

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, July 7

Senior Meal: Sloppy Joe on bun, baked potato, baked beans, fruit.

Council meeting, 7 p.m., City Hall

Groton Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 5:30 p.m.

Groton 14U Legion at Clark, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

U18 Baseball (blue) at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

U10 Softball hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (DH)

T-Ball: at Columbia, 5:30 p.m.

Tiger Skills Workouts, 7:30 a.m., Arena

JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena

United Methodist Bible study, 10 a.m.

Olive Grove: Ladies Bridge/noon League, 6 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Wednesday, July 8

Senior Meal: Chicken alfredo, tossed salad, broccoli, fruit, breadstick

Legion Auxiliary Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar, 11 a.m., Groton Legion

Groton Junior Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

U8 Baseball (red) hosts Claremont, 6:30 p.m.

U12 Softball (B&W) at Faulkton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

TBall: hosts Claremont, 5:30 p.m., Nelson Field

JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Olive Grove: Men's League 3:30-9 pm

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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.

NATO Defense Push

World leaders are gathering in Ankara, Turkey, today for the 36th annual NATO summit. The 32-member alliance is expected to showcase new military equipment funded by increased defense spending.

NATO is estimated to spend about \$258B more on defense across 2025 and 2026 as members work to increase defense budgets from 2% to 5% of their gross domestic product by 2035. President Donald Trump pushed for the higher target last year, arguing that member states rely too heavily on the US. He threatened to reduce backing for allies that fail to meet the metric. Countries near Russia—such as Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia—are nearing the 5% goal, while Spain and Belgium previously struggled to meet the 2% benchmark.

Separately, Ukraine renewed calls for NATO support yesterday after reporting that Russia launched 68 missiles and 351 drones at and around Kyiv. NATO allies have reportedly provided 99% of all military aid to Ukraine since Russia invaded in 2022.

Kirk Murder Hearing

Prosecutors this week are publicly unveiling their evidence in the murder case of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who was fatally shot during a speaking event at Utah Valley University last September. The preliminary hearing that began yesterday will determine whether prosecutors have enough evidence to send the case to trial.

The defendant, 23-year-old Tyler Robinson, is charged with aggravated murder; he has not entered a plea as of this writing. Day 1 of the hearing included testimony from former campus police officer Chris Bagley, who said authorities found what appeared to be a “sniper pad” on a campus rooftop overlooking the event. Prosecutors also outlined evidence they plan to present over the coming days, including DNA evidence, autopsy findings, an alleged confession, and a video interview with Robinson’s former roommate and romantic partner.

Bull Run Begins

The annual nine-day San Fermín festival—known as the Running of the Bulls—kicked off yesterday in Pamplona, Spain.

Beginning today, thousands of people will sprint ahead of six fighting bulls and six steers each morning at 8 am local time, followed by an afternoon bullfight. The medieval-era festival honors Saint Fermín, remembered as the son of a Roman senator and Pamplona’s first bishop. In the 16th century, festivities were moved from the saint’s feast day in the fall to July, presumably to coincide with the peak season for cattle markets. This year, celebrations coincide with the 100th anniversary of the publication of Ernest Hemingway’s “The Sun Also Rises,” which popularized the festival.

At least 16 people are believed to have died in the festivities over the past century.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

George Clooney to receive lifetime achievement honor at the Venice Film Festival.

Ranking Clooney's 25 best movies.

AI "actress" Tilly Norwood will star in her first feature film, created by a team of traditional movie professionals and AI specialists.

Belgium defeats USMNT 4-1, advancing to quarterfinals.

Late goal sends Spain past Portugal into quarterfinals.

Lionel Messi's Argentina meets Egypt at 12 pm ET; Switzerland faces Colombia at 4 pm ET (More, w/ schedule)

Science & Technology

Euclid space telescope discovers oldest-known quasars, luminous objects that could provide new clues to the origins of the universe.

Researchers identify potential solution to electrical imbalances that limit the efficiency and lifespan of next-generation batteries.

Hobbit-like human ancestors likely scavengers rather than hunters, surviving by eating Komodo dragons' leftovers.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.7%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +1.1%); Dow hits record, driven by AI rally.

President Donald Trump rings opening bell from Oval Office to mark launch of child investment accounts.

Microsoft's Xbox to lay off 3,200 employees, representing about 20% of the video game unit's staff as Xbox downsizes and plans to spin off four gaming studios; another 3,200 jobs will be cut at Microsoft outside Xbox.

Comcast's Sky to buy UK TV giant ITV's broadcasting and streaming unit for over \$2B.

Versant to buy golf simulator maker Full Swing for \$530M.

UK budget airline easyJet agrees to \$7.3B US private equity takeover.

Politics & World Affairs

Hamas says it has dissolved its government in Gaza, will transfer power to the US-backed National Committee for the Administration of Gaza as part of ceasefire commitments; administration reiterates demands the group disarm.

Graham Platner, the Democratic candidate for Maine's Senate seat, says his campaign is taking "time to reflect" amid new sexual assault allegation; he denies the allegation.

Thieves steal 27 pieces of jewelry, worth roughly \$4.5M, from the museum of French luxury glassmaker Lalique on Sunday.

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* ★



Water shortage hampers growth north of Sioux Falls but solution near

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

DELL RAPIDS, S.D. – Scott Buss can only imagine what this town north of Sioux Falls might have looked like – and how many jobs and taxes would have been generated – if there wasn't a local shortage of available water.

Buss, executive director of the Minnehaha Community Water Corp., sat in the conference room of the rural water system based in Dell Rapids recently and ticked off the industrial and agricultural projects turned away due to a lack of water.

After hitting its limit on how much water it can provide a few years ago, the rural system has had to turn away proposed projects valued at hundreds of millions of dollars that offered an untold number of new jobs, he said.

The rejected projects include the Agropur Cheese plant that eventually opened in Lake Norden. A few proposed hog farms and dairy expansions in northern Minnehaha County were also stalled, Buss said.

Other proposals, most of which never came to fruition in South Dakota, included the \$1.5 billion Gevo corn-based jet fuel plant, the \$500 million Wholestone Farms hog processing plant and a data center that at some point all eyed the Dell Rapids area for development.

"All the water rights are spoken for between Dell Rapids and Sioux Falls, so there was no more water to be had in Minnehaha County," Buss told News Watch in an interview in June. "With all the (residential) development that was coming in, we realized that our well capacity and our treatment capacity was limiting our ability to take on new high water-use customers."

Buss and the nonprofit corporation's board of directors aren't waiting around to potentially miss out on more opportunities.

In a unique arrangement, the corporation is partnering with the neighboring Big Sioux Community Water System to the north on a \$170 million expansion project called Shared Resources. The expansion, started three years ago, will use new wells into the Big Sioux Aquifer to generate 8 million gallons of water per day starting this fall.

"It's going to be a huge and great benefit for Big Sioux and Minnehaha water," said Jodi Johanson, director of the Big Sioux system based in Egan. "This project is going to make sure that down the road we have enough water for the future."

As with other rural water systems in South Dakota, the aquifers the systems rely on for their water are either running low or are legally tapped out, or both.



A 1.5 million gallon water tower was under construction in early June 2026 as part of the Shared Resources expansion effort by two rural water systems. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota

News Watch)

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In the case of Minnehaha water corporation, the Big Sioux River Aquifer has gotten drier, but state law is also preventing it from taking more water from the aquifer.

In 1996, the state Water Management Board allocated water rights, or withdrawal limits, to systems that take groundwater from the aquifer, Buss said.

Those limits have now been reached, meaning that Minnehaha water cannot take any more than the 7 million gallons per day it is drawing now.

Directly to the north, the Big Sioux Community Water System produces up to 2 million gallons per day for about 2,400 customers in Moody and Lake counties as well as some in Brookings County and in western Minnesota, Johanson said.

The system still has room within its water rights to draw more water, making it an attractive partner for Minnehaha water.

The system also serves a number of dairies that use significant water and provides water to the Dakota Ethanol plant in Wentworth, which is undergoing an expansion. Farmers in the region are also using greater quantities of water to deliver chemicals onto their land, Johanson said.

The biggest Shared Resources ticket item is a new \$80 million water treatment plant that is nearly completed on 240th Street a few miles north of Dell Rapids.

A 20-inch pipeline from the plant to the east will end at a 1.5 million gallon water tower, and a 24-inch pipeline to the west will terminate at a ground-level storage tank with a 4 million gallon capacity.

Ratepayers will see a significant increase in their monthly water bills. The average residential consumer in both systems that uses about 7,000 gallons per month will see their bill rise to \$135 a month, roughly double the cost in 2020, Buss said.



The existing water treatment plant for the Minnehaha Community Water Corp. is located south of Dell Rapids, S.D. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

South Dakota News Watch is an independent nonprofit. Read, donate and subscribe for free at sdnewswatch.org. Contact content director Bart Pfankuch: 605-937-9398/bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org.

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.

New Jersey Lawmakers: Do We Have The Right To Garden?

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine ~ by Serena Goragandhi

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: With rising food costs and climate concerns, many suburban and urban residents want to grow their own food, but face strict local zoning laws or HOA rules. What is the "Right to Garden" movement, and how are states addressing these legal barriers?

-- L.J., via email

As global food prices fluctuate, residential cultivation has transitioned from a leisurely hobby to a vital tool for home food security. But citizens often encounter restrictive webs of zoning laws and Homeowners Association (HOA) regulations that

penalize residents for replacing traditional

turf grass with edible crops or native pollinator plants. To counter this, a growing "Right to Garden" movement is pushing for state-level preemption laws to establish ground-level food cultivation as a protected property right, overriding localized aesthetic bans while leaving municipal safety authority intact.

Florida and Illinois have already successfully codified these protections. Policy research highlights that residential gardens function as essential green infrastructure, absorbing significantly more stormwater runoff than standard shallow-rooted lawns. Currently, arbitrary town ordinances present massive barriers. In Linden and Roselle Park, New Jersey, strict height limits on "all plant life" effectively outlaw basic vegetable stalks, forcing families to choose between legal fines and self-sufficiency.

The economic and ecological data reveal a desperate need for solutions. Traditional shallow-rooted turf grass lawns account for millions of gallons of wasted municipal water and chemical runoff. At the same time, regions like New Jersey face a staggering \$53 million food budget shortfall, leaving over 650,000 residents food insecure. Legalizing backyard gardening reclaims this non-productive acreage, introducing decentralized agricultural nodes that immediately ease municipal supply pressures.

To transform this concept into a statewide reality, initiatives are underway to work alongside lawmakers like New Jersey State Assemblyman Gerry Scharfenberger to introduce the Right to Garden Act into committee. The Right to Garden Act solves local restriction barriers by standardizing agricultural rules statewide. This protects a homeowner's baseline liberties while allowing green spaces to safely absorb 30 percent more stormwater than standard grass, saving towns thousands in infrastructure repairs.

Crafting effective legislation requires balancing resident freedoms with public safety standards. Assemblyman Scharfenberger explained in a legislative press briefing, "Zoning and land-use concerns usually center on potential negative impacts on neighboring properties, such as water runoff, fertilizer odors, or structural setbacks." To help change the legal landscape permanently, citizens can take quick action by contacting their local representatives to demand standard, statewide protections. Also, getting involved with established local support networks like SNAP, WIC, or community garden associations can help identify exactly where regional food and environmental deficiencies can be solved right now.



New Jersey lawmakers are considering legislation that would institutionalize the "right to garden" in that state.

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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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

July 7, 2026 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 North Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
 2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
 3. Minutes
 4. Adjourn the 138th City Council
-
5. Convene the 139th City Council – Oath of Office
 - Appoint Vacant Council Seat – Ward 1
 - Election of Officers: President and Vice President
 - Appoint Advisory Committees
 6. Appoint Attorney – Chad Locken
 7. Appoint Newspaper – The Groton Independent
 8. Appoint Banks – Dacotah Bank & SD FIT
 9. Motion to approve bills each meeting & authorize the Finance Officer to pay payroll and all monthly bills in a timely manner to avoid penalties and take advantage of discounts
 10. Authorization to Allow Alcoholic Beverages for the Celebration in the Park on August 1st from 8am to 10pm at the City Park
 11. Main Street Parking Discussion and Approval to Remove No Parking Signs
 12. Department Reports
 13. Acceptance of FEMA Grant for Park Saferoom and Authorization to Sign Sub-Recipient Agreement and Environmental Report
 14. Approval of Cemetery Map Update Agreement with IMEG
 15. Airport Discussion and Update on Hanger Leases
 16. Agreement to Allow Area IV Senior Nutrition to Use Kitchen and Portion of Southwest Room at Community Center
 17. Bills
 18. Announcement: Groton 1912 Historical Jail Open House on July 12th from 10am to 3pm
 19. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
 20. Adjournment

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**BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
GENERAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2026, 8:45 A.M.
COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS
COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes*
4. Mike McHugh, Ordway Township Clerk
 - a. Resolution to name Township Road
5. Mike Scott, Landfill Manager & Leif Redinger, Helm Engineering
 - a. Pay Application #2 for Cell #5
 - b. Construction Change Order #2 for Cell #5
 - c. Discuss Purchasing 2 – 50 yd. Containers
6. Karly Winter, State's Attorney
 - a. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign contract for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant and approve the required match
 - b. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign contract for Domestic & Sexual Abuse Program (DASA) Grant and approve the required match
7. Richmond Dam Update
8. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of June 30, 2026
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Landfill Tonnage Report
 - e. Authorize Advertising for Budget Hearing
 - f. Set Hearing Date – Authorize Advertising of County Gross Receipts Tax Ordinance
 - g. Travel Requests
 - h. Lottery Permit for Boys & Girls Club
9. Other Business
10. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
11. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>
You can also dial in using your phone. United States: **+1 (872) 240-3311** - Access Code: **601-168-909** #
Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at [Commission Meetings | Brown County](#)

BUDGET WORK SESSION/MEETINGS

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 Post 39 14U sweeps Webster behind explosive offense

WEBSTER — Groton Post 39's 14U baseball team put together a pair of convincing victories Monday, sweeping Webster 12-2 and 16-5 behind timely hitting, patient at-bats and solid pitching.

Groton controlled much of the opener after Webster tied the game 1-1 in the first inning. Post 39 answered with a six-run second inning, collecting five hits in the frame. Hank Hill delivered the biggest hit with a full-count single that plated two runs.

Groton put the game away in the fifth, scoring five more runs. Asher Zimmerman drove in two with a single, Keegan Kucker added a two-run single and Easton Larson forced home another run with a bases-loaded walk.

Trayce Schelle dominated on the mound, allowing no hits over five innings while surrendering just two runs, one earned. He struck out nine and walked five to earn the victory.

Schelle and Kyson Kucker each collected two hits. Zimmerman, Larson and Hill each drove in two runs, while Zimmerman, Larson and Mason Locke each drew two walks. Larson also stole two bases as Groton turned one double play defensively.

The nightcap featured even more offense.

Groton jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first inning on a Hank Hill RBI groundout, a Webster error and an RBI single by Gavin Hanten. Webster answered with five runs over the first two innings to take a 5-3 advantage before Groton exploded.

Post 39 erupted for eight runs in the third inning to seize control for good. Owen Tewksbury highlighted the rally with a two-run single before Groton tacked on five more runs in the fourth. Hudson Eichler drove in a run with a single, Trayce Schelle forced home another with a walk, and Tewksbury capped the scoring with another two-run single.

Asher Zimmerman earned the win, allowing five runs—just two earned—over four innings while striking out two.

Tewksbury led the offense with three RBIs while finishing 2-for-2. Tewksbury, Schelle and Eichler each had two hits. Tewksbury also drew two walks as Groton worked six free passes in the game, while Schelle stole two bases.

The doubleheader sweep showcased the depth of the Groton lineup. Post 39 combined to score 28 runs on 15 hits while drawing 14 walks. Strong pitching performances by Schelle and Zimmerman, along with timely hitting throughout the order, powered Groton to the pair of victories over Webster.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball Take Down Groton Locke Electric A Little At A Time

By GameChanger Media

Aberdeen Circus Baseball kept adding on runs in a 7-1 victory over Groton Locke Electric on Monday at Aberdeen.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Easton Millar doubled down the right field line, and Casey Vining singled to center field, each scoring one run.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball added to their early lead in the bottom of the second inning after Millar hit a sacrifice fly, and Groton Locke Electric committed an error, each scoring one run.

Aberdeen Circus Baseball scored one run in the bottom of the third on a solo home run to center field by Vining.

Chad Ellingson earned the win for Aberdeen Circus Baseball. The pitcher allowed four hits and one run (zero earned) over six innings, striking out six and walking none. Wyatt Locke took the loss for Groton Locke Electric. The pitcher went two innings, allowing four runs (two earned) on three hits, striking out one and walking one.

Jonah Schmidt led the team with one run batted in. Ty Sieber went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Locke Electric in hits.

Vining drove the middle of the lineup, leading Aberdeen Circus Baseball with two runs batted in. The third baseman went 2-for-3 on the day. Millar and Vining each collected two hits for Aberdeen Circus Baseball.

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Groton Locke Electric 1 - 7 Aberdeen Circus Baseball

📍 Away 📅 Monday July 06, 2026

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	1
ABRD	2	2	1	2	0	0	X	7	6	1

BATTING

Groton Locke El...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs #1 (LF)	4	0	0	0	0	2
K Kucker #9 (RF)	3	1	0	0	0	1
T Sieber #24 (3B)	3	0	2	0	0	0
J Schmidt #21 (CF)	2	0	0	1	0	0
B Althoff #27 (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	2
B Althoff #4 (SS)	3	0	1	0	0	0
R Groebli... #0 (2B)	2	0	1	0	1	0
P Boyd #7 (DH)	3	0	0	0	0	0
C Camacho #5 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	1
CR: D Frey #6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	25	1	4	1	1	6

TB: B Althoff, R Groeblichhoff, T Sieber 2, **SF:** J Schmidt, **HBP:** C Camacho, **SB:** K Kucker, **LOB:** 6

PITCHING

Groton Loc...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
W Locke #25	2.0	3	4	2	1	1	0
P Boyd #7	2.0	3	3	2	1	2	1
R Groe... #0	2.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	6.0	6	7	4	2	3	1

L: W Locke, **P-S:** P Boyd 37-21, R Groeblichhoff 23-19, W Locke 48-28, **WP:** W Locke, **HBP:** P Boyd, W Locke, **BF:** P Boyd 11, R Groeblichhoff 6, W Locke 12, **E:** C Camacho

Aberdeen Circus...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
W Thorson (LF)	2	2	0	0	1	1
J Babcock (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
E Millar (CF)	3	2	2	1	0	0
K Kwak (RF)	3	0	1	1	0	0
C Vining (3B)	3	1	2	2	0	0
J Steinwandt (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
J Smith (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	0
K Coates (C)	2	1	0	0	1	0
R Soler (2B)	3	1	1	0	0	0
J Foss (DH)	1	0	0	0	0	1
T Oliver (DH)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	24	7	6	4	2	3

2B: E Millar, **HR:** C Vining, **TB:** K Kwak, E Millar 3, C Vining 5, R Soler, **SF:** E Millar, **HBP:** J Smith, J Foss, **SB:** W Thorson, **LOB:** 4

Aberdeen...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Ellingson	6.0	4	1	0	0	6	0
L Heiser	1.0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	7.0	4	1	0	1	6	0

W: C Ellingson, **P-S:** C Ellingson 86-56, L Heiser 11-6, **HBP:** C Ellingson, **BF:** C Ellingson 24, L Heiser 4, **E:** J Smith

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Groton Legion splits twinbill with Sisseton Post 50

SISSETON — Groton Legion Post 39 earned a split in an American Legion baseball doubleheader Monday, opening the evening with a 4-2 victory before Sisseton Post 50 answered with a 10-7 win in the nightcap.

Groton's pitching and defense set the tone in the opener. Jarrett Erdmann started and did not allow a hit over 3 1/3 innings, giving up no runs while striking out two and working through six walks. Gavin Englund pitched in relief before TC Schuster closed the door to earn the save.

The game remained scoreless until the fifth inning when Groton broke through. After putting runners aboard with a pair of singles, Englund delivered the key hit of the game, lining a two-run single to give Post 39 the lead.

Englund finished 2-for-4 with two RBIs, while he and Lincoln Krause each collected two hits. Carter Simon reached base three times on walks as Groton showed patience at the plate, drawing nine free passes. Defensively, Groton played an error-free game, with Karsten Fliehs leading the club with eight defensive chances.

Sisseton's LJ Crooks and Carter Stickland each had two hits, while Crooks and Bryson Hanson drove in the team's two runs.

The nightcap belonged to Sisseton after a big first inning. Post 50 erupted for eight runs in the opening frame, using three hits, four walks and a hit batter to build a commanding lead. Rylan Anderson, Bryson Hanson and Levi Nelson each delivered RBI hits, while Carter Stickland capped the rally with a two-run double.

Groton answered in the second inning when Karsten Fliehs launched a three-run home run to left field, trimming the deficit to 8-3. Fliehs wasn't finished, finishing 2-for-3 with four RBIs from the seventh spot in the lineup.

Sisseton added another run in the third before holding off Groton's comeback bid for the 10-7 victory.

Isaiah Scepaniak was charged with the loss after Sisseton's eight-run first inning. Kellen Rempp earned the win for Post 50, while Max Dahlen and Levi Nelson combined in relief to secure the victory.

Stickland paced the Sisseton offense by going a perfect 3-for-3 with a double, two RBIs and two stolen bases. Anderson added two hits, while Nelson also drove in two runs as Sisseton finished with 10 hits.

Despite the loss, Groton again played clean defense without committing an error and turned a double play. Lincoln Krause led the defensive effort with three chances.

The split gives Post 39 another solid conference result, highlighted by a dominant pitching performance from Erdmann in the opener and Fliehs' offensive outburst in the second game, including his three-run homer and four-RBI performance.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Sioux Falls mayor endorses Gov. Rhoden, calling him the runoff candidate with 'morals'

Comments come as a dozen other state leaders endorse governor against primary's top vote-getter, Toby Doeden

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

SIoux FALLS — A dozen Republicans who are seeking or hold elected statewide office and the mayor of South Dakota's most populous city have endorsed the incumbent governor in South Dakota's Republican gubernatorial runoff.

"You can't fake ethics, and you can't fake morals, and you can't fake values. And there's one guy in this race that has those, and it's this guy right here," Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken said of Rhoden during a Monday press conference.

Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden finished first in the June 2 primary; Rhoden placed second. Neither candidate reached the 35% threshold required to win the Republican nomination outright.

Both of the remaining Republican candidates are vying for the support of the more than 60,000 people who voted for U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and state Speaker of the House of Representatives Jon Hansen in the primary.

TenHaken said he's backing Rhoden because the governor's decisions have benefited Sioux Falls citizens. TenHaken spoke of the addition of eight troopers and a sergeant to the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Sioux Falls team and Rhoden's signature on bills to expand the city's airport and to allow cities to implement a 1% sales tax for special projects. He also pointed to Rhoden's efforts to support a new state prison and his backing of the planned relocation of Smithfield Foods' slaughterhouse from downtown Sioux Falls to an industrial park on the city's western side.

"When I look at all this stuff we've gotten done in 18 months, it's really quite remarkable," TenHaken said.



Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken answers questions alongside Gov. Larry Rhoden and Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/

South Dakota Searchlight)

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The mayor told South Dakota Searchlight that his comments on Rhoden's morality weren't meant to question Doeden's, but rather to say that "I know Larry really well, and I know Larry has morals, ethics and values, from my time working with him."

"I wouldn't gamble that if I were the voters," he said.

TenHaken is term-limited as Sioux Falls mayor, a position that's officially non-partisan but has been marked by partisanship during the 2026 election cycle. Voters were asked to choose TenHaken's replacement on primary day, June 2, which led to a runoff between Christine Erickson, a former Republican state representative, and Jamie Smith, a state lawmaker and one-time Democratic nominee for governor.

Erickson won the mayoral runoff by two votes. Smith formally requested a recount in the two-vote mayoral runoff race last week.

Doeden responded to TenHaken's comments by saying "like the majority of people supporting Larry's campaign, Paul is a closet Democrat," as evidenced by his not publicly supporting Erickson over Smith.

"He has never spoken to me," Doeden said. "Doesn't know me, my family, or anyone around me."

The Monday event was also attended by Republican Public Utilities Commissioner candidate Don Hagar; current Commissioner Kristie Fiegen; Republican Sioux Falls lawmakers Sen. Sue Peterson, Rep. Jack Kolbeck, Rep. Keri Weems, Rep. Brian Mulder, and Rep. Tim Czmowski; former Rep. Fred Deutsch, R-Florence; Sen. Kevin Jensen, R-Canton; Rep. Les Heinemann, R-Flandreau; House candidate Terry Sabers, R-Mitchell; Rep. Roger DeGroot, R-Brookings. Each of the Republican state officials and candidates pledged their support for Rhoden.

Jensen and Heinemann had previously supported Hansen, who placed last in the June primary election. Czmowski, DeGroot, Mulder and Weems had backed Johnson, who placed third.

Doeden has also landed some recent endorsements, including from Republican Attorney General nominee Lance Russell and the advocacy group South Dakota Canvassing, which supports hand-counting elections. Other former Hansen supporters, including Republican state Rep. Aaron Aylward of Harrisburg and former Hansen campaign spokesman Austin Goss, endorsed Doeden in the days following the primary.

The winner of the July 28 Republican gubernatorial runoff will advance to the November general election against Democratic nominee Dan Ahlers.

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.

Tick bites are surging in the US this year. Here's what to know.

BY AMELIA TWYMAN

WASHINGTON — The prime time for ticks is here in the United States, and after an especially active start to the season, experts are urging the public to stay alert and take preventive measures.

Monthly emergency department visits for tick bites in April spiked to their highest level since 2017 and continued to remain high throughout May and June, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's tick bite tracker.

Though it's hard to predict what the rest of the season will look like, given that tick activity depends on a number of different factors, there has definitely been a recent geographic expansion of the area ticks inhabit, said Pilar Fernandez, a disease ecologist and assistant professor at Washington State University.

The tiny blood-suckers, which tend to thrive in warmer climates, are spreading to places that used to be too cold for their existence, she said during a July 1 SciLine media briefing, as temperatures rise in the United States and around the world.

With more ticks comes a greater risk of individuals developing tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, Alpha-gal syndrome and anaplasmosis. That's why researchers are encouraging people to know their facts and learn how to protect themselves from bites as they venture outdoors.

What's going on this year?

According to the CDC, an estimated 31 million people are bitten by ticks each year, with most encounters taking place between April and October. But in 2026, ER visits began rising as early as March.

Weekly ER trips for tick bites are also up in every U.S. region except for South Central as of June 28, the online tick tracker shows.

Global warming is certainly one reason behind this recent surge in tick activity, though Fernandez said the whole picture is much more complicated.

Because ticks can live for up to two to three years, it's difficult to understand the delayed seasonal effects of increased temperatures or precipitation on their population, she said.

Other factors including local environmental conditions and how much time people spend outside can have an impact on annual tick encounters, she added.

Every spring and summer, she said, people ask her if it's going to be a "big year" for ticks, which is "a really hard question to answer, because it's not equal across all locations."

Most tick cases are recorded in the Northeast and Midwest, but different species of ticks are found in every region of the country. And as the population expands into areas where people are unaware of how to protect themselves and unaccustomed to checking for bites, the threat of contracting a tick-borne infection grows, Fernandez said.

Tick-borne diseases

Ticks carry pathogens that they then pass on to humans by biting into their skin and feeding on their blood. An untreated tick bite can lead to the development of one of nearly 20 different human diseases in the U.S., the most common of which is Lyme disease — about 476,000 patients are treated annually, according to the CDC.

Another tick-borne infection that has been on the rise is Alpha-gal syndrome, which causes people to experience a serious allergic reaction after they eat red meat or other animal products that contain the



A lone star tick, which is a very aggressive tick that bites humans. A circular rash sometimes follows the bite. (Photo courtesy Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention)

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sugar molecule alpha-gal. It is most commonly associated with the lone star species of tick distributed throughout the Northeastern, Southern and Midwestern United States.

Initial symptoms of tick-borne illnesses are unspecific and often the same as those that come with regular sickness, such as a fever, headache, muscle aches and joint pain, according to Alvaro Toledo, an associate professor in the Department of Entomology at Rutgers who also spoke at the July 1 media briefing.

"Physicians need to be vigilant and aware if they receive a patient with symptoms that are compatible with a tick-borne disease," he said.

What if you find a tick?

If one discovers a tick on the skin, Toledo said the proper response is to first quickly remove the tick with tweezers by pinching and pulling it up in a vertical motion, then disinfecting the area and monitoring for signs of sickness.

People should not, on the other hand, deal with a tick by burning it off or applying petroleum jelly to the bite, said University of Wisconsin-Madison Assistant Professor Adela Oliva Chavez, a tick researcher, at the briefing.

"Those are myths," she warned.

Ticks typically do not transmit infection until after they have been attached to the skin for 24 hours, which is why the CDC recommends people aim to remove the pests as soon as possible within the first day.

However, experts say the most effective way to prevent tickborne disease in humans is by limiting exposure to ticks in the first place.

Toledo said people should use chemical sprays such as permethrin on their clothing and classic bug repellents on their skin to keep ticks away. It's also a good idea to wear long, light-colored clothing when spending time in forests and other highly vegetated areas where ticks are abundant.

But, he added as a reminder to the public, there is "no zero-risk zone anywhere when you go out ... even in your backyard, risk is not zero."

Individuals can further reduce their chance of acquiring a tick bite by checking their pets just as often themselves, according to Oliva Chavez. Dogs and cats can easily bring ticks into the house from outside, and if they aren't yet attached to the animal's flesh, they can make their way onto humans, she said.

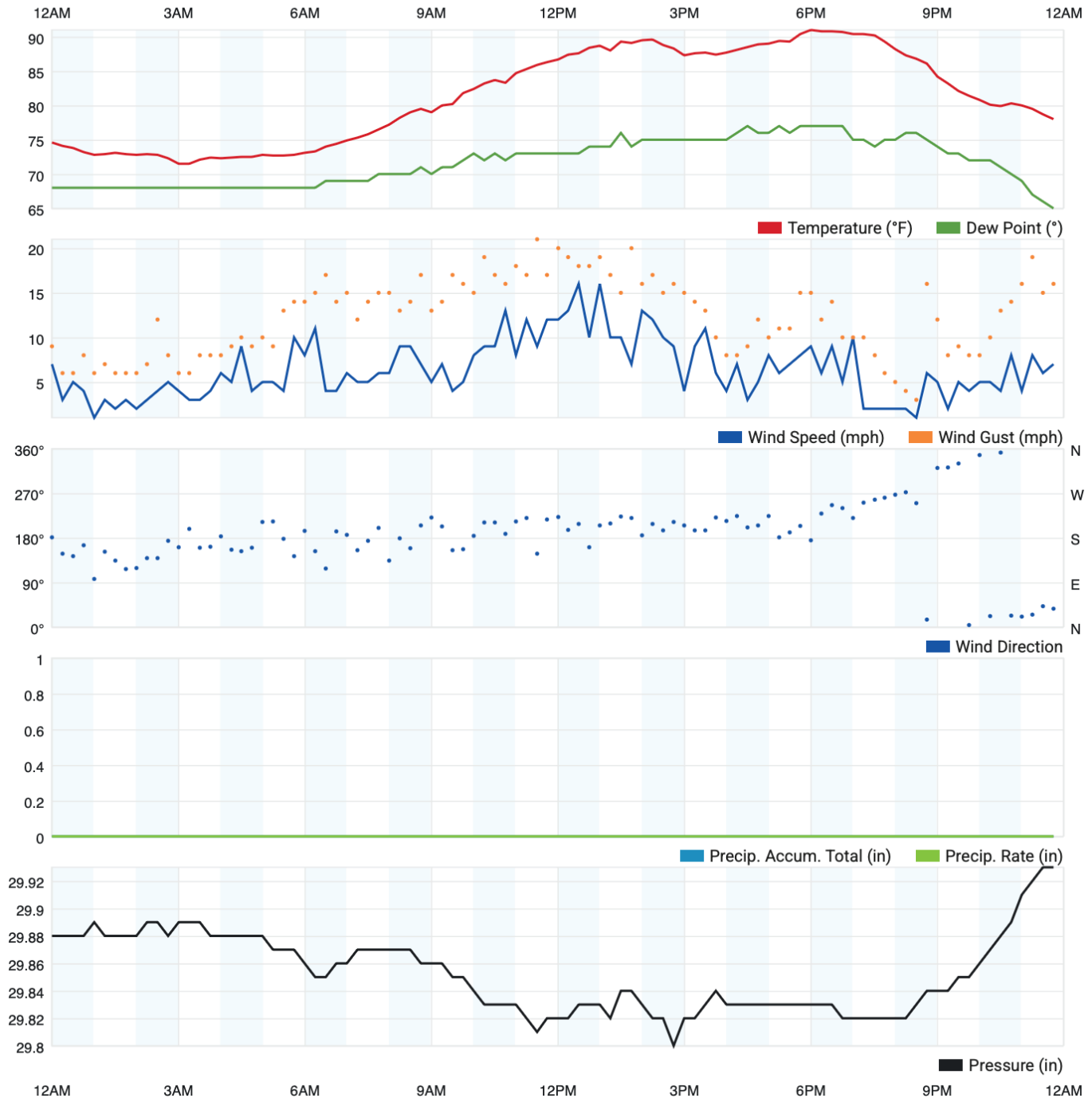
Amelia Twyman is an intern at States Newsroom's Washington bureau. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she now studies journalism and creative writing at the University of Maryland. She works as an assistant news editor at the university's independent student newspaper, The Diamondback. Amelia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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

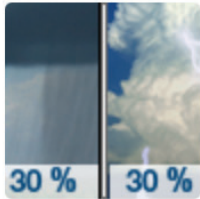
July 6, 2026



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Today



High: 87 °F

Chance
Showers then
Severe
Thunderstorms

Tonight



Low: 61 °F

Severe
Thunderstorms

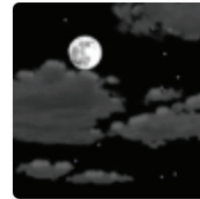
Wednesday



High: 78 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday
Night



Low: 57 °F

Partly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

Scattered Severe Weather
Possible

Timing:

6 PM CDT Tuesday to 1
AM CDT Wednesday

PRIMARY THREATS



DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS
up to 60-70
mph



HAIL up to 1"
diameter

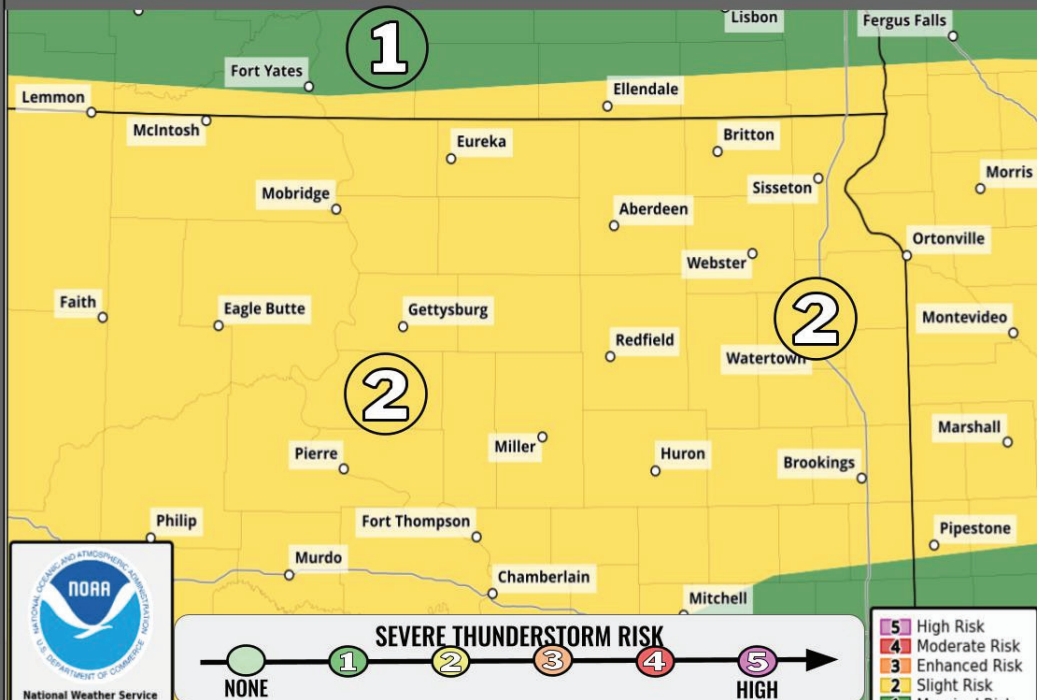


ISOLATED
TORNADO(ES)
POSSIBLE



HEAVY RAIN
POSSIBLE

Slight Risk For Tuesday Afternoon/Evening (July 7th)



A Slight Risk (level 2 out of 5) for severe storms is in place across the entire forecast area today into tonight. Hail at least 1 inch in diameter and thunderstorm wind gusts of 60 to 70 mph are possible. A couple of tornadoes could happen, too. Excessive heavy rain this evening through early Wednesday morning is possible.



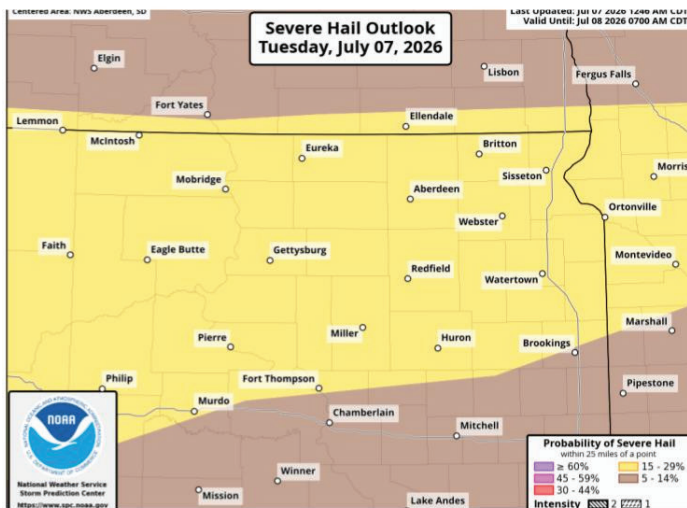
Severe Weather Threats Today/Tonight

July 7, 2026
3:11 AM CDT

Timing: Tuesday late afternoon through early overnight Tuesday night

Severe Thunderstorm Hail Risk:

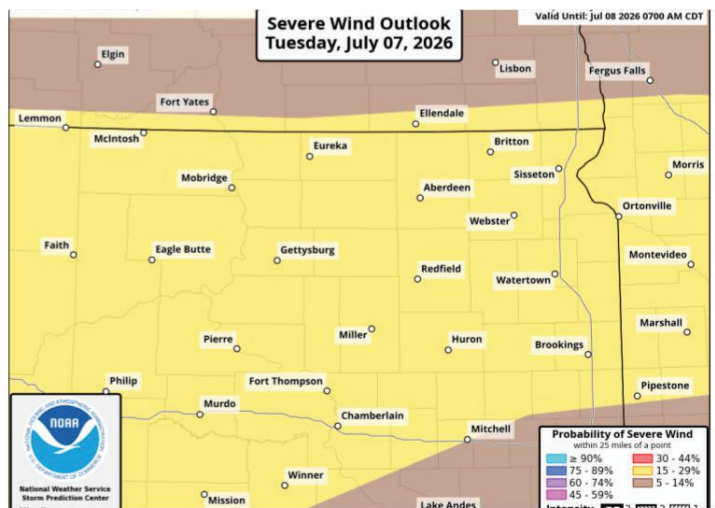
Thunderstorms this afternoon and evening will be capable of producing large hail at least an inch in diameter



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

Severe Thunderstorm Wind Risk:

Thunderstorms this afternoon and evening will be capable of producing thunderstorm wind gusts to 60-70 mph



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Hail at least one inch in diameter and thunderstorm wind gusts 60 to 70 mph will be possible mainly over parts of central into northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota and mainly between 4 PM CDT Tuesday and 1 AM CDT Wednesday .



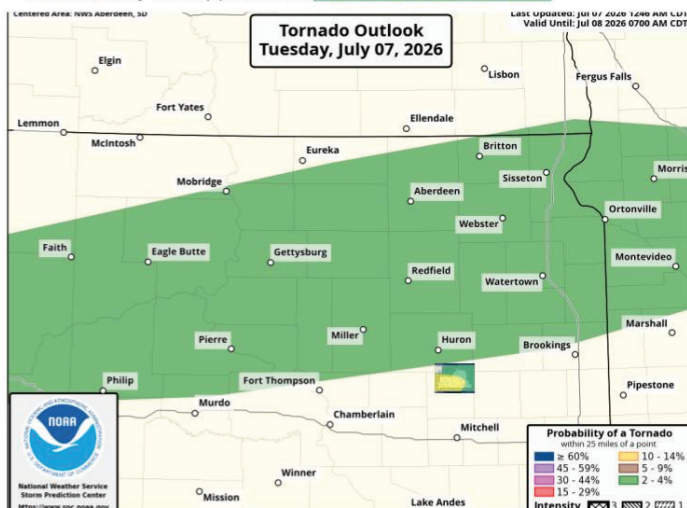
Severe Weather Threats Today/Tonight

July 7, 2026
3:37 AM CDT

Timing: Tuesday late afternoon through early overnight Tuesday night

Severe Thunderstorm Tornado Risk:

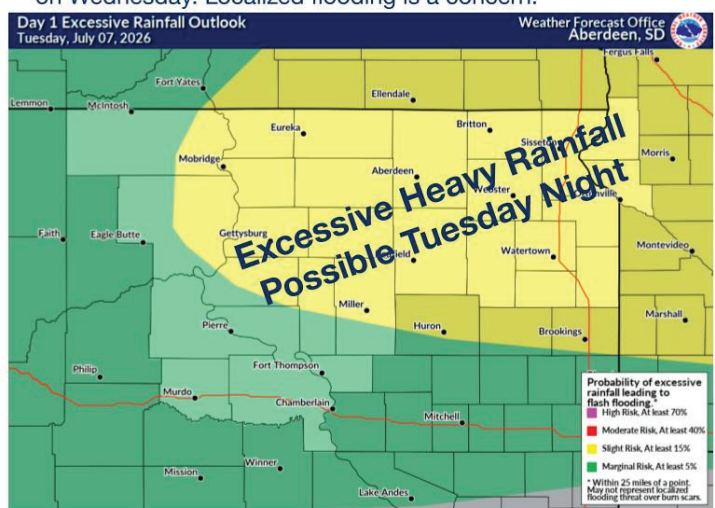
The environment late this afternoon through late this evening, along a warm front extending from central South Dakota into northeast South Dakota, may be supportive of tornadic thunderstorms



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

Flooding Risk:

Heavy rain-producing thunderstorms are possible mainly from late Tuesday evening through the early morning hours on Wednesday. Localized flooding is a concern.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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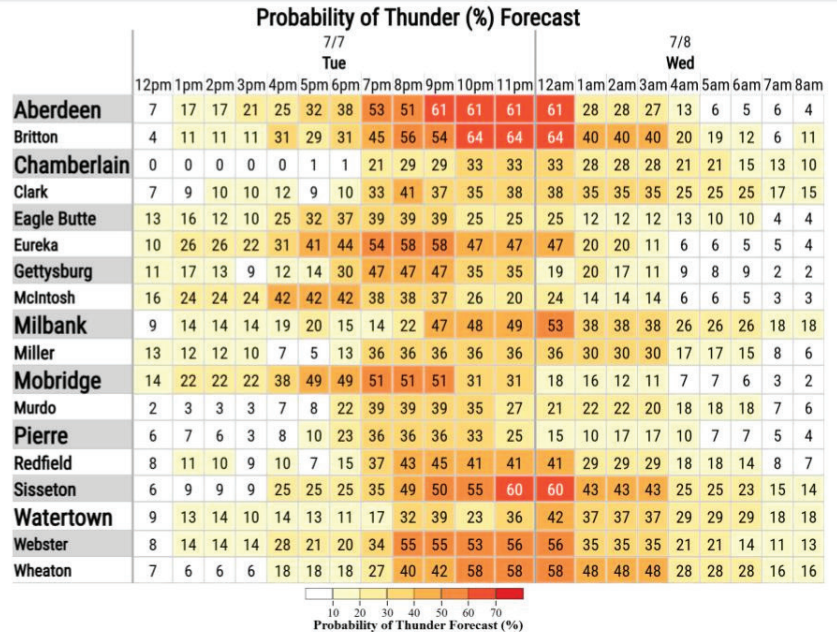


Timing Thunderstorms Today/Tonight

July 7, 2026
3:27 AM CDT

Key Messages:

- **Slight Risk:** Severe Thunderstorms are expected to develop across western and central SD this afternoon and evening and move into west central MN overnight.
 - Primary storm threats include:
 - **Hail 1" in diameter**
 - **Winds 60-70 mph**
 - Additional storm threats include:
 - **A Tornado or two**
 - **Excessive Heavy Rain**



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 91 °F at 5:59 PM

Low Temp: 71 °F at 3:02 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 10:19 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 43 in 1922

Average High: 85

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in July.: 0.82

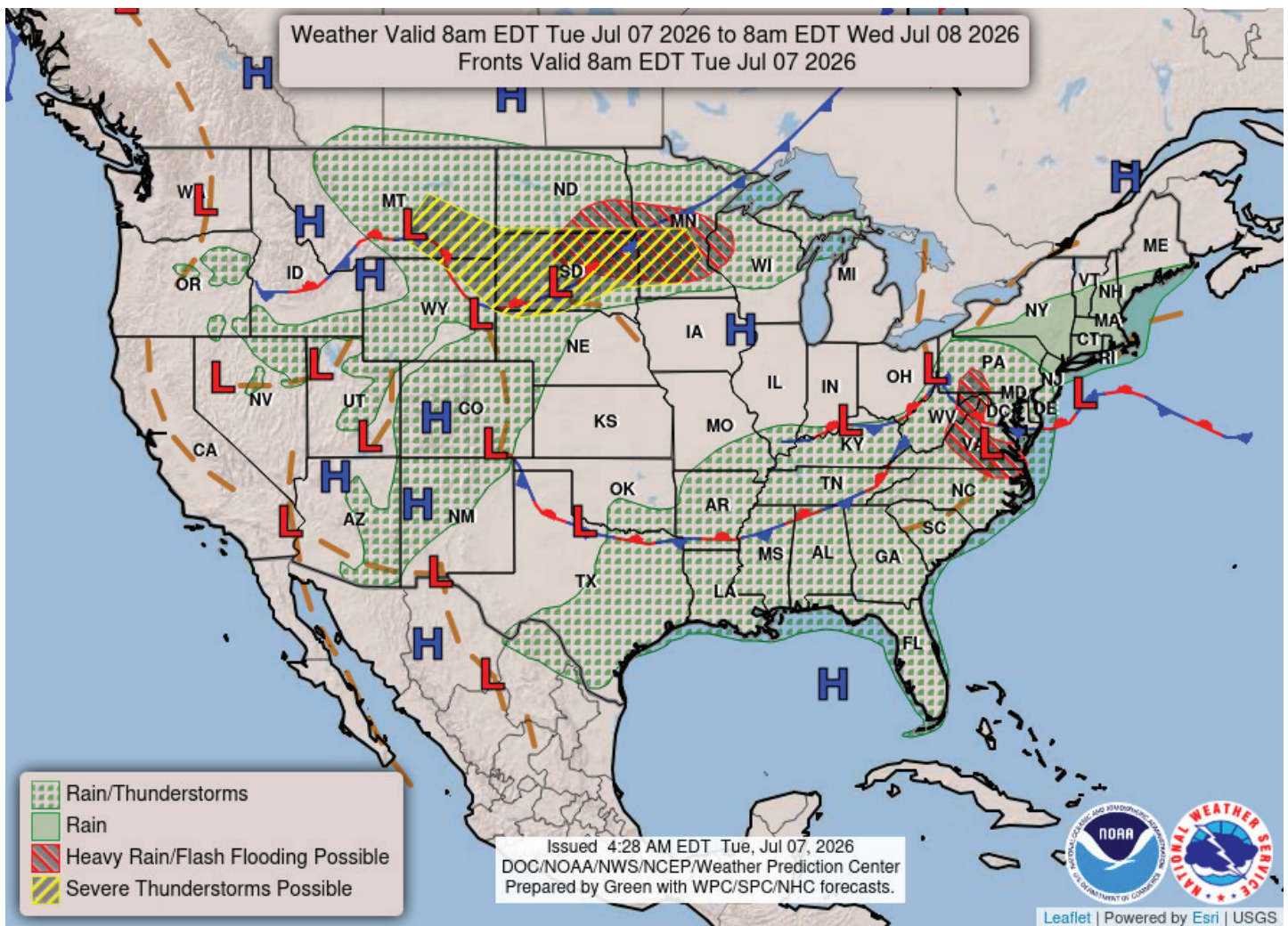
Precip to date in July.: 0.29

Average Precip to date: 11.83

Precip Year to Date: 9.76

Sunset Tonight: 9:22 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:52 am



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Today in Weather History

July 7, 1959: A powerful and widespread windstorm began near Kadoka and moved northeastward across the state at a speed of 60 to 65 mph. Airplane hangers were damaged or destroyed at Murdo, Redfield, and Watertown. Fourteen barns were destroyed or severely damaged. Five trailer homes were overturned.

July 7, 1990: A teenager was injured by softball size hail while working in a field near Herreid. The large hail also injured many cattle in the area. Most homes and vehicles in town suffered damage. The Herreid School had 120 broken panes of glass.

July 6, 1994: Widespread rainfall of over 6 inches fell in Dewey, Potter, and Faulk Counties, causing damage to roads and flooded basements and fields. A teenage girl escaped injury when her car was washed away by the waters of a swollen creek about 5 miles east of Gettysburg. Some total storm amounts include; 6.80 inches in Orient; 6.70 at Faulkton; 5.80 in Milbank; 5.48 in Big Stone City; 5.02 in Ipswich; 4.50 in Gettysburg; 4.17 in Webster; 4.12 near Onaka; 4.02 in Leola; and 3.97 in Britton.

1905: The mercury soared to 127 degrees at Parker, Arizona to tie the state record established at Fort Mohave on the 15th of June in 1896. The current record for Arizona is 128 degrees set in Lake Havasu City on 6-29-1994.

1915 — A severe wind and thunderstorm caused heavy damage and 38 deaths in and near Cincinnati, OH. Many older buildings were demolished. The steamship Dick Fulton was overturned. (The Weather Channel)

1981 — Montana was in the midst of a snowstorm that dumped ten inches at Glacier National Park, and produced winds to 90 mph. Meanwhile, Denver, CO, set a record high with a reading of 101 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms spawned eight tornadoes in Colorado, and three in West Texas. Thunderstorms also produced softball size hail at Bula, TX. In the midst of a record thirty-nine day string of 100 degree days, the temperature at Tucson, AZ, dipped to 66 degrees, marking their third straight record low for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thirty-eight cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Youngstown, OH, hit 100 degrees, and for the second day in a row, Flint, MI, reached 101 degrees, equalling all-time records for those two cities. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather during the day, with more than 100 reports of large hail and damaging winds from Ohio to Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Thunderstorm winds reached 90 mph in Sullivan County, NH, and golf ball size hail was reported in Pennsylvania. Twenty-four cities, mostly in the southwestern U.S., reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 105 degrees at Cedar City, UT, and 114 degrees at Moab, UT, were all-time records for those locations. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1991: During the early daylight hours of Sunday, July 7, 1991, a bow echo developed over southeast South Dakota and began racing east, producing very damaging winds. This bow echo was the start of a long-lived derecho that lasted 17 hours and affected areas from the Great Plains into western New York and Pennsylvania. Wind gusts in some places reached 80 to 100 mph. The strongest gust, 103 mph, was measured at Sioux Center, Iowa around mid-morning, and the roof of a school was blown off in nearby Orange City.

2004: A tornado occurred in the Rockwell Pass area of Sequoia National Park, California. Since the elevation of the tornado's ground circulation was approximately 3705 m (12,156 ft) MSL, this is the highest-elevation tornado documented in the United States.

2012: In Krymsk, Russia, nearly 11 inches of rain falls within a few hours on July 6th. The resulting flash floods occurred during the early morning hours on the 7. The flood wave, as high as 23 feet killed at least 172 people. The 10.83 inches is equivalent to three or four months' worth of precipitation in a typical year.

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Daily Devotion

Our Unmet Needs

**God is faithful in keeping His promises—
and faithful even when we're awaiting their fulfillment.**

Philippians 4:19-20: 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

20 Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

God has made many promises throughout Scripture, yet sometimes their fulfillment seems delayed. So we pray, wait, and question.

When our Father doesn't meet our expectations, we often look outside ourselves for the reason. But it's important to understand that while God's love is unconditional, many of His promises have conditions attached. Philippians 4:19, for example, is a promise that the Lord will supply all of a believer's needs. Scripture shows that obedience plays a role in how we experience God's provision (Psalms 81:10-12). Persistent disobedience can create barriers in our relationship with Him. Restoring that connection begins with repentance.

Taking a promise out of its biblical context can lead to misunderstanding what God has actually said. Expecting Him to fulfill a conditional promise when we're not meeting its requirements sets us up for disappointment.

The good news? God's expectations aren't burdensome (1 John 5:3). What He asks is that we love, honor, and obey Him—not to earn His favor, but because relationship requires participation. As we walk faithfully with Him, we discover He is faithful to meet our needs.

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:

07.06.26

2 8 32 54 56 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.03.26

5 9 29 47 57 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$576,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.06.26

12 16 19 21 23 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$32,500,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 28 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.04.26

8 9 18 25 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$169,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 43 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.06.26

22 25 27 47 50 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 12 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.06.26

17 44 63 66 67 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$434,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 12 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

What to know about China's rare ballistic missile test and why it raises concerns

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — China's navy test-launched a long-range ballistic missile Monday from a nuclear-powered submarine — a move that experts said showed Beijing's increasing skill and capability as part of its nuclear deterrence strategy.

The move also drew protests from the U.S. as well as countries in Asia and the Pacific. It was the second time China had fired a ballistic missile into international waters in recent years. While it gave some countries in the region prior notice, some said it was not enough notice, and experts say the launch exacerbates tensions around increasing militarization in Asia.

Here's what we know, and what we don't, about the missile launch.

Experts think it could be a JL-2 or a JL-3 ballistic missile

China announced the missile test publicly on Monday only after the launch, saying that it was fired into the Pacific Ocean. In a brief statement, the official Xinhua News Agency said the launch was part of routine annual training, complied with international law and practice, and was not directed against any country or target. It didn't provide details about the type of missile.

The missile was carrying a dummy warhead, not a nuclear one. The act of launching in international waters was rare, although the U.S. has also done so with its own missile testing.

Xinhua published a photo of the missile on Tuesday without additional details. Experts say it could be either a JL-2 or a JL-3, both submarine-launched ballistic missiles, though most said the available imagery was not clear enough to tell.

The state-owned tabloid Global Times said it was "most likely" a JL-3 missile with a range exceeding 10,000 kilometers (6,200 miles). The JL-2 has a shorter range.

The New Zealand government said the missile was launched into treaty waters in the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, violating the intention of the agreement.

The zone was established by the 1986 Treaty of Rarotonga, which prohibits nuclear weapons throughout the region. China ratified the protocols in 1987, pledging not to test nuclear weapons within the zone or threaten to use them against signatories with territory in the region.

Australia, Japan, and other countries protest

While China has told other countries to "avoid overinterpretation" in response to the criticism, experts say the concerns from other countries have some basis.

Much of the concern is a result of lack of clear information, said Drew Thompson, a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "China's military modernization and buildup have occurred without concurrent increases in openness and transparency, resulting in uncertainty about China's intentions."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said that China did not provide enough notice to the government.

"There is no doubt that this is a provocative act by China which does destabilize the region," he told reporters Tuesday while in Honiara, in the Solomon Islands.

"This was a test of a nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile fired from a nuclear-powered submarine. That is of real concern because what we need is less nuclear weapons, certainly not more. And the fact that this test took place yesterday with very little notice is of real concern," Albanese added.

New Zealand had said the same Monday, with Foreign Minister Winston Peters calling it "unwelcome and concerning."

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Matthew Wale, also speaking to reporters in Honiara Tuesday, said that "China is a good friend of Solomon Islands, but this is not something a friend does. This is not ... good

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in our region.”

“We don’t want to see any more countries — China, America, anybody — we don’t want anybody testing their ICBMs in the Pacific Islands region. Be our friend, but don’t threaten us,” Wale added.

Test comes amid increasing militarization in Asia

China’s leader Xi Jinping has made modernization of the People’s Liberation Army a top priority in his rule.

China already has the largest standing army in the world and the world’s largest navy. While its nuclear arsenal lags that of the U.S. and Russia, it has been actively expanding its stock of nuclear warheads. It has also actively been developing new longer-range missiles and advanced drones.

China’s defense budget, which is projected to be at \$270 billion in 2026, has grown at roughly 7% for the past four years, and hovers below 2% of its gross domestic product. However, independent analysis suggests the real spending could be much higher. For example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates the overall figure for 2024 at \$313.7 billion.

Much of the security worries about whether or not China’s military would get involved in a war centers on Taiwan, the self-ruled island that China claims as its own and for which it has not ruled out the use of force to bring it under its control. China also regularly sends warplanes and navy ships in the waters around the island in what it says are military exercises.

In response to China’s expanding military and activity, countries in the region have increased their own defense spending, including Japan which is breaking with its long-held cap of 1% of GDP to double the budget to 2%. Meanwhile, the Philippines agreed to allow the U.S. to expand its military presence in the country by adding access to four more bases.

“The Chinese launch exacerbates already deeply strained relations between Beijing and Tokyo. Since (Prime Minister Sanae) Takaichi’s comments last year suggesting that Japan would engage in a conflict over Taiwan, China has tightened export controls on Japan and accused it of embracing a ‘new time of militarism,’” said Emma Chanlett-Avery, director of Political-Security Affairs at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

NATO unveils billions in arms deals to prove its firepower to Trump

By LORNE COOK, SUZAN FRASER and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — NATO on Tuesday showcased a series of military projects worth billions of dollars in an attempt to convince President Donald Trump that U.S. allies are converting fresh defense spending into real firepower.

“It’s money well spent,” an energized NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte told government ministers and defense industry officials on the sidelines of a summit in Turkey. He was speaking at a defense industry forum billed as NATO’s “big reveal,” to the thrum of techno music and a slick video display.

Trump, who is slated to arrive in Ankara later Tuesday, has branded NATO a “paper tiger” that would cease to function without American arms and leadership.

NATO as an organization does not own any weapons — these are the property of the 32 member countries — but it does have a fleet of 14 AWACS early warning radar surveillance planes that are about 50 years old, along with some newer surveillance drones.

A deal to replace the aging planes was announced Tuesday. Swedish manufacturer Saab will be supplying up to 10 new GlobalEye surveillance aircraft for a 10-nation consortium, Sweden’s Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson announced.

“It’s a moment of great pride,” he said, noting that the twin-engine aircraft would be “made within the alliance for all the alliance.”

Some of the projects will be paid for with funds from a system of cheap loans for defense purposes set up by the European Union, comprising up to \$170 billion raised on capital markets.

“We need to ensure that we are translating our economic might into military capabilities, putting the cash to work from defense plans to drones, from money to missiles and interceptors,” Rutte said.

Defense sales announced

Representatives from 15 nations shook hands and patted shoulders on a vast podium under the NATO

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logo as they announced a multinational effort to buy air-to-air refueling and transport planes from Airbus. Then Rutte announced a four-country effort to purchase as many as five new Triton surveillance drones to add to NATO's small fleet.

"It is genuinely made in NATO, and creating jobs on both sides of the Atlantic," he said.

Rutte told reporters on the eve of the military alliance's two-day summit in Turkey that "we will announce tens of billions in new contracts that will provide the crucial kit we need to deter and defend."

However, at Tuesday's event, no dollar figures were given and the display included some projects long since agreed.

The defense industry splash comes a few weeks after Rutte tried to ease U.S. concerns about military spending at NATO with a new pitch using a chart labeled the "The Trump Trillion" — showing \$1.2 trillion in spending by European allies and Canada since 2017.

Far from being impressed, Trump appeared unmoved, saying he was still disappointed at some NATO allies' refusal to join the Iran war, which he had launched alongside Israel without consulting them.

"We don't need their money — we don't need anything," Trump said. "I just want loyalty."

Debate over jet sales to Turkey

The summit is being held in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's sprawling palace compound in Ankara and Trump has suggested he would come bearing gifts for the Turkish leader.

Speaking Monday on the morning show "Fox & Friends," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged the U.S. not to sell F-35 fighter jets to Turkey, saying that Erdogan "calls openly for the annihilation of Israel."

Turkey and Israel have acrimonious relations. Erdogan frequently accuses Israel of committing genocide in its war in Gaza, triggered by the deadly Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel.

Turkey was barred from the F-35 program in 2019, after it purchased Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems. However, Trump, who has warm relations with Erdogan, has hinted ahead of his planned visit to Ankara that the sales could soon resume.

Netanyahu said selling Turkey F-35s would "upset the power balance in the Middle East, which is ultimately guaranteed by Israeli air superiority and also, I think, by America's posture in the Middle East."

Israel's Air Force depends on hundreds of U.S. fighter jets, including F-35s, F-16s and F-15s.

Seeking a stronger Europe for a stronger NATO

The focus of the summit is a stronger Europe for a stronger NATO. The Trump administration has warned the allies that they must handle Europe's security alone as the United States focuses on China and the Indo-Pacific region.

The Pentagon wants a reboot and is promoting what it calls "NATO 3.0," a vision of the alliance in which Europe assumes greater responsibility for its own defense, freeing the U.S. to concentrate on other priorities.

But hiking defense spending means increasing taxes or diverting resources from other priorities. U.K. Defense Secretary John Healey unexpectedly quit last month, saying the British government was not willing to spend at a time of rising threats.

Concern is mounting among some northern and central eastern countries that Russia might be preparing a hybrid attack — a combination of conventional warfare with tactics like cyberattacks — on the continent as Russian President Vladimir Putin struggles to secure victory in Ukraine.

Keir Starmer's office said the British leader will be "focused on building a stronger and more European NATO" on what is likely to be his last foreign trip as prime minister.

Starmer, who announced his resignation June 22, has faced criticism from military leaders, opposition politicians and some in his center-left party for the slow rate of increase in U.K. military spending.

His government has committed to reach the NATO budget target of spending 3.5% of gross domestic product on defense by 2035 but does not have a concrete plan to get there. Its current spending plan will see that spending hit 2.7% of GDP by 2029.

Democrats begin pulling Platner endorsements after Maine candidate faces sexual assault allegation

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

A woman who previously dated Maine Democratic Senate candidate Graham Platner said he drunkenly forced her to have sex after she told him to stop, according to a Politico report released Monday, leading prominent supporters to pull their endorsements and throwing a must-win race for the party into turmoil.

Platner denied the allegation, but said he would be considering next steps for his campaign.

"Regardless of the inaccuracy of the reporting but mindful of the political reality it will inflict, we're taking the time to reflect on the best path forward," he said in a video released on social media.

Jenny Racicot, who lives in Maine, told Politico that Platner entered her home in 2021 while drunk and assaulted her. Racicot said she had been in an on-and-off relationship with Platner, but she cut off contact with him after that night and told him the incident wasn't consensual. A voicemail left at a number listed for Racicot seeking comment did not receive an immediate response, but she said in a CNN interview on Monday evening that she opted not to fight back for fear of Platner, a former Marine, becoming more violent.

"He violated multiple layers of consent that night," Racicot said.

Platner's campaign did not immediately respond to an email and phone message from The Associated Press seeking comment.

"Any accusation of non-consensual behavior is categorically false," Platner said in his video.

Uproar in the Democratic Party

Platner won the Democratic nomination last month, setting himself up to face Republican Sen. Susan Collins, who has beaten back previous attempts to dislodge her from the seat that she's held for nearly three decades.

Although Platner has long been controversial, the sexual allegation sparked a flight away from the candidate, who canceled a handful of town hall events. The main campaign arm of Senate Democrats called on Platner to drop out and said it would spend no money on the race, which is considered critical to control of the chamber, if he is the nominee.

"Graham Platner needs to immediately withdraw as the Democratic nominee for Senate and allow Maine Democrats the opportunity to choose a new candidate who can defeat Susan Collins," Kirsten Gillibrand, chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and Chuck Schumer, the top Senate Democrat, said in a joint statement.

The Democratic National Committee sent out an email soliciting money for Senate races hours after the Politico report posted, but Maine was not one of them. Ken Martin, the party chair, said, "Maine Democrats should select a new nominee."

Rep. Ro Khanna, a California Democrat who stood by Platner even as the candidate faced previous controversies, said Monday's allegation was enough. "I've been very clear that sexual assault or violence against women is a red line," Khanna said. "These allegations are very serious and credible. Graham Platner should drop out from the race. I am withdrawing my endorsement."

Arizona Sen. Ruben Gallego and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren announced they were pulling their endorsements and called on Platner to drop out. The Democratic leaders of Maine's legislature and top officials at the state Democratic Party did the same.

"This Senate race comes at a pivotal moment in the struggle against a government, supported by Senator Collins, that serves the interests of the wealthy and powerful at the expense of ordinary Maine people. It is essential that we refocus this campaign on that struggle," party chair Charlie Dingman, vice chair Imke Schessler and executive director Devon Murphy-Anderson said in a joint statement.

Collins issued only a brief statement.

"These allegations are appalling," she said. "Nevertheless, it is not up to me to choose the Democratic nominee for Senate."

State law allows Platner to be replaced on the ballot if he withdraws by July 13. The replacement candidate must be named by July 27.

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The Associated Press generally does not name victims of sexual assault, but in this case Racicot spoke in an interview with Politico.

A succession of campaign controversies

Platner had never before held elected office, and Democratic leaders in Washington preferred Gov. Janet Mills in the primary. However, Mills, 78, dropped out as Platner, 41, consolidated support with help from progressive leaders at a time when Democratic voters have grown disenchanted with the party establishment.

While some Democrats came around to support him after his commanding primary win, Platner's controversial history had already left others openly despairing of their chances of winning the race. A veteran who also worked for a private security contractor, Platner has a chest tattoo recognized as a Nazi symbol, reportedly sexted with other women shortly after getting married and had a history of inflammatory comments on social media.

In 2013, Platner posted on Reddit that people shouldn't get so drunk "they wind up having sex with someone they don't mean to" and that sexual assault victims should "just take some responsibility for themselves." He's since apologized for the post and says he no longer holds those beliefs.

The New York Times also reported that Platner had volatile relationships with previous girlfriends, one of whom said an argument became physical. Platner denied the allegation.

Hasan Piker, a leftist commentator and streamer who backed Platner, seemed to reverse himself Monday following the Politico report.

"If new evidence presents itself, I'm going to change my perspective — it's that simple," Piker said during a livestream on Twitch, adding: "This is a clear-cut instance of verifiable sexual assault allegations. It's completely irredeemable."

Our Revolution, a progressive organization founded by Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, said Platner should withdraw because the allegations "are too serious to treat as a distraction from the campaign or the issues."

It also hinted at the potential battle over who would replace Platner.

"Whoever leads this movement forward must be someone who has actually lived the fight Graham Platner ran on: a record with working people, with unions, against corporate money, already tested and trusted by the same base that delivered this result," said a statement from Joseph Geevarghese, executive director of Our Revolution.

Platner had pitched himself as a blue-collar oysterman and veteran who could reach disaffected voters. But as controversies mounted, some state Democrats had heartburn, embodied by Mills' refusal to endorse Platner after she dropped out of the primary. Chatter circulated about possible replacements, including former state senator and logger Troy Jackson and Secretary of State Shenna Bellows.

"I've known this has been coming," said Marie Follayttar, a Democrat and community organizer in Maine, talking about the growing whispers inside the state's small population that had been bracing for yet another revelation surrounding Platner. "I've been scared and I've been sick waiting."

Mike Connelly, a business owner and Democrat in Brunswick, Maine, said in an interview that he wants Platner to drop out after the latest allegations. But Connelly said he'd vote for him if he stays in.

"I would vote for a comatose Democrat before I would vote for Susan Collins," Connelly said.

Explosions rock Damascus, wounding 18, as French President Macron visits Syria

By OMAR ALBAM and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Explosions rocked Damascus on Tuesday as France's president met with his Syrian counterpart in a landmark visit, wounding at least 18 people, Syria's Interior Ministry said.

Emmanuel Macron had entered the presidential palace to meet Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa when the explosions happened near the Four Seasons Hotel. Syrian authorities did not immediately comment

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on the incident.

Syrian media reported that Macron was staying at the Four Seasons. The French president's office said he was safe and that his meeting with al-Sharaa was continuing. Macron is the first major Western leader to visit Syria since al-Sharaa came to power and his visit comes before he heads to a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey.

Macron played a major role in pushing Europe and the United States to drop most sanctions on Syria. He arrived in the country Monday night with an economic delegation, and is scheduled to sign memorandums of understanding with his counterpart as the battered country tries to lure investors to help it rebuild after 14 years of war.

The Interior Ministry in a statement reported by Syrian state media said that the two blasts in the heart of the capital were caused by explosive devices, one placed in a garbage bin and the other in a parked car. It added that four of the wounded were police officers, and no deaths were immediately reported. An investigation is currently taking place at the scene of the attack.

A large plume of smoke could be seen from the site. The area is on a busy street in Damascus and is near the headquarters of the Tourism Ministry and the Damascus National Museum.

Footage widely circulated on social media showed a van and a motorcycle on fire and blood stains on the street.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

The incident comes days after an explosive device was detonated in a cafe near the Justice Palace in Damascus, killing at least 10 people and wounding more than 20.

The explosions are a blow for al-Sharaa, who came to power after leading an insurgency that ousted Bashar Assad in 2024.

He has since pushed to assert full control and bring stability in war-torn Syria, appeal to minorities skeptical of his Islamist-led rule, and win the support of Western governments who were skeptical of his past leadership of the former al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group. His government has promised political and economic reform after decades of autocratic rule.

While Syria's new rulers have wrestled with violence involving different groups in the country as they work to assert control, the capital has largely been peaceful during the turbulent period.

The conflict in Syria killed nearly half a million people and displaced millions. Syria's infrastructure lies in ruins, and while other nations and businesses have made large investment pledges, the country still needs hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild and lift millions out of poverty.

Before arriving at the presidential palace, Macron met with members of Syrian civil society, though his office did not give details on who.

Belgium beats US 4-1 to reach World Cup quarterfinals, taking advantage of defensive lapses

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — Images told the story of the United States' World Cup downfall.

Christian Pulisic sprawled on the field in agony after hurting an ankle.

Matt Freese holding his hands on his head after his gaffe gifted a goal.

Chris Richards crumpling to the ground, his face pressed on the grass.

Mauricio Pochettino kicking a rack in front of the American bench, sending four water bottles flying.

American hopes for a deep World Cup run at home ended when Charles De Ketelaere scored twice and assisted on another goal, helping Belgium expose the U.S. defensive liabilities in a 4-1 win Monday night that earned a quarterfinal berth.

"It stinks," Tyler Adams said. "This was a moment to have an opportunity to advance and really try and do something special. We fell short."

While the U.S. was boosted by the presence of star forward Folarin Balogun, whose one-game red-card suspension was controversially lifted by FIFA, American defenders were at fault in a pair of first-half goals

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and Freese's howler gave the Red Devils a third early in the second half.

Second-half substitute Romelu Lukaku added Belgium's final goal in the third minute of stoppage time after Richards' giveaway. The U.S. hadn't allowed that many goals in a World Cup game since a 5-1 loss to Czechoslovakia in the Americans' 1990 opener, when they returned to soccer's biggest stage after a 40-year absence.

"A very bad day," said Pochettino, the U.S. coach. "It's not like you are in a rocket and you improve and you grow. ... It's not linear."

This loss was a painful reckoning for a team that hoped to boost the sport but instead failed to shake a quarter-century of stagnation since 20-year-old Landon Donovan led the Americans to the 2002 quarter-finals. Since then, the U.S. has lost four times in the round of 16.

"Everyone had nerves, right, because we knew how much this meant for the whole country, not just our team," said 21-year-old defender Alex Freeman, the youngest U.S. player.

Belgium knocked out the U.S. in the round of 16 for the second time in 12 years and extended its unbeaten streak to 18 games. The Red Devils play 2010 champion Spain on Friday at Inglewood, California, for a semifinal berth against France or Morocco.

"We showed that we're ready and we want to perform," captain Youri Tielemans said.

All six CONCACAF nations have been eliminated, with the three co-hosts falling in the round of 16.

Malik Tillman tied the score 1-1 midway through the first half when he became the first player since France's Bernard Genghini in 1982 to have two free kick goals in a World Cup, but the Americans conceded less than a minute after the ensuing kickoff.

American star Christian Pulisic could only watch the end from the bench after injuring his right ankle when he hit Tielemans' boot on a 52nd-minute shot attempt. Pulisic was replaced seven minutes later, finishing the tournament with no goals.

"I didn't quite have the moments I was hoping to and to try to help us to really push and get over this next step of beating a really good team," he said. "I'm disappointed with myself, of course, but I'm going to try and stay positive. I did a lot of good things and the team did, as well."

After winning three World Cup games for the first time in this expanded 48-nation tournament, the U.S. lost its seventh straight match to Belgium. The Americans have dropped 11 of their last 12 games against European opponents, winning only their round of 32 match against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A heralded generation led by Pulisic, Adams and Weston McKennie only partially accomplished their mission of lifting soccer's stature closer to that of the NFL, MLB and the NBA.

"A goal was obviously to inspire people that the sport was growing in the U.S., which I think we saw. The support was unbelievable," Adams said. "In this moment we let them down."

De Ketelaere put Belgium ahead in the eighth minute and Tillman's goal in the 31st energized a largely red-white-and-blue crowd of 66,925 at Lumen Field. De Ketelaere damped that and assisted on Hans Vanaken's 57th-minute goal after Freese lost control of the ball in front of his net.

"Obviously disappointed for my involvement and error in judgment on the third goal," Freese said.

Belgium, which didn't start stars Jérémy Doku as and Kevin De Bruyne, pressed from the start and exposed a defense regarded as the Americans' weak spot.

Dodi Lukébakio made a long diagonal pass to the opposite corner, leading to the opening goal. Leandro Troussard controlled the ball and his cross was blocked by Freeman and popped into the air. Freeman headed the ball into the penalty area and Timothy Castagne charged after it and hooked a centering pass around Richards. De Ketelaere split Antonee Robinson and Tim Ream, at 38 the oldest American ever in a World Cup, then with his right foot redirected the ball into an open net.

Pochettino held out his arms, as if to ask: What was going on?

Tillman scored after Brandon Mechele knocked down Balogun about 25 yards from goal. Tillman's kick deflected off Vanaken's head and deflected to the left of goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who had dived right.

Troussard got around Sergiño Dest for a cross and De Ketelaere outjumped Ream and headed the ball past Freese in the 33rd minute for his eighth international goal.

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Belgium built a two-goal lead when Mechele lofted a long ball that Freese chested after two hops. Freese hesitated with a touch, then scrambled and kicked the ball off De Ketelaere. Vanaken one-timed a shot from 35 yards that deflected in off Ream.

Lukaku entered in the 67th minute and scored his 93rd international goal.

Pochettino replaced Gregg Berhalter after first-round elimination at the 2024 Copa America. His contract expires this summer and he hasn't decided whether to stay through the 2030 World Cup.

Instead of focusing on Spain, Pochettino has a different near-term agenda.

"To rest a little bit, to think, to have conversation," he said, "and then see what the decision is from the federation and from us."

Asian markets retreat, with Korean shares slumping despite an AI-led rebound on Wall St

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Asian shares retreated Tuesday, with South Korea's Kospi sinking almost 5% despite a rebound for AI stocks that lifted benchmarks on Wall Street.

Oil prices rose and U.S. futures were mixed.

In Seoul, the Kospi dropped as much as 8% but recovered some losses to close 4.9% lower at 7,656.31. Shares in computer chipmaker Samsung Electronics slumped 7.7% even after it announced its operating income surged 19-fold to 89.4 trillion won (\$58.7 billion) in the last quarter while its revenue more than doubled. SK Hynix lost 6.7%.

Kim Seok-hwan, an analyst at South Korean securities firm Mirae Asset, attributed drop for Samsung to foreign investors locking in recent gains and rebalancing their portfolios.

AI stocks have been gyrating on fears their prices have shot too high, raising questions about whether all the dollars flowing into AI chips and data centers can possibly create enough gains in productivity and profits to make back all the investments.

"The first proper AI stress test may not have arrived with weak demand, a capex warning, or some sudden crack in the data center story. It may have arrived with Samsung posting an extraordinary quarter and the stock falling anyway," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

SK Hynix will further test investors' appetite for AI this week, aiming to raise \$28 billion by selling shares of stock that will trade in the United States on the Nasdaq. That would make it one of the biggest U.S. offerings ever, behind SpaceX's IPO from last month, which raised \$75 billion.

The company's stock in Seoul has more than tripled so far this year because of the AI boom, despite sharp losses in recent weeks.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 declined 2.1% to 68,256.96. Computer chipmaker Tokyo Electron lost 3.9% and chipmaker Kioxia Holdings shed 11.3%.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong declined 0.7% to 23,444.20, while the Shanghai Composite index gave up 1.3% to 3,990.25. Taiwan's Taiex lost 2.3%.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 declined 0.3% to 8,803.90 and India's Sensex rose 0.5%.

On Monday, the S&P 500 rose 0.7% to 7,537.54, pulling to within 1% of its all-time high, even though the majority of stocks within the index fell.

The strength for companies in the artificial-intelligence technology industry sent the Nasdaq composite 1.1% higher, to 26,121.16. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.3%, to 53,055.91, a record.

Broadcom was one of the strongest forces lifting the S&P 500. It rose 3.7% after announcing long-term agreements to provide silicon products to Apple. It was coming off two straight losses of more than 2% on Wednesday and Thursday at the end of last week, before Friday's holiday in advance of the Fourth of July.

SpaceX erased an early gain to fall 1% in the last day of trading before it's scheduled to join the Nasdaq 100 index of the largest non-financial stocks on the Nasdaq. That inclusion will force funds like the QQQ exchange-traded fund, which mimic the index, to buy SpaceX themselves.

Elsewhere in AI, TeraWulf climbed 4.9% after it said Anthropic agreed to a 20-year deal to use its data

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center in Kentucky. TeraWulf expects the deal to bring in roughly \$19 billion in revenue. TeraWulf is in the midst of transitioning its business away from mining bitcoin and into high-performance computing.

In the oil market, the price of a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 84 cents to \$72.83 a barrel. That's close to where it was before the United States and Israel attacked Iran in late February, sending prices spiking.

The stability of supplies remains uncertain. A tanker traveling off the coast of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz caught on fire early Tuesday morning after being struck by a projectile, the British military said.

The attack was the latest targeting a vessel moving through the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which a fifth of all oil and natural gas traded once passed in peacetime. Iranian state television said the liquefied natural gas tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings but did not directly claim the assault.

U.S. benchmark crude added 73 cents to \$69.28 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar fell to 162.01 Japanese yen from 162.09 yen. The euro slipped to \$1.1431 from \$1.1442.

Tanker set ablaze after being struck by projectile in the Strait of Hormuz as Iran mourns Khamenei

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A tanker traveling off the coast of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz caught on fire early Tuesday morning after being struck by a projectile, the British military said.

The attack was the latest targeting a vessel moving through the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which a fifth of all oil and natural gas traded once passed in peacetime. Iranian state television said the liquefied natural gas tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings but did not directly claim the assault.

Tehran has repeatedly declared that only its approved route through the strait is safe and is suspected of attacking other ships that have used another route close to the Omani shore.

The U.S. is eager to press ahead with negotiations with Iran aimed at fully reopening the strait, rolling back Tehran's disputed nuclear program and reaching a permanent end to the war launched Feb. 28. But previous attacks in the strait have sparked retaliatory strikes by the U.S., which then saw Iran attack Gulf Arab states — raising the risk of an escalation.

Talks between Iran and the U.S., meanwhile, appear to be on hold until after the burial of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed at the beginning of the war. Signs have been increasing that mourners at his funeral were calling for the death of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Authorities flew Khamenei's body to the Shiite seminary city of Qom overnight, where mourners honored him Tuesday.

Tanker struck in latest attack in strait

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said the tanker had been hit near Limah, Oman, in the strait. The UKMTO said the projectile hit the port side of the vessel while trying to traveling south out of the strait toward the Gulf of Oman.

It said there was no environmental impact from the strike and that authorities were investigating.

Iranian state TV, quoting anonymous sources, implied Tehran carried out the assault on a tanker it said was carrying natural gas from Qatar. However, there's been no official claim from the Islamic Republic for the attack.

Iran's joint military command warned last Thursday that all oil tankers moving through the strait must use its approved routes. It also said that interference by U.S. forces in the strait "will be met with a rapid and decisive reaction."

But the Joint Maritime Information Center, a multinational body overseen by the U.S. Navy, told shippers on Monday that the route around Oman "has been expanded and remains available for all traffic."

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Trump on Monday at the White House also warned Iran that they'd need to "make a deal or we're going to finish the job."

"I'd rather make a deal, because I don't want to affect 91 million people," Trump said. "We can knock down their bridges in one hour. We can knock out their energy supply."

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 Iran charging for passage through the strait. An effort by Oman and a United Nations agency to launch a new route near Oman's shore earlier sparked attacks across the Mideast, highlighting the tensions.

The data firm Kpler reported that over last weekend at least 108 ships crossed through the strait using various routes.

Mourners gather in Qom for Khamenei's funeral

Iranian state television early Tuesday aired live images from a helicopter of hundreds of thousands of people walking toward Jamkaran Mosque, just south of Qom, for a funeral service for Khamenei. The mosque is believed by Shiites to have once hosted the Muhammad al-Mahdi, the 12th and last Shiite imam, who disappeared in the 9th century and will one day reappear to bring justice to the world.

Images of Khamenei and his son, Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, were displayed on banners and posters held by mourners. Mojtaba Khamenei has yet to make an appearance in the funeral ceremonies, which are unfolding over several days. He is believed to be in hiding after reportedly being wounded in the airstrike that killed his father.

At the height of the war, before an April ceasefire, Israel targeted top Iranian leaders, in at least one case likely using their public appearances to fix their position. It has also threatened to kill the younger Khamenei.

Authorities have shut down streets, airspace and daily life for the mourning, which began Saturday and will end Thursday as Khamenei is buried at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, his birthplace. Khamenei was 86.

What to know about NATO's summit in Turkey as America steps back from its defense of Europe

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump and his NATO counterparts are gathering in Turkey on Tuesday for a two-day summit that comes at a turning point in the organization's history as the United States steps back from its traditional security role in Europe.

Ahead of the meeting in Ankara, Trump has insisted on "loyalty" after some NATO countries balked at allowing U.S. forces to use their bases for attacks on Iran. He listed big European members Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain for criticism.

A NATO summit is a highly symbolic moment when the 32 member countries of the world's biggest military alliance underline their unshakeable commitment to one another's security. This year, though, the trans-Atlantic bond has rarely seemed more fragile.

Still, the meeting is being organized around the theme of a stronger Europe in a stronger NATO. The Trump administration has called for a reboot to a "NATO 3.0," and it's hoped that what this really means will become clearer over the next two days.

A presidential compound for a venue

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is hosting the summit at his vast Bestepe Presidential Compound on the western edge of the Turkish capital, Ankara. A new airport, converted from an old military airfield, has been unveiled especially to host NATO leaders.

Security will be high. Air defenses are on alert, and tens of thousands of police will be on duty. Nearby neighborhoods are closed to traffic and some state workers have been given time off to help keep roads

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unclogged. Public gatherings are banned.

More than a dozen people were detained in security sweeps ahead of the summit, including two journalists, the Turkish Journalists Association said.

On Tuesday evening, Erdogan will host a dinner in his "Winter Garden." Top officials from Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand will join their NATO partners. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to attend.

As they dine, foreign ministers will hold a NATO Ukraine Council, while the alliance's defense ministers will meet with their Indo-Pacific counterparts. A separate meeting with officials from Gulf Arab countries will also take place, and Trump will meet with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa.

NATO leaders alone will hold a single working session on Wednesday morning. They'll publish a short statement summarizing the results of their meeting once it's over.

Defense spending, an industry boost and Ukraine support

Officially topping the agenda is defense spending — a perennial issue at NATO as the U.S. presses allies to do more. Ahead of the summit, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte noted a 20% annual spending hike by European allies and Canada in 2025.

This is unlikely to be enough to satisfy the Trump administration, even after the leaders agreed at their last summit to boost investment to the same level as the United States, in gross domestic product terms. The 2026 U.S. military budget is set at \$901 billion, or about 3.3% of GDP.

NATO also wants to highlight the way it's converting the billions pouring in from state coffers into new military kit that's adapted to modern warfare. The summit will be a chance for the organization to showcase new military projects.

A defense industry forum will be held on the sidelines of the meeting, on Tuesday, bringing senior NATO and partner officials together with industry leaders, as allies push to ramp up weapons production and spur innovation in new technologies.

Another top agenda item is continued support to Ukraine, now in a fifth year of full-scale war with Russia. European allies and Canada are funding most of Ukraine's needs, including paying for about 90% of the country's air defenses.

US force cuts in Europe, and the war on Iran

The working session is only expected to last about three hours, but most debate is likely to focus on U.S. force levels in Europe and the off-agenda item of fallout from the U.S.-Israel war on Iran.

European allies and Canada will want reassurances, or at least clarity, on U.S. force intentions. Since early last year, they have often been blindsided — and sometimes confounded — by Trump's declarations on cutting troop numbers.

Ahead of the summit, the Pentagon surprised the allies by announcing a 6-month review of the U.S. presence. It's focused on progress Europe is making to defend itself, but also on whether the U.S. has full base access and overflight.

NATO played no active role in the Iran war and has no overarching agreement with the United States on the shared use of bases and airspace, although some of its members do.

At a public meeting with Rutte on June 24, Trump renewed his criticism of the allies for their reluctance to get involved in the war. "We don't need their money — we don't need anything," he said. "I just want loyalty."

On joining NATO, member countries pledge loyalty equally to one another through a commitment to collective security — the all-for-one, one-for-all pledge enshrined in Article 5 of NATO's treaty. That guarantee alone underpins everything the organization stands for and does.

What further loyalty Trump might require is unclear.

South Korean law targeting 'fake news' takes effect as journalists' groups raise concerns

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea began enforcing a law Tuesday that allows steep punitive damages against news outlets and social media influencers for spreading false information as journalist groups warned it could chill public discourse and invite censorship.

Journalists and civil liberties groups say the vaguely worded law fails to clearly define what information it prohibits and lacks adequate safeguards for the media, warning it could potentially discourage critical reporting about government officials, politicians and large businesses.

The law allows courts to award damages of up to five times the proven losses against news organizations and large social media channels, including YouTube creators, that circulate illegal, false or manipulated information to cause harm or generate profit.

In addition, those who distribute information more than twice after a court has confirmed it to be false or manipulated could be fined up to 1 billion won (\$656,000) by the country's media regulator. Internet companies operating large social media platforms with more than 1 million daily users are required to take measures such as removing content or suspending user accounts when they receive reports of false or fabricated information.

The law was backed by President Lee Jae Myung's liberal Democratic Party and passed by the National Assembly in December over a boycott by the conservative opposition. The liberals, who unsuccessfully sought to pass similar legislation under previous governments, say the law is necessary to combat fake news and disinformation, which they argue is posing a growing threat to democracy by fueling division and hate speech.

The Journalists Association of Korea said the mere prospect of news organizations repeatedly facing massive damage claims or legal disputes could have an "unavoidable chilling effect."

"Even if a law's objective is legitimate, it could erode the foundations of democracy if it's enforced in a way that discourages the media and ordinary citizens from freely criticizing and scrutinizing those in power," the group said in a statement.

The Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club also expressed concern about the potential impact on the work of the media and the free flow of information.

Concerns about murky online discourse

The push for the law came as Lee expressed concern about South Korea's online discourse and information environment after then-President Yoon Suk Yeol briefly imposed martial law in 2024. He was later impeached and removed from office. He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for rebellion, a ruling that he appealed in February.

Yoon, who faces other criminal cases as well, has promoted unsubstantiated election fraud claims circulated on YouTube to defend his botched power grab and rally conservative supporters against the Democrats. Critics say Yoon's campaign further polarized the country by injecting falsehoods into already bitter political disputes and making compromise increasingly difficult.

The Korea Media and Communications Commission has downplayed concerns that the law could be used as a tool for state censorship. It would be private operators of online platforms, not the government, deciding whether reported content qualifies as false or manipulated information, and the law exempts reporting conducted in the public interest from damages claims, the commission said last week.

But Kim Hong-yeol, a professor at Seoul's Duksung Women's University, said the law could encourage widespread self-censorship and discourage reporting or discussions on sensitive issues. Internet companies could end up acting as online censors, adopting overly aggressive moderation policies to avoid liability and removing legitimate content in the process, Kim wrote in an article for the news website Medius.

While major South Korean internet companies like Naver and Kakao have reportedly been updating their systems for reporting and handling false information in line with guidelines from the Korea Internet Self-Governance Organization, it's unclear how major foreign platforms, like Google's YouTube, would comply.

In a statement to The Associated Press, YouTube said it strives to balance its commitment to openness with its responsibility to protect users and will "continue to engage with relevant parties and share our longstanding investments we have in this critical work." The company did not specify how the South Korean law would affect its policies, but encouraged users to report "potentially violative content" directly on YouTube or through its legal web form.

After the law was passed in December, U.S. Under Secretary of State Sarah B. Rogers criticized it in a post on X, writing that the revised law endangers tech cooperation and that "it's better to give victims civil remedies than give regulators invasive license for viewpoint-based censorship."

Marine Le Pen's 2027 bid for French presidency is at stake in Paris court ruling

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French far-right leader Marine Le Pen's political future is on the line Tuesday as a Paris appeals court rules on her eligibility to stand in the next presidential election.

The verdict will be delivered from 1:30 p.m. and could take several hours to read. It could reshape the 2027 contest to replace President Emmanuel Macron if it forces the popular Le Pen out of the picture. The constitution prevents Macron from seeking a third consecutive term.

Le Pen, 57, is appealing a March 2025 conviction that found her and other members of her National Rally party guilty of misusing European Parliament funds by paying party staff with money intended for EU parliamentary assistants between 2004 and 2016.

The lower court sentenced her to prison time, suspended pending appeal, and imposed a five-year ban on holding elected office.

Le Pen has denied any wrongdoing and still hopes to mount a fourth bid for the presidency. But a verdict that upholds a lengthy ban could make that impossible and suspend her career that has transformed the National Rally into a major political force.

Such a verdict could also reverberate on the European Union, by sidelining a fierce critic of the 27-nation bloc.

If she is barred, her protege Jordan Bardella would replace her. Bardella, 30, is the current president of the anti-immigration, EU-skeptic National Rally.

Other outcomes also are possible. The appeals court could still find Le Pen guilty but reduce the ban on holding elected office to two years or less — or impose no ban at all.

A ban of two years or less would expire before the first round of the French presidential election, scheduled in April 2027.

But that does not automatically mean Le Pen would run. She has said that if the court imposes other constraints that make campaigning difficult, she might decide not to run. That could include any prison sentence, electronic monitoring or other judicial restrictions.

"If I'm allowed to be a candidate but am effectively prevented from campaigning freely, then you understand that wouldn't be possible," Le Pen said in an interview last week.

Prosecutors asked the appeals court to sentence Le Pen to four years in prison, including three suspended, in addition to a ban on holding elected office for five years.

They accused Le Pen of being at the head of a "system" meant to "siphon off" EU public funds to the benefit of her party.

Although prosecutors did not ask for it, the appeals court is free to order the ban on holding elected office to take immediate effect, like the lower court did.

Le Pen could still appeal to the Court of Cassation, France's highest court, but it's unclear whether judges would suspend the sentence pending a final ruling.

The Court of Cassation has previously said that, if asked to review the case, it would seek to issue a ruling before the 2027 presidential election.

Yacht owners and public housing residents once shared Venezuela's coast. Now they share its ruin

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CARABALLEDA, Venezuela (AP) — The rich and poor shared paradise in Caraballeda on Venezuela's Caribbean coast. Their apartments, a few with direct marina access and hundreds in public housing towers, stood on the same curving street and offered idyllic views of the white sandy beaches and crystal waters.

The yacht owners and public transit riders who shared this road epitomized the social integration that the government set out to accomplish. Many of them enjoying a holiday or resting at home on June 24 met the same fate when the ground shook so violently that their homes flattened in seconds.

Now, about 17,000 who survived also share the uncommon status of being homeless in Venezuela. As the official death toll climbs above 3,500, many must rely on a government that has been excoriated for its response to the tragedy and that has politicized housing in the past to figure out where they will live — if they will have a new home at all.

Housing is still a constant even in times of crisis

Housing has generally been the first aspiration for Venezuelan adults since the second half of the 20th century, when an oil bonanza allowed the government to fund housing complexes, the poor to build brick and cement shacks locally known as "ranchos," and the rich to buy second and third homes.

Even when the country's economy came undone in 2013, most Venezuelans still had a roof over their heads, be it by getting one handed out by the country's self-described socialist government, buying one at a deep discount from people desperate for cash to migrate, building ranchos on top of each other, and even invading abandoned homes.

Those in housing built by the ruling party of 27 years — currently helmed by acting President Delcy Rodríguez — do not hold the deeds to the property, but the homes allowed them to save and keep entire families off the streets.

"It was their home, their house. It was an immense joy when they were assigned these houses here," Carlos Ortega said of the 12 apartments in Caraballeda that his relatives were assigned to more than a decade ago following years of financial struggles after a mudslide.

"Imagine, they were given a home after losing everything, but now they've lost everything, even their lives."

Only one of Ortega's siblings survived the collapse of the public housing towers, while his son, who lived in a ninth-floor apartment but was working at a convenience store when the earthquakes struck, is still missing more than a week after the disaster. Ortega hoped he might find him at a hospital, a shelter or one of the tent camps that have taken over public spaces and private parking lots.

Not far from where he took a break from removing the rubble that buried his family, people were assessing flattened homes adjacent to a yacht club and some towed Jet Skis. There, rescuers were being handed cookies and other food on a plastic tray while standing on the rubble where the wife of a military general hoped he and their children would be found.

Government efforts to integrate different socioeconomic classes

Ronal Rodríguez, a researcher at the Venezuela Observatory at Colombia's Universidad del Rosario, explained that Venezuelan governments, even before the arrival of the fiery Hugo Chávez to the presidency in 1999, had tried to prevent socioeconomic segregation by building housing projects in or near areas that were considered exclusive. The strategy, he said, also gave them a political edge by diversifying the voter base in wealthier neighborhoods that tend to vote for the opposition.

But the homes built under Chávez's "Grand Housing Mission," which his successor, Nicolás Maduro, continued until the U.S. military deposed him in January, came with a caveat: People never received a deed.

"What Chavismo tries to do is maintain political dependence," Rodríguez said of Chávez's political movement. "That is, if at any point you turn against me and stop supporting me, then I'll take away the roof

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I've given you."

This makes these residents vulnerable to the whims of the government once again, particularly when survivors have been vocal about the lack of government support in search and rescue efforts.

The government of Rodríguez, whose dismal response to the catastrophe has been decried by residents across the board, has not yet given any timelines for long-term housing recovery efforts.

The extent of damage is still unclear, but at least 10,000 structures, or about one-third, were damaged in Catia La Mar, a city west of Caraballeda also in La Guaira state, based on satellite imagery analyzed by Microsoft's AI for Good Lab. Older buildings, substandard construction and geography left many neighborhoods in Venezuela vulnerable to strong earthquakes.

Picking up the pieces

Benito Mantilla, 68, now lives in a tent set up in a pharmacy parking lot in Catia La Mar after his privately owned home was damaged. His wife left for the Dominican Republic last week, but he decided to stay and try to find a job about 40 minutes away in the capital, Caracas, as the earthquakes also damaged his and his brother's car repair shop.

Another woman also living in the parking lot was still hoping that the government would give her a home soon. Her daughter, she said, is part of the local organizers for the ruling party.

Meanwhile, Caryudedi González, who bought her own home when she was 21, was hoping that her working-class home, half of which went down a ravine, could somehow be repaired.

"In many countries, it's very difficult to own a home, and here, we work so hard to have what's ours," González, 44, said.

Clashes in Sri Lankan prison leave at least 25 dead, mostly inmates

By BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Clashes broke out inside a prison in the outskirts of Sri Lanka's capital, killing at least 25 people, most of them inmates, and injuring more than 100, officials said Monday.

The unrest at the prison in Negombo, about 35 kilometers (22 miles) north of the capital, Colombo, started among inmates on Sunday, and when guards attempted to intervene on Monday, "they (inmates) started attacking the prison officials," prison spokesman A.C. Gajanayake said.

He told reporters that some inmates attempted to escape but were stopped.

An official at the main state-run hospital in the area said seven prison officials and 18 inmates had died while another 43 were being treated for injuries. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. Three other hospitals were also treating dozens of injured, he said.

Justice Minister Harshana Nanayakkara said the first clash erupted between two rival gangs connected to the illegal drug trade. After the authorities restored order on Monday evening, Nanayakkara said the inmates who led the violence were transferred to two other prisons.

Army troops were also deployed around the prison.

Sri Lankan prisons are highly congested, with more than 39,000 inmates crowded into a system with a total capacity of just 10,000.

Hamas dissolves its government in Gaza to transfer power to a UN-backed committee

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The Hamas militant group said Monday it had dissolved its government in Gaza and is preparing to transfer power to a technical committee backed by the United Nations as part of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire deal.

Hamas did not say whether it planned to take the crucial step of disarming or handing over security to an international force, but described its decision as evidence of its commitment to Gaza's reconstruction after years of war.

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It was unclear if the move, announced by a lower-level official, would lead to any meaningful change on the ground.

The Board of Peace, the new entity led by President Donald Trump with the mandate of governing and rebuilding Gaza, said it was aware of the Hamas announcement but would assess the impact based on "actions, not promises." The board stressed in a statement on X that the technocratic committee must control all weapons in Gaza, as laid out in the ceasefire agreement.

At a news conference Monday, Ismail al-Thawabta, general director of the Hamas-run Government Media Office, said "only technical and professional staff" would remain in their positions to run the Palestinian enclave's day-to-day affairs.

"All employees working in service provision are 'state employees' and are fully prepared to work under the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza," al-Thawabta said during a news conference in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem called it "a positive step forward on the path to implement the ceasefire deal."

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar dismissed the move, saying it was designed to avoid disarmament. "As long as Hamas retains its weapons, any civilian government will of course operate as Hamas dictates," he wrote on X.

The committee of technocrats, which is based in Cairo, is chaired by Ali Shaath, a Gaza-born engineer and former official with the Palestinian Authority. It has a mandate to restore essential services and oversee civilian affairs under the supervision of the U.N. and the Board of Peace.

In a statement on X, Shaath acknowledged the Hamas announcement Monday and said that in order for the committee to function effectively, there must be "a single governing authority operating under one legal framework" and "a unified security apparatus accountable to that authority."

Nine months after the ceasefire was signed, negotiations between Israel and Hamas remain largely deadlocked over the implementation of its second phase, including the disarmament of Hamas and the reconstruction of Gaza.

Hamas has insisted on implementing the first phase before moving to discuss its weapons.

The Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Hamas-led militants that sparked the war killed some 1,200 people in Israel and saw 251 others taken hostage. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed 73,098 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, part of the Hamas-led government, is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not distinguish between civilians and militants but says women and children make up around half of all fatalities.

Israeli strikes have lessened considerably since the ceasefire took effect on Oct. 10, but they continue almost daily. Israel's military says it targets Hamas and other militants, often asserting they were planning attacks. The strikes have also killed many civilians.

On Monday, Israeli strikes killed at least five people in Gaza, including three in Khan Younis in the south and two in an apartment in Gaza City, health officials said.

The Israeli military said it targeted a Hamas operative in the Gaza City strike and a militant from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group in the attacks in Khan Younis.

Militants have carried out shooting attacks against Israeli troops in Gaza, and five Israeli soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire. ____

Associated Press writer Melanie Lidman in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

It's decision day in Prince Harry's final privacy suit against British tabloids

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry's longtime battle with the British tabloids reaches its climax Tuesday.

A judge in London's High Court will rule on the Duke of Sussex's privacy invasion lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mail, ending a trio of lawsuits that accused the news media of unlawfully snooping

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on his life.

Harry and six others are seeking substantial damages in the celebrity-studded lawsuit where the legal costs for the 11-week trial have been estimated at about 40 million pounds (\$53.5 million).

Harry, singer Elton John and actors Elizabeth Hurley and Sadie Frost are among those who accused Associated Newspapers Ltd. of tapping their phones, intercepting voicemails and obtaining personal information through deception.

The newspapers denied the allegations as "preposterous," insisting the roughly 50 articles at issue were based on lawful sources including friends, royal aides and publicists who offered information to reporters.

The verdict coincides with Harry's visit home to the U.K., but the court case has been overshadowed by the question of whether he will bring his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, and their two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet, for a rare visit to their grandfather, King Charles III.

Harry has long criticized the news business

Harry's self-proclaimed mission to reform the press for creating what he called a toxic environment is much deeper than headlines that documented his party boy youth and romantic ups and downs. His emotional testimony in February drove that point home.

The prince has blamed the press for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi in Paris, and for attacks on his wife that led the couple to leave royal life and move to the United States in 2020.

"They continue to come after me, they have made my wife's life an absolute misery," he said as he choked back tears in the witness box.

The phone hacking scandal that began in the 1990s and continued for more than a decade gave Harry the opportunity to break with royal family tradition and take his case to court. Three years ago, he became the first senior royal to testify in court in over a century.

Harry won a judgment in 2023 that condemned the publishers of the Daily Mirror for "widespread and habitual" phone hacking. Last year, Rupert Murdoch's flagship U.K. tabloid, The Sun, made an unprecedented apology for intruding on his life for years, and agreed to pay substantial damages to settle his privacy invasion lawsuit.

The case against the Daily Mail

Attorney David Sherborne said the Daily Mail and its sister publication, Mail on Sunday, used its journalists, freelance reporters and private eyes for "clear, systematic and sustained use of unlawful information gathering" to snoop on his clients.

He connected payments to detectives with dates of articles in question to try to show, for example, how journalists tracked down information about Harry's then-girlfriend, Chelsy Davy, and her travel plans.

Harry testified at the start of the trial in January that press intrusions left him "paranoid beyond belief," strained his relationships and took a toll on his mental health.

Hurley accused the Mail of putting microphones outside her windows and stealing her medical records among "other monstrous, staggering things."

"It is like there is someone peeping into your life and into your home," the model and actor testified. "My private life had been violated by violent intruders — that there had been sinister thieves in my home all along and that I had been living with them completely unaware."

Other claimants in the case are anti-racism activist Doreen Lawrence, former politician Simon Hughes and John's husband, David Furnish.

Journalists were 'lining up' to testify in defense

Defense lawyer Antony White said the case relied on conjecture and inferences when the more likely source of information was "ordinary, legitimate journalism."

White said Harry was "inclined to see unlawful evidence gathering, in particular voicemail interception, everywhere," despite a lack of evidence.

The Mail trial has played out differently than the Mirror case, with White saying that journalists were "lining up" to defend their work in court. Some reporters pointed to official mouthpieces, such as a palace

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spokesperson, and others named their sources to dispute Harry's assertion that his "social circles were not leaky."

"They were not all tight-lipped," Katie Nicholl, a former Mail on Sunday editor, said about Harry's associates. "I had very good sources in the inner circle."

Detective's testimony could make or break case

One issue at the trial is whether the claimants should have been allowed to bring allegations dating to the 1990s, long after a six-year limit expired.

They avoided the deadline by saying they were unaware of the phone hacking until private investigator Gavin Burrows came forward in 2021 to "do the right thing" and help those he had targeted.

But Burrows, who once apologized to Harry in a BBC documentary for ruthlessly targeting him for tabloids in his teen years, testified at trial that he never worked for the Mail. He said a statement attributed to him was fabricated by the claimants' legal team and his signature was forged.

Justice Matthew Nicklin repeatedly asked Sherborne what would happen to the case if he rejected Burrows' original statement.

Sherborne said a wealth of other evidence implicated the newspapers, but White said the case collapsed with Burrows' testimony contradicting the witness statement he disavowed.

Burrows denied switching sides to get revenge after a disagreement with Harry's legal team.

Possible reunion with royal family overshadows the case

The judgment, which will be issued remotely without a hearing, comes as Harry is in London for charity events.

Harry had been expected to bring his children to visit Charles, who is being treated for an undisclosed type of cancer, for the first time in years. Harry has been trying to repair a rift since he moved to America and aired family grievances in the scorching 2023 memoir, "Spare," and a Netflix series.

But a family reunion is up in the air as Harry haggles over security arrangements and accommodations. A government committee refused to authorize taxpayer-funded security, which was the source of disputes — including litigation — that Harry has repeatedly lost.

US airlines chase profits in premium cabins, deepening a fare class divide on flights

By RIO YAMAT AP Airlines and Travel Writer

They may arrive at the same destination, but two passengers on the same flight can have strikingly different travel experiences.

One traveler breezes through a priority security lane and heads straight to an invite-only lounge for craft cocktails and a chef-prepared meal before boarding early. A flight attendant offering a glass of champagne and a warm hand towel welcomes the passenger to a spacious seat at the front of the plane.

The other traveler stands in a line at every step — security screening, a café selling \$16 sandwiches, a crowded gate — then boards with one of the final groups, hoping there's still room for a carry-on in the overhead bin before folding into a cramped middle seat. After the cabin lights dim, sleep comes in fragments, and a travel pillow does little to ease a stiff neck.

The contrasting journeys are no accident. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the largest U.S. airlines have pulled out all the stops to court premium passengers who are willing to pay for comfort, convenience and exclusivity. Budget-conscious travelers may notice a widening gap between the back of the plane and up front as the carriers increasingly build their businesses around selling first-class, business-class and premium-economy seats.

"We can't win by trying to provide the cheapest. We have to be able to win by providing the best," Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian said in a recent Fortune podcast interview.

The strategy embraced by Delta and rivals American Airlines and United Airlines marks a notable evolution for an industry that spent decades making air travel more accessible. Now, the nation's largest carriers are reconfiguring aircraft to expand premium seating, designing new fleets with larger premium cabins and

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investing billions in amenities that extend the top-tier travel treatment beyond their jetliners.

But United CEO Scott Kirby has pushed back on the idea that the industry has become solely focused on chasing big spenders. He said United's premium investments are part of a broader strategy to boost the experience of every traveler, pointing to initiatives such as seatback entertainment and improvements to the airline's mobile app.

"We're investing nose to tail for all customers," Kirby said last month on financial firm Morgan Stanley's Exceptional Leaders podcast.

Premium cabins have become airlines' most valuable real estate

The premium playbook didn't emerge overnight.

Airlines used to fill empty first-class seats mainly by giving their most loyal frequent flyers free upgrades. Delta rewrote the rules in the early 2010s by using sophisticated pricing tools to offer more of those seats to coach passengers who were willing to pay a little more, said Henry Harteveldt, president of travel advisory firm Atmosphere Research Group.

The strategy unlocked demand airlines hadn't fully recognized, encouraging more travelers to trade up and laying the groundwork for today's broader premium push.

"Travelers could and would pay for noticeably more comfort, noticeably better service, noticeably more amenities, if the price was right," Harteveldt said.

Then came the pandemic. When business travel collapsed and Zoom replaced many corporate trips, airline analysts wondered whether carriers would once again have to lure travelers with cheap fares. Instead, eager leisure travelers proved willing to splurge on premium seats and perks, convincing airlines that demand extended well beyond the traditional business road warrior, Harteveldt said.

That confidence has only grown. Premium demand is now a fixture of quarterly earnings calls, with airline executives regularly touting premium revenue as they compete for higher-spending travelers.

"When you think about what's different and what's changed over the last 10 or 15 years, the premium products used to be loss leaders, and now they're the highest-margin products," former Delta President Glen Hauenstein said last summer. "That's really the headline."

Analysts say premium cabins — a category that expanded with the introduction of premium economy seats featuring more legroom and amenities at a fraction of the cost — now generate a disproportionate share of airline revenue compared with the space they take up on commercial aircraft.

On heavily trafficked transatlantic routes, business-class tickets can bring in nearly as much revenue as fares and fees paid by passengers in the much larger economy cabin, according to an analysis by consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

Airlines are competing with chef-designed menus and high-end skin care

The premiumization of air travel has become impossible to miss, even for travelers who only get a glimpse through an airport lounge door or while walking down an airplane aisle.

Delta's new first-class lounges resemble upscale restaurants, with open kitchens plating dishes such as hamachi crudo, cocktail bars serving made-to-order drinks, soundproof relaxation pods and outdoor decks overlooking the tarmac.

American has refreshed its premium cabin menus with "globally inspired dishes," like crispy maitake mushroom and fried chicken bao topped with yuzu aioli, in partnership with the James Beard Foundation. The airline also redesigned its newest Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners for long-haul international flights around individual business-class compartments with sliding privacy doors, lie-flat seats longer than a standard twin mattress and amenity kits that might include a celebrity facialist's brand of sheet masks and under-eye patches.

United's newest business-class cubicles add oversized 27-inch entertainment screens, caviar service, luxury skincare products and multi-course dining on long-haul international services. The airline said its revamped menus "feature flavors and dishes" inspired by cities across its network.

"Marie Antoinette would feel very comfortable on any of the big three airlines these days," said William J. McGee, senior fellow for aviation at the American Economic Liberties Project. "But instead of saying, 'Let them eat cake' in the back of the plane, she would say, 'Let them eat Biscoffs.'"

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Air travel is getting more stratified as fuel costs increase fares

The airlines' pursuit of higher-paying passengers shows no loss of momentum. On board Delta's next-generation Airbus A350-1000 aircraft arriving in 2027, nearly half the cabin will be devoted to premium seating. American has said it plans to expand premium cabins by 50% by the end of the decade.

Yet the new era of luxury in the skies is unfolding alongside a very different reality for other U.S. travelers as broader inflationary pressures have added to the strain on household budgets.

New York-based travel advisor Mary Auteri said more of her clients are "experiencing sticker shock" as fares and add-on fees have gotten more expensive since the Iran war broke out and pushed up the price of jet fuel, one of the largest operating costs for airlines.

A group of friends in their 20s recently asked Auteri to price out flights to the sugar-white sand beaches of Punta Cana, a resort town in the Dominican Republic. After she sent them an itinerary, they said they had found what looked like the same flights on Google Flights for more than \$100 less.

But the cheaper fares were basic economy tickets that excluded seat assignments, checked bags and flexibility to change plans. Once those costs were added back in, the trip no longer fit their budget.

Checked-bag fees, seat-selection charges and other add-on costs fall heaviest on economy travelers, McGee said. For wealthier travelers, those fees may amount to little more than an inconvenience. For budget-conscious travelers, they can determine whether a trip happens at all.

"The idea that we're all created equal? Not in the airlines' eyes," McGee said. "Not by any means."

Former officer describes finding a 'sniper pad' on nearby rooftop after Charlie Kirk assassination

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

PROVO, Utah (AP) — A former campus police officer testified Monday that he found an apparent "sniper pad" on a rooftop near where Charlie Kirk was assassinated, as prosecutors sought to convince a state judge they have enough evidence to put a Utah man on trial for murder.

Former Utah Valley University Officer Christopher Bagley said he witnessed Kirk's shooting while the conservative activist was speaking on Sept. 10 to a crowd of thousands. Soon after, Bagley searched a nearby gravel rooftop, where it appeared someone had been lying prone with a clear sightline to Kirk's location, he said.

"It looks like a sniper pad," Bagley said, adding, "you've got markings of elbows, knees and feet."

The testimony came as Kirk's parents, Kathryn and Robert, and his widow, Erika, were in the courtroom for the first time since the case began, along with the president's son Donald Trump Jr.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty for defendant Tyler Robinson, 23, who is charged with aggravated murder. Robinson's parents also were present, sitting a few rows behind the Kirks.

The five-day preliminary hearing that began Monday is expected to mark the most significant presentation of evidence to date in the case. There were no major revelations on the first day, although prosecutors aired new video that investigators believe showed Robinson getting in and out of his vehicle on Sept. 10 and 11.

Robinson turned himself in the day after the shooting. He has not yet entered a plea, and his attorneys have not commented on his guilt or innocence. They have, however, sought to get the death penalty taken off the table, so far unsuccessfully.

A low threshold for prosecutors

Prosecutors showed several videos of Kirk's shooting as they made their case to state District Judge Tony Graf. Attorneys from both sides tried to shield their monitors from courtroom spectators, after Graf said the assassination videos couldn't be publicized because of their graphic nature.

The sound was still audible in court — Kirk's response to a question about mass shootings in the U.S. is interrupted by a loud pop, followed by screams.

Kirk's family briefly stepped out of the courtroom twice — when investigators began testifying about the

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day of the shooting and again when prosecutors introduced the graphic videos.

David Hull, who was an agent with the State Bureau of Investigation at the time of Kirk's killing, said investigators reviewed hundreds of hours of video to track the suspect's movements before and after the shooting. He pointed out Robinson in court after prosecutors asked him if the suspect he identified during his investigation was in the room.

The proceeding this week resembles a minitrial, but prosecutors need only demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds to believe Robinson killed Kirk. The standard is lower than for a trial, where prosecutors must prove guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt."

Prosecutors, as a result, should have little trouble advancing their case, said Mark Kouris, a former prosecutor and state judge in Salt Lake City.

"This standard is extremely low and the chances of them not getting through it are, quite frankly, almost nothing," said Kouris, now an adjunct professor at the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law.

Defense attorney Kathryn Nester repeatedly objected to evidence introduced by prosecutors. She was mostly overruled by the judge.

However, Graf sided with the defense to block the introduction of a compilation of surveillance videos from Utah Valley University because some had been altered to zoom in or had circles drawn around individuals. Prosecutors said they would try again Tuesday to introduce that video with the alterations removed.

Nester asked Bagley, the prosecution's first witness, about finding an empty pistol holster on the ground after the crowd fled. Bagley acknowledged he never took custody of the holster and didn't know whether it had been fingerprinted.

Utah is an open carry state, meaning people can carry guns openly or conceal them without a permit.

Roommate's recorded testimony could be focal point

Prosecutors have said they also plan to present DNA evidence linking Robinson to the suspected murder weapon, autopsy findings and witness statements. They are expected to argue the shooting endangered others at Kirk's campus event — an aggravating circumstance that could make the crime punishable by death under Utah law.

Prosecutors allege Robinson confessed in a note left for his roommate, who was also his romantic partner, that read: "I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk and I'm going to take it."

Robinson's roommate is not expected to testify in person during the hearing. Still, the roommate's recorded testimony could be a focal point for prosecutors. Besides the alleged confession note, Robinson reportedly texted his roommate that he targeted Kirk because he "had enough of his hatred," prosecutors have said.

Erika Kirk says court proceedings are a 'painful reminder'

Before his death, Kirk and the organization he co-founded, Turning Point USA, galvanized the conservative youth vote to help President Donald Trump win a second term.

The Republican president has said he hopes Robinson receives the death penalty.

Erika Kirk said during her husband's memorial service that she forgives Robinson.

Ahead of Monday's hearing, she thanked supporters in a statement for their kindness and prayers.

"Every court proceeding serves as a painful reminder of his death," she wrote, "and the loss that has irrevocably impacted our lives and the lives of his children."

Integrity of World Cup is questioned as Trump, FIFA defend actions surrounding Balogun suspension

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — Soccer leaders questioned the World Cup's integrity on a chaotic and unprecedented day in the event's modern history Monday.

The furor centered on a phone call that President Donald Trump made last week to FIFA head Gianni Infantino to make the case that U.S. striker Folarin Balogun should not have been suspended for Monday's matchup with Belgium because of a red card in a game last week. FIFA lifted the suspension and cleared Balogun to play.

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The decision ultimately didn't help the U.S. team, which was eliminated from the World Cup with a 4-1 loss to Belgium late Monday with Balogun in the lineup.

The decision appeared to be the first time since 1962 that punishment for a World Cup offense was suspended in the tournament, increasing scrutiny on Infantino's control of FIFA and his close association with Trump.

European soccer body UEFA said FIFA "crossed a red line" and called Sunday's decision by FIFA's disciplinary committee "unprecedented, incomprehensible and unjustifiable." Infantino denied having a role in the decision. Trump called it a "horrible" call and took credit for getting FIFA to review the foul, but said he did not demand an outcome.

The Belgian Football Association said it informed the U.S. Soccer Federation it was contesting Balogun's eligibility.

But FIFA's appeals committee dismissed Belgium's legal challenge less than eight hours before scheduled kickoff of the round of 16 match in Seattle. The appellate panel said Belgium had no standing to challenge the decision.

It was unclear whether Belgium could pursue an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland.

Balogun's red card was assessed by Brazilian referee Raphael Claus for stepping on an opponent's ankle last Wednesday during the Americans' 2-0 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina, triggering an automatic one-game suspension. Claus did not initially issue a red card but showed it after a video review.

FIFA's disciplinary committee on Sunday provisionally lifted the suspension for one year and fined Balogun \$40,000, which the USSF can pay.

UEFA vs. FIFA reignites

European soccer officials reacted with outrage.

"When the certainty of rules is no longer guaranteed by its guardians, the integrity of the game is at stake and the credibility of a competition is undermined," UEFA said in a statement.

"Sometimes rules are open to interpretation. In this case not," it said. "When the certainty of rules is no longer guaranteed by its guardians, the integrity of the game is at stake and the credibility of a competition is undermined."

UEFA has often clashed with Infantino during his decade in FIFA power.

Infantino's predecessor Sepp Blatter, forced from office in 2015 in fallout from corruption scandals, posted Monday on social media:

"Red cards are not overturned by political phone calls," said Blatter. "They are overturned by rules, evidence and independent bodies."

The Swiss Football Association declared that the "credibility of the competition depends on clear rules that are applied consistently."

Coaches speculated about the implications of the decision going forward.

"What about the next red card? What happens then?" Norway coach Ståle Solbakken said. "Is there going to be some committee somewhere that is going to take that card away? It's a bad, bad, bad, bad, bad decision that will hurt the World Cup."

England coach Thomas Tuchel wondered whether yellow cards to English defender Declan Rice and French midfielder Michael Olise could be reversed.

FIFA's disciplinary committee defended its decision in a statement Monday.

"Reviewing the legal consequences of red cards in football is nothing new in the modern game," it said. "In the majority of top-tier leagues belonging to UEFA-affiliated member associations the overturning of red cards is a common disciplinary measure, yet this has never raised concerns about crossing any 'red line.'"

Trump's comments

Trump on Monday called the referee's decision a "horrible" call while admitting he was confused about the rules and punishment surrounding red cards.

"I didn't think it was a foul," Trump said. "I thought it was two great athletes that crashed into each other and got entangled."

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He also acknowledged calling Infantino.

"All I did was ask for a review," Trump said. "I didn't say, 'You have to do this.'"

Infantino issued a statement saying: "FIFA's judicial bodies are independent. They operate autonomously."

"I explained that there was an ongoing legal process involving FIFA's independent judicial bodies and that the case would be decided in due course by the competent bodies," he said of his conversation with Trump.

Infantino's relationship with Trump previously sparked concern among soccer officials. European soccer leaders walked out of a FIFA Congress in Paraguay last year due to a three-hour delay caused by Infantino arriving late because he was with Trump in the Middle East.

After Infantino awarded Trump the first FIFA peace prize in December, Norway's governing body filed a letter supporting an ethics complaint against Infantino that accused him of violating provisions in FIFA's code of ethics requiring political neutrality.

Belgium's legal options

Belgian officials prepared in Seattle through the night into Monday to get a hearing with a FIFA-appointed appeals judge, and their eventual defeat might not be the end.

"Regardless of the sporting outcome of the match," the Belgian federation said, "(we are) deeply concerned by the way these events have unfolded and will continue, in the hours, days and months ahead, to pursue every available avenue to uphold the fundamental principles of ethics, sporting fairness and the interests of football as a whole."

Balogun's tackle

Balogun was sent off directly for planting his cleated foot on an ankle of defender Tarik Muharemović.

That kind of challenge has been a routine red card all season in competitions worldwide, and Balogun could have expected a two-game ban for serious foul play under the FIFA disciplinary code.

Still, similar challenges by star players have gone unpunished at this World Cup — by Argentina's Lionel Messi against Algeria and Morocco's Achraf Hakimi vs. Brazil. Bernardo Silva of Portugal got just a yellow card against Congo.

"I think a yellow card would have been fair," Balogun later suggested.

FIFA's interventions

This World Cup has been remarkable for FIFA under Infantino seeming to rewrite the norms of disciplinary action even before the tournament began.

A pattern of pardons opened FIFA to suggestions of executive intervention in the statutory independence of its judicial bodies, including the disciplinary committee that formally reprieved Balogun.

Cristiano Ronaldo was cleared to play in Portugal's opening World Cup game despite getting a red card for serious foul play in a qualifying game against Ireland last November. He struck an opponent with an elbow.

Ronaldo served his mandatory ban in Portugal's final qualifying game but he was reprieved from an expected two-game ban because FIFA introduced the idea of probation. An imposed three-game ban was less meaningful as two games were deferred during a one-year probationary period.

At the opening game on June 11, South Africa's Themba Zwane got a red card against Mexico for a similar offense to Ronaldo's and FIFA imposed a three-game ban with no probation. Zwane did not play again at the World Cup.

Three players sent off in their teams' qualifying games last year were surprisingly told by FIFA in May they could serve their bans in a future competition instead of at the World Cup, which was the long-standing norm.

Ecuador midfielder Moisés Caicedo, Argentina defender Nicolás Otamendi and Qatar defender Tarek Salman all had their bans waived for the World Cup.

China test-launches a ballistic missile in the South Pacific and raises regional concerns

By HUIZHONG WU and CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — China's navy test-launched a long-range ballistic missile Monday from one of its nuclear-powered submarines in the South Pacific, a rare act that drew protests and concern from countries in the region and the United States.

The missile carried a dummy warhead, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. China last conducted a missile test in the Pacific two years ago, firing an intercontinental ballistic missile with a dummy warhead, the first since 1980.

The 2024 launch mirrored the testing the United States conducts for its own ballistic missile fleet, which experts viewed as an assertion of China's growing superpower status.

Monday's launch, at 12:01 p.m. local time, was part of routine annual training, complied with international law and practice and was not directed against any country or target, according to a short statement from Xinhua, which was reposted by the Ministry of Defense.

Australia, Japan and New Zealand express criticism

Beijing's militarization has drawn concerns, and Australia, Japan and New Zealand criticized the launch.

The New Zealand government said it was informed hours beforehand and noted that the missile was fired into the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone.

The zone was established by the 1986 Treaty of Rarotonga, which prohibits nuclear weapons throughout the region. China ratified the protocols in 1987, pledging not to test nuclear weapons within the zone or threaten to use them against signatories with territory in the region.

"It appears that despite our long-standing concerns about this type of activity, China carried out the test within hours of informing us," Foreign Minister Winston Peters told The Associated Press in a statement.

The launch took place the same day Australia and Fiji signed a new mutual defense treaty meant to counter Chinese influence in the Pacific.

"Australia has been clear with China that we regard this as destabilizing to the region," Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong told reporters in Fiji in response to the test.

Japan's Defense Ministry in a statement expressed concern about China's increasing military activity and urged Beijing to "rethink" its missile testing so that the projectiles would not fly over Japan or pose other security risks.

"China's military activities, combined with its lack of transparency, have become a grave concern for Japan and the international society," Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said in Japan, citing Beijing's military activities around Japan and its increased military spending.

Beijing brushed off the criticism.

"We hope that the relevant countries will avoid overinterpretation," a Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson said.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Thomas Pigott said while the U.S. was "working harder than ever" to prevent nuclear proliferation, China was doing the opposite.

"Beijing's rapid and opaque nuclear weapons buildup is of great concern to the region and the world," he said.

He added the U.S. will continue to urge Beijing to engage in meaningful arms control discussions and commit to a regularized notification arrangement for intercontinental ballistic missile and space launches.

Expert says it's a signal to the United States

The concern is a result of a lack of clear information, said Drew Thompson, senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore: "China's military modernization and buildup have occurred without concurrent increases in openness and transparency, resulting in uncertainty about China's intentions."

Lyle Morris, a senior fellow at Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis, said the launch was the first publicly acknowledged test with a dummy warhead from a nuclear-powered ballistic missile

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submarine of the Chinese navy to travel this far into the Pacific.

Morris said it is noteworthy that the information available shows Japan, New Zealand and Australia received notifications in advance, but not the U.S.

The test was a signal to the U.S., he said: "The announcement demonstrates that China's nuclear deterrent is no longer centered solely on land-based missiles."

China maintains a "no first use" of nuclear weapons policy, but is also actively pursuing nuclear technology and weaponry as part of its long-term strategy to modernize the People's Liberation Army.

China has a fleet of six ballistic-missile submarines and 59 nuclear-powered attack submarines, according to the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a Washington-based think tank.

In its latest report to Congress on China's military capabilities, released in late 2025, the Pentagon said China had an estimated stockpile of around 600 nuclear warheads in 2024, adding that the PLA remains on track to field more than 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030.

Russia's missile and drone attacks on Ukraine kill at least 22

By HANNA ARHIROVA, SAMYA KULLAB and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia unleashed waves of missiles and drones at Ukraine early Monday, killing at least 22 people in attacks that exposed widening gaps in the country's air defenses more than four years into Moscow's full-scale invasion, authorities said.

All of the ballistic missiles launched by Russia struck their targets, underscoring Kyiv's need for more U.S.-made Patriot interceptor missiles — a point Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will likely reiterate at a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, this week.

Fifteen people were killed in the capital of Kyiv, which was Russia's main target, and 56 were injured, according to administrative head Tymur Tkachenko. Another seven people were killed in the wider Kyiv region and 29 were injured, according to Ukraine's emergency service.

Emergency workers searched for survivors in the rubble of residential high-rises in two locations that suffered direct hits.

Moscow has stepped up attacks on Kyiv in retaliation for Ukraine's recent long-range strikes, according to the Russian Defense Ministry. Those Ukrainian attacks have caused severe fuel shortages and put pressure on President Vladimir Putin.

On Thursday, a Russian strike killed 31 people in Kyiv, the deadliest attack in the capital this year.

Ukraine's advances in drone technology have given it an edge in recent months, analysts and Western officials say, striking supply routes behind the front line, stripping the Russian army of momentum on the battlefield and slowing its advance.

But Russia now is exploiting vulnerabilities in Ukraine's air defenses, which remain heavily reliant on the Patriot missile systems to intercept ballistic missiles it can rarely shoot down. The war in the Middle East has strained the global supply of Patriot interceptors — a shortage now felt keenly in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy notes gaps in stopping ballistic missiles

Ukraine's air force said Russia fired 351 drones and 68 missiles overnight, targeting mainly Kyiv, and all 29 ballistic missiles struck their targets.

"To intercept ballistics, we need the means for interception," air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said on national television. "Russians are certainly using the fact that there is a serious deficit of interceptor missiles now, in Ukraine and the world."

Ahead of the NATO summit in Turkey, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces had performed well against drones and cruise missiles but not against ballistic missiles — a shortfall he blamed on insufficient supplies of interceptors. He urged U.S. and European partners at the summit to bolster Ukraine's air defense and protect civilians.

"As long as Patriot missiles remain in our allies' stockpiles, Russia is only encouraged to keep 'vanquishing' residential buildings. The United States and Europe have enough strength to stop this terror," he said on X following the attack.

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Russia's Defense Ministry said any increase in the supply of drones, missiles and ammunition produced in the West "will not go unnoticed and will be countered by a corresponding increase in the number and power of retaliatory strikes by the Russian armed forces on Ukrainian territory."

Ukraine's Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said Russia is deliberately ramping up ballistic missile attacks on a scale unseen before, exploiting the acute shortage of Patriot interceptors. "Fewer such missiles are produced worldwide each month than the enemy fires at Ukraine in that same period," he said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the attack targeted weapons factories in Kyiv, including sites it said produce drones, armored vehicles and missiles, as well as facilities repairing air defense systems and fuel and energy infrastructure in the capital and surrounding region. The claims could not be independently verified.

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

"These are residential buildings. Places where people slept and lived their ordinary lives," Tkachenko said in a post on Telegram.

A residential building in the Podilskyi district partially collapsed, he said. In the Darnytsia district, several multistory buildings were damaged and people were believed to be buried in the rubble.

In Kyiv's suburb of Vyshneve, about 600 residents were evacuated due to the risk of unexploded munitions, Ukraine's Emergency Service said.

Witnesses recount their harrowing escapes

Khrystyna Piatetska, 20, a resident of Kyiv's Darnytskyi district, said she began screaming after the first strike, which was followed by a second blast that blew out the windows in her apartment building.

The lights went out, a burning smell filled the air and the stairwell was thick with smoke, she said.

"When we were leaving the building, bodies were lying there," Piatetska said. "When we got downstairs, cars started exploding, and we came out from under the rubble straight into the fire."

Halina Ivanivna, 61, said she was awakened by the first strike about 2 a.m. Moments later, her apartment building began collapsing around her.

"Everything was falling down," she said. Water poured through the building as smoke filled the air while emergency crews rushed to evacuate residents.

About five minutes after the initial impact, a second strike hit, she said.

Ukrainian strikes reach from Russian-held Crimea to Siberia

Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defenses downed 613 of 625 Ukrainian drones overnight.

Ukraine's military said its Special Operations Forces struck the Omsk oil refinery in western Siberia, nearly 2,500 kilometers (1,550 miles) from Ukraine's border. That appeared to be the farthest oil refinery in Russia's east that Ukraine has ever struck, and added to a long list of key refineries hit in recent months.

Omsk regional Gov. Vitaly Khotsenko confirmed a Ukrainian attack on the refinery in a Telegram post but provided no details, saying only that "most of the drones" targeting the facility were destroyed and that there were no casualties.

The Omsk refinery is Russia's largest, boasting a capacity of around 460,000 barrels a day, said Gary Peach, oil markets analyst at Energy Intelligence. As of the end of June, it was producing close to capacity, accounting for 12% of all Russian refining output, Peach said.

"Depending on the extent of the damage, a sustained outage of even part of Omsk's capacity will exacerbate Russia's woes on the domestic fuel market and make the need to find import replacements even more urgent," he said.

Russia has been grappling with a widespread fuel crisis from Ukraine's repeated strikes on refineries and other infrastructure inside the country. Gasoline shortages and fuel rationing have been reported in multiple regions, with drivers waiting for hours to fill their tanks.

In Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014, an energy provider reported a blackout across the peninsula following Ukrainian attacks early Monday. The Moscow-appointed head of the city of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said the attacks cut power that was restored with backup equipment.

Ukraine's military confirmed it struck several Russian energy and military facilities used to supply Russia's armed forces with fuel and support its war efforts.

In the Russian city of Yaroslavl, two people were wounded in an attack in which over 70 Ukrainian drones were downed, according to regional Gov. Mikhail Yevrayev. He didn't say if any facilities were damaged, but the Astra online news outlet said they caused a fire at an oil refinery.

Ukrainian drone attack on the Leningrad region north of Moscow damaged unspecified infrastructure at the Luga training ground, as well as in the areas of Baltic Sea ports of Ust-Luga and Vysotsk, Gov. Alexander Drozdenko said.

As quake rescue effort winds down, Venezuelans are left alone to recover their dead

By FERNANDA PESCE and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela (AP) — When the high-rise where Noel Márquez lived with his family crashed to the ground and burst into flames in Venezuela's twin earthquakes, Márquez, who happened to be at his girlfriend's apartment, raced home and called out for his mother, grandparents and siblings. Only his 17-year-old brother, his legs pinned under columns that required heavy machinery to lift, responded.

Márquez and his father, who also survived, spoke through layers of concrete, hearing Leonel suffer, shout for help and inhale suffocating smoke as he waited for a crane to remove the columns crushing him. But it never came. After several hours, Leonel's cries gave way to silence, Márquez said.

But even that, terrible as it was, was not what disturbed him the most. The worst, Márquez said, was trying to recover his families' tangled remains with little more than his bare hands and a saw. He sliced off limbs to free the corpses of Leonel and his mother but was forced to abandon his sister, who was eight-months' pregnant, grandmother and other relatives beneath the ruins — and with their bodies, the hope that if he couldn't save them, he could at least give them proper burials.

"It's unfair. It's inhumane, everything that is happening," 26-year-old Márquez said from the overflowing makeshift morgue at La Guaira port. "We couldn't get my brother out because we didn't get a response from the state ... and after 11 days, we are still requesting a crane."

Márquez is one of countless Venezuelans who, after days of torment, has been left alone to search, if not for signs of life, then for loved ones' remains — and for some semblance of closure.

International rescue teams, quietly acknowledging the possibility that no more victims would be found alive after 12 days under the rubble, are preparing to depart. Local authorities are turning their focus to finding shelter for thousands of displaced people. But the recovery of the dead has become a pressing, and horrifying, duty for Venezuelans still missing their loved ones.

"I found her hand, but her torso is crushed," said Norely Rodríguez, trying to get her 5-year-old daughter out of the ruins in the hardest-hit state of La Guaira. "I want to see if I can get her out whole."

Residents say they are alone in the search for their dead

Many say that just as they were left without government help to rescue survivors in the immediate aftermath of the quakes, so too are they now under-equipped to unearth their dead nearly two weeks later.

The more time passes, the more gruesome the recovery process becomes, said William Gomez, a firefighter in La Guaira. "It has been difficult because the bodies are already in an advanced state of decomposition, decomposed to such an extent that many times when we try to remove them, they fall apart."

Authorities announced that the death toll rose on Monday to 3,535, with another 16,740 people injured. Beyond that is an untold toll: those whose bodies have yet to be found. There are no official statistics on how many people are buried under the rubble, but more than 30,000 reports of missing people have been sent to a website set up by the Venezuelan opposition.

Over the weekend in La Guaira, no government civil defense crews or security forces could be seen helping families dig. The vast majority of those working their way through the wreckage were civilians using their bare hands or rudimentary tools like pickaxes and shovels, occasionally accompanied by firefighters and Mexican rescuers who remain in the country.

There are 1.2 million tons of debris in the most affected parts of La Guaira, according to the United Nations Development Program.

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"We are the ones helping ourselves: our family. Nobody else helps us except for a few volunteers," said Yeikhary Urbina, who found the bodies of her mother and brother on Saturday suspended under piles of concrete, seemingly locked in an embrace.

In several WhatsApp chats on Monday, neighbors who could no longer wait for authorities to help them recover their dead discussed pooling their own money to rent a crane — for the price of \$11,500, in one case.

Search teams from Italy, Argentina, Spain and other countries have already returned home. The Venezuelan government has not yet called off the search for survivors. But officials have pivoted from promoting heroic rescue stories on social media to announcing reconstruction plans under a program called Venezuela Reborn.

"Venezuela is entering a process of infrastructure recovery, of housing recovery," acting President Delcy Rodríguez told state TV on Saturday. She has fiercely rejected widespread criticism that her government reacted too slowly to the disaster and accused media outlets of spreading misinformation.

Anger over recovery effort mounts

Families with missing loved ones face fresh horrors as they scour the rubble. Some have searched for days to find corpses of loved ones so decomposed, they cannot tell them apart.

Others have dug and dug only to find nothing at all. "She kept asking, 'Why did God play this trick on me?'" Geraldine Perdomo said of her sister, who was feverishly clawing at the ruins of her home for anything that would confirm the death of her two daughters.

And some, like Márquez, have agonized for days to extract their loved ones' bodies only to lose them again in the chaos of the impromptu morgue beneath grain silos at the La Guaira port, where a near-constant stream of bodies has been arriving since the June 24 quakes.

Márquez said that on Sunday, a week after delivering their corpses, he heard authorities had located his mother and grandfather. But Leonel, he said, "is still missing because of the negligence here."

He and many other residents of the country's public housing blocks — built years ago for low-income families by former socialist leader Hugo Chávez — say their complaints of negligence long predate this disaster. High-rise buildings housing hundreds of apartments pancaked in the earthquakes, reviving questions about substandard construction.

Alexander, a 42-year-old police officer who lived in one of the towers, was trembling with fury at the government on Sunday — for not addressing what he said were long-running resident concerns that his concrete housing complex was shoddily constructed, for not sending rescue teams in time to save his wife and three daughters, and now, for not delivering heavy machinery to help him recover their bodies.

"Not a single person from the government was here," he said, requesting to be identified only by his first name because, as a government employee, he feared retaliation for criticizing authorities.

After 11 days of searching, he reached the last missing member of his family — his 12-year-old daughter, her corpse decomposed but intact.

"She was waiting for me to pull her out," he said, cradling the black plastic body bag in his arms.

Rebounding AI stocks send the S&P 500 within 1% of its record

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A rebound for AI stocks lifted the U.S. market on Monday.

The S&P 500 rose 0.7% and pulled back within 1% of its all-time high, even though the majority of stocks within the index fell. The strength for companies in the artificial-intelligence technology industry sent the Nasdaq composite 1.1% higher, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 155 points, or 0.3%, to a record.

AI stocks have swung sharply in recent weeks on worries that their prices shot too high. Doubts are rising about whether all the dollars flowing into AI chips and data centers can possibly create enough gains in productivity and profits to make back all the investments.

Broadcom was one of the strongest forces lifting the S&P 500 and rose 3.7% after announcing long-term

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agreements to provide silicon products to Apple. It was coming off two straight losses of more than 2% on Wednesday and Thursday at the end of last week, before Friday's holiday in advance of the Fourth of July.

The global appetite for AI from investors will face an additional test later this week when SK Hynix, the South Korean maker of computer memory, plans to raise \$28 billion by selling shares of stock that will trade in the United States on the Nasdaq. That would make it one of the biggest U.S. offerings ever, behind SpaceX's IPO from last month, which raised \$75 billion.

SK Hynix's stock in Seoul has already more than tripled so far this year because of the AI boom, but its day-to-day swings have included sharp losses in recent weeks. It fell 14.6% on Thursday alone, for example.

SpaceX, which owns the xAI business, has seen its stock likewise swing following its ballyhooed initial public offering.

It erased an early gain to fall 1% in the last day of trading before it's scheduled to join the Nasdaq 100 index of the largest non-financial stocks on the Nasdaq. That inclusion will force funds like the QQQ exchange-traded fund, which mimic the index, to buy SpaceX themselves.

Elsewhere in AI, TeraWulf climbed 4.9% after it said Anthropic agreed to a 20-year deal to use its data center in Kentucky. TeraWulf expects the deal to bring in roughly \$19 billion in revenue. TeraWulf is in the midst of transitioning its business away from mining bitcoin and into high-performance computing.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 54.19 points to 7,537.54. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 155.84 to 53,055.91, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 288.49 to 26,121.16.

In the oil market, prices drifted after OPEC+ announced Sunday that seven of its members plan to expand oil production by a combined total of 188,000 barrels per day in August. It was the fifth straight month that OPEC+ members have agreed to raise output, moves that tend to weigh on oil prices.

The price of a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, fell 0.2% to \$71.99. That's close to where it was before the United States and Israel attacked Iran in late February and sent prices spiking.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased a bit. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.47% from 4.49% late Thursday.

A report showed that growth last month for U.S. recreation, finance and other services businesses was roughly in line with economists' expectations. The survey by the Institute for Supply Management said that some businesses said they were seeing lower prices for gasoline and diesel, easing inflationary pressures.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell modestly across much of Europe and Asia. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was an outlier and rose 1.1%.

Trump rings Wall Street's opening bells as he ties his presidency to stock market gains

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday rang the opening bells for the New York Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq from the golden confines of the Oval Office, a symbolic act that reflects how he has increasingly tied his presidency to the stock market.

With high inflation hurting Trump's popularity, the Republican president has tried to get more Americans to focus on their 401(k) investments, claiming that his policies should get the credit for any gains, particularly as the November midterm elections draw closer.

"It's going to go up — I think the market's going to go through the roof," said Trump after formally launching the start of trading.

Only 33% of U.S. adults approve of Trump's economic leadership, according to a June survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Still, the act of ringing the opening bell suggests why the president's emphasis on the stock market might not help his party much with voters this fall.

The Oval Office event was promoting the launch of Trump Accounts, which were created as a vehicle for children to have investments in stock indexes as part of Republicans' big 2025 tax and spending cuts bill.

In championing the accounts, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has emphasized that many Americans

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have no direct exposure to stocks.

This means that millions of people are not benefiting from investments that largely accrue to more affluent households or that the benefits they're receiving are for retirements decades away.

Bessent declared before the bell ringing that "38% of American families do not have any exposure to our great equity markets."

The S&P 500 stock index posted gains of 17.9% in 2025, but that came after annual returns of 25% in 2024 and 26.3% in 2023, during the presidency of Democrat Joe Biden. The benchmark stock index has risen roughly 10% so far this year.

But just as inflation crushed public support for Biden, Trump has also seen his approval fall prey to a cycle of rising prices. Trump won the 2024 election by promising to bring down costs, but his tariffs and the start of the war in Iran created new inflationary pressures.

The consumer price index has climbed 4.2% over the past 12 months, up from 3% when Trump started his second term in January 2025.

Trump, however, is betting that the stock investments that are being seeded by the government and by some prominent companies and billionaires will give future generations a deeper stake in the U.S. economy. The accounts already have gotten a boost from billionaires beyond the \$1,000 from the government.

Michael Dell, the founder of Dell Technologies, and his wife, Susan, appeared by Trump on Monday as they have pledged \$6.25 billion for the accounts, while there have been separate pledges by billionaires including investor Ray Dalio and SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell, who said Monday that she would donate stock in the Elon Musk-led company to the accounts.

Trump jokingly acknowledged that children had missed the stock market gains that have occurred so far because of the delay in launching the Trump Accounts.

"We should have acted faster," Trump said.

Mourners throng funeral procession in Tehran for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Mourners dressed in black flooded into Iran's capital Monday for a procession as part of the funeral of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with throngs of people calling for the death of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Khamenei's flag-draped coffin, and those of his family members who were killed Feb. 28 in an airstrike at the start of the war launched by Israel and the United States, sat aboard a truck decorated to resemble the ornamental grating that surrounds the shrine of an imam. The massive turnout was encouraged by Iran's theocracy as a sign of strength, and it came as the Islamic Republic negotiates with the U.S. over a permanent end to the war.

Helicopter images aired on Iranian state television showed a massive crowd stretching from Tehran's Azadi, or Freedom, Square for kilometers (miles) down a multilane street of the same name. The crowd appeared to be larger than the one that turned out for the 2020 procession for the late Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, which drew over 1 million people.

Authorities offered no immediate crowd count as the truck crept down the street. People alongside the truck and elsewhere on the route carried placards, signs and banners calling for Trump's death.

"Today that we are here for the funeral for our leader, it's a very tough day," mourner Fatima Hassan said. "We are not here to say goodbye to him. We are here for revenge. And we will take revenge."

Sea of mourners gather for Khamenei

Mourners reached out to touch the truck, and some threw scarves and other items for attendants to brush against the coffin, a common practice in Iran seen as a blessing. Attendants, some on the ladders of fire trucks, sprayed misted water across the crowds to cool them in the heat.

Authorities appeared concerned about the dangers of having a large crowd alongside the procession, with officials on loudspeakers urging the public to walk slowly, not to push and to stay to the edges of

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the street.

The coffins were taken through the streets of Tehran on a roughly 12-hour journey to Mehrabad International Airport, and Khamenei's casket was flown later Monday to the Shiite seminary city of Qom, according to state television. He will be honored there Tuesday.

Authorities have shut down streets, airspace and daily life for the mourning, which began Saturday and will end Thursday as Khamenei is buried at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, his birthplace. Khamenei was 86.

"This is the last time I am seeing him," said a weeping Maryam Alizadeh. "Our generation lived with him for decades."

Calls for Trump's death grow as the funeral goes on

As the funeral has gone on, mourners have increasingly called for Khamenei's death to be avenged. Mourners and the signs they carry have called for the killing of both Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Such signs were seen again Monday along the procession's route, with one effigy of Trump being hanged.

"We are here to show that his path will continue, and every single one of these people will continue down his path with clenched fists, and soon we will certainly avenge his death against the U.S and Israel," said mourner Sahar Zaratgar.

U.S. federal authorities have been tracking Iranian threats against Trump and other administration officials for years, stemming from Trump's ordering the 2020 killing of Soleimani, who led the elite Quds Force. Iran has repeatedly denied plotting to kill Trump, though hard-line propaganda footage long has suggested Trump was in Tehran's crosshairs.

Trump, meanwhile, promised to destroy Iran's civilization during the war, among other threats.

Negotiations over the war remain on hold

The U.S. is eager to press ahead with negotiations with Iran aimed at fully reopening the Strait of Hormuz, rolling back Tehran's disputed nuclear program and reaching a permanent end to the war. Talks appear to be on hold until after the burial.

The funeral was in part a show of unity as Iran demands a measure of control over the strait, a vital waterway for global energy that it shut down during the war. The U.S. has rejected those demands, and the sides are divided on other key issues, including the nuclear program and the conflict between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, has yet to make an appearance in the funeral ceremonies, which are unfolding over several days. He is believed to be in hiding after reportedly being wounded in the airstrike that killed his father.

At the height of the war, before an April ceasefire, Israel targeted top Iranian leaders, in at least one case likely using their public appearance to fix their position. It has also threatened to kill the younger Khamenei.

NATO chief demands allies present credible plans to reach defense spending targets

By LORNE COOK and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte on Monday demanded that members put forward "clear, concrete and credible plans" to reach the organization's defense spending targets at its annual summit in Ankara.

Rutte spoke in the Turkish capital ahead of the two-day summit starting on Tuesday at a crucial time for the alliance, with the United States scaling down its security role in Europe. Washington has been pressing allies to shoulder more of the spending burden.

The 32 nations agreed last year to invest 5% of their gross domestic product on defense — 3.5% on their defense budgets and 1.5% on roads, bridges and ports so troops and equipment can move faster in times of conflict.

Spain endorsed the goal but said it could fulfill NATO's security requirements without spending so much.

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Some countries are still struggling to meet the alliance's old target of 2% of GDP.

Asked what would happen to members that don't have a clear plan, Rutte said: "If one or two of them still have to be convinced, we have ways to do that." He did not elaborate.

Trump has called for 'loyalty' from NATO allies

U.S. Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker suggested last week that the U.S. has something in store for those who do not step up, but declined to say more.

"President (Donald) Trump fully expects that all allies will step up immediately and get on the path to 5% and do it with urgency," Whitaker said.

On spending among European allies and Canada, Rutte said that "the evidence we see so far is impressive." He said NATO estimates that they will invest a combined \$258 billion more in defense in 2025 and this year than they have in previous years.

But the numbers might not be enough to satisfy the Trump administration. Trump has repeatedly lashed U.S. allies over defense spending, and in the past threatened not to come to the defense of any member not doing enough — challenging NATO's key reason for existence.

Trump also has called for "loyalty" from NATO allies, after some of them declined to allow the use of their military bases in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. As well as airing grievances about how much the U.S. spends on defense compared with other countries, Trump has sparred with allies over the war, his comments about annexing Greenland and other tiffs.

The Trump administration is promoting what it calls "NATO 3.0," a vision in which Europe assumes greater responsibility for its own defense, freeing the U.S. to concentrate on other priorities. The approach was laid out earlier this year by Elbridge Colby, a U.S. undersecretary of defense, during a meeting of NATO defense ministers.

"We need our allies in NATO to step up and assume leadership roles, and I mean that not only in sort of loud cheerleading but also the moral authority and the moral compass of the alliance," Whitaker said last week.

European allies warn about a possible Russia attack

Some European governments have warned that Russia might be preparing a hybrid attack somewhere on the continent as Russian President Vladimir Putin struggles to secure victory in Ukraine.

NATO on Tuesday is due to make announcements showcasing the military equipment being bought with billions of dollars more being spent on defense and security. The event has been dubbed the "big reveal."

Among the projects, many of them prepared and signed long before the summit, is one to replace NATO's aging fleet of surveillance planes.

NATO as an organization does not own any weaponry — these are the property of member countries — but it has a fleet of AWACS aircraft that are about 50 years old and some surveillance drones.

In a report released on Monday, the European Stability Mechanism — a financial institution set up to help countries using the euro currency in severe financial distress — said NATO's defense spending target is achievable but must be handled carefully.

It warned that Europe's defense buildup, which largely will use debt financing in the short term, is turning into "one of the central fiscal policy questions of this decade."

NATO governments are struggling to hike their defense spending, which requires increasing taxes or reshuffling resources from other priorities.

U.K. Defense Secretary John Healey unexpectedly quit last month because he said the government was not willing to spend at a time of rising threats.

Philippine Senate opens the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The Philippine Senate, acting as an impeachment court, opened the trial of Vice President Sara Duterte on Monday in a politically volatile event that will unfold against the backdrop of her bitter feud with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

More than 6,000 police officers, including anti-riot squads, were deployed to secure the Senate, where about 400 anti-Duterte demonstrators converged, chanting "Convict Sara now." Duterte did not appear but was represented by her lawyers at the start of the trial, which will run for 92 days, according to a pretrial plan seen by The Associated Press.

If convicted of the charges, which include amassing unexplained wealth and publicly threatening to have Marcos assassinated, Duterte may be permanently disqualified from holding public office. She denies the charges.

Rep. Gerville Luistro, who leads the prosecution team, said there was adequate evidence and witness accounts to convict the vice president.

"This is the moment when the republic must demonstrate that laws are applied equally to the powerful and the powerless alike," Luistro said.

Sheila Sison, head of the vice president's legal defense, expressed doubt whether prosecutors have legitimate evidence to back up their allegations against Duterte, who rose to power with a landslide electoral victory.

"This court, and we as a people, must guarantee that all efforts to hold our leaders accountable must be done right," Sison said. "Impeachment should never be abused."

A conviction would be a lethal blow to the vice president's announced plan to seek the presidency in mid-2028, when Marcos ends his six-year term. They were running mates in the 2022 elections in a whirlwind alliance that combined the vote-getting power of two of the country's most formidable political dynasties, but the union rapidly fell apart.

The vice president is the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, Marcos' predecessor. He was arrested last year on orders of the International Criminal Court and flown to The Hague, where he is detained and is scheduled to face trial over alleged crimes against humanity on Nov. 30.

The charges stem from the ex-president's brutal anti-drugs crackdowns that left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead, alarming Western governments and human rights groups. Rodrigo Duterte has denied authorizing extrajudicial killings but repeatedly threatened suspects with death while in office.

The vice president has blamed Marcos for her 81-year-old father's arrest and handover to the ICC.

Marcos and the Dutertes have contrasting geopolitical leanings. Marcos has expanded defense engagements with the United States, his country's treaty ally, as his administration stood up to China's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed South China Sea.

Rodrigo Duterte had nurtured cozy ties with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin while threatening to sever ties with Washington. The vice president has come under fire for not condemning China's assaults, including with the use of powerful water cannons, against Filipino forces and fishermen in the disputed waters.

Last month, the House of Representatives, which is dominated by Marcos' allies, voted overwhelmingly to impeach the vice president over alleged unexplained wealth, misuse of confidential state funds and a public threat to have the president, his wife and a former House speaker and ally assassinated if she herself were killed due to their political disputes.

Sara Duterte has generally denied the charges but has refused to publicly answer the allegations in detail ahead of the impeachment trial. Her supporters have accused Marcos and his key aides of politically persecuting the vice president and her senatorial allies to ensure her impeachment.

Two-thirds of the 24-member Senate, or 16 votes, are needed to convict the vice president.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who belongs to a Senate bloc backing the Duterte family, was arrested and de-

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tained last month on a nonbailable charge of plunder, or large-scale graft, in connection with a flood-control project bribery scandal. Estrada denies any wrongdoing.

Another pro-Duterte senator, Rodante Marcoleta, was arrested Monday over a nonbailable charge of plunder for receiving huge campaign donations and failing to declare the funds in his assets declaration. Marcoleta has denied committing any irregularity.

A third senator, Ronald dela Rosa, has gone into hiding after the ICC issued a warrant for his arrest as a co-perpetrator in the Duterte-era killings. Dela Rosa served as Rodrigo Duterte's national police chief, who first enforced the then-president's deadly crackdown against illegal drugs.

Today in History: July 7

Reagan nominates O'Connor for the US Supreme Court

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, July 7, the 188th day of 2026. There are 177 days left in the year.

On July 7, 1981, President Ronald Reagan announced he was nominating Arizona Judge Sandra Day O'Connor to become the first female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1865, four people were hanged in Washington, D.C., for conspiring with John Wilkes Booth to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln: Lewis Powell, David Herold, George Atzerodt and Mary Surratt, the first woman to be executed by the federal government.

In 1898, President William McKinley signed the Newlands Resolution, approving the annexation of the Republic of Hawaii.

In 1930, construction began on Boulder Dam (known today as Hoover Dam).

In 1976, the United States Military Academy at West Point included female cadets for the first time as 119 women joined the Class of 1980.

In 1990, the first "Three Tenors" concert took place as opera stars Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras performed amid the brick ruins of Rome's Baths of Caracalla on the eve of the FIFA World Cup final.

In 2005, terrorist bombings in three Underground stations and a double-decker bus killed 52 people and four bombers in the worst attack on London since World War II.

In 2010, Los Angeles police arrested and charged Lonnie Franklin Jr. in the city's "Grim Sleeper" serial killings. (Franklin, who was sentenced to death for the killings of nine women and a teenage girl, died in prison in March 2020 at the age of 67.)

In 2013, Andy Murray became the first British man in 77 years to win the Wimbledon title, beating Novak Djokovic in the final.

In 2016, Micah Johnson, a Black Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, opened fire on Dallas police, killing five officers in an act of vengeance for the fatal police shootings of Black men; the attack ended with Johnson being killed by a bomb delivered by a police robot.

In 2021, a squad of gunmen assassinated Haitian President Jovenel Moïse and wounded his wife in an overnight raid on their home.

In 2022, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced his resignation after top government officials quit over the latest scandal to engulf him, this one involving his appointment of a politician who had been accused of sexual misconduct.

Today's Birthdays: Musician-conductor Doc Severinsen is 99. Former Beatle Ringo Starr is 86. World Golf Hall of Famer Tony Jacklin is 82. Actor Joe Spano is 80. Actor Roz Ryan is 75. Actor Billy Campbell is 67. Basketball Hall of Famer Ralph Sampson is 66. Singer-songwriter Vonda Shepard is 63. Actor-comedian Jim Gaffigan is 60. Actor Amy Carlson is 58. Actor Jorja Fox is 58. Actor Robin Weigert is 57. Basketball Hall of Famer Lisa Leslie is 54. Actor Kirsten Vangsness ("Criminal Minds") is 54. Actor Berenice Bejo (BEH'-ruh-nees BAY'-hoh) (Film: "The Artist") is 50. Actor Hamish Linklater is 50. Olympic figure skating medalist Michelle Kwan is 46. Guitarist Synyster Gates (Avenged Sevenfold) is 45. Pop singer Ally Brooke (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 33. Pop musician Ashton Irwin (5 Seconds to Summer) is 32. Country singer Maddie Font (Maddie and Tae) is 31.