

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

Groton Daily Independent

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Olive Grove: Men's League 3:30-9 pm.
18U Softball Tournament at Redfield.

Thursday, July 9

Senior Meal: BBQ pulled pork with mac 'n cheese, cucumber salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

Lions Club Meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main

Groton Legion at Rotary Tourney in Clark

U10 Baseball (B&W) hosts Ipswich, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

Friday, July 10

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combo, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Groton Legion at Rotary Tournament in Clark

Groton 14U Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

Olive Grove: Men's 4 Man Hdcp 1 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.

NYC Building Watch

Multiple blocks in New York City's Midtown East were cordoned off yesterday and several buildings were evacuated after officials discovered a high-rise building was unstable and at risk of collapse.

The site, at 235 E. 42nd Street near 2nd Avenue, is the former headquarters of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer. Since 2024, developer Metro Loft has been working to convert the complex into a residential building with more than 1,600 apartments, 25% of which are reserved for affordable housing. Early yesterday, officials discovered beams bending "like cigarettes" on the 21st and 22nd floors, causing floors 21 to 26—where floors were being added—to begin caving in. An investigation into the issue is ongoing.

The renovation is part of a broader post-COVID-19 effort to repurpose vacant commercial real estate into residential units amid a housing shortage.

Miniature Musical Minds

Humans begin recognizing music as young as 3 months old and start moving in response by their first birthday, according to the first study to measure infant brain activity and body movement simultaneously.

Researchers recorded infants aged 3, 6, and 12 months as they listened to children's songs and scrambled versions of those songs. All age groups showed stronger brain responses to the melodic versions, suggesting humans are drawn to musical structures very early in life. Only the 12-month-olds, however, moved more when listening to the melodic songs—swaying, rocking, and clapping. Researchers say the enhanced response likely reflects the maturing of the dorsal auditory stream—a brain pathway that eventually helps people articulate speech and maintain a beat. It's still unclear when music-driven movement evolves into rhythmic dancing.

Prince Harry Loses Lawsuit

A UK judge dismissed a privacy lawsuit yesterday brought by Prince Harry and six other claimants against Associated Newspapers, the publisher of the Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, and MailOnline.

The claimants, who included Harry, Elton John, Elizabeth Hurley, and four others, alleged voicemail interception, phone hacking, and obtaining information by deception, centering on roughly 57 articles across the group. Harry's claim focused on 14 Daily Mail articles published between 2001 and 2013, largely about his relationship with former girlfriend Chelsy Davy. Associated Newspapers denied any wrongdoing. In a 436-page ruling, the judge said the claimants failed to show their personal information had been unlawfully obtained, noting some allegations dated back 20 to 30 years. Legal costs for the 11-week trial are estimated at about \$67M.

The decision comes as Harry is in the UK for the one-year countdown to the 2027 Invictus Games in Birmingham, the tournament he created for injured veterans.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Dolly Parton musical drawing on the country icon's life and music will hit Broadway Jan. 19, Parton's 81st birthday.

"Law & Order" actress Mariska Hargitay to host Emmy Awards Sept. 14, will be the first woman emcee in 15 years.

Coco Gauff, 22, becomes youngest player to reach all four Grand Slam semifinals since 2007 after winning Wimbledon quarterfinals.

Russian athletes are provisionally cleared to compete in 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Lionel Messi's Argentina knocks out Egypt 3-2 with all three goals scored in the final 15 minutes.

Quarterfinals kick off tomorrow with France taking on Morocco at 4 pm ET

Science & Technology

Some dying bacterial clusters eject healthy cells to spawn new colonies, similar to how jellyfish eject their stingers upon contact with prey or predators; the behavior may inspire treatments for drug-resistant bacteria.

One-time cocaine exposure shown to trigger changes in mouse brains lasting at least two weeks, offering clues to cocaine addiction in people.

Stone tools and seashell ornaments found in a Turkish cave suggest Neanderthals and modern humans may have shared culture 59,000 years ago (More, w/photo)

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.5%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq -1.2%) amid sell-off in semiconductor sector.

US trade deficit widened to nearly \$78B in May as imports rose 3.3% month over month to roughly \$395B while exports fell 3.2% month over month to roughly \$318B.

Stellantis to sell mini Fiat Topolino electric vehicle for \$13,995 in the US; the golf cart-like Topolino ("little mouse") can travel up to 19 mph.

Rivians shares fall 18% after the EV maker sells 75 million shares to raise capital.

Politics & World Affairs

France's Marine Le Pen announces 2027 presidential run after her embezzlement conviction was upheld; Le Pen says she will appeal the ruling, which stipulates she must wear an ankle bracelet, limiting her movements while campaigning.

Nigel Farage, leader of the UK's poll-leading nationalist-populist Reform UK party, resigns from Parliament, says he will run again; announcement comes amid scrutiny into donor gifts leading up to the 2024 election.

Ukrainian woman suspected of targeting a Ukrainian business tycoon in a Monaco bombing attack is found dead near Kyiv.

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* ★

Groton council discusses downtown parking issues, accepts FEMA grant for park tornado shelter

By Elizabeth Varin

At its most recent meeting, the Groton City Council discussed potential changes to overnight parking restrictions in the downtown business district, accepted a federal grant to construct a tornado shelter that will also serve as a new park restroom and approved alcohol consumption during the Aug. 1 Celebration in the Park.

Much of Tuesday evening's discussion focused on overnight parking restrictions along Main Street, where business owner Bruce Babcock, downtown building owner Greg Heilman and Public Works Coordinator Dwight Zerr offered differing perspectives on whether the city's current "No Parking 2 to 6 a.m." restrictions should remain in place.

Babcock said he would like to see more parking available for downtown businesses but cautioned the council against removing the restrictions without first establishing an alternative plan.

"It would be great to park on Main Street, but if you're going to take the signs down, you better have a plan in place," Babcock said. "I don't want the signs, but you better have a solution."

Heilman, who is renovating a downtown building into apartment units, said the current restrictions are not being enforced consistently and encouraged the council to consider other options for managing overnight parking in the business district.

"It's foolish to me to see a sign posted that's not enforced," he said.

Zerr said he would be OK changing the restrictions to seasonal overnight parking, noting the current ordinance is especially helpful during the winter when city crews need clear streets for snow removal. However, he also cautioned that residents have become accustomed to the existing rules and changing them could create confusion.

Following the discussion, council members agreed to continue exploring potential options but took no action Tuesday night.

The council also approved accepting a FEMA grant to help fund construction of a new restroom facility at the City Park. In addition to providing public restroom facilities, the building will be designed to function as a tornado shelter, offering a safe location for park visitors and nearby residents during severe weather.

The project was estimated to cost \$635,000 in 2023 when the city applied for FEMA funding. The

state has already approved paying 10% of the project, with FEMA awarding a grant to cover 75% of the eligible costs. That leaves the city to pay 15% of eligible costs, as well as all uneligible costs.

The state and federal emergency management grants will cover building the tornado shelter building, but does not include items to make the facility a restroom for the park.

HKG Architect's Dean Marske asked the council to hold a kickoff meeting as soon as possible in order to get the project started before winter. That would allow the city to go out to bid before the fall and possibly pour footings for the building before the ground freezes.

There is also incentive to move forward as the only public tornado shelter in town is in the old portion of the high school, and the school district is in talks to rebuild portions of the school, said city Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich. If the old section of the school goes away, the city would be shelterless.

Council members also voted to allow alcohol to be consumed in the City Park during Celebration in the Park on Aug. 1. Groton Lions Club President Suzie Easthouse said they don't plan to have a beer tent this year, but asked the city to allow the rib festival teams to bring their own alcohol to consume. The kids area will still be blocked off and signs will be posted to indicate no alcohol is allowed in those areas.

In addition to its regular business, the council completed its annual organizational meeting. The 138th City Council adjourned before the 129th City Council convened. Council members took their oaths of office, elected the council president and vice president, and appointed council members to specific advisory committees.

The city also heard reports on various city departments.

Pool co-managers Tricia Keith and Kami Lipp reported on the first few weeks of pool activity. One of the lifeguards has already made a save this summer, a pool patron talked to the managers about moving the diving board back and two separate incidents involving bats have occurred at the pool.

One bat was found walking outside the boys bathroom, and another bat was found swimming in the pool.

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Groton Legion splits Tuesday twinbill as seniors rally early, 14U powers past Clark

It was a split night for Groton Legion baseball on Tuesday as the senior Legion squad saw a six-run lead slip away in a 12-9 loss to Aberdeen Smitty's, while the Groton Post 39 14U team rolled to a convincing 14-3 victory over Clark.

The senior Legion team appeared in control early, building a 6-0 advantage through three innings before Aberdeen stormed back with a late rally.

Groton struck first in the opening inning when Carter Simon delivered an RBI single before TC Schuster lined a two-run double to give Post 39 a 3-0 lead. The advantage grew in the second as Jordan Schwan drove in a run with a groundout and Simon added another RBI single down the left-field line. In the third inning, Lincoln Krause singled down the right-field line to score another run before an Aberdeen error pushed the lead to 6-0.

Aberdeen steadily chipped away before taking the lead for good with a three-run seventh inning. Karson Borge and Joe Cogley each drew bases-loaded walks before Jackson Post added an RBI groundout to put Smitty's in front.

Despite the loss, Groton out-hit Aberdeen 14-11. Schuster and Alex Abeln each collected three hits, while Gavin Englund added two hits. Schuster and Simon each drove in two runs.

Schuster started on the mound for Post 39, allowing six runs, four earned, on seven hits over 4 1/3 innings while striking out five. Jordan Schwan took the loss in relief after working the final two innings.

Aberdeen's Joe Cogley finished 3-for-5 with three RBIs, while Cogley and Jackson Post each recorded three hits. Smitty's also drew 11 walks in the contest to fuel the comeback.

Earlier in the evening, the Groton Post 39 14U squad wasted little time taking control in a 14-3 victory over Clark.

Earlier in the evening, the Groton Post 39 14U squad wasted little time taking control in a 14-3 victory over Clark.

Groton scored three runs in the opening inning as Trayce Schelle delivered an RBI single while two more runs crossed on a Clark error.

Post 39 broke the game open with seven runs in the second inning. Schelle doubled home a run, Tucker Leicht and Kyson Kucker each added RBI singles, Owen Tewksbury drew a bases-loaded walk, Bentley Ehresmann singled in another run, and Carter Boerger capped the rally with a two-run single.

Groton added four more runs in the third. Gavin Hanten singled to center, Boerger drove in a run with a groundout, Asher Zimmerman lined an RBI single down the right-field line, and Keegan Kucker doubled home another run.

Easton Larson earned the victory, allowing three runs on six hits over three innings without issuing a walk.

Groton pounded out 15 hits in the win. Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, and Asher Zimmerman each collected two hits, while Carter Boerger drove in a team-high three runs. Defensively, Post 39 played a clean game without committing an error.

The senior Legion team was scheduled to continue play Tuesday at Milbank, while the 14U squad returns home Friday to host Aberdeen Smitty's.

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.

NPS 18U TOURNAMENT

5:30

Groton vs.
Redfield Trash Fire

6:30

Hub City Fastpitch
vs. Groton

7:30

Hub City Fastpitch
vs. Redfield Trash Fire

SOUTH DIAMONDS
REDFIELD

WEDNESDAY
JULY 8

225 W 14th Ave
Redfield, SD

FREE ADMISSION

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**

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





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota governor's office reports helping with over 800 deportations as feds deliver funding

BY JOSHUA HAIAR



South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden speaks to reporters from a podium on July 28, 2025, at the Public Safety Administration Building in Sioux Falls. Also visible are, from left, Dan Satterlee, director of the state Division of Criminal Investigation, and Sam Olson, Minneapolis field office director for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (Photo by John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

South Dakota troopers have assisted in more than 204 immigration-related arrests, and state National Guard soldiers have helped process 807 deportations as the state continues to expand its partnership with federal immigration authorities.

The update came as Gov. Larry Rhoden announced that President Donald Trump's administration has provided \$150,418 to the state to recoup the costs associated with the South Dakota Highway Patrol's collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Under the terms of an agreement signed in the spring of 2025, state troopers are authorized to carry out some federal immigration enforcement duties.

The money will go toward payroll, and specialized equipment and technology for the Highway Patrol's enforcement work. The state expects additional funding as operations continue, according to a news release from Rhoden's office.

In May, Rhoden issued a press release saying the federal government had committed to reimbursing the state \$165,000. The South Dakota Department of Public Safety did not immediately respond to a question about the total cost of immigration-related enforcement for the state patrol.

Rhoden's immigration enforcement push, which also loops in the state Department of Corrections and the South Dakota National Guard, is part of a law enforcement undertaking dubbed "Operation Prairie Thunder." It features periodic saturation patrols by state troopers, 14 of which have taken place in 11 cities across South Dakota since last July. Initial operations focused on Sioux Falls.

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"Our partnership with ICE has delivered strong results, and I look forward to continuing to partner with the Trump Administration as we work to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free," Rhoden said in the press release.

The governor's office said 40 Highway Patrol troopers are participating in the program. That's more than double the number trained in mid-May, when Rhoden announced plans to fold more troopers into the program.

The 204 trooper-assisted apprehensions of people who reportedly lacked legal status is a jump from May, when the state said Highway Patrol reported 150 arrests.

The Corrections Department, meanwhile, has paroled 25 people into ICE custody for deportation. Four more people incarcerated by the state were approved for release into federal custody by the parole board in June, Rhoden's office said, and the board will consider four more cases in July.

Each person released from state custody saves the state an average of \$34,000 per year, Rhoden's office said.

Seven South Dakota National Guard soldiers have also remained deployed in Sioux Falls and Rapid City since the fall to help ICE process deportations. National Guard-assisted deportation processing starting in May 2025 rose from 664 through mid-May to 807 as of Tuesday.

The state Department of Public Safety did not immediately respond to a request for the total number of people deported from South Dakota since the state began coordinating with ICE.

Some of the people whose ICE deportations were aided by the state National Guard may not have been living in South Dakota, Rhoden spokesperson Josie Harms told Searchlight, as they could've been apprehended while traveling through the state.

ICE did not respond to a request for comment on the total number of people deported from South Dakota since Trump took office.

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.

Dell Rapids Republican lawmaker may get plea deal in election fraud case

Tom Pischke has stepped back from roles in county, state party while charges are pending

BY JOHN HULT

SIOUX FALLS – A plea deal is in the works for a Republican state senator from Dell Rapids facing felony charges related to attempted election fraud.

Tom Pischke, 44, was charged with two felony counts for allegedly filing documents to get candidates for county party positions on the June 2 primary ballot without those candidates' knowledge. He pleaded not guilty during an initial appearance Tuesday. Each count carries up to two years in prison.

The senator was in the courtroom with his lawyer, Ryan Kolbeck, who requested and was granted a preliminary hearing date for Pischke from magistrate Judge Andrew Robertson.

Defendants charged with felonies in South Dakota are entitled to preliminary hearings upon request, at which prosecutors must present enough evidence to justify the pursuit of charges.

The case may not reach such a hearing, tentatively scheduled for August, if a plea deal is reached.

"I believe we have a plea deal" for Pischke, said Minnehaha County State's Attorney Daniel Hagggar. He did not elaborate.

After the hearing, Kolbeck confirmed that plea deal discussions are ongoing but said a deal is not yet "imminent." Pischke declined to comment.

The charges against Pischke are felonies, but low-level felonies that carry a rebuttable presumption of probation.

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Sen. Tom Pischke, R-Dell Rapids, sports a "No on G" shirt at the Life Defense Fund election night watch party in Sioux Falls on Nov. 5, 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Prosecutors say this spring, Pischke filled out and mailed 16 applications for precinct committeeman and committeewoman to the Minnehaha County Auditor's Office for inclusion on the June 2 primary ballot without the candidates' knowledge.

Applications to run for precinct committeeman or committeewoman are meant to be filled out and signed only by the candidate, but there's no law requiring the forms to be notarized, and potential candidates needn't collect signatures to qualify.

County precinct committeemen and committeewomen are chosen by voters during primary elections or by members of county parties between primary seasons. Those who hold the positions can cast ballots at the state GOP convention to help choose candidates for constitutional offices like secretary

of state or auditor.

Auditor Leah Anderson's staff spurred the investigation that ultimately led to Pischke when they noticed suspiciously similar handwriting on the applications, according to a detective's report in Pischke's case file. The applications were tested for fingerprints and DNA after interviews with the listed candidates, each of whom told sheriff's deputies they hadn't signed the forms.

Pischke serves as a committeeman for the Minnehaha County GOP and is a member of the county organization's board.

Pischke did not attend last month's state GOP convention, however, which began two days after the charges against him were filed. He's also stepped back from his duties with the state and county party as the charges are pending, party leaders said the week he was indicted.

Pischke is set to run against an independent named Bryan Breitling in November. Breitling had previously served in the state Senate as a Republican.

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

Should teachers have to pass a test?

Shortages lead to consideration of certification alternatives.

Racial disparities in exam pass rates and a low percentage of Native American teachers fuel calls for change

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

Teacher shortages in rural and tribal schools are driving the South Dakota Department of Education to explore alternatives to licensing exams.

State Education Secretary Joe Graves asked members of the state Indian Education Advisory Council for their input on the possibility last month. He did not offer a timeline for the possible change.

Statewide, the number of teacher openings fell recently to 290, down from a high of 410 at the same time in 2023. But district-specific data show elevated vacancies in rural and tribal districts such as Sisseton, Todd County and Oglala Lakota schools. Those three school districts reported average full-time staff vacancies of 2.64, 3.83 and 7.23, respectively, at the start of the school year from 2019 to 2025. The average school district in South Dakota reported 0.59 vacancies.

Graves said willing, educated teachers with relevant “cultural backgrounds” — particularly Native American teachers — are especially in need but are often failing the licensing exam.

“Meanwhile, we’re replacing them with people not just lacking their cultural background, but people we’re recruiting from across the Pacific Ocean,” Graves said.

In 2025, 446 teachers hired from overseas were leading classrooms statewide. Many of those educators are “high quality people,” but it’s “galling” to some educators observing the situation that they can’t fill that role, Graves told South Dakota Searchlight after the council meeting. Meanwhile, some school districts are relying on untrained, long-term substitutes.

Offering an alternative certification pathway for some local teachers could help solve the problem, Graves said during the meeting. The state has required teachers to pass a certification exam — the Praxis Series, a standardized test of academic skills and subject knowledge — since 2005.

Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Education Director Sherry Johnson partnered with a national nonprofit to conduct research on alternatives after years of concern about the exam’s impact on Native American teacher candidates. Johnson was awarded a fellow, Diana Martinez, from Leadership for Education Equity to study the issue. Martinez presented her findings to Graves in June.

Johnson said the research stems from a “longtime concern among tribal educator directors” about potential teachers not passing the certification test.

“We can’t always bash and bash the system,” Johnson said. “When you’re going to bash the system,



A Sioux Falls School District educator teaches students reading at Lowell Elementary during the 2024-2025 school year.

(Courtesy of the Sioux Falls School District)

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you need to come to officials with some resources and examples and solutions.”

About 61% of all candidates pass the certification exam each year in South Dakota. The certification exam is a “barrier” for aspiring Native American and other minority teachers, contributing to the rural teacher shortage, Martinez said.

According to a 2019 study, the pass rate was 75% for white candidates, 33% for Black candidates, 56% for Latino candidates and 30% for “other races,” which includes Native Americans. Non-white candidates are also less likely to retake the exam, which costs hundreds of dollars.

Research has indicated that the lower success rates for candidates of color may be partly attributable to deficiencies in the educational opportunities they received as children, or to cultural bias in the tests or administration of the tests.

Martinez’s research points to a portfolio approach as the solution: a certification process in which candidates document their teaching, lesson planning, student assessment and professional development skills rather than taking a standardized test.

“We don’t want to produce something to make it easier to be a teacher,” Martinez said. “We want them to go into this having the right skills. This is supposed to be rigorous still. If you make it easier, you won’t get the results you want.”

Martinez said several other states have implemented alternative certification pathways — such as California, Minnesota and New Mexico — resulting in increased certification and retention rates among teachers. Other states have relaxed their professional standards, Graves said.

While Graves said he is “very hesitant” to relinquish the “rigor” of the test, he asked advisory members if there could be a “middle ground.”

“If we give it up, we’ve lost something in the profession,” Graves said. “And I also think if we keep holding to this standard, we’re driving, say, five teachers out of the profession a year who are particularly well suited to teach at certain schools in the state. That’s a loss as well.”

He said the department is researching alternatives, such as temporarily altering certification requirements for school districts with severe teacher shortages or with high poverty rates.

“How do we address what we hope is a short-term problem of the teacher shortage without creating a long-term liability for the profession?” Graves asked while framing the problem for South Dakota Searchlight.

Members of the advisory committee were split. Some shared stories of difficulties passing the exam. Pierre teacher Megan Deal said the state should keep the exam.

“We want highly qualified teachers in our state,” Deal said. “Are our lawyers not going to have to take the bar anymore? Are doctors not going to have to take anything? Yes, it breaks my heart if they keep failing it, but we’ve all had to pass it to get our teaching certificate.”

In fact, it is now possible to become a lawyer in South Dakota without passing the bar exam. Law school students selected for a pilot program can earn entrance to the state bar by completing two years of full-time public service employment, such as in the office of a state’s attorney or public defender, and passing a review of their work portfolio.

Brian Wagner, tribal education director with the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, said children need to see themselves in their teachers. Native American children comprise 10.5% of public school students, yet 1.4% of teachers are Native American, according to Kids Count South Dakota, a nonprofit organization focused on child development.

Schools serving student bodies that are at least 25% Native American — along with rural public schools — have the highest teacher turnover and vacancy rates in the state, according to the same report.

Waiving the certification test could increase Native American teacher representation and improve outcomes for Native American students, Wagner said.

“I’ve worked with people who’ve passed the Praxis that can barely tie their shoes, but they’re good at taking tests,” Wagner said. “I’ve worked with elders who have no degree at all, other than having walked in life, that are the best teachers I’ve ever worked with.”

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with

health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

New ruling against mandatory detention is another blow to Trump immigration policy

BY TIM HENDERSON

A new appeals court ruling is another blow to the Trump administration's mandatory detention policy that threatens millions of immigrants with unlimited incarceration without bond if they ever crossed a border illegally.

A sharply divided 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 on July 2 that such immigrants must receive a bond hearing within 90 days. One of the two judges said 30 days would be a better time limit.

The dissenting judge said having no bond was appropriate, calling the Trump policy "constitutionally sound."

The 2025 policy has faced widespread rebellion among federal judges, even Trump appointees, with many of them freeing immigration prisoners and calling the policy unconstitutional. Other appeals courts have also struck it down in a conflict likely to be heard in October by the U.S. Supreme Court. Last week's ruling affects three of the states with some of the largest detention centers — Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Immigrants from across the country often are transferred to those states.

"Since ICE moves people it has detained so quickly and frequently, isolating them from their lawyers, families and support systems, many New Yorkers are held at detention centers in these states," said Reed Dunlea, a spokesperson for the New York Immigration Coalition.

The American Immigration Council, which was a party in the case, noted that the case turned on three longtime Texas residents with no criminal history and U.S. citizen children, all detained in traffic stops.

The decision "affirms that constitutional rights do not disappear simply because someone is in immigration proceedings," said Rebecca Cassier, an attorney for the council who argued in the case, in a statement.

The Department of Homeland Security, in an unattributed statement to Stateline, said it disagrees with the decision and looks forward to Supreme Court review: "DHS strongly disagrees with the Fifth Circuit panel and is confident in its legal position regarding mandatory detention."

It's a partial reversal of the same appeals court's ruling in February that greenlighted limitless detention for some immigrants in those states despite conflicting rulings for other states that struck down the policy as unconstitutional. As of now only the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld the detention



A resident sits on a bench at Make the Road New York, a community center in Corona, Queens, in New York City. An appeals court ruling against mandatory detention applies to states where many New York immigrants are transferred after arrest. (Photo by Tim

Henderson/Stateline)

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policy, covering centers in seven states: Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

One federal court in California struck down the mandatory detention policy nationwide in a class-action lawsuit. The ruling was stayed pending appeal in March but remains in effect in part of California and has often been cited by other state judges in freeing immigration prisoners, according to a Stateline review of recent immigration rulings.

The immigrant detention population peaked in January at an all-time high of more than 70,000 people. It declined to about 60,000 in April as fewer non-criminal immigrants were detained in the wake of controversy and protests over enforcement in Minnesota and other places.

There are some signs that fewer non-criminals are being detained even as arrests have surged in recent days in an attempt by the Trump administration to double the number of arrests to 2,000 a day. The share of immigration arrests that led to detention dropped from 38% last year to 17% between March and May.

Fewer than 30% of immigrants detained in April had criminal convictions, including traffic offenses and immigration crimes. The others had only immigration violations or pending criminal charges.

Stateline reporter Tim Henderson can be reached at thenderson@stateline.org.

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

Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and the Journal News.

With control of US Senate in play, national Dems rush to dump Maine's Platner BY JACOB FISCHLER

A host of high-profile Democrats called for Graham Platner, the party's nominee to take on Republican U.S. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine in November's election, to drop out of the race as they tried to save the party's chances to retake the Senate majority.

In the wake of Politico's explosive Monday report that an ex-girlfriend of Platner's alleged he sexually assaulted her in 2021, the political newcomer's supporters in Congress and Democratic circles in Washington, D.C., rescinded their endorsements and sought a new candidate in the race that is seen as crucial to Senate control.

The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee said it would pull all its resources from the race as long as Platner was the nominee, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called for him to drop out and Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent who gave a critical early boost to Platner in the race for the Democratic nomination, said he told Platner directly he should "step aside."

Even Democratic National Committee Chairman Ken Martin said Platner should withdraw.

And key outside Democratic groups, including Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club, and the Sanders-founded Our Revolution PAC, also withdrew their endorsements after the Politico report came out.

Platner has denied the accusation and, as of Tuesday afternoon, was still the Democratic nominee. But he raised the possibility he would leave the race Monday, saying in a short direct-to-camera video that he was "taking the time to reflect on the best path forward."

Under state law, he must withdraw by July 13, and the party would have until July 27 to replace him.

Four Senate seats

Monday and Tuesday, national Democrats seemed eager to move on from the oysterman and first-time candidate, who gained nationwide attention for both his energetic economic populist campaign and his personal scandals, in an effort to preserve one of the party's best chances to pick up a Senate seat this year.

Democrats need to flip four Senate seats to win control of the chamber, with Collins the only Republican up for reelection in a state President Donald Trump lost in 2024.

Elections forecasters generally considered the Maine race a toss-up before the latest news about Platner.

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Independent U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont on Tuesday, July 7, 2026, said he told U.S. Senate candidate Graham Platner of Maine he should “step aside.” In this photo, Sanders, right, rallies with Platner in Portland on May 25, 2026. (Photo by Emma Davis/ Maine Morning Star)

time she was on the ballot, to remain the only New England Republican in the Senate — has beguiled Democrats for decades.

Quick consolidation

Replacing Platner and quickly coalescing around another candidate could be the party’s best chance to keep the map competitive.

Rodell Mollineau, a Democratic strategist and co-founder at D.C.-based ROKK Solutions, said Maine Democrats should be mindful of the party’s loss in the 2024 presidential race following the replacement of President Joe Biden with Vice President Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket.

“A replacement could win if everyone gets on the same page quickly,” he said in a Tuesday interview. “Drawing from some of the lessons of 2024, it would be helpful if there could be a process where voters do not think that this person was thrust upon them and they had a choice.”

Several potential replacements have expressed interest since the Politico story published.

Former state CDC Director Nirav D. Shah, who finished second in the gubernatorial primary last month, said he had fielded “hundreds of encouraging messages” and that he was evaluating his next move.

Jordan Wood, who finished third in the primary for the U.S. House seat held by retiring Rep. Jared Golden, indicated he would appreciate consideration.

“If my fellow Maine Democrats decide through an open and democratic process that I am the best candidate to defeat Susan Collins, I would be humbled by their trust,” Wood said in a statement.

Our Revolution, which supports progressive candidates, warned “the Democratic establishment” to heed primary voters’ wishes if and when a replacement is selected.

The Hill reported Tuesday the group is backing former state Senate President Troy Jackson, who finished third in the gubernatorial primary.

Spokespeople for Platner’s campaign did not return messages seeking comment Tuesday.

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

The Cook Political Report rates a North Carolina seat being vacated by retiring Republican Thom Tillis as leaning toward Democrats, while Republican incumbents facing strong Democratic challengers in Alaska and Ohio are tossups, as is an open race to replace Democrat Gary Peters in Michigan.

If Collins wins reelection, Democrats would have to sweep those races and pick up at least one seat currently seen as favoring the GOP to tilt the balance in the Senate, now controlled by Republicans with 53 seats.

The national environment generally gives Democrats an advantage, given Trump’s poor poll ratings and trends that favor the party not in the White House in midterm elections.

But Collins’ electoral strength — she outperformed Trump by 15 percentage points in 2020, the last

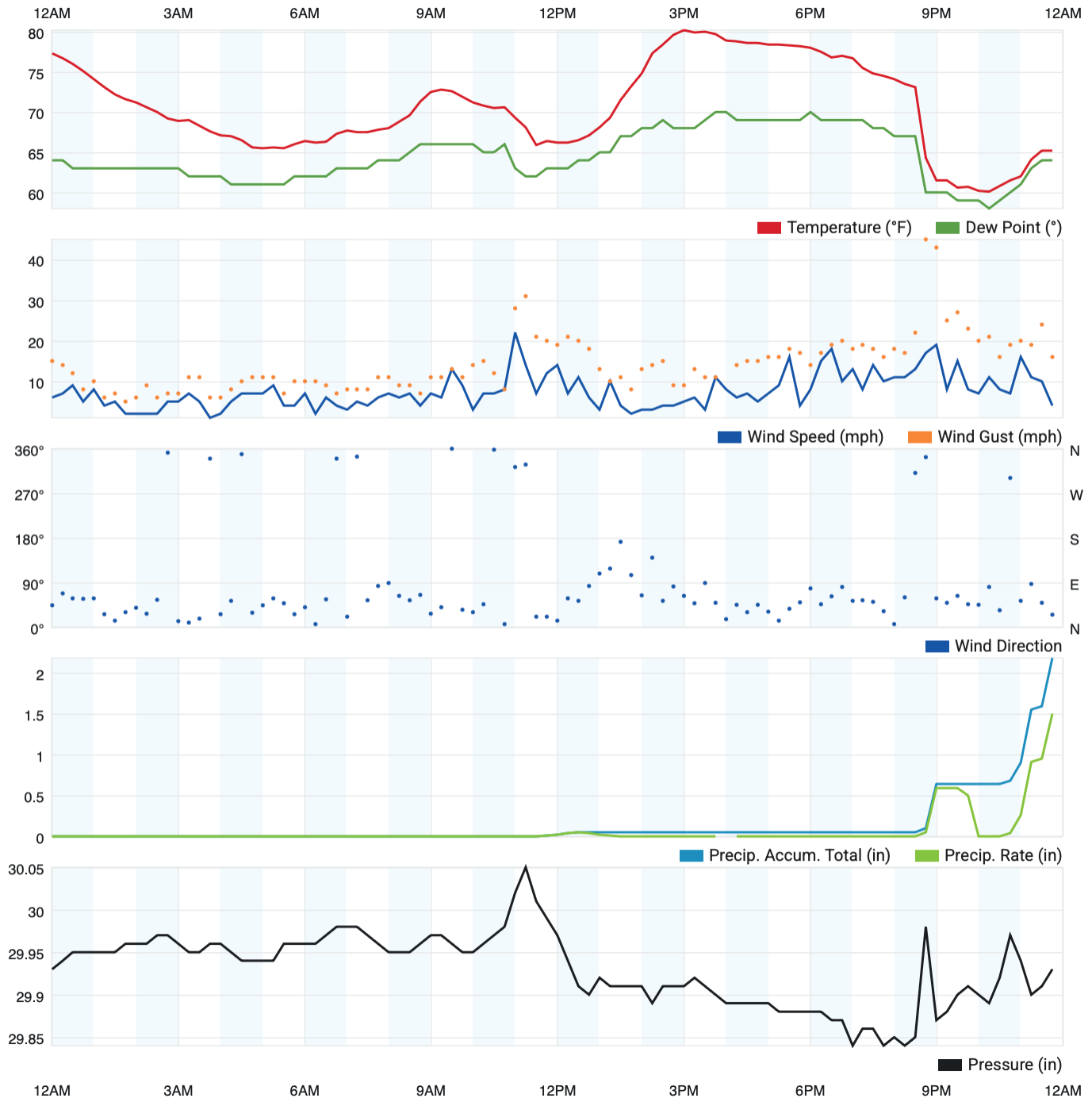
time she was on the ballot, to remain the only New England Republican in the Senate — has beguiled

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 7, 2026



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Wednesday



High: 78 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Wednesday
Night



Low: 57 °F

Partly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 84 °F

Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 62 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 91 °F

Hot

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

Isolated Severe Weather Possible

Timing:

Thursday
Afternoon/Evening

PRIMARY THREATS

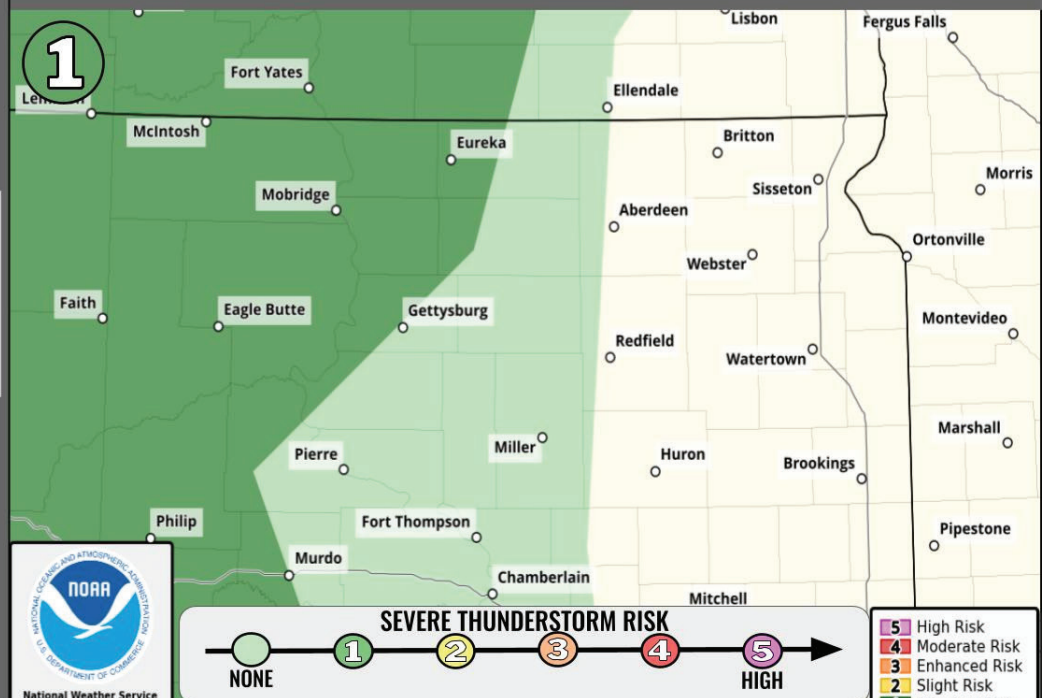


DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS
up to 60-70
mph



HAIL up to 1"
diameter

Marginal Risk For Severe Thunderstorms (July 9th)



A Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for severe storms is in place across mainly north central South Dakota Thursday afternoon and evening. Large hail at least one inch in diameter and damaging wind gusts of 60-70 mph will be possible.

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Thunderstorms Thursday To Heat Over The Weekend

July 8, 2026
3:47 AM CDT

Key Messages:

- Marginal Risk:** Severe thunderstorms capable of 60-70 mph wind gusts and hail at least an inch in diameter are possible mainly across north central SD Thursday (July 9th) afternoon and evening.
- High Heat Index and high HeatRisk** values heading into this upcoming weekend. Multiple days of Major to Extreme HeatRisk **Sunday through Tuesday** could lead to serious health problems and heat-related illnesses!

Category	Risk of Heat-Related Impacts
Green 0	Little to no risk from expected heat.
Yellow 1	Minor - Primarily affects those who are extremely sensitive to heat and without cooling/hydration.
Orange 2	Moderate - Affects those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without cooling/hydration, and some health systems and industries.
Red 3	Major - Affects anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems and industries.
Magenta 4	Extreme - Rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with no overnight relief affecting anyone without cooling/hydration as well as health systems, industries, and infrastructure.

Maximum HeatRisk Forecast

	7/8	7/9	7/10	7/11	7/12	7/13	7/14
	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Aberdeen	0	1	2	2	3	3	3
Britton	0	1	1	2	3	3	3
Chamberlain	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Clark	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Eagle Butte	1	1	1	2	3	3	2
Eureka	0	1	2	3	3	4	4
Gettysburg	1	1	2	2	3	3	3
McIntosh	1	1	1	2	3	3	2
Milbank	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Miller	0	1	1	2	3	3	3
Mobridge	1	1	2	3	3	3	3
Murdo	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Pierre	1	1	1	2	2	3	2
Redfield	1	1	2	2	3	3	3
Sisseton	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Watertown	1	1	2	2	3	3	3
Webster	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
Wheaton	1	1	1	2	3	3	3



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The next chance for strong to severe storms is Thursday afternoon and evening. But, beyond that, there is some bonafide summer heat headed this way, starting Friday and building into early next week. And, with plenty of humidity accompanying it, the potential for heat-related illnesses is going to increase.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 3:03 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 10:03 PM

Wind: 46 mph at 8:43 PM

Precip: 4.10

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 43 in 1905

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 0.94

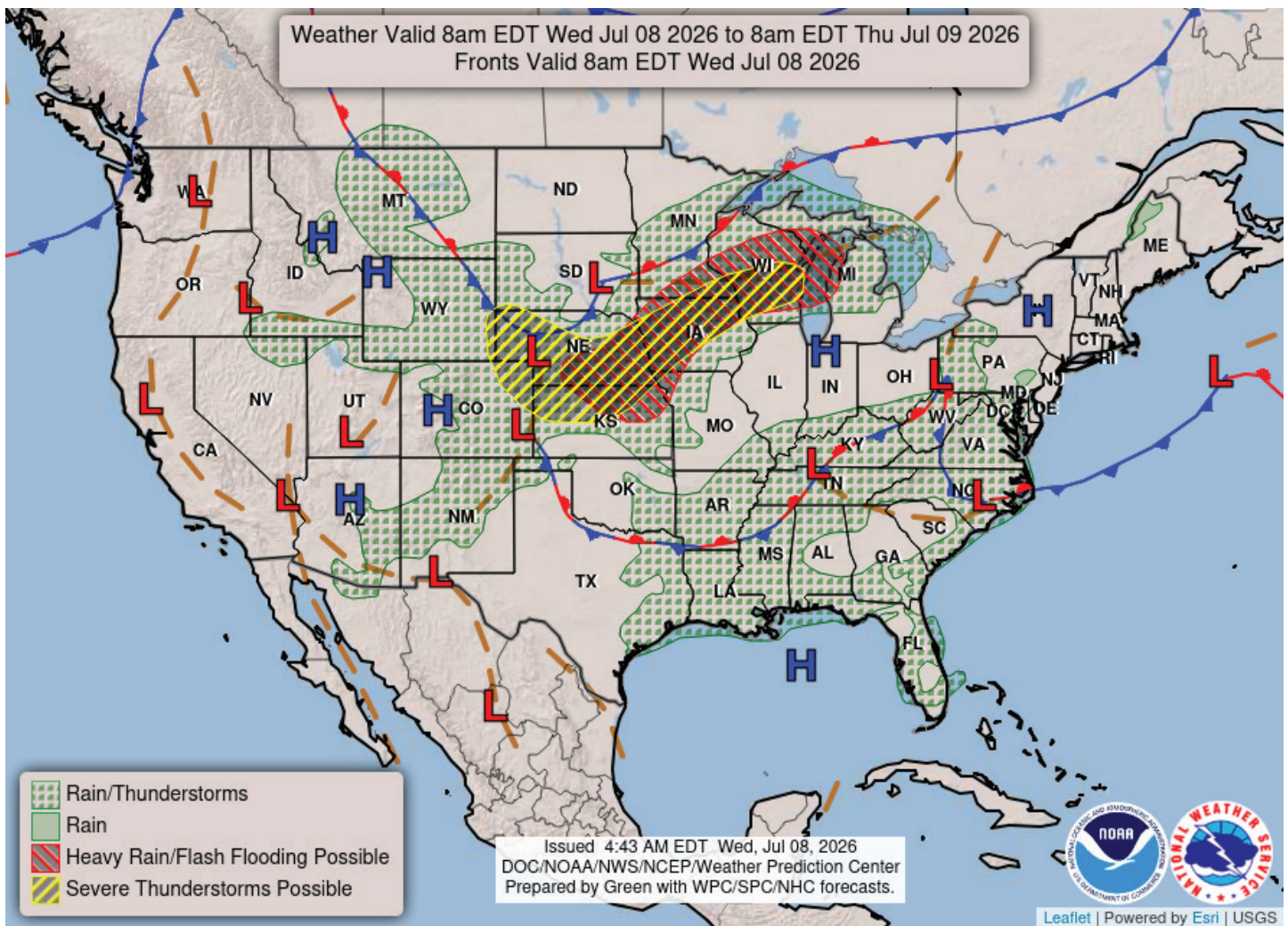
Precip to date in July.: 4.39

Average Precip to date: 11.95

Precip Year to Date: 13.86

Sunset Tonight: 9:22 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53 am



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Today in Weather History

July 8, 1922: Two tornadoes occurred near the southern border of South Dakota, with one at St. Charles in Gregory County, and the other on the south shore of Lake Andes, in Charles Mix County. The distance apart was about 30 miles. The tornado in Gregory County missed the town of Lake Andes. However, it destroyed about 29 cottages and five large barns. Fifteen people were injured, but no one was killed.

July 8, 1951: An F2 touched down in open country and moved northeastward, passing three miles northwest of Corona in Roberts County. Thirteen buildings were destroyed on a farm with only the house left standing. Three cows and 20 pigs were killed.

July 8, 2009: A tornado passed through the city of Dickinson, ND, on the far south side, mainly just south of the Heart River. From their eyewitness accounts, and from video obtained from the Dickinson Police Department, it is likely that this was a rain-wrapped tornado, and very difficult if not impossible to see. The tornado occurred before sunset, yet it was described as being as dark as night during the event. Over 450 structures were damaged, of which nearly 100 were declared destroyed or beyond repair. Numerous vehicles were damaged or destroyed; some were on their roofs. From that, it was determined that peak wind speeds in the tornado were on the order of 150 mph.

July 8, 2011: Historical releases on the Oahe Dam of 160,000 CFS kept the Missouri River from Pierre to Chamberlain at record flood levels throughout July. Extensive sandbagging and levee building had been done earlier to hold back the river. Residents in the Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Oacoma areas continued to be the most affected by the river. Many homes, along with roads, crop, and pastureland remained flooded throughout the month. The Missouri River at Pierre continued from 5 to 6 foot above flood stage throughout July. The Missouri River at Chamberlain reached a record stage of 75.1 feet on July 8th. Flood stage at Chamberlain is 65 feet. The flooding on the river began in late May and continued into August.

July 8, 2013: A thunderstorm complex moving across central and north central South Dakota produced gusty winds up to 70 mph. These strong winds brought down several tree branches around the area with Dewey County the hardest hit location. In Timber Lake, downed tree branches fell on houses and vehicles causing damage.

1680: The first confirmed tornado death in the United States occurred in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The funnel was filled with, stones, bushes, and other things. The tornado also unroofed a barn and snapped many large trees.

1816 — Frost was reported in low places throughout New England. (David Ludlum)

1950 — The town of York, NE, was deluged with 13.15 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1975 — Three people were killed and six others were injured when lightning struck a walnut tree near Mayo, FL. The nine people were stringing tobacco under a tin shed when the bolt hit the nearby tree. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Waterloo, IA, 6.38 inches of rain at Tescott, KS, and twenty-five minutes of ping-pong ball size hail at Drummond, OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thirty cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley, WV, equalled their all-time record with a high of 93 degrees. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms spawned seven tornadoes in Adams and Logan counties of eastern Colorado, and hail caused 2.3 million dollars damage in Adams, Logan and Washington counties. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Sixteen cities in the central and western U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 103 degrees at Denver, CO, equalled their record for July, and a 110 degree reading at Rapid City, SD, equalled their all-time record high. Denver reported a record five straight days of 100 degree heat, and Scottsbluff, NE, reported a record eight days in a row of 100 degree weather. (The National Weather Summary)

2003: What may be the world's highest dew point temperature was recorded at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in the Persian Gulf. A dew point of 95 degrees was recorded at 3 PM while the air temperature was 108 degrees. The apparent temperature at that time would have been 172 degrees.

2009: An intense cold front brings heavy snow, hail, high winds and unusually cold temperatures to southern Peru. The severe conditions were blamed for the deaths of more than 246 children due to cold-related illnesses.

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Daily Devotion

Understanding God's Promises

Every trial carries the potential for the Lord to teach us something new.

Psalms 19:7-11: 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

Yesterday we noted that to understand divine promises, believers must consider the whole counsel of God. For example, the Lord's commitment to supply our needs connects to other parts of Scripture that show how we cooperate with His provision:

We trust God to provide (James 1:6-7). God's trustworthiness is clear throughout Scripture and in believers' lives. When we trust Him confidently instead of doubting, we're better able to recognize and receive what He wants to give.

We wait upon His timing (1 Samuel 13:8-14). Rather than wait for Samuel to arrive, King Saul took matters into his own hands by making a pre-battle sacrifice. Though his army won the battle, Saul's impatience cost him God's favor and eventually the throne. When we manipulate circumstances or rush ahead of God's timing, we often miss His best.

We accept responsibility (Proverbs 19:15). We should be alert and ready to participate in our Father's plan. If we want to discern His direction, we must seek Him through prayer and study of His Word.

God knows our needs and has committed Himself to meeting them. Our responsibility is to trust Him and be patient. Then we can rest, knowing He will provide in His way and His time.

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:

07.07.26

27 43 48 49 50 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 38 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.07.26

2 31 35 36 63 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$604,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 9 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: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.04.26

8 9 18 25 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$169,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.06.26

22 25 27 47 50 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 10 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: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Iran and US trade fire and Trump calls the ceasefire into question

By JON GAMBRELL and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran targeted American military sites in the Gulf on Wednesday after the U.S. launched strikes on several places in Iran and reinstated sanctions on its oil sales. Washington said it was responding to Iranian attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

The crossfire raised fears that the war in Iran could reignite — and U.S. President Donald Trump fueled those concerns by saying that the interim agreement to pause fighting was “over,” although he added that he would allow negotiations to continue.

Attacks have repeatedly threatened the shaky ceasefire, but Trump’s comments add new uncertainty, and oil prices shot up after he spoke. A renewed conflict could engulf the wider Middle East and would likely again halt energy shipments through the strait that are crucial to the global economy.

“For me, I think it’s over,” Trump responded when asked about the status of the ceasefire. He added that U.S. representatives can continue negotiations, but he cast doubt on the outcome. “They can talk, but I think they’re wasting their time,” he said.

Negotiations to reach a final deal had been due to start after the dayslong funeral for Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed Feb. 28 in the war’s first moments. The funeral, which ends Thursday, was supposed to be a period of lower tensions.

The talks are meant to focus on the toughest matters, including fully reopening the strait and rolling back Tehran’s disputed nuclear program.

“The era of bullying and extortion is over,” Iran’s Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf wrote on X. “It leads nowhere. We don’t fold.”

Overnight US strikes target Iran

The U.S. military’s Central Command said American forces launched strikes “to impose heavy costs for targeting and attacking commercial shipping crewed by innocent civilians in an international waterway.”

It said it hit Iranian targets including air defense systems, radars and over 60 small boats used by Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

Those boats have been key to threatening ships in the strait, through which a fifth of the world’s traded oil and natural gas passed before the war. Iran’s ability to bring shipping in the waterway to a near halt during the war proved its greatest strategic advantage as rising prices for energy supplies, fertilizer and food put pressure on the U.S. to make a deal. On Wednesday, the price of Brent crude, the international standard, spiked over 5% after Trump’s comments.

The U.S. military remains “prepared to hold Iran accountable when the agreement is not adhered to or obeyed,” it added, saying this round of attacks had ended.

Iranian state media reported explosions in several locations, including in Bandar Mahshahr, where a Guard member was killed. It also reported attacks on Bushehr, home to Iran’s nuclear power plant complex.

On Wednesday morning, both Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet, and Kuwait, home to U.S. Army forces, sounded missile alerts. The Guard issued a statement acknowledging targeting U.S. military installations in both countries.

Kuwait said it intercepted two ballistic missiles and 13 drones launched by Iran. It Electricity Ministry said a number of lines were out of service after shrapnel fell on them.

A similar spate of Iranian attacks on shipping and U.S. retaliatory strikes occurred late last month — which similarly drew Iranian attacks on Bahrain and Kuwait. Wednesday’s strikes came as Trump was in Turkey for a summit of the NATO military alliance.

Anwar Gargash, a senior diplomat in the United Arab Emirates, called Iran’s attacks on Bahrain and Kuwait “a clear indicator that Tehran remains incapable of committing to the requirements of de-escalation and turning the page on war.”

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US revokes the license for the sale of Iranian oil

Before the strikes, the U.S. revoked a license that authorized the sale of Iranian oil as part of the interim deal. That paused U.S. sanctions and allowed Iran to conduct oil sales openly in U.S. dollars for the first time in years. Iran long had been suspected of selling sanctioned crude at below-market prices to China.

The decision came after the strikes on shipping. One tanker was off the coast of Oman when it was hit and caught fire, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. Iranian state television said the tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings but did not directly claim the assault.

Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for the Qatari Foreign Ministry, said the tanker was carrying Qatari natural gas and called the strike an "unacceptable attack" on international navigation and global energy security. He said Qatar, which has been a key mediator alongside Pakistan in the talks, holds Iran "fully legally responsible."

The other two ships sustained some damage, but no one was injured, and both continued on their way, the U.K. agency said.

Iran and the United States agreed as part of the interim deal to allow ships to pass through the strait without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran has insisted it must control the vessels' routes and vowed to later charge fees for passage. That would upend decades of practice in the waterway. The ships attacked Tuesday all appeared to be using a route close to Oman's shore, rather than one ordered by Tehran.

The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they will not agree to Iran charging for passage through the strait.

Mourners attend Khamenei's funeral services in Iraq

Funeral ceremonies for Khamenei were held Wednesday in the Iraqi city of Najaf. Attending the services are Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and other Iranian as well as Iraqi officials, including Prime Minister Ali Falah al-Zaidi. There will be funeral prayers later at the Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala as well.

Khamenei's son, Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, has yet to make an appearance at the ceremonies, which began Saturday in Tehran. He is believed to be in hiding after reportedly being wounded in the airstrike that killed his father.

Khamenei's body will then be returned to Iran to be buried Thursday at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, his birthplace.

Danish PM says her country is 'ready to defend' Greenland as Trump's demands upend NATO summit

By LORNE COOK and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Denmark on Wednesday vowed to defend its territory after President Donald Trump insisted again that the United States should control Greenland, upending a NATO summit in Turkey meant to be a show of strength and unity.

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said her country is "ready to defend every inch of NATO including our own territory" in the event of an attack, and would rely on NATO allies to honor their commitment to defend each other.

"We hope that all, including all allies, will respect the Greenland people's right for self-determination," Frederiksen said ahead of the meeting of NATO leaders. "Greenland is of course not for sale."

Trump had reopened old wounds on the eve of the meeting by insisting that the United States should control Greenland, a semiautonomous Danish territory.

Arriving at the summit on Wednesday, Trump said he was "not happy with NATO" for its member nations' pushback against his earlier efforts to take over Greenland, adding that the territory "is very important for the United States, but it's not important for Denmark."

Trump's renewed interest in Greenland could put at risk the entire future of NATO, which was founded in 1949 to counter the threat to European security posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The organization is normally focused on outside threats such as that posed by Russia. It is not designed to deal with threats from within.

Iceland's Prime Minister Kristján Frostsóttir said Greenland "belongs to the people of Greenland," and

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called for unity in the face of Russia, which she called "the biggest threat."

NATO chief backs latest US strikes on Iran

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said from Ankara on Wednesday that he believes the United States is fully committed to the alliance. He praised Trump for the series of U.S. strikes on Iran overnight, after Tehran struck three merchant ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

"I think what you did last night was absolutely necessary," Rutte said to Trump. "It was a very strong response, and I'm with you on this."

The U.S. strikes, as well as the revoking of a license allowing Iran to sell its oil on global markets, underscored the fragility of an interim deal to end months of fighting.

Trump said Wednesday the interim agreement with Iran is "over" after the strikes, but that he will allow talks to continue.

"For me, I think it's over," Trump responded when asked about the status of the ceasefire. "It's just a waste of time dealing with them."

NATO leaders sought to show Trump they were boosting defense

The meeting in Ankara was meant to focus on progress made toward meeting the alliance's spending targets — something Rutte highlighted by noting numerous countries that are already investing more.

"The commitment is there, no doubt," Rutte said before chairing the summit, but noted the Trump administration expects "the Europeans and Canadian will equalize their spending with the United States."

In an attempt last month to mollify the U.S. leader, Rutte went to Washington to hail the "Trump Trillion" — the \$1.2 trillion that European allies and Canada have added to defense spending since Trump came to power in 2017.

Yet Trump has demanded "loyalty" and branded NATO a "paper tiger" after some allies refused to grant open access to their bases for U.S. forces to attack Iran.

Trump on Wednesday blasted NATO member Spain for its refusals to allow U.S. forces to use its bases to attack Iran, saying it was a "terrible partner in NATO" and renewing his threats to cut off trade with Spain.

As leaders converged on Ankara, Rutte hosted a "big reveal" event to showcase the many deals planned for the increased spending — much of it to be spent on U.S. companies, creating thousands of jobs for Americans.

NATO diplomats and officials had hoped that Trump would take the win, but judging by some of his remarks since arriving in Turkey, they are in for yet another dressing down.

NATO braces for Trump's grievances

Trump has long argued that the U.S. carries more than its fair share of the defense burden for NATO. At last year's summit, the allies agreed to invest 5% of their gross domestic product on defense — 3.5% on their defense budgets and 1.5% on infrastructure so troops and equipment can move faster in times of conflict.

Yet new figures released by NATO on Tuesday showed that Slovenia, Belgium, Spain and the Czech Republic could be in hot water with the Trump administration as they struggle to meet the alliance's old spending target of 2% of GDP.

The Trump administration wants to see a more lean and lethal "NATO 3.0," with Europe taking responsibility for its own security, including Ukraine, with conventional weapons while America would continue to provide its nuclear umbrella.

However, the Pentagon has launched a six-month review of U.S. military presence in Europe, leaving allies to seek clarity on just how deeply Trump intends to cut U.S. force numbers.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy pushes for NATO entry

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a fresh appeal Tuesday for Ukraine to be allowed to join the alliance, saying Ukrainian armed forces are highly experienced and would only boost NATO's defense capabilities.

Zelenskyy, who is expected to meet with Trump in Ankara on Wednesday, highlighted Ukraine's adaptability and its ability to strike deep inside Russia, hit Moscow's oil refineries and other energy targets. He said Ukraine's armed forces are "eliminating" on average 30,000 Russian troops every month.

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

U.S. Sen Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), one member of a congressional delegation attending the NATO summit, said at a news conference Wednesday that she hoped there would be a “recommitment” to Ukraine, and that the momentum on the battlefield favored Kyiv.

“We need to do everything possible to ramp up pressure on Russia to come to the table,” she said.

Trump will also meet with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, a former insurgent who led the offensive that unseated autocrat Bashar Assad in December 2024. Despite having once been an al-Qaida fighter, al-Sharaa has won Trump’s backing as he seeks to rebuild Syria and restore its long-shattered ties with the West.

Trump has repeatedly suggested that al-Sharaa would do a better job of rooting out Hezbollah in Lebanon than the Israeli army, raising alarms in Lebanon and Israel alike. The Syrian leader has said he has no interest in doing so.

Oil prices jump nearly 6% after Trump says ceasefire with Iran is ‘over’

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Oil prices surged nearly 6% after U.S. President Donald Trump said Wednesday that the interim agreement with Iran is “over,” though he will allow talks to continue.

Trump made the comments following U.S. strikes on Iran in reaction to attacks on three ships in the Strait of Hormuz. The price of Brent crude oil jumped 5.6% to more than \$78 a barrel. U.S. benchmark crude surged 5.8% to \$74.55 a barrel.

“For me, I think it’s over,” Trump responded when asked about the status of the ceasefire. “It’s just a waste of time dealing with them,” he said on the sidelines of the two-day NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey.

Crude prices had declined recently from spikes well above \$100 a barrel to around the levels they were at before the war with Iran began in late February.

Iran and the United States agreed as part of their interim deal on ending the war to allow ships to pass through the strait without paying charges for 60 days. But Tehran has insisted it must control the vessels’ routes and vowed to later charge fees for passage. That would upend decades of practice in the waterway. The ships attacked Tuesday all appeared to be using a route close to Oman’s shore, rather than one ordered by Tehran.

The upsets for oil markets have coincided with waves of worries that the craze for artificial intelligence-related shares has pushed prices past the amount of gains in productivity and profits likely to result from massive investments in computer chip production capacity and data centers.

“As such, geopolitical headlines will likely determine market sentiment over the coming hours. A further deterioration in the situation could weigh further on equity valuations along with rising stress in technology,” Ipek Ozkardeskaya of Swissquote said in a commentary.

In share trading, Germany’s DAX shed 1.1% to 25,191.69 and the CAC 40 in Paris gave up 0.9% to 8,358.67. Britain’s FTSE 100 slid 0.8% to 10,579.09.

The future for the S&P 500 edged 0.1% lower and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.4%.

In Asian trading, Tokyo’s Nikkei 225 lost 2.1% to 66,819.05, while the Kospi in South Korea shed 5.4%, to 7,246.79.

The South Korean index has soared and then fallen back, briefly surpassing the 9,000 level last month and then succumbing to bouts of heavy selling of big AI-related tech shares like Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix. Samsung fell 6.3% early Wednesday after dropping about 7% the day before. SK Hynix shed early gains to drop 5.7%.

Taiwan’s Taiex rose 0.6%.

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In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng rose 3% to 24,193.56.

Hong Kong traded shares of Chinese AI model startup Zhipu, known also as Z.ai and traded as Knowledge Atlas Technology, rose nearly 14% on Wednesday.

A six-month lock up period for "cornerstone" investors after its \$558 million trading debut in Hong Kong in early January expires this week. State-owned China National Radio reported late Tuesday that nearly 70% of Zhipu's cornerstone investors are committed to stay on, despite previous worries that the lock up period expiration could trigger a sell-off of shares. Zhipu's share price has risen more than 1,300% since its January trading debut in Hong Kong.

The Shanghai Composite index declined 0.5% to 3,970.88.

Elsewhere in Asia, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.2% to 8,785.10, while India's Sensex lost 0.7%.

On Tuesday, the roller-coaster ride for AI stocks whipped back down, dragging Wall Street lower.

The S&P 500 fell 0.4%, though the majority of stocks within the index rose.

The drops for stocks in the artificial-intelligence industry dragged the Nasdaq composite 1.2% lower, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.2%.

Advanced Micro Devices sank 6.5% and Intel shed 9.7%. Micron Technology lost 4.7%.

SpaceX, which owns the xAI business, fell 6.8% in its first day of trading after it was included in the Nasdaq 100 index.

In other trading early Wednesday, the U.S. dollar rose to 162.26 Japanese yen from 162.11 yen. The euro climbed to \$1.1426 from \$1.1414.

Funeral prayers in Iraq for Iranian supreme leader commence after body arrives in holy city

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

NAJAF, Iraq (AP) — Funeral processions for Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei began Wednesday in the Iraqi city of Najaf with thousands of mourners present.

The Islamic Republic's dayslong funeral for Khamenei began Saturday, with authorities shutting down streets, airspace and daily life in Tehran as mourners commemorate the life of the man who led Iran for decades with an iron fist while confronting the West. His body will later be taken from Najaf to the city of Karbala before returning to Iran.

Talks between the United States and Iran appear to be on hold until after the burial. However, strikes from both sides in the Persian Gulf Tuesday and into Wednesday raised risks that the interim agreement to end the monthslong war that engulfed the Mideast could break down. The U.S. military attacked Iran early Wednesday after it said Tehran struck three ships in the Strait of Hormuz, before Iran launched retaliatory strikes on Kuwait and Bahrain.

The body of Khamenei arrived in the Iraqi city considered among the holiest for millions of Shiite Muslims around the world on Tuesday, alongside Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, and other senior officials. They were welcomed by mourners and supporters holding portraits of the late supreme leader, and others performing self-flagellation on the streets.

Khamenei's body was in a casket draped in the Islamic Republic's flag, encased in glass. Mourners waved flags of Iran as well as red and black flags symbolizing mourning and revenge.

"We the people of Iraq will remain a thorn in the eyes of the enemies," said Jaafar Jawad, who is participating in the funeral. "His arrival to us is the greatest possible honor, and God willing we will be loyal, and repay a little of his due in the holy city of Najaf."

The funeral prayers in Najaf will take place at the Shrine of Imam Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and will be led by Muhammad Taqi al-Hakim, a senior scholar at the Najaf seminary.

In Karbala, also a holy city for Shiite Muslims where the Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet, was killed in 680 AD, Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalaee, a representative of Iraq's top Shiite religious authority will lead the prayers at the Imam Hussein Shrine.

Khamenei was killed in late February in wide-scale U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran. He was among several senior Iranian leaders killed in strikes during the war. He was 86.

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.

Some health workers in Congo's Ebola outbreak go on strike over pay issues as deaths near 600

By PROSPER HERI NGORORA Associated Press

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — The healthcare workers at the epicenter of Congo's Ebola outbreak are walking off their jobs to protest delays in their payments, threatening efforts to slow the outbreak that officials said continues to spread faster than the response.

In Ituri province, the hardest hit among the three provinces in eastern Congo affected by the outbreak, some of the health professionals and other front-line workers told The Associated Press they've not been paid their wages and bonuses since the outbreak was declared on May 15. They also alleged they were working with limited gear, and were being treated unfairly by authorities as well as response teams.

"Since the Ebola virus disease outbreak was declared, we've been demanding payment for our work," Dr. Biensi Kano, a member of the epidemiological surveillance committee in Ituri's capital, Bunia, told The Associated Press.

The latest government data shows 1,708 recorded cases, including 580 deaths, and that the first month of this Ebola outbreak was already the worst on record, health authorities said. The strike comes at the start of enrollment for clinical trials for the treatment of the Bundibugyo virus that is responsible for this outbreak.

Treatment centers at near-full capacity

The World Health Organization representative in Congo, Dr. Anne Ancia, said Tuesday that the virus continues to spread, fueled by population movements and insecurity, while some treatment centers are at near-full capacity.

The non-payment of benefits "exposes us and our families to significant socio-economic difficulties and seriously undermines our living conditions," said Kano.

In an official notice to national and provincial authorities over the weekend, front-line workers in Ituri threatened to strike if the wages were not paid in 24 hours. By Tuesday, some had already stopped working although no official strike has been declared.

The aggrieved front-line workers also include safety and security teams, those that often embark on community outreach as well as those burying patients who died from Ebola.

Congo's government did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the situation. Officials in Ituri, however, said they've met with the workers and their concerns are being addressed.

"The fact that Bunia airport is closed is hampering the very implementation of the response, particularly certain aspects of the flow of funds. This is one of the reasons that may account for the delay in payment," Akilimali Pierre, incident manager at Congo's National Institute of Public Health, told The Associated Press.

Some of the workers organized a protest Monday outside the Rwampara Ebola treatment center. They set tires alight, causing a brief panic in the vicinity before the police intervened to restore order.

Health workers face other challenges as well, including attacks from angry residents and skepticism about the virus.

'We risk dying for nothing'

Dr. Ben Bakule, a community investigator, said he narrowly escaped death in late May when a group of angry young men attacked him and his colleagues while they were tracing contacts of a confirmed Ebola case in the village of Tutu, in Djugu territory.

"We spend money on transport to get to work. We thought we'd be rewarded. At the moment, nothing is going right because we're not being paid. We don't deserve this sort of treatment," he told The Associ-

ated Press.

"We might have to give up our jobs. These are risks we're taking. We risk dying for nothing. This government wants this epidemic to continue," Bakule added, his voice tinged with frustration.

When he visited the mining town of Mongbwalu — considered the hot spot for the disease — last month, Congo's Minister of Health Roger Kamba assured the response teams that the government was prioritizing their working conditions.

"All doctors, all nurses and all staff working on the response will be fully supported. We have the money for that," Kamba said at the time.

But front-line workers say the reality is different.

"We are doing everything we can to make the public understand how dangerous this disease is. I came here to save people's lives, but this is how I am being thanked. We are working day and night without being paid," said Dr. Ghislain Maneba, an epidemiologist and community investigator in the Rwampara health zone.

Meanwhile, the strike by some workers has caused concern among residents in Ituri, where measures to slow the outbreak have resulted in economic hardship.

Bunia resident Anifa Kito said she fears that response efforts may falter, further complicating daily life. "I would ask the authorities to resolve this situation before things get any worse," she said, standing in front of her tomato stall.

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.

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"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 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 had a fleet of six ballistic-missile submarines and 59 nuclear-powered attack submarines as of November 2025, 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.

DNA evidence from Charlie Kirk assassination disputed by defendant's lawyers

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

PROVO, Utah (AP) — Lawyers for the man accused of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk are expected to keep questioning the reliability of DNA testing that prosecutors said links the defendant to the suspected murder weapon when a weeklong hearing continues Wednesday.

A member of Tyler Robinson's defense team interrogated a DNA analyst from the FBI on Tuesday about the techniques she used to connect Robinson to a rifle found wrapped inside a towel at Utah Valley University, where Kirk was shot in September while speaking to a crowd.

Defense lawyer Michael Burt cast doubt on the analyst's conclusions — a theme that's likely to come up again during the five-day preliminary hearing.

"She can't match Mr. Robinson to the questioned samples," Burt concluded.

Deputy Utah County Attorney Ryan McBride countered that the reliability of the DNA testing could be examined if the case goes to trial. He suggested the preliminary hearing was not the time to take up the matter.

"The point is there are explanations that are susceptible to different interpretations and arguments," McBride said. "The court is going to determine if it meets the threshold of reliability at trial."

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Prosecutors intend to seek the death penalty in the case. They are trying to convince Judge Tony Graf that they have enough evidence to bring Robinson to trial on an aggravated murder charge.

Robinson 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.

Prosecutors must show they have enough evidence for a trial

FBI analyst Amanda Bakker said after Robinson's roommate provided a DNA sample for comparison, she was able to rerun her tests and attribute all of the DNA to two people.

Investigators found the towel and suspected murder weapon — a bolt-action rifle with one spent round — in a wooded area near where Kirk was shot.

DNA on the towel matched to two people, Jennifer Faumuina with the State Bureau of Investigation testified. One was Robinson's roommate, Lance Twiggs, and the other was very likely Robinson, she said. Twiggs, a key figure in the prosecution's case, will not testify in person this week, but prosecutors have said they plan to introduce a recorded statement.

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

In a surveillance video shown in court from the day Kirk was killed, Robinson could be seen climbing over a railing onto a rooftop, crouching down and running to a site overlooking where the activist was speaking, former State Bureau of Investigation Agent David Hull testified Tuesday.

Hull said that after shooting Kirk, Robinson ran back across the roof, dropped to the ground and fled on foot.

Defense team pushes back

Defense attorney Kathryn Nester questioned Hull's handling of the crime scene on the day of the shooting. She also asked about a bullet that was found on campus at a different location than the alleged site of the shooting.

Hull said that bullet was traced back to a law enforcement officer who had "cleared" his weapon, ejecting an unused bullet.

Prosecutors contend the shooting endangered others at Kirk's campus event — an aggravating circumstance that could make the crime punishable by death under Utah law. Robinson also faces possible sentence enhancements based on the prosecution's claim that he targeted Kirk because of his political views.

During one of several appearances on campus by Robinson on Sept. 10, Hull said the defendant went to the amphitheater where Kirk was later shot and contacted representatives of Turning Point USA, a group co-founded by Kirk that galvanized the conservative youth vote to help Trump win a second term.

The investigator did not detail what occurred during that interaction or if members of Kirk's security team were present.

Robinson turned himself in after the shooting. Prosecutors allege he sent a text to Twiggs saying he targeted Kirk because he "had enough of his hatred."

Robinson's defense team pushed back Tuesday on the idea that he was hostile to Kirk's politics. Defense attorney Richard Novak sought to block prosecutors from introducing a statement describing the traditional Christian values of Turning Point USA.

"This doesn't say anything about Mr. Robinson's state of mind," Novak said about the statement from Turning Point USA board member David Engelhardt. "I don't think that this court should be deciding — based on the record before it — where, if at all, politics and religion intersect."

The judge ruled that the Turning Point statement was relevant and would be "provisionally admitted" with a final decision at a later date.

Investigator says video shows defendant going onto roof to kill Charlie Kirk

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

PROVO, Utah (AP) — The man charged with killing Charlie Kirk strolled Utah Valley University in shorts and a T-shirt, bought a meal at Chick-fil-A and made contact with people from Kirk's organization, before returning in different clothes to shoot the conservative activist from a rooftop, an investigator testified Tuesday.

Former State Bureau of Investigation Agent David Hull described Tyler Robinson's alleged movements before and after Kirk was killed as prosecutors played previously unseen campus surveillance videos in state court. The defendant first arrived on campus about four hours before the shooting and returned several times, including when he allegedly went onto the roof to shoot Kirk and again the night after Kirk was killed, Hull said.

Prosecutors say they intend to seek the death penalty in the case. They are trying to convince Judge Tony Graf that they have enough evidence to bring Robinson to trial on an aggravated murder charge.

Robinson has not yet entered a plea. 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.

In a video shown Tuesday, Robinson climbs over a railing onto a rooftop, crouches down and runs to a site overlooking where Kirk was speaking, Hull testified. After the shooting, Robinson runs back across the roof, drops to the ground and flees on foot, Hull said.

Investigators found the suspected murder weapon — a bolt-action rifle with one spent round — wrapped in a towel in some nearby woods. DNA on the towel matched to two people. One was Tyler Robinson's roommate and the other was very likely Robinson, Jennifer Faumuina with the State Bureau of Investigation testified.

This week's preliminary hearing marks the most significant presentation of evidence to date in the case. Authorities allege Robinson, 23, shot Kirk on Sept. 10 while the 31-year-old activist and ally of President Donald Trump was speaking to a crowd of thousands.

Judge reviews Turning Point USA board member statement

Defense attorney Kathryn Nester questioned Hull's handling of the crime scene on the day of the shooting. She also asked about a bullet that was found on campus at a different location than the alleged shooting site.

Hull said that bullet was traced back to a law enforcement officer who had "cleared" his weapon, ejecting an unused bullet. He also said a handgun in a backpack was found at the scene.

Robinson's attorneys also raised questions about the DNA evidence, using testimony from an FBI analyst to demonstrate that finding a person's DNA on an item doesn't necessarily mean that person touched the item.

Prosecutors contend the shooting endangered others at Kirk's campus event — an aggravating circumstance that could make the crime punishable by death under Utah law. Robinson also faces possible sentence enhancements based on the prosecution's claim that he targeted Kirk because of his political views.

During one of several appearances on campus by Robinson on Sept. 10, Hull said the defendant went to the amphitheater where Kirk was later shot and contacted representatives of Turning Point USA, a group co-founded by Kirk that galvanized the conservative youth vote to help Trump win a second term.

The investigator did not detail what occurred during that interaction or if members of Kirk's security team were present.

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 also sent a text saying he targeted Kirk because he "had enough of his hatred," prosecutors have said.

Robinson's defense team pushed back Tuesday on the idea that he was hostile to Kirk's politics. Defense attorney Richard Novak sought to block prosecutors from introducing a statement describing the traditional Christian values of Turning Point USA.

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"This doesn't say anything about Mr. Robinson's state of mind," Novak said about the statement from Turning Point USA board member David Englehardt. "I don't think that this court should be deciding — based on the record before it — where, if at all, politics and religion intersect."

Judge Graf ruled that the statement was relevant and said it would be "provisionally admitted" with a final decision at a later date.

Prosecutors have a low bar

This week marks the first time since the case began that Kirk's parents, Kathryn and Robert, and widow, Erika, were in the courtroom. Also present were the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., who said Tuesday that Kirk was one of his closest friends, and Robinson's parents, Matt and Amber Robinson.

The proceeding resembles a minitrial, but with a lower standard of proof than for a jury trial where prosecutors must prove guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt." At the preliminary hearing, prosecutors need only demonstrate to the judge that there are reasonable grounds to believe Robinson killed Kirk and should stand trial.

Legal experts say that means prosecutors should have little trouble advancing their case.

Spectators camped out for hearing

Utah County residents Denae Branch and Jean Rivera lined up outside the courthouse around midnight Tuesday and snagged one of the few seats available to the public for this week's hearing.

The women said they were in the crowd when Kirk was shot and now think about it every day.

"It feels like a lot of the world just kept spinning and we're still dealing with the trauma of it," Branch said. "Our hearts and minds are still trying to process it and, yeah, it kind of helps being here."

Branch said she was overcome with emotion in court when Erika Kirk, who herself was crying, handed her a tissue.

Rivera on Tuesday morning wore a shirt that read "FREEDOM" — just as Kirk did on the day he was shot — but was told she could not wear it inside. She said she hoped to hear testimony about Robinson's alleged confession note.

Manhattan high-rise deemed stable after columns buckled, and some evacuations are lifted

By PHILIP MARCELO and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — An under-construction Manhattan high-rise at risk of collapse was stabilized late Tuesday and some evacuations of nearby buildings were lifted.

"We've been monitoring the building for many hours and have not seen any movement," Ahmed Tigani, commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings, said during a news conference Tuesday.

By nighttime, residents were allowed back into several of the seven buildings that were evacuated as a precaution.

The scene unfolded after columns were spotted buckling on Tuesday morning at the 1970s-era building, which is being converted into luxury apartments. Construction workers at the site and people in nearby buildings — including a school, diplomatic offices and several hotels — in the busy corridor of midtown were rushed out after firefighters were called there around 8 a.m. Mayor Zohran Mamdani described it as "an extremely serious situation."

City officials going floor-by-floor later found no additional movement of the damaged columns, giving on-site contractors the greenlight to move forward with emergency repairs, his office said. On Tuesday evening, workers could be seen shoring up the damage inside the gleaming glass-and-steel high rise.

That work is expected to continue, impacting a part of Manhattan near the famed Grand Central train station that is a hub for metro area commuters and residents as well as tourists.

Fears of collapse prompted evacuation orders

The building, which is the former headquarters of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, is located just down the street from New York City icons like the Chrysler Building and the United Nations headquarters.

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Leila Bozorg, one of Mamdani's deputy mayors, said it was "encouraging" the building did not appear to be shifting as officials went up into and past the damaged floors on their way to the 37th floor — the top floor — of the building.

From the street below, a badly bent structural column could be seen through a large glass window on the 21st floor. The fire department, which also posted images of the column, said they found multiple cracks and sagging floors as well.

Asked earlier in the day if there was concern of a collapse, Fire Chief John Esposito said the way the steel-framed building is constructed, "it would not be a total collapse, it would be more of a localized collapse."

Nearby buildings and streets remained evacuated for much of the day, including a school and the Israeli consulate just across the street. The former Pfizer building itself was empty at the time, other than for the construction workers.

Ramesh Yallappa, a tourist who was among those evacuated from a nearby hotel, said he initially feared it was a fire in the hotel when an immediate evacuation was ordered Tuesday morning.

"That moment, we were really really scared," he said.

Developer says new addition led to damage

With more than 1,600 units, the developers say the project is the largest office-to-residential conversion in the city's history. Gensler, the architectural firm leading the project, says on its website that it is transforming a pair of 1970s-era office buildings by adding more than a dozen stories and redesigning an adjoining tower.

Building department records show the project has been fined by the city for several safety violations, including glass and metal falling off the building, along with an incident where a worker fell off a ladder.

Spokespersons for Gensler and MetroLoft, the project developer, didn't return messages seeking comment.

But in a statement to The New York Times, MetroLoft stressed that the building itself is not at risk of collapse and that no debris fell from the building.

Nathan Berman, founder of MetroLoft, told The Wall Street Journal that the added weight from widening the top 15 or so floors of the building likely caused the damage. The two columns that buckled may not have been properly reinforced, he told the newspaper.

"Why those particular two columns and nothing else? We don't know," Berman told the Journal. "We're investigating that."

He maintained the building's integrity wasn't compromised.

"Ninety-five percent of the building, the structure is sound and intact," Berman told the Journal. "There is no way that this corner of a small extension all of a sudden topples this building."

Experts say more extensive repairs likely needed

Emily Guglielmo, a structural engineer based in California, said the buckled columns are likely not repairable and will need to be removed and replaced.

"A lot of these things — cracking, deflections, sagging — those elements are probably not salvageable," she said.

Replacing the columns will require rigorous analysis, and the repairs will be expensive, experts said.

The short-term solution is shoring up the structure and the floors, said Abi Aghayere, a professor of structural engineering at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Shoring involves installing four-legged scaffolding to temporarily carry the load that the structure is supposed to carry until the columns can be replaced, Aghayere said.

Yi Bao, associate professor of civil engineering at the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey, said the building could be damaged beyond the buckled columns, which could have forced the loads to be redistributed to different parts of the building.

Ed Miller, an area resident, said he walks under the building's scaffolding several times a day, but will find other routes home going forward.

"The building was pretty old," said Miles Grant, who said he used to work at the building. "It definitely needed a lot of work to become ready for residential."

A southern Chinese region reels from floods and destruction from remnants of tropical storm

BEIJING (AP) — A southern Chinese region on Wednesday was reeling from the destruction and widespread flooding caused by record-breaking rain from the remnants of Tropical Storm Maysak.

Officials said six people were killed, and 11 others were missing in the Guangxi region by Tuesday evening. The severe weather forced 130,000 people to evacuate, according to the regional propaganda office.

Some residents were still waiting to be rescued. Lu Xiaofei, who works in Shenzhen, a tech hub near Hong Kong, said her brother's family was stuck at his house in Lu village in Qintang district. His brother was with his wife, his 9-month-old baby, their parents and grandfather.

"The water in the house is over one person's height. They have to all move to the second floor. The power has been out since yesterday morning, and now they don't have running water, either," Lu told The Associated Press in a phone interview.

Lu said her brother told her that the water level rose last night and their situation was so dire that drinkable water would be running out soon, while local authorities had not reached out to them. Many villagers nearby were facing the same challenges, she said.

Others called for help on social media, showing videos of their inundated surroundings following the flooding and highlighting their lack of resources.

Local media Litchi News reported that snakes from breeding facilities were washed away and were at large in Hengzhou city, with some attempting to enter houses. It quoted a villager saying that over a dozen of people were bitten.

The national meteorological center said heavy rain has been battering central-eastern and southern parts of Guangxi since last Saturday, with cumulative rainfall amounts reaching 100 mm to 400 mm (about 4 inches to 16 inches) in some areas. Some hard-hit areas recorded over 900 mm (35 inches), it said. The weather agency said heavy rain would continue to affect the areas on Wednesday.

Some train services were suspended in the region for safety reasons.

While Guangxi was grappling with floods, Super Typhoon Bavi is expected to hit parts of southeastern China over the weekend.

Elsewhere in Asia, severe weather also caused deaths. Landslides triggered by heavy monsoon rains in southeastern Bangladesh killed several Rohingya refugees, including five children. Heavy monsoon rains battered parts of neighboring India, leaving over a dozen of people dead over the past few days.

Platner may be finished, but voters' hunger for change and willingness to take risks will remain

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

With Graham Platner's campaign teetering from an allegation of sexual assault, there's no shortage of people arguing that the 41-year-old Maine oysterman and progressive political neophyte was always too risky for a key Senate race. However, it's likely more candidates will follow his path in the future.

That's because Platner's starburst candidacy followed an increasingly familiar arc that's shown no signs of abating in American politics — the outsider who defies the warnings of party veterans and captures the hearts of primary voters, even as liabilities pile up and complicate the odds of winning the general election.

With so many ways to raise money and draw attention, and so little faith in longstanding institutions, the country remains primed for new waves of anti-establishment campaigns, no matter how erratic.

"I think there's going to be a lot more of this," said Seth Masket, a political scientist at the University of Denver.

Platner initially surged onto the scene with a grassroots campaign in defiance of Democratic leadership, who had rallied around 78-year-old Maine Gov. Janet Mills as their best hope of unseating Republican Sen. Susan Collins. But Mills dropped out as Platner, 41, consolidated support, weathering a steady drumbeat of revelations over a tattoo recognized as a Nazi symbol, extramarital sexting and controversial social media

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posts that would have wrecked a typical campaign.

But that changed this week when a former girlfriend told reporters that Platner drunkenly entered her house and sexually assaulted her in 2021, an allegation the candidate denied. Even Platner's most ardent supporters have urged him to drop out by July 13, which would allow the state party to replace him with a new candidate in a must-win race for Democrats who already faced a narrow path to wrest back control of the Senate in November.

Traditionally, political parties avoid this sort of last-minute surprise with an internal system to vet candidates for skeletons in their closets. In addition, people running for national office have often previously served in local or state positions where any hidden baggage would be exposed.

That doesn't happen as much for populists who can bypass party gatekeepers and even base their entire campaigns on not being beholden to political professionals.

"I understand that people are tired of politics as usual, it's just that part of the normal political process does vet candidates, and I think people should be worried about unvetted candidates facing Republicans who will have hundreds of millions of dollars to spend to exploit weaknesses," said Neera Tanden, a veteran Democrat who has sparred with progressives over the years and currently leads the Center for American Progress, a party-aligned think tank.

A familiar story for Republicans

Of course, establishment-backed candidates can flame out, too. The last Democrat to lose a Senate race amid a sex scandal was North Carolina's Cal Cunningham, a lawyer and former state senator who fell narrowly short of Republican Sen. Thom Tillis in 2020 after the disclosure of explicit text messages with a woman who wasn't his wife.

Plenty of incumbents of all ideological stripes have been brought down by scandals. The biggest recent win by a Democratic outsider came when Zohran Mamdani, a self-described democratic socialist, won the New York mayor's primary last year against Andrew Cuomo, a former governor who was hobbled by a sex scandal.

Still, there's a longstanding pattern of insurgent candidates getting into trouble of all kinds.

Just ask Republicans. After the rise of the Tea Party in 2010, they lost multiple winnable races because outsiders defied their own party establishment to win primaries, only to lose in the general election. Republicans ended up missing a chance to gain control of the Senate despite outrage over President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

The party lost more Senate races in 2012 only to launch an internal war against outsider candidates and capture the chamber with more traditional nominees in 2014.

Liberal activists have openly hungered for a Democratic variant of the Tea Party, which emerged from disgust at Republican losses during Obama's presidency. Democratic voters stood by their party establishment during Trump's first term, but after President Joe Biden's collapse and Trump's return last year they have become enraged at their own party leaders.

In primary after primary, Democratic voters have favored younger, outsider candidates this year.

"The Democrats are going through what we went through 15 or 20 years ago," said Matt Gorman, a veteran Republican strategist. "They're just in their second inning of this. The rubber's going to hit the road when they start losing winnable Senate seats."

Of course, Trump is the ultimate example of the outsider, populist candidate, one who ran openly disparaging his party's leadership and now controls it with an iron fist. He has, however, an advantage that Platner and many other anti-establishment candidates lack — a decades-long, carefully cultivated image that dominated popular culture long before he ran for office.

"If you don't have a 25-year hard name ID before jumping into politics, this matters," Gorman said of scandals like Platner's.

Liberals still want party to keep its distance

Even Platner backers like liberal podcaster Tommy Vietor were having second thoughts about the process this week.

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"Obviously, a big lesson here is that vetting is really important, and some of the vetting gets done by campaigns themselves, and then ultimately it will be done by the media if the campaigns don't figure that part out," said Viotor on the Pod Save America podcast.

Viotor, who boosted Platner but has now called for him to drop out, noted that traditional vetting often doesn't pick up allegations of assault like the one threatening to sink Platner's campaign, but it can highlight red flags.

Even though Platner has not formally decided to withdraw, Maine's Democratic politicians are acting as if he has. State Sen. Troy Jackson, another progressive who opted to run unsuccessfully in the party's primary for governor, filed papers for his Senate candidacy on Tuesday, even with Platner still the nominee. Other Maine aspirants began jockeying for position ahead of the July 27 deadline the state party would have to choose a replacement.

Platner's liberal backers have demanded he be replaced by a similarly anti-establishment candidate, saying that would best reflect the will of the state's Democratic voters who overwhelmingly backed Platner in the primary just a month ago. Whatever happens, it seems likely to leave more scar tissue along the fault lines that have split the party already this year.

Adam Green of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee said his group, which heavily backed Platner but now has called for him to leave the race, said that he hopes that Platner's replacement will have a similar agenda "and will not just let the DSCC" – Senate Democrats' campaign arm – "just run their campaign."

"People clearly wanted a voice for systemic change," Green said. "But it's a little unclear exactly what's happening behind the scenes."

Federal immigration agent fatally shoots man in Houston during an enforcement operation

By JACK BROOK and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press/Report for America

A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer shot and killed a man in Houston after he attempted to evade arrest in his vehicle during an operation Tuesday, the agency said.

The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement that Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a Mexican national, ignored commands and attempted to ram an agent who fired his weapon in self-defense. The man was targeted in an operation because he was living in the country without legal permission, according to the department, which oversees ICE. The man's car struck an ICE vehicle, the department added.

Salgado Araujo died after being transported to a hospital, according to DHS.

The death drew immediate calls from some Democratic officials and immigrant rights groups for an independent investigation. Democratic U.S. Rep. Sylvia Garcia, who represents the neighborhood where the shooting took place, said the initial account released by federal authorities needs to be independently verified.

"All available footage, communications, and other evidence should be preserved and reviewed as part of a full and impartial investigation," she said in a post on X.

The FBI's Houston field office is investigating a potential assault on a federal law enforcement officer, said spokesperson Connor Hagan. In addition, representatives of the office's evidence response team responded to the shooting at the request of DHS to process the scene, he said.

The shooting comes amid a newly intensified push by the Trump administration to carry out its mass deportations agenda. During the five-day period at the end of June, ICE arrested more than 10,000 people. The figures indicate that while the administration is no longer cracking down on individual cities, the arrests continue and are surging.

Son says his father had been in the US for decades

Juliet Martinez said she was on her way to drop off her son at summer school early Tuesday morning in Houston when she spotted two federal officers leaning over a man on the ground. As she slowly drove by, she filmed the man bleeding and handcuffed, his leg shaking as loud groans can be heard.

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The video shows a black vehicle angled towards a white van, their doors wide open, and the man lying between the two. One officer is on the phone, with his other hand on the man's side. Nearby, other federal officers stand over at least three other men handcuffed.

Ronaldo Salgado, Salgado Araujo's son, said in a post on Facebook that his father works in construction and was on his way to work, picking up his workers, when the shooting happened.

Salgado described his father as a hardworking Mexican man who has been in the U.S. for almost 35 years and was in the process of getting a work permit.

"My father did not deserve this," he said.

The shooting was at least the eighth death from an encounter with federal immigration officials since the start of the Trump administration's intense immigration enforcement campaign in the U.S.

ICE has conducted ongoing operations in Houston

Texas' largest city has experienced heightened enforcement operations since the crackdown began last year, and not without public backlash. The Houston City Council voted to pass an ordinance limiting ICE cooperation but reversed course after Texas' Republican Gov. Greg Abbott threatened to cut more than \$100 million in state funding for public safety.

By Tuesday evening, a small group of protesters gathered in the neighborhood where the shooting happened and chanted against ICE.

Juan Proaño, CEO of the League of United Latin American Citizens, called for a transparent investigation conducted by local authorities into the shooting. He said his organization is offering a \$5,000 reward for information and videos from witnesses.

"We don't take DHS at their word at all," Proaño told The Associated Press. "There should be an independent investigation and they should release all the videos."

Houston Mayor John Whitmire, a Democrat, declined to comment on the shooting.

Calls for video after the shooting

In other other shootings involving federal officers, initial descriptions by immigration officials have sometimes been contradicted later by video evidence. In February, federal authorities launched an investigation into two federal immigration agents who appeared to have made untruthful statements under oath regarding a nonfatal shooting of an immigrant in Minneapolis in January.

Last year, a federal immigration agent shot and killed a 23-year-old U.S. citizen, Ruben Ray Martinez, during a late-night traffic encounter. A grand jury declined to file criminal charges against the agent. DHS said the agent had fired at the vehicle after the driver "intentionally ran over" his fellow agent. Video footage of the encounter released by authorities does not clearly show the vehicle striking the agent.

In January, 37-year-old U.S. citizen Renee Good was shot in the head by a federal immigration agent during a crackdown in Minneapolis. DHS also said Good was trying to hit the agent with her vehicle, which local officials and witnesses disputed, saying she was only trying to drive away.

George E. Johnson Sr., founder of a pioneering Black hair care business, dies at 99

By COREY WILLIAMS and AISHA I. JEFFERSON Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — George E. Johnson Sr., a pioneer in Black hair care whose multimillion-dollar business was the first Black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange, has died at age 99, according to his family.

Johnson died Monday at his home in downtown Chicago. A cause of death was not released.

Johnson and his late wife and high school sweetheart, Joan, started Johnson Products in 1954 on Chicago's South Side after securing a \$250 loan. It grew into a hair care empire catering almost exclusively to Black people, with brands like Afro Sheen and Ultra Sheen.

People who remember Afro Sheen and Ultra Sheen in their heyday also remember the brands' marketing campaigns and their association with the "Black is Beautiful" movement, which promoted cultural and racial pride among Black people. The iconic 1970s commercials, which featured variations of the "Watu

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Wazuri" ("Beautiful People") jingle, have enjoyed a resurgence on social media in recent years.

The commercials aired primarily during the hit music-and-dance television show "Soul Train," which his company was a national sponsor of and once owned.

"It was just a wonderful opportunity for Don Cornelius to be able to go national. He wouldn't have been able to do that without George Johnson's partnership," Rogers said. "And so, to see it work out for everyone and for our community all together was part of his genius."

A legacy worth celebrating

During its annual gala in November, the Chicago Urban League celebrated Johnson as the Edwin C. "Bill" Berry Civil Rights Award honoree, named for the League's iconic leader. Berry joined Johnson Products Company when he left the organization, according to Karen Freeman-Wilson, president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League. She said the honor was a full-circle moment for Johnson, who was a longtime board member.

"Just 12 or 14 days ago, he was standing with Barack Obama in the presidential library, dedicating a room for he and my mother," Eric George Johnson, the eldest of Johnson's four children, told The Associated Press. "It's a wonderful life to celebrate."

Johnson's trajectory started from humble beginnings.

He was born in 1927 in Richton, Mississippi. Johnson's mother, Priscilla Dean Johnson, was just 18 when she left her husband, took her children to Chicago and found a job at a local hospital, said Hilary Beard, a Philadelphia-based author who worked with Johnson on his memoir.

Their move occurred during what's known as the First Great Migration, between 1910 and 1940, when tens of thousands of southern Black people moved to northern and Midwestern cities for jobs and to escape racial oppression.

"There was just enough money for food, clothing and shelter, but not for anything extra," Beard said.

Johnson and his older brother, John, would collect cigarette packages, peel out the aluminum linings, roll them into balls and sell them to people who collected junk for resale, Beard said. Johnson also shined shoes, cleared tables in eateries and set up pins in a bowling alley.

A source of pride and inspiration

As an adult, Johnson worked for the Black-owned Fuller Products Co. in Chicago. Beard said Johnson met a barber who was distraught because he couldn't convince Fuller to back a product he was developing that straightened men's hair. The drawback was the product burned the scalp.

Johnson worked with Fuller's chemist to revamp the barber's formula and started his business after ultimately convincing a bank he needed a \$250 loan to take his wife on a vacation, Beard said. That business would become Johnson Products.

Johnson's company offered above-market salaries, profit-sharing for its workers, healthcare and other benefits at a time when many companies didn't provide such perks, Beard added. Johnson Products was sold in 1993 to a pharmaceutical firm in a deal worth more than \$60 million.

Johnson later founded Independence Bank and became the first Black person to serve on the board of directors of the Illinois electric utility Commonwealth Edison. The George E. Johnson Educational Fund awarded more than 1,000 college scholarships.

John W. Rogers, the founder of Chicago-based Ariel Investments, remembers his father taking him to Independence Bank to open a checking account and being awed that Johnson owned it.

"That was just so impressive to me that he would start the largest Black bank in the country" which helped Black entrepreneurs, homeowners and anyone who needed assistance as they were building their lives, said Rogers, a mentee of Johnson.

The Golden Rule

Though Johnson is gone, the lessons he imparted continue to shape the family's future.

Eric Johnson, who served as CEO, left Johnson Products Company in 1992. He said he purchased Baldwin Ice Cream in 1997, intending to keep the company in the family for generations to come. Eric Johnson officially retired from Baldwin Richardson Foods on May 9 after successfully transitioning ownership to his

daughters, Erin Tolefree and Cara Hughes.

"He saw his children come along and be successful, and now his grandchildren being successful," Eric Johnson said.

Eric Johnson isn't the only one who sees that legacy continuing. Rogers points to the company's third generation of leadership as evidence.

"Eric's positioned his kids who are now running the business day-to-day. So it's a third generation, which is remarkable. They're doing so well," Rogers said.

Johnson's memoir, "Afro Sheen: How I Revolutionized an Industry with the Golden Rule, from Soul Train to Wall Street," was published in 2024.

Being fair and treating people the way you want to be treated was Johnson's golden rule, according to his son. And it's a cherished piece of advice that Eric Johnson said his father instilled in him.

"And it's a foundation that was established in him as a child by his mother, that he established in all of us," he said.

Succession fight is already underway as calls mount for Platner to drop out of Maine Senate race

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, PATRICK WHITTLE and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Democratic nominee Graham Platner hasn't resigned from the Maine U.S. Senate race following an allegation of sexual assault. But the succession battle to take his place was already underway Tuesday.

The allegation reported Monday prompted a chorus of calls for Platner to depart the high-stakes race against Republican Sen. Susan Collins, which could decide party control of the Senate. Platner's long-time backer, Sen. Bernie Sanders, "recommended that he step aside." Then, Tuesday evening, The Washington Post reported that an ex-girlfriend of Platner's had accused him of removing condoms during sex without her consent.

Platner, who has denied all the allegations, has been mum on whether he'll step aside. And the Maine Democratic Party, charged with creating a process to pick his replacement, hasn't publicly announced their plans.

On Tuesday night, Executive Director Devon Murphy-Anderson released a video saying the party is developing an "open, inclusive, transparent and fair" process but won't disclose details until Platner withdraws. Platner's team has repeatedly tried to "put their thumb on the scale," she said.

"We have repeatedly reiterated to Graham Platner's team that they have no role in determining our next Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate, nor in determining what this process looks like," she said.

An official for the Platner campaign responded that it "has reached out to the party to try and understand what this process would look like" and "at no point has the campaign tried to 'put its finger on the scale.'" The official added that thousands of Maine residents voted and volunteered for Platner and they should play a role in the decision.

"While Graham wouldn't want to be a part of the process, he would want to make sure the voters and volunteers make this decision — not the political establishment," the statement said.

So far, the succession battle has played out in a murky power vacuum. A growing number of candidates are teasing their entry into the race as a fight shapes up between the progressive wing and the establishment camp of the Democratic Party.

Platner became a populist hero among the party's left flank, pulling far ahead of an establishment-backed candidate, Gov. Janet Mills, in the primary. Now, progressive groups fear that political ground could be lost.

"To the Democratic establishment: This is not your opening," said Joseph Geevarghese, who leads Our Revolution. The organization founded by Sanders backed and then withdrew its endorsement of Platner after the sexual assault allegation. The group said Tuesday that it was "rallying behind" another progressive contender, Troy Jackson, who announced he's "exploring" a candidacy.

The sexual assault allegation against Platner

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In the allegation published Monday by Politico, a woman whom Platner previously dated said he drunkenly forced her to have sex after she told him to stop. It is the latest in a string of controversies the first-time candidate had weathered, but the seriousness of the assault claim was too far for many of his supporters in the Democratic Party.

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. 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.

Replacing Platner may further divide Democrats

The pressure for Platner to withdraw from the Senate race has only increased given the short deadlines Maine law allows for replacing general election candidates. There is no mechanism for Democrats to remove Platner from the ballot, and the deadline to withdraw is 5 p.m. July 13. State law gives the authority to choose a replacement to the state party. Any replacement candidate must be named by July 27.

The lack of communication from Platner and the state's Democratic Party has contributed to some confusion about what comes next as candidates tentatively toss their hats in the ring.

Some are arguing that the next Democrat should echo Platner's progressive messaging, pointing to his success at rallying voters across the state. Others cautioned that having ties to Platner will only doom an already uphill campaign against Collins. Many are pushing for an open process even with limited time.

"No one's enjoying this experience, and it seems like the consensus step forward should be having a fair and open process that everybody feels is legitimate," said Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, a political action committee that backed Platner but now calls for him to suspend his campaign.

One possible contender, Nirav Shah, the former director of Maine's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said Tuesday he was "evaluating" whether to join the race. Shah said he's been in contact with the Maine Democratic Party about ensuring a possible replacement process is based on "openness, transparency and robustness."

"Every single day that we don't have a nominee, and a process and a clear pathway for the nominee, is another day that we're letting Sen. Collins continue to get her message out," Shah told The Associated Press. "As of right now, it's not clear what the process will be."

Shah, who came in second in this year's Maine Democratic gubernatorial primary, added, "I want to give the party grace, because we're building this plane as we're flying it."

Maine's governor, Mills, who sought the Democratic Senate nomination but dropped out before the June 9 primary, could be considered as another contender. Mills was supported by Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer but abandoned her campaign, saying she couldn't raise the money needed to compete.

Another possible replacement is Jackson, Maine's former state Senate President, who unsuccessfully ran to be the Democratic gubernatorial nominee earlier this year with the backing of Platner and Sanders. Jackson filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission Tuesday to launch a Senate exploratory committee.

"Remember: Progressives overwhelmingly won the primary. A progressive MUST be on the ballot," Our Revolution said in a fundraising email, which described Jackson as a logger and union leader who helmed Sanders' past presidential efforts in Maine.

Jordan Wood, a former U.S. Senate candidate who then switched to unsuccessfully run for Maine's 2nd District, posted Tuesday that he was "continuing conversations" with voters about joining the race.

Other names circulating include Shenna Bellows, the current Maine Secretary of State; Dan Kleban, founder of Maine Beer Co.; and Hannah Pingree, currently Maine's Democratic gubernatorial nominee.

Bellows said in a statement she will "seriously consider entering this race."

A Platner voter is 'heartbroken'

Joanie Monteith, a passionate supporter from the southern Maine town of York who organized a trivia night about Platner in March, said through tears Tuesday that she was devastated by the news. She was waiting for another public statement from Platner before making a decision about whether she could keep

supporting him.

"I'm numb, and I'm waiting for what Graham has to say," she said. "I'm trying not to be a part of this public trial. And I'm heartbroken. And I'm heartbroken for him and his wife."

She added that she believes the allegations are serious.

"I'm not going to blame a victim. Because if this is true I feel very bad for the woman," she said.

Another Maine voter, Lee Holman, said she wants Platner to stay in the race.

"I feel like the people of Maine have spoken," the Democrat said. "If they wanted Janet Mills, they could have voted for her."

She said the allegation against Platner may be legitimate, but she questions the timing. Democrats, she added, can be too quick to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" by calling on politicians facing allegations to resign.

"Every time we think we have a chance to snatch our democracy back, something gets in the way," she said.

US launches new strikes on Iran, revokes oil sales permit after 3 ships attacked in Strait of Hormuz

By JON GAMBRELL, FATIMA HUSSEIN and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. military attacked Iran early Wednesday after it said Tehran struck three ships in the Strait of Hormuz, part of an American effort that also revoked the Islamic Republic's ability to openly sell crude oil in the world market.

Iran immediately warned Washington it would "take whatever measures it deems necessary," raising the risks that an interim agreement in the war halting fighting could break down, putting the wider Middle East again at risk of a wider conflict. Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, sounded its missile alert sirens Wednesday morning after the American attack on Iran.

The attacks on shipping and the resulting strikes on Iran came during the dayslong funeral for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed Feb. 28 in the war's first moments at age 86. The funeral, which ends Thursday, had been thought to be a period of lower tensions — though mourners have repeatedly called for the killings of U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Negotiations to reach a final deal had been due to start after Khamenei's burial and focus on the toughest matters, including fully reopening the strait and rolling back Tehran's disputed nuclear program. But the new attacks threw that into question.

"The era of bullying and extortion is over," Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf wrote on X. "It leads nowhere. We don't fold."

Overnight US strikes target Iran

The U.S. military's Central Command said American forces launched the strikes "to impose heavy costs for targeting and attacking commercial shipping crewed by innocent civilians in an international waterway."

It said it hit Iranian targets including air defense systems, radars and over 60 small boats used by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Those boats have been key in harassing ships in the strait.

The U.S. military remains "postured and prepared to hold Iran accountable when the agreement is not adhered to or obeyed," it added, saying this round of attacks had ended.

Iran acknowledged the strikes, but offered no word on any losses. Iranian state media reported the sound of explosions in Bandar Abbas, Qeshm and Sirik.

Iran's central military command warned it "will respond decisively to this aggression and terrorist act."

"Under no circumstances will (the Iranian armed forces) allow interference in the affairs of the Strait of Hormuz, nor will they permit others to manage it," it said.

A similar spate of Iranian attacks on shipping and U.S. retaliatory strikes occurred late last month — which drew Iranian attacks on Bahrain and Kuwait. Wednesday's strikes also came as Trump was in Turkey for

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a summit of the NATO military alliance.

US revokes license for the sale of Iranian oil

The U.S. also revoked a license that authorized the sale of Iranian oil as part of the interim deal. That had allowed Iran for the first time in years to conduct oil sales openly on the international market for U.S. dollars. Iran long had been suspected of selling sanctioned crude oil at below-market prices to China.

A U.S. official said the license was revoked because Iran's actions in the strait were unacceptable and needed to be met with consequences. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to share insight into the reasoning behind the move.

The decision came after the strikes on shipping. One tanker was traveling off the coast of Oman when it was hit and caught fire, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. Iranian state television said the liquefied natural gas tanker came under attack after ignoring warnings but did not directly claim the assault.

The other two ships sustained some damage, but no one was injured, and both continued on their way in the Strait of Hormuz, the U.K. maritime agency said. Iran has maintained a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz since the war, disrupting global energy markets as a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed through the channel in peacetime. The ships attacked Tuesday all appeared to be using a route close to Oman's shore, rather than one ordered by Tehran.

Tehran repeatedly has declared that only its approved route through the strait is safe and is suspected of attacking other ships that have used the Oman route.

Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for the Qatari Foreign Ministry, said the Qatari tanker Al Rekayyat was targeted in an "unacceptable attack" on international navigation and global energy security. He said Qatar holds Iran "fully legally responsible."

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

The U.S. and many Gulf Arab states say they will not agree to Iran charging for passage through the strait.

Mourners gather in Qom for Khamenei's funeral

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

Iranian state television aired live images of hundreds of thousands of people walking toward Jamkaran Mosque, just south of Qom, for the funeral service. Shiites believe the mosque once hosted Muhammad al-Mahdi, the 12th and last Shiite imam, who disappeared in the 9th century and is supposed to one day reappear to bring justice to the world.

Khamenei's son, Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, has yet to make an appearance at the ceremonies, which began Saturday in Tehran. He is believed to be in hiding after reportedly being wounded in the airstrike that killed his father.

Khamenei's body arrived late Tuesday in Iraq, where it was received by officials from both countries. Processions are planned for Wednesday in Najaf and Karbala, the two holy Shiite cities.

Khamenei will then be returned to Iran to be buried Thursday at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, his birthplace.

Judge rejects Justice Department attempt to get names of 2020 election workers in Fulton County

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The U.S. Department of Justice cannot have the names and personal contact information for every person who worked during the 2020 election in Georgia's Fulton County, a federal judge ruled Tuesday.

The Justice Department served a grand jury subpoena in April seeking the names and personal contact information of county employees and volunteer poll workers. President Donald Trump has long claimed

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without evidence that widespread voter fraud in Georgia's most populous county, a Democratic stronghold, cost him victory in the state in 2020.

Fulton County asked a judge to quash the subpoena, arguing it was meant to "target, harass and punish the President's perceived political opponents" and that it was "grossly over broad and untethered to any reasonable need."

"Given the low need for the subpoenaed information and the highly burdensome nature of the disclosure of the same, the Subpoena is unreasonable and must be quashed," U.S. District Judge William Ray wrote in his ruling, calling the scope of the request "staggering."

"We are proud of our efforts to push back against these improper demands that only serve to undermine confidence in our elections," Fulton County Attorney Soo Jo said in a statement.

An email seeking comment was sent to the Justice Department.

While grand juries often work with federal prosecutors to investigate alleged crimes, "that does not give the DOJ the right to use the Grand Jury to do whatever the DOJ wants," wrote Ray, who was nominated to the bench by Trump.

Even if the records sought by the Justice Department could help find people who worked for the county during the 2020 election who support the theory that the election was unfair, the information couldn't be used to charge anyone because the statute of limitations has passed, Ray wrote.

The subpoena came after the FBI in January served a search warrant at the Fulton County election hub and seized hundreds of boxes of ballots and other documents from the 2020 election. A federal judge in May denied the county's request to force the federal government to return the ballots.

The Justice Department argued in a court filing that the subpoena was the "next step in the normal investigative process" and that it seeks "records identifying persons with relevant knowledge."

Kamal Ghali, a lawyer for the county, argued during a hearing in May that the subpoena "will chill participation by election workers" and that the statute of limitations for any of the alleged misconduct had already lapsed.

Justice Department lawyer William McComb argued that the statute of limitations issue is not relevant at the investigative stage.

"My point is, as we sit here now, we are not sure what charges can be brought. That's the whole point of the investigation," he said.

The FBI is also using some 260 staffers across the country to help examine records in the Fulton County investigation, according to an agency memo.

The judge noted that the Justice Department had expressed concern about possible criminal actions in the years that followed the election. But he noted that the subpoena seeks information related to what happened during the 2020 election and its immediate aftermath.

"In these hyper-political times in which we currently live, there are sure to be some who disagree with this decision because they believe the allegations of fraud in the 2020 Election and believe that 'light' should be brought to those claims," Ray wrote.

He added that nothing prevents continued investigation into those allegations by people who believe those claims — such as Congress or even the Justice Department — but the power of the grand jury, "which exists to investigate potential crimes and to bring viable indictments" cannot be used for that purpose. Otherwise, anyone in power could use the grand jury process to subpoena personal information of citizens "with no legitimate law enforcement purpose," he wrote.

"Thus, everyone, whether you support the President or you do not, or whether you believe the 2020 Election was fair or believe that it was not, should be concerned about the DOJ's ability to utilize the power of the Grand Jury to appropriate your private information without a legitimate purpose," Ray wrote.

The judge also agreed that providing the subpoenaed information could make it harder for Fulton County to recruit election workers. Those who help run elections "should be valued and are necessary for successful elections in Fulton County going forward," he wrote.

Lionel Messi leads Argentina to 3-2 comeback victory over Egypt and spot in World Cup quarterfinals

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — It was another World Cup epic from an Argentina team that simply doesn't know when it's beaten.

Trailing 2-0 against Egypt with 11 minutes of regulation time to play on Tuesday, the defending champions rallied for an improbable 3-2 victory and a spot in the quarterfinals.

"We have a phenomenal group, a group that never gives up no matter the difficulties and adversity. We're always together," said Enzo Fernandez, who scored the winning goal in stoppage time.

Argentina will play Switzerland in the next round on Saturday in Kansas City, Missouri.

For much of Tuesday's game, it looked like it would be a painful exit for the 39-year-old Lionel Messi in what might be the last of his six World Cups.

Egypt led after goals in each half from Yasser Ibrahim and Mostafa Zico and could have been ahead 3-0 if not for a video review that ruled out another score.

Argentina looked down and out, its bid to be the first team to win back-to-back World Cup titles since Brazil in 1958 and 1962 all but dead.

Cue a monumental comeback.

"The heart of Argentinians is always something that pushes, that we keep going no matter what, that we give everything until the end. And honestly, with the score 2-0, we looked a bit beaten," Argentina striker Julian Alvarez said. "There was little time left, but we always manage to get something more by fighting until the end."

Cristian Romero started the rally by scoring with a header in the 79th minute. Messi, who was in tears after the final whistle, scored his eighth goal of the tournament and record-extending 21st goal at the World Cup in the 83rd to level the score at 2-2 and Fernandez completed the comeback in injury time.

"Four years have passed since Qatar, and we've come to enjoy another World Cup — and we want to win it again. That's what we're aiming for," Fernandez said.

Argentina is no stranger to heroic matches at the World Cup.

There was the 3-2 win over West Germany in the 1986 final. Then the 3-3 draw and eventual shootout victory against France to reclaim the title four years ago.

Cape Verde pushed Argentina to the brink in the last round before the defending champions eventually won 3-2 in extra time.

Tuesday's match was even more dramatic, with Messi having a first-half penalty saved and another effort hit the post.

"I'm so emotional," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "What a group of players, brother."

Egypt took a surprising lead in the 15th minute when Ibrahim got ahead of Lisandro Martinez to meet Marwan Attia's cross and head the ball into the bottom corner.

Argentina was quickly given the chance to level the match when Haissem Hassan tripped Nicolas Tagliafico in the box moments later. Referee François Letexier pointed to the penalty spot and Messi stepped up with an expectant crowd waiting for him to score.

Egypt goalkeeper Mostafa Shobeir had other ideas, diving to his left to block the shot for Messi's second penalty miss of the tournament after also failing from the spot against Austria in the group stage.

Despite being the all-time leading scorer at World Cups, Messi has now missed four of eight penalty kicks at the tournament.

After Messi hit the post later in the half, Shobeir pulled off another great save to stop Julian Alvarez from close range.

Egypt thought it had doubled its lead in the second half when Mostafa Zico finished off a sweeping attack. But the wild celebrations were cut short when a foul earlier in the move was confirmed on video review and the goal was disallowed.

That second goal for Egypt did come in the 67th from a similar break, and this time Zico's effort counted.

It just wasn't enough.

"We looked better compared to the reigning champions. We were better in everything, but the result," Egypt coach Hossam Hassan said.

Hassan said he would not watch any further games at this year's World Cup, believing his team should have had a penalty before Argentina broke away for the winning goal.

"I'm not convinced with this outcome. I'm not convinced with the way things unfolded during this match," he said. "I do not want to try to put it nicely here with beautiful wording, selected wording, and saying hard luck and so on and so forth.

"We have been treated unfairly today," Hassan said. "We have suffered injustice."

Le Pen says she'll run for French presidency next year despite court-ordered monitor

By SYLVIE CORBET, JOHN LEICESTER and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Far-right leader Marine Le Pen says she'll run for the French presidency next year despite being sentenced Tuesday to wear a court-ordered electronic monitor for embezzlement.

The decision by the 57-year-old veteran of three presidential races sets up a fourth campaign like no other: potentially seeking votes while subject to monitoring and with a judge possibly deciding how, and for how long, the punishment is applied.

Le Pen said she will appeal the ruling to France's highest court and that the process will suspend the sentence that she be electronically monitored for a year.

"I will therefore campaign without an electronic bracelet," she said in a television interview Tuesday night. "Tonight, I am a candidate for the presidential election."

Appeals court clears her pathway for another run

The appeals court ruling earlier Tuesday cleared the way for Le Pen by shortening a ban handed down by a court last year that kept her from seeking public office for five years.

But it also said she must wear an electronic monitor, a constraint Le Pen previously said would make campaigning impossible.

But after huddling for hours with other leading figures of her National Rally party, Le Pen made clear Tuesday night that she believes she won't be subjected to monitoring at all, and that her appeal to the Court of Cassation will vindicate her.

"My hands are clean," she said.

The highest court previously said it would be able to rule before the presidential election, with the first round in April and a knockout round in May.

"I want to pursue all the legal avenues available to me so that I can defend my innocence," she said.

A similar situation arose in former President Nicolas Sarkozy's corruption case. An appeals court sentenced him in 2023 to serve part of his sentence under electronic monitoring. Sarkozy appealed to the Court of Cassation, which suspended Sarkozy's sentence pending its review before ultimately upholding the conviction. He wore an electronic ankle monitor last year.

Appeals court confirms Le Pen's guilt but reduces punishments

The appeals court ruled that Le Pen oversaw years of misuse by her National Rally party of European Parliament funds by paying staff with money intended for European Union parliamentary assistants. She denied criminal wrongdoing but said during the trial that the party had made a "mistake."

The ruling upheld guilty verdicts for all 11 accused, including Le Pen and other party members. The party itself also was declared guilty. The court ruled that it embezzled 2.8 million euros (\$3.2 million) over more than 11 years.

"The facts are serious," said the chief judge, Michèle Agi.

But the court scaled back punishments handed down by a lower court last year.

From five years handed down in March 2025, Le Pen's ban on seeking office was cut to 45 months, with two-thirds of it suspended. Le Pen has already served 15 months of the ban, meaning that the potential

obstacle is now removed.

The verdict also cut her prison sentence from four years, two of them suspended, to three years with two suspended.

Le Pen previously said that not being able to make a fourth run in 2027 would amount to "political death."

Le Pen went straight to her party's office

From the courthouse, Le Pen went to the National Rally's headquarters in Paris, to consult her protégé Jordan Bardella and others. Bardella, a European Parliament lawmaker, would have been Le Pen's replacement as the party's presidential candidate if she had decided that electronic monitoring prevented her from running.

But a Le Pen has been on ballot papers at every presidential election since 1988: four times for her father and three times for her.

Her embezzlement conviction leaves her open to attacks from critics and potential election opponents. But she quickly sought to turn the verdict into a campaign message, making the point that the court ruling restored the option for voters to cast ballots for her next year.

The party was called the National Front when her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, founded it in 1972. It ditched that name in 2018, part of Marine Le Pen's efforts to broaden her appeal by moving away from her polarizing father's legacy. His associations with people who collaborated with France's Nazi occupiers in World II and his multiple hate-speech convictions, including Holocaust denial, made the National Front anathema to many voters.

The court, in written notes detailing the verdict, made clear that it had the 2027 election in mind. It noted "the voter's freedom of choice" and said the ban from seeking elected office that Le Pen has already served repaired harm done to public integrity by her wrongdoing.

"Disregarding this would undermine the principle of freedom to stand for election, an essential condition for the democratic expression of universal suffrage," the court said.

Reform UK's Farage says he'll quit as lawmaker and seek reelection amid donation allegations

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Reform UK leader Nigel Farage announced Tuesday that he will quit his seat in Parliament and seek reelection in an effort to clear his name over financial allegations linked to millions of dollars' worth of donations.

The unexpected resignation is an effort by the anti-immigration politician to preempt a standards investigation that could have seen him ejected as a lawmaker, and to present himself as the victim of a witch hunt by the media and his political foes.

"I have done nothing wrong. I have not broken the law in any way at all. I have not misused public money," Farage, a prominent ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, said in a statement broadcast by his party. Media outlets were not allowed to attend the broadcast and he did not take questions.

Farage faces a parliamentary standards investigation about undeclared and potentially rule-breaking donations, including a 5 million pound (\$6.7 million) gift he received from a Thailand-based cryptocurrency billionaire. A finding of wrongdoing could lead to Farage being suspended or expelled from Parliament. But he has made the first move by triggering an election for his seaside seat of Clacton in eastern England.

"The people of Clacton should be the judges of my actions," Farage said. "This will be a people versus the establishment by-election."

And, he said: "I will fight to win."

Farage won Clacton comfortably in the 2024 election, taking 46.2% of the vote, and stands a strong chance of winning reelection — not least because he may run largely unopposed. The governing Labour Party and opposition Conservatives and Liberal Democrats all said they would not put forward candidates.

Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer called Farage's announcement "a desperate stunt" from a man "up to his neck in sleaze." Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch said her party "will not be standing a

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candidate in the fake by-election that Farage is causing to distract people from what is happening.”

Reform UK said it was willing to pay for the special election, which may deflect claims it is wasting taxpayers’ money.

The gambit may only postpone Farage’s problems. Even if he wins, the standards inquiry is likely to resume. The Guardian reported Tuesday that bankers aware of the transaction had reported the 5 million pound donation to the National Crime Agency as potentially laundered money.

The crime agency said it did not confirm or deny the receipt of financial “suspicious activity reports,” which are confidential.

Farage tipped by some as a future prime minister

Scrutiny of Farage’s finances has spurred speculation about the future of a politician some considered the favorite to be prime minister after the next national election.

One of the most high-profile and controversial figures in British politics, Farage has had an outsized impact as a champion of leaving the European Union and foe of large-scale immigration. He was key in securing victory for the “leave” side in the 2016 EU membership referendum.

His rise has echoes of Trump’s nationalist, anti-immigration playbook. Farage has capitalized on — critics say stoked — concerns about migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats, which he has called an invasion, and alleges that white people face discrimination from police.

He also rails against “the establishment” and the media, which he claimed are using “foul means” to stop him.

A skilled communicator whose supporters see a beer-drinking plain-speaker, and whose critics see a populist rabble-rouser, Farage has had a checkered political career and was only elected to Parliament in 2024 after seven failed attempts. Farage also has a history of walking away from parties he led, stepping down from both the UK Independence Party and its successor, the Brexit Party, in the last decade.

Reform UK has only eight of the 650 seats in the House of Commons but consistently leads opinion polls over the governing Labour Party and the main opposition Conservatives.

Farage’s party was the big winner in local and regional elections in May that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the hands of his own Labour Party.

But Reform UK has lost three consecutive special elections that it hoped to win, a possible sign its support may be sagging. The most recent loss was to Labour’s Andy Burnham, who is likely to succeed Starmer as prime minister within weeks.

Donors include a crypto billionaire and a fraudster

Parliamentary standards commissioner Daniel Greenberg is investigating the 5 million pound donation to Farage from Christopher Harborne, a British businessman based in Thailand. Farage says the money was a personal gift that he used to fund security and came before he was elected to the House of Commons.

U.K. rules state that newly elected lawmakers must declare gifts worth more than 300 pounds (\$400) they received in the previous 12 months, except where the gift “could not be reasonably thought by others” to relate to their political activities.

Farage is also facing questions about claims, reported by the Sunday Times, over his financial relationship with George Cottrell, an aristocratic crypto-gambling entrepreneur, convicted fraudster and on-off aide to the Reform UK leader.

Cottrell was arrested at Chicago’s O’Hare airport in 2016, while traveling with Farage, over allegations he offered to launder money for undercover agents posing as drug traffickers. Indicted on 21 counts relating to money laundering, fraud, blackmail and extortion, he agreed to plead guilty to a single charge of wire fraud, admitting attempting to defraud criminals on the dark web by masquerading as a money launderer. He served eight months in prison.

Cottrell, 32, remains close to Farage, and The Sunday Times said he gave the politician funding for staffing and security before Britain’s 2024 general election, as well as the use of a London townhouse near Buckingham Palace.

Charges filed against Indian crime boss in assassination that strained Canada-India ties

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

Authorities announced charges against the leader of an Indian criminal group on Tuesday in connection with the political assassination of a prominent Sikh leader in Canada — a high-profile killing that strained the diplomatic relationship between Canada and India at the time.

The charges were part of a massive law enforcement operation involving agencies across the United States, Canada and Europe that swept up 37 defendants who are allegedly a part of three Indian international crime syndicates tied to kidnappings, racketeering, extortion, firearms dealing, drug trafficking and murder, U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli announced at a news conference on Tuesday. He spoke alongside officials with the Los Angeles Police Department, the FBI and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Authorities are still searching for seven fugitives in the U.S., two in India and one in Europe.

The groups have “have fueled violence, fear and instability within the East Indian communities throughout California and abroad,” said Patrick Grandy, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Los Angeles field office.

Lawrence Bishnoi, 33, and his childhood friend Satinderjeet Singh are accused of orchestrating the assassination of a well-known Sikh independence activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was fatally shot outside of a temple where he served as president in 2023. The killing sparked tensions between the Canadian and Indian governments, after then-Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that there were “credible allegations” that the Indian government was involved in Nijjar’s death. Bishnoi is in custody, but Singh has not been apprehended.

Bishnoi’s organization “routinely targeted prominent religious, social and political leaders with violence” in exchange for large amounts of money.

Nijjar, 45 when he died, was a prominent member of a movement to create an independent Sikh homeland known as Khalistan, and he was organizing an unofficial referendum among the Sikh diaspora with the organization Sikhs For Justice. Nijjar, who was born in India and was a Canadian citizen, was wanted by Indian authorities at the time of his death. The authorities had offered a reward for information leading to his arrest.

Sikh diaspora activism has been a source of tension between India and Canada for years. Canada has the largest population of Sikhs outside India, and India has repeatedly accused it of tolerating “terrorists and extremists.” Both India and Canada expelled diplomats from the other country amid the international dispute.

Authorities also named two other criminal organizations that were swept up for similar charges over the course of the two-year investigation. The transnational organizations have members in countries ranging from the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Members of the group are also accused of stealing large quantities of drugs from other criminal organizations operating in California, and then selling the illicit merchandise across the country and into Canada.

The indictments say that some defendants leveraged relationships with corrupt local authorities in India to persecute rivals or those who were believed to be cooperating with law enforcement. At least one defendant is accused of organizing criminal activities while detained at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility, authorities said Tuesday, though it is not clear how he was able to communicate without being detected.

An attorney for Bishnoi was not listed on Tuesday afternoon.

Authorities on Tuesday touted the operation as an example of international cooperation.

“Working together, law enforcement in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia are determined to target and dismantle these criminal organizations wherever they operate,” Essayli said.

NATO unveils billions in arms deals to prove its firepower as Trump again demands Greenland

By SEUNG MIN KIM, LORNE COOK, SUZAN FRASER and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday insisted that the United States should be in control of Greenland rather than NATO ally Denmark, renewing tensions in Europe even as the trans-Atlantic military alliance was announcing billions in arms deals at a summit in an attempt to appease the mercurial U.S. leader.

Trump called the semiautonomous island “an important part” for the United States, as he repeated the false claim that it’s surrounded by Chinese and Russian ships and said he won’t let Greenland be threatened.

“That should be controlled by the United States, not by Denmark,” Trump told reporters during a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara.

The NATO alliance was founded on the principle that its 32 members will defend each others’ territory and not threaten to seize it. At the summit, European countries and the alliance’s secretary-general, Mark Rutte, were already working overtime to address another longstanding Trump complaint: that European allies do not spend enough on their own defense.

Separately, Trump announced that the U.S. will lift sanctions on Turkey that were issued after Ankara purchased a Russian missile defense system that led to the country being kicked out of the F-35 fighter jet program — in a nod to his warm ties with summit host Erdogan.

Trump cites Erdogan ‘chemistry’ as he lifts an obstacle on F-35s

Turkey’s purchase in 2019 of Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems sparked years of tensions, despite the warm personal relationship between Trump and Erdogan dating back to the U.S. president’s first term.

Legal hurdles remain before Turkey could be fully admitted back to the U.S. F-35 program, but the removal of sanctions issued under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act would help ease that process. Regaining access to the F-35s is a top goal of Erdogan.

“We’re going to be taking the sanctions off, OK?” Trump said in response to a question, saying Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth were working on the issue.

Trump said the possibility of selling F-35s to Turkey is “something certainly we’d consider” given the countries’ relationship, and that “Turkey’s been, in many ways, much more loyal than other countries that we think would be loyal.”

Erdogan expressed hope that the U.S. will sell the F-35s, saying the U.S. president always stands by his word.

Trump and Erdogan showed off their fondness for each other. Erdogan greeted Trump with an elaborate ceremony involving military officials on horseback and jets overhead emitting red, white and blue smoke.

Asked what makes their relationship so strong, Trump said there’s “a chemistry that works between us,” adding that “Sometimes you get along with the toughest people, like him.”

Turkey’s access to U.S. F-35s could complicate relationships elsewhere. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he has urged Trump not to sell the fighter jets to Turkey, saying it would put Israel in danger.

“This is not a force for peace and stability,” Netanyahu said on CNN. “When you give them that power, you’re going to see aggression its wake.”

There is also opposition among U.S. lawmakers to Turkey having the F-35s as long as the Russian missile defense system remains in its possession. Even if sanctions are lifted, the Trump administration still faces restrictions under U.S. law that prevents Turkey from being able to purchase the fighter jets if it owns the S-400s.

NATO has ‘moment of great pride’ on defense

Earlier in the day, NATO showcased military projects worth billions of dollars — an investment Rutte called “money well spent” and one clearly meant to try to satisfy Trump.

Rutte was speaking to government ministers and defense industry officials at a forum billed as NATO’s

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"big reveal," to the thrum of techno music.

NATO does not own weapons — these are the property of member countries — but it has 14 AWACS early warning radar surveillance planes that are about 50 years old, along with newer surveillance drones.

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

"It's a moment of great pride," he said.

Some 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.

Representatives from 15 nations 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.

Rutte had told reporters on the eve of the two-day summit that "we will announce tens of billions in new contracts." However, at Tuesday's event, no dollar figures were given and the display included some projects long since agreed.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy pushes for NATO entry

Separately, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a fresh appeal for his country to be allowed to join the alliance, saying his country's armed forces are highly experienced and would boost NATO's defense capabilities.

He highlighted Ukraine's ability to strike deep inside Russia and hit oil refineries and other energy targets. He said Ukraine's armed forces are "eliminating" on average 30,000 Russian troops every month. He is set to meet with Trump on Wednesday in Ankara.

"Frankly we take no pride in this," Zelenskyy said, noting that the war with Russia — now in its fifth year — is one "we did not seek but one we are forced to fight."

Concern is mounting among some European 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.

Yet a senior NATO official, speaking on the summit's sidelines, said that despite some "reckless" actions by Russia, including airspace violations over Poland, Romania and Estonia, the alliance has been successful in deterring Moscow from any potential attack on a member country. The official insisted on anonymity to brief reporters.

AI stocks sink and drag markets lower worldwide

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The roller-coaster ride for AI stocks snapped back down on Tuesday and dragged Wall Street lower.

The S&P 500 fell 0.4% even though the majority of stocks within the index rose. The drops for stocks in the artificial-intelligence industry dragged the Nasdaq composite down 1.2%, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 130 points, or 0.2%, from its record.

The weakness began in Asia, where Samsung Electronics tumbled 6.9% in Seoul. The tech giant gave a preliminary look at its performance for the second quarter, and the numbers were strong. Samsung Electronics said it expects to report its operating profit surged roughly 1,800% from a year earlier.

Analysts called the numbers surprisingly good, but they still weren't enough for investors after Samsung Electronics' stock had come into the day having well more than doubled in the year so far.

On Wall Street, AI stocks have been under similar pressure in recent weeks on worries that their prices shot too high and that AI may not produce enough productivity and profits to make all the investments in chips and data centers worth it.

Drops of 6.5% for Advanced Micro Devices, 9.7% for Intel and 4.7% for Micron Technology were the heaviest weights on the market.

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SpaceX, which owns the xAI business, fell 6.8% in its first trading after getting included in the Nasdaq 100 index.

Outside of tech, Vertex Pharmaceuticals slipped 1.4% after saying it agreed to buy Crinetics Pharmaceuticals for \$85 per share in cash. Crinetics, which develops therapeutics for endocrine diseases, soared 98.7%.

Rivian Automotive dropped 18.1% after the electric vehicle company said it's selling 75 million shares of its stock, a move that dilutes the ownership stakes of earlier shareholders.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 33.58 points to 7,503.85. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 130.76 to 52,925.15, and the Nasdaq composite sank 302.47 to 25,818.69.

Stocks also felt pressure from a rise in oil prices after the British military said three tankers were struck by projectiles in the Strait of Hormuz. The United States later revoked a license that had authorized the sale of Iranian oil as part an interim deal to end the fighting between the U.S. and Iran.

That hurt hopes that the Strait of Hormuz may fully reopen to oil tankers carrying crude to customers worldwide from the Persian Gulf.

Brent crude, the international standard, rose 3% to settle at \$74.16 per barrel.

Higher oil prices put upward pressure on inflation, and Treasury yields climbed in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.54% from 4.48% late Monday and from just 3.97% before the war with Iran began.

High yields worldwide have been rattling investors since the war sent oil prices bursting above \$100 per barrel in March. The worry is that high inflation may force the Federal Reserve and other central banks to hike interest rates. Higher rates can keep a lid on inflation, but they also slow the economy and hurt prices for all kinds of investments.

In stock markets abroad, South Korea's Kospi tumbled 4.9% because Samsung Electronics by itself makes up more than a quarter of the index.

Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 2.1%, and Germany's DAX lost 1.4% for two of the world's bigger moves.

What to know about the electronic monitor a French court says Marine Le Pen must wear

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN, SYLVIE CORBET and NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Electronic monitors such as one that Marine Le Pen may have to wear when she campaigns to succeed French President Emmanuel Macron in elections next year are a common measure in France, in part to ease prison overcrowding.

A Paris appeals court on Tuesday declared the far-right leader guilty of embezzlement and ordered her subjected to electronic monitoring as part of her punishment.

Still, Le Pen said she'll run for the French presidency next year despite that verdict — something that is possible under French law. She said she doesn't expect to wear an electronic bracelet at all, because she believes France's highest court will ultimately vindicate her on appeal.

That court, the Court of Cassation, previously said it would be able to rule before the presidential election, and Le Pen could eventually be forced to wear the monitor during the campaign if her appeal proved unsuccessful.

Here's what to know about electronic monitors:

French prisons are overcrowded and have struggled with worsening detention conditions, according to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. Electronic monitors keep from adding to that problem.

Under French law, home detention requires a person to wear an electronic ankle monitor or bracelet and prohibits them from leaving their home or another designated location of residence, except during the hours authorized by the judge.

The designated location and the periods during which the person must remain there are determined by the court or by the judge responsible for the enforcement of sentences.

Such a device makes it difficult to conduct a political campaign but not impossible.

If Le Pen's conviction is eventually upheld, a specialized judge will decide how her electronic monitoring

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will be carried out, the residence where she must serve the sentence and the hours she will be permitted to leave.

The law provides that "during the period of sentence adjustment, the convicted person may be eligible for sentence reductions of up to six months per year," and even conditional release, the appeals court stressed in a statement.

France will hold the first round of its next presidential election on April 18, and if no candidate secures a majority of the votes, a runoff will take place two weeks later, on May 2.

"The appeals court has decided to make a (presidential) bid possible, so the decision must be respected," said Céline Bertetto, president of the national association of sentence enforcement judges.

"Regarding sentence reductions: For a one-year sentence, there can be a six-month reduction, but she must comply with the permitted hours of movement and pay the criminal fine," Bertetto added.

Le Pen backpedals on her plans not to run

A 57-year-old veteran of three presidential races, Le Pen repeated last week that she would not run for president next year if the appeals court ordered her to wear an electronic monitor.

Despite the ruling, she now believes that she won't be subjected to monitoring at all.

"We are innocent of the acts we are accused of," she claimed. "These acts cannot be classified as embezzlement of public funds."

Sarkozy wore an electronic monitor

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy wore an electronic ankle monitoring device last year after he was convicted to a year in prison in a corruption case. He was filmed leaving to go jogging with the device. He was granted conditional release, which allowed him to remove the electronic tag, after just over three months.

At the time, French media reported that he was authorized to leave his home between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. This authorization was reportedly extended until 9:30 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, to make sure he could attend a separate trial.

Democrats' narrow path to Senate majority gets rockier as Platner faces sexual assault allegation

By BILL BARROW and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

A new accusation that Graham Platner once sexually assaulted a woman he was dating has rocked the U.S. Senate race in Maine and cast fresh doubt on Democrats' path to a Senate majority.

Republicans currently have a 53-47 advantage in the Senate, and Maine is viewed as a necessary win for Democrats to gain the minimum of four new Senate seats.

But now there's a question of whether Platner, who denied the allegation, will remain on the ballot and, if he does, whether he can defeat five-term Republican Sen. Susan Collins.

Here's a closer look at the top races that Democrats are targeting.

Democrats see some pickup opportunities

ALASKA: Former Democratic Rep. Mary Peltola's candidacy against incumbent Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan has buoyed her party.

Peltola, one of a handful of Democrats who've won in Republican dominated states, was the first Alaska Native to serve in Congress, winning special and regular elections in 2022 for the state's only House seat.

At center stage for the state's Aug. 18 primary is drama involving a man running with the same name and party affiliation as Sullivan. The state supreme court has said the challenger is qualified to be on the ballot.

Peltola's campaign and state Democrats have denied Sullivan's allegation that they're working with the challenger to cause confusion..

MAINE: Platner catapulted to the Democratic nomination despite earlier controversies. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer initially backed sitting Gov. Janet Mills but reluctantly aligned behind Platner -- until Monday's latest bombshell accusation.

Now, Schumer and many Democrats are pushing for Platner to withdraw. If he does that by July 13,

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Maine Democrats can put a replacement on the ballot. If not, Platner could face Collins with minimal national party support.

If Platner drops out, his replacement could meet a similar challenge to what presidential candidate Kamala Harris faced in 2024, when she had a late start to appeal to a general election audience without having won the nomination in a competitive primary.

Meanwhile, Collins has won elections for 30 years despite no Republican presidential nominee, including President Donald Trump, winning Maine since 1988.

NORTH CAROLINA: Democrats landed one of their prize recruits with former Gov. Roy Cooper, who has never lost a statewide election through four terms as attorney general and two as governor. Republicans answered with Trump's handpicked candidate, Michael Whatley, who'd previously served as state GOP chairman and as the Republican National Committee chairman.

Whatley was viewed as a prodigious fundraiser and ideal Trump surrogate in a state the president carried three times, and he has history on his side -- Democrats have won just two U.S. Senate races and one presidential contest in North Carolina in the last three decades.

Yet Cooper won governors races in two of Trump's three presidential cycles and is leveraging his centrist image at a time when independents have soured on Trump. That leaves Whatley with the difficult tasks of satisfying Trump's core supporters without alienating other voters; introducing himself to voters who don't know him; and convincing enough North Carolina voters that they've been wrong about Cooper for decades.

OHIO: Democrats are counting on former Sen. Sherrod Brown to unseat Republican incumbent Jon Husted in what's shaping up to be another expensive contest in the state — its third in four years.

The Senate Leadership Fund, a GOP super PAC, has pledged \$79 million to defend Husted, a former lieutenant governor appointed to fill the seat after JD Vance became vice president.

Brown served three terms in the Senate before losing a tough reelection contest in 2024.

Ohio has steadily trended Republican. But Brown won previously as an advocate of unions and the working class, and Democrats believe he can attract some of the voters who've helped Trump win the state three times.

Underdogs could offer surprises

IOWA: The state, which Trump won three times gives Democrats an opportunity to flip a seat with two-term Republican Sen. Joni Ernst's retirement.

Democratic Iowa state Rep. Josh Turek faces Trump-endorsed Republican U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson.

Turek is a relative newcomer to elected office and has pointed to his experience winning in a red state House district as proof he could appeal to independent and moderate Republican voters in November.

Hinson is a three-term House incumbent representing northeastern Iowa, and claims Trump needs a fighter who would "always have his back."

TEXAS: State Rep. James Talarico, a 37-year-old seminarian, has become a national fundraising phenomenon.

Talarico faces the scandal-ridden Republican nominee Ken Paxton. The Texas attorney general has weathered an impeachment attempt by his own party, a yearslong corruption investigation and public airing of his marital difficulties. Through all that, Paxton has won multiple reelections.

Democrats were buoyed by their primary turnout of about 2.3 million eclipsing Republicans' 2.2 million, something that hasn't happened since the state flipped to Republicans in the 1990s. But the challenge for Talarico is turning that momentum into a racially, ethnically and geographically diverse coalition in November.

The seats Democrats have to hold

GEORGIA: Sen. Jon Ossoff is the only Democratic senator running for reelection this year in a state Trump won in 2024.

He had no primary opposition, and he's been a fundraising force with more than \$30 million cash-on-hand as he entered the general election campaign. Ossoff has attracted national attention with his unapologetic broadsides against Trump.

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Republican Rep. Mike Collins is playing catchup after winning a bruising GOP primary runoff. He must navigate skeptical Republicans who believe he's too conservative or controversial for this battleground state. Collins repeats Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was rigged, and he's also facing a House ethics inquiry over allegations that he misused taxpayer money to pay the girlfriend of a former top aide.

Collins' strongest line of attack against Ossoff comes on immigration. Collins sponsored the Laken Riley Act, named for a Georgia nursing student killed by a Venezuelan man in the U.S. illegally. The 2025 law, among other provisions, requires immigrants accused of certain crimes to be detained by federal law enforcement.

Ossoff voted for that legislation after Trump returned to the White House. The senator had previously voted, along with all Senate Democrats, to block consideration of an earlier Republican version — offered as an amendment to a 2024 spending bill — that would have prohibited undocumented immigrants accused of certain crimes from obtaining legal status. Collins and Republicans frame those votes as Ossoff flip-flopping on immigration enforcement.

MICHIGAN: Democratic Sen. Gary Peters' retirement opens up a seat the party must hold in a key presidential battleground that Trump won twice and former President Joe Biden carried in 2020.

The Aug. 4 Democratic primary pits moderate Haley Stevens against progressive Abdul El-Sayed. It was a three-way race until Mallory McMorrow, who had backing from some progressive Democratic senators, suspended her campaign.

Stevens and El-Sayed have split support among Democratic senators. Stevens has the support of Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, while El-Sayed has support from Sen. Bernie Sanders and other progressives.

Stevens has also benefited from heavy outside spending, including nearly \$8 million from a super PAC affiliated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

El-Sayed, a former Wayne County health director, has run on issues like Medicare for All and halting all U.S. weapons transfers to Israel. He has campaigned with popular-yet-controversial streamer Hasan Piker, who has millions of followers online and has said things such as that "America deserved 9/11."

The winner is expected to face Republican Mike Rogers, who lost to now-Sen. Elissa Slotkin, a Democrat, in 2024.

Explosions rock Syria's capital as French President Macron visits

By OMAR ALBAM, GHAITH AL SAYED and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Explosions rocked Syria's capital on Tuesday and injured at least 18 people as France's president met with his counterpart in a landmark visit to the country rebuilding from years of civil war, Syria's Interior Ministry said.

It was the second attack in Damascus in a week and a setback for President Ahmad al-Sharaa as he welcomed the first major Western leader to visit since the ouster of longtime dictator Bashar Assad by insurgent groups in late 2024. Syria's new rulers have wrestled with outbreaks of violence as they assert control, but the capital had been largely peaceful.

French President Emmanuel Macron was in the presidential palace when the explosions happened. An official from the Elysee Palace said he was safe and the meeting with al-Sharaa continued, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss Macron's security.

No group immediately claimed responsibility.

"Nothing can smother the aspiration of Syrian women and men to live in a fully sovereign, safe, pluralistic, and united Syria," Macron said on X hours later. "This morning I met Syria in all its diversity. I saw dignity, courage and determination."

Later, al-Sharaa and Macron announced they have agreed to reappoint ambassadors after more than a decade, marking a major restoration of diplomatic ties.

"Our meeting marks a historical milestone," al-Sharaa said. France had closed its embassy in 2012 but symbolically reopened it in early 2025.

Macron, who played a major role in pushing Europe and the United States to drop most sanctions that

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were imposed on Syria under Assad, was in Damascus before heading to Ankara, Turkey, later Tuesday for a NATO summit that al-Sharaa also would attend.

A large plume of smoke was seen at the site of the blast near the Four Seasons Hotel, where Syrian media reported Macron was staying. Footage on social media showed a van and a motorcycle on fire and bloodstains on a busy street near the headquarters of the Tourism Ministry and the Damascus National Museum.

The Interior Ministry in a statement reported by Syrian state media said one bomb had been placed in a garbage bin and the other in a parked car. It said four of the wounded were police officers, and no deaths were immediately reported.

On Thursday, an explosive device detonated in a cafe near the Justice Palace, killing at least 10 people and wounding more than 20.

Syria's government sees Macron's visit and the signing of over a dozen agreements with Paris and large French companies as a major boost for the country's new authorities in their bid to rebuild the country battered by a 14-year uprising-turned-civil war under Assad.

One agreement was to kick off the process of returning some 51 million euros (\$58.3 million) in illicit assets that belonged to Rifaat Assad, the late uncle of Assad. Other agreements included rebuilding the destroyed water and electricity infrastructure in the city of Homs, providing technical assistance to Syria's Central Bank as it undergoes financial reforms and bolstering cargo infrastructure at the Damascus airport.

"The outcome of this visit confirms that Syria is steadily moving toward a new phase of international partnerships based on shared interests and mutual respect," a Syrian foreign ministry official told The Associated Press, who said the perpetrators of the attack will be brought to justice. "Attempts to destabilize the country will not alter this trajectory." The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The explosions represent a challenge for al-Sharaa, who has pushed to assert full control over Syria, appeal to minorities skeptical of his Islamist-led rule and win the support of Western governments who were concerned about his past leadership of the formerly al-Qaida-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group. His government has promised political and economic reform after decades of autocratic rule.

The conflict in Syria killed nearly half a million people and displaced millions. Infrastructure lies in ruins. 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.

Prepared not scared. Dedicated volunteers in Nashville relay calm, straight-talk info during storms

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Anyone who has watched an episode of "9-1-1: Nashville" could be forgiven for thinking the city is constantly beset by tornadoes that turn outdoor concerts into scenes of carnage and blow scooter-riding tourists onto the tops of water towers.

That may be a TV exaggeration, but tornadoes and other dangerous storms do hit the city regularly. When they do, many people here turn to Nashville Severe Weather.

This group of dedicated volunteers can be found on social media, calmly explaining the storm movement, advising when to take cover and giving the "all clear." The coverage by Will Minkoff, Andrew Leeper and Tom Johnstone draws tens of thousands of viewers who interact with them in real time. It's a service that evokes the early promise of the internet, before the rise of the influencer.

This is happening at a time when many people no longer watch local news and weather reports. Yet Kevin Trowbridge, who teaches strategic communication at Belmont University in Nashville, says an informal survey of his students found many are tuning in to Nashville Severe Weather.

"The millennials and Gen Z — and teaching college students, I know this all too well — their source of information is that handheld device," he says. "It's not turning on a TV. And it's not even looking at a

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traditional media outlet's online presence. It's finding sources that provide them quick information when they need it."

They are 'prepared, not scared'

The rise of Nashville Severe Weather is a modern case study in multiple areas — a shifting tornado alley, a changing climate, the prevalence of social media and the value of instantaneous, hyperlocal information that can save the day or save lives.

The initiative has evolved over more than a decade from its origins as a Twitter feed and blog. Today, volunteers livestream on their YouTube channel whenever Nashville or surrounding counties face severe weather. Because Leeper, Minkoff and Johnstone all live here, they are facing the same threats as their audience.

"There's something about Nash Severe Weather that's different from the hobbyist enthusiast," Trowbridge says. "I think that's why people are following them. That's why they are trusting them. That's why they're tuning in and turning to them. ... It is authentic and real."

Leeper, a church pastor, has a soothing voice and a sign on a shelf behind him that reads "prepared not scared." He has had to leave the stream to wake up his family and hunker down in their safe space. He did so calmly, modeling the behavior of his motto. After the threat passed, he rejoined the stream.

Katherine Moffat, who works as the executive director of the Tennessee Academy of Physician Assistants, says local TV weather can be "a little over-the-top" when storms are threatening. Nashville Severe Weather, she says, is different.

"They're a little more calm and telling it to you straight," she says. "They don't get people overly excited."

Tornado Alley has shifted

The need for their service has never been greater. "Tornado Alley" has been shifting from the Midwest plains to states further east, says Johnstone, a meteorologist who joined the group last year after 33 years with the National Weather Service.

"The mid-South, especially down through Alabama, Mississippi, and into Tennessee and western Kentucky, has been where tornadoes have been most frequent ... and people have been dying in the highest numbers," he says.

Michelle Stewart gets all her weather information via push notifications from Nashville Severe Weather on her phone. It's a service she found invaluable during an ice storm that left much of the city without power or internet service for days.

"They are very informative about, not just what to expect, but how to be prepared, and just giving everybody the lay of the land without it being too science-y. You know, it kind of feels like you're talking to your neighbor," says Stewart, a project manager at a healthcare research company. "They are so calming to me during those live events."

Brett Withers, a former Nashville city councilman who saw two people die in his district during a 2020 tornado that killed 24 people in Tennessee, calls Nashville Severe Weather a "godsend."

"We have so many people moving to Nashville, and they might move from places where tornadoes are rare, if they ever happen," he says.

Low production value with a 'volunteer heart'

The popularity of Nashville Severe Weather defies much of the received logic about how to build an audience on social media. There's nothing fancy or highly produced about their livestreams. They don't try to play up danger or excitement. They certainly don't try to chase down tornadoes or run around outside in hurricane-force winds.

Their streams are visually dominated by weather radar. Minkoff, Leeper and Johnstone, sometimes joined by other volunteers, each stream from their own homes and appear in little boxes at the bottom or side of the screen. Graphics, when they have them at all, look like they could have been drawn by a 5-year-old.

Take the beloved "Dry Air Monster," a stick figure with an huge head and chomping Godzilla jaws.

Nashville Severe Weather co-founder David Drobny drew this to explain how dry air could "eat" snow that was headed toward Nashville. In a Southern town that usually sees snow on the ground only a few days

each year, many people look forward to it as a mini-vacation. The monster's motto is "No Snow for You."

Its hyperlocal focus stays grounded

Their hyperlocal focus allows Nashville Severe Weather to fill a niche left open by the local TV meteorologists who have to report on dozens of counties.

"One of the things that Nash Severe can do that even the TV stations have trouble doing is really bring it down to intersection level, school level, church level to let people know where the danger and the threat is," Johnstone says.

Their coverage is a two-way street. Audience members provide photos and video showing on-the-ground conditions and comment in the chat. Nashville Severe Weather shares that information with the National Weather Service and TV meteorologists. They also try to answer people's questions as they stream.

Leeper remembers a day when schoolchildren were sent home because of a tornado threat. When one child commented in the chat about being home alone, his heart sank.

"We just stopped what we were saying on the stream, and I said, 'Hey. It dawns on me that we've got a bunch of kiddos at home that are maybe by themselves. Hey. Here's what you do,'" Leeper recalls. "I love those moments where we can just sort of put everything else aside to talk to the people who are listening, in whatever situation they're in."

It's moments like that that help them stay grounded.

In 2023, a tornado killed a mother and young child here who lived in a trailer. Leeper didn't know them, but he attended the visitation.

"It just creates a whole other emotion when you walk into a funeral visitation for hurting families when it's a weather event that you covered," he says. "It's not all action and adventure. It really affects people's lives forever."

What to know about Legionnaires' disease making people sick on New York's Upper East Side

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

New York City health officials are investigating a Legionnaires' disease cluster in two Upper East Side neighborhoods. As of July 6, there have been 23 cases, 17 hospitalizations and no deaths.

The likely source of the bacteria causing this pneumonia is a cooling tower or towers in the area, officials said. These are water systems usually found on the top of buildings that control the temperature of systems such as refrigeration. The city health department is testing all such towers in the area. The affected areas are Carnegie Hill and Yorkville — ZIP codes 10028, 10128, and 10075.

Because it's not caused by an issue with any building's plumbing system, officials said, residents can continue drinking tap water, bathing, showering, cooking and using air conditioners, which don't use water to cool the air. People can't get the bacteria from each other.

Officials urged residents or recent visitors to the area with flu-like symptoms to contact a health care provider as soon as possible.

Here's what to know:

What is Legionnaires' disease?

It's a type of pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria, which grow in warm water and spread in building water systems. They can be found in places such as showerheads, hot tubs and cooling towers.

People often get it by breathing in tiny droplets of contaminated water. Highly susceptible patients in hospitals can also get it through contaminated water or ice, and babies can be exposed during water births, health officials said.

Symptoms usually develop two days to two weeks after exposure and include cough, fever, headaches, muscle aches and shortness of breath, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

People are at an increased risk for Legionnaires' disease if they are age 50 or older, smoke or vape, have a chronic lung disease or have a weakened immune system.

The name comes from an outbreak that hit attendees of an American Legion convention in Philadelphia

in 1976.

Is Legionnaires' disease fatal?

It can be. The CDC says one in 10 people who get sick will die of complications from Legionnaires' disease. That's why it's important to be diagnosed quickly and treated with the appropriate antibiotics, health officials said.

If untreated, Legionnaires' disease usually worsens during the first week, the World Health Organization said. Complications can include respiratory failure, shock and kidney or multiorgan failure.

How can Legionnaires' disease be prevented?

People responsible for the safety of buildings and water systems can reduce the threat by taking steps to minimize the growth of the bacteria, the WHO said. For example, they should regularly clean and disinfect cooling towers, maintain adequate chlorine levels in spa pools, and flush unused taps in buildings weekly.

There are also steps people can take to reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease at home. New York health officials suggest draining garden hoses; following manufacturers' instructions for cleaning and replacing water filters; checking chlorine levels in pools and hot tubs regularly; and flushing hot water heaters twice a year.

US airlines are redesigning travel around their highest-paying passengers

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 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

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to coach passengers who were willing to pay a little more, said Henry Harteveltdt, 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," Harteveltdt 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, Harteveltdt 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 partnered with the James Beard Foundation to refresh its lounge menus with dishes like Thai basil and chili crispy shrimp. 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.'"

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.

Baggage 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."

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, leading prominent supporters to pull their endorsements and throwing a must-win race for the party into turmoil.

Platner denied the allegation on Monday, 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

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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.

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.

Why losing weight isn't just about counting calories — and what to do about it

By J.M. HIRSCH Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — When it comes to losing weight, it turns out the simple math of counting calories doesn't always add up.

Fad diets come and go, but the underlying message almost always follows a simple equation. If you consume fewer calories than you burn, the weight will melt away.

In principle, it's true. And counting calories can be a useful tool for managing weight. But it only works if you know what numbers you're counting. And what's been billed as basic math can sometimes look more like Einstein's theory of relativity.

That's because a complex web of factors influences how or even if our bodies process calories. And it turns out diet quality is just as important as quantity, and possibly more.

"Different foods have very different effects on the brain, liver, fat cells, muscle function, pancreas and all organs related to metabolism and body weight," said Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, a cardiologist and director of the Food is Medicine Institute at Tufts University.

Counting calories could burn you

A calorie is the unit of energy used to count what the body can get from carbohydrates, proteins and fats. That sounds simple, but the complexity of counting calories went mainstream recently, when a lawsuit accused the maker of David protein bars of affixing labels that misrepresent how many calories and how much fat the products contain. The lawsuit has since been dropped.

The allegations were based on an analysis of the bars using bomb calorimetry, which measures calories by burning food and calculating the amount of heat released, a method that counts every potential calorie. But our bodies aren't combustion chambers and don't treat all calories the same. The company's numbers, like many food labels, are based only on the calories our bodies can actually use. Technically, both are correct, but only the latter matters for diet.

"You could put sawdust into a bomb calorimeter and you would get basically 4 calories per gram," said Dr. David Ludwig, an endocrinologist and researcher at Boston Children's Hospital. "If you're a termite, yes, you'll get calories from it. But humans won't."

The calorie counts on most nutrition labels reflect the total our bodies are likely to metabolize, not their burn rate. But they still can be misleading. Because of permitted rounding, the tallies can be off by as much as 20%. Additionally, the digestibility of an ingredient, whether and how it is cooked, to what extent it was processed, variations in processing, even quirks in our own DNA — all of these things influence whether and how our bodies use the calories we eat. Even that is just the start of the complications.

Calories are simple. How your body uses them is not

Our bodies determine how to process calories — either burning them or storing them — depending in part on our energy needs. But the quality of the calories matters, too. High-glycemic foods, such as white breads, pastas and sugars, are easily converted to usable energy and trigger our bodies to store calories, Ludwig said.

Foods containing resistant starches, including some beans, whole grains and seeds, resist easy conversion into usable energy and don't trigger that same storage response. They also are more difficult to process, so we absorb fewer of the total calories contained in them.

"Having a snack of 8 ounces of sugary beverage, 100 calories, should be better for your weight than 1 ounce of nuts at 200 calories, right?" Ludwig said. "That's the opposite of what actually happens because those 100 calories, even if they're fewer at that moment, they shift your body toward storing fat and leave you hungrier sooner."

Which of course triggers you to eat more, well, calories.

Even cooking and ripeness influence the equation. The calories in cooked foods are more easily absorbed than from raw ingredients, while the calories in unripe produce, such as bananas, are less easily absorbed. This means the number of calories you get from eating a medium banana, which is listed at 105 calories, can depend on how ripe it is.

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As for processing, including something as simple as grinding a food, can change caloric impact.

"One classic example is that the calories in whole almonds are absorbed substantially less well than the calories in almond butter," Ludwig said. "Just processing the almonds into almond butter causes a change in how much they will be absorbed."

Ultra-processed foods introduce another challenge. Diets high in such foods have been found to decrease the number of calories we burn at rest, Mozaffarian said. That means a higher proportion of those calories will stick to your ribs.

Then there's just plain old variation between people. Genetics lead our bodies to treat calories differently, said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, a Harvard Medical School obesity specialist. Even something as simple as a bad night's sleep can change how the body processes calories. So you might absorb more or fewer calories from the same food on different days.

Should you even bother to count calories?

So what's a weight watcher to do? Calorie counts can be a rough guideline; many people otherwise struggle to make healthy choices or determine appropriate portions, Ludwig said.

But the evidence indicates people should focus on diet quality, not just calorie quantity. Avoid ultra-processed foods, particularly refined starches, and build your diet around whole, minimally processed foods with an emphasis on plant-based ingredients rich in fiber.

"We need to think about calories in a much more sophisticated fashion than the number on the package," Ludwig said. "The number on the package can do more harm than good by misleading people into thinking that it's simply an accounting problem."

Today in History: July 8, Thai cave rescue

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, July 8, the 189th day of 2025. There are 176 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 8, 2018, divers rescued four of the 12 boys who had been trapped in a flooded cave in northern Thailand with their soccer coach for more than two weeks. (The remaining eight boys and their coach were rescued over the next two days.)

Also on this date:

In 1776, Col. John Nixon gave the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, outside the State House (now Independence Hall) in Philadelphia.

In 1853, an expedition led by U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Edo Bay, Japan, on a mission to seek diplomatic and trade relations with the Japanese.

In 1889, the first issue of The Wall Street Journal was published.

In 1947, a New Mexico newspaper, the Roswell Daily Record, quoted officials at Roswell Army Air Field as saying they had recovered a "flying saucer" that crashed onto a ranch; officials then said it was actually a weather balloon.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman named Gen. Douglas MacArthur commander-in-chief of United Nations forces in Korea. (Truman would fire MacArthur for insubordination nine months later.)

In 1972, the Nixon administration announced a deal to sell \$750 million in grain to the Soviet Union. (However, the Soviets were also engaged in secretly buying subsidized American grain, resulting in what critics dubbed "The Great Grain Robbery.")

In 1994, Kim Il Sung, North Korea's communist leader since 1948, died at age 82.

In 2000, Venus Williams beat Lindsay Davenport for her first Grand Slam title, becoming the first Black female champion at Wimbledon since Althea Gibson in 1958.

In 2011, the 135th and final space shuttle mission began when space shuttle Atlantis launched from Kennedy Space Center.

In 2021, President Joe Biden said the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan would end on Aug. 31; in

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a speech in the White House East Room, Biden made an impassioned argument for exiting the nearly 20-year war without sacrificing more America lives, but acknowledged that there would be no "mission accomplished" moment to celebrate.

In 2022, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated on a street in western Japan by a gunman who opened fire on him from behind as he delivered a campaign speech.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jeffrey Tambor is 82. Drummer Jaimoe Johanson (The Allman Brothers Band) is 82. Actor Kim Darby is 79. Children's musician Raffi is 78. Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck is 77. Actor Anjelica Huston is 75. Writer Anna Quindlen is 74. Author and politician Marianne Williamson is 74. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jack Lambert is 74. Actor Kevin Bacon is 68. Singer Joan Osborne is 64. Actor Lee Tergesen (TV: "Oz") is 61. Actor Billy Crudup is 58. Actor Michael Weatherly (TV: "NCIS") is 58. Musician Beck is 56. Actor Kathleen Robertson is 53. Christian rock musician Stephen Mason (Jars of Clay) is 51. Actor Milo Ventimiglia (MEE'-loh vehn-tih-MEEL'-yuh) is 49. Actor Lance Gross (TV: "Tyler Perry's House of Payne") is 45. Actor Sophia Bush is 44. Actor Maya Hawke is 28. Actor Jaden Smith is 28.