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Thursday, July 2

Senior Meal: Meatloaf, au gratin potatoes, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

U12 Baseball hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (DH), Nelson Field

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

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

U8 Baseball (blue), at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

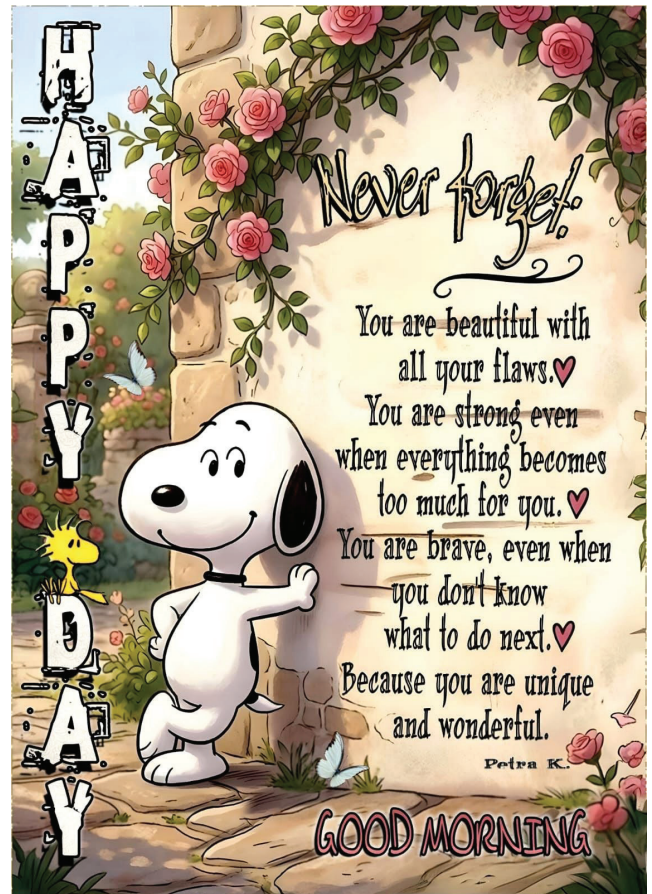
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, July 3

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Saturday, July 4

Firecracker Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

Sunday, July 5

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

Mr. Potato Cell

Biologists have, for the first time, combined dozens of lifeless chemicals to create a synthetic cell that eats, grows, reproduces, and even competes for food like naturally occurring cells, a team from University of Minnesota revealed yesterday.

The breakthrough builds on decades of research into the minimum genetic material necessary to sustain life, which could pave the way for advances in medicine and other fields but also raises concerns for synthetic biology skeptics. While earlier efforts focused on stripping down existing natural cells, this is the first cell assembled piece by piece from 150 to 200 simple molecules. Named for its potato-like appearance, SpudCell has just 36 genes, including some taken from a virus and E. coli. By comparison, earlier experiments required nearly 500 genes and humans have roughly 20,000.

Hundreds of scientists are expected to join a new nonprofit dedicated to advancing SpudCell, which cannot consistently pass its complete genetic material to future generations or produce its own proteins.

California Food Labels

California food labels can no longer include "sell by" dates after a new law went into effect yesterday. Food producers can instead add "best if used by" dates (indicating peak product quality) or "use by" dates (indicating safety).

The law aims to reduce confusion. More than 80% of Americans discard unspoiled food due to label misunderstandings, a 2019 survey found. One-third of respondents falsely believe the dates are federally regulated (the exception is infant formula, after the removal of salt in the 1970s led to at least 118 cases of Bartter syndrome).

Nearly 20% of American food waste is due to label confusion, the FDA says. In California, more than 6 million tons of unspoiled food per year ends up in landfills, where organic waste releases more than 40% of the state's methane emissions, per climate advocates.

California's laws can have nationwide implications, as companies streamline their products for compliance.

Canada Joins Eurovision

Canada will make its Eurovision Song Contest debut next year in Bulgaria, the country's national public broadcaster said yesterday. The decision comes as Canada seeks to expand European ties, and as viewership dropped this year amid a boycott over Israel's participation.

The contest began in 1956 with a mission to unite postwar Europe and is open to all members of the European Broadcasting Union. Israel joined in 1973, and Australia joined in 2015. (Morocco joined for one year only, in 1980) Canada allocated more than \$105M this year for contest expenses, and will appear in the semifinal. Today, Eurovision is the world's largest music event, reaching more than 130 million viewers.

Canada has not yet revealed how it will select its musical act; some broadcasters host a competition while others handpick their acts. In past years, Canadian citizens have participated via other countries.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Victor Willis, the Village People cofounder, dies at age 74.

Willis co-wrote "Y.M.C.A.," dubbed "an American phenomenon" by Congress.

Actor Danny Glover, 79, reveals yearslong battle with Alzheimer's.

Nearly complete OpenAI film bought by indie distributor Neon after being dropped by Amazon.

Sony to stop producing physical video game discs for new PlayStation games starting January 2028, citing declining demand.

USMNT advances to World Cup's Round of 16 after defeating Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-0, marking the team's first knockout stage win in 12 years; USMNT will face Belgium on Monday in Seattle.

Science & Technology

Anthropic begins restoring access to powerful Mythos and Fable AI models after the Trump administration drops export restrictions.

Light-based gene therapy activates neurons involved in Huntington's disease progression, improving brain activity and mobility in mice.

New blood test detects traces of pancreatic cancer in nearly four times as many patients as standard testing, providing opportunity for earlier interventions.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.0%, Nasdaq -0.7%) after Fed Chair Kevin Warsh says inflation is too high; offers no hint on July interest rate decision.

Bending Spoons—owner of AOL and Vimeo—debuts on Nasdaq with \$1.7B initial public offering; name comes from "The Matrix" films.

Uber-backed Lime raises \$167M in IPO.

America's second-largest grocer, Kroger, to buy regional grocery chain Giant Eagle for around \$1.6B.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump earned more than \$2B in income last year, financial disclosure reveals; earnings came from stocks and real estate ventures in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and \$1.2B from cryptocurrency businesses.

The US will not renew US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which President Donald Trump signed in 2018; will instead renegotiate with each country before the trade deal expires in 2036.

President Donald Trump takes first trip on new Air Force One to North Dakota.

Life is messy,
wear an apron ♥

“Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Psalm 34:8

❖ Ladies Luncheon ❖

Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

By Bethesda Women of the ELCA



Silent Auction opens at 10:30



Guest Speaker: Tiffany Hoeft, Bristol
Graduate and owner of “Minds Matter”



Luncheon at Noon

TICKETS
\$15.00

Deadline to purchase
tickets is Friday, July 10



Kay Espeland 605-492-3507



Jane Goehring 605-290-1420



Or contact any WELCA member



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Groton Chamber of Commerce July Meeting

July 1, 2026

12pm City Hall

- Members present: Douglas Heinrich, April Abeln, Ashley Bentz, Katelyn Nehlich
 - The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich. All members present voted aye.
 - The treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$31,395.36 in addition to the \$10,154.59 CD. The bucks account balance is about \$3,600. The report was approved by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich. All members present voted aye.
 - A prior email motion was made by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich to allow POET 1 spot on the Hwy 12 sign for 2027 and 2028 in exchange for their seesaw donation. All members present email voted aye.
 - The seesaw was discussed. The unit has been ordered with a July 17th ship date with \$2,694.69 left to fundraise.
 - Motion by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich to close the webstore on BK Custom T's website. All members present voted aye.
 - Motion by Nehlich and seconded by Heinrich to advertise on the 2026-2027 Activities Calendar for \$420. All members present voted aye.
 - The September/October ad for the SD and Aberdeen Magazines was discussed.
 - No donation requests were received.
 - New business welcomes were discussed.
 - Next Meeting: August 5th at 12pm at City Hall
- Upcoming events:
- 07/04/2026 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
 - 07/08/2026 Legion Auxiliary Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm
 - 07/12/2026 Historic 1912 Jail Open House 10am-3pm
 - 07/15/2026 Enrich Groton School Supply Drive at the Community Center 4-7pm
 - 07/20-22/2026 St John's Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School 5:30-8pm, Program 7/22/26 8pm
 - 07/27-28/2026 United Methodist Church Vacation Bible School 5-7:45pm
 - 08/01/2026 3rd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9pm
 - 08/06/2026 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm

Land for Sale

**800 Acres Spink
& northern
Clark County
646 tillable acres,
133 pasture**

**For more info, visit:
www.keminklandco.com**



**Rod Kemink, Broker
605-880-2112
Watertown, SD**

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Largest Property Tax Cut Takes Effect

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Rhoden's property tax cut, which delivers the largest property tax cut in South Dakota history, goes into effect.

"Hard working South Dakotans deserve to keep more of what they make. I was proud to deliver the largest property tax cut in state history," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "As these laws take effect, homeowners will benefit from both statewide and targeted relief. I am grateful for all the legislators and stakeholders who worked together to get this across the finish line."

SB 96 gives people in each county the option to cut their own property taxes, and SB 245 provides statewide property tax relief through the established general education formula. Governor Larry Rhoden previously unveiled a county map that shows savings estimates for SB 96 and SB 245.

Several counties have already expressed excitement about implementing SB 96, and the Department of Revenue has published resources to assist counties as they continue discussing implementation of SB 96.

"Many times in order to make a quick fix, the state will hand local governments a mandate they may or may not be able to fit within their budgets. SB 96 gave counties the option to decide if it fits for them or not," said Meade County Commissioner Gary Deering. "We are currently looking at all of the numbers to decide if this is a good fit for Meade County. I appreciate Governor Rhoden letting local governments decide what is best for the county they represent."



Left Photo: Sunset over Lake Pickerel Wednesday evening.

Right Photo: Sunrise over Pickerel Lake. (Photos

by Bruce Babcock)

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Groton Legion teams go 3-1 on Wednesday

Groton's American Legion baseball teams combined for three victories in four games Wednesday, highlighted by a dominant first-inning outburst from the senior Legion squad and a split by the 14U team at Milbank.

Groton Legion Post 39 needed just one inning to put away Lake Norden/Badger, erupting for 12 runs in the opening frame on the way to a 13-3 victory.

The rally featured patience at the plate and timely hitting as Nick Groeblichhoff, Braeden Fliehs, Karsten Fliehs, Tristin McGannon, Alex Abeln and Lincoln Krause all drew RBI walks. Gavin Englund followed with a three-run double before Karsten Fliehs capped the inning with a two-run double.

Post 39 added its final run in the third when Karsten Fliehs tripled to right field.

Jarrett Erdmann earned the win after allowing just one hit over two scoreless innings while striking out five. Isaiah Scepaniak worked the final three innings in relief.

Karsten Fliehs, batting seventh, drove in four runs while going 2-for-2. Englund also had two hits, including his three-run double. Groton showed excellent plate discipline, drawing 12 walks. Krause, TC Schuster, Groeblichhoff and Karsten Fliehs each reached twice via walks.

Defensively, Groton played error-free baseball, turned a double play and was led by catcher Karsten Fliehs, who handled six chances.

Meanwhile, the Groton Post 39 14U squad split a doubleheader at Milbank.

In the opener, Milbank rallied late to hand Groton a narrow 5-4 defeat.

Groton scored first on a Milbank error before taking a 3-1 lead in the second when Bentley Ehresmann delivered a two-run single. Milbank answered with two runs in the fifth to regain the lead and held on the rest of the way.

Mason Locke struck out eight over 5 1/3 innings for Groton. Ehresmann led the offense with two hits and two RBIs from the ninth spot in the batting order. Trayce Schelle, Easton Larson and Locke each added two hits.

Groton bounced back in the nightcap with an 8-2 victory behind an outstanding performance from Schelle.

Schelle went 3-for-3 with two doubles, a single and four RBIs while also stealing two bases. He drove in two runs with a first-inning double as Groton built an early 3-0 lead, then delivered another two-run double during a decisive five-run fifth inning. Gavin Hanten added an RBI single in the inning, while Hudson Eichler drove home another run with a groundout.

Graham Rose earned the victory after allowing two runs over three innings, and Keegan Kucker recorded the save. Asher Zimmerman added two hits in three at-bats to help lead the offense.

Groton's senior Legion team returns to action Monday at Sisseton, while the 14U squad travels to Webster on Monday.

South Dakota State Museum reopens

PIERRE, S.D. – After three years of major renovation work, the South Dakota State Museum in Pierre officially reopened the first three rooms to the public on July 1st.

In 2022, the State Historical Society received an appropriation from the legislature to renovate the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Renovations updated the building and increased collection storage capacity. Simultaneously, the State Historical Society redeveloped the museum exhibits.

Redeveloping the museum exhibits was intensive. As South Dakota's State Museum, the exhibits need to reflect the state's story. Therefore, many public meetings were held statewide seeking input on what individuals wanted to see in their museum. The new exhibits are based on extensive input and the recently revised state social studies standards to better serve modern visitors.

Reopening these rooms is part of our nation's 250th birthday celebration. The remainder of the museum gallery space will be reopened later this year.

South Dakota State Museum Director David Grabitske said, "Come to Pierre and experience South Dakota's history! People of many backgrounds have aided the process, so come see the collective work!"

The South Dakota State Museum's public viewing hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM and Sundays from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM. The museum will be closed on Mondays. Admission to the Museum is free for all South Dakotans and children from everywhere.



Are lieutenant governor picks always announced after the nominee is selected?

No.

Gubernatorial running mates in South Dakota are not always chosen after the nominee is selected.

Republican nominee Jon Hansen chose Karla Lems as his running mate on April 24, 2025, over a year before the primary on June 2.

Gov. Larry Rhoden announced that Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen would stay on as his running mate when he announced his re-election campaign on Nov. 18.

In 1994, former Gov. Bill Janklow tapped Carole Hillard prior to the primary. Janklow went on to beat Walter Miller in the primary, and Hillard became the first woman to serve as lieutenant governor of South Dakota.

In May 2025, Rhoden signed into law a bill that requires governor candidates to nominate a candidate for lieutenant governor by 5 p.m. on the second Tuesday of August on election years. In 2026, Aug. 11 is the deadline for governor hopefuls to choose running mates.

This fact brief responds to claims such as this one.

GROTON SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM = RELOCATION NOTICE =

The Groton Senior Nutrition Program is moving
to the **Groton Community Center**
beginning **July 1, 2026**.



Meal Pick-Up:

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
at the Community Center



Home Delivered Meals:

No changes to delivery service



Suggested Donation:

\$6 per meal



Congregate Dining:

Temporarily suspended
during the transition



For reservations call

Barb Pohlkamp at 612-388-2099

Thank you for your patience and support!



GROTON 1912 ★ HISTORICAL JAIL

315 1ST AVE. E, GROTON

Open House

**SUNDAY,
JULY 12,**

★
10 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

★



★ *Come see the
newly restored jail* ★



Effective Immediately

CITY OF GROTON WATER RESTRICTIONS

*We appreciate your immediate cooperation
to keep our water levels safe.*

If your house number is odd, you may only water
on odd days (& **only before 11am or after 6pm**).

If your house number is even, you may only water
on even days (& **only before 11am or after 6pm**).



**Absolutely NO WATERING
between 11am - 6pm.**

Failure to comply will result in fines.
After a warning is issued, fines will start
at \$50 and double with each offense.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota board advances rules allowing \$30 million in airport loans from housing fund

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

A South Dakota board advanced rules on Wednesday that allow up to \$30 million to be loaned from a state housing infrastructure fund to help finance airport projects in Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

The Housing Development Authority's members approved the rules without any opposition. The rules implement a bill introduced at Gov. Larry Rhoden's request and signed into law by him in March.

The law authorizes loans up to \$15 million each to the state's two largest commercial airports. The loans would carry 2% interest rates with repayment periods of 20 years. Repayments and interest must be returned to the housing fund to support future housing infrastructure projects.

Rapid City plans a concourse expansion adding five gates and more passenger space. Sioux Falls is building a new concourse that will provide up to five additional aircraft gates and 57,000 square feet of seating and circulation space. The projects are expected to cost more than \$100 million apiece.

The Legislature and former Gov. Kristi Noem created the housing fund and program in 2023 with \$200 million: \$100 million for grants and \$100 million for loans to support streets, sewer, water, and other infrastructure needed for housing developments. The package used \$150 million in state money and \$50 million in federal American Rescue Plan funds.

By late 2025, about \$65 million remained on the loan side. The program has helped finance 87 projects expected to produce 7,464 single-family lots and 5,882 multifamily units.

The housing board's rule change now goes to the Legislature's Interim Rules Review Committee.

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

COMMENTARY

Viral confrontation at political convention reveals what's wrong with 'news' from influencers

by Seth Tupper

I should spend more time on social media.

Unlike most people, who are free to protect their mental health by reducing their social media intake, journalists are obligated to spend an increasing amount of time on social platforms like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). My resistance to that trend has occasionally put me at a professional disadvantage, because social media has become the best way to monitor the statements and activities of some newsmakers.

There was a time when routine news came through press releases and press conferences. Some people in the news still use those traditional means of communication, but others have abandoned the old ways in favor of social media. It allows them to bypass journalists and go straight to the audience.

But without journalists adding context, seeking contrary views and doing their best to exercise good news judgment, social media consumers are unwittingly manipulated by influencers and algorithms into obsessing over trivialities.

A viral dustup at last week's South Dakota Republican Convention was a case in point. I happened upon

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it when I tried to cover a speech by U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota.

I had completed the party's online press registration days earlier. But when I tried to enter the room where Thune was scheduled to speak, a sergeant-at-arms blocked me. I showed him my press credential. I told him I'd registered. I showed him the email I received from the party allowing me to attend.

I might as well have been telling him Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election. He wasn't going to be moved by evidence.

Meanwhile, local gadfly James Bialota and traveling social media influencer Scott Presler had also been denied entrance to Thune's speech and were arguing with local and state party officials.

Some of those officials eventually told me Bialota and Presler were presenting themselves as members of the press based on their social media activities (although Presler also appeared to have a ticket), and had "ruined it" for the rest of the media — in other words, for me, the only journalist in sight. Thus, the party chairman had decided not to allow any media in the room, I was told.

Because I don't spend as much time on social media as I should, I didn't know much about Presler. I've since learned he's a frequent agitator on behalf of the SAVE America Act, which would require all Americans to show proof of citizenship when registering to vote and a photo ID when casting a ballot (South Dakota already requires both). Presler and some other supporters of the legislation blame Thune for its failure to pass the Senate.

Thune's response has been blunt: The bill doesn't have the votes.

"At the end of the day, I have to deal with reality," he said recently. "And sometimes the alternative universe that is X doesn't reflect the facts on the ground."

President Donald Trump launched his followers, including Presler, into that alternative universe last week. Trump canceled a signing ceremony for a bipartisan housing bill while saying he wouldn't approve that legislation until Congress sends him the SAVE Act.

The next day, Presler parachuted into the South Dakota Republican Convention, filmed part of his confrontation with the sergeant-at-arms who blocked his entrance, and shared the video online to stoke more anger about the SAVE Act's fate. At last check on Facebook, the video had 1.2 million views.

I had no viral intentions. I wanted to hear Thune's speech — and another one by his surprise guest, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin — so I could report any newsworthy comments, and ask Thune and Mullin some questions.

Had I been allowed in the room where Thune spoke, I might have been able to ask him why, even though he says the SAVE Act doesn't have enough support, he's spoken in favor of the bill's provision requiring identification to vote. Wouldn't a federally imposed requirement like that be a step toward nationalizing elections? Wouldn't it diminish the power of states to run their own elections? Isn't that something Republicans like Thune always opposed before Trump came along?

Those are the kinds of challenging questions that journalists can put to politicians like Thune who are still willing to engage with the press.

But when everybody's attention is diverted by a viral sideshow, and press access is blocked, nobody outside the room learns anything.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Trump brings Roosevelt's Medal of Honor as a gift during North Dakota library's dedication

BY JACOB ORLEDGE AND MICHAEL ACHTERLING

MEDORA – President Donald Trump presented a new artifact for the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library during its dedication ceremony Wednesday — the Medal of Honor awarded to Roosevelt.

The medal had been displayed in the Roosevelt Room of the White House.

"I thought this would be a ... really appropriate place to have it," Trump said after being introduced by Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, the former governor of North Dakota.

Trump and Burgum cut the ribbon in a dedication ceremony for the library honoring Roosevelt, who credited his time in North Dakota for helping him become president.

"What a magnificent library you built," Trump said. "It's a great tribute."

Trump called the library a "living monument to a legend, statesman, soldier, frontiersman, and a true American hero." He was effusive in his praise for Roosevelt and what he represents.

"We come to the heartland of America to pay tribute to a man who embodied the heart and soul and fight and spirit of our country, as much as anyone who ever lived," Trump said. "He was really quite something."

The 47th president extolled Roosevelt's achievements as president, such as constructing the Panama Canal and building the U.S. Navy into a global force, and the impact his tenure in the White House had on American prestige.

Trump said Roosevelt had "transformed his country by the reach of his vision" and "by the force of his will" by the time the Rough Rider colonel died at the age of 60 in 1919.

The United States had become "one of the greatest places, one of the greatest empires, one of the most incredible countries, ready to take its rightful place as the strongest and most respected nation anywhere in the world," Trump said.

The most enduring legacy of Roosevelt may be the principles behind his drive and determination.

"He never stopped, never quit, never surrendered," Trump said. "Again and again, he summoned the will to transcend tragedy and triumph and defeat heartbreak with hard work."

Trump said some of those principles remain essential for Americans to aspire to for the country to survive and prosper.

"Theodore Roosevelt reminds us all that to be a great nation, and to be a free nation, we must have courage. Without courage, you have nothing," Trump said. "As TR once put it, freedom is not a gift that lasts long in the hands of cowards."

The president also recommitted himself and the United States to that of another legacy, the Declaration of Independence that was signed 250 years ago this Saturday.

"A government that was honest and accountable was the number one demand of the Declaration of Independence. They want honesty, they want respect, and on this anniversary we recommit ourselves to upholding that righteous legacy," Trump said.

Gov. Kelly Armstrong, who led off the slate of speakers in Medora Wednesday afternoon, urged every American to consider what they can do for their country moving forward.

"As we celebrate these last 250 years of American greatness, we recognize that it is incumbent on each and every one of us to do our part to ensure that the next 250 years are better than the last," Armstrong said.

Trump landed in North Dakota just after 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, taking the first flight on the new Air Force One. Bismarck residents gathered near the airport Wednesday morning to take photos of Air Force One's arrival.

Accompanying Trump on Air Force One were Interior Secretary and former North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and his wife, Kathryn, Donald Trump Jr. and his wife, Bettina, Eric Trump, and Rep. Julie Fedorchak, according to a White House pool report. Fedorchak's office said she's the first member of Congress to travel on the new plane, donated by the government of Qatar.

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He then traveled by the Marine One helicopter to the western North Dakota, and took a ceremonial Freedom250 train into the tourist town of Medora, where he took a private tour of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library ahead of its grand opening on Saturday. Horseback riders portraying Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders waited to escort Trump's motorcade.

Trump spoke to a packed crowd at the Burning Hills Amphitheatre, an event that's part of the Freedom 250 celebration.

Members of the public began lining up in Medora as early as 6 a.m. MT to attend the president's speech. It's Trump's fourth visit to North Dakota and his third as president.

Rayann Vande Sandt of Tioga called seeing Trump the "chance of a lifetime."

"I'll wait in line days to see him," Vande Sandt said.

Danette Maisey of Williston said she appreciated that Trump came to North Dakota, a state much of the country often forgets.

Brenden Bergquist of Turtle Lake said he was excited to hear about Roosevelt's legacy and how it relates to North Dakota.

"It's pretty unique in the sense that Teddy found his passion out here and became president soon after," Bergquist said.

The grand opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library is being held in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the United States' declaration of independence from Great Britain. Roosevelt spent time in the western North Dakota Badlands after the death of his wife and mother, and famously said he would not have been president if not for his time in North Dakota.

About a dozen members of the North Dakota Public Lands Coalition protested near the Fryburg exit of Interstate 94 Wednesday to show their opposition to the Trump administration's public lands policies, which they said are counter to Roosevelt's legacy.

"Celebrating such an extraordinary conservation legacy deserves more than speeches and ceremonies," Todd Leake, chair of the Sierra Club North Dakota chapter, said in a statement. "It deserves leaders willing to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife he fought so hard to conserve."

This story has been updated with additional reporting.

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

Jacob Orledge is a reporter based in Bismarck through ProPublica's Local Reporting Network. He most recently worked for the Tioga Tribune in Williams County. You can reach him at jorledge@northdakotamonitor.com.

Michael Achterling is a reporter based in Bismarck. He recently worked as digital editor and city government reporter for the Detroit Lakes Tribune in Minnesota and as news director for KDLM/KRCQ/KBOT, a part of Leighton Broadcasting. You can reach him at machterling@northdakotamonitor.com.

USDA's finalized rule could boost adoption of regenerative farming practices

Corn and soybean farmers can now quantify carbon intensity of crops bound for biofuels
BY CAMI KOONS

Farmers growing corn and soybeans for biofuels can now quantify the carbon intensity of crops grown with certain regenerative agriculture practices, due to a recently finalized federal rule.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regenerative Feedstock Rule will allow farmers to "capture new value" from agricultural practices like cover crops and reduced tillage, according to a news release from the department.

According to the finalized rule, the production of corn accounts for more than 50% of the direct greenhouse gas emissions associated with producing corn ethanol, and nearly 50% of soybean biodiesel emissions are attributable to the feedstock crop production.

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The greenhouse gas emissions associated with growing corn and soybeans can be reduced with the "low-carbon practices" outlined in the final rule. These tools include reduced tillage, cover crops and nitrification inhibitors.

Farmers can also lower the carbon intensity score of a feedstock by following nutrient management guidelines that specify nutrient budgets based on current soil testing and are verified by a third party.

According to the final rule, these practices, which in earlier iterations of proposed rules were called "climate-smart agriculture" practices, generally reduce greenhouse gas emissions or increase soil-carbon sequestration. The adoption of these practices can lower the greenhouse gas emissions of biofuel production and "provide other environmental benefits" like improved water quality and soil health, according to the final rule.

Along with the finalized rule, USDA released an updated carbon intensity calculator to help farmers "quantify regenerative practices" and market their feedstocks accordingly.

The carbon intensity score of a feedstock is important to low-carbon biofuel producers, as these fuels must be produced within certain total greenhouse gas emissions limits – from the field to distillation. Low-carbon intensity feedstocks can help biofuel producers fit within these limits.

The finalized rule was celebrated by crop and biofuel groups in Iowa, who also called for the adoption of the rule into a U.S. Department of Energy model essential to receiving low-carbon fuel tax credits known as 45Z tax credits.

The renewable fuels industry has also looked to carbon sequestration pipelines as a way to lower the life cycle greenhouse gas emissions of biofuels, but such projects have faced pushback in Iowa.

Iowa Renewable Fuels Association Executive Director Monte Shaw called the finalization of the USDA rule a "great step forward" and said farmers can benefit from adopting regenerative practices, while biofuels producers will be able to source low-carbon intensity feedstocks and access "massive new markets."

"And maybe most importantly, biofuels production will now be the single biggest driver of regenerative ag practices that improve water quality throughout rural America," Shaw said in a news release.

Shaw said the DOE needs to "expeditiously" incorporate the USDA tool into the Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies, or GREET, model that stipulates the life cycle emissions levels a biofuel must be produced within to qualify for the 45Z tax credit.

"The Treasury Department must immediately recognize that updated model in time for farmers to make decisions this fall," Shaw said. "It may seem a little early when this year's harvest isn't even out of the ground yet, but many farmers will already be making decisions by August that will impact the (carbon intensity) of next year's crop."

Mark Mueller, president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, said the new rule will "jumpstart" opportunities for growers in Iowa who "are committed to doing what's right for the land and the environment."

"For years, Iowa corn farmers have led the nation in adoption and implementation of conservation practices, and today's USDA rule provides a framework to reward conservation-minded farmers who are stewards of the land," Mueller said in a news release.

President Donald Trump also signed an executive order Friday calling for the advancement of regenerative agriculture practices. The order connects the practices to the administration's Make America Healthy Again initiative.

"It is the policy of the United States to promote continued advances in precision agriculture technologies; significantly increase Federal investment in regenerative agriculture practices, research, and education; and spur private-sector innovation in farm modernization by reducing red tape and strengthening public-private partnerships," the order said.

In addition to regenerative agriculture practices, the order also urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to prioritize the registration of substances that can be used as alternatives to "older active ingredients." It also encouraged EPA to support research into the impacts of chemical exposures on human health.

A news release from USDA said the executive order and finalized rule represent the "most significant market-driven effort ever undertaken to reward America's farmers for voluntarily implementing regener-

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ative practices.”

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins said the initiatives were examples of Trump’s “America First agenda.” “(The rule) put farmers, not Washington bureaucrats, in the driver’s seat,” Rollins said in the release. “Instead of mandates, we’re creating market opportunities. Farmers who choose to implement regenerative practices will have new opportunities to earn premium prices, lower their input costs, improve soil health, and strengthen the long-term profitability of their operations.”

This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, 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.

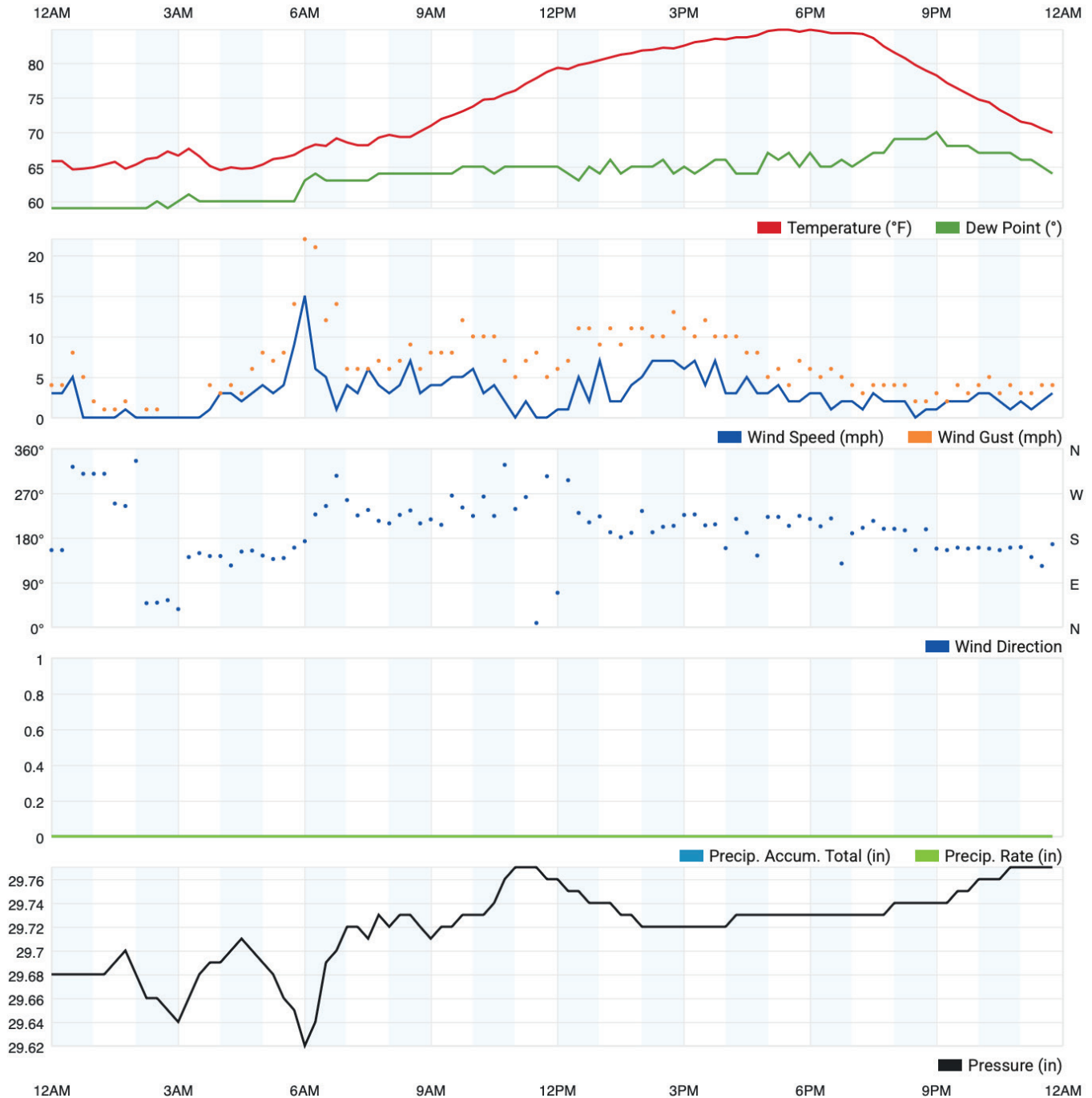
Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 1, 2026



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Today



High: 94 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Severe
Thunderstorms

Tonight



Low: 63 °F

Severe
Thunderstorms

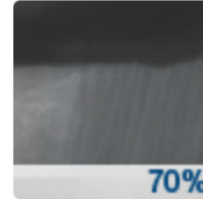
Friday



High: 90 °F

Partly Sunny
then Chance
T-storms

Friday Night



Low: 62 °F

Showers
Likely

Independence
Day



High: 87 °F

Chance
Showers



Enhanced Risk For Severe Weather

July 2, 2026
2:23 AM CDT

Thunderstorm Timing

Key Messages:

- Multiple rounds of storms possible across the area through the afternoon and evening.
 - Initial storm threat:
 - Hail > 2"
 - Winds +60 mph
 - Tornado or two
- Organizing during the evening into primarily a **high wind threat** for the **Enhanced** area.
- Uncertainty:**
 - High smoke from western wildfires influences instability.
 - Poor consistency among high resolution models regarding storm placement & timing.

NEW

Important Updates:

- Upgrade of Severe Weather risk area to **Enhanced**.

	7/2 Thu				7/3 Fri		
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am
Aberdeen	0	0	26	59	41	0	0
Britton	0	0	29	34	17	18	0
Chamberlain	1	28	37	47	32	20	11
Clark	0	0	0	81	63	27	21
Eagle Butte	0	24	38	41	34	0	0
Eureka	0	35	57	42	17	0	0
Gettysburg	0	21	45	53	26	0	0
McIntosh	0	68	71	28	0	0	0
Milbank	0	0	0	69	41	49	23
Miller	0	20	25	56	45	15	0
Mobridge	0	42	41	38	16	0	0
Murdo	0	16	45	40	54	21	19
Pierre	0	0	31	48	55	22	0
Redfield	0	0	19	63	53	23	17
Sisseton	0	0	25	45	27	25	16
Watertown	0	0	0	65	69	48	24
Webster	0	0	21	56	26	26	16
Wheaton	0	0	0	66	37	16	0



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

We will have to monitor for severe weather this afternoon, evening and through the overnight hours. Severe weather initially will start with a large hail, high wind and tornado threat, and multiple rounds of storms may occur at your location before everything organizes into a high wind threat in the enhanced risk area.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

3

Widespread Severe Weather
Expected

Timing:

2 PM through 11 PM CDT

Central/North Central SD

4 PM through 6 AM

Northeast SD & Western MN

PRIMARY THREATS



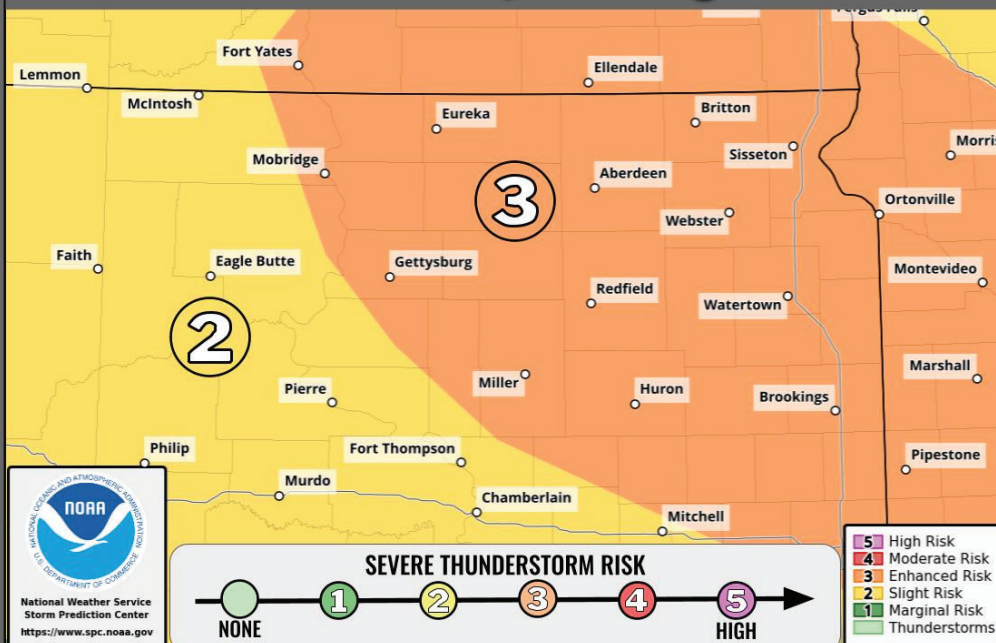
DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS
of 60-80 mph



LARGE HAIL
+2" diameter

TORNADO or
Two Possible

Enhanced Risk For Today into Friday Morning



The risk for severe weather has been elevated to Enhanced across north central/northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Main hazards are 2 inch or greater diameter hail and wind gusts of 60-80 mph. A tornado or two are possible as well.



Severe Weather Threat Summary

July 2, 2026

2:31 AM CDT

Share the message!

Hazards

Large Hail - High Winds - Tornadoes



What You Can Do Now...

When storms near your location, make sure you have a plan in place!

- How will you receive hazardous weather alerts?
- Is there a safe shelter nearby?
- Are there alternate routes to take if a storm blocks your path?



Have multiple ways to get warnings
[weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov)



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 5:18 PM

Low Temp: 64 °F at 12:32 AM

Wind: 22 mph at 6:04 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1949

Record Low: 37 in 1945

Average High: 84

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in July.: 0.23

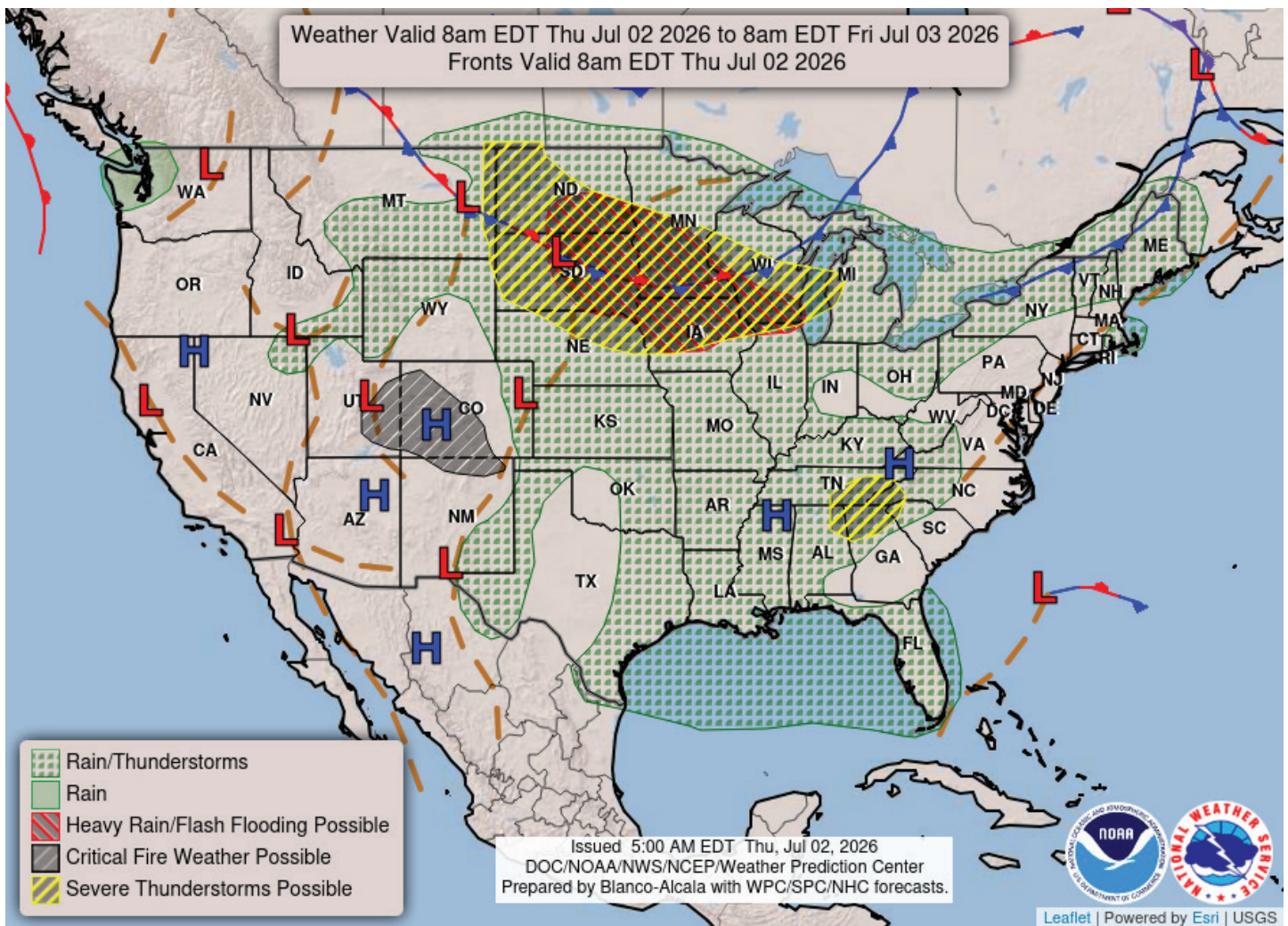
Precip to date in July.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 11.24

Precip Year to Date: 9.47

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:48 am



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Today in Weather History

July 2, 1921: Barns were destroyed on two farms near Frederick in Brown County. A boy who could not make it to the cellar was killed in the open near a barn. This death is one of the earliest known from a significant, estimated F2 tornado in Brown County.

July 2, 1960: Hail shredded corn flattened grain and hay and pounded soybeans into the ground in a strip extending from Clinton to Montevideo in Minnesota. Leaves and bark were stripped from trees. Hailstones were reported to pile up to a depth of four feet in low spots. One farmer lost 2000 turkeys. Twelve barns demolished, many outbuildings destroyed and several homes damaged by winds. Near Appleton, 45 cars of a moving 174 car freight train derailed by the wind, one hanger destroyed, and two planes were damaged. In Big Stone County alone, the cost to repair power lines and poles estimated to be near 10,000 dollars. Total crop acreage affected was near 64,000 acres. The three counties of Big Stone, Swift, and Chippewa Counties, was designed a disaster area.

July 2, 2005: A line of severe thunderstorms with powerful straight-line winds moved from northeast Wyoming and southeast Montana across northwest South Dakota during the evening. Widespread wind gusts of 60 to 80 mph affected northwestern South Dakota; breaking tree limbs, downing trees, and knocking down snow fences. The high winds capsized a boat on the Belle Fourche Reservoir near Orman Dam. Five people, including an infant, were rescued by emergency personnel with no one injured. The strongest winds were reported north of Newell, near Castle Rock, where gusts estimated at 100 mph damaged a barn roof and ripped a chimney off a house. Hail to the size of quarters was also reported across parts of the area, and combined with the wind, caused some minor damage.

1833: The following is from the "History and Description of New England" published in 1860: "On the 2nd of July, 1833, this town (Holland, Vermont) was visited by a violent tornado, which commenced on Salem Pond in Salem, and passed over this place in a northeasterly direction. It was from half to three-quarters of a mile wide and prostrated and scattered nearly all the trees, fences, and buildings in its course. It crossed the outlet of Norton Pond and passed into Canada, and its path could be traced through the forests nearly to Connecticut River."

1843: An alligator reportedly fell from the sky onto Anson Street in Charleston, SC during a thunderstorm.

1833 — An unusually large New England tornado, one half to three quarters of a mile wide, went from Salem Pond to Norton Pond, VT, and then into Canada. It prostrated nearly everything in its path. (The Weather Channel)

1843 — An alligator reportedly fell from the sky onto Anson Street in Charleston, SC, during a thunderstorm. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Thunderstorms in Colorado produced hail as large as golf balls northwest of Kiowa, which accumulated to a depth of twelve inches. Hail two and a half inches in diameter was reported at Black Forest. Hail damaged 900 acres of crops south of the town of Wiggins. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Twenty-six cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The morning low of 47 degrees at Roanoke, VA, broke the July record set the previous day. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the south central U.S., with 158 reports of large hail and damaging winds through the day. Evening thunderstorms in northeastern Texas produced softball size hail which caused more than five million dollars damage at Allen, and wind gusts to 90 mph at Dallas, which injured eight persons and caused seven million dollars damage. Winnfield LA reported 29.52 inches of rain in six days, for a total of 62.50 inches for the first six months of the year. Midland, TX, reported an all-time record high of 112 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2001: In Michigan, frost and freezing temperatures were observed in some locations with Grant dropping to 29 degrees. Muskegon reported their coldest July temperature on record with 39 degrees. Other daily record lows included: Lansing: 38, Muskegon: 39, Flint: 40, Youngstown, Ohio: 40, and Grand Rapids, Michigan: 43 degrees.

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Daily Devotion

A Mighty Servant of God

God wants to transform you into who He has made you to be. It starts with surrender

Ephesians 4:17-24: 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

If we want to become God's mighty servant, we must first decide whether we will base our life on His priorities or the world's.

Before salvation, people typically live according to their own desires. However, Scripture teaches us to do the opposite: to put God above all else and "regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 2:3). Jesus says that giving God top priority involves loving Him wholeheartedly, denying ourselves, and following Him (Matthew 16:24; Matthew 22:37-38).

How can we know we are becoming spiritually stronger? First, we'll be less attracted to sin and ungodly practices and will yearn to be more like Jesus. Next, we will start replacing ungodly habits with activities that please and honor the Lord. Then, we'll begin to comprehend some of the deeper biblical truths and apply them in our life. Finally, our spiritual discernment will improve. With the Holy Spirit's help, we will more easily recognize and choose God's best.

Do you want to become mighty in spirit? If so, spend time in the Scriptures, learning what is important to God. Then ask Him to transform you into the person He has designed you to be. As you align your priorities with His, you'll discover a strength and purpose you never knew was possible.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

23 25 29 36 48 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 53 Mins 7
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.30.26

26 41 50 53 62 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$542,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 38
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

10 20 35 38 46 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$31,490,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 14 Hrs 53
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

4 14 22 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$164,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 8
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

10 20 30 60 64 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 37
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.01.26

2 6 26 39 68 6

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$396,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 37
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Vatican cracks down on a traditionalist group by excommunicating its bishops

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican responded aggressively Thursday to a traditionalist group that consecrated bishops without the pope's consent, declaring the Society of St. Pius X had formally broken with the Catholic Church. It also excommunicated its bishops and priests, and warned its faithful that they too face the harshest sanctions in the church.

By declaring a schism and extending sanctions to potentially thousands of Catholics, the Vatican's doctrine office went above and beyond the minimum sanctions foreseen by the church's canon law to respond to the consecrations Wednesday of four new bishops.

The society, known by its acronym SSPX, celebrates the ancient Latin Mass and opposes the modernizing reforms of the Catholic Church, which it considers to be rife with heresies and errors. While a fringe movement on the Catholic right, the SSPX has been a thorn in the Vatican's side for five decades because it claims to be even more Catholic than the Holy See.

The harshness of the response suggested that after trying to negotiate with the SSPX, the Vatican under Pope Leo XIV has had enough.

During a ritual-filled, five-hour Mass on Wednesday at its seminary in Econe, Switzerland, the SSPX consecrated four new bishops in direct defiance of Leo, who had urged the group to hold off for the sake of church unity. An estimated 15,500 people and their children attended, a sign that the SSPX has plenty of supporters who came from around the world knowing full well they were defying Rome.

A decree targeting bishops and faithful

In a decree, the Vatican excommunicated the four new bishops and the two bishops who participated in the ceremony. It declared the consecrations a "schismatic act" and declared the society itself had created a schism, or intentional rupture with the Catholic Church.

The Vatican warned the faithful to stop going to the society's Masses, declaring "those who adhere formally" to the society are considered themselves schismatic and excommunicated. It declared SSPX priests to be schismatic, and therefore excommunicated, and invalidated the sacraments of confession and marriage that they administer.

The Vatican has previously described "adherence" to the SSPX as including those faithful who share in the schism by placing their loyalties to the society above the pope, and those who participate exclusively in SSPX Masses. As a result, Thursday's decree could potentially involve the excommunications of thousands of rank-and-file SSPX faithful who attend SSPX Masses.

The sanctions, especially those targeting the priests, the faithful and the sacraments they can receive, were particularly harsh and reversed concessions the Vatican had granted the SSPX in recent years as part of its outreach to bring the group back under Rome's wing.

The actions were announced just as one of the new bishops, Pascal Schreiber of Switzerland, was celebrating his first Mass as a bishop in Econe.

A group formed in opposition of modernism

French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre founded the SSPX in 1970 in opposition to the modernizing reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Among other things, the 1960s meetings known as Vatican II revolutionized the church's relations with other Christians, Jews and people of other faiths and allowed Mass to be celebrated in the vernacular rather than Latin.

Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without papal consent in 1988. The Vatican promptly excommunicated Lefebvre and the four bishops and declared the consecrations a "schismatic act."

Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 lifted the excommunications as part of his yearslong outreach to the group. But the SSPX today has no legal standing in the church and with Thursday's decree is declared to be in

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schism.

The consecrations had posed a crisis for Leo because the American pope has stressed the need for church unity. He has reached out especially to the conservative and traditionalist wing of the church that was in many ways alienated during the Pope Francis pontificate.

The Vatican responded so aggressively in part because the group poses something of a threat by representing a parallel, ultra-Catholic, pre-Vatican II church that has grown in the decades since its original break from Rome. While representing a fraction of the 1.4-billion strong Catholic faithful, the SSPX now has six bishops, 751 priests, 264 seminarians training in five seminaries, 145 religious brothers, 88 oblates and 250 religious sisters representing 50 nationalities, according to SSPX statistics.

Traditionalists in communion with Rome respond

In a note accompanying the decree, the Vatican said it was willing, "like a caring mother," to welcome any SSPX faithful back into the fold. But it didn't create any specific Vatican entity to receive them, decreeing only that Vatican ambassadors around the world would establish procedures for local bishops to follow. The Vatican was expected to explain the procedures later Thursday in a doctrinal statement.

While the SSPX is out of communion with Rome, plenty of other Catholic traditionalists who love the Latin Mass remain in communion with the Holy See. They had been watching carefully to see how Leo's Vatican would respond to the SSPX consecrations and were surprised by the harshness of Thursday's sanctions.

Luigi Casalini, of the blog *Messa in Latino*, meaning Latin Mass, said the excommunication of the bishops was correct because canon law provides for it.

But the extension of the excommunications to SSPX priests and faithful was "an act of unusual severity," he said, while saying the invalidation of SSPX sacraments was problematic.

"Above all, we find it hard to believe that, to date, no Vatican body has been established to manage potential defectors," as was the case after the 1988 excommunications, Casalini told The Associated Press.

The SSPX has accused the church of being rife with errors, such as modernism and liberalism, and that only it is upholding the true faith of Christ. It has justified the consecrations, citing a "state of necessity" to minister to its faithful. Only two of the original four bishops consecrated in 1988 are alive, and the SSPX has said they simply are too old to minister to all the SSPX faithful.

In his homily during the consecrations Wednesday, the Rev. Davide Pagliarani, the SSPX superior, insisted the consecrations served Leo and the church.

"We are accused of not respecting the pope," Pagliarani said. "But it is precisely because we love the pope as the vicar of Christ, as the head of the church, that we don't want to see the pope humiliated anymore, on the side of false shepherds representing false religions."

One of the thousands of worshippers at Wednesday's consecrations was Allison Isermann, a 24-year-old from St. Marys, Kansas, who grew up as a society member and strongly defended its teaching in opposition to Vatican II, specifically its openness to those of other faiths.

"It is actually very anti-Catholic and anti-charitable to affirm others and their beliefs when it is our duty and our mission to actually convert and sanctify the world and to restore all things in Christ," she said.

A major Russian attack kills 20 in Kyiv as Ukrainian strikes batter Moscow's oil sector

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia hammered Kyiv in an 11-hour drone and missile attack overnight into Thursday morning, killing at least 20 civilians in the city and injuring scores more in what Moscow said was retaliation for Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil facilities.

Loud explosions shook the Ukrainian capital for hours during the night, with many people sheltering in subway stations after authorities issued air raid warnings. Emergency crews were still digging through the rubble of collapsed and charred apartment buildings in search of victims as dawn broke.

Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement that the deadly bombardment was in response to Ukraine's long-range strikes that have caused severe fuel shortages and put pressure on President Vladimir Putin.

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Ukraine's increasingly frequent and large-scale attacks — described by Zelenskyy as a 40-day blitz — have especially targeted oil refineries, causing a fuel crisis that has frustrated Russians, more than four years after Moscow's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

Ukrainian officials say they are trying to force Putin to the negotiating table, but so far Moscow's response has been to hit back.

Diplomatic efforts to end the war, most recently by the Trump administration, haven't produced results. Putin thinks that time is on his side, that Western support will peter out and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually collapse under pressure from strategic bombing, Western analysts say.

Ukraine's top diplomat says it was a 'night of horror' in Kyiv

The attack killed 20 people in Kyiv, according to Kyiv city administration head Tymur Tkachenko. More than 90 others were injured, according to Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said it was a "night of horror" in the capital.

Damage was recorded in 30 locations across the city, mainly residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, according to Tymur Tkachenko, head of the Kyiv City Military Administration. Some 20 residential buildings were damaged, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

Flashes from exploding drones and missiles lit up the night, and loud booms echoed through Kyiv. Tracers from air defense fire streaked through the air as a huge pall of black smoke rose into the sky.

Kyiv resident Serhii Budko said three or four ballistic missiles hit his district of the city. "We were inside the shelter and felt the shelter shaking — the ceiling and floor, everything," the 24-year-old told The Associated Press.

In Kyiv's Desnianskyi district, people were trapped inside a damaged nine-story residential building, and in the Darnytskyi district six levels of a nine-story building collapsed.

Russia's General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov reported the results of the "massive retaliatory strike" to Putin, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

The bombardment was "exclusively against military or military-linked targets," Peskov said.

Russia's aerial attacks on Ukraine have repeatedly hit civilian areas. More than 16,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed in the war, according to the United Nations.

Sybiha said in April that domestic production meets up to 75% of Ukraine's military needs and accounts for up to 95% of long-range strikes against Russia. The location of the factories making those weapons is secret.

Elsewhere, in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region a Russian guided bomb strike killed a 7-year-old girl and wounded four other people, including an 11-year-old girl, all members of the same family, regional head Oleksandr Hanzha said.

Ukrainian officials urge countries to provide more air defenses

The attack used "high-precision long-range weapons" and drones on "military industry facilities and fuel and energy complexes in Kyiv and the Kyiv region, as well as military airfield infrastructure in four other regions of Ukraine," the Russian Defense Ministry's statement said.

It published a list of targets it said the barrage hit, mostly plants manufacturing and assembling Ukrainian drones, missiles and components.

Russia fired 74 missiles, 24 of them ballistic, and 496 drones of various types in the attack, Ukraine's air force said.

Ukraine's air defenses have improved throughout the war, especially in countering Russian drones. But ballistic missiles are harder to stop, and Ukrainian officials have repeatedly pleaded with partner countries to supply more Patriot missile systems that offer the best protection.

Sybiha urged countries not to delay decisions on supplying air defense systems and missiles.

He rejected any Russian attempts to justify the strikes as retaliation for Ukraine's long-range attacks, saying Ukraine was exercising its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter while Russia remained the aggressor.

Sybiha said on X that the death toll may rise as rescue teams continue their work.

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Ukraine attacks another Russian oil refinery

Ukrainian forces struck one of Russia's largest oil refineries overnight in the Nizhny Novgorod region east of Moscow, starting a fire, Ukraine's General Staff said.

Also, Ukrainian forces struck a railway bridge over the Siverskyi Donets River in the Russian-occupied Luhansk region, it said. The bridge was used by Russian forces to transport personnel, weapons and military supplies, according to the General Staff.

Ukraine's recent success with drone strikes that keep Russian troops pinned down on the front line, disrupt Russian supply lines in the rear and damage oil facilities have brought a significant change in the war, Western analysts say.

"Russia's spring-summer 2026 offensive has failed to achieve operationally significant gains thus far, and Russian forces' rate of advance in June 2026 (was) a fraction of the rate of advance that Russian forces achieved in June 2025," the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said in an assessment late Wednesday.

11-year-old boy driving pickup truck crashes into group of Thai monks, killing 9

BANGKOK (AP) — An 11-year-old boy crashed a pickup truck into a group of monks on a pilgrimage walk in northeastern Thailand on Thursday, killing nine, officials said.

A total of 35 monks from Mukdahan province, about 600 kilometers (372 miles) northeast of the capital Bangkok, were on the pilgrimage. Five monks were killed at the site, while four others died at a hospital. Thirteen were hospitalized with three in critical condition, according to the provincial administration.

The group started the 260-kilometer (161-mile) walk to Ubon Ratchathani province about 30 minutes before the crash.

Security camera footage shared by a local rescue group, Ruam Jai Mukdahan Rescue Association, shows the monks walking in a single line on the side of a road before the truck crashes into them.

The boy is in custody and will be questioned when state child protection officers arrive, police said.

The cause of the accident is under investigation, but police said the monks described seeing the vehicle swerving before it slid off the road and crashed into the group.

Princess Kate returns to Wimbledon and greets tennis fans lining up in the Queue

By KEN MAGUIRE AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Kate, the Princess of Wales, met tennis fans lining up in Wimbledon's famous Queue on Thursday before attending a second-round match featuring British player Arthur Fery on one of the outer courts at the grass-court Grand Slam.

The princess, who early last year announced her cancer was in remission, is the patron of the All England Club.

"On arrival, Her Royal Highness visited The Queue, spending time meeting attendees who have queued since early this morning, alongside AELTC's honorary stewards, who volunteer each year to manage The Queue and welcome guests as they arrive at the Championships," Kensington Palace said in a statement.

Wimbledon leaves a small batch of tickets available for same-day purchase and fans begin lining up and camping out the evening before in Wimbledon Park to get them each day.

The palace said Kate — who also helped out in a Wimbledon ticket office — was to meet with children from Shine Camera Club, a local program that supports children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Kate last year was at Centre Court on consecutive days to present the winners' trophies to singles champions Iga Swiatek and Jannik Sinner.

A year ago, Kate offered consoling words to women's runner-up Amanda Anisimova after a 6-0, 6-0 loss to Swiatek.

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In 2024, while recovering from cancer, Kate did not attend the women's final but was on hand for Carlos Alcaraz's win over Novak Djokovic.

Fery was playing Otto Virtanen of Finland on Court 18. She sat next to Tim Henman, the former Wimbledon semifinalist who is now an All England Club board member.

New Jersey is set to charge companies with workers on Medicaid. Other states may follow

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

New Jersey is launching a new fee on companies whose workers have Medicaid health coverage instead of being covered by their employers. Other states are considering it, too.

Democratic lawmakers and governors see it as a way to help pay for the joint federal and state insurance program that covers low-income residents as federal policy changes are expected to make the program more expensive for states and may lead to a reduction in the number of people with coverage.

Proponents also say it's about fairness because employers benefit from having some lower-income workers with taxpayer-funded health coverage.

Business groups object. So do some liberal policy organizations.

New Jersey is putting the fee in place

New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill signed a measure Tuesday night to charge employers that have at least 50 workers covered by Medicaid, and the state budget she approved earlier in the week counts on raising \$145 million this year from the program.

Under the plan, companies will be billed for each employee and employees' dependent receiving Medicaid, the joint state-federal insurance program.

The fees per person would start at \$325 a year for companies with 50 to 249 Medicaid beneficiaries and top out at \$725 annually for employers with at least 500 recipients.

Federal Medicaid changes are prompting Democratic-led states to act

A bill passed this week in California doesn't impose a charge now, but it does direct the state administration to present lawmakers options for doing so next year.

Finishing the job would fall to the successor of Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat who is leaving office in January. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Xavier Becerra has made an employer charge part of his election platform.

State Sen. John Laird, a Democrat who sponsored the California proposal, said the big tax and policy law President Donald Trump signed a year ago was a major factor in the need for action because it could prompt the state to spend more on Medicaid to plug holes left by federal changes.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office expects more than 10 million people will be uninsured because of the law by 2034. It requires some beneficiaries to work, be in school or volunteer — and requires even more to document whether they meet the requirements. Most employees at the bigger companies would not be at risk of losing Medicaid coverage as long as they're working at least 20 hours a week.

Laird also said there's an equity issue involved.

"If you're a small business person in California, you are quite likely paying for health insurance for your employees. And through your taxes, you're paying for health insurance for some of the biggest employers in California," he said. "And that's not fair."

Legislation with similar intents passed one legislative chamber in both Colorado and Oregon this year, but neither made it to law. A measure was also introduced in Washington.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat who is seeking a third term in November's election, has called for the same move there with the idea of making it a part of the state budget that would kick in two years from now.

Opposition comes from business and some liberal groups

It's no surprise that business organizations have criticized the approach, which would add to their ex-

penses.

"The fact remains that many job-creators are still going to be penalized for something they have no control over," Christopher Emigholz, the chief government affairs officer at the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, said in a statement. "If an employee declines an employer-provided health plan because they'd rather be on Medicaid, it is unfair to penalize the employer for that employee's decision."

Some left-leaning policy organizations also oppose the charges.

Gideon Lukens, who analyzes health policy at the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said that while the idea may be well-intentioned, it could lead companies to employ fewer people from low-income household or single parents. He said companies could also consider the policy in decisions about whom to hire or lay off — and also on where to locate or how many workers to employ.

And, he said, it could make employees — or potential employees — less likely to enroll in Medicaid knowing it would make them less attractive to employers.

"Usually, when I see a tax on something it's going to discourage whatever being taxed," he said in an interview.

New Jersey's legislation tries to address some of the concerns. It would exempt temporary, seasonal and part-time employees. It would also bar employment decisions based on a workers' Medicaid status.

The idea has come up before, though it's never stuck for long

Charging companies whose workers are covered by Medicaid isn't a new idea. At least two states have previously enacted it, and it's been proposed in Congress.

Massachusetts lawmakers in 2017 adopted a charge on employers up to \$750 per nondisabled worker who was covered through Medicaid or a state-subsidized health exchange plan. The program began in 2018 was not renewed when it expired the next year.

An even earlier policy in Maryland, in 2006, immediately affected only Walmart. An industry group challenged it in court and won, stopping the fees. A federal judge found that it required the company to track and allocate employment benefits differently in Maryland than in other states in violation of a federal law that governs self-insured employee health plans.

The latest generation of proposals may avoid that legal pitfall by not referencing those health plans in the legislation.

Iran warns oil tankers to use approved routes in Strait of Hormuz or face a 'forceful response'

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's joint military command warned Thursday that all oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz must use its approved routes or face a "forceful response," again ratcheting up tensions over a waterway crucial for international energy supplies.

The strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, has emerged as one of the top issues in negotiations to reach a permanent end to the Iran war. The statement from the Khatam al-Anbiya military command, reported by Iranian state television, comes after both U.S. and Iranian diplomats met with mediators on Wednesday in Qatar.

It wasn't immediately clear what sparked the threat from Iran. However, the U.S. military's Central Command had put out a statement about having a meeting with officials from Mideast nations in Bahrain that said "leaders underscored their shared commitment to the free flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz."

That appears to have been the phrase to anger Iran, which is preparing for the funeral that begins this weekend for the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the war's first moments in February.

"Any failure to comply, deviation from the designated route, or disregard for the navigation protocols of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz will be met with an immediate and forceful response from the armed forces, endangering the security of the violating vessels," the Iranian statement said.

It also said the continued presence of U.S. fighter jets over the strait "causes insecurity in this waterway and threatens regional security."

"Any attempt by the United States to interfere in security matters or any disruptive action in the Strait of Hormuz will be considered a threat to Iran's national sovereignty and will be met with a rapid and decisive reaction," the Iranian warning added.

Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the waterway.

The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they won't agree to the charges. An effort by Oman and a United Nations agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore sparked attacks across the Mideast last weekend, highlighting the tensions.

Despite the tensions, Wednesday's talks saw "positive progress," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said. He told journalists that Pakistan hoped the next round of talks would be scheduled as soon as possible after Khamenei's funeral.

Gaza faces uncertain future as Palestinians and Israelis mark 1,000 days of war

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

It's the 1,000th day since a Hamas-led attack on Israel sparked the war in Gaza. Other conflicts have emerged in the region, and fragile ceasefires show scars of persistent attacks. Both Israelis and Palestinians are weary of the strain.

The fate of over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, largely displaced and living amid ruins, remains uncertain. Israeli forces controlled over half of the territory under the ceasefire that took effect on Oct. 10, but Israel's government has expanded that and says it aims to hold 70%.

The Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on southern Israel killed about 1,200 people and took 251 hostage. All hostages or their remains have been released or handed over. Many recounted long-term starvation, physical and psychological abuse and, in some cases, sexual abuse.

Israel's retaliation has killed a total of 73,066 Palestinians as of Tuesday, Gaza's Health Ministry says. Despite the ceasefire, few people can get in or out of Gaza. Further ceasefire steps, including Hamas' disarmament and the immense task of reconstruction, have stalled.

"Much more needs to be done so that even a semblance of normality can come back, and we are far, far away from this," the International Committee of the Red Cross regional director, Nicolas von Arx, said this week.

Here's a look at what has happened over the 1,000 days and what may lie ahead.

Palestinians are still being killed

Israeli strikes have lessened considerably since the ceasefire took effect, but they continue almost daily.

Gaza's Health Ministry counted 1,053 Palestinians dead since the ceasefire as of Tuesday, including over 350 women and children. In recent days, they included a teenage girl on her way to school and a mother with her 1-year-old daughter.

"Where is this ceasefire they keep talking about?! Shame on them," one Palestinian, Wisal Abu Khater, said this week after another deadly strike, lashing out at Arabs who she said have failed Gaza's people and are busy watching World Cup games instead.

The United Nations on Wednesday warned that the Israeli expansion in Gaza increases deadly risks for civilians in "areas lacking clear demarcation on the ground."

The Health Ministry said over 3,400 people have been wounded since the ceasefire. The ministry is part of the Hamas-led government and maintains detailed casualty records seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants but says women and children make up roughly half the dead.

Israel's military says it targets Hamas and other militants, often asserting they were planning attacks,

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and accuses Hamas of using civilians as human shields.

The Trump-created Board of Peace has made little progress

The top diplomat overseeing the ceasefire, Nikolay Mladenov, has made it clear: The next steps in implementing the U.S.-brokered deal are stalled over the difficult issue of Hamas disarming.

This has been a high-profile test of the Board of Peace created and led by U.S. President Donald Trump. Launched with fanfare and billions of dollars in international pledges earlier this year with the sole aim of Gaza's recovery from war, the board now says little publicly.

Hamas' disarmament would open the way for other steps, including new administration of Gaza and the deployment of an international stabilization force to assist with security and reconstruction efforts. While Hamas hasn't outright rejected disarming, it has indicated it wants to hold on to some weapons and demanded further concessions from Israel.

A divided Israel, still in mourning, faces an election

Israelis over the past 1,000 days have been traumatized by the Oct. 7 attack — the deadliest in Israel's history — and other conflicts that followed: against the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen and Iran itself.

Israelis marked the anniversary on Thursday in several spots across the country, including at the scene of a music festival where at least 364 people were killed and 40 taken hostage. Other people marked it at bomb shelters along the roads in the south where their relatives were killed as they tried to flee the Hamas onslaught.

"Today we mark 1,000 days, 1,000 days since the terrible day when our world collapsed, the day we lost our loved ones," said Yoram Yehudai, whose son Ron was killed at the festival. "We are here at the Nova site, behind me was the party area itself. Children who came to dance and celebrate went home in coffins."

Dozens of protesters gathered near the Israeli parliament, demanding the government establish a state commission of inquiry into the attack, which Netanyahu has tried to avoid.

These conflicts and their toll — including mounting deaths of Israeli soldiers, continuing attacks along Israel's border with Lebanon and international allegations of genocide in Gaza, which Israel rejects — are weighing on Israelis and the national mood as Netanyahu seeks reelection this fall.

Netanyahu has projected confidence, but he faces a tough challenge.

Over 60% of Israelis think he shouldn't run again, according to a poll by The Israel Democracy Institute published last month. Anger has been high over the security failures before Oct. 7, the lack of a state commission of inquiry to investigate them and unpopular exemptions from military service granted to Netanyahu's ultra-Orthodox governing partners.

Gaza is in rubble as humanitarian aid still faces obstacles

Palestinians in Gaza say they are near their limit. Sheltering in vast tent camps with basic if any utilities, or in the skeletons of bombed-out buildings, they continue to live amid the hum of Israeli drones and the daily threat of strikes.

The ceasefire was meant to bring a surge in humanitarian aid like medicines and fuel. Aid groups and others say that has not happened. All of Gaza's border crossings remain tightly restricted, and at times they have closed completely. The U.N. last month said 17 hospitals are still not functional.

"Cumbersome" Israeli approvals and customs procedures limit crucial supplies, U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said last month, adding that even prosthetic limbs have been affected by concerns about having a potential "dual" use as weapons.

Famine was declared in Gaza City last August, but food security experts later said there were "notable improvements" after the ceasefire. The Israeli military body responsible for coordinating civilian affairs in Gaza, COGAT, said Wednesday that "the quantities of food that are being brought in far exceed the nutritional needs of the Gazan civilian population."

With Israeli forces expanding in Gaza, and Hamas militants accused of illegally executing Palestinians for alleged collaboration with Israel or crimes like looting, people say they are stressed and exhausted.

"We had everything before the war," said Mahmoud Ashour, a 33-year-old shop owner in Khan Younis. "And now we're just craving a bite to eat."

Facing barbs and pressure from Trump, Europe's leaders close ranks

By GIADA ZAMPANO and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

ROME (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump's attacks on Italy's premier have had an unintended consequence.

After Trump questioned Italy's reliability as a wartime ally and claimed Giorgia Meloni had groveled for his attention, European leaders rallied to Meloni's side, thawing what had been a frosty relationship over her hard-right political roots.

It is the latest example of how the often divisive American president is helping to draw Europe closer together.

European leaders are finding more reasons to coordinate on defense, tariffs and foreign policy as they confront wars in Ukraine and Iran, a ballooning trade deficit with China, and threats from Russia. That leaves Trump, who has often preferred to negotiate with European countries individually, with less ability to do so, analysts say.

"Most of the mainstream leaders realize that Europe is getting squeezed between China and America, and so, if not now, then when?" said Sudha David-Wilp, vice president at the German Marshall Fund. "They need to act as a bloc in order to maintain Europe's place in the world."

This newfound European unity could be tested next week at a NATO summit in Turkey.

European leaders rally around Meloni

Meloni's spat with Trump has helped her strengthen ties with European leaders once wary of her party's post-fascist roots.

A pivotal moment came in March when she wouldn't allow U.S. bombers headed to the Middle East to use a base in Sicily without parliamentary approval.

For years before then, France and Germany often kept Meloni outside the small-group talks that helped shape Europe's response to major foreign policy crises. That persisted into 2026 amid disagreements over the Russian war on Ukraine, including Meloni's rejection of a proposal by Britain and France to send European troops there following a possible ceasefire.

But Trump's escalating attacks on Meloni — who called Trump's criticism of Pope Leo "unacceptable" — helped shift the dynamic, prompting European leaders to rally around her.

After all, they, too, have been on the receiving end of Trump's barbs.

Meloni was firmly in the fold at a late June meeting in Berlin with the leaders of Germany, France, Britain and Poland. And she met the next day with French President Emmanuel Macron in southern France — the first bilateral summit since the pandemic.

Europe's nationalist parties are adjusting

Even nationalist parties across the continent once aligned with Trump are recalibrating their stances because his trade policies and war with Iran are proving unpopular with voters.

In France, far-right leader Jordan Bardella recently blasted U.S. actions as "foreign interference" and described Trump as "erratic" and "extremely unsteady." Bardella had previously welcomed Trump's brand of nationalism as a "wind of freedom."

In Germany, leaders of the far-right Alternative for Germany party have criticized the U.S. military campaign against Iran. The co-leader of the party, Tino Chrupalla, said in March he was "extremely disappointed" with Trump, whom he had viewed as a politician who would avoid new conflicts.

The changing rhetoric comes as elections approach, putting more focus on domestic issues.

"This pushes everyone to consider a European horizon more than an international one," said Lorenzo Castellani, a political analyst and professor at Rome's LUISS University,

Beyond Europe's biggest powers

These dynamics are playing out beyond the European Union, from the Arctic Ocean to the Balkans.

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When Trump threatened to take Greenland by force, protests erupted in its capital, Nuuk, and in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. Leaders across the political spectrum bristled at the threatened infringement of European sovereignty and feared it could shatter the already stressed NATO military alliance.

In Albania, a luxury development being planned that is linked to Trump's family business has become a major political issue, drawing protests in June.

The political risks of close alignment with Trump were perhaps most clearly illustrated in Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán — long regarded as Trump's closest ally in the European Union — was voted out of office in April despite support from the U.S. president and prominent figures in the MAGA movement.

An analysis by the consultancy Maplecroft suggested that negative perceptions of the Trump administration may have weighed on Orbán politically.

Meloni's balancing act

Though Meloni remains closely aligned with Trump on issues like immigration and security, she has long diverged from him on Ukraine. Her steadfast support for Kyiv made her more palatable for European leaders and has been a key factor in forging a more united European front toward the U.S.

During their public spat last month, Meloni said her friendship with Trump came with a heavy political cost.

In her response to his accusation that she had "begged" to be photographed with him while at the recent G7 summit in France, she wrote on social media: "As for my popularity, being your friend has certainly not helped it, nor does it depend on my relationship with you."

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that Trump is deeply unpopular in Italy. According to the survey, 83% of Italians have no confidence in Trump's ability to do the right thing regarding foreign affairs. His handling of a range of issues -- including Iran, tariffs, and U.S. immigration policies -- received a low level of support.

With a national election due by 2027 — and possibly as early as next spring — Meloni faces mounting political pressures, including fallout from the unpopular Iran war and her former ties to Trump.

Voters across Europe could hold their own politicians accountable for the actions of an American president beyond their control, said Castellani, the political analyst.

"At a certain point, when voters see the price of gasoline rising because of a war perceived as distant, they ask Meloni for the bill, not Trump."

Some ransom notes sent in Nancy Guthrie case still being investigated as legitimate, FBI says

By The Associated Press undefined

The FBI has discounted some of the ransom notes that surfaced after the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie as nothing more than extortion attempts, but the agency said Wednesday it's still evaluating others that might be legitimate.

The FBI did not specify how many ransom notes have been received, other than saying "several."

"This case continues to be investigated as a kidnapping for ransom case," the FBI said in a statement.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department is also investigating the case. The department declined to comment on the notes Wednesday but said it's taking every tip in the investigation seriously.

Tucson TV station KOLD has said it received two notes, one demanding millions in Bitcoin in exchange for Guthrie's return and another that said she had died. TMZ also received a note.

Guthrie is the mother of longtime "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie. Authorities believe she was kidnapped, abducted or otherwise taken against her will on Feb. 1. They found blood near the front doorstep of her home just outside Tucson, and the FBI later released surveillance videos showing a masked man on the porch that night.

Volunteers and search teams scoured the nearby desert terrain filled with cactuses, bushes and boulders in the weeks after she vanished. A volunteer group recently conducted a search for her body near the Arizona-Mexico border.

Russia waged a drone campaign in Europe and likely launched drones from shadow ships, report says

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

Russia likely used shadow ships to launch drones over Europe that repeatedly disrupted civilian aviation, as it monitored military sites and tested the air defenses of NATO nations, according to a report published Thursday by the International Institute of Strategic Studies think tank.

The report, which was shared before publication with The Associated Press, plotted 144 suspected drone sightings across Europe, including in NATO members Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the U.K., and Denmark, between 2024 and 2026.

Those sightings peaked in late 2025, forcing the temporary closure of several European airports, including in Germany, Spain and Denmark.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen described the incidents in her country as the “most serious attack on Danish critical infrastructure to date.”

The IISS said the Russian campaign was designed to fall below the threshold of triggering discussions for a collective NATO response and was a “strategic failure” for Europe that exposed how the continent’s air defenses are not fit to deal with the current threat.

Air Chief Marshal John Stringer, NATO’s deputy supreme allied commander in Europe, told AP that it is up to each alliance member to decide how to respond to such threats — and many countries are taking them increasingly seriously.

Several senior European officials said it’s difficult to attribute the drone incursions to Russia, and Stringer did not blame Moscow. But he suggested the activity fits the pattern of behavior seen in a widespread campaign of disruption across Europe that Western officials have blamed on Russia since its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Of the handful of countries that have confirmed drone sightings, only Sweden has blamed Moscow directly — when a military drone flew toward a French aircraft carrier from a Russian spy ship.

President Vladimir Putin said in May that Russia is not waging a sabotage campaign against Europe.

European nations struggled to respond to drones, the IISS said

Drones are challenging to detect because they fly low and slow, and on radar can look like birds or planes. They can be launched inside, or near, national borders, bypassing missile defenses, which are designed to detect supersonic missiles fired from abroad. And even if a drone is shot down, it’s extremely difficult to identify where it came from or who sent it and why.

The incursions showed drone defenses in Europe need to rapidly be improved, the IISS said.

Creating a comprehensive picture of threats is often difficult because the responsibility for tackling drones is often split among various authorities, Lt. Gen. Jonny Lindfors, Sweden’s military representative to NATO, told AP. It’s also a “tough decision,” he said, to decide to shoot a drone down because it could cause civilian casualties.

In a June report, Denmark’s Defense Command said the armed forces “could have been in a stronger position” to respond to drone sightings and that there were shortcomings in equipment used to detect them. Following the incidents, Denmark and several other European countries said they would boost their drone defenses.

Countries that may have had a “benign” view of the danger a few years ago have now realized that counterdrone systems are a critical part of air defense, said Stringer.

Russia is launching drones from shadow ships, the IISS said

The IISS plotted the movement of Russian shadow fleet vessels — ships of uncertain ownership that help Moscow dodge sanctions — and concluded that it’s highly likely that Russia is using them as platforms for launching drones.

The report focused on sightings of drones across central and northwest Europe and did not examine incursions along NATO’s eastern flank, where multiple Russian and Ukrainian attack drones have entered

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European airspace.

On Dec. 2, the Vezhen, a shadow ship linked to the severing of a Baltic cable, sailed in circles off the coast of Ireland when Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived for his first official visit, the IISS said. Another ship was nearby, but its signal was off, it said.

At that time, four large military drones were spotted off the Dublin coast, flying for two hours above an Irish navy ship, the report said. The Irish Defense Forces did not reply to a request for comment.

The report cited other sightings that occurred when shadow fleet ships were nearby, several in Denmark.

— On Jan. 3, 2025, as the shadow fleet vessel Arctica sailed along the Danish coast, the IISS said up to 20 drones flew over the port of Koege, Denmark, before disappearing toward the sea.

— On Sept. 22, drone sightings led to the closure of Copenhagen Airport. The IISS found several shadow ships were in the area at the time, including the Arctica and the Boracay.

— Over the next several days, as the Boracay rounded Denmark and several other ships were in the area, more drones were reported over the country, including near military installations.

The IISS said suspicion for at least some of the sightings in September fell on the Boracay. The French military boarded the ship at the end of the month, and President Emmanuel Macron said he can't rule out that the vessel was involved in the drone flights over Denmark.

Denmark's Defense Command confirmed that drones were identified in the country's airspace in September and October 2025. It didn't link them to Russia but noted that Moscow is carrying out hybrid attacks against the West, including those that are of a "character and scope far beyond what Russia carried out before the war in Ukraine."

"It's a reasonable assumption" that Russia is launching drones from shadow fleet ships, said Lindfors, though he noted it's often "almost impossible" to attribute them to one nation or actor.

Russia flew drones above military sites, the report said

The report also concluded that Russia likely tried to monitor military sites in the U.K., the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany and force NATO nations to scramble to defend against drones, and so reveal radar positions and gaps in defenses. Among the reports of drones over military installations cited by the IISS were:

— The U.S. Air Force in Europe said there were multiple sightings of drones in November 2024 over four American air bases in the U.K.

— German authorities recorded more than 1,000 suspicious drone sightings in 2025, including over defense companies and military bases where Ukrainian soldiers were training.

— Dutch and Belgian defense officials said drones were spotted in November and December 2025 over military bases in the Netherlands and Belgium. The IISS said the bases are believed to host American B61 nuclear bombs.

— Drone sightings were reported at the Ile Longue submarine base, which hosts France's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines.

The U.S. Air Force in Europe said it couldn't provide more detail on the incidents in the U.K., the Netherlands and Belgium, nor confirm the presence of American nuclear weapons.

A British defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military information, said a defense police investigation found no evidence to conclusively link the drone sightings in the U.K. to Russia. The Dutch Defense Ministry confirmed drones were seen over Volkel Air Base and said it took steps to defend military sites against drones.

The French army chief of staff headquarters said an investigation of the drones over Ile Longue is on-going. It didn't respond to questions about whether the military suspects the drones were launched from shadow fleet ships.

Requests for comment were also sent to defense ministries in Belgium, Denmark and Germany.

With so many incursions, "it would be naive to believe it's just a coincidence," said Lindfors, suggesting that such threats are the new normal.

An AP journalist describes a month in the epicenter of Congo's Ebola outbreak

By JUSTIN KABUMBA Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Mourners stood at a distance as a small coffin was lowered into the grave. Health workers wearing masks and gloves joined a priest who prayed.

A 6-month-old girl was the latest victim of the Ebola outbreak sweeping through eastern Congo. She was the third child in her orphanage to die.

After a month reporting from the outbreak's epicenter with AP photographer Moses Sawasawa, this quiet scene has stayed with me the most.

From afar, the epidemic is often measured in numbers: over 1,300 confirmed cases, hundreds of deaths, tens of thousands of people who may have had contact with them.

The funeral is when we truly realized the gravity of the outbreak. Ebola does not distinguish between young and old, educated and uneducated, rich and the poor, civilians and health professionals.

And of course it's not over. Experts say the peak of infections hasn't been reached. There are no approved treatments for this type of Ebola, Bundibugyo, and the arrival of any vaccine is said to be months away.

Another death that stayed with us was that of a medical student a few months from graduation. She had been the hope of her family and a badly needed health professional in a remote region where outbreaks, like this one, can go undetected for weeks.

At her funeral, her mother was inconsolable.

Reporting on this outbreak means multiple dangers

It is hard to imagine a more challenging place for a deadly outbreak to unfold.

Every day of reporting began and ended with a careful process of protection and disinfection. Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. That meant putting on gloves, masks and hair nets in 80-degree Fahrenheit heat (26 Celsius) and 80% humidity.

Our driver's vehicle, our microphones and other equipment had to be disinfected after entering outbreak-affected areas. The routine became second nature.

As we reported at struggling health centers, the sound of crying families followed us. The air was thick and humid, and people were slick with sweat. Health workers moved between crowded wards, washing their hands again and again.

Seeing the grief and lives cut short reminded me of covering the previous crisis in this region, the capture of Goma city, a humanitarian hub, last year by M23 rebels. Wounded babies, children and adults were rushed to hospitals to the sounds of weeping loved ones.

The Ebola outbreak is centered in neighboring Ituri province, scarred by years of such conflict. Armed groups control some areas and nearly a million people have been displaced. Economic hardships have now deepened.

We found some people trying to keep their hands clean with oatmeal and sand.

In the first three weeks after this outbreak was declared in mid-May, at least 520 security incidents, including attacks on health workers, impacted the work of responders, the World Health Organization said.

Attacks continue to be reported. We saw hospital beds left charred, the patients having fled.

Other people with confirmed or suspected Ebola infections have been abducted, disappearing into a world of poor mobile phone signal and bone-shaking unpaved roads.

In these surroundings, local people like Husein Twaibu are coordinating the community response.

Twaibu told me at least four health zones in Ituri, encompassing thousands of people, remain inaccessible because they are under rebel control. Unable to enter, response teams are relying in part on rebel leaders to pass on Ebola prevention messages and encourage participation in measures meant to slow the spread of the virus.

But that brings up another problem.

Misinformation and fear are the biggest challenges

I repeatedly heard the concern from doctors and aid workers: Many residents do not trust the Ebola

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response. Some believe the disease is not real.

In a region long traumatized by attacks and exploitation of rich natural resources, people are wary of outsiders. A lack of understanding of Ebola, whose symptoms like fever can be mistaken for others like malaria, means the strict prevention measures can be jarring.

There has been anger especially around burials, with people told not to do what comes naturally: bathe and prepare a loved one for the grave.

The distrust is one reason health officials don't know the outbreak's true size. Authorities still haven't identified the first person who became ill.

Some residents avoid health centers. At times, community health workers who survived an Ebola infection find it difficult to persuade people to take the disease seriously.

One is Étienne Ezo, a nurse who contracted Ebola earlier this year.

He told me that many people ask why he survived and others didn't.

"Some say that health workers have been paid off, which is why so many people are dying. Others claim that medical staff are actually killing people," Ezo said. This is the kind of misinformation that he and others battle.

Journalists are not spared. At times, people accused us of being part of a conspiracy to invent the disease. Once, an angry crowd gathered outside a health center where we planned to report. Its director told us to come back another day.

And yet, life goes on

People are learning to adjust to the outbreak even as it grows.

At bars, face masks, temperature checks and socially distanced dancing are now part of a night out. Weddings have continued, with veils replacing face masks. At churches, attendants in nurse-like white gowns marked with red crosses hand out Communion wafers.

And during a World Cup match between Congo and Portugal, hundreds of fans embraced and cheered on the team at bars and roadside viewing areas, overjoyed at Congo's first World Cup showing in over half a century.

For a few hours, for all of us, social distancing gave way to celebration.

Retrofitted Qatari jet takes flight as Air Force One for Trump's trip to North Dakota

By JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday took his maiden voyage on a new Air Force One — a retrofitted Boeing 747-800 worth \$400 million gifted by Qatar that embeds his personality more deeply into the institution of the American presidency.

Gone is the trademark light blue hull that helped Air Force One blend into the sky. The refurbished jet is painted in Trump's preferred color scheme: a navy-blue belly with red and gold stripes. It has the luxury features that the president believes a commander-in-chief's entourage should have — plush carpets, lie-flat seats, wood paneling and a presidential seal on the seat belts, according to reported tours of the plane.

Trump told reporters that he was proud of the luxurious plane. "You can do two things: You can low-key it, or you can show it," he said.

The retrofitted Qatari jet is intended to serve as a "bridge" between the aging Boeing jets that have served as Air Force One for the last 36 years and two new aircraft, which are years behind schedule and expected to be delivered in 2028 at the earliest. Trump toured the new jet just weeks after returning to the White House last year and directed that it be prepared for his use for the bulk of his remaining time in office.

The compressed timetable set by the president limited the modifications to the plane. Images of the jet captured since its unveiling and analyzed by the Associated Press show that it is not equipped with at least some of the same missile detection and countermeasure systems as the outgoing Cold War-era jets.

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The Air Force has said that it did little to change the cabin layout of the plane and that it spent less than \$400 million on security upgrades.

Jeremiah Gertler, a senior analyst for Teal Group, an aviation and defense consulting firm, said that this absence, as well as a seemingly smaller number of communications antennas, suggested that the Qatari jet is better suited to only work as a domestic aircraft.

"If you're going on a long trip, you take the big fancy car, but if you're just buzzing around town, you'll settle for something less. Right? And this looks like it's a domestic-only model," Gertler said, speaking of the new jet.

"If the idea was to do it as quickly and inexpensively as possible, it would seem to lead to the notion that there's less content" in the jet's modifications, Gertler said.

Trump has said he plans to use the new plane next week when he travels to attend the NATO summit in Turkey.

The Air Force argued that the rapid conversion of the jet was done "without accepting any risk regarding security, safety, or secure communications," but added that "several highly complex engineering modifications required for the final (Air Force One aircraft) were intentionally excluded from the Bridge aircraft." The service acknowledged that it did not widen the doors leading out of the aircraft or include multiple stairs built into the hull of the plane.

Reporters are generally not permitted to take photos inside the plane unless Trump is present. But on Wednesday, Trump administration staffers shared images of the plane's interior on social media.

White House communications director Steven Cheung posted a photo of aides gathered around a circular table that had off-white place mats and leather captain's chairs. Monica Crowley, the chief of U.S. protocol, posted a picture of herself perched on a leather couch between a pair of Air Force One throw pillows. Mounted on the wall behind her was a framed photo of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

The jet carried Trump to North Dakota to see the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, its first official visitor ahead of its opening on the nation's 250th anniversary.

The gift from the Middle Eastern power raised ethical concerns, but Trump saw the plane as a necessary replacement for the older planes that had previously ferried him as president.

"This is a gift from a country that has treated us very well," Trump said. Trump has said in the past that the Qatar plane would end up in a presidential library.

The Onion's new parody of Alex Jones' Infowars starts with \$100,000 to Sandy Hook families

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

The satirical news site The Onion isn't waiting to take possession of Infowars to launch a parody of Alex Jones' conspiracy platform.

More than a year after first trying to buy Infowars, The Onion on Thursday will debut a send-up under its own website with plans to give some of the revenue to families of the victims in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

The families have still received no money from Jones since courts ordered him to pay more than \$1 billion for falsely calling the 2012 shooting a hoax.

The Onion will start by sending the families \$100,000 from merchandise sales that combine the conspiracy empire's brand with the The Onion's logo in rainbow colors, according to CEO Ben Collins, whose company is still in court trying to take control of Infowars.

"Don't give comedy writers a grudge for 18 months," Collins said.

The parody will include a series of shows and other content under Infowars branding that spoof Jones' aggressive mashup of conspiracies linking major news events, dubious scientific claims, attacks on people suffering in tragedies and sales of supplements and survival gear.

Jones' claims that the 2012 shooting that killed 20 first graders and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut is a hoax have no truth, but Jones continued to amplify them. His followers started

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to harass victims' families, suggesting they were "crisis actors" and even making death threats.

Jones' Infowars empire had 10 million visitors a month and generated more than \$50 million in annual revenues at its peak, according to the company. But the \$1.4 billion judgements in defamation cases in Connecticut and Texas, where Jones is based, forced him into bankruptcy and broke Infowars apart.

"All he's been left with is an iPhone and a fancy microphone," said Chris Mattei, an attorney for nine of the Sandy Hook families.

Jones has moved his show to a different website. An email sent to an address to request interviews went unanswered.

The families knew they could never stop Jones from getting his message out, and he has managed to avoid paying the judgement so far. But they could expose what he said and assure he can never profit again, Mattei said.

"Every dime Alex Jones makes from here until the end of eternity is going to be claimed by the families," Mattei said.

The Onion stepped in when Collins saw Infowars' assets were going to be sold at auction.

Collins spoke to Sandy Hook families, who said they were briefly skeptical, but then saw how The Onion's staff could use the Infowars style and branding to take the moral high ground and make fun of the people who not only caused them so much pain but they felt also poisoned society.

Collins didn't want to give away too much of the new stuff before it goes live Thursday.

But the new Infowars will maintain The Onion's sharp satire sprinkled with shock value. Collins said there will be a section selling a penis flattening device, a fake "pro oxygen" supplement pill that the host claims can replace breathing, as well as an extended debate on how many Bozo the Clowns there are.

"It's old-fashioned Infowars — using the tricks that they use to get people addicted to outrage and, I would say, addicted to anticipation, trying to find the thing that's around the corner that's going to save your life," Collins said.

The Onion will keep chasing Jones' property. Collins thinks they will soon get control of the Austin, Texas, studio Infowars once used.

Some families can't wait for that day. Collins said that Robbie Parker, whose daughter died at Sandy Hook, plans to read his book about fighting Jones while dealing with so much grief in the place Jones once sat.

The families at first wanted Infowars shut down forever and Jones never heard from again. But they are now looking forward to seeing what The Onion has planned, attorney Mattei said.

"The idea that it could be turned to some social good. I think it's even better," Mattei said. "So, yeah, I think the families are both pleased and amused with what they've been able to achieve here."

Analysis: Trump embraces 'Great Equivocator' role sending mixed signals that vex markets and allies

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the U.S. and Iran reached a tentative agreement to end the war, President Donald Trump managed to both trumpet the deal and raise questions about its viability, all in the same answer.

"It's a very strong deal," he said. "Nobody knows what it is. But it's very strong."

It was the kind of mixed signal the president frequently sends: He'll seem to commit to one side of a major issue, then the opposite — only to subsequently suggest he's not actually decided and may not be wed one way or the other.

Just as Ronald Reagan was the "Great Communicator" and George W. Bush declared himself "The Decider," Trump increasingly seems comfortable as the "Great Equivocator," oscillating between contradictions in what he says on one subject or multiple times in a single online post.

Taking so many positions means the president can't be fully wrong while letting the public fix on different, albeit often conflicting, statements that can reinforce their own beliefs. It differs from Trump's propensity for falsehoods, which can be part of a concentrated effort to cloud the facts for his own political benefit.

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"Trump is, generally, all over the map," said Daniel Immerwahr, a historian at Northwestern University and author of "How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States." "His friends forgive him, and his enemies hate it."

Those close to Trump say it's strategic

White House spokesperson Kush Desai dismissed questions about the president's shifting positions as an "asinine obsession with splitting hairs."

"President Trump's results speak for themselves," Desai said, noting the ceasefire agreement, a resulting decline in energy prices and administration efforts to lower prescription drug prices among the "many other victories for the American people."

Aides from Trump's first administration say the president likes to lean on the business concept of "optionality," or staying flexible enough to have always multiple choices available. That allows him to shift abruptly as the politics or his personal needs change.

Deepak Malhotra, a Harvard Business School professor and author of "Negotiating the Impossible," finds that implausible.

"Business leaders and politicians have always sought to create option value whenever possible. But they wouldn't go about it by taking incoherent, or mutually inconsistent, positions on major issues," he said. "That erodes credibility."

Still, Trump's style can make him a feared negotiator since no one knows his next move. It recalls President Richard Nixon's "madman" theory of foreign relations, in which he sought to gain an upper hand by spreading uncertainty about his personal volatility.

Trump has mostly abandoned any pretense of the United States playing its traditional role as leader of a rules-based global order. That could damage the country's international reputation, but it also gives Trump a freer hand, Immerwahr said.

Most presidents "are interested in systemic power, the whole chessboard," Immerwahr said. Trump, meanwhile, is "interested in what's in front of his face."

"That's not just a pathology of his, that's his worldview," Immerwahr said. "That is a strategy."

Trump is consistently inconsistent

While politicians typically try to avoid accusations of waffling, Trump has long been unafraid to contradict himself — refusing to be pinned down even when it unsettles financial markets or sparks consternation among fellow Republicans ahead of November's midterm elections.

On Iran, Trump indicated that two top objectives were to remove Tehran's stockpile of enriched uranium and eliminate its ability to fire ballistic missiles. More recently, however, he has suggested Iran should be able to keep both, citing the need for fairness among regional powers.

"You're not letting them have it for purposes of electricity and things like that," he said in June of the enriched uranium. "You have to use a little common sense."

Of Tehran's missiles, the president now says, "They have to have some because other people have some."

Malhotra said Trump "has become accustomed to people not holding him accountable for outcomes because he is typically able to change the subject or declare victory regardless."

"We are now witnessing what happens when someone like that realizes there are limits to how much you can spin reality," he said. "You start to promise everything and nothing, and you get fixated on making excuses for yesterday rather than strategizing for tomorrow."

Desai countered that the ceasefire agreement amounted to "the Art of the Deal in practice."

Trump also frequently offered conflicting statements about the war itself. He claimed repeatedly that it was already won even as fighting escalated. He downplayed the war as "a little excursion" and "not a big thing," while pointing to it as the reason he couldn't do other things, like attend his son's wedding in the Bahamas.

"I think there's a point where he goes into default sales mode for whatever he's trying to sell," said Thomas Wright, a former special assistant to President Joe Biden and senior director for strategic planning at his administration's National Security Council. "And he'll say, with great conviction, points that will sometimes

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be in contradiction to each other.”

It's not just Iran

Cuba, Trump has said, is “ready to fall” without U.S. military intervention. while also suggesting that the quick-strike U.S. operation to remove Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro could be a model for the island's communist government.

“Sometimes you have to use it,” Trump said of the military during a March investment forum. “And Cuba is next, by the way.” On Wednesday, in a North Dakota speech he was even more explicit saying of Cuba: “After many, many decades, it's coming our way.”

After spending years slamming Biden for rising inflation, Trump said recently, “I love the inflation,” as prices rose under his own watch during the Iran war.

Even when it comes to seeking a third presidential term, Trump has toggled between teasing another run and hinting that he's only joking — or maybe not.

Reagan, known for his keen storytelling and ability to project warmth, got his moniker from a background in radio and movie and television acting. Bush declared himself the ultimate arbiter at a low moment of the Iraq War when asked about firing Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Trump doesn't struggle to communicate. As a developer in 1980s New York, the future president was so obsessed with managing his image that he used fake names to call reporters and pose as his own spokesperson.

Now, he talks constantly to the media and is the unquestioned decision maker at the White House, where aides often have to scramble to make their own past and present statements coincide with the boss' latest about-face.

Trump nonetheless talks in circles as a matter of course.

“We like everybody really in the room. I don't like a few people, but that's OK,” the president said recently following an occasionally heated lunch with Senate Republicans.

Trump's approach carries risk even for allies

Daniel Ames, a professor at Columbia Business School whose research focuses on social judgment and behavior, said Trump may be driven by showmanship.

“We could look at President Trump's behavior through the lens of content production and managing for viewership,” Ames said. “Constant twists and cliffhangers may seem like attractive levers for engagement, leaving viewers wondering and having to tune back in to find out ‘What will I do?’”

But Wright, now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said Trump's ever-changing sentiments also mean he can fully support something, then shift his position without warning — leaving even close allies squeezed. For instance, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been politically weakened by the Iran war's major objectives going unfulfilled.

“It's a little bit like riding the tiger,” Wright said. “You might sometimes get him to move in your direction. But, when all is said and done, one might wonder if it was better just to leave the tiger alone.”

Belgium comes back from two goals down to beat Senegal 3-2 in extra time at World Cup

By ANDREW DESTIN AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — Belgium overturned a two-goal deficit and scored from the penalty spot deep into extra time to beat Senegal 3-2 on Wednesday in the biggest comeback of the World Cup so far.

Senegal held a 2-0 lead with just 5 minutes of regulation time remaining but late goals by Romelu Lukaku and Youri Tielemans pushed the round of 32 match into extra time.

Tielemans completed Belgium's comeback by converting a penalty in the 125th minute of the game — the latest goal in World Cup history.

“Being part of this comeback is a proud moment because I scored the last two goals to give the team the win today. I'm very proud of that to be able to help the team to score goals and bring us over the line,” Tielemans said.

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He was fouled with only seconds to go and with a penalty shootout looming, and the referee awarded the spot kick after a video review, ignoring protests from the Senegal team.

"I do not want to interpret the decision. We all have different interpretations when it comes to awarding a penalty," Senegal coach Pape Thiaw said. "I'd rather not comment, not interpreting the referee's decision."

The win for Belgium marked the second time in the last 11 World Cups that a team trailed by two or more goals in the knockout round and advanced. Belgium also did so in a 3-2 victory over Japan in the round of 16 at the 2018 tournament.

"Senegal deserved to win," Belgium coach Rudi Garcia said. "But, I am happy it was us."

Many of the key players from the Belgium team that finished in third place in Russia in 2018 were instrumental to Wednesday's victory. Lukaku, who leads his nation in goals scored, came off the bench to get Belgium back into the match by scoring in the 86th minute, setting the scene for Tielemans to force extra time.

"It is a cruel loss, as we were good in the game," Thiaw said. "We had the advantage. We were leading 2-0. However a football match is not an 85-minute one. Belgium came back, and we were not able to deal with that ... We must congratulate Belgium as they progress."

Belgium is back in the round of 16 for the third time in four tournaments. The team reached the quarter-finals in 2014 and the semifinals in 2018 but failed to get out of the group stage four years ago in Qatar.

The Belgians will next face the United States on Monday in Seattle.

Senegal long appeared to be heading toward the round of 16. Habib Diarra scored in the first half and Ismaila Sarr made it 2-0 at the start of the second. It was his fourth goal of the World Cup, and one of the most beautiful of the tournament. Sarr made a perfect first touch off his chest on a long ball from Moussa Niakhaté and then sent his shot past Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

Courtois, who was playing in his fourth World Cup, then made three key saves to keep Senegal from increasing its lead.

Senegal defender Krépin Diatta said Belgium should not have been allowed to get back into the game.

"It shouldn't have happened. You have to defend your box and you have to be the boss of your box," he said. "We suffered, but we have to go on. It's a pity."

Lukaku said Belgium showed character with its late comeback.

"This Senegal side is one of the best teams in the tournament," he said. "Technically, physically and tactically, it was really tough. But when we stepped up the intensity of our pressing, when we were there for the second ball, our team spirit shone through and we won the match."

Senegal headed to the World Cup as the second-highest ranking team in Africa, behind Morocco. It won a chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final on Jan. 18 against Morocco, but the result was overturned by the governing body of African soccer because Thiaw had temporarily pulled his players off the pitch.

Senegal advanced to the World Cup knockout phase as one of the best third-place finishers after losing to France and Norway and beating Iraq.

"It's the best African nation. It's as simple as that," Garcia said. "They showed that even against France, they dominated in the first half. They came out of a difficult group. I would have preferred not to play against them."

Venezuelan medics fear earthquake aftermath will trigger widening medical crisis

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, MEGAN JANETSKY and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Doctors said Wednesday they feared the aftermath of Venezuela's devastating twin earthquakes could trigger a widening medical crisis marked by untreated injuries, infectious diseases and a healthcare system already on the brink.

Thousands of displaced Venezuelans are sleeping in crowded shelters or outside without access to clean water amid dismal sanitary conditions following the June 24 earthquakes which officials say killed at least 2,295 and left more than 11,000 injured.

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Aid workers said the aftermath of the quakes has become a major medical crisis that, unless quickly controlled, would take more lives in the days and weeks ahead. The emergency has laid bare Venezuela's chronic shortage of doctors, the result of years of economic crisis, underfunding and emigration.

"The issue we foresee just around the corner is the infections that patients who have been exposed to the disaster for the longest time might bring," said Eugenio Cova, the head of the trauma unit at Hospital del Oeste Dr. José Gregorio Hernández in Caracas, the capital. "We've already gone through a period of complex trauma — which will continue to occur — but now it's complicated by infections."

Aid workers also warn that the extensive damage to infrastructure could fuel outbreaks of diseases in the hardest-hit communities.

"It's very hot and there's a lot of concern about potential vector-borne diseases," said Veronique Durroux, the U.N. humanitarian agency spokesperson for Latin America and the Caribbean. "Waste management is an issue. Debris management, when you see the scale of devastation, it's very concerning."

US military deploys 900 personnel to aid Venezuela

The United States had 900 military personnel currently on the ground to support relief and rescue operations as of Wednesday, Steven McCloud, a U.S. Southern Command spokesperson, told The Associated Press.

The military has repaired an earthquake-damaged runway at the country's main international airport that serves Caracas to allow for the arrival of humanitarian assistance and stationed naval assets off the coast to receive airlifted survivors. An additional 100 people from the U.S. State Department have been sent to aid those efforts, McCloud said.

So far, the Trump administration has offered Venezuela \$300 million in assistance channeled through aid groups and the United Nations. But that's just a fraction of the post-earthquake aid the country needs: Material damage from the quakes is estimated at over \$6.7 billion, according to satellite analysis by the U.N. Development Program.

Fifty other international teams have arrived in recent days to help with search-and-rescue operations, including from countries like Ecuador and Israel that don't have diplomatic relations with Venezuela. Against the odds, rescuers are continuing to find a small number of survivors, including on Tuesday, a toddler who had been trapped for six days.

Crisis-stricken hospitals dealt another blow

Long before the earthquakes, Venezuela's public hospitals were strained by shortages of water, energy, critical medical equipment and highly trained staff.

More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2013, when Nicolás Maduro took office and the economy came undone as a result of mismanagement, corruption and a drop in oil prices.

Among those who took flight were many specialized doctors and nurses.

Venezuela's medical association has estimated that about a third of its 60,000 registered physicians have left the country since the economic crisis began. Dr. Huniades Urbina, a member of the board of the pediatrics association of Venezuela, said the number left is roughly half of the 84,000 that the country needs based on World Health Organization standards.

Urbina added that a 2025 national survey of public hospitals revealed shortages of more than 30% of emergency supplies and more than 70% of supplies in operating rooms. Laboratories are "all practically closed or do the basic things only," he said.

The earthquakes "once again highlight the Venezuelan government's inability to provide an adequate health care system that meets the needs of the Venezuelan people," he said.

Underequipped hospitals face a surge

Those who remain now confront the overwhelming prospect of treating thousands of grievous injuries from crushed and caved-in concrete structures.

Hospital del Oeste Dr. José Gregorio Hernández in Caracas lacks screws and plates needed for orthopedic surgery and medicated gauze to prevent infections, said Cova, who conducts surgery on crushed limbs in makeshift operating rooms because possible earthquake damage has made parts of the building

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inaccessible. Doctors have even started posting what medical supplies they need on social media, asking for donations.

According to the government, the earthquakes damaged or otherwise compromised 38 hospitals nationwide.

There's also a nationwide shortage of ambulances that forces many injured Venezuelans to arrive at hospitals in the backs of pickup trucks, said Jaime Lorenzo, director of United Doctors of Venezuela, a nonprofit network of medical professionals. That's just one of the ways that ordinary citizens, feeling abandoned by the government, say they've been forced to shoulder much of the rescue effort.

When the chaos and trauma of the quakes starts to subside, Lorenzo said he fears a new wave of patients will hit hospitals: Venezuelans, who, rendered suddenly homeless after the earthquakes, have gone all week without medication for chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Questions over government response

The government of acting President Delcy Rodríguez — who served as deputy to Maduro until he was ousted by the United States in January and who became interim leader with the backing of the Trump administration — has faced growing criticism over its handling of the disaster.

Videos circulating on social media in recent days appear to show security officers picking through the rubble of fallen buildings and making off with U.S. dollars, appliances and other personal belongings and sparking widespread anger among Venezuelans. The videos couldn't be verified by the AP.

In response to the videos, the the Interior Ministry on Wednesday said it dismissed and detained four police officials for "deviating from their duties and taking advantage of the rescue and humanitarian aid efforts."

Many thousands remain missing, adding ambiguity to the complete toll and leaving families in an agonizing limbo as they wait days by collapsed buildings, hoping for the bodies of their loved ones to surface. One non-governmental digital database where families can register missing loved ones showed over 40,600 people still unaccounted for as of Wednesday.

On Wednesday, U.S. officials pushed back against accusations that Rodríguez was politicizing response efforts and brushed off widespread criticisms of failures by Venezuela's government to respond to the crisis. Gen. Francis Donovan, head of U.S. Southern Command, turned blame on decades of neglect in Venezuela which he said "made this even more challenging for the current government."

"It is a big problem for any leader to deal with a challenge of this magnitude," Donovan said.

Trump visits newly built Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in North Dakota's Badlands

By JACK DURA and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

MEDORA, N.D. (AP) — President Donald Trump visited North Dakota on Wednesday to see the newly built Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, a massive facility exploring the life of America's 26th president, built in the rugged, lonely landscape where Roosevelt built his conservation values in the 1880s.

During a tour of the 96,000-square-foot library and in a speech afterward, Trump spoke admiringly of Roosevelt and compared himself favorably to the former president, who he described as the embodiment of the American spirit, praising his toughness as a leader and outdoorsman.

"He had a freakin' wild life," Trump told an audience at a Western-themed amphitheater. "He didn't want to be quiet. He wanted to be great."

The official opening of the library on Saturday coincides with July 4th celebrations honoring the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Trump made the trip to see the \$450 million project aboard his new Air Force One, a Boeing 747 given to the United States by Qatar. The visit was a boost for Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, a former governor of North Dakota, while also bringing the nation's birthday festivities to a region synonymous with its westward expansion.

In his speech after the tour, Trump weaved between his own administration's work while returning to

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lessons drawn from Roosevelt's life, recounting stories of bravery during Roosevelt's time in the West and as president.

"He was something special," Trump said. "He was a really great man. He was a man the likes of which you may never see again."

During the visit, Trump announced that his administration was giving \$750,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support the library's first year.

Roosevelt was a New York native with a strong North Dakota connection

Roosevelt visited Dakota Territory in 1883 to hunt bison. On Valentine's Day the next year, his mother and wife died hours apart in the same house in New York.

Devastated, Roosevelt came to Dakota where he ranched cattle and hunted big game in the West during visits mostly from 1884 to 1887.

He underwent deep personal growth from his experiences, including chasing boat thieves down a river, standing up to a bully in a bar and working alongside cowboys who ridiculed him for wearing eyeglasses.

Roosevelt, who served as president from 1901 to 1909, later said he never would have been president were it not for his experiences in North Dakota.

Near the library is Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Visitors can hike trails and drive a scenic route through the colorful, rugged Badlands where bison and wild horses roam.

Trump has often described an affinity with Roosevelt

Trump began his second term last year by trumpeting the construction of the Panama Canal during the Roosevelt administration.

Trump even said the U.S. might seek to take back the waterway from Panama to curb influence from China. That goal has been overshadowed by his suggestions that Washington might seize control of Greenland or that Canada could become America's 51st state.

Given a chance to talk with an artificial-intelligence version of Roosevelt at the library, Trump asked if the 26th president considered the Panama Canal his greatest achievement. A digital Roosevelt said he took pride in it while also listing achievements involving parks, medicine and his Square Deal.

In the run-up to staging a UFC fight on the White House lawn for his 80th birthday, Trump said he was aware of Roosevelt holding far lower-key boxing matches in the White House. Trump made no mention of Roosevelt having detached the retina of his left eye during one such sparring session.

The trip also underscores the president's esteem for Burgum, who has become a key face of and cheerleader for the president's expansive renovation projects around Washington.

In 2019, Burgum championed the library to North Dakota's Republican-led legislature when he was governor, touting its tourism potential. The legislature approved a \$50 million operations endowment, requiring library planners to raise \$100 million in private donations, a goal met in 2020. Donations total about \$354 million as of early 2026.

Donors include oil executive Harold Hamm, the Waltons of Walmart fame, Kenneth Griffin, founder and CEO of Citadel, a hedge fund, and Burgum himself.

The library will showcase Roosevelt's ideas and artifacts

Trump was the library's first official visitor, according to the library's executive director, Robbie Lauf.

All living presidents were invited to the grand opening of the library, which joins more than a dozen others across the country that examine the lives and legacies of U.S. presidents, from Ronald Reagan in California to Franklin D. Roosevelt in New York and Herbert Hoover in Iowa. The Obama Presidential Center recently opened in Chicago, bringing together four former presidents for the occasion.

Visitors will learn about Roosevelt's conservation ideas and his Rough Riders regiment of the Spanish-American War, but also his "horrific comments" about Native Americans and other issues "that have obviously aged poorly," Lauf said.

Artifacts, many of them out of public view for decades, will tell Roosevelt's story. Visitors will see his Rough Riders uniform; the 1884 diary grieving his terrible loss; and the eyeglasses case, speech and shirt from the 1912 assassination attempt against him.

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Organizers hope the library draws families and thousands of school children from the region, as well as some of the millions of motorists who travel to Yellowstone National Park and the Black Hills.

"It's a feature, not a bug, that we are in a county of 1,000 people and a town of 120," Lauf said. "TR came here for that purpose."

The Dakota Resource Council on Tuesday hosted several conservation leaders who criticized Burgum and Trump for policies they say contradict Roosevelt's conservation principles, such as cutting staff and budgets and prioritizing energy development on public lands.

Last year, Burgum signed an order prioritizing the openness and accessibility of parks to the public amid the workforce cuts. He has compared America's public lands and natural resources to "assets" that should be responsibly developed to exert "energy dominance."

On Friday, Trump plans to visit South Dakota's Mount Rushmore for Independence Day fireworks, as he did in 2020.

16 children rescued from Ohio home were 'almost feral,' authorities say

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

HAMDEN, Ohio (AP) — Sixteen children from the same family who were rescued from a dilapidated home in rural Ohio were living in wretched conditions with human waste all around, confined to just one room over much of the past four years, authorities said Wednesday.

Some of the children discovered Tuesday were unable to speak and one — an 18-year-old who was developmentally disabled — could not even write her name, investigators said.

"Most of our livestock was kept in better conditions than the children," said Vinton County Sheriff Ryan Cain. "Just a disgusting scene."

The children's parents and two grandparents were charged with felony child endangerment, a prosecutor said.

Authorities found the children while carrying out a search warrant in an unrelated investigation, Ohio Attorney General Andy Wilson said Wednesday at a news conference.

Officials said it seemed as if no one outside the family knew about the children, who weren't enrolled in school.

"We didn't know there were going to be 16 kids there," said Wilson, who was nearly at a loss for words in describing what officials found in the tiny village of Hamden that sits in one of Ohio's poorest counties.

"It's the type of thing that we're not used to seeing here in America," he said.

Rescued children looked like 'feral animals'

The sheriff said it appears the children spent most of their time in a room that was roughly 12 feet by 12 feet (3.5 meters by 3.5 meters). He didn't disclose how the kids were kept inside the home, but said authorities didn't find any cages in the house.

The children ranged in age from 1 1/2 years to 18 years old and included both boys and girls, officials said. Seven were transported to hospitals in Columbus and two were flown by helicopter. One was in critical condition on Tuesday while some of the others were admitted for care, Wilson said.

"They looked like almost feral animals," Wilson said. "It was terrible."

The children were in temporary custody of the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

Vinton County prosecuting attorney William Archer said the four adults were charged with second-degree felony child endangering because it involves "serious physical harm."

Gary Siders Jr., Gary Siders Sr., Christina Siders and Elizabeth Siders appeared in court Wednesday where a judge entered not guilty pleas on their behalf and set bond at \$300,000 for each. They have not yet been assigned lawyers.

Steve Irwin, a spokesperson for the attorney general's office, would not say whether all of the children are siblings or how they were related.

Neighbor saw 'no kids at all'

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The house where the children were found sits on a road tucked away alongside a steep railroad embankment, where tracks carry rumbling trains through Hamden. The closest neighbors are separated by trees and thick brush, but the house is easily visible from the road.

An open door revealed bits of trash inside while a wooden deck and the backyard were filled with discarded tires, a high chair and other debris.

Investigators said members of the family had moved around southern Ohio over the past two decades and that it looks like they avoided setting up medical and government records.

"These folks were pretty good at hiding these kids," Wilson said.

Investigators were reviewing whether the family was reported to any children's services agencies in the past.

Neighbor Joseph Stewart, 60, said he saw "no kids at all" since the family moved in three houses down and that he could clearly see the house and yard when passing by.

"It's a sad situation," he said. Stewart has lived on the street for six years and called it "a quiet neighborhood."

On Wednesday, the home's doors and windows stood open to the sweltering heat. A tangle of discarded children's items -- two busted bicycles, a plastic play table, a beach pail and two infant carriers -- stood in a pile in the yard.

Hamden has a population of less than 1,000 people and is about 60 miles (97 kilometers) southeast of Columbus.

The discovery of the children is reminiscent of past horrific cases of family abuse.

In 2019, David and Louise Turpin pleaded guilty to torture and years of abuse that included shackling some of their 13 children at their home in California, starving them and providing only a minimal education.

They were sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 25 years. The couple were arrested in 2018 after their 17-year-old daughter escaped from the home and called 911.

Ex-CIA Director John Brennan seeks court order requiring records from investigations be preserved

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former CIA Director John Brennan sued the Trump administration Wednesday, demanding a court order that would require officials to preserve records from investigations that he says are targeting him for "what amounts to phantom criminal conduct."

The lawsuit says the records would shed light on the motivations of government officials who are investigating Brennan and would form the basis of defense efforts to dismiss any eventual indictment on grounds that the case constitutes a vindictive prosecution.

Such an argument, his lawyers said, would be supported by the more than 100 verbal or written statements that President Donald Trump has made since 2017 lambasting Brennan and by the Republican president's directives to his Justice Department to initiate investigations of Brennan "without regard to factual or legal justification."

"To fully consider those motions, the reviewing judge would need to scrutinize the motivations of the Justice Department officials who directed, oversaw, or undertook those actions to determine whether they violated Director Brennan's rights, and specifically whether they were motivated by a desire to vindictively prosecute him as an act of retribution," Brennan's lawyers wrote in the lawsuit filed in federal court in Washington.

Without an order, the lawsuit contends, the records are at risk of being lost or intentionally deleted.

The lawsuit amounts to a preemptive strike of sorts on months-long investigations into Brennan and other perceived adversaries of the president, and represents another effort by Brennan's legal team to sound the alarm on inquiries they believe are part of a pattern of politically motivated probes driven by the White House. It asserts that Brennan is being targeted in a vindictive and selective manner arising from Trump's "obsession with punishing him for his lawful conduct as CIA Director and for his constitutionally

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protected criticism of the President and the President's policies.

"That is the reason he is being singled out for investigation of concocted theories of criminal activity, and that will be the dominant reason for any criminal charges resulting from that investigation. That is also why Director Brennan will have an extremely strong basis to challenge those charges as the product of vindictive and selective prosecution," the lawsuit says.

Investigators based in Florida are examining whether Brennan made a false statement to Congress in 2023 related to an assessment by intelligence agencies documenting Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, when Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton. The other investigation aims to determine whether former law enforcement and intelligence officials conspired over the last decade to undermine Trump, including during the course of the Russian interference investigation.

Brennan has denied any wrongdoing.

The complaint seeks a court order requiring the preservation of all government records relevant to the investigations, including emails, calendar entries and communications — whether public or private — from Trump or other White House officials about the inquiries and efforts to advance them.

"Given these strong indicia of vindictiveness, Director Brennan expects that he will forcefully challenge any eventual indictment as the product of an unconstitutionally vindictive and selective prosecution," the lawsuit says, adding that the judge presiding over any criminal case would look to those records for a glimpse of the government's motives.

The lawsuit says there's a "very real risk" that the requested communications will not be available by the time any indictment is brought, either because of technology changes that make deletion of records more routine or automatic or because of a Trump administration habit of "failing to observe their legal obligation to maintain such records."

"Given the government's questionable recent history with respect to its record preservation and other legal obligations, however, Director Brennan has a well-founded concern that those records and communications will not be preserved until such time as the court can review them for evidence of unconstitutional vindictiveness," Brennan's lawyers wrote.

The lawsuit names as defendants Trump and other top officials from his administration, including acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, FBI Director Kash Patel, White House chief of staff Susie Wiles and CIA Director John Ratcliffe.

Other defendants include Jason Reding Quiñones, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Joe diGenova, a Reagan administration prosecutor who returned to the Justice Department in April to serve as a special counselor to the attorney general and help oversee the investigations.

Brennan's lawyer, Ken Wainstein, wrote in December to the chief judge of the federal court in Florida asking that the Justice Department be prevented from steering investigations related to Brennan to a "favored" Trump administration judge, Aileen Cannon, who in 2024 dismissed the classified documents prosecution against Trump.

Asked about Brennan's lawsuit, Justice Department spokeswoman Emily Covington said in a statement, "While we cannot comment on the existence, or lack thereof, of an investigation, it is certainly rich that John Brennan is accusing anyone of a 'retribution campaign.'"

US and Iran hold separate meetings in Qatar and agree to continue discussions

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. and Iranian negotiators met separately on Wednesday with Qatari and Pakistani mediators, with "positive progress made," and they agreed to continue discussions, host Qatar said.

The next meeting will be scheduled "at the earliest possible time" after the funeral of Iran's previous supreme leader, the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Majed al-Ansari, a spokesman for Qatar's Foreign Ministry, said on X. The funeral is set to start Saturday in Tehran.

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U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law, were in Qatar for talks seeking a permanent end to the war, along with Iran's top negotiator, Kazem Gharibabadi.

Negotiators aim to nail down specifics to pave the way for top leaders to seal an agreement, though differences over the Strait of Hormuz and Lebanon loom large.

A ship ran aground in the strait while using a route not approved by Iran, state television in Tehran reported Wednesday. The vessel was identified as a foreign container ship, with no other details.

The report appeared aimed at underlining Tehran's claims to control the strait, which the world has long considered an international waterway. A fifth of all oil and natural gas passed through it in peacetime.

Since the U.S. and Israel launched the war against Iran on Feb. 28, Iran has used its ability to choke off the waterway as a key source of leverage, disrupting global markets for energy and other critical goods.

The Strait of Hormuz is a key sticking point in talks

Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the waterway.

The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they won't agree to the charges. An effort by Oman and a U.N. agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore sparked attacks across the Mideast last weekend, highlighting the tensions.

Iranian state TV on Wednesday said the ship "ran aground with its cargo because of shallow waters along the route it had chosen and was unable to continue sailing." It said shippers needed to follow the instructions of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in the strait.

The Guard's navy has repeatedly warned that "any entry or exit through routes other than the 'Route of Authority' in the Persian Gulf could lead to irreparable incidents."

The report did not mention the two ships Iran attacked in recent days for daring to head out through the strait without Tehran's permission, including one carrying crude oil from Qatar.

Qatar meets with both sides

Witkoff and Kushner met Wednesday with Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and its foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, according to a statement by the Qatari government.

Discussions included details related to traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, U.S. Vice President JD Vance told reporters in the United States.

"Obviously, we're worried about the nuclear issue," Vance said. "We're going to start talking about that."

Sheikh Mohammed also met with Gharibabadi and other Iranian officials, with Pakistani mediators also on hand. Gharibabadi said the Iranian delegation had no direct talks with the American side, and its talks with mediators dealt with Lebanon and plans to return some of Iran's frozen assets, Iranian state media reported.

Lebanon remains a thorny issue in the negotiations. Iran has insisted that all fighting end between the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah and Israeli military forces there.

Iran also has called for Israel to give up the land it now occupies in southern Lebanon. Israel insists it must hold the territory and have a free hand to attack Hezbollah, which has been launching attacks into northern Israel.

More ships get out of Strait of Hormuz

While ship traffic in the strait dropped after the weekend attacks, more countries say their vessels have gotten out.

The Thai Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that 10 out of 11 Thai-flagged vessels or vessels chartered by Thai operators have departed the strait safely. South Korean officials say all but two of the country's 26 vessels that were stranded have left safely.

US Navy searches for helicopter crew member in the Arabian Sea

In other developments Wednesday, a U.S. Navy helicopter made an emergency water landing into the Arabian Sea, leaving one crew member missing, the Navy's 5th fleet said in a statement.

The Navy said there was "no indication the emergency was caused by hostile action." It said the MH-60S

Sea Hawk went into the water at 3:30 a.m.

Three of the helicopter's four crew members were rescued, the statement said. The Navy was searching for the missing crew member.

The Navy statement did not say whether the aircraft sank or was recovered. The helicopter was assigned to the USS George H.W. Bush, one of two aircraft carriers deployed in the waters off Iran.

Harry Kane sends England into the round of 16 of the World Cup after 2-1 win against Congo

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — England handled the pressure and is now headed to Mexico City.

Harry Kane ensured England avoided an early exit from the inaugural 48-team World Cup by scoring two second-half goals in a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Congo in the round of 32 on Wednesday.

The late victory, England's second ever at the World Cup after conceding the first goal, earned the 1966 champions a spot in the round of 16 and a match against co-host Mexico.

"It was just about pounding the rock, keep pounding the rock and our moment would come," Kane said after scoring his fourth and fifth goals of the tournament. "We spoke about people having hero moments. It can be anyone in the team ... Whoever it is, we have hero moments, and for me it was the day."

That team's next match will be played at the Azteca Stadium, the site of Argentina great Diego Maradona's infamous "Hand of God" goal that eliminated England from the 1986 World Cup quarterfinals.

Getting there didn't come easy against a Congo team that nearly pulled off one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history.

England's only other World Cup victory after trailing 1-0 came in the 1966 final against West Germany at Wembley Stadium.

"That's a good sign. It just shows you the level of determination and the level of belief and also the level of focus," England coach Thomas Tuchel said. "I didn't feel the weight on their shoulders and I found that we played it with the exactly right attitude and we trusted our spirit."

"The goalkeeper kept on saving incredible saves ... but this team today did not accept a defeat as an outcome."

Kane made sure the early deficit wasn't a problem Wednesday at Mercedes-Benz Stadium by extending his record as his country's leading scorer in tournament history to 13. He has a record 84 goals for the national team in total.

His first goal came in the 75th minute. Substitute Anthony Gordon lifted a cross from the left and despite Congo goalkeeper Lionel Mpasi getting a hand to Kane's header, he didn't stop it from nestling into the bottom corner.

Eleven minutes later, Kane sent his shot into the top corner to put the thoughts of an upset to rest.

"When you get to the knockouts, the pressure and the risks are so much higher. But from an attacking point of view, that was easily our best game of the tournament," Kane said. "Sometimes you just have to grind wins out and we did exactly that today. I told the boys to enjoy it. We're through, and we go again in four days."

Brian Cipenga had put Congo in the lead in the seventh minute after collecting a cross on the left of the box and shooting low past England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford at the near post.

Mpasi did his best to keep that 1-0 lead alive. He denied Jude Bellingham on three occasions — blocking two close-range headers before halftime and then clawing away another deflected effort after the break.

Kane nearly made a breakthrough late in the first half, but Mpasi blocked a powerful shot at the near post. And the keeper was also caught up in a collision with Kane in the box. England thought it should have been awarded a penalty, but referee Adham Makhadmeh waved away appeals.

Congo had a chance to double its lead when Yoane Wissa hit the post in the first half.

"We're disappointed because we really believed we could do it," Congo coach Sébastien Desabre said. "We played well. Towards the end of the match, we conceded two chances and one of the world's best

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players scored two goals against us. It's a shame."

England's only major soccer title came in that 1966 tournament at home. But the team has been getting closer to another in recent years, reaching back-to-back European Championship finals and the semifinals of the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Tuchel has been hired to end that winless run. As a German, his appointment was a controversial choice given England's long-standing rivalry with his country. So anything other than a deep run in this year's tournament would likely reignite questions over the wisdom of that decision.

Despite winning Group L with two wins and a draw at this year's World Cup, there has been a mixed response to England's performances.

And in a tournament that has seen traditional powers like Germany and the Netherlands eliminated early, the fear was that England could follow that trend against a Congo team that already held Portugal to a 1-1 draw in the group stage.

The 46th-ranked Congo team had already made history with its first goal, point and win at a World Cup, 52 years after its only previous appearance when competing as Zaire at the 1974 tournament in West Germany.

Crypto, real estate, watches: How Trump made over \$1 billion last year

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The real estate mogul has become the billion-dollar crypto man.

President Donald Trump's latest financial disclosure report showed he took in about \$1.2 billion last year from various crypto holdings, overshadowing a real estate business that brought him fame and helped propel him to the nation's top office.

Whereas it took decades for Trump to amass his various properties, the rise of crypto in his portfolio was done in just over a year, a stunning development sped along by his own friendly policies toward the industry and help from billionaires and other actors with important business before the presidency.

Running over 900 pages, the mandatory annual report showed Trump struck several other new veins of wealth last year, raising questions about whether he is profiting from his high office.

He took in tens of millions from new property holdings in foreign countries eager to please a man with power over where to deploy the U.S. military and how much to charge in tariffs. And he got tens of million more suing media companies worried they could lose their broadcast licenses or not get deals approved by his regulators.

Ever the salesman, Trump even made big money off the smallest of things, pulling in millions by slapping his name on Bibles, guitars and watches — the latter alone bringing in \$4.7 million.

Hail the new crypto king

Trump got more than \$500 million from his World Liberty Financial business selling "governance tokens" and "stablecoins" and other crypto assets. Another crypto business, CIC Digital LLC, took in more than \$600 million from sales of souvenir-type "meme" coins stamped with his face.

Both the tokens and the meme coins have plunged in value since his sales, partly because they are so difficult to value. Governance tokens, for instance, confer to holders only the power to vote on certain management policies at a company, not equity stakes, and so typical valuation measures don't apply.

Buyers pounced on Trump crypto anyway, including a Chinese billionaire who spent \$75 million on the tokens and \$200 million on the souvenir coins. In February 2025, a federal lawsuit charging the billionaire, Justin Sun, with duping investors was paused before being settled for a \$10 million fine.

Sun has denied his spending on Trump businesses had anything to do with his federal case, while World Liberty has dismissed the notion of a conflict of interest.

Separately, a company linked to the United Arab Emirates government bought a stake in World Liberty for \$500 million shortly before Trump's inauguration. The disclosure says nothing about the deal explicitly, but notes Trump received his share of a "capital contribution" amounting to nearly \$200 million.

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Subsequently, the UAE got access to advanced U.S. chips that it had been previously banned from importing because of national security concerns.

The White House has repeatedly said that Trump has acted only in the public interest, never gets involved in a family business run by his two oldest sons and has zero conflicts of interest.

His real estate business is booming, too

Trump took in tens of millions in fees from a flurry of new hotel, resort and condo deals overseas, amounting to the biggest property expansion ever in the century since the family business was founded.

Many of those countries were negotiating with the U.S. over tariffs, military aid and other important matters while the family business was striking the deals.

A property in the UAE generated \$10.4 million for the Trump business last year. One in Saudi Arabia being built by a real estate developer close to the ruling family sent the president's company \$9 million. And one in Bucharest, Romania, and another in Qatar sent him \$5 million each.

Trump's Winter White House is hot

A big winner last year was Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, generating \$77 million as heads of state and business people flocked to what Trump has dubbed his Winter White House. That's up 50% from a year earlier when Trump was just another citizen.

His golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, also is doing well from the glow of the presidency. Trump got \$38 million from his so-called Summer White House, up nearly 20%.

In total his 16 golf courses and clubs around the world brought in more than \$470 million in fees and licensing income.

The president's MAGA book sold more than the Bible

Trump took in millions last year from selling Trump books and various other Trump-branded goods in another unprecedented move for the presidency.

Trump Bibles made \$208,486, but the word of God didn't sell as well as a trio of other literary offerings. His "Save America" book took in \$1,893,965, "Letters to Trump" generated \$590,730, and "A MAGA Journey," \$552,685.

His brand of guitars generated \$35,920. Trump sneakers and fragrances took in \$67,634.

Trump sued a lot, and made a lot of money

It's anyone's guess why exactly various media companies decided to settle Trump lawsuits alleging fraud and defamation, but settle they did — and paid up.

Lawsuits against ABC, CBS, Meta, and others took in more than \$80 million, much of which went to Trump's planned Miami library.

Where Trump hasn't prevailed so far is with E. Jean Carroll, the advice columnist who won millions accusing Trump of sexual abuse and defamation. The disclosure says Trump owes her \$50 million, pending appeal.

Changes to student loans are taking effect July 1. Here's what to know

By ADRIANA MORGA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Changes to federal student loans expected to affect millions of borrowers are taking effect July 1. A part of President Donald Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill," these changes mean the end of some payment plans and new limits for graduate loans.

Along with the end of the Biden-era SAVE plan, the changes are expected to raise the cost of payments for millions of borrowers.

"The main concern is the affordability of monthly payments. I think a lot of people are simply going to see their payment increase significantly and they're either going to have to stretch pretty significantly to make that payment work or they're not going to be able to make the payment," said Michele Zampini, an associate vice president at The Institute for College Access & Success.

Around 9 million Americans are in default on their federal student loans as of June, according to the Education Department. Hundreds of thousands more are behind on loan payments and at risk of default

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this year.

Earlier this month, Education Department officials said borrowers who are enrolled in auto pay will be eligible for a 1% rate reduction beginning July 1. However, borrowers who currently use auto pay already receive an interest-rate discount of 0.25%, so the new reduction takes off just 0.75%. For all borrowers, the rate reduction will be temporary, lasting through June 2028.

If you're a student loan borrower, here are some key things to know:

SAVE plan comes to an end

The SAVE plan was a repayment option with some of the most lenient terms ever offered by the government. Soon after its launch it was challenged in court, leaving millions of student loan borrowers in limbo. Earlier this year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit struck down the SAVE plan, which ended Wednesday.

There are about seven and a half million borrowers in the SAVE plan and servicers will begin sending them official notices Wednesday, said Lindsay Vail Clark, chief borrower advocate at Savi, a student loan debt assistance platform.

Borrowers enrolled in the SAVE plan will be notified that they have 90 days to enroll in another income-driven repayment plan. Vail Clark recommends borrowers start checking their options as soon as possible because processing delays are likely. If borrowers don't enroll in another plan before the 90-day deadline, they will be auto-enrolled in one of the standard options by the Education Department, said Vail Clark.

However, there's no specific deadline for all borrowers enrolled in the SAVE plan to find another plan. This is because notices will be going out on a rolling basis, said Zampini.

Changes in graduate school loan caps

Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" changed the amounts graduate students can borrow for various programs, but his administration revised that plan this week in line with a judge's order.

Under the new rule, programs designated as professional degrees face federal student loan caps of \$200,000, while other graduate programs are capped at \$100,000. Previously, graduate students had been able to take out federal loans up to the full cost of their degree.

For now, the administration's revised plan restores eligibility for students pursuing graduate degrees in nursing, physical therapy and several other fields to take out higher federal student loan amounts. The initial rule had held them to lower limits.

Changes to Parent PLUS Loans

Parent PLUS Loans have had fewer repayment options but now, the options are being reduced further, said Zampini. New limits on Parent PLUS loans cap them at \$20,000 per student, and \$65,000 per family.

Additionally, Parent PLUS borrowers who take out new loans on or after July 1 will not have access to any income-driven repayment plans, only a new tiered standard payment plan.

"Going forward, they're basically only going to have the standard payment option and there's not going to be any caveat or any safety net to adjust that based on income, if they have a low income or if they have an income fluctuation or some kind of other hardship," Zampini said.

Parent PLUS Loan borrowers who consolidated their Parent PLUS Loans into a Direct Consolidation Loan before July 1 can repay their loans through the income-contingent repayment plan until June 30, 2028. After that date, borrowers will be moved to the income-based repayment plan.

Enrolling in income-driven repayment plans

Current borrowers can apply for the following income-driven plans: the Income-Based Repayment Plan, the Pay as You Earn plan, and the Income-Contingent Repayment plan. The payment amount under income-driven plans is a percentage of the borrower's discretionary income, and the percentage varies depending on the plan.

However, students who take loans on or after July will only be able to enroll in one income-driven repayment plan: the Repayment Assistance Plan. Borrowers can also use Tiered Standard Plan, a payment plan with a fixed amount that ensures loans are paid off within 10-25 years.

You can find out which repayment plan might work best for you by logging on to the Education Department's loan simulator.

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If you're working toward your Public Service Loan Forgiveness

There are no changes to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, despite a Trump administration plan announced last year to change the eligibility requirements for participating nonprofits. The policy sought to disqualify nonprofit workers if their work is deemed to have "substantial illegal purpose." The Trump administration said it's necessary to block taxpayer money from lawbreakers, while critics said it turns the program into a tool of political retribution.

Two separate federal judges struck down the new rules on Tuesday, a day before they were due to take effect.

If your student loans are in default

Involuntary collections on federal student loans remain on hold. The Trump administration announced earlier this year that it is delaying plans to withhold pay from student loan borrowers who default on their payments.

Federal student loan borrowers can have their wages garnished and their federal tax refunds withheld if they default on their loans. Borrowers are considered in default when they are at least 270 days behind on payments.

If your student loans are in default, you can contact your loan holder to apply for a loan rehabilitation program. Through this program, borrowers are enrolled in a reduced payment plan and, after five successful payments, wage garnishment ends.

Borrowers can find more information about loan rehabilitation here.

If you want to consolidate your loan

The online application for loan consolidation is available at studentaid.gov/loan-consolidation. If you have multiple federal student loans, you can combine them into a single loan with a fixed interest rate and a single monthly payment.

The consolidation process typically takes around 60 days to complete. You can only consolidate your loans once.

Federal Reserve Chair Warsh emphasizes political independence, signals focus on inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — New Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh said Wednesday that the central bank would remain independent and seek to bring down inflation, likely foreclosing the rate cuts President Donald Trump has sought.

In remarks at a central bank conference in Sintra, Portugal, Warsh said that if businesses or households thought the Fed would accept inflation above 2%, "I guess they'd be disappointed. We're going to deliver price stability."

The Fed typically combats inflation by raising borrowing costs. When asked about Trump's oft-repeated desire for lower rates, Warsh underscored the Fed's independence from day-to-day politics.

"We've been an independent central bank for a very long time," he said. "We're going to be an independent central bank at this moment and you're going to see no changes to that."

Such comments suggest that Warsh has shifted his views since replacing Jerome Powell as chair May 22. He called for lower rates last year as he essentially campaigned for the job. Since becoming chair, however, Warsh has appeared to move away from that stance and instead has signaled a focus on getting inflation down.

But on Wednesday he declined to say what steps the Fed would take to achieve that goal, consistent with his opposition to so-called "forward guidance," in which central bank leaders foreshadow their next policy moves.

"I'm not going to make a judgment now," he said during the panel discussion with other central bankers. "The tactics, the strategy, and the rest, that's still to come," he later added.

At his first news conference last month, Warsh also emphasized his goal of getting inflation back down

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to target. Wall Street investors expect the Fed could hike its key interest rate as soon as in September, from its current level of about 3.6% to roughly 3.9%.

When the Fed last met June 16-17, nearly half of the 19 policymakers signaled that they supported higher rates this year, while eight supported no change and one penciled in a cut. Warsh did not submit a forecast because of his opposition to providing guidance.

The economy has shifted since Trump first nominated Warsh in January, with inflation rising to a three-year high of 4.2% in May, pushed higher by the Iran war's impact on gas prices. Yet as a peace agreement has been reached, gas prices have declined, suggesting inflation may have peaked. Fed officials may very well wait to see where inflation settles if oil and gas prices continue to fall back to prewar levels.

On Wednesday, Warsh also said there are signs that the threat of persistent inflation has moderated. He specifically cited inflation expectations, or where the public and financial markets think inflation will head next, as measured by surveys and bond prices. Both have showed declining expectations in the past month.

Yet a key question facing Warsh is whether he will have to raise rates in the next few meetings to underscore his commitment to fighting inflation. If gas prices keep falling and inflation declines, he may be try to avoid doing so.

At the same time, hiring has picked up in recent months and economists forecast the government will issue a solid jobs report on Thursday that will likely show the unemployment rate remains a low 4.3%. Such a report would reduce pressure on the Fed to lower borrowing costs.

Warsh also reiterated his view that over time, artificial intelligence will expand the economy's ability to produce goods and services and reduce inflationary pressures. Yet many economists think it could take an extended period of time for those trends to take hold.

In the short term, economists say, the breakneck investment in AI infrastructure is pushing up prices for semiconductor and computing equipment, fueling inflation.

Warsh declined to comment specifically on whether AI spending is inflationary, and often noted that he has set up five task forces at the Fed to study a range of issues, including AI and its impact on productivity.

"This is as exciting a time and also as consequential a time to be a central banker that I can think of at any point, maybe outside of a crisis, in my adult lifetime," he said.

Trump's actions signal a move toward institutionalizing people with disabilities, advocates warn

By ANNIE MA AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — For decades, disabled people have fought for their rights to go to school and live alongside peers without disabilities — rights that some fear could be losing ground under the Trump administration.

Last month, the Department of Education announced it would shift oversight of special education to the Department of Health and Human Services, led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., whose comments on the limits of disabilities such as autism have drawn sharp rebukes from advocates and lawmakers.

Meanwhile, after a White House push to police homelessness, the Department of Justice released guidance that lowered the barrier to institutionalizing any person with a disability.

Taken together, the actions signal a worrying return to a reality where people with disabilities are pushed to the margins of society, advocates said.

"It's a direct, frontal assault on the rights of people with disabilities to live their lives the way that people who are nondisabled live their lives," said Selene Almazan, legal director for the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates. "I can't imagine that as a country, that would be something that we would agree we should go back to."

The move away from confining people with disabilities

Since the 1960s, legislation and court decisions have expanded supports and protections for people with disabilities to go to school with nondisabled peers and to live and work in their communities. Before

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that, people with mental illnesses or developmental and intellectual disabilities were largely confined to institutions.

Advocates have pushed back on what is known as the "medical model," where an individual's disability is viewed as a defect to be cured. Instead, under a "social model" of disability, differences can be accommodated and supported, as people with and without disabilities learn and work alongside each other.

Families and advocates have warned that moving special education to a health department marks a return to the medical model. They also have been angered by Kennedy's attempts to link vaccines to autism, going against decades of research that show no such link, and his framing of autism as a debilitating disease.

Kennedy's comments last year, where he said children with autism would never write a poem, pay taxes or hold a job, raised questions about how he would oversee an agency meant to help students develop those skills. Kennedy later said he was referring to people with "severe autism" or those who are nonverbal.

"Many of the things he said autistic people will never do, (special education) is in charge of making sure students with disabilities have the opportunity to do," said Zoe Gross, director of advocacy at the Autistic Self Advocacy Network. "Will he execute that faithfully, or does he consider disabled students a lost cause until we find some medical cure?"

The Supreme Court weighs in on disabilities

In 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that segregating disabled people who are otherwise able to live in their community with proper supports was a form of discrimination. The *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision led to requirements that government agencies provide disability services in the most integrated setting possible — in mainstream schools, homes and workplaces.

But in a memo issued in June, the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel upended that guidance. It argued that neither the Americans with Disabilities Act nor Section 504, two major disability rights laws, requires states to provide services in the most mainstream setting. While the memo does not change the law, it signals how federal agencies may interpret and enforce civil rights issues related to the topic. It could embolden states or school districts to decline to support people with disabilities in mainstream environments.

The White House has already acted on a similar philosophy. Last year, President Donald Trump issued an executive order on homelessness that endorsed civil commitment, where a court orders individuals into involuntary hospitalization or treatment programs. Trump directed HHS to reduce barriers to institutionalizing people with mental illnesses.

In its memo, the Justice Department acknowledged its interpretation of the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision is "out of step" with the common understanding. If a state starts to provide services in institutional settings, legal challenges likely would follow, the department said.

The Republican administration's steps fit a worldview in which the government has no obligation to support people with disabilities, said Claudia Center, legal director at Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund.

"It's dark, and it's awful," Center said. "And I think it's contrary to the majority view in our country. ... It's out of touch with where our society is."

Families say their kids thrive in mainstream classes

The moves have created a deep sense of uncertainty for students with disabilities.

Lindsey Althaus says home and community-based services in northwest Ohio have been instrumental to her family. Her 12-year-old son, Whitman, has autism and a neurological disorder called apraxia, in which the brain struggles to tell muscles how to move to form words or perform other motor skills. For some of his school career, with proper support services, Whitman was able to spend much of his school day in a classroom that included kids without disabilities.

Through a Medicaid waiver program, Althaus pays her mother to care for Whitman in her absence. That allows him to spend time out in the community with his grandmother while Althaus and her husband are working or away with their daughter.

Under the Justice Department's new interpretation of *Olmstead*, states would have fewer obligations to fund and support those programs. Kennedy, in testimony to lawmakers on Capitol Hill earlier this year,

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criticized similar programs as subject to fraud.

"We want to be able to have him in the community," said Althaus, who works as a disability rights advocate. "It's just starting to feel like Whitman's not going to be welcome anymore. We're going back to this: You're either perfect, or you're not in the light."

For many students with disabilities, schools are where they receive the majority of support services and where they are integrated among their peers. Before Magda Nakassis's 8-year-old son, who is autistic and nonverbal, started public school in Maryland, his preschool experience had largely been defined by being kicked out of things, she said.

In school, Nakassis said, she found teachers and staff members who understood her son's needs and told her to stop apologizing for them. A program at his school called Fantastic Friends teaches mainstream fifth graders about autism and they spend recesses with children in the autism program. Every year, Nakassis said, there is a waitlist to be a Fantastic Friend.

Nakassis said that it has been difficult to see the ways autism in particular has become politicized. Every child is entitled to a public education in this country, Nakassis said, and special education is a response to the fact that some children have differences that require additional support.

Regardless of his diagnosis, his right to an education is not a medical issue, she said, but rather a question of equity and access in a society that often pushes disabled people to the margins.

"There are lots of kids like him out there, and I sometimes wonder, 'what did we use to do?'" Nakassis said. "I can't believe it was better."

Victor Willis, who co-founded the Village People and co-wrote 'Y.M.C.A.,' dies at 74

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Victor Willis, who co-founded the Village People, co-wrote the disco group's classic hits "Y.M.C.A.," "Macho Man" and "In the Navy," and delighted crowds while dressed as the band's helmeted and mustachioed police officer, has died. He was 74.

"We are profoundly sad to announce the death of Victor Willis, lead singer of Village People," the group posted on its official Facebook page. The cause was identified as "a short but aggressive illness."

Willis was a musician-actor who, among other things, had appeared on Broadway in "The Wiz" when he decided to cash in on the disco craze in 1977 by joining a group made up of beefy, macho-looking guys dressed as a biker, a construction worker, a cop, a cowboy and a Native American chief.

With producer Jacques Morali and Henri Belolo, Morali's business partner, Willis founded the six-member Village People. The idea came to them while partying at an after-hours gay nightclub in the West Village of Manhattan. The group's self-titled debut album was released in 1977.

In 1978, the group released two albums, "Macho Man" and "Cruisin'" — which featured the international hit "Y.M.C.A.," a song that peaked at No. 2 on the Billboard chart. A year later, Village People released the album "Go West," which included "In the Navy," a song that peaked at No. 3 on the chart. "Macho Man" peaked at No. 25 in 1978.

In 2020, Congress described "Y.M.C.A." — with its infectious chorus of "It's fun to stay at the Y.M.C.A." and an accompanying dance spelling out the letters — as "an American phenomenon" and added the song to the National Recording Registry. In 2021, it was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

Willis also starred in the 1980 movie "Can't Stop the Music," a widely ridiculed comedy starring the Village People and Steve Guttenberg and directed by Nancy Walker. Critic Rex Reed called it "one of the silliest movies ever made."

Village People music is the backbone of pool parties, high school dances, weddings, proms, bar mitzvahs, games and whenever an uplifting mood is needed. The songs also played at gay marches and the White House.

"We will think of Victor every time 'Y.M.C.A.' is played, like today, and all throughout this July Fourth Birthday week," President Donald Trump wrote on social media Wednesday. "My condolences to his won-

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derful family and group, Victor Willis will be sorely missed."

While musicians like Neil Young, John Fogerty, Phil Collins, Panic! At The Disco and the estates of Leonard Cohen, Tom Petty and Prince sent cease-and-desist letters to stop Trump from using their music, Willis said he didn't feel he was endorsing Trump when the song played.

Willis was born in Texas and grew up in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco. When he moved to New York, he went to a YMCA on West 63rd Street in Manhattan, which inspired the hit song.

The ownership of Village People's songs came into doubt decades after the hits, and in 2015, a federal jury ruled that Willis was entitled to 50% copyright ownership in the United States of 13 of the group's songs, including "Y.M.C.A."

After a series of arrests on drug-related charges that resulted in a rehab stint, Willis told The Associated Press in 2012 that his life had turned around. "Life is fine. I went through whatever I went through, but everything is going great now," he said.

In May, Willis and the Village People — he was the only original member — sang "Happy Birthday" and "Y.M.C.A." for Secretary of State Marco Rubio during an event in India.

Trump filing shows he took in about \$1.2 billion from crypto businesses last year

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump took in nearly \$1.2 billion from his crypto businesses last year, a federal filing released Tuesday shows, locking in profits while his investors were socked with losses.

Mere startups when he took the oath of office, the new ventures have now eclipsed in revenue much of his vast property portfolio that took him decades to accumulate. Fueling their rise were billionaire investors and Trump's own move to quash a federal crackdown on the industry.

Trump got more than \$500 million from his World Liberty Financial business selling new crypto products, including "governance tokens," according to the required annual disclosure report with the Office of Government Ethics. It also showed another crypto business, CIC Digital LLC, took in more than \$600 million from sales of souvenir-type "meme" coins stamped with his face.

Both the tokens and the coins have plunged in value since the sales.

Trump also took in millions last year from selling Trump-branded Bibles, sneakers and other small items in another unprecedented move for the presidency. The sale of Trump-branded watches alone brought in \$4.7 million.

The 927-page disclosure form paints a stark, if incomplete picture of the massive growth of the president's wealth since taking office last January through a web of business interests — many of which have benefited from the policy moves of Trump's own government. Trump has insisted that his sons direct his finances but the arrangement rejects the conflict of interest protections that his recent predecessors in office had instituted.

Forbes estimates Trump's net worth at \$6 billion, up from \$2.3 billion in 2024.

The Trump business is growing abroad

The rise of crypto relative to Trump's property is especially noteworthy because he first rode to office boasting of his property wins. It's also remarkable because that mainstay business also boomed last year. Trump took in tens of millions in fees from a flurry of new hotel, resort and condo deals overseas that amounts to the biggest property expansion ever in the century since the family business was founded.

Many of those countries were negotiating with the U.S. over tariffs, military aid and other important matters while the family business was striking the deals.

A property in the United Arab Emirates generated \$10.4 million for the Trump business last year. One in Saudi Arabia being built by a real estate developer close to the ruling family sent the president's company \$9 million. And one in Bucharest, Romania, and another in Qatar sent him \$5 million each.

One of his prominent domestic properties, Mar-a-Lago in Florida, notched big growth last year, too.

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Trump took in \$77 million from the property, a 50% jump from the year earlier when he was just another citizen, as heads of state and business people flocked to it in his new term.

The disclosure report doesn't give profit figures, just revenue, so it's impossible to know how much he is earning.

Trump is now the billion-dollar crypto man

Trump said Wednesday that most of his gains last year came from the stock market and he's just riding along with everyone else.

"We're all profiting," he said. "I'm profiting because I have a lot of money and a lot of cash."

But crypto was clearly the big revenue generator last year in part due his own moves since taking office — pushing policies friendly to the industry and reversing a Biden administration regulatory crackdown.

The regulators are still worried. Before Trump's World Liberty began selling "governance tokens," they issued warnings about this new kind of crypto asset, saying that unlike stocks, the tokens offer no ownership stake in the issuing company, just voting power on certain corporate policies, and are difficult to value.

Buyers pounced anyway, including a Chinese billionaire who spent \$75 million on the tokens and \$200 million on the souvenir coins. In February last year, a federal lawsuit charging him with duping investors was paused before being settled for a \$10 million fine.

The billionaire, Justin Sun, has repeatedly denied his spending on Trump businesses had anything to do with his federal case, while World Liberty has dismissed the notion of a conflict of interest.

Meanwhile, investors have seen the value of their Trump-tied holdings drop significantly.

The price of World Liberty tokens has fallen 80% since they started trading in September. And the Trump souvenir coins that spiked to more than \$74 in the days after launching in January 2025 now sell for \$1.68.

The White House says Trump only acts in the public interest

The White House has repeatedly said Trump put his business in a trust managed by his sons and is not involved in its decisions and that there are no ethics issues to discuss.

"Neither the President nor his family has ever engaged — or will ever engage — in conflicts of interest," spokeswoman Anna Kelly said. "All actions by President Trump and his administration are taken in the best interest of the American people."

The Trump umbrella company, the Trump Organization, has said its deals overseas were with private companies, not with governments.

Still, it is difficult to know what is truly private in countries ruled by authoritarians, royal families and one-party governments.

For a new Trump resort in Vietnam, the report shows Trump took in \$5 million last year after the ruling Communist Party sent its deputy prime minister to sign off on the deal and, according to The New York Times, pushed farmers off the land to make way for the construction.

Whether the deals played any role in changing U.S. policies in ways these countries sought is nearly impossible to know, but the countries did get what they wanted.

Vietnam got tariff relief. Qatar got access to advanced U.S. technology previously off limits, and Saudi Arabia got U.S. fighter jets it had coveted for years.

Zelenskyy says Ukraine has hit a Russian oil refinery for the second time in a week

By SAMYA KULLAB and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces struck Russia's major Ufa oil refinery for the second time in a week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday.

Almost daily long-range attacks on Russian oil facilities have created a fuel crisis and heaped political pressure on the Kremlin as its all-out invasion of Ukraine stretches into its fifth year.

The Ufa refinery is one of Russia's largest producers of lubricants and is located more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) from Ukraine, Zelenskyy said on social media.

Ukraine also struck a plant producing missile components in Russia's Penza region southeast of Moscow,

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some 500 kilometers (300 miles) from Ukraine, Zelenskyy said.

Russian officials did not confirm the strikes, which could not be independently verified. The Russian Defense Ministry reported intercepting 179 Ukrainian drones over 16 Russian regions, the annexed Crimea and waters of the Azov and the Black Sea.

Penza regional Gov. Oleg Melnichenko said that Ukrainian drones struck two industrial plants in the city of Penza, injuring two people at one of them. He didn't name the plants or describe the damage.

The explosions shattered windows in two apartment buildings in Penza, Melnichenko said, while downed drone debris damaged a power line and fell on a building under construction.

Ukraine says drone strikes slow Russian advance

Ukraine's domestically developed and manufactured drones and missiles have been hammering Russian oil facilities, including refineries, terminals, storage depots and pipeline pumping stations, for months.

Many regions of Russia, one of the world's biggest energy producers, have introduced fuel rationing.

Ukraine has developed new weaponry and in recent months has gained an edge, according to Western officials. Its strikes on supply routes behind the front line have robbed the Russian army of momentum on the battlefield, officials and analysts say.

"Russians now have great problems with delivering infantry to the front line and supplying it," Ukrainian Minister of Defense Mykhailo Fedorov said Wednesday.

Ukraine sees growing interest in its military technology

Ukraine has become a provider of military technology sought by countries around the world, especially drones.

With European countries fearing what Moscow's territorial ambitions might lie beyond Ukraine, leaders have described Kyiv as a bulwark against Russian advances.

Ukraine is "becoming a security provider for the whole of Europe," Swedish Minister of Defense Paul Jonsson said in Kyiv, where he held talks with Fedorov.

Ukraine signed an agreement on Tuesday for Sweden to provide Kyiv with Gripen fighter jets. They will help Ukraine stop Russian aircraft carrying powerful glide bombs, Fedorov said.

Jonsson said European countries want Ukraine to be integrated into Euro-Atlantic defenses, although Ukraine's NATO membership has been a contentious issue and likely will be discussed at an alliance summit in Turkey next week.

"The sooner it happens, the better it is for you, the better it is for our security and prosperity as well," Jonsson told a press conference.

Ukraine also wants to join the European Union, though the process could take years. Zelenskyy arrived Wednesday in Ireland, which currently holds the EU's rotating presidency.

"Ukraine proves every day that it deserves to be an equal partner of our common European home. And we hope that during Ireland's presidency of the EU Council, we will be able to achieve tangible progress on the path to membership and open all negotiations clusters," Zelenskyy said.

Russian attacks kill five Ukrainian civilians, injure 35

Russian long-range attacks on Ukraine continued, with at least five civilians reported killed Wednesday. A Russian drone struck a bus in the southern Kherson region, killing two people and injuring six others, regional head Oleksandr Prokudin said.

Glide bombs hit the northeastern city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest, killing two people, including a 15-year-old boy, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said. At least 26 people were wounded, including a 1-year-old, he added.

A 43-year-old woman was killed and three were injured, including a 35-year-old pregnant woman, when Russia attacked five gas stations in the central Dnipropetrovsk region overnight, according to regional authorities.

Russian forces have increasingly targeted Ukrainian gas stations.

Trump administration lifts restrictions on Anthropic's Claude models after cybersecurity alarm

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The Trump administration has lifted restrictions on artificial intelligence company Anthropic's latest versions of its Claude chatbot, ending a weeklong ban tied to cybersecurity concerns.

Anthropic said Tuesday night that its AI model called Claude Fable 5 is now widely available. It's also restoring access to its most powerful model, Mythos 5, but only to a select group of U.S.-based organizations approved by the federal government.

The Commerce Department blocked foreign nationals from using both AI models on June 12, a move that San Francisco-based Anthropic said forced the company to immediately take the products down for all users just days after it unveiled them.

Anthropic said in a blog post this week that the government's concerns were sparked by a report from cybersecurity researchers at Amazon, Anthropic's primary cloud computing provider. The company "had found a method of bypassing Fable 5's safeguards" that enabled it to discover and potentially exploit software vulnerabilities, Anthropic said.

Officials have grown increasingly concerned since Anthropic warned earlier this year that its Mythos model was adept at finding software flaws in a way that could be weaponized by malicious hackers and threaten critical computer networks around the world.

Anthropic's chief rival, ChatGPT maker OpenAI, also said Friday it is restricting the release of its new artificial intelligence model at the request of President Donald Trump's administration.

OpenAI said its new AI product, called GPT-5.6 Sol, would be accessible only to a select group of government-approved customers for a temporary period.

Trump last month signed an executive order on AI oversight that established a framework for the federal government to vet the national security risks of the most advanced AI systems for up to 30 days before their public release. The order described participation by AI developers as voluntary, but the framework has not yet been fully developed.

Ukrainian drone attacks on oil refineries plunge Russia into a summer fuel crisis

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

The lines are growing at Russian gas stations -- and so is the frustration and uncertainty as several months of Ukrainian attacks have set oil refineries ablaze and choked supplies for motorists across the vast country.

Fuel rationing has been introduced in many regions, with hourslong queues of cars snaking beside roads. Social media videos show drivers aghast at the lines or swearing at empty gas pumps and rising prices. The mayor of the Siberian city of Irkutsk even ordered portable toilets brought in to accommodate those in line.

The fuel crisis — unprecedented for a nation that is one of the world's biggest energy producers — has brought Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine home to ordinary Russians like few other events in the war, now in its fifth year.

It drew a rare admission from President Vladimir Putin, who acknowledged "problems persist for both motorists and businesses," and "there are still queues at petrol stations, and finding the right grade of petrol isn't always easy."

He insisted the shortages are "not critical" and "temporary."

But that appeared to do little to reassure at least one motorist in Moscow, the wealthy capital typically better-insulated from economic shocks than the rest of the country.

"I think the situation is not very good," the motorist waiting in line told The Associated Press on Monday, the day after Putin's televised remarks.

"They say one thing on television, and in reality it's another. ... People are queueing everywhere," he

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added, declining to give his full name out of safety concerns.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday echoed that sentiment, writing on Telegram that "Putin can go on and on, claiming on TV that he supposedly has everything under control," but Russians can see that the war "has reached the point where even an oil state -- a gas station, as Russia used to be called -- is now facing gas shortages."

Ukraine hits energy targets multiple times

An AP count shows over 50 reported attacks by Ukraine on oil refineries, depots, terminals and other energy infrastructure in Russia and the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula since March. Often, the same facility was hit more than once — such as the refinery in the Black Sea town of Tuapse that was struck four times.

The amount of crude oil Russia processed into fuel in June was down 25% from a year ago, to 3.95 million barrels per day — the lowest level in over two decades, said Gary Peach, oil markets analyst at Energy Intelligence.

"The outages are extraordinary," he said.

Gasoline production has fallen 17% to 850,000 barrels a day, from 1.03 million a day a year ago — far short of what the domestic market needs. Russia exports relatively little gasoline.

About a third of Russia's oil refining capacity is offline, said Chris Weafer, CEO of Macro-Advisory Ltd. Consultancy, noting that because refineries don't publicly confirm the extent of the damage, his estimate comes from anecdotal evidence and oil industry sources.

"It comes at a very critical time for the Russian economy, in that the agriculture season, particularly the harvest season, is now starting to ratchet up," increasing demand, Weafer said.

Ukrainian officials describe the strikes as a campaign to pressure Moscow to end the war by undermining military logistics and supply lines and weakening its ability to mount front-line assaults.

In particular, Kyiv has sought to isolate Crimea, which was seized from Ukraine in 2014 in a move most nations don't recognize. Attacks this year forced the Moscow-installed authorities to enact fuel rationing on the peninsula in May and halt sales to civilians there altogether. Limited sales later resumed in the city of Sevastopol.

Attacks — and fuel shortages — spread

Ukraine carried out major drone strikes on Russia's two largest cities, embarrassing the Kremlin with images of black plumes of smoke that circulated widely online, despite regulations restricting their publication.

A June 3 attack on a St. Petersburg oil terminal darkened the sky as Putin prepared to host his annual economic forum to attract foreign investment. On June 18, a similar cloud rose from the Moscow Oil Refinery on capital's outskirts, with greasy black droplets raining down.

By late June, some form of rationing was reported in over half of Russia's regions. Some slapped strict limits on all gas stations; in others, gas station chains limited how much fuel could be bought.

Officials blamed hoarding and panic-buying, urging motorists to fill their tanks only when needed.

Exports of gasoline and aviation fuel have been restricted, and authorities weighed banning diesel fuel exports, too.

Importing fuel was being considered. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said contacts with some countries were "underway," calling the move "another step toward stabilizing the market and aimed at reducing panic-buying."

Shortages in Siberia

The shortages have reached distant regions where no refineries were attacked by Ukraine.

Viktor Shkurenko, who owns retail stores and other businesses in the Omsk region, called announced limits on gasoline sales there to 40 liters (10.5 gallons) per vehicle "unexpected."

"Nothing was bombed here. We have the biggest oil refinery in Siberia right here, and it gave us confidence that this fuel crisis won't come to us," he said, expressing worry about how limits could affect his businesses. As of Saturday, however, he said his company has not had any problems refueling its vehicles.

In the Siberian region of Zabayakalye, east of Lake Baikal, media reports said a garbage hauler suspended pickups and some bus services were curtailed.

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In addition to ordering portable toilets outside gas stations, the city of Irkutsk raised public transport fares as of Wednesday, citing higher fuel costs.

Pavel Kharitonenko, acting head of Irkutsk's branch of the opposition Yabloko party, told AP he finds it easier to walk or use public transportation.

"I don't have the fuel, and I don't want to queue at gas stations," he said. The Irkutsk region, home to a Rosneft oil refinery, has experienced acute shortages for several days, with lines growing, Kharitonenko said.

Repairs will take time

Putin said Russia's gasoline stockpiles are only 4% lower than what it had the same time last year. Weafer, the analyst, says that "reportedly, there are good supplies of fuel around the country. The problem is it's in the wrong place."

Supplies need to be reallocated to regions experiencing shortages, and in a big country like Russia, "it's not something that can be done overnight," Weafer said.

"There should be enough, but it will take several weeks to get it from where it is to where it's needed," he says. "It's just a huge logistics operation to do that."

Fixing the war-damaged refineries is complicated. Ukraine's attacks damaged specialized equipment that is often imported, making repairs time-consuming and expensive as workarounds or replacements are sought by evading sanctions.

"They manage to get these things up and running, not necessarily at full capacity," Peach said. "But the extent of the damage this time is so extensive that they won't get back to winter levels of refining this summer."

Some refineries aren't worth repairing until a ceasefire or armistice, he said, because they will just "get knocked down again."

Repairing the Moscow refinery that supplied 40% of the fuel for the capital and the surrounding region is expected to take at least three months, Weafer said.

If there's no further damage to Russia's oil infrastructure, he estimated the shortages will last "probably throughout the summer" because demand from agriculture will likely remain high into September.

Today in History: July 2, Civil Rights Act signed into law

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 2, the 183rd day of 2026. There are 182 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law a sweeping civil rights bill passed by Congress prohibiting discrimination and segregation based on race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Also on this date:

In 1776, the Continental Congress passed a resolution saying that "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States."

In 1881, President James A. Garfield was shot by Charles J. Guiteau (gee-TOH') at the Washington, D.C., railroad station; Garfield died the following September. (Guiteau was hanged in June 1882.)

In 1917, rioting erupted in East St. Louis, Illinois, as white mobs attacked Black residents; at least 50 and as many as 200 people, most of them Black, are believed to have died in the violence.

In 1937, aviator Amelia Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan disappeared over the Pacific Ocean while attempting to make the first round-the-world flight along the equator.

In 1962, the first Walmart store opened in Rogers, Arkansas.

In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Gregg v. Georgia, ruled 7-2 that the death penalty was not inherently cruel or unusual.

In 1979, the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin was released to the public.

In 1986, ruling in a pair of cases, the Supreme Court upheld affirmative action as a remedy for past job