hezbollah likewise has not announced any attacks on Israeli forces since Saturday.

The lull in fighting in Lebanon is the longest since the outbreak of the latest Israel-Hezbollah war on March 2.

Staggering amounts of fentanyl hit streets as the DEA watched and took no action, records show

By JIM MUSTIAN and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Even as it battled the deadliest drug epidemic in American history, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration permitted hundreds of thousands of fentanyl pills to hit the streets of New Mexico between 2023 and 2025, according to three current and former DEA agents and government records reviewed by The Associated Press.

DEA agents repeatedly monitored shipments of fentanyl pills — but did not seize them — as federal prosecutors sought to bring bigger criminal cases against traffickers of a synthetic opioid that the White House last year designated a “weapon of mass destruction.”

Agents and experts, however, said the tactic amounted to a gamble with public safety that potentially imperiled communities in and around Albuquerque and may have violated U.S. Justice Department rules intended to safeguard the public.

“We poisoned our community to make cases,” DEA Special Agent David Howell told AP in a series of interviews in New Mexico. “Through our own willful blindness, we get to say, ‘We don’t really know what happened to the drugs.’ But we 100% got people killed.”

The DEA has long contended it would not be plausible to seize every shipment of every drug. But the strategy of allowing staggering amounts of counterfeit painkillers to hit the streets shocked several veteran agents who spoke with AP.

Ridding the streets of illicit fentanyl, manufactured mostly in Mexican labs, became DEA’s top priority over the past decade as overdose deaths surged. At the same time, its lethality — a few milligrams can kill the average adult — upended time-tested tactics that had been used to combat drugs like cocaine and heroin. Those methods have included allowing drug transactions to be completed so agents might follow the narcotics through the supply chain. Fentanyl, however, is so dangerous that the U.S. Justice Department developed guidelines for agents in such circumstances, encouraging them to seize the opioid whenever “practicable.”

Albuquerque, which has a neighborhood so besieged by drugs it’s known as “War Zone,” and other regions in New Mexico remain at the epicenter of the fentanyl epidemic. While overdose deaths nationwide fell 14% last year, government data show New Mexico tallied a 21% spike.

Alex Uballez, who served as U.S. attorney in New Mexico from 2022 through last year, said authorities at times allowed drug shipments to go unseized as part of a broader effort to gather intelligence and build cases against major drug traffickers. He said the approach reflected his office’s limited resources and his belief that prosecuting larger organizations can have a bigger impact than interdicting every suspected drug transaction.

Last year, DEA recorded the largest fentanyl bust in its history in Albuquerque.

“The bigger fish are worth catching,” Uballez said, “and that will save more lives.”

The DEA said in a statement that “the investigative decisions at issue were lawful, reasonable under the circumstances and consistent with Department guidance.”

“Public descriptions suggesting that DEA knowingly permitted fentanyl to reach communities are false and fundamentally mischaracterize the facts,” DEA spokesperson Amanda Wozniak wrote in an email. She said the investigations involved court-authorized wiretaps “in which agents and prosecutors conducted real-time surveillance, intelligence gathering, and operational analysis targeting larger drug trafficking organizations.”

Precise intelligence on drug deliveries

In some cases, the DEA had such detailed intelligence about drug deliveries that agents were able to tally precise pill counts, according to reports reviewed by AP.

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Agents, for example, deciphered coded chatter over cellphones and closely surveilled a transaction at a mobile home park in Albuquerque in June 2023, according to a 66-page report reviewed by AP. Agents wrote in the report that traffickers delivered 74,000 pills as part of that deal, a figure federal prosecutors later confirmed in a court filing.

Days earlier, another DEA report showed, investigators watched the same distribution ring deliver a spare tire hiding another suspected fentanyl shipment that similarly went unseized.

"We did nothing, but sit back and watch," said Howell, who filed an official whistleblower complaint in 2023 to bring attention to what he thought was a tactic that risked public safety.

Months passed before federal authorities busted the traffickers, and Howell, who participated in the surveillance, said authorities today cannot account for the unseized shipments.

"It's outrageous to put that many lives at risk in hopes of making a big case," said Tristan Leavitt, president of Empower Oversight, a whistleblower advocacy group that has asked the Senate Judiciary Committee and Justice Department's Office of Inspector General to investigate Howell's claims.

A former DEA supervisor, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, said he and his Albuquerque colleagues allowed "millions" of pills to go unseized during a multi-state investigation last year.

Howell reported in his whistleblower disclosures that agents on that case permitted the delivery of at least 1.8 million fentanyl pills.

That investigation, the former supervisor and Howell told AP, culminated in the largest fentanyl bust in DEA history, a takedown announced in May 2025 by then-Attorney General Pam Bondi that resulted in the seizure of more than 3 million pills.

"The amount we ultimately seized was hitting the streets every month while that case was going on," the former supervisor said, adding that the DEA could have dismantled the organization six months earlier.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Albuquerque did not answer questions about the unseized fentanyl shipments but, in a statement to AP, said the "conduct" Howell brought to light happened during the prior administration.

"The current leadership of this office is focused on aggressively investigating and prosecuting fentanyl trafficking and disrupting the criminal organizations responsible for distributing these drugs," Tessa DuBerry, a spokesperson for the office, wrote in an email.

Ubaldez, the former U.S. attorney, said estimated pill counts "based on intercepted phone calls are not reliable."

"I don't think I'd contest that drugs are 'walked,'" he said, referring to the law enforcement tactic of allowing contraband to go unseized to further an investigation. "How much and how frequently — and with what certainty — is incredibly difficult to answer in retrospect."

To seize or not to seize

As fentanyl overdoses became an epidemic over the last decade, the U.S. Justice Department developed an internal playbook for combatting the deadliest drug ever to cross the Mexican border. The game plan coincided with a publicity campaign that warned Americans that "One Pill Can Kill," a DEA effort to highlight fentanyl's unique dangers.

Adopted in 2017, the department's two-page "Fentanyl Protocols" called on agents to "seize or otherwise prevent the distribution" of fentanyl "as soon as practicable." The rules, which have not previously been made public, said that "protecting public safety is paramount," irrespective of whether seizures compromise investigations.

The Justice Department rewrote the rules in 2024 to afford law enforcement more discretion in such cases. The updated protocols say investigators "may exercise discretion in determining whether to take action to prevent the trafficking of fentanyl," balancing public safety risks against "the benefits to be achieved through preserving the investigation."

The DEA rarely discusses the tactic of allowing drugs to go unseized. Its agent manual describes taking drugs off the street as "the usual course of action" but adds "there may be instances where the investigative objectives can be better achieved by not doing so."

The agency has long used "controlled deliveries" in which constant surveillance of the drugs — and often

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replacing them with fake narcotics — is followed by a takedown to recover them, according to current and former agents.

In interviews, several current and former agents likened the decision to permit fentanyl to hit the streets to the infamous “Operation Fast and Furious,” a 2011 gun-walking scandal in which straw buyers smuggled some 2,000 assault weapons into Mexico with the intent of tracing the firearms to cartel leaders.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was savaged with bipartisan criticism after two of those guns surfaced at the scene of the fatal shooting of a Border Patrol agent, and the Justice Department explicitly forbid agents from allowing firearms to be trafficked.

Blowing the whistle

Howell became so unnerved by his agency’s failure to seize fentanyl that he began flagging overdose deaths that might have been caused by the very pills DEA permitted to flow to dealers. One of those cases included a 15-month-old toddler who died after ingesting burned fentanyl residue last year in Española, a New Mexico town ravaged by grinding poverty and addiction.

Howell, who joined DEA 19 years ago after a decade in the Navy, took his allegations to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel. The agency, tasked with protecting whistleblowers, initially found a “substantial likelihood of wrongdoing” and asked the Justice Department to investigate.

In early 2024, Howell told the Justice Department’s Office of Professional Responsibility that DEA agents had observed — yet not seized — separate deliveries of 150,000 and 50,000 fentanyl pills.

DEA and federal prosecutors, he added, “are placing themselves in a precarious position where they will not be able to prove that the fentanyl they could have stopped did not result in the death of a person.”

The Justice Department’s Office of Professional Responsibility found in 2024 that the DEA and U.S. attorney’s office had made reasonable decisions in deciding to allow drugs to go unseized and that their inaction posed no “specific danger to public health.”

The Office of Special Counsel, which critics say rarely pushes back on agency findings, deemed the Justice Department’s report reasonable.

Howell, meanwhile, paid a price after coming forward. The DEA relegated him to desk duty for more than a year and docked his performance evaluations, according to Howell and DEA records. Internal records also show prosecutors barred him from testifying in federal court, citing his “pattern of refusing to heed” admonitions to allow drugs to go unseized during long-term investigations.

Pointing to DEA’s own “One Pill Can Kill” campaign, current and former agents said they could not understand the watchdog’s finding that the tactics had not put the public in danger. They noted the drug is so dangerous it has to be handled in a specialized laboratory.

Judge in Charlie Kirk killing case to decide if prosecutors could be punished for comments in media

By MATTHEW BROWN and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

The Utah judge in the murder case over Charlie Kirk’s killing says he will rule Monday whether prosecutors could face sanctions for comments to the media about a bullet fragment recovered from the conservative activist’s body.

Lawyers for defendant Tyler Robinson have asked Judge Tony Graf to block the death penalty in the case, claiming the prosecutors’ comments could sway potential jurors regarding his guilt.

But criminal law expert Paul Cassell said it would be extraordinary for Graf to grant the defense request. Their concerns could be addressed in other ways, such as more closely questioning jurors to ensure they aren’t biased, the University of Utah law professor said.

“A standard defense attorney maneuver is to avoid talking about the guilt or innocence of your client. The theory is that as long as you’re talking about anything other than whether the defendant is guilty, you’re winning as a defense attorney,” Cassell said. “This seems to be an extreme example of that.”

Representatives of the Utah County Attorney’s Office said they were compelled to speak publicly about the case following speculation in some media outlets.

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The speculation began after the defense team publicly disclosed that initial tests were inconclusive to determine whether the bullet was fired from the suspected murder weapon.

Conjecture over the evidence in Kirk's killing has fueled unsubstantiated conspiracy theories that there might have been a second shooter, or that his death was staged. The case has attracted enormous media attention and concerns from both sides about misinformation tainting the potential jury pool.

Robinson has not yet entered a plea. Prosecutors have said they intend to seek the death penalty if he is convicted.

The 23-year-old from southwestern Utah is charged with aggravated murder in the Sept. 10 killing of Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump who was shot in the neck while addressing a crowd of thousands at Utah Valley University.

Judge Graf held a hearing last week over whether prosecutors should be held in contempt for their comments about the bullet.

Robinson's attorneys accused prosecutors including Deputy Utah County Attorney Christopher Ballard of trying to influence potential jurors by going on a "media tour" to talk about ballistics evidence in the case.

Ballard argued at the June 12 hearing that he didn't speak to the media about case specifics, and he only remarked generally about how ballistics testing can be inconclusive.

The defense team also pointed to another Utah criminal case in which prosecutors were accused of contempt and suggested that one potential remedy would be to bar the state from seeking the death penalty.

While the judge in that earlier case disagreed that an order barring the death penalty was merited, Robinson's attorneys noted that "the court did not conclude that such a remedy was beyond its authority where the facts support it."

A key hearing in Robinson's case is scheduled for July 6-10, when prosecutors must show they have enough evidence to warrant a trial.

Trump-endorsed de la Espriella holds slim lead in Colombia's election as his rival challenges vote

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — A polarized Colombia gave conservative political outsider Abelardo de la Espriella a razor-thin lead in a runoff election that will be challenged in the coming days by the ruling party's progressive candidate.

De la Espriella, a business owner and lawyer who earned U.S. President Donald Trump's endorsement despite never having run for office, led progressive lawmaker Iván Cepeda taking 49.7% of the votes, with 99.9% of results released by electoral authorities. Cepeda, Petro's ally, earned 48.7% support. Election officials have not formally announced a winner.

A victory by de la Espriella is expected to usher in policies that will reverse the agenda of outgoing President Gustavo Petro, including a controversial plan to hold parallel peace negotiations with illegal armed groups. Petro's protégé, lawmaker Ivan Cepeda, had pledged to push forward that strategy and other social reforms if he won Sunday's vote.

The election was colored by people's fears of a renewed internal conflict.

"I will govern for all Colombians," de la Espriella, nicknamed "The Tiger," told thousands of supporters as he stood behind bulletproof glass in the northern city of Barranquilla on Sunday night. But his conciliatory tone changed as he spoke.

"Pack your bags and prepare to exercise the opposition," he added. "Make no mistake, Mr. Cepeda. You already know how fiercely the tiger roars."

Speaking from Bogota after the vote count was tallied, Cepeda told supporters that his campaign considers the count "unofficial and non-binding" and that his team will challenge results from more than 30,000 voting stations. No recount has flipped the results of a presidential election in Colombian history.

"We will not allow ... the rollback of the social gains we have achieved," Cepeda said. "We will not allow democracy to be violated."

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Petro also vowed to challenge the outcome. Sunday's winner will begin a four-year term Aug. 7.

The two candidates pitched voters widely different strategies to prevent the South American country from experiencing the nonstop violence, such as car bombs, kidnappings, disappearances and forced displacements, that Colombians lived with in previous decades.

De la Esriella, 47, promised a heavy-handed approach to crime-fighting, including drug trafficking. He also said he plans to end Petro's attempts to establish dialogues with multiple armed groups — an effort that has largely failed — and build mega-prisons, emulating Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's aggressive policies. Those tactics have lowered homicide rates in the Central American country but have fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

De la Esriella holds dual Colombian and U.S. citizenship. He's a Trump supporter and a member of the Republican Party.

"He Won, BIG!" Trump said on his social media platform.

'It's always the same violence'

Yolanda Hernández, who recycles trash for a living, voted for Petro in 2022, but cast her ballot for de la Esriella this time. While she acknowledged that Petro was unable to deliver on promises meant to help the poor because of congressional gridlock, she said Colombia cannot afford another four years under his vision for the country.

"We want change in Colombia because it's always the same violence, always the same thing," Hernández, 49, said. "(Petro) said he was going to lower the cost of services, that he was going to lower the price of food, and everything is more expensive."

Will Freeman, a fellow for Latin American Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, said Sunday's result shows the country "has not shifted overwhelmingly or decisively" against Petro's project or for de la Esriella's outsider "iron fist showmanship." Freeman added that the result also underscored Colombia's regional divisions.

"It's regional not just ideological polarization; or rather, the two overlapping," he said. "Ironically, de la Esriella's iron-fist message performed best in the core of the country, not the periphery, which bears the brunt of Colombia's violence."

Colombia's illegal groups have more than 27,000 members.

Last year, authorities recorded 14,780 homicides, the most since at least 2015, driven by clashes among illegal armed groups. Among those killed was conservative presidential hopeful Miguel Uribe.

Explosion as Qatar restarts gas export terminal hurts 54 and leaves 18 missing

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An explosion tore through Qatar's key natural gas export terminal Sunday night as workers tried to resume operations there after Iran bombed it during the war, causing a fire that hurt at least 54 people as another 18 were still missing hours later.

The blast at the Ras Laffan industrial area could cause further chaos in global energy markets, particularly as Qatar remains one of the world's top natural gas producers. Qatar shut down its production after Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz meant it couldn't get shipments out to its clients.

With Iran loosening its grip on the strait as negotiations continue over a permanent end to the war, Qatar began work to try to restart its export terminal. On Sunday night, that work sparked an explosion and fire at the Barzan gas supply facility, the state-run firm QatarEnergy said.

The scale of the damage remains unknown after the blast, with officials initially saying only a few people had been hurt. But hours later, Qatar's Interior Ministry offered the far-greater casualty figures.

The Barzan plant had a capacity of almost 1.4 billion standard cubic feet of sales gas per day, which Qatar used primarily for local electricity generation and to power its crucial water desalination plants in the desert reaches of the Arabian Peninsula.

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Qatar owns nearly all of the plant, with a small share also held by ExxonMobil. The oil company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In March, an Iranian missile hit Ras Laffan, sparking a fire that caused "extensive" damage before it was extinguished, authorities said. Qatar had already halted production there because of Iranian attacks.

Qatar shares its massive offshore natural gas field in the Persian Gulf with Iran. That natural gas production has made Qatar wealthy. It has used that money to raise its profile worldwide through hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, creating the Al Jazeera news network and funding its work as an international mediator, including the talks in Switzerland between Iran and the United States.

Trump-backed de la Espriella holds razor-thin lead in Colombia's election as rival challenges vote

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Political outsider Abelardo de la Espriella held a razor-thin lead in Colombia's presidential election with nearly all the votes counted Sunday, in a runoff vote marked by people's fears of a renewed internal conflict.

A victory by de la Espriella would effectively be an indictment of the policies of outgoing President Gustavo Petro, whose protégé had promised to continue his agenda if he defeated his rival.

De la Espriella, a business owner and lawyer who earned U.S. President Donald Trump's endorsement despite never having run for office, led progressive lawmaker Iván Cepeda taking 49.7% of the votes, with 99.9% of the results released by electoral authorities. Cepeda, Petro's ally, earned 48.7% support. Election officials have not formally announced a winner.

"I appear before you tonight to announce the most important news of my life: the Colombian people have entrusted me with the supreme honor of serving them as their next president of the Republic of Colombia," de la Espriella told thousands of supporters as he stood behind bulletproof glass in the northern city of Barranquilla. "I will govern for all Colombians ... there will be no retaliation, no persecution, because in a democracy there are no irreconcilable enemies."

Cepeda told supporters that his campaign considers the count "unofficial and non-binding" and that his team will challenge results from more than 30,000 voting stations. No recount has flipped the results of a presidential election in Colombian history.

"We will not allow ... the rollback of the social gains we have achieved," Cepeda said. "We will not allow democracy to be violated."

Petro also vowed to challenge the outcome.

Both candidates pitched voters widely different strategies to prevent the South American country from experiencing the nonstop merciless violence, such as car bombs, kidnappings, disappearances and forced displacements, that Colombians lived with in previous decades.

Sunday's winner will begin a four-year term Aug. 7.

De la Espriella promises tough-on-crime approach

De la Espriella, 47, promised a heavy-handed approach to crime-fighting, including drug trafficking. He also said he plans to end Petro's attempts to establish parallel peace negotiations with multiple armed groups — an effort that has largely failed — and build mega-prisons, emulating Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's aggressive policies. Those tactics have lowered homicide rates in the Central American country but have fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

De la Espriella, nicknamed "The Tiger," holds dual Colombian and U.S. citizenship. He's a Trump supporter and a member of the Republican Party.

"We have had an armed conflict and a drug trafficking problem for too long, and this has greatly polarized the country," retired economist Víctor Duque, 72, said while wearing a national soccer team jersey at a voting center in the capital, Bogota. "I believe it is one of the most important elections that has taken place in Colombia this century."

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Presidents Javier Milei of Argentina and Daniel Noboa of Ecuador

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were among the first political leaders to congratulate de la Espriella.

"The Trump Administration looks forward to working closely with your incoming administration to advance regional security cooperation, end illegal immigration to the United States, and strengthen our economic ties," Rubio said on X. "Colombia's best days are ahead."

"He Won, BIG!" Trump later said on his social media platform.

Voters seek change

In the first round, Cepeda earned 41% of the vote, while de la Espriella garnered 44%, according to official results. Petro, without evidence, sowed doubts in the results after Cepeda, who had consistently led polls ahead of the May vote, did not win outright and even finished behind de la Espriella.

Yolanda Hernández, 49, voted early Sunday before she started selling black-ink pens outside a Bogota voting center. Clients, she said, buy the pens because ink cannot be erased from paper ballots, which reduces the possibility of fraud.

Hernández, who recycles trash for a living, voted for Petro in 2022, but cast her ballot for de la Espriella this time. While she acknowledged that Petro was unable to deliver on promises meant to help the poor because of congressional gridlock, she said Colombia cannot afford another four years under his vision for the country.

"We want change in Colombia because it's always the same violence, always the same thing," Hernández said. "(Petro) said he was going to lower the cost of services, that he was going to lower the price of food, and everything is more expensive."

People in the streets of Bogota yelled "Petro out! Petro out!" and honked car horns as results became public.

Fighting between rebel groups plagues the nation

Will Freeman, a fellow for Latin American Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, said Sunday's result shows the country "has not shifted overwhelmingly or decisively" against Petro's project or for de la Espriella's outsider "iron fist showmanship." Freeman added that the result also underscored Colombia's regional divisions.

"It's regional not just ideological polarization; or rather, the two overlapping," he said. "Ironically, de la Espriella's iron fist message performed best in the core of the country, not the periphery, which bears the brunt of Colombia's violence."

The election comes 10 years after Colombia signed a historic peace pact with guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, that had offered hope to break the nation's vicious cycle of fighting between rebel groups and the government.

But violence has since roared back, particularly as most rebel groups abandoned their ideologically driven fight for the financial benefits of drug trafficking. Colombia's illegal groups have more than 27,000 members.

Last year, authorities recorded 14,780 homicides, the most since at least 2015 and driven by clashes among illegal armed groups. Among those killed was conservative presidential hopeful Miguel Uribe. Extortions have also soared, reaching 13,417 cases in 2025, more than double the number tallied in 2015.

US-Iran negotiations end, technical talks will continue after Trump shakes talks with threats

By AAMER MADHANI, SEUNG MIN KIM and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

OBBUERGEN, Switzerland (AP) — High-level negotiations in Switzerland seeking a permanent end to the Iran war concluded early Monday, with lower-level talks planned for the rest of the week as Iran and the United States agreed to create a "de-confliction cell" to address the fighting in Lebanon.

A statement from mediators Pakistan and Qatar said the cell would include the Lebanese government and would "ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon." But it remains unclear whether that will be enough to stop fighting between the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah and Israel, which occupies Lebanon and insists it must maintain a free hand to attack militants who are launching

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attacks into northern Israel.

The U.S. offered no immediate comment, while Iran praised the mediators' work.

The talks marked the start of a 60-day diplomatic process that seeks to reach a permanent deal to end the Iran war. But the fighting in Lebanon remains one of the key sticking points.

Meanwhile, Iran insisted it had again shut the Strait of Hormuz over the weekend, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf crucial to energy shipments, while the U.S. said traffic continued.

Tense start to talks

The negotiations had a tense start Sunday in Switzerland, when Tehran took offense at U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to attack and his warning that Iran's president should watch what he says.

"Iran must immediately stop their highly paid PROXIES in Lebanon from causing trouble," Trump said on social media. "If they don't, we'll hit Iran very hard again, just like we did last week, only harder!!!"

The comments from afar — on social media and to news outlets — complicated efforts by Vice President JD Vance and mediators Pakistan and Qatar to keep Iran engaged in discussions.

"They would do better to be careful about their statements," Iran's lead negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, said on X after Trump's comments. "Our armed forces are prepared to respond to them in a different manner. They may keep talking, it is we who act."

But later, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote on X that "tireless Pakistani and Qatari mediation has delivered major progress to end Lebanon War." He said the first "real test" of negotiations would be whether the deconfliction cell succeeded in halting the fighting in Lebanon.

Vance and U.S. negotiators including Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, met with Qalibaf and Araghchi for what Iranian state media said was about 80 minutes. One released photo showed Vance on a laptop, working with Qatar's prime minister and Kushner over his shoulder, a coffee machine visible in the background.

Pakistan and Qatar after the meeting said lower-level technical talks would continue in Switzerland for the rest of the week. Such talks aim at producing the breakthroughs needed for high-level officials to return and sign agreements.

A senior U.S. diplomat engaged in the talks, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe private discussions, said the talks Sunday included clarifying what Iran meant by recent statements about the Strait of Hormuz. Negotiators also discussed "mechanisms" to ensure the strait remains open and that a ceasefire in southern Lebanon is enforced, along with "robust" discussions on the nuclear issue.

Iran first wants to focus on Israeli strikes in Lebanon

Negotiators are in a 60-day sprint to reach an agreement on the technical details that hold massive implications for the world economy and global security.

"The question before us now is how much more can we accomplish together? Can we turn over a new leaf?" Vance said as the talks began, and asked whether they could "change relations in the Middle East permanently."

The Iranian delegation did not take part in speaking to assembled Western journalists ahead of the talks.

The U.S. wants Iran locked into negotiations over its nuclear program amid concerns it may be used for military purposes, which Iran denies. Vance also wants Tehran to commit to keeping open the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran on Saturday claimed to close. The U.S. has disputed that, saying shipping traffic continued Sunday.

A renewed ceasefire in Lebanon, brokered on Saturday, appeared to be holding, and Israel's military said it would lift movement restrictions for residents near the border with Lebanon on Monday morning — another sign of calm.

But neither Israel nor Hezbollah is a signatory to the U.S.-Iran deal, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep his forces in southern Lebanon until any threat to Israel is eliminated. Hezbollah has refused to halt attacks unless Israel commits to withdrawing.

Sharp words are exchanged over Iran's nuclear program

The agreement signed by Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian immediately allows Tehran to sell its oil freely and paves the way for Iran to tap into billions of dollars in assets that are currently

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frozen. A member of Iran's negotiating team told state television that draft wording was reached about "temporary sanctions waivers for oil and petroleum derivatives."

The agreement also calls for Iran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, believed to be buried under nuclear sites that were targeted in U.S. strikes a year ago.

Pezeshkian, however, declared Sunday that "we will never back down from the right to enrich uranium, and the other side is also forced to accept it," according to Iran's state media.

Trump, in a telephone interview with Fox News, later warned that the Iranian president should watch what he says and threatened to take over Iran, in comments relayed by a Fox correspondent.

Iran had cautiously approached the talks given its previous experience with U.S. negotiations on the nuclear issue, which twice in the past year were interrupted by military strikes.

The deal has stirred controversy

Trump and Vance have come under searing criticism from parts of their own party for the deal, with Republican hard-liners unfavorably likening it to the nuclear agreement signed by the Obama administration that Trump and Republicans have insisted did nothing to terminate Iran's nuclear program.

The new agreement says commercial vessels can pass through the Strait of Hormuz for 60 days without charge, but does not preclude future fees imposed by Iran. Trump made his own threat Saturday to levy U.S. tolls if there is no deal with Iran in 60 days, insisting that the money would be for "services rendered as the Guardian Angel to the countries of the Middle East."

The Trump administration has been working to reassure global markets that the war has been merely a blip on oil prices, as Americans complain about high gasoline prices ahead of peak summer travel. After the deal was announced, oil futures dropped almost 8%.

Wyndham Clark avoids record collapse and holds on to win the US Open

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y. (AP) — Wyndham Clark couldn't remember being in a darker place. He was publicly reviled for a moment of petulance when he smashed a locker at Oakmont after missing the cut in the U.S. Open last year. His game, his reputation, he felt it all was slipping away.

Sunday at Shinnecock Hills wasn't much better. The New York crowd behind Scottie Scheffler in his bid for a career Grand Slam turned on Clark, cheering his misses and wishing for the worst.

That's what made this U.S. Open title so much sweeter.

On the edge of the greatest collapse in U.S. Open history, Clark held his nerve against a charge by Sam Burns and a Shinnecock Hills crowd that never gave him much love until he showed his mettle with his second U.S. Open title in four years.

"The first one was kind of just the breakthrough of knowing I can do it," Clark said after a two-putt par from 50 feet for a 3-over 73 and a one-shot victory. "And then this one was a lot of redemption. Last year was so tough, a terrible year. I left this place in shambles, and it's amazing what a year can do. I'm leaving here this Sunday as a champion, and I'm just so blessed."

Clark, who won the 2023 U.S. Open at Los Angeles Country Club, became the first wire-to-wire winner of the U.S. Open since Martin Kaymer at Pinehurst No. 2 in 2014.

This sure didn't feel like a stroll through the Hamptons.

He had the largest 54-hole lead in the U.S. Open in 15 years. It was down to a single shot in just five holes, and stress followed him the rest of the way.

The clincher for Clark was on the par-5 16th, where on Saturday he made the only eagle of the week. This time it was his worst drive, well left into the gnarly fescue. He gouged that out and narrowly cleared a bunker. His 8-iron barely stayed on the back of the green. He rolled in a 30-foot birdie putt for a two-shot lead with holes to play.

It was a signature moment with muted applause. The gallery rooted against him all day, putting all their

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support behind Scheffler, who made his own share of mistakes and never got closer than three shots of Clark all day.

"Winning major championships is extremely difficult," Scheffler said after a 71 to tie for fourth. "He had some stones down the stretch. ... Being in the arena is not for everybody, and I think it shows a lot about Wyndham, how he handled not only this golf course but I think the crowd today. And he is a well-deserving champion."

Clark had the highest final round of a U.S. Open champion since Graeme McDowell closed with a 74 to win at Pebble Beach. No matter. The 32-year-old American has two U.S. Open titles, and two wins in the last month.

Burns closed with a 67, his second chance in as many years to win the U.S. Open. He bounced back from a three-putt bogey on the 15th with a an 18-foot birdie to stay within one shot. He made a weak pass at a 10-foot birdie putt to tie for the lead on the 17th. What haunts him is a 17-foot birdie chance on the 18th that grazed the right edge of the cup, causing him to drop to his knees.

"I would say last year at Oakmont I felt more I lost the golf tournament. I certainly don't feel that way today," Burn said. "I did everything I could to have a chance to win today."

Clark finished at 4-under 276 and got a surprise at the end when his father, Randall, took an overnight flight from Denver to watch his son win for the first time.

Even the New York crowd had no choice but to salute him.

"New York didn't really like me — I love you guys," Clark said at the closing ceremony, hoisting the silver trophy. "But I get it. Some of it's self-deserved. I did some unfortunate things last year that I really regret, and I've been sorry multiple times and I'm still sorry, so hopefully I can win you guys over eventually."

Clark noticed fans leaving early on Saturday and hoped for a big crowd and big energy for the final round. He got every bit of that, and it was uncomfortable at times. One was ejected when he shouted, "Don't choke, Wyndham." The grandstand behind the seventh green broke into cheers when his shot rolled off the green and into the bunker.

"I get it — they were rooting for Scottie," Clark said. "Grand Slams only happen a few times. He's going to get it. He's the best player in the world. But today it's my day."

It almost wasn't.

But Burns never caught caught him. No one did.

Tom Kim, who like Scheffler celebrated a birthday on Sunday, was on the fringes of seriously contending until he fell back with a bogey on the 17th and shot 70 to finish third.

Clark's hit a superb wedge that spun back to 4 feet for birdie on the 10th to restore the lead to two shots. But then he went long on the 13th with a pitching wedge and couldn't save par. And then came his big moment on the 16th, and one last act of lagging a 50-foot putt to tap-in range.

That's how it was at Los Angeles in 2023, when he needed two putts from 60 feet and lagged it close. Clark simply is at his best against tough tests, and rough arenas. Three years ago, he denied Rory McIlroy. This time it was Scheffler.

"The first one was amazing, and this one seems even better," Clark said. "I think especially after such a sour taste last year in this championship, to have some redemption and win this again is almost surreal."

A month ago, he was two years without a win and No. 75 in the world. Then he shot 60 in the final round to win The CJ Cup, contended the next two weeks and won his second major. It moves him to No. 8 in the world.

The smile he wore holding that U.S. Open trophy would suggest he feels on top of the world.

Oh, brother! Brady Tkachuk gets traded to Florida to join Matthew Tkachuk

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Sports Writer

Matthew Tkachuk and Brady Tkachuk are about to team up in Florida, after the Panthers pulled off

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another summertime blockbuster.

The Panthers and Ottawa finalized a deal Sunday night, with Florida sending four draft picks to the Senators for Brady Tkachuk — the brother of Panthers star Matthew Tkachuk.

The picks were the No. 9 pick in this year's draft, Tampa Bay's first-round pick this year (acquired earlier Sunday in a trade Florida made sending Mackie Samoskevich to Seattle), the Panthers' second-round pick in 2027 and their top 10-protected first-round pick in 2029. And that means Florida adds an elite player to its forward corps without losing any of its top seven scorers from this past season.

"Brady is a dynamic competitor and one of the most physical and relentless forwards in the league," Panthers hockey operations president and general manager Bill Zito said. "A proven leader and exactly the type of player we want in our locker room, he strives to make everyone around him better both on and off the ice. We're thrilled to welcome Brady to South Florida to join our group as we continue our pursuit of championship hockey."

Brady Tkachuk has spent the entirety of his eight-year NHL career in Ottawa, and now he joins his brother, Olympic teammate and podcast co-host in Florida — the place where Matthew Tkachuk has spent the last four seasons, winning two Stanley Cups and getting to the final three times.

The Athletic was first to report the pending trade.

Brady Tkachuk has two seasons left on the seven-year, \$57.56 million contract he signed in October 2021 when he also became Ottawa's captain. As recently as late April, he bristled at conversation about his name being in trade rumors following a first-round playoff exit.

"This was not a decision we took lightly, but ultimately we did what we felt was best for the long-term future of our hockey club," Senators general manager Steve Staios said Sunday. "We now possess cap space and draft capital and will be actively working to improve our roster."

It's a move that makes sense for so many reasons and has seemed almost inevitable.

Matthew Tkachuk and Brady Tkachuk reveled in the chance to play alongside one another for USA Hockey at the 4 Nations Face-Off in 2025 (winning silver) and the Milan Cortina Olympics this year (winning gold, the first for the American men's program on the Olympic stage since the miracle in Lake Placid 46 years ago).

Their parents — their dad is NHL legend Keith Tkachuk — have a home in Florida and are regular attendees at Panthers games, and the USA Hockey ties means Brady Tkachuk already has relationships with many in the Florida organization. Zito had a role within USA Hockey during this past Olympic cycle and Panthers equipment manager Teddy Richards had a role with the 4 Nations and Milan Cortina teams as well.

Brady Tkachuk was Ottawa's captain for the last five seasons, and he was — by far in some cases — their leader in countless categories over his eight years with the Senators. No player had more goals (213), points (463), power-play goals (62), shots (2,202), hits (1,921), winning goals (28), multigoal games (30) and penalty minutes (821) in his tenure with the club, which acquired him with the No. 4 pick in the 2018 draft.

And now, four years after landing Matthew Tkachuk, the Panthers have tapped into the Tkachuk family well of talent again.

It also adds another big name to the list of players that Florida has locked up for several seasons going forward, including Aleksander Barkov, Aaron Ekblad, Sam Reinhart, Sam Bennett, Carter Verhaeghe, Gustav Forsling, Anton Lundell and others. They're all Stanley Cup winners, and now Brady Tkachuk would figure to have a real chance to get his name etched onto hockey's chalice in the coming years as well.

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Heat, wind and drought conditions spark wildfires in US West

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

Extreme heat and dry, windy conditions fueled several wildfires in the West on Sunday, including an uncontained blaze in Utah that forced the evacuation of a small town southwest of Salt Lake City.

The Iron Fire in Utah's Juab County was first detected Saturday and had blackened 34 square miles (87 square kilometers), authorities said. The fire about 70 miles (113 kilometers) southwest of Salt Lake City forced the evacuation of Eureka, population 1,000, and people at a nearby ranch.

No homes had been lost, and UTAH Fire Info, a multiagency operation, said in a post on X that firefighters conducted a successful backburn operation to protect the town.

Kelly Wickens, a fire prevention specialist with the Utah Division of Forestry Fire and State Lands, warned

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that the fire was continuing to grow amid drought conditions. Wickens said the fire was human-caused and remains under investigation.

Utah Gov. Spencer J. Cox visited the town Sunday.

"We knew that there was going to be extreme fire danger, and sure enough we had multiple fires," Cox said.

The Iron Fire was one of six fires burning in Utah at varying levels of containment.

A wildfire prompted evacuations over the weekend near Sedona, Arizona, burning about 300 acres (120 hectares) of steep and rugged terrain near Oak Creek Canyon. As of Sunday afternoon, about 300 fire personnel were fighting the blaze, which remained uncontained. Residents evacuated earlier were still not being allowed to return home.

Much of the Western U.S. from the Rockies to the Pacific coast saw above-average temperatures this weekend with even hotter weather anticipated for early this week. Officials warned that the prolonged dry, hot weather and relatively low humidity increased the risk of fire danger.

Much of Utah is experiencing severe to extreme drought, while parts of Arizona and Colorado are experiencing severe drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. In Colorado, the southwest corner of the state was under a red flag warning issued by the National Weather Service until Monday, due to gusty winds and low relative humidity.

Extreme heat claimed the lives of three hikers in two separate incidents last week in the Grand Canyon. Temperatures were expected to climb in the Southwest on Sunday, with a forecast of up to 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42.2 C) in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

Meanwhile, the Florida Forest Service said fire crews from across the state had nearly contained several brush fires in western Miami-Dade County in Florida,

7 killed and dozens injured following series of weekend shootings in Chicago

CHICAGO (AP) — A spate of shootings in Chicago has led to at least seven deaths and 38 injuries since Friday evening, police say, prompting President Donald Trump to renew his call for a military intervention in the nation's third-largest city.

"Why isn't Governor Pritzker calling me for help. I could make Chicago a safe City in ONE MONTH, in ONE YEAR, it would be one of the safest!!!" Trump said in a Sunday morning Truth Social post.

The office of Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, a potential 2028 Democratic presidential contender who has repeatedly rebuffed Trump's calls for a military intervention, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Under Trump, National Guard troops have been deployed on crime-fighting missions in Democrat-led cities including New Orleans, Washington, D.C. and Memphis, Tennessee.

While Chicago Police Department data shows a slight uptick in shooting incidents compared to the first half of last year, violent crime rates have generally dropped in the city over the past few years, in parallel with national trends.

Preliminary information shared by Chicago police indicate there have been at least two dozen shooting incidents since 5 p.m. on Friday. Those killed by gunfire include a 21-year-old shot in the chest Sunday, an 18-year-old shot in the armpit Saturday evening and a 50-year-old shot in the chest Friday.

At least 12 people in a crowd on a Chicago street suffered gunshot wounds Friday evening after an SUV pulled up and two people inside started shooting, police said.

The eight men and four women in the group ranged in age from 17 to 47. They were being treated at four hospitals. Police said another man suffered unknown injuries and refused medical treatment.

That shooting happened on Juneteenth, a holiday that celebrates the end of slavery in the U.S. Earlier Friday, former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama welcomed the first visitors to his presidential center on the South Side.

"What should have been a night of celebration and community reflection for Juneteenth was shattered by a horrific act of violence," Mayor Brandon Johnson said in an X post Saturday. "My thoughts and prayers

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are with the victims and their loved ones."

"Violence has no place in our city, and those responsible will be held accountable," he said.

Other major U.S. cities experienced gun-related violence over the weekend. In Philadelphia, two people were killed and two others wounded following a shooting early Sunday morning, according to Fox-29. In Cincinnati, a shooting killed three people Saturday evening, WLWT reported. And police in Kansas City, Missouri say they are investigating a shooting Friday evening that left one dead and five wounded.

France restricts public alcohol consumption and outdoor sports as heat wave bakes parts of Europe

By OLEG CETINIC and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France endured sizzling temperatures on Sunday, with trains, concerts and sports events canceled and authorities cracking down on drinking alcohol in public, as an exceptional heat wave unfurled across parts of Europe.

Multiple drownings were reported as people sought relief in whatever water they could find.

About a third of France is under a "red alert" for heat, and high temperatures reached 40 C (104 F) in some areas, in a country where air conditioning isn't widespread. The forecast for Monday is even hotter.

The Eiffel Tower and other Paris venues set up misting stations to cool down crowds. Tourists in Rome dunked in fountains.

Over the last four years, more than 200,000 people across Europe died from heat-related causes, and most of the fatalities were preventable, the World Health Organization's Europe office said this month. More above-average temperatures are expected this summer, which can cause heat exhaustion and life-threatening heat stroke.

Human-caused climate change is tied to increasing extreme weather, and U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years should shatter more heat records. A rapid study found that human-caused climate change was responsible for killing about 1,500 people in an unusually early European heat wave in May.

Waterways offer comfort, and dangers

In this latest European hot spell, French media reported that four children drowned Saturday. Summer drownings are an annual problem that health authorities say worsens during hot spells. One man drowned in southwestern Germany and three others were missing after swimming in the Rhine River, the German news agency dpa reported.

Canal Saint Martin in Paris drew throngs Sunday splashing and diving off a bridge, despite authorities' attempts to control the crowds.

"With this heat, it's the only way to have fun while going out," swimmer Nicolas Cruz told The Associated Press.

Zouzou Hobbs was skeptical at first of swimming in the murky urban canal.

"But it's hot. I'm going to risk it," she decided. "We need to cool off before tonight when we're gonna be dancing."

Solstice parties draw large crowds in extreme heat

France's annual Music Day on Sunday was of particular concern. The nationwide summer solstice celebration involves thousands of concerts in village squares, rave venues and Paris clubs, bringing communities together and increasingly drawing British and other international visitors. Some concerts were canceled.

The French government banned drinking booze in "red alert" zones, and ordered organizers of music day events to limit alcohol consumption to "preserve emergency services and allow medics to concentrate on taking care of the most vulnerable."

Authorities are notably worried about people living in the baking streets, and elderly people in nursing homes or isolated in their homes. About 15,000 older people died in France in a 2003 heat wave that became a national reckoning.

The government mobilized emergency services and military forces for reinforced wildfire readiness, imposed tightened surveillance of water supplies to France's many nuclear reactors, and ordered 845

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schools to close Monday.

Spain, Italy, Germany swelter as tourists seek relief

Spain kicked off the summer with large parts of the country on alert because of temperatures expected to hover around 40 C (104 F) — even in the interior of the Basque region, an area in the north of the country, which typically experiences cooler temperatures.

Authorities have suspended outdoor sports and cultural activities in the region. The heat wave is expected to scorch Spain at least through Wednesday.

In Italy, authorities expanded heat warnings — referred to locally as “red flags” — to eight cities Sunday in northern and central parts of the country. Temperatures there are mostly in the upper 30s C (high 90s to low 100s F).

At one farm outside Milan, owners set up fans and sprinklers to keep cows cool, while visitors to Milan Fashion Week huddled under parasols and clutched fans. In Rome, tourists dunked their arms and occasionally their faces into the city’s famed fountain pools.

German meteorologists are forecasting temperatures of up to 37 C (98 F) for Monday and Tuesday, and up to 39 C (102 F) on Wednesday.

The U.K. weather office has issued an “extreme heat” warning for much of southern England and parts of Wales from Monday until Thursday, saying temperatures could reach 38 C (100 F). The current record for a June day is 35.6 C (96 F), reached in 1976.

Thunderstorms also threatened regions in Germany and Poland.

French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu is convening a new government heat crisis meeting Sunday, and ordered government ministers to plan for better adapting France to heat waves in the future — including “via air conditioning, if necessary.”

In Taylor Swift’s beach town, every clue becomes a wedding rumor

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

WESTERLY, R.I. (AP) — When a large tent appeared next door to Taylor Swift’s Watch Hill estate this week, it didn’t take long for speculation about the superstar’s impending nuptials to ripple through the affluent New England seaside village — and the internet.

Soon, fans were swapping theories online, photographers were staking out vantage points and residents found themselves fielding questions about a wedding that never was. Or at least, a wedding that seems yet to happen.

The rumors, so far, have proved unfounded. But they offered a glimpse into life in Watch Hill, the Rhode Island beach community in the town of Westerly, close to the Connecticut border, where Swift has owned a home for more than a decade and where curiosity about the singer has become woven into everyday life.

Rumors take hold

From the nearby lighthouse, visitors craned for a better view of Swift’s mansion, a sprawling white home perched atop a rocky bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Security cameras dotted the property, and a guard called out to visitors who strayed too close.

Wedding planner Nicole Simeral, dressed in black, stood outside the small white chapel across from the massive yellow Ocean House hotel — Swift’s neighbor on the beach — waving along cars and buses that slowed and directing traffic to keep moving.

She watched visitors speculate about a wedding she said she knew wasn’t Swift’s. She’s working a different wedding every weekend in June in that spot. Still, the questions kept coming.

“Is Taylor Swift getting married here? Many, many, many have asked,” Simeral said.

She said there had been “a lot of chitter chatter” as people tried to connect sightings of people who know Swift in local shops to impending nuptials. But she doubted Watch Hill would be practical for a wedding of that scale because of its limited luxury lodging.

The Watch Hill rumors also dovetailed with separate online speculation that Swift and her fiancé, Kan-

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sas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, were planning a celebration at Madison Square Garden, though no details about the pair's wedding have been released, despite multiple requests for comment to Swift's spokesperson.

The tent itself, Simeral said, was hardly unusual. "Next weekend, there'll be another tent just like this."

For two summers, Westerly Police Department community service officer Nick Quaratella has stood at the entrance to a public path leading to the beach beside Swift's estate, answering questions from beachgoers and keeping traffic moving.

"They come to the beach, but then they also ask if she's here or not," Quaratella said.

He said he can't help but joke around with some fans.

"I'll say, 'Oh, did you hear that she moved?'" he said. "And they'll say, 'No.' And I say, 'Yeah, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson moved in.' And they'll go, 'Oh, really?' and then they'll walk away."

"That's pretty funny," he concluded.

Over the years, he's seen plenty of unusual reactions. His coworker once spotted a fan on their knees, bowing toward the entrance gate near the property. Visitors have shouted "I love you, Taylor!" from the roadside. One woman convinced her granddaughter he was Swift's security guard and posed for a photo with him.

Quaratella has fielded a few questions about the supposed wedding, but not as many as he expected.

"At this point, it's part of my job," he said. "It makes me smile. It makes me laugh. I have no problem with it. It makes the day go by."

Living with Taylor Swift

Down near a strip of beach boutiques, lifelong resident Lauren Nigrelli said the frenzy surrounding the star has eased since Swift first moved into the neighborhood in 2013. Back then, Nigrelli recalled, fans would drive around in circles by her shop playing Swift's songs.

"Things have definitely calmed down since then," she said.

Today, Swift's presence remains a fixture among local businesses in what she described as a "quaint New England coastal community." Nigrelli, a Realtor who owns the boutiques Tide and Tide Kids, said she began selling apparel emblazoned with "Holiday House," the nickname associated with Swift's mansion, after children began coming into the store asking for it. On Saturday, she was also selling a Taylor Swift-Travis Kelce wedding sticker book.

"I think every shop has something related to her," Nigrelli said.

On the beach below the mansion, Audrey and John Curtis, a married couple from Connecticut who have been vacationing in Westerly for years, settled into beach chairs and debated the wedding rumors.

"We were just looking up at her house," Audrey Curtis said, pointing toward the mansion. "She's not getting married here now, though."

Curtis said she had heard various theories, including speculation that a wedding might be held at Ocean House. But as she thought through the logistics, she became skeptical.

"Then I was thinking about, 'How would everybody get here?'" she said. "In New York, you've got JFK, you've got LaGuardia, and she's got two penthouses in New York that she combined, so I figured they could obviously have more people there."

Her husband wasn't so sure.

"They could lie and say it's happening there, but it's happening here," John Curtis said. "When important people do things, they don't want people to know."

Six friends from New York, posing for photos in matching Watch Hill sweatshirts while celebrating a birthday, said Swift wasn't the reason they chose the beach town, though they weren't sure they would have discovered it if not for the singer.

Leslie Aucapina, 24, who attended Swift's Eras Tour in Philadelphia, said she grew up listening to Swift's music and thought the Taylor-themed merchandise was "really cute." She liked that the excitement surrounding Swift helped local businesses and enjoyed visiting the inspiration for "the last great american dynasty," a song about Holiday House from Swift's 2020 Grammy Album of the Year-winning album, folklore.

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But she said the speculation at times crosses a line. "If she wants to share it, she wants to share it," she said. "At the end of the day, it's someone's house."

'Toy Story 5' rakes in the biggest box-office debut of the year with a franchise-best \$160 million

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Toy Story" still has a friend in moviegoers.

The fifth installment in the Pixar series debuted with \$160 million in domestic ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday, easily setting a new franchise record and notching the biggest opening weekend of the year.

Launching 31 years after the original "Toy Story" first landed in theaters, "Toy Story 5" far surpassed the previous series-best debut: \$120 million for "Toy Story 4" in 2019. Internationally, it was just as successful, with \$152 million in opening-weekend sales, for a worldwide haul of \$312 million.

The "Toy Story" franchise is one of the most profitable for The Walt Disney Co. Before "Toy Story 5" launched, the movies had collectively grossed more than \$3 billion, while also pulling in billions from merchandising.

Though the series seemed to reach a conclusion with 2010's "Toy Story 3," the decision to revive the franchise almost a decade later — while controversial — has been extremely lucrative. "Toy Story 4" exceeded \$1 billion in ticket sales, and "Toy Story 5" is all but certain to as well.

Among animated films, only 2018's "Incredibles 2" had a bigger opening weekend (\$182.7 million) than "Toy Story 5."

These toys aren't cheap

Keeping the "Toy Story" movies going has gotten more expensive, though. The fifth movie cost \$250 million to make, not including marketing. It returns a voice cast led by Tom Hanks (as Woody), Tim Allen (as Buzz Lightyear) and Joan Cusack (as Jessie).

In the sequel, the toys are pushed aside when Bonnie gets a new tablet. It's directed by Andrew Stanton, the Pixar veteran who helmed "Finding Nemo" (2003) and "WALL-E" (2008). "Toy Story 5" also features a new song by Taylor Swift, "I Knew It, I Knew You."

Reviews have been very good and audiences gave "Toy Story 5" an "A" CinemaScore, suggesting it should remain a force in theaters for weeks.

After its chart-topping debut, Steven Spielberg's "Disclosure Day" slipped to second place with \$17 million in its second weekend. That's not the hold that Universal Pictures was hoping for. Dropping 61% from its first weekend suggests "Disclosure Day" might not find the legs Spielberg's sci-fi thriller needs to break out this summer.

Still, the \$115 million budgeted movie, starring Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor and Colman Domingo, has grossed \$160.4 million globally in two weeks. "Disclosure Day" stands a good chance of remaining the top adult-oriented option in theaters in the coming weeks.

"Toy Story 5" faced little competition from newcomers.

'Robin Hood' misses the bullseye

A24's "The Death of Robin Hood," a violent revisionist approach to the old legend, flopped with \$2.6 million on 1,762 screens. The film, starring Hugh Jackman and directed by Michael Sarnoski, was modestly budgeted at \$20 million. But after finding mixed reviews, audiences didn't go for the movie, either. It earned a "C+" CinemaScore.

Neon's "Leviticus" came out just ahead of "The Death of Robin Hood," with \$2.7 million from 1,076 theaters. Written and directed by Adrian Chiarella, the buzzy low-budget horror film is about two teen boys who meet at conversion therapy. It's a fine start for an indie with a small budget of \$3.5 million and good word-of-mouth. But "Leviticus" also faced unusually strong competition in the still-potent horror hits "Obsession" and "Backrooms."

The top horror choice remained "Obsession," the microbudget phenomenon by 26-year-old Curry Barker.

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In its sixth weekend, it nearly equaled its \$17 million opening weekend from mid-May. The Focus Features release, which cost less than \$1 million to make, added \$14.2 million to bring its domestic total to \$215.8 million and its global haul to \$333.3 million.

With "Toy Story 5" and "Obsession" driving sales, the summer box office is up 15% from the 2025 summer, according to Rentrak. More impressively, summer ticket sales are nearly equal to the 2019 summer at the same point, not accounting for inflation. The summer to date is just 1.9% down from that year.

Paul Dergarabedian, head of marketplace trends for Rentrak, expects that Hollywood is heading for its best summer since before the pandemic. And the success is coming from both expected and unexpected places.

"To me, this is a hybrid summer and this could be the new blueprint for how you build the perfect summer box-office beast," says Dergarabedian. "You throw in a mix of very eclectic films and not just the usual suspects — the big franchise films, the known brands — but also films like 'Backrooms' and 'Obsession' and original films like 'Disclosure Day.'"

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

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

1. "Toy Story 5," \$160 million.
2. "Disclosure Day," \$17 million.
3. "Obsession," \$14.2 million.
4. "Backrooms," \$7.3 million.
5. "Scary Movie," \$6.7 million.
6. "Masters of the Universe," \$5.6 million.
7. "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu," \$3.9 million.
8. "Leviticus," \$2.7 million.
9. "The Death of Robin Hood," \$2.6 million.
10. "Michael," \$2.2 million.

Starmer is on the precipice as pressure builds for the UK leader to resign

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is facing a career-defining decision: step down or fight a possible challenge from Labour Party rival Andy Burnham.

Starmer has publicly vowed to stay in office, but pressure is building as more and more Labour Party colleagues conclude that his time is up. Expectation is growing that he will announce a timetable for his resignation as soon as Monday. That's the day Burnham will be sworn in as a lawmaker in the House of Commons after winning a special election last week.

Business Secretary Peter Kyle said Sunday that Starmer is "making time to reflect on the political realities, challenges and opportunities that he finds himself in."

"I know he is a prime minister who always puts his country first," Kyle told the BBC, though he said that reports that Starmer will resign are "speculation."

Starmer is spending the weekend at Chequers, the country mansion used by prime ministers, with his family. He gave no public hint about his decision, but sent a Father's Day message on social media.

"Being a dad is my greatest joy. Today, I'm thinking about my dad, and the father I am to my children because of him," he wrote on X.

U.S. President Donald Trump weighed in even before an announcement, linking Starmer's potential exit to two of his recurring bugbears: immigration and renewable energy.

"Keir Starmer will resign as Prime Minister of The United Kingdom. He failed badly on two very important subjects- IMMIGRATION AND ENERGY (OPEN NORTH SEA OIL!). I wish him well! President DJT," Trump posted on his Truth Social network.

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It was unclear whether Trump was responding to media reports about Starmer's plans. The two leaders haven't spoken over the weekend.

Starmer's initially warm relationship with the president has soured in recent months over issues including the Iran war, which the U.K. didn't join.

If Starmer quits, he will be the sixth prime minister to leave office in the past 10 years, an extraordinary rate of churn for the United Kingdom.

Discontent with the prime minister has been building for months, with Labour lawmakers desperate to reverse the government's decline in popularity since Starmer led the center-left party to a landslide election victory in July 2024.

He has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living, and has 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.

Labour is losing liberal voters to the growing Green Party and facing a rising Reform UK, the Nigel Farage-led anti-immigration party that consistently leads in nationwide opinion polls.

Burnham, until this week the popular mayor of Greater Manchester, decisively won the seat of Makerfield in northwestern England in a special election held Thursday. He took almost 55% of the 45,510 votes cast, over 9,000 more than the Reform UK runner-up.

Now that Burnham is becoming a lawmaker, he's in a position to challenge Starmer for leadership of the Labour Party. Burnham's acceptance speech left no doubt that he wants to lead both the party and the country.

"Everyone knows that politics isn't working," he said. "Everyone can feel that the country isn't where it should be. Tonight could, just could, be the turning point."

It's unclear whether Burnham would face a coronation or a challenge, if Starmer steps aside. Wes Streeting, who resigned as health secretary last month to protest Starmer's leadership, has said that he will run in a contest if there is one.

Starmer congratulated Burnham on Friday, but insisted that he would fight any attempt to oust him.

"I will run, I will stand," if there is a Labour leadership contest, Starmer said. "I've said repeatedly I'm not going to walk away from that."

But Charlie Falconer, a senior Labour member of the House of Lords, said Saturday that Starmer has "absolutely no authority" left.

"There should be an agreed transition process in which Andy and Keir cooperate as to when the handover should take place," he told the BBC.

What to know about the legacy of Brexit, which still divides Britain 10 years on

By BRIAN MELLEY and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Ten years ago, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union in a referendum that forges political identities to this day and that shattered a half-century project to get closer to the continent.

Brexit, short for British exit, became a reality on June 23, 2016, when 52% — or more than 17 million people — voted to leave the EU. Though the margin was narrow, the vote led to the most dramatic shake-up of the U.K. economy and society since World War II.

But like any divorce, the paperwork and process of completing the breakup was not swift: It took nearly five years.

Brexit was born out of a growing sense of frustration not only with the EU but over the global financial crisis of 2008. Supporters were able to tap into that frustration, and argued that the U.K. on its own, would be revitalized and able to focus just on domestic priorities.

Opponents warned that Brexit would lead to an economic disruption and that it risked the country's standing in the world.

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A decade on, here is where Brexit stands.

Brexit ushered in a harsh economic reality

Backers of Brexit — commonly known as Brexiters — held out a vision that the British economy could thrive outside the EU by harnessing the buccaneering spirit that had once made it the world's biggest.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic and the wars in Ukraine and more recently, the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran have not helped, it's clear that the British economy has not been revitalized.

Merchants have complained about the hurdles that they now have to clear when trading with their European neighbors — the 27-nation EU remains by far the U.K.'s biggest trading partner.

And though there are no tariffs imposed on British goods entering the EU, there is a raft of non-tariff barriers, such as cumbersome customs paperwork, border certifications, and visa restrictions. Many of the trade deals that the Brexiters touted, most notably one with the United States, have not materialized.

Experts say the British economy is between 4% and 8% smaller than it would have been had the country voted to remain in the EU. That would translate to much higher living standards and billions more pumped into public services, including the cherished National Health Service, which was promised an extra 350 million pounds (\$468 million) a week by Brexit campaigners. That pledge was emblazoned on their big red campaigning bus.

"Brexit has made the U.K. economy smaller than it otherwise would have been," said Jonathan Portes, professor at King's College London.

"The effect has not been a sudden collapse, but a gradual and cumulative drag on trade, investment and productivity," he wrote in an article for The UK in a Changing Europe think tank.

Brexiters argue, however, that leaving the EU is not something that can be judged in the short-term — there was always going to be a short-term economic disruption in return for greater control over an array of policy levers, including on migration.

The uproar over immigration is escalating

Brexit put an end to free movement between the U.K. and EU, but securing Britain's border has had mixed outcomes. Getting a grip on immigration was a key promise of the Brexiters — their message of taking back control resonated.

Though net migration — the difference between those entering the U.K. and those leaving in any one year, from Europe — has plunged, it has soared from non-EU countries. That's partly because of changes in visa rules that the previous Conservative government introduced to help out sectors that desperately needed migrant labor, such as workers to care for the elderly.

Overall though, there are signs the government is getting a grip on who can and cannot enter the country legally. Net migration has fallen sharply, from more than 900,000 in 2023 to 171,000 last year.

Though net migration is down, many are angered by migrants entering the country illegally — specifically the sight of people, often escaping war zones such as Afghanistan and Sudan, arriving on British shores in inflatable boats after making the dangerous journey across the English Channel.

The uproar over the number of small boat crossings, which peaked at 46,000 in 2022 and reached 41,000 last year, has become one of the main top political issues despite being a fraction of overall migration. Anger has focused on asylum seekers, often housed at public cost. Unruly mobs have protested outside and even tried to set fire to some hotels housing asylum seekers.

Voters have expressed remorse

In the years since Brexit, Britain's political landscape has fractured, with declining support for the two long-dominant parties, Conservatives and Labour. The Conservatives were ejected in 2024 after 14 years in power, much of it dominated by wrangling over U.K.-European relations.

The Labour government hasn't impressed either and Prime Minister Keir Starmer looks like he will be announcing his resignation very soon.

Millions of voters are being tempted by Reform U.K., led by Nigel Farage, who perhaps more than any other politician campaigned for Brexit. His party has led in almost every opinion poll for more than a year.

At the same, there's a growing feeling in the country that Brexit has failed.

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According to two polls from Ipsos, 52% of people in the U.K. would like to rejoin the EU while 33% are against it. The pollster also found that 48% think Brexit is going worse than expected against just 9% who think it's going better. Also, Ipsos found that 48% would back another referendum today on the U.K.'s membership of the EU against 27% who oppose one.

A reset would be complicated

Against this backdrop, the Labour Party has walked a tightrope since being elected in 2024. Having explicitly ruled out reversing Brexit — or even rejoining the EU's frictionless single market — it hasn't got a huge amount of political space to maneuver.

Starmer has sought a "reset" of ties following the distrust built over the years of the Brexit negotiations, largely centered around making trading easier. He is hoping to announce further measures at a summit with the EU next month — provided he's still the prime minister.

His most likely successor, Andy Burnham, tempered his language on the U.K. rejoining the EU while out on the campaign trail over the past month, ahead of his victory in a special election on Thursday that saw him beat back a challenge from Reform in a seat that overwhelmingly backed Brexit.

"I am not proposing that the U.K. considers rejoining the EU," Burnham said. "I respect the decision that was made at the referendum and it is going to undermine everything I have said about strengthening democracy if we don't respect that vote."

What to know about opposition in Albania to a Trump family-linked resort development

By ZANA CIMILI Associated Press

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — A coastal development project in Albania linked to Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner is facing growing opposition from environmental advocates and has triggered daily protests in the capital, Tirana.

To the deafening sound of drums, horns and whistles, thousands of demonstrators late Saturday chanted "Rama Leave!" — referring to longtime Socialist Prime Minister Edi Rama.

The rally drew participation from Albanian migrant communities abroad as the protests dubbed the "flamingo revolution" continue to gain momentum. The government says the development on the Adriatic coast would be transformational for the former communist nation as it seeks to enter the high-end tourism market and pushes for European Union membership.

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

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

Prime minister under pressure

Rama has vowed not to "step back" from the development and defended his administration's environmental record. He says the protests were being encouraged by malicious cyber activists overseas and accuses Iran of targeting his government.

"There is a lot of manipulation. There are a lot of half-truths that become bigger and bigger lies by the hour," Rama told The Associated Press in an interview.

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

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

European Union officials say they are monitoring the development to ensure that it complies with the terms of Albania's bid to join the EU.

The protests are also becoming increasingly political. Calls to halt the development project have been gradually replaced by overtly political demands, centered on calls for Rama's resignation and early elections.

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Kushner and Ivanka Trump discovered site on vacation

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

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

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

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

Decades of communist rule left beaches untouched

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

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

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

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

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

Questions of ownership complicate venture

Albania's Special Prosecution Office Against Corruption and Organized Crime has confirmed it opened an investigation related to the project but has disclosed few details.

It recently ordered the seizure of assets worth 128.3 million euros from the Albanian Land Development LLC company concerning land sale contracts in the area where the project is planned.

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

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

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

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

Serbian lesson

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

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

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

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Today in History: June 22, Joe Louis knocks out Max Schmeling

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, June 22, the 173rd day of 2026. There are 192 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 22, 1938, in a rematch that bore the weight of both geopolitical symbolism and African American representation, American Joe Louis knocked out German Max Schmeling in just two minutes and four seconds to retain his heavyweight boxing title in front of 70,000 spectators at New York's Yankee Stadium.

Also on this date:

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte abdicated for a second time as Emperor of the French.

In 1941, Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, a massive and ultimately ill-fated invasion of the Soviet Union that would prove pivotal to the Allied victory over the Axis Powers.

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more popularly known as the "GI Bill of Rights," which provided tuition coverage, unemployment support and low-interest home and business loans to returning veterans.

In 1945, the World War II Battle of Okinawa ended with an Allied victory.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed an extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that lowered the minimum voting age to 18.

In 1977, John N. Mitchell became the first former U.S. attorney general to go to prison as he began serving a sentence for his role in the Watergate cover-up.

In 1981, Mark David Chapman pleaded guilty to killing rock star and former Beatle John Lennon.

In 1986, Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona scored the infamous "Hand of God" goal in the quarter-finals of the FIFA World Cup against England, giving Argentina a 1-0 lead before he scored again minutes later to seal a 2-1 victory. (Argentina would beat West Germany 3-2 for the World Cup trophy days later).

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, unanimously ruled that hate crime laws that banned cross burning and similar expressions of racial bias violated free-speech rights.

In 2009, a Metro commuter train slammed into the back of another train waiting to enter a station in Washington, D.C., killing nine people, including a train operator, and leaving dozens injured. It was the deadliest accident on the Metro train system since it opened in 1976.

In 2011, after evading arrest for 16 years, mob boss James "Whitey" Bulger was captured in Santa Monica, California.

In 2012, former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was convicted by a jury in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, on 45 counts of sexually assaulting 10 boys over 15 years. (Sandusky would later be sentenced to 30 to 60 years in prison.)

In 2022, a powerful earthquake struck a mountainous region of eastern Afghanistan, killing at least 1,000 people and injuring at least 1,500 others.

In 2025, U.S. forces used bunker buster bombs and cruise missiles to attack two underground uranium enrichment plants in Iran, seeking to deliver a knockout blow to that country's nuclear program.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Klaus Maria Brandauer is 83. Musician-producer Peter Asher (Peter and Gordon) is 82. Musician-producer Todd Rundgren is 78. Actor Meryl Streep is 77. Actor Lindsay Wagner is 77. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., is 77. Singer-songwriter Cyndi Lauper is 73. Actor Bruce Campbell is 68. Environmental activist Erin Brockovich is 66. Democratic Sen. Adam Schiff of California is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Clyde Drexler is 64. Actor Amy Brenneman is 62. Actor Mary Lynn Rajsak is 55. Football Hall of Famer Kurt Warner is 55. Actor Donald Faison is 52. Football Hall of Famer Champ Bailey is 48. Golfer Dustin Johnson is 42. Singer Dinah Jane is 29. Actor Sean Kaufman is 26.