

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, July 18

U14 Tournament in Groton: Game 5 (if necessary): 1:00 p.m.
U12 Baseball State Tournament at Elkton/Salem/Beresford

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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Sunday, July 19

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., at Zion, 11 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
U12 Baseball State Tournament at Elkton/Salem/Beresford
Jr. Legion at Clark: vs. Garretson at 4 p.m. and Clark at 6 p.m.

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1440

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

Armed Egyptian Princesses

Ancient Egyptian princesses were skilled archers and warriors, according to an analysis of nearly 4,000-year-old royal remains published this week.

The five princess mummies examined in the study were found in the 1890s, buried with bows and arrows, maces, and a lapis lazuli-adorned dagger. Archaeologists had long been uncertain whether the weapons were ceremonial or used by the princesses. But using modern bone analysis, X-ray imaging, and chemical testing methods, researchers recently reconstructed the women's physical profiles and probed the question. The analysis revealed strong muscle attachment points in the princesses' arms and shoulders—attributes consistent with habitual archery and weapon use. Some remains showed signs of healed injuries, further suggesting intense physical activity and access to skilled medical treatment.

The researchers also uncovered rare spinal and development traits that point to close biological relationships between royal lines. If DNA can be recovered from the remains, it could provide further insight into their family relationships.

Andy Burnham prepares to become UK prime minister.

The former mayor of Greater Manchester was installed as leader of the center-left Labour Party yesterday, positioning him to replace Keir Starmer as prime minister. Burnham is expected to take office on Monday, after Starmer formally submits his resignation to King Charles III. Starmer had faced mounting pressure from Labour officials to step down since the party suffered losses in May local elections.

Lettuce at Taco Bell is a confirmed source of diarrhea-causing parasite.

Federal health officials say shredded iceberg lettuce is partly responsible for the cyclosporiasis outbreak spanning 34 states. Investigators traced the parasite to a single supplier in Mexico that supplies lettuce to Taco Bell locations in five states, including Michigan, which has reported over 4,300 cases—the highest total in the country.

Teleprompter operator allegedly made over \$100K betting on Trump speeches.

Gabriel Perez, a White House technical assistant to President Donald Trump since 2016, has been put on unpaid administrative leave after prediction market Kalshi alerted federal regulators to suspicious betting activity. Perez allegedly used his insider knowledge of Trump's speeches to place over a dozen bets on which words and phrases would be spoken and which topics would be covered.

MLB cracks down on iPad use in the dugout to prevent AI decision-making.

Major League Baseball this week restricted teams from accessing generative artificial intelligence on iPads during games. The midseason policy change comes amid reports that up to a third of the league's teams installed custom AI apps to help make strategic suggestions mid-game, including substitutions and pitch calls. The ban does not carry any punishments, as all teams were compliant with the rules as previously written.

Japan revises succession rules to protect oldest continuous hereditary monarchy.

The Japanese parliament yesterday passed a bill empowering the imperial family to adopt distant male relatives to preserve the male bloodline, which conservatives say underpins the emperor's authority. Of the 16 adults in the family, only five are men, and there are no children. The law also allows female royals to retain their titles after marrying commoners, but they and their descendants still cannot inherit the throne.

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Oscar-winning actress, "Home Alone 2" Pigeon Lady dies at age 81.

Brenda Fricker became the first Irish actress to win an Academy Award in 1990, earning the Oscar for best supporting actress for her performance in "My Left Foot." She later became widely recognized by audiences for her role as the Pigeon Lady in "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York." The late actress released a memoir last year chronicling her experiences with child abuse, mental illness, and fame.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Lisa G. in Cary, North Carolina.

"I recently entered a local chain-operated drugstore to pick up a prescription. Upon entry, a young man, an employee working at the front cash register station exclaimed, 'Good morning. Welcome in.' It was refreshing to feel noticed by a store employee. Another customer who entered a few minutes before me said, 'He greeted me the same way. It made my day.' Upon reflection, she was right. His kind and cheerful greeting put a little pep in my step. As I left the store, I told him how his friendly greetings were a positive to customers. He beamed with a beautiful smile in return."

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BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA

GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2026, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS

COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes*
4. Chris Hemen, Weed & Pest Supervisor
 - a. Award Bid for Weed & Pest Vehicle
5. Richmond Dam Update
6. Patricia Kendall, Dacotah Prairie Museum Director
 - a. Request for Funding
7. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks
 - a. Quotes for Talent Booking Agencies
8. Dennis Jones – Discuss the Home Arts Building at the Fairgrounds
9. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Local Emergency Management Performance Grant (LEMPG) for 3rd Qtr.
10. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of July 14, 2026
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Travel Requests
11. Other Business
12. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
13. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311) - Access Code: **601-168-909** #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

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

BUDGET WORK SESSION

NOTICE OF TESTING AUTOMATIC TABULATING EQUIPMENT

Notice is hereby given to the public, the county chair of the Republican party, that the automatic tabulating equipment will be tested to ascertain that it will correctly count all the votes for the Governor Runoff Election held on the 28th day of July, 2026.

The test will be conducted on the 20th day of July, 2026 at 9 o'clock A.M. at the following location: Brown County Auditor's Office, 25 Market St., Ste. 1, Aberdeen, SD 57401

Dated this 17th day of July, 2026.

Lynn Heupel, Brown County Auditor

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Friday Night Fun Night

Friday night is fun night at the Groton Swimming Pool. Swimmers bring inflatables to the fun. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Celebrating America's 250th with the arts

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

While this month's celebrations of the 250 years since the signing of our country's founding document focused on fire-works, speeches and parades, the most meaningful events of those two and half centuries are stories of America communicated through the lives of its people. These stories are found in the creative contributions of Native Americans, and the songs, the paintings and the plays and films that depict real people building a new nation together. Our history is expressed best through American arts—and in South Dakota, these stories are being shared this summer in communities throughout the state.

The South Dakota Arts Council is supporting six distinctive projects through the America250 Community Arts Grant program. Over 30 applications were made and six \$5,000 grants were awarded to celebrate the uniquely South Dakota stories that help compose the tapestry of U.S. history since 1776. From Sioux Falls to Bison and Aberdeen to Yankton, community arts collaborations combine music, poetry and the stories of prairie families for audiences in every corner of South Dakota. Patriotic concerts in Sioux Falls and Yankton, storytelling in Watertown and Bison and an art competition focused on American identity, local history and future generations in Aberdeen all showcase the variety and richness of our cultural heritage.

"As we commemorate America's 250th anniversary, these projects help tell the unique stories of South Dakota communities through creativity, history, and community pride," said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. "We are proud to support programs that bring people together, celebrate our shared heritage, and inspire meaningful community engagement through the arts."

This year as we celebrate the founding of our nation through the Declaration of Independence, let us also celebrate the stories, songs and creative expressions that accompanied the birth of this nation.

For more information about this year's summer arts celebrations in your area, visit ArtsSouthDakota.org.



Data as of 07/16/2026

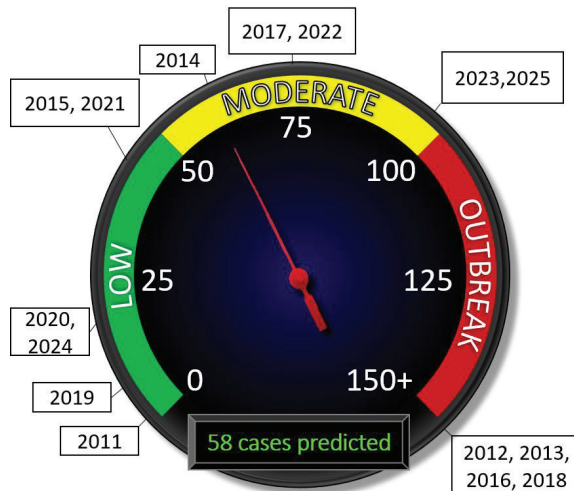
Division of Disease Prevention and Control

South Dakota Mosquito

SD West Nile Virus

- 2 human cases reported (Jerauld, Pennington)
 - 1 non-neuroinvasive case
 - 1 neuroinvasive case
 - 1 death
- 0 human viremic blood donor detections
- 2 counties with a positive mosquito pool
 - Brown, Hughes

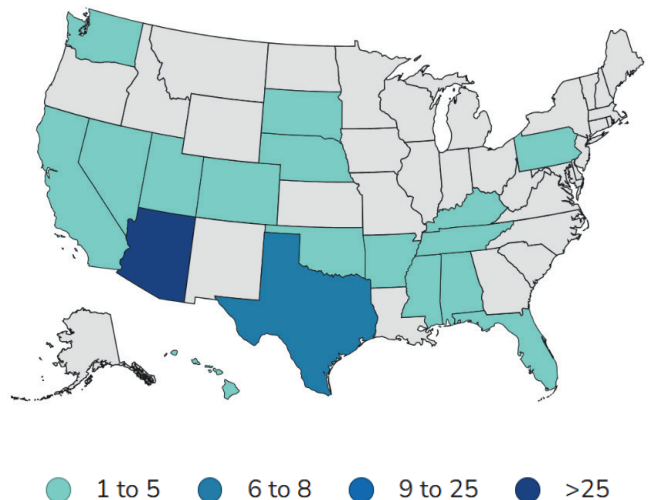
Current WNV SD Case Prediction:



US West Nile Virus

- 81 human cases reported
 - 57 of which are neuroinvasive

WNV Human Disease Cases Reported by State of Residence:



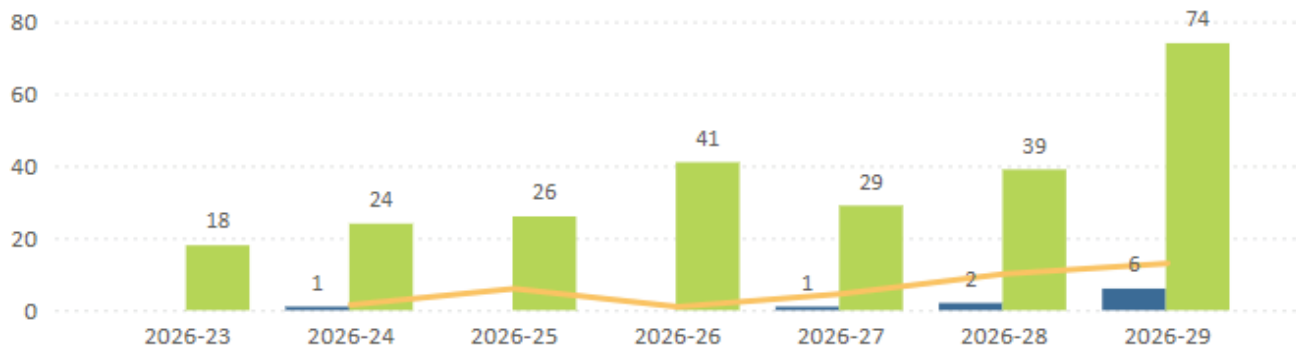
Data compiled from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. West Nile Virus: Current Year Data and Maps. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/data-maps/current-year-data.html>

SD Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2026

- Total sites collecting mosquitos: 46
- *Culex* Species Collected: 12,416
- Total mosquito pools tested: 261
- Percent positivity: 3.83%

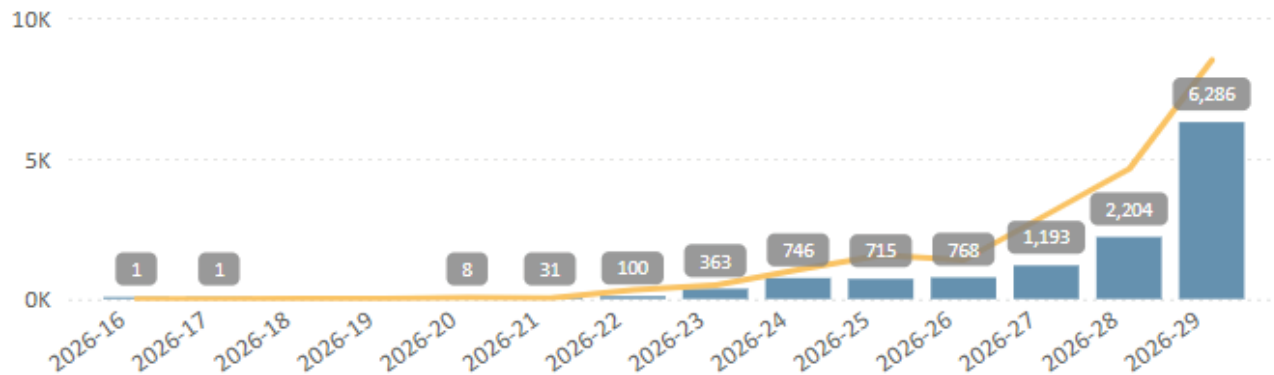
Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative ● 5 Year Median Pool Count



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week

● Culex Species Collected ● 5Y Median Culex Count



For more information, please visit the SD-DOH website [here](#).



South Dakota Severe Weather Severe Snapshot

By Elena Tittel

South Dakota News Watch

South Dakota is no stranger to severe weather events. The latest proof: a 131 mph wind gust on June 29 in Highmore that was one of the strongest recorded in U.S. history and the second-highest gust recorded in South Dakota.

The National Weather Service issued a severe thunderstorm warning at the time of the storm and confirmed the winds did not come from a tornado, according to a fact brief published by News Watch.

Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension state climatologist, said winds exceeding 130 mph are "uncommon," but with the right ingredients, it can occur.

"I think they had just the right perfect conditions with the strengthening storm as it was approaching that area," she said.

It was the latest of several recent wind-related events.

In December, a record-breaking winter windstorm swept across Custer, Fall River and Pennington counties, causing widespread damage.

According to a press release from Gov. Larry Rhoden, the storm produced sustained winds and gusts exceeding 90 mph, bringing down power lines, snapping off and topping trees, damaging public infrastructure and leaving thousands of residents without power. It prompted Gov. Larry Rhoden to request a presidential disaster declaration, which was received in April.

16 federal disasters in past decade

Over the past nine years, there have been 16 federal major disaster declarations, not including the COVID-19 pandemic, in the state of South Dakota, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Federal disaster declarations are determined by the president.

The reasons include winter storms, flooding, thunderstorms, tornadoes and straight-line winds.

State disaster declarations, on the other hand, are issued by the governor. Executive orders related to state disasters from the previous decade include severe winter storms, flooding, droughts and straight-line winds.

Drought-like conditions in South Dakota

Aside from the two recent major wind-related storms, South Dakota has also seen a lack of precipitation in the southern parts of the state.

Andrew Kalin, senior service hydrologist for the National Weather Service in Sioux Falls, said in the northwest and other parts of the state, precipitation levels are closer to normal.

Data from the U.S. Drought Monitor shows approximately 48% of the state is in moderate to extreme (D1-D4) drought, affecting an estimated 557,792 people. These drier conditions, primarily concentrated within the southern parts of the state, are causing a lack of soil moisture, especially following a drier winter that had less snow, Clabo said.

Edwards said that there has been an ebb and flow of drought in the state over the past five or so years, especially along the southern part of the state. She predicts improvement will be relatively local, meaning it will not be uniform across the state.

"I think the improvement that we'll see will be relatively local, and I think we're going to continue to see this ebb and flow of worsening and improvement," Edwards said.

Staying informed: Weather alert services

In instances of severe weather, South Dakotans have multiple options to stay informed. One of these are weather sirens, which are designed to alert people who are outdoors.

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Sometimes, though, not everything goes according to plan.

Back in early June, weather sirens in Aberdeen and Viborg experienced troubles ahead of tornado season ramping up.

Tanner Jondahl, chief of police for the city of Aberdeen, said the backup plan is still working. The sirens are being tested every Wednesday at 6 p.m. and they expect the new primary system to be up and running sometime in August.

In the southeast South Dakota town of Viborg, the sirens on the west side stopped working after a control board burned out. It has been replaced and the sirens are working again, said maintenance superintendent Jody Nelsen.

Aside from weather sirens, there are multiple ways to stay informed during potentially life-threatening situations. The most widespread weather alert system is NOAA Weather Radio, a nationwide radio station network, providing 24/7 weather alerts. Aside from tuning into the radio, people can also enable wireless emergency alerts on their iPhone or Android's settings.

However, it's wise not to rely solely on one weather alert system, due to potential unpredictability.

Looking forward, a forecast from the NOAA Climate Prediction Center, the next one to three months are projected to have warmer than average weather in the west, south and eastern parts of the state, whereas the north-central part of the state may experience near- to below-average temperatures.

South Dakota News Watch is an independent nonprofit. Read, subscribe for free and donate at sdnewswatch.org. Elena Tittel's internship was funded with support from the Nonprofit Newsroom Internship Program created by The Scripps Howard Fund and the Institute for Nonprofit News. Contact: elena.tittel@sdnewswatch.org.

Groton Post 39 14U captures regional title with dominant win over Clark Area

GROTON – Groton Post 39 (14U) is headed to the South Dakota American Legion State 14U Tournament after rolling to a 15-1 victory over Clark Area in the championship game of the regional tournament Friday at Locke-Karst Field.

With the win, Groton claimed the regional championship and advanced to the state tournament, scheduled for July 24-26 in Vermillion.

Groton wasted little time taking control, scoring twice in the first inning. Easton Larson lined an RBI single down the right-field line before Tucker Leicht drew a bases-loaded walk to make it 2-0. Larson added another RBI on a fielder's choice in the second inning to stretch the lead to 3-0.

The game was put away in a marathon third inning when Post 39 exploded for 11 runs. Hank Hill started the rally with an RBI single before Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle and Kyson Kucker each forced in runs with bases-loaded walks. Larson added another RBI single, Hill was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, Bentley Ehresmann drew another run-scoring walk, an error brought home another run, and Schelle capped the inning with a two-run single as Groton built a commanding 14-0 advantage.

Asher Zimmerman turned in a strong performance on the mound, pitching all five innings to earn the victory. He allowed six hits and one unearned run while striking out two and walking three.

Schelle and Larson each collected two hits and drove in three runs to lead the Groton offense. Kyson Kucker reached base throughout the game, drawing four walks as part of a patient offensive effort that saw Post 39 earn 17 walks.

Kyson Kucker and Hill each stole multiple bases, while Groton also played outstanding defense, turning two double plays.

Clark Area's Archer L., batting eighth in the order, led his team with two hits.



The Groton American Legion U14 team celebrates their winning the region championship while punching their ticket to the U14 State Tournament. (Photo by Katie Kesterson)

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion's Late Push Leads To Victory Over Smittys B

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion defeated Smittys B 6-5 on Friday after taking the lead late in the game. The game was tied at five in the top of the seventh when Braden Fliehs drew a walk, scoring one run.

Smittys B got on the board in the bottom of the fourth inning after D Backous singled to center field, and Smittys B scored on a passed ball, each scoring one run.

In the top of the fifth inning, Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion went back into the lead after Jordan Schwan singled to center field, and Fliehs singled down the left field line, each scoring two runs.

A. Hericks doubled to right field, which helped Smittys B tie the game at five in the bottom of the sixth.

Schwan earned the win for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The hurler surrendered four hits and two runs (one earned) over four innings, striking out three and walking three. D Pederson took the loss for Smittys B. The starter went four and two-thirds innings, surrendering four runs on four hits, striking out four and walking four. Wesley Borg collected the save.

Fliehs, T.C Schuster, Schwan, Ryder Schelle, and Borg each collected one hit for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Fliehs and Schwan each drove in two runs for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Fliehs led Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting eight walks for the game. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion turned one double play in the game.

Backous and Hericks each collected two hits for Smittys B. Hericks went 2-for-3 at the plate and led the team with two runs batted in. Smittys B were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. L Hannigan made the most plays with seven.

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion

6 - 5 Smittys B

📍 Away 📅 Friday July 17, 2026

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

BATTING

Groton Post 39...	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (C)	3	1	0	0	1	0
J Schwan #11 (P)	4	1	1	2	0	2
T Schuster #3 (SS)	3	0	1	0	1	0
B Fliehs #19 (3B)	2	0	1	2	2	0
L Shilhan... #17 (1B)	3	0	0	0	1	1
R Schelle #6 (2B)	2	1	1	0	1	0
Z Fliehs #23 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
J Bisbee #15 (LF)	2	1	0	0	1	2
W Borg #1 (P)	2	1	1	0	1	0
X Ellenbe... #8 (CF)	1	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	25	6	5	4	8	7

TB: R Schelle, B Fliehs, T Schuster, W Borg, J Schwan,
CS: B Fliehs, **HBP:** X Ellenbecker 2, **SB:** R Schelle, A
Abeln, **LOB:** 8

PITCHING

Groton Pos...	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Schwan #11	4.0	4	2	1	3	3	0
W Borg #1	3.0	3	3	1	2	2	0
Totals	7.0	7	5	2	5	5	0

W: J Schwan, **P-S:** W Borg 53-31, J Schwan 69-41,
HBP: J Schwan, **BF:** W Borg 16, J Schwan 18, **E:** T
Schuster, L Shilhanek

Smittys B	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Hericks #10 (CF)	3	1	2	2	0	0
D Pederson #4 (P)	3	0	1	0	1	1
T Joosten #3 (SS)	4	0	0	0	0	1
L Shoultz #18 (1B)	4	1	1	0	0	0
D Backous #18 (LF)	4	1	2	1	0	0
M Arnott #8 (3B)	2	1	0	0	2	0
D Stahl #5 (2B)	2	1	0	0	2	1
B Kludt #11 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	2
L Hannigan #12 (C)	3	0	1	0	0	0
Totals	28	5	7	3	5	5

2B: A Hericks, **3B:** L Shoultz, **TB:** D Backous 2, D
Pederson, L Hannigan, A Hericks 3, L Shoultz 3, **HBP:** A
Hericks, **SB:** D Pederson, **LOB:** 8

Smittys B	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
D Peder... #4	4.2	4	4	4	4	4	0
D Back... #18	1.1	1	1	0	2	3	0
M Arnott #8	1.0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Totals	7.0	5	6	4	8	7	0

L: D Pederson, **P-S:** D Backous 37-17, D Pederson
78-42, M Arnott 19-9, **HBP:** D Pederson 2, **BF:** D
Backous 7, D Pederson 23, M Arnott 5



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Restoration artists craft 'the next phase of history' in the South Dakota Capitol rotunda

Lawmakers have dedicated \$13 million in recent years to study and repair the building, lake and grounds, while planning for a larger effort

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — While tour groups, state employees and lawmakers make their way around scaffolding on the second floor of the South Dakota Capitol building, artists including Philip Atilano climb around at nearly 100 feet above — painting, measuring and working to restore the rotunda and dome to its former beauty.

"It's a humbling experience. It's almost like we're the next phase of history," Atilano said.

But with years of experience under his belt as a professional restorer for Conrad Schmitt Studios in Wisconsin, Atilano said he's not nervous or stressed about caring for such a historic structure.

"I look at it like we're here because we should be here," he said.

Since 2019, South Dakota lawmakers have provided \$13 million for Capitol projects including the dredging of Capitol Lake, repairs of cracking plaster, the ongoing paint restoration work, and the creation of a fund to save for a full restoration and renovation that could cost at least \$150 million. That rough estimate came from the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration, which is responsible for maintaining the Capitol.

The last full restoration was conducted ahead of the 1989 state centennial, nearly 40 years ago. Construction of the Capitol was completed 116 years ago in 1910.

Recent cracking and damage to ceilings and walls pushed state officials to take a closer look at the building's needs. That search revealed outdated utilities, like the building's climate control system, said Leah Haugan, who oversees special projects for the bureau.

"If you go down in the basement, you'll see that the utilities that run through the ceilings on the base-



Restoration artist and foreman Philip Atilano, of Conrad Schmitt Studios, lines up a stencil at the apex of the dome of the South Dakota State Capitol building during restoration work on July 7, 2026. (Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

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ment levels are the utilities that have been here since the beginning," she said. "We just keep disconnecting those and adding more, so there's a whole lot of things that need to be updated and repaired."

That's why some of the earliest work is in the rotunda, where there aren't any utilities to repair before painting, Haugan said.

Current restoration work: Like 'night and day'

Annually from January through March, the Capitol is buzzing with activity as state lawmakers debate policy, lobbyists linger in the halls and stakeholders testify on legislation. After the legislative session wraps, state employees, other elected officials and visitors still use the building on a daily basis.

That's important to keep in mind for Darin Seeley, the commissioner of the bureau.

"It was designed, in many parts of the Capitol, for how work was done 120 years ago," he said. "This is both a historic piece and an operating facility."

Last year, heavy rains and leaks in the ceiling left plaster around galleries and chambers cracked and damaged. That and other aging plaster has since been repaired.

Wall paint, decorative details, and artwork have faded, and lighting has become less visually appealing over time, too. That's where Atilano's team comes in.

"It was so dark and dreary in here, initially, for a rotunda. It just didn't scream 'state Capitol' as much as it will now," Atilano said. "What we're doing now, it's going to blow people's minds. I think people that were used to it before, now they're going to see it, and I think it's going to be night and day."

The first phase of the current restoration work was to repair plaster. The second stage was restoring the painted details along the ceiling of some of the hallways throughout the building.

Now, Atilano's team is painting the ornamental pieces that cap the columns — called capitals — in the rotunda. It's a four-step process, said painter Alyssa Johnson: a base coat, followed by a gold coat of paint, staining, then 23-karat gold leaf on the tips of the capitals "for a little extra pizzazz and sparkle," she said.

"The techniques haven't really changed. We're doing the same stuff that was done hundreds of years ago," Johnson said while working on a platform in the rotunda. "This is like taking that tradition, and feeling like I'm part of this longer flow of art."

This is Johnson's first time working on a restoration project that isn't a church, she said, but there are a lot of similar elements like stained glass, mural work, arches and other decorative elements. Usually,



Painter Alyssa Johnson applies a coat of gold paint to capitals on columns above the grand staircase in the South Dakota State Capitol Building on July 7, 2026. (Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

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though, the churches are shut down during restorations.

"I'm working right at the level people are walking by, and I almost felt like a zoo animal a little bit, but it was fun," she joked. "I've never had an audience like that before."

Atilano has been working on the stenciling for painted details near the peak of the rotunda, 96 feet above the floor.

He and his crew have added paint that, from afar, appears to be petrified wood. Greens, browns and reds blend and swirl over columns along the upper rotunda to create the illusion for visitors below. He was also placing stencils that, when painted, will look more like plasterwork than paint.

"I think people are really going to be able to sit in the center of the rotunda, look up and see something that they never saw was here before," Atilano said. "I think everything will be much more inviting, warm and welcoming."

The third stage of restoration will bring legislators and members of the judicial and executive branches together to better understand the needs of each group. It's a large undertaking, Seeley said.

"When you come at it and think about what needs to be done, it's why the planning has to happen," Seeley said, "why it's so critical that we come at this with a full plan in mind, and not piecemealing the building and its renovation."

The 1989 restoration, including Sharpies

During the restoration ahead of the 1989 statehood centennial, minimum-security inmates had a hand in some aspects of the project, Haugan said. It helped the state save on labor costs.

"They're very talented artists that were there, and they came and they did beautiful work, and we don't want to diminish the work that they did by re-restoring it," she said. "We just would like it to be historically correct."

Johnson saw signs from that earlier work, including artwork stenciled using permanent markers.

"Nothing wrong with Sharpie," Johnson said. "I just wouldn't put it on a state Capitol building. "It seems a little bit irreverent, but it's obviously held up well, because it's as old as I am — that work was done about the same time I was born."

She also found initials carved into a capital — an ornate piece at the top of a column — as she painted it. "That's kind of another tradition, is people either leaving little Easter eggs or initials or drawings, but in a spot where only another worker will ever see it," she said.

Johnson plans to leave her mark with new layers of paint rather than a signature.

"Those things accumulate over time, and they just kind of add character," she said. "It's just part of its history now."

Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.



Foreman Philip Atilano uses a white pencil to trace stencil lines on the walls of the South Dakota State Capitol's dome on July 7, 2026. (Photo by Meghan O'Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

Judge temporarily blocks South Dakota's abortion-pill advertising ban as lawsuit continues

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

A new South Dakota law that criminalizes the advertising of abortion pills cannot be enforced while a lawsuit against it continues, a federal judge ruled Friday.

Nancy Turbak Berry, who formerly served as a Democratic state legislator from Watertown, and New York-based nonprofit Mayday Health filed the lawsuit in May against Gov. Larry Rhoden and Attorney General Marty Jackley, who are both Republicans. Rhoden signed the legislation in March after legislators approved it, but it wasn't scheduled to take effect until this month.

South Dakota already had a near-total ban on abortion, except when it's necessary "to preserve the life of the pregnant female."

The new law prohibits the dispensing, distribution and advertising of abortion pills and other abortion-related items, and makes violations punishable by felony prosecutions and fines.

Mayday Health and Turbak Berry say the law illegally restricts Turbak Berry's free speech. As an example, the lawsuit says the prohibition on advertising would prevent her from wearing a sweatshirt sold by Mayday. The sweatshirt says abortion pills can be obtained in all 50 states and encourages people to learn more on Mayday's website.

"Unless this court grants relief, Turbak will be deterred from wearing the sweatshirt," and thereby deterred from engaging in First Amendment-protected speech, the lawsuit says.

Mayday also posted advertisements at South Dakota gas stations last year directing people to the organization's website for information on abortion pills.

Jackley said during a hearing in Rapid City last month that the state is not attempting to criminalize the wearing of a sweatshirt. He said the state is targeting the way Mayday uses its website to connect South Dakotans with abortion-pill providers, which he said is not legal in a state that bans abortion.

"What the First Amendment doesn't do is protect an illegal drug transaction in South Dakota," he said.

A Mayday official said during the same hearing that the organization only provides information and does not encourage anyone to obtain abortion pills.

Judge Camela Theeler wrote in her ruling that the state's lawyers have "not shown that Mayday advertises with the specific intent that another person engage in specific criminal conduct and thus have not shown that Mayday's advertising is integral to criminal conduct."

Mayday and Turbak Berry, along with their lawyer, Jim Leach, of Rapid City, will now seek a permanent order blocking the law's enforcement.



Mayday Health posted signs like this one at gas stations around South Dakota in December 2025 as part of a campaign to spread awareness about the availability of abortion pills. (Courtesy of Mayday Health)

Jackley issued a statement saying the state will continue to defend the new law.

"Protecting and defending innocent life is and remains important to our Legislature, governor, attorney general and citizens," Jackley said.

Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

Amid criticism, candidate spokesperson says property tax elimination plan is only for homeowners

Response comes amid flurry of critiques flying back and forth ahead of July 28 runoff election for Republican governor nomination

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota governor candidate Toby Doeden has repeatedly pledged to eliminate or phase out property taxes, often without limiting his language to any specific type of property.

This week, amid criticism about the cost of that pledge, Doeden's campaign spokesperson said the plan has only ever been applicable to homeowners.

That's one of many criticisms and responses flying back and forth as the campaign for the Republican nomination for governor approaches its final week.

The runoff election on July 28 pits the first-place finisher in the June 2 Republican primary, Doeden, against second-place finisher, Gov. Larry Rhoden. Because neither received 35% in the June 2 race that also included U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and state House Speaker Jon Hansen, Doeden and Rhoden were thrown into a runoff.

The following are fact checks with additional context to explain some of the recent criticisms that the two candidates or their supporters have launched against each other in advertising and on social media.

Property taxes

Doeden's campaign website says he will eliminate property taxes "so that you can raise your family, operate your farm or ranch, and grow your business."

He told Rapid City television station KOTA in December that he would "completely eliminate property



South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden, left, and Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden are candidates in a July 28 runoff for the Republican nomination for governor. (Photos by South Dakota Searchlight; illustration

by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

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taxes," adding "farmers, ranchers, small business owners are being crippled."

A Doeden campaign postcard mailed earlier this year carried the heading "eliminate property taxes," without any language limiting the pledge to homeowners. The text under the heading was also devoid of qualifying language: "South Dakota residents are getting crushed under the weight of property taxes. Toby Doeden will phase out property taxes once and for all."

Responding to those and other similar statements, Rhoden has interpreted Doeden's property tax plan as being applicable to all classes of property — residential, agricultural and commercial. Collectively, they contribute about \$1.8 billion of property tax revenue to counties, cities, schools and other smaller units of local government in the state.

Rhoden alleges that eliminating all of that revenue would require the state to replace it, and would blow a \$1.8 billion hole in the state budget. The Rhoden campaign recently released ads and launched a "Reckless Toby Doeden" website making those assertions.

In response to that criticism, Doeden's campaign spokesperson Matt Hurley said this week that Doeden's plan has never applied to any classes of property beyond owner-occupied homes. They produce about \$815 million in local tax revenue. Eliminating property taxes for homeowners — and nobody else — has "always been the plan," Hurley said.

The Rhoden campaign is not the only entity that has interpreted Doeden's pledges as applying to all property classes.

On Thursday, a coalition of South Dakota business groups issued a press release expressing concern about Doeden's property tax proposal, arguing it would require funding cuts for counties, cities and schools, and would ultimately require new taxes to replace the lost revenue. The release described the coalition's understanding of Doeden's plan as "the elimination of nearly \$2 billion in local property taxes," indicating all classes of property.

Ryan Budmayr is president of the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry, a member of the coalition. When informed of Hurley's statements, Budmayr said they reflect a lack of clarity in Doeden's plan and messaging.

"We're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, whether it's homeowners or all property taxpayers," Budmayr said.

Lab-grown meat

On another topic, the Dakota First Action political action committee, which Doeden founded, has sent text messages to voters describing Rhoden as "Lab-Grown Larry," saying Rhoden "supports lab-grown meat" because he vetoed legislation that would have permanently banned its manufacture and sale in the state.

Rhoden, a rancher, did veto a bill during the most recent legislative session that would have effectively banned lab-grown meat by classifying it as an adulterated food. In his veto message, Rhoden said he personally opposes cell-cultivated meat, writing that "you won't catch me eating these products."

He argued that a permanent ban could invite legal challenges, could cause other states to adopt restrictions on their markets for South Dakota crops or livestock, and could overstep state authority by usurping the federal government's role in food safety.

As a compromise, Rhoden supported and signed into law a five-year moratorium on lab-grown meat to allow more time to study the emerging industry.

Rhoden spokesperson Ian Fury responded with a statement to South Dakota Searchlight questions about Dakota First Action's criticism.

"As Governor Rhoden has said many times, you'll never catch him eating cell-cultured protein, but it's against our principles to ban something just because we don't like it," Fury said.

Abortion

Another Dakota First Action text message to voters says "the pro-abortion lobby is officially supporting Larry Rhoden," citing a \$4,000 contribution to Rhoden's campaign from the law office of Watertown attorney Nancy Turbak Berry. She's a Democratic former legislator who helped lead the campaign supporting an unsuccessful 2024 abortion-rights ballot question.

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"Radical Democrats are footing the bill for Larry Rhoden's campaign," the message reads.

Turbak Berry told Searchlight the law office is run by her sons, that she has a small ownership stake, is partially retired, and was not consulted before the firm gave \$4,000 to Rhoden's campaign.

Turbak Berry said she temporarily switched her party affiliation to Republican in order to vote for Rhoden, based partly on the respect he's shown her despite their policy disagreements.

"Larry Rhoden and I have never agreed and will never agree on the issue of reproductive rights," Turbak Berry said.

When Rhoden was a legislator, he cosponsored South Dakota's abortion ban, which has one exception for abortions necessary to save the life of the mother.

He signed legislation earlier this year prohibiting abortion-pill distribution and advertising, and Turbak Berry is suing in an attempt to block that bill from becoming law. At the bill-signing ceremony earlier this year was the anti-abortion group South Dakota Right to Life. In response to the messaging by Dakota First Action, the group issued a statement.

"Larry Rhoden's decades-long record on LIFE is 100% pro-life," the statement reads. "Don't let misinformation tell you otherwise. South Dakota Right to Life is not endorsing a candidate, simply stating the facts."

Property rights

Doeden's campaign sent out text messages to Republican voters this week saying "the carbon pipeline scam is BACK in South Dakota."

"Larry Rhoden hosted a campaign event alongside Dan Lederman," the messages said. "Dan was the lead lobbyist on behalf of Summit Carbon Solutions, and their attempt to force their way onto private land."

Summit planned to collect carbon dioxide from ethanol plants in Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, and transport it via pipeline for underground sequestration in North Dakota, to capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-trapping atmospheric emissions. Lederman did public relations for the company in South Dakota.

Opposition to the project caused a political property-rights revolt. It culminated in Rhoden signing a bill into law last year banning carbon dioxide pipelines from using eminent domain, which is a legal process for gaining access to private land. That law has so far kept Summit out of the state, and its latest route does not include South Dakota.

The event referenced in the Doeden campaign text messages was a Rhoden meet-and-greet at the Dakota Dunes Country Club. Lederman is the Republican Party county chairperson of Union County.

Lederman said he did urge voters at the event to support Rhoden, but Lederman and Fury said the event had nothing to do with Summit or the pipeline proposal.

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.

DHS boss Mullin warns of possible prosecution for election officials over voter roll access

BY SAM GAUNTT

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin threatened on Friday to prosecute election officials in states that don't "participate in securing the elections" ahead of the November midterms.

Election officials who do not comply with administration directives to enhance security of voting machines and to share voter data with the federal government through the powerful Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements computer program would be subject to fines and even prison time, he said.

"If the states that choose not to participate with the SAVE program and they choose not to participate in securing the elections, we will make sure that we make those states a priority to look at who voted in their states, and hold the election officials accountable," Mullin said during a press conference.

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The Trump administration will make it mandatory for states to undergo security enhancements of their voter machines and withhold grants or reimbursements to any states that do not, he said.

The mandate was necessary, he said, because foreign adversaries produce parts that are vital pieces in U.S. voting machines, and can "change voter registration and your vote."

"The machines have to be secured and your voter registration list needs to be scrubbed," he said, summarizing the department's message to state officials. "Our machines are vulnerable. There are steps that can be made right now that can secure those."

Earlier Friday, Mullin sent a letter to the secretaries of state of four states the department reviewed — Nevada, California, New Jersey and Pennsylvania — to warn them of the "tens of thousands of non-citizens who are illegally on the states' voter rolls."

Leaders from those states immediately pushed back against Mullin and President Donald Trump's claims. It is unclear what authority Mullin would use to investigate state election administration. The U.S. Constitution empowers states to run elections.

But it is clear the Trump administration considers election security a top priority in the leadup to the midterms.

Mullin's remarks followed President Donald Trump's address to the nation Thursday evening in which he declared that the U.S. election systems are vulnerable to foreign cyberattacks and nations such as China and Iran have sought to influence the outcome of past elections, including in 2018 and 2020.

Noncitizen voting

Trump has long focused on voting by noncitizens, which is rare.

Mullin on Friday said the Homeland Security Department reviewed voter rolls in a handful of states and discovered more than 250,000 noncitizens who were registered to vote.

The federal government will make it a priority to "look at who voted in their states" and hold their election officials accountable, Mullin said.

The federal government will go through the records "one by one," he said at the press conference, and pursue maximum charges for anyone found to have voted illegally, which includes up to five years in prison and \$250,000 in fines.

SAVE in court

The SAVE program allows local jurisdictions to determine someone's immigration status for purposes such as applying for government jobs, benefits and driver's licenses.

The administration wants states to use the powerful computer system to check the citizenship of people



President Donald Trump shakes hands with newly sworn in Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin during a ceremony in the Oval Office on March 24, 2026. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

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on voter rolls and is battling in court to restore that use of the program after a federal court ruled in June the expansion was unlawful.

Mullin blamed the program's pause on "activist judges" who don't want secure elections.

The SAVE program is distinct from, but shares its acronym with, the SAVE America Act, a bill that proposes to restrict voter access by adding requirements to register and cast ballots, including photo IDs. The bill is stalled in the U.S. Senate and does not include funding for election security infrastructure.

Democratic officials cry foul

In Mullin's letter to Nevada Secretary of State Francisco Aguilar, which was shared with States Newsroom, Mullin shared "concerning results" of a preliminary review of Nevada's voter registration data showing there were as many as 15,903 noncitizens registered to vote.

"I hope that you share in the commitment to ensure that only U.S. citizens participate in our federal elections," Mullin wrote. "Allowing just one non-citizen to vote cancels the vote of one U.S. citizen."

Mullin said his team would help support the state to "take steps to protect Nevada voters and ensure that ineligible voters will not impact upcoming federal elections."

Aguilar, a Democrat, told States Newsroom in a statement Friday that the department's estimate is "wildly speculative at best." The department "hasn't shared anything that backs it up," he added.

Aguilar said there are multiple safeguards in place to prevent noncitizens or any other ineligible voters from casting a ballot, and that Nevada runs "some of the safest, most secure and accessible elections in the country."

"The Administration lacks a fundamental understanding of how elections work," Aguilar wrote. "They just want to cause chaos and doubt ahead of the midterms."

In a statement Friday afternoon, Pennsylvania Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt, a Republican, said all evidence shows that noncitizen voting is "extremely rare across the country, including in Pennsylvania."

Every resident must take multiple steps to verify their identity before they cast a ballot or register to vote, he said.

"While the Department has made clear that we cannot share Pennsylvanians' private, personal information, we will review any information provided by DHS so that we can evaluate the validity of these claims," Schmidt said.

California under fire

California has repeatedly come under fire from Trump regarding its elections. In his speech Thursday evening, he cast doubt on the integrity of the state's recent Los Angeles mayoral and gubernatorial races.

Secretary of State Shirley Weber described the claims as fallacious and unsubstantiated.

"Non-citizen voting remains exceedingly rare," she said. "In California, election officials work every day to maintain accurate voter rolls and ensure that only eligible voters are registered."

She said her team will carefully review Mullin's letter to assess the methodology for its claims, and "welcome legitimate best practices that comply with state and federal law while protecting Californians' personal information."

"However, the information provided during the President's remarks and on the White House website, do not inspire any level of confidence in the methodology used or the conclusions reached," she added. "If the President is truly committed to election integrity, he must stop undermining confidence in our democracy, making it harder for eligible Americans to vote, and attempting to seize authority that the Constitution clearly reserves for the states."

Sam Gauntt is an intern at States Newsroom's Washington bureau through the Dow Jones News Fund internship program. He is a senior journalism major at the University of Maryland and editor in chief of The Diamondback, the university's independent student newspaper. He previously interned with Maryland Matters, an affiliate of States Newsroom.

Immigrants, DHS agents and traffic stops: Violent outcomes repeat across the US

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on July 13 killed 25-year-old Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a Colombian national with legal work authorization, in Maine, making him the 22nd person shot at by federal immigration officers during President Donald Trump's second term.

Nearly all of those 22 incidents — 19 — involved Department of Homeland Security officers shooting upon people in their vehicles during traffic stops, a crucial nexus, according to a States Newsroom review of news reports and documents. The encounters spanned the nation, from Colorado to Texas to Oregon to New Jersey.

Since Trump's inauguration in January 2025, where he promised to carry out an aggressive immigration crackdown, federal immigration officers have killed six people, three of them U.S. citizens. Four deaths came during traffic stops.

Following Guerrero's death, the second immigrant to be killed by ICE officers during a traffic stop in a week, DHS put a pause on traffic stop enforcement. But Trump quickly ordered the department to abandon those plans.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Thursday that officers will conduct vehicle-related enforcement stops "in order to continue their deportation campaign."

The agency has plenty of funding at hand. Congressional Republicans last year used a legislative maneuver to allocate roughly \$175 billion to DHS for immigration enforcement, detainment and deportations, without needing Democratic support. GOP lawmakers did the same move this year to fund \$75 billion for ICE and Border Patrol until September of 2029.

After the ICE shooting in Biddeford, the entire Maine congressional delegation called for an independent investigation, with Republican Sen. Susan Collins urging an end to vehicle enforcement.

A Thursday report from the American Civil Liberties Union found patterns of misconduct by immigration agents during Trump's second term, identifying 432 incidents where agents either used or threatened to use force against immigrants and bystanders.

The report reviewed more than 1,200 incidents across eight states — Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland and New Mexico.

Of the traffic-related enforcement, the ACLU found in 76 instances, people and passengers were pulled



People gather near the scene of 26th Street and Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where federal agents shot and killed Alex Pretti on Jan. 24, 2026, the third shooting in as many weeks. (Photo by Nicole Neri/Minnesota Reformer)

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from their cars; windows were smashed 47 times; officers 14 times rammed vehicles into people's cars; and they hit people with cars six times.

What happened afterward

In the moments after those 22 shootings, DHS has quickly accused those who were fired upon of using their vehicles as weapons against immigration officers.

But independent video has often contradicted that narrative.

In at least five cases DHS brought, charges were dismissed after the department accused U.S. citizens and immigrants shot by federal agents as being the aggressors.

In August 2025, Francisco Longoria, a Mexican national, was driving his vehicle in San Bernardino, California, when federal immigration agents in unmarked cars tried to pull him over. He fled and the agents fired upon him.

The Department of Justice charged him with attempting to harm agents, but prosecutors couldn't defend the DHS actions and charges were dismissed. Longoria was not injured.

Marimar Martinez was labeled a domestic terrorist by DHS and indicted after she was shot in her car five times by Border Patrol agents in October 2025, during the Trump administration's aggressive immigration deportation campaign in Chicago. DOJ dropped its charges against Martinez, a U.S. citizen, after the Trump administration accused her of using her car as a weapon.

When the president initially directed immigration agents to the nation's capitol, Phillip M. Brown, a U.S. citizen, was pulled over by law enforcement, including an immigration officer who shot into his vehicle. During the October 2025 shooting, Brown was not injured, but charged with fleeing from law enforcement. The U.S. Attorney's Office declined to prosecute the case.

During the Trump administration's aggressive deportation drive in Minneapolis in January, that left two U.S. citizens dead, a Venezuelan immigrant, Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis was shot by a federal agent while in his home. DHS accused Cesar Sosa-Celis of striking an immigration officer with a broom handle, but Cesar Sosa-Celis denied it and surveillance video contradicted the federal government's claim.

The immigration agent who shot Cesar Sosa-Celis was prosecuted by local Minnesota officials and arrested in May for falsely reporting a crime and for assault.

In Houston, on July 7, ICE officers killed 52-year-old Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, saying he tried to run over agents as has been the case in other incidents.

Salgado Araujo was driving several other people to work that morning when immigration officers approached his van. He was not considered a person of interest, DHS has stated.

The FBI has sought a search warrant to seize plastic bags with "crystal-like substances," to test for methamphetamine, according to the Texas Tribune. One of the lawyers representing Salgado Araujo's brother, who was in the van during the shooting, said it was granulated salt.

A grim beginning to the year

The most people shot by federal immigration agents was in January. Three of the five people shot by ICE and Border Patrol officers were in Minnesota, with two of them fatalities.

The two deaths were in Minneapolis, where the Trump administration conducted an aggressive deportation campaign that targeted the city, which has a high Somali refugee population.

That month, federal immigration agents shot and killed Renee Good and Alex Pretti, both U.S. citizens, and shot and wounded Cesar Sosa-Celis.

Good was killed while in her vehicle, which then DHS Secretary Kristi Noem labeled her as a domestic terrorist. DHS accused Good of using her SUV as a weapon, but independent video did not uphold that allegation.

A week later, federal immigration officers shot and killed intensive care unit nurse Pretti, who was recording agents on his phone and helping a woman who was pushed down by them. Noem again labeled him a domestic terrorist and said he was attacking agents, but multiple videos taken from different angles do not show that.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

Taco Bell removing lettuce nationwide linked to cyclosporiasis in 5 states

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Friday that public health officials have linked the ongoing outbreak of cyclosporiasis in five states to shredded iceberg lettuce from Taco Bell restaurants.

The fast food chain wrote in a statement that it plans to remove the “potentially impacted lettuce” from its “supply chain nationwide and will be replaced within 24 hours in select states.”

“While no official advisory has been issued, we believe public health is a shared responsibility among restaurants, their suppliers, and authorities, and we are proud to have consistently acted quickly and proactively to protect our guests,” the statement said.

“Taco Bell has taken precautionary action, and we encourage all relevant restaurants, retailers, and foodservice operators to do the same.”

The CDC statement said it had linked the ongoing outbreak to Taco Bell restaurants in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia. The statement didn’t say whether the lettuce was the cause of the severe gastrointestinal illness caused by a parasite in other states.

Taylor Farms wrote in a statement that based on information from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration “Taylor Farms de Mexico is voluntarily removing all iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico.”

“While the FDA traceback is indicating a specific independent farm that represents less than 1% of the U.S.’s iceberg lettuce supply as the potential source of the outbreak, we have removed all iceberg lettuce from the region indefinitely,” the statement said.

Taylor Farms added that none of their “salads or kits are associated with this outbreak.”

The CDC has confirmed more than 1,600 cases in 34 states since the outbreak began. Nearly 150 of those people were hospitalized, though no deaths have been reported so far.

The CDC writes on a webpage about the outbreak that it expects the number of confirmed cases will continue to increase given the six-week “reporting lag between illness onset and case reporting to CDC.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on July 17, 2026, it has linked an outbreak of cyclosporiasis in five states to shredded iceberg lettuce from Taco Bell restaurants. (Photo courtesy Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Tick season is getting longer. So is the list of states trying to keep up.

The lone star tick, once found primarily in the Southeast, has steadily expanded its range
BY AMANDA WATFORD

The tiniest menace of summer doesn't care if you're hiking through the woods, walking the dog or pulling weeds in your backyard.

It just wants a ride and a meal.

As ticks spread into new parts of the country and emergency room visits for tick bites climb higher than usual, states are scrambling to monitor where the pests are showing up, what diseases they may be carrying and how to warn residents before a bite turns into something far more serious.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in April that emergency department visits for tick bites were higher than expected across much of the United States and at their highest levels for that point in the year since 2017.

In June, there were 112 tick-related ER visits per 100,000 people, compared with 110 per 100,000 during the same period last year, according to the CDC's online tick bite tracker. That suggests this year's summer trend may be in line with 2025.

Nationwide, the latest available data show an estimated 65 tick bite-related emergency department visits per 100,000 people, up from 47 per 100,000 last year. This year's current figures are preliminary and subject to change, but if they hold, this year's rate may be the highest since 2017.

Health officials say the trend reflects a combination of expanding tick populations, changing environmental conditions and increased human exposure during warmer months.

The concern extends well beyond Lyme disease.

The lone star tick, once found primarily in the Southeast, has steadily expanded its range and is known for its aggressive host-seeking behavior, often actively crawling toward people and animals. An adult female is distinguished by a white dot or "lone star" on her back.

The species has been linked to alpha-gal syndrome, an allergy that can cause people to develop severe reactions after eating beef, pork and other mammalian products. Researchers also continue to monitor ticks that carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever, anaplasmosis and other illnesses.

Tick surveillance by state health officials varies widely across the country. Some states maintain active



A dog walks along a wooded trail in a Maryland park. Ticks are commonly found in wooded and grassy habitats, and the lone star tick has expanded well beyond its historic range in the Southeast. (Photo by Amanda Watford/Stateline)

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surveillance programs that collect and test ticks to identify where disease-carrying species are becoming established. Other states rely more heavily on human disease reports or passive tick submissions, making it harder to detect changes before infections begin to rise.

Those differences can leave public health officials with an incomplete picture of how quickly tick populations are changing — and where people may face the greatest risk.

Several states, including Massachusetts, Missouri and Oklahoma, have expanded surveillance efforts in recent years or launched public education campaigns as tick habitats shift. All three joined the list of states that now or will soon mandate reporting of alpha-gal syndrome. Other states are studying the spread of lone star ticks and the increasing recognition of the syndrome, which experts believe remains underdiagnosed.

Some experts say warmer winters in many parts of the country have allowed ticks to remain active for longer periods each year while expanding into regions where they were once uncommon. At the same time, growing white-tailed deer populations and changing land use have created more opportunities for people and ticks to cross paths.

Public health officials say the best defense remains preventing bites altogether. They recommend using insect repellents registered by the Environmental Protection Agency, wearing permethrin-treated clothing, including long sleeves and pants in wooded or grassy areas, checking people and pets for ticks after spending time outdoors and removing attached ticks as soon as they're found.

For states, the challenge is becoming less about responding to tick season and more about adapting to a future in which, in many places, the season is lasting longer — and the tiny hitchhikers are turning up in places they never did before.

Stateline reporter Amanda Watford can be reached at awatford@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.

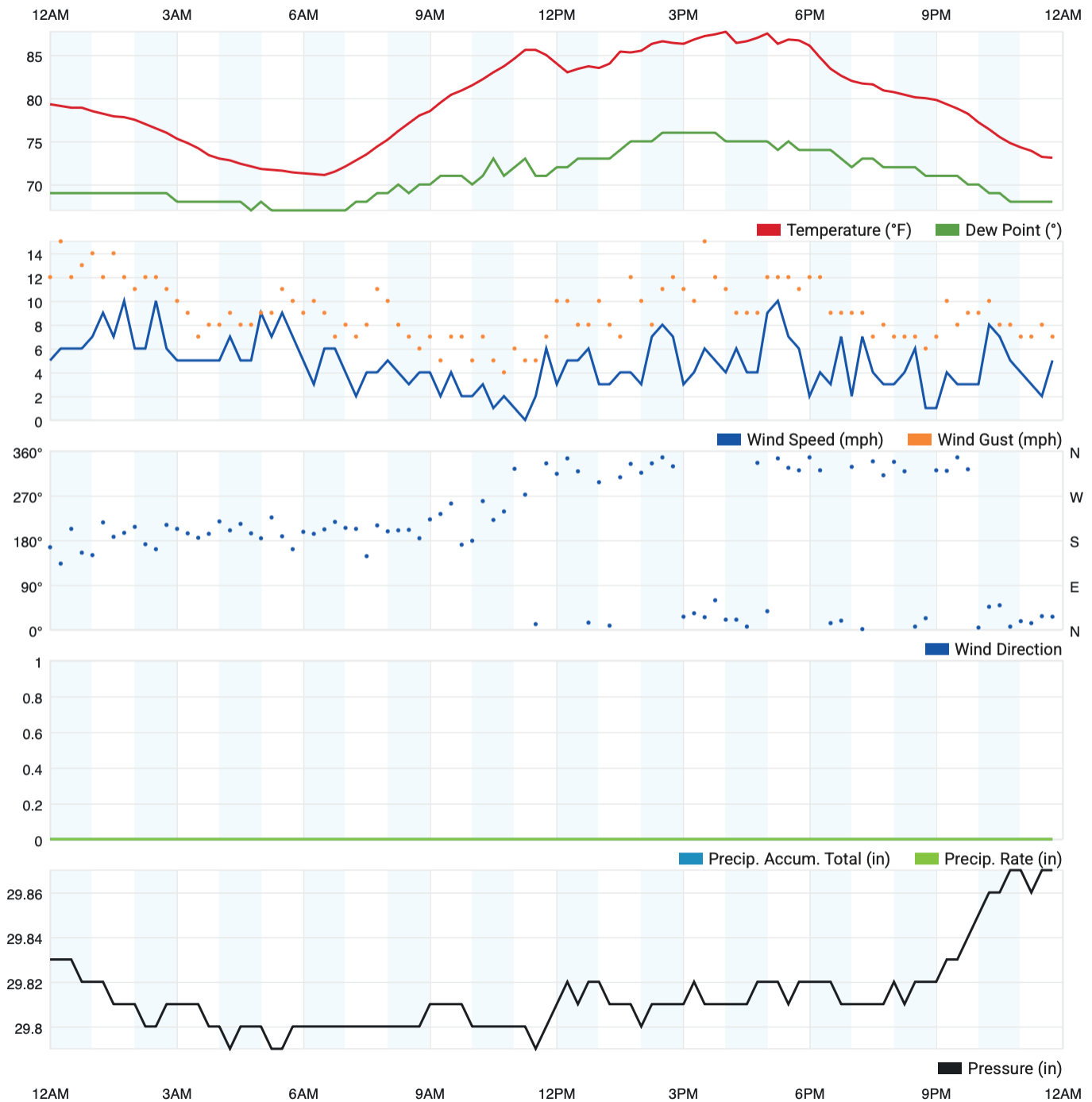
Amanda Watford (née Hernández) is a national reporter covering criminal justice and public safety for Stateline. Her reporting focuses on how states are reshaping approaches to policing, crime victims' services, corrections, courts, drug policy, gun violence and more.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

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Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 90 °F

Hot



Low: 66 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 95 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Sunny



Low: 69 °F

Chance
Showers



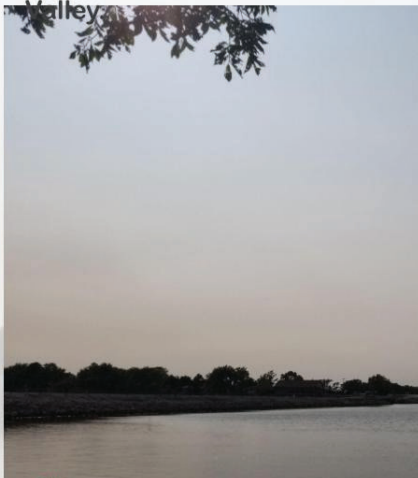
High: 94 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Sunny
and Breezy

Hot & Smoky, Then Stormy Weather Ahead

Today, July 18th

Sunny with highs warming into the 90s except low 80s east. Smoke aloft will hold temps down east of the James



National Weather Service Aberdeen, South Dakota

Sunday - Sunday Night

Mostly cloudy with highs 90 - 103. Scattered thunderstorms. Some may be severe Sunday evening mainly north of Highway 212.



Updated: July 18, 2026

3:55 AM

Smoke will drift overhead across northeastern SD and west central MN today, helping to keep temperatures cooler in the lower 80s. Elsewhere, expect highs in the 90s. Thunderstorms move in late tonight into Sunday morning as smoke clears out and dangerously hot temperatures return. Some of the storms may be strong to severe Sunday night. There is a marginal risk (1 of 5) for severe storms north of Highway 212.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 88 °F at 4:54 PM

Low Temp: 71 °F at 6:18 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 12:12 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 40 in 1915

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.99

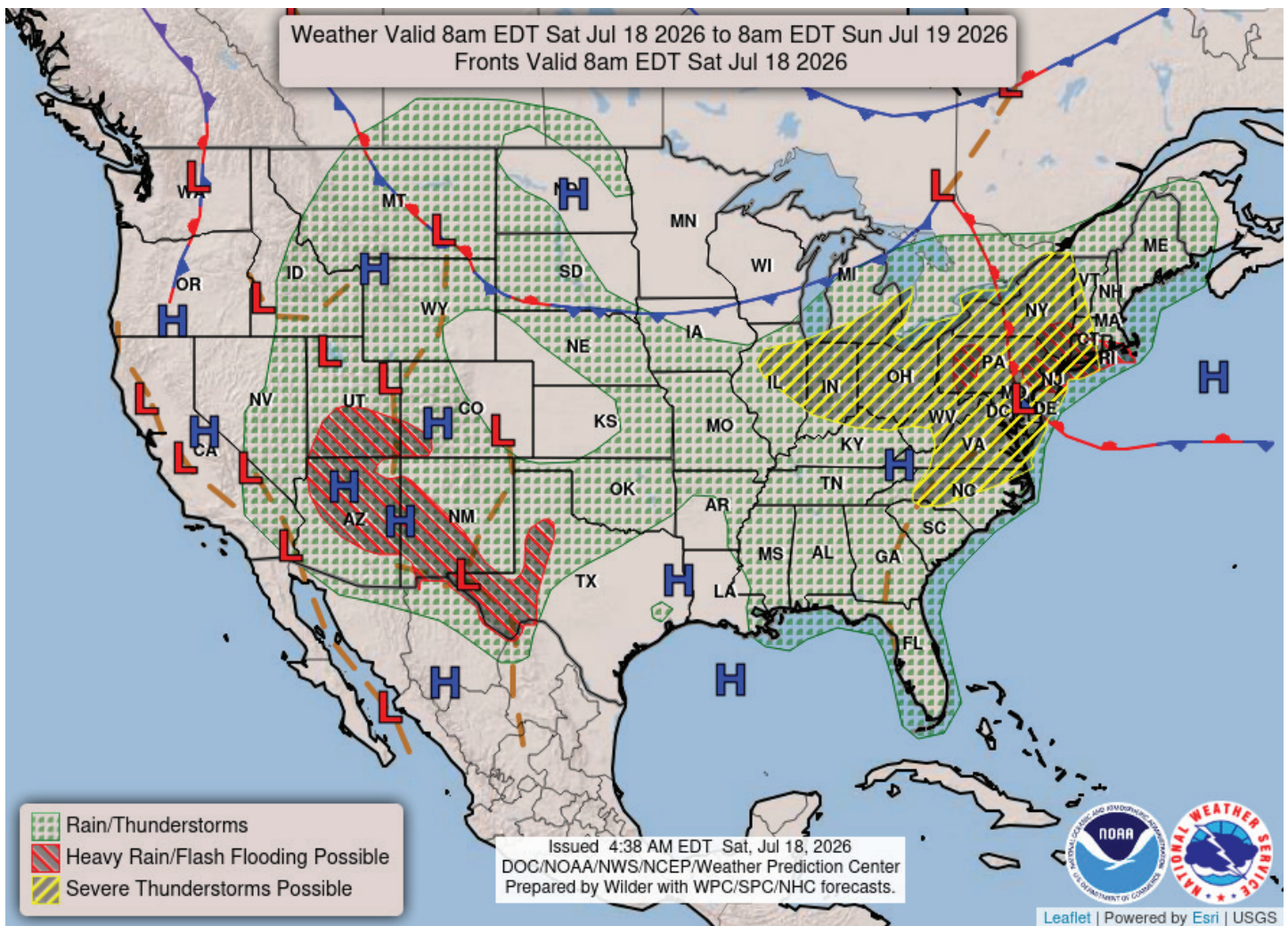
Precip to date in July.: 4.72

Average Precip to date: 13.00

Precip Year to Date: 14.19

Sunset Tonight: 9:15 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:02 am



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Today in Weather History

July 18, 1883: An estimated F3 tornado moved southeast from south of Redfield to north of Hitchcock, to 6 miles southeast of Crandon in Spink County. At least one farm house was destroyed and swept away. Three people were killed on one farm.

July 18, 1986: In the afternoon, an F2 tornado that touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis became one of the most observed and photographed tornadoes ever. The detailed coverage included video from a Minnesota DOT traffic camera and a remarkable aerial video taken from a helicopter by a television camera crew. The tornado began in Brooklyn Park and moved slowly northeast, causing light to moderate damage. It then turned east and slowed as it crossed the Mississippi River. Also on this day, an F2 tornado touched down two miles southeast of Bryant, in Hamlin County. This tornado traveled near Dolph Creek and moved east along the creek to the Lake Norden area. The tornado damaged many trees and destroyed a barn. A second F2 tornado touched down three miles west of Toronto and moved southeast. The tornado destroyed a barn, silo, and six other buildings and caused extensive damage to farm equipment on a farm one mile south and a half mile west Astoria.

July 18, 2008: Severe thunderstorms developed across parts of central and north-central South Dakota bringing large hail up to the size of golf balls and damaging winds to near 80 mph. Some tree, vehicle, and building damage occurred with some of the storms. Eighty mph winds or higher brought down many branches along with some trees in Fort Pierre. Power was cut off for parts of Fort Pierre when branches fell on power lines. Several truck trailers and feed silos were tipped onto their sides by the high winds. Also, some buildings were damaged. A loaded train was pushed down the tracks almost a quarter of a mile by the strong winds. Seventy mph winds or greater brought down many tree branches along with some trees in Pierre. There were power outages in Pierre along with some buildings receiving damage. Damaging thunderstorm winds also downed six power poles between Sully Buttes and Onida knocking power out to over 800 homes in and around Onida.

64: The great fire of Rome breaks out and destroys much of the city on this day. Despite the well-known stories, there is no evidence that the Roman emperor, Nero, either started the fire or played the fiddle while it burned. The fire began in the slums of a district south of the legendary Palatine Hill. The area's homes burned very quickly, and the fire spread north, fueled by high winds.

1889 — A cloudburst in West Virginia along the small creeks in Wirt County, Jackson County and Wood County claimed twenty lives. Rockport, WV, reported nineteen inches of rain in two hours and ten minutes that Thursday evening. Tygart Creek rose 22 feet in one hour, and villages were swept away on Tygart, Slate, Tucker, and Sandy Creeks. (The Weather Channel)

1936 — The all time record high temperature for the state of Kansas was set when a 121-degree high temperature fried Fredonia. (US National Weather Service Wichita)

1942 — A record deluge occurred at Smethport in northern Pennsylvania, with 30.7 inches in just six hours. The downpours and resultant flooding in Pennsylvania were devastating. (David Ludlum)

1986 — One of the most photo-genic tornadoes touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, MN, during the late afternoon. The very slow moving tornado actually appeared live on the evening news by way of an aerial video taken by the KARE-TV helicopter crew. The tornado, unlike most, was quite the prima donna, staying visible to tens of thousands of persons for thirty minutes. It was moderate in intensity, with winds of 113-157 mph, and caused 650 thousand dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma, northern Texas and Arkansas during the afternoon, and into the night. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Stamford, TX, and wind gusts to 92 mph near Throckmorton, TX. Record heat continued in the southwestern U.S. Phoenix AZ reported a record high of 115 degrees, and a 111 degree reading at Midland, TX, was second only to their all-time record high of 112 degrees established sixteen days earlier. (The National Weather Summary)

1996: A massive rainstorm in north central and northeast Illinois led to widespread flooding. Aurora reported 16.94 inches of rain, establishing a state record for the most rain in a single day. Other heavy totals included 13.60 inches at Joliet, 9.24 inches in Wheaton, 8.09 inches in DeKalb, and 7.82 inches at Elgin. This event is often called "the second most damaging weather disaster in Illinois History."

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Daily Devotion

Saved and Sure

When doubts or questions arise, God answers with His promises of security.

John 10:28-29: 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

29 `` My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Many of us struggle with lingering doubts about our salvation. To settle this question, let's look at three truths the Lord wants believers to understand:

God wants everyone to be saved. He calls all men and women to Himself, but there must be a response to His invitation. When we answer His call, the Father makes us part of His everlasting family (Romans 10:9-13).

God wants everyone to be saved by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 declares that our salvation is entirely the work of the Lord—His plan, His work, His gift. Our only part is faithfully receiving what He freely offers.

God wants everyone to be sure of salvation. If doubt creeps in when you stumble, recognize that God isn't the one planting those seeds of insecurity. He has already established the plan by which we can be saved, and He invites us to rest confidently in that finished work.

Passages like John 3:16, 1 John 5:13, and Ephesians 1:13-14 all point to the complete certainty we can embrace. The next time you feel unsure, read these passages and ask the Spirit to anchor your faith in what the Lord has already accomplished.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.17.26

3 19 38 48 58 1

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 23 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.17.26

22 34 45 48 55 14

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$707,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.15.26

26 29 41 46 47 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,120,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 23 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.15.26

1 9 10 16 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 38 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.15.26

14 15 23 33 42 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 7 Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.15.26

2 7 18 29 38 16

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$526,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 7 Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Judge blocks South Dakota abortion advertising ban against nonprofit

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota cannot enforce its abortion advertising ban against a reproductive health nonprofit, a federal judge ruled Friday.

U.S. District Judge Camela C. Theeler issued a preliminary injunction blocking South Dakota from enforcing the recently adopted state law against New York-based Mayday Health and plaintiff Nancy Turbak Berry. The judge said the nonprofit was likely to win the case.

Signed in March, the law prohibits the distribution and advertisement for unlawful abortion services, like abortion pills, in South Dakota. Friday's ruling does not strike down the law.

The plaintiffs filed the lawsuit in May against Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden and Attorney General Marty Jackley, arguing the abortion advertising ban violates freedom of speech. In the Friday ruling, the judge wrote that the state did not attempt to prove the law met strict scrutiny — that the law both served a compelling government interest and was narrowly tailored.

"Information should not be banned," said Jim Leach, the attorney representing Mayday Health. "And the state wants to ban information about abortion. This ruling says the state cannot ban information about abortion, no matter what you think about abortion or anything else."

Abortion has been illegal in South Dakota since the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, except in cases where the life of the pregnant person is at risk. Administering, prescribing or procuring an abortion in the state is a felony offense.

Mayday Health, which was formed in 2022, advertises about the legality and availability of abortion pills, but it does not sell or distribute any medication. It advertised abortion pills in South Dakota in December 2025 through placards at gas stations that read, "Pregnant? Don't want to be? Learn More at Mayday.Health."

Jackley then filed a complaint against Mayday Health for the advertisements, and the two reached an agreement in March for the nonprofit to remove the placards.

Rhoden said in a statement Friday that he was disappointed with the ruling but noted that it is only a preliminary decision.

"I remain confident that our law is not only constitutional — it's vitally important," he said.

Innovation, data fixes fuel Native American graduation gains at federally funded schools

By SAVANNAH PETERS Associated Press

During his senior year of high school on the Puyallup Reservation, Gerald Dillon traded much of his academic coursework for career training. When he walked into the second grade classroom where he worked as a teaching assistant, students would rush from their seats for a fist bump or a hug.

The 18-year-old, who once found classes boring and put in only enough effort to pass, found renewed purpose to come to school everyday.

"It motivates me. I like making connections with the kids, I like helping them," Dillon said.

It began in his junior year when he enrolled in career training courses. Soon, Dillon said, his grades improved. He graduated in June from Chief Leschi Schools in Washington and is now considering going to college for a teaching degree.

Administrators at the school say a shift in focus to technical training and career readiness is paying off, with more students not only staying in school but graduating on time.

Those gains are emblematic of progress across the U.S. Bureau of Indian Education, which oversees 183 primary and secondary schools serving over 40,000 students. In 2015, just over half of high schoolers at

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BIE schools graduated within four years. That number soared to a record high of 79% by 2025.

Some BIE educators attribute that surge to local innovations. Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Billy Kirkland says they reflect the Trump administration's commitment to Native American students, including efforts to strengthen teacher training. In addition, the way graduation rates are reported across BIE schools was changed to address flawed data collection that previously depressed the numbers.

But concerns loom that changes reshaping the BIE under the Trump administration — including the planned dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education and continued fallout from cuts instituted by DOGE — could undermine progress and prevent struggling schools from improving.

Reporting standards net more accurate data

The surge in graduation rates reflects, in part, more accurate reporting rather than a sudden leap in student academic improvement, according to agency officials.

For years, school administrators across the system used flawed methods to track graduation rates, often counting students who had transferred to other schools as dropouts.

"We had to come to a consensus and set an accountability framework for our schools," said Carmelia Becenti, the agency's chief academic officer.

Beginning in 2018, BIE began standardizing data collection methods. In the years since, Becenti said, the data has painted a more accurate and encouraging picture.

An AP analysis of BIE data found that graduation rates across the system are up 55% since new reporting standards began rolling out, with 11 of its secondary schools reporting 100% growth or higher.

New approaches help students connect

Less than one-third of BIE schools are operated by the agency itself. The rest are run by tribes and receive federal funding. At some of those, educators say data collection is only part of the story.

Don Brummett, superintendent of Chief Leschi Schools, said his staff has been working to correct a "disconnect" between the high school's previous laser focus on getting students ready for college and many students' goals of finding a job upon graduation.

"We devalued the trades. That was a mistake," Brummett said.

The school launched its career and technical curriculum in 2020 with funding from the Puyallup Tribal Council. Since then, Brummett has seen students who might otherwise have dropped out instead enter health sciences, education and fisheries management and find new motivation to stay in school.

Dillon, the recent graduate, said hands-on job training was a better match for his learning style.

"It was kind of the first time I felt excited to go to school," said Dillon, reflecting on his time helping second graders practice reading skills and learn the life cycle of a frog.

Between 2019 and 2025, Chief Leschi Schools reported four-year graduation rates rose from 53% to 87%.

A focus on trades is just one of the ways tribal-controlled BIE schools have innovated to keep students on track. At Choctaw Central High School, a BIE school operated by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw, administrators said a COVID-era experiment in virtual learning contributed to a surge in graduation rates from roughly 70% to 93%.

"For certain kids that have more responsibilities at home, kids that need to work, we saw that (virtual learning) gave them a flexible schedule and an opportunity to earn their diploma," said principal Alaric Keams.

When pandemic lockdowns lifted, the district maintained a virtual learning option for all high schoolers.

But not all tribal governments have the resources to pay for these kinds of programs or take over management of BIE schools.

Peter Lengkeek, chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, says the BIE-operated high school serving his community is chronically understaffed and crumbling under a backlog of deferred maintenance, including a gymnasium with sinking walls and a rodent infestation. It has reported graduating fewer than 60% of students on time in recent years.

"If we were able to, we would step in and try to remedy a lot of these things," said Lengkeek. "We have to rely on the government to fulfill its treaty promise."

Tribal leaders push back against education changes

From the dismantling of the federal Department of Education to DOGE reductions that swept out longtime staffers, as well as repeated threats of deep funding cuts, tribal leaders fear the progress that has been made could be undermined.

In November 2025, the Department of Education began handing off oversight of dozens of programs that serve Native students to BIE.

At a tribal consultation session in February in Washington, D.C., dozens of tribal leaders spoke in opposition, saying the transition could overwhelm the already understaffed and stretched BIE with additional responsibilities. Several accused the department of ignoring its legal responsibility to seek their input before moving forward.

"We are here too late," said Herschel Gorham, lieutenant governor of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. "The ink was dry on the agreements before the tribes were ever notified. That should never, ever happen."

Jason Dropik, executive director of the National Indian Education Association, said turmoil at the agency's Washington office trickles down to schools, pointing to a Trump administration executive order that aimed to turn the BIE into a school choice system but was scaled back after an outcry from tribes.

"That caused some delays and disruptions to services," Dropik said. "When drastic changes go into motion without tribal consultation, there can be unintended consequences for our students."

Lengkeek worries the BIE could be consumed by political upheaval while schools like the one serving his community continue to underperform.

"This system holds the future of our nations in its hands," Lengkeek said. "We need stability. We need increased funding. We need infrastructure."

Indian police forcibly hospitalize a prominent Cockroach Party activist on hunger strike

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN and SHONAL GANGULY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Police forcibly transferred a prominent activist to a hospital in New Delhi on Saturday after his health deteriorated during a 20-day hunger strike tied to India's viral Cockroach Janta Party movement for education reform.

Authorities tightened security around New Delhi's Jantar Mantar, a designated public protest ground enclosed by police barricades, where activist Sonam Wangchuk has been camped along with students and Cockroach Party activists who demand the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, after allegations that exam papers were leaked in advance.

The movement also seeks sweeping reforms to the examination system and compensation for families of students who died by suicide over the leaks or exam results.

The 59-year-old engineer and education reformer's strike has become a rallying point for the party, which began in May after Supreme Court Chief Justice Surya Kant compared some unemployed young people to "cockroaches" during a hearing on another issue. Supporters embraced the insult as a badge of resilience, turning it into a satirical political campaign that amassed more than 21 million Instagram followers in a few days.

Delhi Police said Wangchuk was taken to hospital after his health worsened during the hunger strike, and that a brief commotion occurred when some protesters tried to block the move.

Sachin Sharma, a deputy commissioner of police, said Wangchuk's hospitalization was carried out following medical advice and a court directive.

"Mr. Sonam Wangchuk has been taken from here to an appropriate government hospital, a much-needed medical intervention, under medical supervision," Sharma said.

The Cockroach Party said in a social media post that the government "forcefully abducted" Wangchuk "without his or his family's consent" two days before their planned march to India's Parliament.

Saurav Das, chief spokesperson of the Cockroach Party, disputed the police account, saying the court had not ordered Wangchuk's forcible removal. He questioned the medical grounds for the move, noting that no doctor had examined him shortly before he was taken away, and alleged that authorities were

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trying to curb a protest movement that had been gaining momentum.

Shortly after the incident, Abhijeet Dipke, a Boston University student and founder of the Cockroach Party, announced he would begin a hunger strike and called for nationwide protests.

Dipke told The Associated Press at the protest ground that police used force while removing Wangchuk and alleged that he was "kidnapped by the police like criminals and goons" after "covering him in sheets."

The party founder reaffirmed the movement's plan to march to India's Parliament, scheduled for Monday, when its session begins.

"The resolve and the movement will only get stronger from here," Dipke said.

Meanwhile, Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali J. Angmo, in a letter to Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital, said "lack of transparency has shaken their trust" and sought her husband be shifted to a medical center of their choice. She said nothing should be given to Wangchuk orally or intravenously without her consent.

Authorities deployed additional police and paramilitary soldiers and erected barricades around Jantar Mantar. Police said the heightened security measures were precautionary and urged protesters to cooperate with authorities.

8 killed and more than 60 wounded in Ukrainian drone attack on Russian regions

By The Associated Press undefined

Eight people were killed and more than 60 others were wounded in Russia by overnight Ukrainian drone attacks, Russian officials said Saturday.

Kyiv's forces are continuing their relentless aerial campaign against energy infrastructure and military targets inside Russia, aiming to undermine Moscow's war effort and make Russians feel the consequences of the Kremlin's all-out invasion of Ukraine that is well into its fifth year.

Two sprawling warehouses of Russia's major online retailer, Wildberries, were hit by Ukrainian drones overnight, according to Russian officials: one in the town of Kotovsk in the Tambov region, some 360 kilometers (roughly 220 miles) from the border with Ukraine, and another one in the city of Elektrostal, about 50 kilometers (some 30 miles) east of Moscow.

Both caught fire, but Wildberries founder Tatyana Kim said later on Saturday morning that the fire in Kotovsk has been put out. Images and footage released by Russian online outlets showed a fire raging at the Elektrostal facility, with massive plumes of smoke towering over it.

A Ukrainian drone also hit an oil depot in the city of Noginsk, just north of Elektrostal, sparking a fire and prompting evacuations of a nearby maternity hospital and a residential building, according to the governor of the Moscow region, Andrei Vorobyov.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post on Saturday that Ukrainian long-range strikes hit two "significant logistical facilities in the Moscow and Tambov regions."

"These facilities were used by the aggressor to supply sanctioned components for the production of drones and navigation equipment," he wrote. An oil facility was also hit, he said.

Seven night shift workers were killed at the warehouse in Kotovsk, and 25 others were wounded, Tambov regional governor Yevgeny Pervyshov said. A total of 37 people were wounded in the Moscow region, Vorobyov said, adding that one of those later died in the hospital.

In Elektrostal, drone debris also hit a kindergarten building, Vorobyov said, sparking a fire that has since been put out.

In the city of Vladimir, some 180 kilometers (over 110 miles) east of Moscow, a Ukrainian drone hit a residential building, sparking a brief fire, Vladimir governor Alexander Avdeyev said. There were no casualties, he added.

Ukrainian special operations also conducted strikes against targets in the Sea of Azov and in occupied territory, Zelenskyy said.

Overall, the Russian Defense Ministry said its air defenses overnight intercepted 379 Ukrainian drones over 19 Russian regions, as well as the illegally annexed Crimea, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea.

Rescuers race to find survivors in the rain after a landslide in China kills at least 8

By ANDY WONG and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

CHONGQING, China (AP) — Rescue crews on Saturday raced to find survivors from a landslide in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing that killed at least eight people and left 34 missing.

The landslide occurred in Pengshui County on Friday morning on the outskirts of Chongqing municipality, when massive amounts of rocks and soil washed down a slope, burying more than 10 residential buildings, state broadcaster CCTV said. Ten people were rescued and sent to the hospital, while more than 1,100 people have been relocated.

Associated Press photos and videos showed that one of the fallen rocks appeared larger than a multi-story building, with ruins scattered across the steep terrain. One of the damaged buildings had its top part crushed and a car was seen half-buried near another building.

The landslide contained about 18,000 cubic meters (635,500 cubic feet) of rocks and debris, and the largest single rock was around 3,000 cubic meters (106,000 cubic feet), Wang Chuanjun, head of Planning and Natural Resources in Pengshui County, told a news conference on Friday.

CCTV said persistent rain hit Pengshui from Friday night to Saturday morning, with 19.2 centimeters (nearly 8 inches) recorded at a weather station. The unstable weather made the rescue operation more challenging, it said. As the rain eased slightly, rescue teams entered the site to conduct on-the-ground inspections of the collapsed buildings and riverbank areas.

While rescue operations are being carried out on one side of the massive rocks, teams will later need to look beneath them, where they may risk injury if the boulders become unstable and slide, CCTV reported. Once the search of the surrounding areas is complete, officers will drill into the boulders and fill the holes with explosives to break them apart, it said.

Beyond the deployment of excavators, a CCTV video report showed a search dog barking to alert a rescuer about signs of life.

China's National Development and Reform Commission on Saturday allocated a relief fund of 30 million yuan (\$4.4 million) to support the restoration of infrastructure and public service facilities following the disaster.

The rain-triggered landslide occurred near a stretch of the Wujiang River, which cuts through karst mountains peppered with small towns and terraces.

Pengshui County is located in the southeast part of Chongqing, bordering the provinces of Hubei and Guizhou.

The US and Iran have blown past red lines as they lurch back toward all-out war

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

A week after the United States and Iran signed a preliminary deal aimed at ending the war, an Iranian drone slammed into a cargo ship sailing through the Strait of Hormuz.

There were no casualties or major damage, but the June 25 attack set off a chain of hostilities that would put the two countries on a path back toward all-out war less than a month after they agreed to stop fighting.

Each strike and counterstrike chipped away at the pillars of the agreement, which has now collapsed, though there are still efforts to salvage it. Red lines set by both sides have been crossed. A return to full-scale war that would further destabilize the Middle East and disrupt the world economy appears increasingly likely.

Here's a look at how we got here.

Iran attacks ships using a route bypassing its control

The attack on the cargo ship came after Iran had warned vessels not to use an alternative route through

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the Strait of Hormuz that is overseen by the U.S. military and intended to be outside Tehran's control.

Iran had largely shut down the waterway — which carried a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas in peacetime — after the surprise U.S.-Israeli attack on Feb. 28 that started the war. Tehran has come to see control over the strait, and its far-reaching economic impact, as a key pressure point in its confrontation with the U.S.

The preliminary agreement called for the strait to be fully reopened, but it also contained language suggesting Iran would manage traffic and potentially charge fees in the future. Iran has seized on that, saying it has the right to control the strait and that the alternative route is a violation of the deal.

The U.S. and others dispute that, saying the strait should be open to all and toll-free, as it was before the war.

US strikes Iran, which retaliates against Gulf states

The U.S. launched strikes on Iran a day after the June 25 attack, hitting what the U.S. military said were missile and drone locations and coastal radar sites.

The following day, Iran attacked a tanker using the alternative route through the strait, and the U.S. responded with more strikes. This time, Iran lashed out at nearby Gulf states, attacking Kuwait and Bahrain, both of which host American troops.

The two sides pulled back the following week, each sending delegations to Qatar, which had played a key role in mediating the agreement. But they did not meet directly.

Iran reiterated its warning against using the alternative route as it prepared for the dayslong funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the opening U.S.-Israeli strikes. The funeral began on July 4, with crowds calling for revenge against U.S. President Donald Trump.

Fighting resumes after attacks on 3 ships

Days later, Iran attacked three ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. responded with a wave of strikes that it said targeted air defense systems, radars and over 60 small boats used by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Such boats have been used to harass ships in the strait.

The U.S. also revoked a waiver that had allowed Iran for the first time in years to sell its oil on the international market for U.S. dollars. The waiver was part of the interim deal.

Iran condemned the U.S. strikes and the restoration of oil sanctions as violations of the agreement while insisting it had the right to control the strait, which the military command says is an "unbreakable red line." Iran also broadened its retaliatory strikes, hitting Bahrain, Kuwait and mediator Qatar.

Trump, after departing from a NATO summit, offered mixed messages.

He said the U.S. strikes were in response to the attacks on shipping, warning that "if it happens again, it will get much worse!" But he also appeared to rule out long-term military action, saying "anything that happens is going to happen very fast." He also suggested the U.S. military might "just finish the job."

The fighting has steadily escalated since then. On Wednesday, the U.S. restored its blockade on Iran's ports, which had been lifted as part of the interim agreement.

The next red line is civilian infrastructure, and it may have been crossed

In recent days, the U.S. has expanded its strikes to northern Iran, hitting targets far from the strait. On Friday, it struck bridges and power stations in the south, collapsing a tower that it said was used by the Revolutionary Guard for maritime surveillance at one of Iran's main ports.

Iran said Friday that U.S. strikes have killed at least 46 people and wounded more than 400 since hostilities resumed.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to target civilian infrastructure in Iran, at one point earlier in the war vowing to annihilate Iran's "whole civilization." Until now, he has repeatedly backed off from such threats, citing diplomatic progress.

But Iran's leaders may already believe that yet another line has been crossed. On Friday and again Saturday, Iran attacked a water desalination plant in extremely arid Kuwait.

Trump has also mused about taking control of the strait by force, possibly by seizing one or more strategic islands held by Iran. That would likely require a far larger naval presence and potentially tens of

thousands of ground troops.

US and Iran exchange strikes as they struggle over Strait of Hormuz

By JON GAMBRELL and TOQA EZZIDIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States and Iran exchanged strikes aimed at infrastructure and military targets on Saturday as their battle over the Strait of Hormuz intensified.

The region has endured days of back-and-forth attacks in a conflict increasingly focused on control of the strait. The collapse of an interim ceasefire leaves no clear end in sight for the war that the U.S. and Israel began more than four months ago.

The U.S. Central Command said early Saturday that its seventh straight night of strikes had hit "surveillance sites, military logistics infrastructure, underground weapons storage, and maritime capabilities."

Kuwait said Saturday it intercepted Iranian missiles and drones and that a water desalination plant was struck, causing a fire, the second such attack in two days in the tiny desert nation, which depends on desalination for 90 percent of its drinking water.

Several firefighters and a worker were injured while battling two other blazes sparked by Iranian strikes, according to the Kuwait Fire Force.

Kuwait briefly closed its airspace in the morning due to missile threats, and Kuwait Airways said it was rescheduling most flights to and from the capital.

Iraq said it shot down attack drones over the city of Irbil. Jordan's state-run Petra news agency said that the kingdom's air defense systems had downed Iranian missiles, while air sirens sounded multiple times in Bahrain, according to the government.

Iranian officials say recent U.S. strikes have killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds in Iran. The U.S. military also acknowledged that several more service members were injured.

Iran effectively closed the strait to shipping traffic after the war started Feb. 28. That sent the price of oil soaring and gave Iran significant leverage in negotiations. The price of oil rose Friday above \$86 a barrel, close to its highest level in a month, as crossings through the strait fell to a three-week low, according to an international shipping tracker.

In an address to the American public on Thursday evening, Trump insisted the war was going well. "We are likewise winning big in Iran, and you will see the fruits of that labor very, very shortly," he said.

Before the war began, the U.S. had been in talks with Iran over its nuclear program. Trump now faces political pressure to bring the war to a close and avoid the kind of prolonged Middle East conflict he had campaigned against.

Infrastructure hit in Iran

U.S. airstrikes hit an electricity and desalination plant in Iran's southern Hormozgan province, Iranian state television reported. The attacks hit Bonji, a village on Iran's coast on the Strait of Hormuz.

Overnight strikes damaged two tunnels and a bridge, disrupting one of the main highways towards Bandar Abbas, a city which sits near the narrowest part of the Strait of Hormuz, according to Iran's state-run news agency. Iran also reported strikes on the strategic Qeshm Island inside the Strait.

The previous day, Iranian state media reported that the U.S. hit highways and railway bridges, seemingly aimed at cutting off Bandar Abbas, Iran's main port, from roads leading into the Islamic Republic's central region onward to Tehran, the capital.

Iran acknowledged "attacks on power infrastructure" during the U.S. airstrike campaign for the first time Friday when its Energy Ministry issued a call for people to use less power in southern provinces "experiencing extreme heat." The ministry did not specify what was hit.

Iranian authorities said at least 46 people have been killed and more than 400 wounded in recent U.S. strikes, including eight killed in a strike on a bridge Friday.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on Saturday stepped up its warning that countries hosting U.S. forces should be "prepared to receive a corresponding response," according to Iran's State TV.

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U.S. officials acknowledged 13 additional U.S. service members — 10 Army soldiers and three Navy sailors — had been injured since Monday, but offered no further details. Since the war began, 14 U.S. service members have been killed and 427 wounded.

Strikes come as Iran and US vie for Strait of Hormuz

Iran has said the strait must be under its sole control and that vessels should pay fees to Tehran — even though the world for decades has considered it an international waterway.

Trump has returned in recent days to his threats to target Iranian power stations and bridges to try to compel Iran to loosen its hold on the strait, through which about a fifth of all oil and natural gas traded once passed in peacetime. The U.S. also reimposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports to halt its shipments of crude oil.

Crossings through the strait fell to a three-week low of just eight vessels on Thursday, according to MarineTraffic.com.

A growing amount of the region's energy is being shipped through pipelines, but not nearly enough to offset the decline in shipping through the strait.

Massive fire destroys 100 homes in Norway and forces hundreds to evacuate

DRAMMEN, Norway (AP) — A major fire in southern Norway destroyed more than 100 homes Friday and forced hundreds of people to evacuate the area, according to police and the country's public broadcaster.

The blaze started in a townhouse in the city of Drammen around 3:30 p.m. Friday, police said. It then spread through the area and into nearby forests. Firefighters continued their efforts Saturday morning to bring the blaze under control.

NRK, Norway's public broadcaster, said hundreds of people went to an evacuation center.

No residents have been reported missing, police said. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire. Drammen is roughly 34 kilometers (21 miles) southwest of Oslo.

Women are dying in Africa as US ramps up its global battle against abortion

By MONIKA PRONCZUK and THALIA BEATY Associated Press

KISUMU, Kenya (AP) — For decades, U.S. anti-abortion groups have lobbied domestically and abroad for restricting access to abortion. In the U.S., their biggest success was the reversal of Roe v. Wade. Now, the Trump administration is delivering new momentum to the movement exporting "family values" to nations overseas.

At anti-abortion activists' annual March for Life demonstration in Washington, Vice President JD Vance announced sweeping new restrictions on U.S. funding for nongovernmental organizations, foreign governments and U.N. agencies that promote access to abortion, gender-affirming care and diversity initiatives overseas.

"We're going to start blocking every international NGO that performs or promotes abortion abroad from receiving a dollar of U.S. money," Vance told the crowd in January.

The expanded restrictions build on the anti-abortion advocacy work carried out by conservative U.S. nonprofits abroad — especially in Africa, where healthcare is highly dependent on foreign aid. The region has the world's highest estimated proportion of unsafe abortions and highest maternal mortality rates — including the highest number of maternal deaths per 100,000 abortions.

This is part of a series on maternal mortality in sub-Saharan Africa, which has the world's fastest-growing population and accounts for 70% of global maternal deaths. Around 180,000 pregnancy deaths are recorded every year across the continent.

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The new rules represent a radical expansion of earlier U.S. policy that cut assistance to overseas groups providing abortion-related services. Experts say at least \$30 billion in U.S. aid could be affected, reshaping health policies worldwide.

"We're seeing opportunity here to have a consistently pro-life ethic," Nicole Hunt of Colorado-based Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian evangelical group, told The Associated Press. "We've been influencing health policies for a long time with our foreign aid. This is just a new direction."

In the crosshairs is an international convention signed by African countries two decades ago declaring safe abortion a human right. Known as the Maputo Protocol, it obliges signatory nations to legalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, fetal malformation or risk to a woman's health. But implementation has been spotty, forcing women to seek illicit procedures. Every year, sub-Saharan Africa records over 6 million unsafe abortions, according to the African Institute for Development Policy.

Emboldened by President Donald Trump's policies, U.S. anti-abortion groups now aim to overturn even this limited access to safe abortion.

In Nairobi, Nardos Hagos of the International Planned Parenthood Federation said she is deeply worried for the future.

"We've now moved into a new era where we are the ones who are in opposition because the most powerful and influential supporters of reproductive health — the U.S. and a lot of Europe — are now more aligned with anti-rights groups," she said.

"We're gonna see more women dying from unsafe abortions."

Africa is the focus

It's difficult to track the full scope of the funding U.S. anti-abortion charitable groups send to Africa.

Publicly available information from nonprofit tax filings of 17 such groups show money sent to Africa jumped 50% between 2019 and 2022, to over \$16 million, according to an analysis by the Institute for Journalism and Social Change, a research group.

And the funding kept growing: The organizations spent almost \$9.4 million in Africa during 2023 and 2024, previously unreported data analyzed by the institute shows.

That's "just the tip of the iceberg," said the institute's Claire Provost.

"What we're seeing here is just a fraction of what the real investment on the continent is," Provost said, noting that unlike other tax-exempt charitable organizations, U.S.-based churches and some religious groups are not required to complete annual financial disclosures detailing revenue, contributions and expenses.

It's not possible to see "even limited information" about how much money The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, among others, funnel to Africa, she said.

Widely known as the Mormon church, the Salt Lake City-based church is "increasingly active on the continent, including opposing sexual and reproductive rights issues," Provost said. With over 1 million followers in Africa, it has held "Strengthening Families" conferences throughout the continent over the past eight years.

Sean E.R. Donnelly, the church's communications manager for Africa, said in an AP interview that about a quarter of the \$1.5 billion the church spent overseas last year was in Africa, for development projects "with the goal of helping people, especially families," including in healthcare, education and emergency relief.

Asked about women's reproductive rights and abortion, he said the church was "not really active" in those areas, but noted the issues may be discussed by its African partners during church-sponsored conferences.

"We have the deputy prime minister, we have the ministries of gender, we have all the ministers who are relevant to family, and we're helping them ... as they craft policy and strategy to make sure that we protect the family," Donnelly said of the conferences.

Asked about the church's position on abortion, he sent a statement outlining that it generally opposes elective abortion in most cases but allows exceptions for rape, incest or danger to a woman's health in counseling its members. He said via email that the church conducts no activities related to abortion and reproductive rights.

Last year's church-sponsored conference took place in Sierra Leone at a time when the country was

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close to decriminalizing abortion. But pressure from local religious lobbies stalled the process, local rights groups said. Activists and rights groups have raised the alarm over the influence of local religious groups, whose strategies mirror those of some conservative U.S. Christian groups. In response to AP's questions about the conference and any pressures around abortion and other reproductive rights issues, Donnelly said, "This is not how the church operates in Africa or globally."

He also referred AP to the church's Caring Report, which outlines its humanitarian work globally and does not mention the conference.

It's tricky to determine how the U.S. money is spent once it reaches Africa because of loose requirements on disclosing financial data in African countries.

Focus on the Family spent \$370,000 in Africa between 2019 and 2023, according to the Institute for Journalism and Social Change, which says that likely does not fully capture the scope of the group's influence or work. Focus on the Family's Hunt said its mission is "to change hearts and minds on abortion" globally, but she declined to provide details of activities in Africa.

Funding emboldens harassment of reproductive-rights groups

Hannah Ruguru vowed to help women get abortions safely after losing her sister to a backstreet procedure. But her work at a reproductive health clinic in Kisumu in rural western Kenya has proven increasingly hazardous.

She's been screamed at by protesters and encountered so much abuse on Facebook that she deleted her account, she said.

"Sometimes you can get scared," Ruguru said. But "at the end of the day, I'm helping women."

Marie Stopes International, which runs the clinic where Ruguru works, said in a 2024 report that staff in several African countries described online and legal attacks from U.S.-based groups and U.S.-funded local organizations. In Congo, it said, health workers have been detained for days for providing legally permissible services before being released without charge.

"The extent of the opposition has made abortion providers fearful of coming into work," the report said.

In Ethiopia, the group said, the head of the local office of U.S.-based Family Watch International has "targeted and trolled members of our senior leadership team on social media," and released YouTube videos promoting anti-abortion misinformation.

In Kenya, the names and addresses of staff at reproductive rights organizations have been published online, accusing them of murder.

The owner of a private abortion clinic in Nairobi said staff members have been harassed by police and detained. Officials demand bribes, threatening charges if they don't pay up, the owner said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions.

Musoba Kitui, regional director of Ipas Africa Alliance, which promotes reproductive rights and access to safe abortion care, said the changes in U.S. foreign aid policy combined with "this advancing American interest in ideology in Africa is really concerning."

"We think the consequences are going to be dire," Kitui said, especially for women and marginalized communities such as LGBTQ+ people.

'It's a culture war'

Last year, anti-abortion Christian groups from the U.S., Europe and Africa and high-ranking Kenyan officials gathered in Nairobi for a conference on "Promoting and Protecting Family Values in Challenging Times." Poland-based anti-abortion group Ordo Iuris handed out a guide in four languages, including Swahili, with tips on lobbying international organizations, including the United Nations, European Union and African Union.

Travis Weber, vice president of the Family Research Council, a Washington-based evangelical group active in anti-abortion advocacy, said he traveled to Nairobi to "defend the family as God designed it."

Charles Kanjama, vice chairman of African Christian Professionals Forum, the conference organizer, said that previously international aid often supported reproductive rights — but times have changed.

"We are hoping that ... we can start attracting money from people who think like us," said Kanjama, among Africa's most prominent anti-abortion figures. "It's a culture war, really."

Indeed, the anti-abortion agenda is gaining momentum. In June, representatives of 20 African countries

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finalized a draft charter at a conference in Ghana that calls for rejecting sexual and reproductive health rights. It will be voted on by the African Union next year. Family Watch International's co-founder, Sharon Slater, was among those fundraising for the charter's passage at the European Parliament in Brussels this year.

Legal gray area

In Kenya, one of Africa's richest countries, seven women die every day on average from complications of unsafe abortions, according to the African Population and Health Research Center.

The 2010 Kenyan Constitution permits abortion when a woman's health or life is threatened. Subsequent court decisions have also allowed abortions in cases of rape, incest or serious threat to a woman's mental health.

But there's a major legal gray area. Kenya's penal code, which dates to the colonial era, continues to criminalize abortion providers and women seeking the procedure, who can face up to 14 years in prison.

Most public hospitals don't perform abortions, leaving women the option of pricey private clinic procedures or risky illicit methods, healthcare officials said.

In May, an appeals court in Kenya overturned a ruling that affirmed access to abortion is a fundamental right — a case led by Kanjama, who said the decision "restored constitutional balance."

The Kenyan Health Ministry, Justice Ministry and the government spokesperson's office did not reply to repeated AP requests for comment, including detailed questions sent via email.

The U.S. State Department, in response to an AP request for comment on the Trump administration's new rules governing American aid overseas, said: "The American people expect their tax dollars to support programs that save lives ... and reflect American values, not fund abortion-related activities, left-wing social agendas, or wasteful overseas bureaucracies."

"U.S. assistance continues to support a wide range of maternal and child health services as part of the America First Global Health Strategy," it said in a statement.

On the ground, women are dying from unsafe abortions

In Kenya, doctors are obligated to treat women suffering from post-abortion complications, often from underground procedures, including bleeding, infections and the loss of their wombs — and it's those cases that often end up in public hospitals.

"By the time the women come, we are often dealing with a life-threatening situation," said Dominic Omollo, the reproductive health coordinator in Bondo, western Kenya.

Even as the stated aim of U.S., international and Africa-based anti-abortion groups is to protect life, activists and healthcare providers say that on the ground, the result is more unsafe abortions and more women dying.

In Karabok, a village in rural Kenya, two trees were planted at the site where Mary Olouch is buried, just feet (meters) from where the 25-year-old bled to death after an illicit abortion.

"She did not open up to anyone," said Loice Ochieng, a community health volunteer in charge of family planning in the village.

Olouch already had a young child when she realized she was pregnant. She didn't tell her husband. When he came home one evening, he found her bleeding and rushed her to the hospital, but it was too late.

Olouch did not qualify for an abortion in a public hospital and couldn't afford a private clinic on her meager income selling fish. Abortion carries enormous stigma in rural communities, and husbands often don't allow women to use contraceptives, Ochieng said.

After Olouch's death, women started to talk more openly about abortion in Karabok, where for many even uttering the word had been taboo, Ochieng said.

Now, she said, if women "have a problem, they come to me, they ask. Because they have seen that this thing can cause death."

Mount Olympus, home of the ancient Greek gods, is a candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage List

By COSTAS KANTOURIS and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

LITochoro, Greece (AP) — Snow-capped for much of the year, Mount Olympus, mythological home of ancient Greece's 12 Olympian gods, has captured the imagination through the millennia. Rising to 2,918 meters (9,573 feet) from a base practically at sea level, the ancient Greeks believed the throne of Zeus, king of the gods, stood on the highest of its craggy, often mist-shrouded peaks.

Now, modern-day Greeks hope their tallest mountain will be inducted into UNESCO's World Heritage List as a mixed cultural and natural site. The nomination is to be discussed when the World Heritage Committee meets in Busan, South Korea from Sunday through July 29.

"Olympus is our life. It is the place we grew up in," said Evangelos Geroliolios, mayor of Dion-Olympus, based in Litochoro, the mountain's main town. "It is the place we see every day, but at the same time, it is also a place which carries with it myth, history, biodiversity, extraordinary beauty and a very great cultural weight."

Seat of the gods

Few locations are as central to ancient Greek mythology as Mount Olympus. It was here that Zeus was said to have established his court after overthrowing his father, Cronus, in a 10-year war that ended the reign of the Titans.

Interest in Olympus may receive another boost with the theatrical release this week of Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey," a new adaptation of Homer's epic, in which the mountain serves as the home of Zeus and the Olympian gods who influence Odysseus' journey.

On one of Olympus's lower peaks, excavations have uncovered an open-air sanctuary, with the oldest finds dating to the Hellenistic period, which ran from 323 B.C. to 30 B.C. According to Greece's original UNESCO nomination, the sanctuary is believed to have been one mentioned by the ancient philosopher and historian Plutarch, who in the 2nd century wrote of processions to one of Olympus's peaks for animal sacrifices to Zeus.

The mountain retained religious significance into the Christian era. A chapel on the peak of Prophet Elias, at 2,803 meters, is believed to be the highest altitude chapel in the Christian Orthodox world. The mountain's Enipeas Gorge holds the remains of a monastery founded in 1542, while a roughly 20-minute walk from there leads to the Holy Cave of St. Dionysios, a chapel built into a cave from where a small spring flows, believed to carry holy water.

The mountain's slopes, which reach practically to the sea, also host a wealth of flora and fauna, including endemic species. It is this blending of culture, myth, natural beauty and biodiversity that locals hope will see their mountain declared a World Heritage site.

"It is a place we love. It is a place that many people from all over the world visit to see, to live, to experience. We want to protect it," Geroliolios said. Its inclusion on UNESCO's list would be "something very big that goes beyond not just local boundaries, but national boundaries. It is something that concerns the entire world. It is very important."

Inclusion in the World Heritage List is far from certain

Greece began the process to have Mount Olympus recognized as a World Heritage site in 2014, inscribing it on its Tentative List — the mandatory first step in any nomination. The Tentative List is where countries include sites they can then formally nominate over the next five to 10 years.

The nomination process includes a preliminary assessment followed by submission of a full nomination file, which is then evaluated over 14 months by advisory bodies, including the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Recommendations by the advisory bodies are then discussed during the World Heritage Committee's annual meeting, where representatives of 21 countries vote on nominated sites.

Greece's Mount Olympus nomination is far from certain. A draft of the Busan meeting's agenda indicates the committee will refer the nomination back to Greece and request further details.

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Still, locals hope the mountain's cultural and natural wonders will secure it a place and will play a role in securing more protection for the mountain.

The need for protection

The mayor, Geroliolios, said inclusion on the World Heritage list "places some greater obligations on our part to protect this environment."

Environmental protection is also foremost in the mind of mountain guide Babis Marinidis, president of the Alpine Club of Litochoro.

Including Olympus on UNESCO's World Heritage list would likely attract more people to the mountain and the surrounding area, Marinidis said. "How many people can this mountain, this ecosystem, bear?" he asked. Although much of Olympus was designated a national park decades ago and there are regulations in place, many are openly flouted, with Marinidis saying visitors regularly ignore "no swimming" or "no camping" signs.

The ever-growing number of visitors had led local authorities to consider imposing entrance fees and registering visitor numbers. "I used to be against that," Marinidis said. "But now with so many people, I believe some limit must be imposed."

Mount Olympus has claimed many lives

The mythological home of the gods attracts hikers and mountaineers from across the world. While technical climbing experience isn't mandatory to reach the summit, the mountain is also not to be trifled with.

With its combination of changeable weather and treacherous terrain, it has claimed many lives. The most recent fatality was on July 11, when a 64-year-old Greek hiker died after collapsing on a trail. In May, rescue crews found the body of a 25-year-old Spanish man days after he went missing while attempting to reach the summit in the snow.

"You need to be careful," and safety measures must always be kept in mind, said 32-year-old hiker Triantafyllos Giannospyros, who was visiting the mountain for the first time. "But with care and with good organization, it isn't something you should be afraid of."

Stavroula Vourou, who runs a hotel in Litochoro, the town from where many hikers set off, echoed his sentiment.

"Everyone sets off to go up and conquer a mountain that needs respect," she said. "You respect this mountain, it respects you too."

US and Iran escalate strikes across Mideast

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States and Iran exchanged strikes aimed at infrastructure and military targets on Saturday as their battle over the Strait of Hormuz intensified.

The region has endured days of back-and-forth attacks in a conflict increasingly focused on control of the strait. The collapse of an interim ceasefire leaves no clear end in sight for the war that the U.S. and Israel began more than four months ago.

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In an address to the American public on Thursday evening, Trump insisted the war was going well. "We are likewise winning big in Iran, and you will see the fruits of that labor very, very shortly," he said.

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Bridges and 'electrical infrastructure' hit in Iran

The U.S. airstrikes had hit bridges in Iran's southern Hormozgan province, Iranian state television reported. The attacks hit Bandar Khamir, a city on Iran's coast on the Strait of Hormuz.

The highway and railway bridge strikes appeared aimed at cutting off Bandar Abbas, Iran's main port, from roads leading into the Islamic Republic's central region onward to Tehran, the capital.

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U.S. officials acknowledged 13 additional U.S. service members — 10 Army soldiers and three Navy sailors — had been injured since Monday, but offered no further details. Since the war began, 14 U.S. service members have been killed and 427 wounded.

Tower at key port collapses in US strike

U.S. strikes conducted overnight into Friday collapsed a tower at Iran's Chabahar port on the Gulf of Oman, a key trade route for landlocked, neighboring Afghanistan, the state-run IRNA news agency reported and the U.S. military later confirmed.

Chabahar port, which Iran had been running with support from India, has been a repeated target of American airstrikes.

Iran said the tower oversees commercial traffic into the port. But Central Command said it was part of a maritime surveillance network used by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard to "track and target" commercial vessels in the strait.

On Friday evening Iranian state media reported explosions around Iran, including in the central and south of the country. Local authorities said the U.S. attacked around Ahvaz city without elaborating. IRNA also reported the sound of explosions in Lar, Yazd and Sirik.

Iran retaliates by targeting Qatar, a mediator in the war

On Friday, Qatar warned the public to take shelter as a barrage of Iranian missiles targeted the nation. People heard explosions overhead as air defenses fired to intercept the missiles. Qatar's Interior Ministry said falling debris wounded a child.

Iran also targeted Bahrain and Kuwait early Friday.

In Kuwait, authorities said Iran attacked a power and water desalination plant, causing widespread damage to the station. Kuwait said it extinguished the blaze and was working to assess the damage and get the station working again. About 90% of the country's drinking water comes from desalination.

A spokesman for Kuwait's defense ministry said Iranian drone attacks on its army's "facilities and camps" injured an unspecified number of personnel.

Jordan's military said it intercepted three incoming missiles Friday morning launched by Iran.

Explosions also could be heard Friday morning in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah in northern Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region as air defenses targeted incoming fire. The attack apparently targeted the Iranian Kurdish dissident group Komala, killing at least nine people and wounding others, said an official who spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

Iran did not immediately claim the attack but has targeted Komala in the past.

Also on Friday, a tanker came under attack traveling through the Strait of Hormuz taking the route closest to Oman, the British military said. The report from the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said the ship sustained minor damage without any of its crew being injured.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge any attack. In recent days, it has openly targeted ships using the route, which is overseen by the U.S. military and intended to be outside of Tehran's control.

Strikes come as Iran and US vie for Strait of Hormuz

Iran has said the strait must be under its sole control and that vessels should pay fees to Tehran — even though the world for decades has considered it an international waterway.

Trump has returned in recent days to his threats to target Iranian power stations and bridges to try to compel Iran to loosen its hold on the strait, through which about a fifth of all oil and natural gas traded once passed in peacetime. The U.S. also reimposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports to halt its shipments of crude oil.

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A growing amount of the region's energy is being shipped through pipelines, but not nearly enough to offset the decline in shipping through the strait.

License revoked for boarding school in Utah where Paris Hilton says she was abused as a teen

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah revoked another campus license on Friday for the boarding school where Paris Hilton said she was abused as a teenager, marking a major victory in the hotel heiress' yearslong effort to get the school shut down.

The Utah Department of Health and Human Services' decision cites a multitude of noncompliance citations in 2026 for the Provo Canyon School's Provo campus, including not protecting "a client from potential harm or acts of violence," and "using cruel and unnecessary practice on a child." More than a dozen of the citations were noted on Friday.

"No child should be hurt in a program that is meant to protect them; particularly programs that require the authorization of the state to operate," Shannon Thoman-Black, director of the division of licensing and background checks at the health and human services department, said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the state revoked the license for the Provo Canyon School's other campus in Utah, saying the school has "failed to provide applicable health and safety services for clients."

Paris Hilton, the media personality who spent almost a year at the school in the late 1990s, said the latest announcement means she finally feels a sense of "peace."

"This horrific chapter of abuse, neglect, and trauma has finally come to an end," she said in a statement.

The school, which is described on its website as a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth ages 12 to 18, has until Aug. 15 to stop providing services at its Provo campus. In the interim, Utah officials will be monitoring the facility at least once a week, according to the state's Department of Health and Human Services.

Staci Bradley, the school's director of business development, said in a statement that they do not agree with the state's decision and "are carefully reviewing all available legal and administrative avenues, including the appeals process."

The facility has 15 days to request a hearing before the department.

Hilton alleges that school staff members beat her, watched her shower, fed her unknown pills and locked her in solitary confinement without clothing.

"Today means no child will ever have to endure what we did at Provo Canyon School again," she said.

She has testified about her experiences there in Congress and state legislatures around the U.S., helping pass laws to protect teens in Utah and more than a dozen other states. Utah has long played an outsized role in the troubled teen industry, a network of private, for-profit residential centers for children with behavioral issues.

In June, Hilton returned to the Provo Canyon School to support two families who filed lawsuits alleging that their children were mistreated at the school.

The school is under new ownership, and the administration has said it can't comment on anything that

came before the change, including Hilton's time there.

Trump urges Darline Graham to run for full Senate term as funeral scheduled for Lindsey Graham

By MEG KINNARD and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that Darline Graham, the sister of the late Lindsey Graham, has his support to run for a full term to replace her brother in the U.S. Senate.

He wrote on social media that she "has been a WINNER all of her life and, should she accept, has my Complete and Total Endorsement."

"RUN, DARLINE, RUN!" Trump added.

The president said he had discussed a potential campaign with Darline Graham at the White House. Four people familiar with the deliberations, none of whom were authorized to speak publicly, had previously said that she privately expressed interest in running.

Trump's endorsement dramatically reshapes the scramble to fill Lindsey Graham's seat after he died last weekend. The president had previously suggested he could back a potential candidacy from Rep. Russell Fry. Several other noteworthy politicians — including Fry, Rep. Nancy Mace, Rep. Ralph Norman and Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette — have been eyeing a run.

The filing period for a special primary runs from July 21 to July 28, and the primary is scheduled for Aug. 11.

Plans for Lindsey Graham's funeral were also announced Friday. There will be a service in Washington on July 28 and more in South Carolina on July 29.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster appointed Darline Graham to serve the remainder of her brother's term, which ends in January.

The first woman to represent the state in the Senate, Darline Graham called it "such an honor," as dozens of her brother's staffers and campaign advisers stood behind her, some with eyes glassy from welling tears.

"Lindsey has always been there for me. And now, I will be there for him," she said.

Lindsey Graham died Saturday at age 71. A preliminary report from the medical examiner said he suffered a tear in his aorta.

He never married or had a family of his own, but his sister was often by his side for the political touch points of his career, speaking at events and appearing in some of his campaign ads. After both of their parents died when Darline Graham was only 13, her older brother became her legal guardian and later adopted her, to ensure his military benefits would flow to her.

In forging a relationship with Darline Graham — who is new to politics but was a constant in her brother's political career — Trump could be angling to develop another ally to help steer his agenda through the Senate.

Although they had at times a tumultuous relationship, Lindsey Graham had been one of Trump's top Senate confidants, and the day after his death, the president said he was "like a member of the family."

In his announcement Monday, McMaster made no reference to Darline Graham as a placeholder or symbolic appointment.

However, a person familiar with McMaster's thinking but unauthorized to speak publicly said the governor, in selecting Darline Graham, had never contemplated that she would run for the seat herself.

Sen. Tim Scott, another South Carolina Republican, said he would not endorse any candidate in the primary because he also serves as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

But, he said, "as Tim Scott, the voter of South Carolina, I might indeed wade into the water at some point."

"I think the truth of the matter is that Darline has so far been off to a remarkable start," Scott told reporters, asking about her as a possible special primary contender. "Why not her?" would be my question."

When he died, Lindsey Graham had millions in his campaign account and was expected to raise much more heading into the general election. But those aren't funds that Darline Graham could directly access,

if she were to run, according to Bradley A. Smith, a former chairman of the Federal Election Commission.

Under federal rules, Lindsey Graham's campaign would be limited to transferring just \$2,000 to a potential Darline Graham candidacy. However, Smith said there is no limit on how much it could transfer to the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which could — thanks to a Supreme Court decision last month — “spend an unlimited amount in coordination with Darline's campaign.”

“It can't be earmarked for Darline's campaign, but in those circumstances I'm sure that the party will make sure she's not short of cash,” said Smith, now serving as a professor at Capital University Law School in Ohio.

Off-duty employee arrested in shooting near ICE detention center in Colorado that injured a woman

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — An off-duty employee at a federal immigration detention center in Colorado has been arrested for allegedly firing a gun following a confrontation with two protesters outside the building, hitting a woman in the foot.

Aurora police said the shooting happened Thursday night as employees were waiting along a street for the protest to clear so they could start their work shifts. Investigators said two women started a verbal confrontation and took pictures of the employees' vehicles before walking away.

The man is accused of retrieving a personally owned pistol and firing one shot in the direction of the women, hitting one in the lower body. The woman's injuries were not considered life-threatening, police said.

Emma Landis, 21, said she got shot on her right ankle. “It's not a joke. This isn't a game. This isn't something you see on social media and hope not to experience,” Landis said.

Demonstrators regularly have been gathering outside the center in Colorado, like they have elsewhere around the U.S., to protest President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. Earlier this month, protesters clashed with law enforcement in New Jersey, resulting in dozens of arrests there.

In Colorado, the detention center employee was arrested and booked on suspicion of attempted second-degree murder, first-degree assault and other charges. He works for the private-prison operator Geo Group, which is contracted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to run the 1,500-bed detention center.

Geo Group confirmed Friday that the employee was placed on unpaid administrative leave. The company said it will cooperate with law enforcement.

The Associated Press emailed ICE on Friday requesting comment.

A Texas prosecutor reveals new details in an ICE killing of a Houston father

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

A federal prosecutor in Texas shared new details Thursday evening about the moments before an immigration officer shot and killed a Mexican national and longtime U.S. resident in early July. The disclosure complicates the government's earlier claim that the man struck an ICE vehicle before he was shot.

A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer killed Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, 52, on July 7 as he was driving to a Houston construction job site with three co-workers, one of whom was his brother. The shooting sparked protests in the sprawling Texas city, echoing Salgado Araujo's family's calls for transparency. The family describes him as a hardworking father very close to obtaining legal status in the U.S. after living in the country for 35 years.

The shooting came just days before two other men in Florida and Maine died as part of President Donald Trump's federal immigration crackdown, renewing scrutiny on the Department of Homeland Security's law enforcement tactics.

Aaron Reitz, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Texas, said for the first time on Thursday that ICE officers were targeting two Guatemalan men who were potentially subject to deportation. He said they were driving a van similar to the one Salgado Araujo was driving when he was killed. In an earlier

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statement released the day Salgado Araujo was killed, DHS said he was targeted in an immigration enforcement operation, and he was living in the country without legal permission.

Reitz also said that the officers believed that Salgado Araujo and the passengers in his car fit the description of the Guatemalan men the agents were looking for.

Four officers driving two separate law enforcement vehicles attempted to pull over Salgado Araujo's van using their police lights. Salgado Araujo then made a U-turn and drove over a median to evade getting pulled over, Reitz said.

Later that morning, the officers again encountered Salgado Araujo's van and for the second time tried to pull him over, this time effectively surrounding the vehicle, Reitz said. Two of the four agents got out of their cars and told Salgado Araujo to put the vehicle in park. Just before he was shot, one of the agents was "partially inside the van or immediately next to it" when Salgado Araujo tried to reverse and then drive forward again, Reitz said.

An earlier DHS statement accused Salgado Araujo of weaponizing his vehicle. The agency said he rammed his van into a law enforcement vehicle and said an officer opened fire in self-defense. The most recent statement from the U.S attorney's office, however, didn't mention any collision between Salgado Araujo's van and a law enforcement vehicle. It also didn't explicitly say that the officer feared for his life. There are no reported injuries for the officers involved.

The latest statement didn't name the officer who killed Salgado Araujo, nor did it specify if the officer who fired the shot was the same person who was next to, or partially inside, the van.

Reitz also said in the statement that officers "saw in plain view several small bags of a white, crystal-like substance inside the van" and that the FBI later executed a search warrant to investigate for possible illicit substances. Salgado Araujo's brother, who was in the van when the shooting happened, has been in ICE detention since the incident. His attorney said the white substance was a salt mixture that the men used as electrolytes to stay hydrated while doing manual labor in the grueling Texas heat.

Few photos or videos surrounding the shooting in Houston have emerged on social media, unlike other deaths involving federal immigration officers.

Texas floods have left high waters and a big cleanup job after hundreds of people are rescued

By JESSE BEDAYN, JAMIE STENGLE and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — First responders in storm-battered Texas again rushed to save people trapped in high waters Friday, as more heavy rain widened the danger from floods that have killed at least two people and left hundreds more in need of rescue.

A week of punishing downpours dumped more than 2 feet (60 centimeters) in some areas. The rain was expected to taper off, but another round of showers worsened already swollen rivers and flooded rural communities near the border with Mexico that had largely been spared major damage.

Near Ozona, a small town about 200 miles (322 kilometers) west of San Antonio, floodwaters spilled over Interstate 10. More than 50 people were rescued by boat from flooded apartments and a water-logged RV park.

A section of a bridge also collapsed over the Nueces River in Uvalde County, where months worth of rain has fallen in a span of days. In Uvalde, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) southwest of San Antonio, floodwaters rushed through Miguel Vasquez's home twice this week, leaving a layer of mud and knocking over his refrigerator and other items.

Debris was strewn around his neighborhood and a neighbor's shed teetered over a washed-away section of the property. He said Friday that he'd been caught in the waters' current and nearly been swept away and drowned in trying to get to his house Wednesday.

"I had to grab on with my hands and my feet. You couldn't swim," he said. "People think that when there's a flood, you can swim. Swimming's not going to help you. It'll take you. The current's too strong."

Almost a trillion gallons of water fell in a flood-prone area

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Nearly 1 trillion gallons of water fell on the three hardest-hit counties over three days — enough to fill 1.5 million Olympic-sized swimming pools or supply 11 million homes for a year.

Uvalde County alone got more rain in that period than California has seen over the last month, according to Ryan Maue, former chief scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

The Hill Country is especially prone to flash floods because the area's signature limestone is covered by just a thin layer of soil. During heavy rains, water can quickly shoot downhill before filling the narrow river basins.

Emergency personnel across a wide swath of southern and central Texas have rescued more than 570 people, including stranded drivers and people trapped in homes, Gov. Greg Abbott said. Hill Country residents were beginning to clean up after floodwaters again barreled down the Guadalupe River and through communities still reeling from deadly floods a year ago.

Giant border buoys set adrift on the Rio Grande

Floodwaters on the Rio Grande temporarily closed the two international bridges on the border with Mexico at Eagle Pass, stranding a few people on the wrong side. About 600 huge buoys placed on the river to deter migrants from crossing into the U.S. illegally were set adrift by the rising waters, U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar said.

Cuellar said about 480 of them were captured by noon Friday. Critics have worried about the damage the buoys might do if they became untethered and got caught along banks and against bridge piers. Each is about 15 feet (4.6 meters) long and weighs 1,000 pounds (454 kilograms).

In the Hill Country, Serena Reyna woke up Thursday morning to find her Kerrville boutique, Nu Accents, covered in debris after four feet of floodwater rushed into the store. She described the store as "a total loss."

"The floors, I mean they're soaked in mud and still you know an inch of water in some spots," she said.

The Texas Department of Transportation said high waters closed a 50-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 57 and that parts of the roadway were not expected to reopen until Monday.

In all, roughly 6 million residents across Texas were under a flood watch at various points this week.

Residents in hard-hit Uvalde return to flooded homes

Floodwaters had overrun Uvalde and cut off most outside routes, making it one of the hardest hit cities. The waters were receding Friday, and officials said a major highway, Route 90, had reopened.

One person died while driving on a flooded road, swept away near Uvalde, authorities said.

Another victim, 65-year-old John Mark Steward of Kerrville, died after his mobile home was swept into Goat Creek on the Guadalupe River, his wife said. The same river was wrecked by flash floods last year when two dozen children and counselors died at Camp Mystic. Authorities on Thursday said summer campers were safe.

In Ozona, the seat of Crockett County, authorities used seven rescue boat teams to get people out of the hardest-hit areas. They were taken to the local civic center for shelter.

Eddie Martin, the county's emergency management director, said the area received 6 inches of rain after midnight, on top of nearly 10 inches of rain before that.

"We have more and more accidents on the interstate," he said. "We have more and more water pouring into the neighborhoods where we've been pulling people out of."

Wildfire smoke from Canada and Minnesota pushes farther into the US and engulfs DC in haze

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Millions of people in the Great Lakes, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states muddled through another day of unhealthy air from uncontrolled wildfires on Friday.

The thick smoke enveloped the nation's capital in a gloomy, eerie haze and prompted Major League Baseball's Cleveland Guardians to postpone their game against Pittsburgh Pirates in Ohio.

Warnings of dangerous conditions were expected to remain in effect through Saturday across a wide

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swath of the U.S., though there's potential for temporary improvement with storms forecast in some affected areas during the weekend.

D.C. resident Stewart Verdery awoke Friday to take in his usual sunrise view of the city's famous landmarks from a rooftop, only to be greeted by a darkened horizon and no monuments in sight.

"It's pretty crazy to wake up at sunrise and not see the sun when it's not even raining," he said by phone after posting a video of the surreal scene on X. "And it smells like somebody's having the world's largest cookout."

No end in sight for smoky conditions

There may be pockets of relief at times, such as this weekend, but the smoky conditions won't be gone anytime soon as the fires continue to burn largely unchecked, cautioned Bob Oravec, a lead forecaster at the National Weather Service based in Maryland.

Wildfires are burning in the Ontario area of Canada as well as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota, which U.S. officials have closed as they fight to put out the blazes.

"The source of the smoke is going to continue on for certainly a week, probably," Oravec said. "It's just going to depend upon which way the wind's blowing as to where the smoke is going to affect the most."

On Friday, communities in Minnesota, Illinois and Michigan, including Detroit, again registered some of the worst air quality in the world, according to IQAir, an air quality monitoring website.

Not far behind Detroit was Washington, D.C., where the smoke created eerie scenes. The Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and other national landmarks were enveloped in an orange-hued haze throughout much of the day.

People, particularly those with heart or lung disease, older adults and children, were urged to limit or avoid going outside until air quality improved.

Long-term exposure to smoky conditions can complicate existing health problems and lead to chronic and deadly issues, including respiratory illness, cardiovascular and neurological diseases and premature death, officials warned.

For Maria Travela, Friday was her first day outside since after smoke from the wildfires blanketed the Chicago area early Thursday.

"Now it's better. This morning, it was bad," said Travela, who has asthma and wore a mask as she crossed a bridge over the Chicago River downtown. "They were saying that, for people like me, with asthma, any kind of issues like that, it would be bad for your lungs."

Trump criticizes Canada

Hundreds of wildfires are burning in Canada, including about 190 in northern Ontario, Premier Doug Ford said at a news conference. Flames destroyed the Namaygoosisagagun First Nation community, and 10 northern Ontario communities have been evacuated or were being evacuated, with more possible.

The increase of fire in vast Canadian forests has largely been blamed on climate change.

In response to the smoke, U.S. President Donald Trump made a social media post Friday that blamed Canada for its forest management and threatened additional tariffs on Canada.

The Canadian government didn't initially respond to questions about Trump's comments.

Asked about a Michigan lawmaker's criticism about the smoke, Ford noted Canada has helped the U.S. fight fires in the past.

"If there's some politicians out there chirping away, maybe what you should do rather than complain is send support, send help, because we have done the exact same thing for our American friends and that's what you're supposed to do," Ford said.

Conditions should improve for Sunday's World Cup final

In the New York City area, there was also concern about how the smoky air might impact Sunday's World Cup final between soccer powerhouses Spain and Argentina at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

Oravec said winds will continue pushing the wildfire smoke east in the U.S., though conditions should be better on game day than on Saturday.

On Thursday, a thick haze tinged with orange and yellow darkened skies across several states and partly

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obscured Manhattan's skyline.

Officials from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and other Northeast states distributed free K95 face masks, canceled outdoor programming and opened libraries and other public buildings as cooling centers where people could get a respite from the sooty air.

As Friday progressed, air quality measures improved from "unhealthy" to "moderate" in some places in and around New York City. A strong sun broke through a thin veil of smoke, and clear blue sky was visible across much of the region by Friday afternoon.

Rainstorms could bring reprieve in some places

Saturday brings a high chance of thunderstorms across much of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, which will help dampen the bad air.

Organizers of the All-American Soap Box Derby in Ohio hope air quality improves enough to allow for Saturday's championship races. The major annual competition in Akron scrubbed Friday's events over air quality concerns.

"I think they made the right choice," said Dayna Lincoln, a pediatric nurse practitioner from Hodgdon, Maine, whose family drove 15 hours for their 9-year-old daughter's race on Saturday.

"I'm glad they're not forcing the kids out into it," she said. "There are kids with asthma and adults with respiratory conditions who could really suffer."

A 7.3 earthquake hits Mexico-Guatemala border with no immediate damage reported

By EDGAR H. CLEMENTE Associated Press

TAPACHULA, México (AP) — A strong earthquake struck the southern Mexican Pacific coast on Friday, right on the border with Guatemala, and was felt from Mexico City to El Salvador. Authorities did not report any severe damage or casualties in any country. Two people were reported injured in southern Mexico.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) reported that the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.3 with the epicenter 48 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of Aquiles Serdan, near the coast of Chiapas and at a depth of 15 kilometers (9 miles). It was preceded by a smaller quake with an epicenter a bit farther out in the ocean.

There were at least 10 aftershocks between magnitude 4.9 and 6, according to USGS.

In Tapachula, the main city on Mexico's southern border, the tremor began mildly but gradually intensified. "We were upstairs on the second floor when it started shaking; we thought it would pass, but then it got stronger, so we all went downstairs and evacuated in an orderly manner to the front courtyard," Alejandra Mendoza, an administrative employee at a public hospital in the city, explained to The Associated Press.

Demetrio Martínez, head of the city's Civil Protection agency said that a Haitian migrant woman in her 30s suffered a nervous breakdown and jumped from a height of about four meters (13 feet) from an apartment building. She was taken to a hospital with fractures, but her life is not in danger, the official added. He said that there was another minor injury from a broken window at a nearby business.

In Guatemala City, the earthquake frightened residents because of how long it lasted. Many people poured into the streets in the middle of rush hour as the workday was beginning and several buildings were evacuated.

Guatemala's National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) reported no immediate damage. Social media users posted videos of some landslides, especially on roads heading west.

The Ministry of Education suspended in-person classes in the departments of San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Suchitepéquez and Retalhuleu, near the quake's epicenter.

In the Mexican capital, where buildings in certain areas creaked and shook, the earthquake alert did not sound because, the government said, "the energy radiated by the earthquake during the first few seconds did not exceed the activation thresholds."

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said that preliminary reports showed no damage. The navy recommended staying away from beaches for six hours because of tsunami risk.

The Meteorological Service of Chiapas alerted that there could be tsunami waves up to 1 meter (3.3

feet) off the coast of Mexico and Guatemala.

In the town of Suchiate, located along the river that separates Mexico from Guatemala, coastal areas are being monitored for tsunami risk, according to Mayor Elmer Vázquez Gallardo.

In San Salvador, the earthquake was also felt strongly, but no deaths or damage were reported, although the Ministry of Environment reported another earthquake of lesser intensity off the coast of the department of Usulután, in the eastern part of the country.

The region is prone to earthquakes, many that can be deadly. Earlier this year, a strong earthquake rattled southern and central Mexico, killing two. Hundreds in Mexico City were killed in a 7.1 magnitude earthquake in 2017.

Landslide in China's Chongqing kills at least 8 and leaves 34 missing

By ANDY WONG Associated Press

CHONGQING, China (AP) — A landslide Friday on the outskirts of the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing killed at least eight people and left 34 missing, burying residential buildings and forcing more than 1,100 people to evacuate, according to local officials and state media reports.

The landslide occurred at around 9:08 a.m. in Pengshui County on the outer edge of the Chongqing municipality, when massive amounts of rocks and soil washed downslope, burying more than 10 residential buildings, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Ten people were rescued from the debris, including two who were seriously injured, Pengshui County Mayor Ren Xujiang said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping asked authorities to determine the cause of the disaster, state media said.

The landslide contained about 18,000 cubic meters (636,000 cubic feet) of rocks and debris, and the largest single rock was around 3,000 cubic meters (106,000 cubic feet), said Wang Chuanjun, head of Planning and Natural Resources in Pengshui County, at a news conference.

Wang also warned of persistent risk of further collapse under extreme weather conditions, such as heavy rainfall or prolonged periods of clear and hot weather, based on experts' field inspections that found scattered unstable rock masses remain at the top and along the sides of the steep cliff.

Water, electricity and gas supplies were cut off within a 1-kilometer (0.6-mile) radius of the landslide to prevent further disruptions. Over 800 rescuers worked on site, a local government statement said.

Xinhua said drones were used to conduct surveys of the landslide sites.

Residents said local officials and communities organized an evacuation after small rocks fell and unusual sounds were heard from the hills. The landslide happened during the evacuation, local newspaper Chongqing Daily reported.

Images by CCTV showed part of a mountainside collapsing onto a residential area. Several buildings were located next to the collapse site, while rescue crews combed through the debris. Rescue efforts were hindered by the unstable terrain and the risk of another landslide, according to the broadcaster.

Images shared on social media showed orange-clad rescuers using excavators to dig through the rubble. At one point, a team of rescuers pulled a survivor out of the debris.

Large slabs of rock had slid beside buildings into a waterway below. Two buildings that looked about five and 15 stories high were damaged but still standing.

The rain-triggered landslide occurred near a section of the Wujiang River, which cuts through karst mountains peppered with small towns and terraces.

Authorities said they sent more than 13,000 disaster relief items to Chongqing, including tents, folding beds and family emergency kits.

Pengshui County is located in the southeast part of Chongqing, bordering the provinces of Hubei and Guizhou.

Lettuce at Taco Bell in 5 states confirmed as a source of diarrhea-causing parasite

By BILL BARROW and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Federal health officials have identified lettuce from Mexico served at Taco Bell locations across five U.S. states as a source of a widespread outbreak of diarrhea-causing parasite cyclospora.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention late Thursday warned consumers not to eat shredded iceberg lettuce from Taco Bell restaurants in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia. A record number of cyclospora cases have been reported in more than 30 states, and experts have said not every recent U.S. illness might be caused by a single source.

A Food and Drug Administration investigation so far has identified a single supplier of the lettuce. The federal warnings to consumers did not identify the company, but Taylor Fresh Foods, of Salinas, California, said FDA testing indicated it was "a specific independent farm" affiliated with the company.

The FDA was working with the supplier "to determine if potentially contaminated shredded iceberg lettuce remains on the market," including in other states, the CDC said. "Taco Bell has committed to stop using any lettuce from the supplier identified by FDA's traceback investigation."

Taylor Farms has been tied to foodborne outbreaks in the past. The company said in a statement Friday afternoon that it was voluntarily removing all iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico from the U.S. market.

"As a family owned and operated company, we are deeply concerned for those who became ill, their families, and the many Americans whose trust in the safety of their fresh produce has been shaken," the statement said.

Taco Bell says it will use a different supplier

CDC, FDA and public health officials in several states have been investigating a multistate outbreak of cyclospora infections.

The illness is not usually life threatening and is typically treated with antibiotics.

On Thursday, ahead of the federal government's confirmation, Taco Bell issued a statement saying that it had taken "immediate action to voluntarily remove potentially impacted lettuce from a supplier in select states. The affected ingredient from our supplier is being indefinitely removed from our supply chain nationwide and will be replaced within 24 hours in select states."

It's possible other businesses could be linked to the outbreak

In a statement, federal health officials stressed that other "brands, restaurants, retailers, or distribution channels" could be tied to the outbreak as the investigation continues.

Michigan investigators are trying to figure out if the lettuce went to other restaurants or stores because many of the ill people said they didn't eat at Taco Bell, state health officials said Friday.

There is no evidence the outbreak "is related to poor food handling or preparation at any single restaurant or fast-food chain," Michigan health officials said in a statement.

For that reason, they continue to recommend that consumers purchase whole heads of lettuce instead of pre-washed, bagged lettuce or pre-mixed salad kits. Taylor Fresh Foods said in its statement that no Taylor Farms-branded salad kits contain iceberg lettuce.

Some past outbreaks linked to the company involved products sold under different brand names.

North Carolina health officials on Friday reported their count has now surpassed 300 cases, but said the recent illnesses there are not considered to be linked to the outbreak in and around Michigan. They said the most commonly reported foods include parsley, cilantro and lettuce, but it's not clear if those ingredients were the source of the infections, they said.

Cyclospora cases have been rising for years

Cyclospora is a microscopic, spherical parasite that commonly causes watery diarrhea "with frequent and sometimes explosive bowel movements," according to the CDC. Outbreaks tend to occur most often in the late spring and summer.

The heat-loving parasite infects the bowels and spreads through feces. In the past, people have been

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infected by consuming fruits or vegetables that were exposed to feces-contaminated irrigation water.

The illness, called cyclosporiasis, is less common than foodborne illnesses caused by other germs, including salmonella and E. coli. Many cases are never linked to a specific food or other source and, for years, few U.S. cyclospora outbreaks were reported. But the number started rising about a decade ago, with a particularly notable spike in 2018 and 2019.

Previously, 2019 saw the most reported U.S. cyclosporiasis cases, with about 4,700. The current surge has far surpassed that. Michigan — the apparent epicenter of the current outbreak — is reporting more than 5,000 cases, and more than 2,000 additional probable and suspected cases have been reported in other states.

No deaths have been reported. But Michigan officials say more than 100 people in that state have been hospitalized, and health officials say dozens more have been hospitalized in other states.

Experts attribute the increasing trend in cases to climate change and better detection. They also say it's likely that cyclospora cases historically were underreported, for several reasons.

Some common tests used to check for food poisoning have not been geared to detect cyclospora. Technicians aren't able to grow the parasite in labs, making it hard to draw evidence from contaminated produce. And it can be hard to figure out what food sick people had in common because sometimes it's a single ingredient that might be common in multiple recipes — like basil or cilantro.

Taco Bell and Taylor Farms have been tied to past outbreaks

The FDA's traceback investigation identified a single supplier of iceberg lettuce from Mexico used by the Taco Bell locations where people who got sick ate, federal officials said.

The Mexican food chain is among the restaurants linked to foodborne illness outbreaks in the past.

Taylor Farms also was tied to a 2013 cyclosporiasis outbreak linked to salad mix and a 2024 E. coli outbreak tied to onions served at McDonald's.

An Israeli strike on a funeral in Gaza kills 7 people and wounds 22, a local hospital says

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli strike on a funeral in the central Gaza Strip killed at least seven people and wounded 22, while other attacks in the embattled coastal territory left five more dead, according to local officials.

The Israeli military said it targeted a "terrorist cell" belonging to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group. It said it was aware that civilians may have been harmed in the strike.

The Awda Hospital in the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza confirmed the number of casualties in the strike in central Gaza, saying people were struck at the funeral for a Palestinian killed in a strike earlier on Friday. In that attack, which killed two people, the Israeli military said it targeted a Hamas militant, without elaborating.

Israeli fire also killed three more people on Friday, including two women, in northern Gaza, Gaza City and Khan Younis, according to local health officials.

The Palestinian Hamas militant group, which has fought a bruising war with Israel, called the strike on the funeral "a heinous crime."

Israel and the militant group agreed to a ceasefire deal in October aimed at halting a two-year-long war.

The heaviest fighting has subsided but at least 1,123 people have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect, according to the territory's Health Ministry.

The ministry, which has been part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants but says women and children make up most of the dead.

Militants have carried out shooting attacks on troops, and Israel says its strikes are in response to that and other violations. Five Israeli soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire.

In recent weeks, Israel has ramped up its strikes in Gaza, targeting people in cars, tents, buildings and

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on the street. It says it is going after Hamas and other militants but civilians have also been killed.

According to the independent monitoring group, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, Israel carried out 40 attacks targeting militants in June, the highest monthly total since the start of the ceasefire.

The war began after the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killed around 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed more than 73,264 Palestinians, including those killed since the ceasefire, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

Foodborne illnesses at restaurant chains are rare but can sicken customers

By MAE ANDERSON and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Big U.S. restaurant chains don't get linked to foodborne illness outbreaks often, but the number of meals they serve causes a lot of concern when contamination of some kind sickens customers.

Federal health officials identified iceberg lettuce from Mexico served at Taco Bell locations in five states as a source of widespread infections from the diarrhea-causing parasite cyclospora. A U.S. Food and Drug Administration investigation identified a single supplier as the source of the suspect lettuce.

Taco Bell issued a statement on Thursday saying that "the affected ingredient from our supplier is being indefinitely removed from our supply chain nationwide and will be replaced within 24 hours in select states." The company described the move as precautionary.

A federal official who was briefed on the outbreak investigation and not authorized to discuss it identified the supplier as Taylor Farms, a company based in Salinas, California, that produces fresh vegetables for commercial use and meal kits and bagged lettuce products sold at supermarkets.

Federal health officials stressed that other "brands, restaurants, retailers, or distribution channels" could be identified as the investigation continues.

Here's a brief history of some other recent outbreaks that roiled restaurant companies and sometimes changed how food safety is regulated in the U.S.

Taylor Farms provided onions implicated in an outbreak linked to McDonald's hamburgers

E. coli bacteria caused a 2024 food poisoning outbreak tied to raw onions on McDonald's Quarter Pounder hamburgers. The outbreak sickened at least 104 people in 14 states, including 34 who were hospitalized, according to the FDA. One person in Colorado died.

McDonald's said the onions came from Taylor Farms and temporarily pulled the Quarter Pounder off its menu in the affected states. Other national restaurant chains temporarily stopped using fresh onions in some of their locations.

Likely E. coli contamination gets lettuce pulled from Wendy's sandwiches

Wendy's pulled lettuce from sandwiches in its restaurants in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania in August 2022 after some people reported falling ill.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said at the time that it was trying to determine whether romaine lettuce was the source of an E. coli outbreak that sickened at least 37 people and whether romaine used at Wendy's was also served or sold at other businesses.

One person was also sickened in Indiana, according to the CDC.

Extensive E. coli outbreak at Chipotle leads to criminal charges

In 2015, Chipotle was hit by an E. coli outbreak that sickened more than 50 people and it temporarily shut down dozens of restaurants on the West Coast, but that was just the beginning. A month later, 30 Boston College students, including at least eight members of the men's basketball team, complained of gastrointestinal symptoms after eating at a Chipotle restaurant.

Federal officials declared the outbreak over by February 2016, but the chain shut down every one of its restaurants to retrain employees and allow them to regroup.

By the end of the year, however, Chipotle Co-CEO Montgomery Moran stepped down as sales plunged.

In 2020 Chipotle Mexican Grille agreed to pay a record \$25 million fine to resolve criminal charges that it served tainted food that sickened more than 1,100 people in the U.S. between 2015 and 2018.

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The company admitted that poor safety practices, such as not keeping food at proper temperatures to prevent pathogen growth, sickened customers in Los Angeles and nearby Simi Valley, as well as Boston, Sterling, Virginia, and Powell, Ohio.

Taco Bell removes green onions nationwide after an E. coli outbreak sickens dozens

In December 2006, Taco Bell ordered the removal of green onions from its 5,800 restaurants nationwide after samples taken by investigators appeared to contain a harsh strain of E. coli. The outbreak sickened at least 71 people in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware, with most of them hospitalized, according to the CDC.

Eight people developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic-uremic syndrome.

Eventually, it was determined that contaminated lettuce was the probable cause, with the vegetable used in numerous dishes on the menu.

Almost immediately, Taco Bell launched a newspaper ad blitz and sent its president on a string of media interviews to assure customers that its food was safe.

Deadly outbreak traced to Jack in the Box hamburgers leads to regulatory changes

Four deaths and more than 700 illnesses in Washington, Idaho, California, and Nevada between 1992 and 1993 eventually were traced to undercooked Jack in the Box restaurant hamburgers contaminated with E. coli.

The ensuing investigation by federal regulators changed regulatory practices in the U.S., experts say.

An investigation by the CDC identified five slaughter plants in the U.S. and one in Canada as the likely sources of animals used in the contaminated lots of meat and identified potential control points for reducing the likelihood of contamination. The animals slaughtered in domestic slaughter plants were traced to farms and auctions in six western states. No one slaughter plant or farm was identified as the source.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture mandated a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system, which helps identify and control hazards within the system of food production. The system provided for more monitoring and controls to rapidly limit the spread of outbreaks.

Jack in the Box lost more than \$44 million in 1993 and did not post another annual profit for another three years.

Lawmakers demand answers after 'bombshell' report about ICE officer shooting in Maine

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic members of Congress are demanding answers about Homeland Security's vetting and training of immigration enforcement agents after it was disclosed that the ICE officer involved in a deadly shooting this week in Maine had a history of mental health issues and violent behavior.

The Associated Press reported Thursday that David Brouillette, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer who shot a Colombian man in Maine, is an Army veteran who has struggled with serious mental health issues since early childhood, according to several of his close relatives.

The AP reached out to congressional leaders and several key lawmakers of both major political parties for response.

The top Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, said Brouillette's history of violence and mental health issues and the death in Biddeford, Maine, "directly call into question the supposed vetting and training ICE does of its recruits."

"This senseless tragedy must be investigated and the officer responsible should be taken off our streets and face justice for his actions," Thompson said in a statement to the AP.

Brouillette didn't respond to text messages or an email seeking comment, but three relatives who said they had spoken to him since the shooting, including an ex-wife and a daughter, said he told them he acted in self-defense.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, who led a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security earlier this year as Democrats tried to impose restraints on immigration enforcement

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operations, said the consequences of failing to put guardrails on ICE are now being measured in lives.

President Donald Trump's administration "rushed 12,000 agents onto our streets without ensuring they were fit to carry a badge and a gun — and Republicans gave this rogue agency vast power and no accountability," Schumer said in a statement. "They empowered ICE. Now they must work with us to prevent more killings."

The report on Brouillette's troubling past comes as the Department of Homeland Security has been on a hiring spree, fueled by vast sums of money from Republicans in Congress to help carry out Trump's mass deportation agenda. It raises fresh questions about the department's efforts to quickly hire, vet, train and dispatch recruits who are being sent to patrol communities across America.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, the Republican chair of the powerful Appropriations Committee, referred back to her prior statement that "an impartial investigation into the shooting in Biddeford needs to proceed, as the details surrounding this tragedy are important."

Collins had said earlier that it is "extremely unfortunate" that the agent did not have a body-worn camera.

The senator ensured \$20 million for expanded use of body-worn cameras and \$2 million for de-escalation training as part of the Homeland Security funding bill that Congress approved to end the department shutdown.

"The Democratic government shutdown delayed enactment and implementation of these important safety measures," she said.

At least 10 people have died in encounters with immigration agents since Trump launched the crackdown after retaking office, including 25-year-old Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, the Colombian national who was shot and killed by Brouillette on Monday while in his car near his home in the coastal Maine city of Biddeford.

"This bombshell is absolutely appalling — exactly the intolerable danger that we feared as a result of arrest quotas and inadequate training," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., in a statement to the AP.

"This agent clearly should never have had a gun — let alone one provided to him by the United States government. And now a man is dead. I'm going to continue demanding answers and accountability," he said.

Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., said Trump and his administration have encouraged ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection "to enter and terrorize our communities, even if those agents are untrained, improperly vetted, or lack experience."

"The killing of Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero was horrifying," he said in a statement to the AP, "and there must be a credible, independent, and transparent investigation so that those responsible are held accountable."

The Republican chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Andrew Garbarino of New York, referred to his request earlier in the week that the department brief lawmakers from both parties on ICE's use of force policies and the status of body camera deployment.

Trump doubles down on US election attacks in his primetime speech

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, ERIC TUCKER and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump used a primetime address to the nation Thursday to elevate his yearslong push to raise doubts about the legitimacy of U.S. elections and dispute his 2020 loss in an appeal for more restrictive voting laws ahead of the midterms.

Trump's amplification of debunked theories about the election six years ago and his inability to accept his loss led to one of the darker moments in American history when a mob of his supporters led a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in the final days of his first term.

Now back in power, Trump opted to revisit the subject, despite persistent voter concerns about the cost of living, American forces escalating strikes on Iran in a conflict for which there is no end in sight, and an immigration crackdown facing bipartisan scrutiny for its sometimes deadly tactics.

His address Thursday hinged on contradictions.

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A twice-elected president complained about his one personal defeat, alleged a cover-up by officials in his own first administration and surfaced claims about countries attempting to harm his own prospects while staying silent on steps taken by other nations to boost him.

Trump used the remarks to justify his push to pass a strict voter ID bill in Congress that has not advanced because it lacks enough support from his fellow Republicans.

"America is back and doing really well, but we still have a major challenge that must be urgently addressed, because no country can be great without fair and honest elections," he said.

Trump doesn't raise doubts about his election wins

Trump began Thursday night with a stark warning about what he described as flaws in the voting system and said he was releasing previously classified documents related to the 2020 and 2018 elections, when he lost the presidential election and when his party suffered losses.

Trump's speech presented allegations of interference and influence in ways that lacked key context and did not produce evidence that votes had been manipulated or that the election outcome had been altered.

Notably, Trump focused on China but glossed over Russia, a country that intelligence officials have said favored Trump in 2016 and 2020 and engaged in wide-ranging influence campaigns aimed at boosting him over Democrat Joe Biden in the latter campaign.

Despite focusing on China in his speech, Trump did not criticize or issue a warning to Chinese President Xi Jinping, whom he has long praised.

Election security experts say America's decentralized voting system, with the power over elections residing with the states instead of the federal government, is a strength. Americans vote in more than 10,000 different jurisdictions with different rules, making the nations' elections extraordinarily complicated but safe from widespread fraud.

No credible intelligence has emerged showing that the vote count in 2020 was manipulated by foreign actors. Repeated audits and reviews -- many run by Republicans, including Trump's own then-attorney general -- have found no significant fraud occurred in 2020.

Even if substantiated, Trump's claims did not amount to conduct that would have altered the outcome of any race, let alone the 2020 race for the White House.

He also did not raise doubts about his election wins in 2016 or 2024.

As Trump spoke, the White House unveiled a website containing documents that were presented without context and included selectively released pieces of investigation files, intelligence analysis and correspondence.

Former intelligence official calls address 'dangerous'

Sue Gordon, principal deputy director of national intelligence in Trump's first term, called the president's address "a dangerous speech about an incredibly important topic." She said the intelligence community throughout Trump's first term was alarmed about foreign interference in elections, but Trump scoffed at them, angered at the investigation of his campaign's relationship with Russia.

"He had an entire term to deal with it and I don't know how you can believe how the same community that told him about it, that was excoriated about it" wouldn't warn him in 2020, Gordon said on CNN.

Conservative commentator John Solomon, who joined the White House staff last month and was seated in the East Room for Trump's speech, later told MS NOW that "the intelligence community has zero evidence that someone has flipped -- that a foreign power flipped -- a vote in 2020, '22 or '24."

But, he added, "We're not through all the documents."

Trump urged the Justice Department to conduct investigations and prosecutions, though it was unclear from his speech what sort of criminal conduct -- if any -- could be identified, proven and charged.

In a contrast with his concerns about foreign interference in elections, Trump in his new budget proposes a \$707 million cut in the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, the group charged with protecting American election systems from overseas cyberattacks. Trump and other conservatives have been frustrated that the organization pushed back on election claims in 2020 and beyond.

Some networks did not air it live

In past presidencies, primetime addresses have typically been reserved for major milestones or nation-

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ally significant events.

Trump last spoke to the nation in April, giving an address on the Iran war a month after it started. He said then that the U.S. would accomplish its objectives "very shortly" and that "the hard part is done, so it should be easy." The war, however, has dragged on and strikes between the U.S. and Iran have intensified this week.

Trump also delivered a politically charged primetime speech in December in which he sought to blame the challenging economic climate on Democrats.

ABC, NBC and CNN did not air Thursday's remarks live but carried them in full on their streaming services.

CBS and MS NOW both cut away from Trump's speech before he finished, while Fox News continued to carry his address.

Trump called out the media outlets for not carrying it live, accused them of being "part of a plot" and suggested their broadcast licenses be revoked.

Networks typically — but not always — carry presidential addresses to the nation live. In 2022, when Biden delivered a primetime address full of warnings about Trump and his adherents' "extreme ideology," the networks did not carry it live.

In 2014, the major networks chose to stick with their primetime programming instead of airing an address by President Barack Obama on his plans for immigration reform.

Democrats accuse Trump of seeking to discredit next election

Democrats warned that Trump was trying to revive false claims of past stolen elections in order to delegitimize the 2026 midterm elections, in which Trump's Republican Party is facing headwinds.

Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia called Trump's claims "totally bogus."

"The fact is our intelligence agencies unanimously agreed that China did not even try to change a single vote in the 2020 election," Warner said in a statement on X. "A single concurring opinion suggested China may have tried to sway voters' opinions ... but that's been public knowledge since 2021."

Rep. Joseph Morelle of New York, the ranking Democrat on the administration committee that handles federal voting issues and elections, said Trump is trying to sow confusion before the midterm elections.

"This is a pretext for the president, I think, calling into dispute the 2026 elections," Morelle said on C-SPAN, adding that "we have secure elections."

"I heard no concrete allegations that foreign actors actually changed the results of an American election," Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware said on CNN.

Takeaways: The ICE officer who killed a man in Maine has a violent history, family and records say

By JACK BROOK, MICHAEL R. SISK, AMANDA SWINHART and CLAIRE GALOFARO Associated Press/Report for America

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — When David Brouillette told his ex-wife Ashley late last year that he had joined Immigration and Customs Enforcement, she didn't believe him. Her ex-husband was abusive, had a long history of psychiatric issues and never should have been given a badge and a gun, she and other relatives of his told The Associated Press.

Ashley Brouillette didn't realize he'd been telling the truth until this week, when videos began circulating online of the moments surrounding the shooting of a 25-year-old Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero by an ICE officer in the coastal Maine city of Biddeford.

She told the AP that she spoke to her ex-husband in a Facebook audio call, and he acknowledged that he had killed Durán Guerrero. Their 18-year-old daughter, Madison Brouillette, also told the AP that her father called her Wednesday and said that he killed him.

David Brouillette's troubling past further challenges how thoroughly the Department of Homeland Security has vetted recruits as it went on a hiring spree to help carry out President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. At least 10 people have died in encounters with immigration agents since Trump launched the crackdown after starting his second term.

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DHS, which oversees ICE and hasn't released the name of the officer who killed Durán Guerrero, has said the "vehicle attempted to flee the scene and, fearing for public safety, an officer discharged his weapon."

When reached for comment about Brouillette's record and his role in Monday's shooting, an ICE spokesperson said in a statement that, "We will never confirm or deny attempts to dox our law enforcement officers," and that "The ICE officer in question has nearly a decade of federal law enforcement experience with required training including use of force training."

Brouillette, 37, didn't respond to text messages or an email seeking comment. Three relatives who said they had spoken to him since the shooting, including Ashley and Madison Brouillette, said he told them he acted in self-defense.

The White House referred all questions about the shooting and Brouillette to ICE.

A new career in ICE

David and Ashley Brouillette were high school sweethearts who married in 2007 but divorced two years later. She said he became violent with her after she got pregnant, and that the abuse continued after she left him.

David Brouillette doesn't appear to have a criminal record in Maine, as a check with the Maine Department of Public Safety returned no records for him.

But hundreds of family court records obtained from the Augusta District Court clerk's office detail years of allegations of physical and verbal abuse raised by his second ex-wife on behalf of herself and his daughters.

The second ex-wife — whom the AP is not identifying because she fears retaliation — alleged that he had stalked and harassed her and physically and verbally abused his daughter, according to multiple requests for temporary protection orders.

"Dave needs counseling or something for his PTSD & depression," she wrote in an application for a temporary protective order on behalf of his teenage daughter which a judge granted in 2021.

In court filings, David Brouillette said that his second ex-wife had slandered him.

Madison Brouillette said she also witnessed her dad's volatility, including when she came home from school once and he told her he had been sitting on a tree stump with a gun to his head.

An immediate relative of David Brouillette who spoke on the condition that their name not be used said he was diagnosed with severe bipolar disorder and attention deficit disorder as a child — a diagnosis that Ashley Brouillette confirmed. The immediate relative described him as "extremely mentally ill" and said he attempted suicide twice at age 12 and was hospitalized multiple times.

The relative said they've been estranged for years, after they broke off contact because they feared he would harm them. He did not respond to their outreach this week, the relative added.

A military deployment and law enforcement aspirations

Growing up in Gardiner, a city of about 6,000 people roughly 60 miles (97 kilometers) northeast of Biddeford, where Monday's shooting occurred, David Brouillette was enchanted by law enforcement and the military, his relatives said.

Brouillette was initially rejected by military recruiters because of his mental health diagnoses, but recruiters encouraged him to go off his medications for a year and reapply, which he did, his immediate relative said. He was eventually able to enlist.

According to U.S. military records, Brouillette was enlisted in the Maine Army National Guard from November 2007 until January 2010. He then joined the regular Army as a human intelligence collector. Brouillette deployed to Afghanistan from May 2012 to February 2013 and eventually left the Army as a sergeant in December 2015.

Life after the Army

After his discharge, Brouillette held a hodgepodge of jobs — some in or adjacent to law enforcement — and was injured in an accident while training to become a firefighter, public records and court documents show.

But by the end of 2021, he wrote in a text message included in court filings, he was broke, going to school full-time and making money delivering food for DoorDash.

In March, the Maine agency that handles child support matters filed a lien against him, public records

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show. The filing suggests that Brouillette may have been in line for a permanent impairment or disability settlement.

'I don't think he sees himself as a killer'

In late 2025, around the time he joined ICE, his ex-wife Ashley said he left a three-minute voicemail mocking her for taking out a restraining order against him. According to the message she shared with AP, he repeatedly called her "disgusting" and suggested that she and the other female members of her "bloodline" should die.

"And all of you should have your f-----g throats cut," the voicemail said. "Yeah, you should. Am I threatening that I'm gonna do that? Nope. Nope. But do I think that you should have your f-----g throats cut? Or should have had them cut? Yep."

She said she cut off contact with him until Wednesday, when his picture began circulating online.

Ashley Brouillette reached out to his current wife on Facebook and they spoke on the phone for several minutes. Her ex-husband spoke with her, according to cellphone screenshots of the phone exchange she shared with the AP. He acknowledged he had fatally shot Durán Guerrero.

"He was asking if I could tell them that he was a good person and not to talk about the abuse and stuff that I had endured while with him and he said that the most important thing is his character right now," she said.

She said he told her he is now hiding in protective custody.

"I asked him why he did it," she said. "He said it was a justified shooting. The guy was trying to run him over with a car."

His daughter also said he told her it was justified.

"I don't think he sees himself as a killer," Madison Brouillette said.

Maine Democrats running to replace Platner as Senate nominee scramble to woo his voters

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

The tight timeline to replace former Maine Senate nominee Graham Platner has left Democratic hopefuls scrambling to woo his progressive base while trying to turn the focus from the disgraced oysterman to defeating Republican Sen. Susan Collins in November.

It's a delicate balance for the candidates, who are vying to face Collins in a contest that could decide control of the Senate as Platner's shadow hangs over the race. In their first debate Thursday night, one of the first questions candidates were asked was: What was Graham Platner's best idea?

Moving past Platner is just one of the challenges facing Democrats. The never-before-used process to pick a new nominee means candidates have less than three weeks to pull off what typically takes campaigns months or years, from organizing volunteers to raising money and preparing for debates.

The whiplash many of the candidates are facing was on display Thursday.

Asked by debate moderators about President Donald Trump's decision to capture Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife earlier this year, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows gave inaccurate information about Collins not pushing back against Trump, a Republican. When a moderator called her on it, Bellows said she was on vacation on the Kennebec River last week after previously focusing on her unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign and hadn't expected to be running for the Senate.

"When I need to know the facts, I will. I'll do my homework," said Bellows, who lost to Collins in 2014.

The field of 12 candidates also includes former public health leader Nirav Shah and union-backed logger Troy Jackson, who campaigned alongside Platner in a failed bid for governor.

Platner's exit means the clock is ticking

Platner quit the Senate race last week after he was accused of rape, which he denies, and his campaign quickly imploded as supporters revoked their endorsements and resources.

Democrats have until July 27 to choose a new nominee, according to state law. The Maine Democratic Party's succession plan calls for a state party convention at which 601 delegates will meet on July 25 and

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vote for Platner's replacement. The majority of the convention delegates will be selected this weekend from each of the state's 16 counties.

Candidates hoping to replace Platner have been recruiting delegates who will vote for them at the convention. The candidates also must collect 500 voter signatures needed to qualify for the convention vote.

"I don't think anyone's happy that we're in this situation," said Dan Jenkins, a Maine Democrat who has applied to be a delegate. "We would have preferred that this had broken many, many months ago and then Graham had exited the race when there was a time for a democratic process. But it's where we are."

Some candidates might see a boost from prior campaigns

Jackson is among the handful of candidates pivoting to the Senate race after running for other political offices, likely giving them a leg up in not having to launch from scratch.

Our Revolution, a progressive organization founded by Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont that had originally backed Platner, has thrown its support behind Jackson, the former Maine Senate president. Sanders, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, has not endorsed in the race.

Shah, former director of Maine's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, also unsuccessfully ran in this year's Maine Democratic governor's primary. He has been pitching Platner's supporters that he's also an outsider who can unify a fractured Democratic Party.

"You have an important place in this campaign, and we welcome your voices," Shah said earlier this month speaking to Platner's base.

Bellows also ran for governor. She's hoping that her previous battles with Trump will bolster her argument that she'll be an advocate for the working class.

Bellows previously tried to unseat Collins in 2014 as the Senate Democratic nominee and lost to her in a landslide. She later went on to win a seat as a state senator before becoming Maine's secretary of state. She's since downplayed her prior loss to Collins by pointing to the Democratic establishment's unwillingness to take on the Republican in 2014.

Another candidate, Jordan Wood, initially announced his intent to run in the Maine Democratic Senate primary. He dropped out last fall to run in the state's 2nd District but lost that race.

Candidates seize on recent ICE shooting

The fatal shooting by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Maine this week has been top of mind among the potential Senate nominees.

The Embassy of Colombia has identified the man killed Monday in Biddeford, roughly 15 miles (24 kilometers) southwest of Portland, as Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a 26-year-old Colombian national. The Department of Homeland Security has since said an ICE officer fired his weapon when the man officers were pursuing attempted to flee the scene, threatening "public safety."

Many have rushed to connect Collins to the embattled federal agency.

All the candidates who debated Thursday said they agreed with the call to "abolish ICE," though Wood stopped short of saying the agency should be completely dissolved.

"I believe that when I say we have to abolish it, what I mean is that we need a new law enforcement agency that has the trust of the people," Wood said.

Jackson disagreed, calling ICE a "rogue agency that goes around doing things that they're being told to on high."

Candidates asked about Platner's best ideas

Platner attracted more than 150,000 votes during the June 9 primary, an eye-opening number that signaled a progressive base eager to support a candidate known for his promise to defend the working class and ability to rally large crowds.

With little more than a week until the state convention to find Platner's replacement, it still remains unknown just who will be able to capture that same excitement seen among Platner's base.

When pressed during Thursday's debate about Platner's best idea on the campaign trail, Jackson pointed to his commitment to "Medicare for All." As a gubernatorial candidate, Jackson also voiced support for replacing job-based and individual private health insurance with a government-run plan that guarantees

coverage for all with no premiums, no deductibles and only minimal copays for certain services.

Bellows said that she agreed with Platner's description that democracy in the U.S. has been corrupted by those in power.

Shah said he would take up Platner's commitment to "abolish ICE," while Wood said he admired Platner's decision to say that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, something Israel denies.

"Graham got into this race saying, 'this is genocide.' And I learned that it is so important in these moments to draw those moral lines," Wood said.

Andy Burnham is declared leader of UK's Labour Party, pledges to restore hope

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Andy Burnham was officially declared leader of Britain's governing Labour Party on Friday, promising to bring hope to the British people and purpose to the floundering government as he cleared his final hurdle to take office as prime minister next week.

The former mayor of Greater Manchester was the only contender in the center-left party's leadership contest to replace departing Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who was forced out by a rebellion within his party. Friday's announcement was a foregone conclusion after Burnham secured nominations from 379 of the 403 Labour lawmakers in the House of Commons.

Burnham pledged to serve "people and places who have been waiting too long for politics to let them hope again."

"We're going to give them hope back," he told an audience of lawmakers, party activists and trade union leaders in his first speech as leader. "I am ready."

"I have a plan," he added, in a bid to reassure a party that has seen its popularity nosedive since winning a landslide election victory two years ago. He pledged to end Labour's factional disputes, saying "we won't beat Britain's new right if we are consumed by infighting and pulling in different directions."

The prime minister in waiting is about to take office

Burnham has been prime minister-in-waiting for weeks, since winning a special election for a seat in Parliament a month ago, but he has revealed little detail about his policy priorities. He will arrive in Number 10 Downing Street largely unknown to voters outside Manchester.

He sketched out some priorities in Friday's speech, promising to deliver "hope in every heart" and "good growth in every post code," in part by transferring power from central government in London to local leaders in cities and regions.

"We will take power back from Westminster and Whitehall and give it to the place you live," he told the audience. "More power over life's essentials so you can make them work better."

Starmer announced last month that he would resign after two years in office marred by missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with his party and the public.

Labour regularly trails behind anti-immigration party Reform UK in opinion polls, and the governing party had catastrophic results in local elections in May, triggering pressure on Starmer to step down that he couldn't resist.

Burnham deemed a better communicator than Starmer

Burnham brings a more relaxed style of leadership than the rather stern Starmer, and is regarded as one of the Labour Party's best communicators. But he faces many of the same problems as his predecessor, including a sluggish economy, a cost-of-living squeeze fueled by wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and overstretched public services.

And his promises of a new, less divisive politics are not too different to what Starmer pledged when he took office in 2024.

"I will work to build a new politics. The country is crying out for it," Burnham said. "How can politicians point fingers when living standards are falling and politics as a whole isn't working for them? It infuriates

them and makes them switch off.”

He said he would have the “courage to fix the big things that politics has neglected,” such as tackling the patchy access to social care for those who need it because of age, illness or disability. It’s a pressing issue in a country with an aging population, and one that has foxed previous Labour and Conservative governments.

Burnham says he’ll reverse 40 years of bad decisions

He highlighted plans to focus on economic renewal, more public control of key sectors and creating new modern industrial jobs, arguing that Britain took “a series of wrong turns in the 1980s” when “political power was centralized and economic power privatized.”

That’s the decade when Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher oversaw policies of privatization, deindustrialization and political centralization that transformed the U.K. economy.

“Slowly, at times imperceptibly, over four decades, political and economic power drained away out of our communities in every region and nation of the U.K.,” Burnham said, calling Britain’s change of prime ministers — for the sixth time in a decade — “the most significant change moment in our politics for 40 years.”

Starmer will remain prime minister until Monday, when he formally tenders his resignation to King Charles III. The king will then ask Burnham to form a government.

Britain’s parliamentary democracy allows governing parties to change leaders, and thus prime ministers, without the need for a general election. The next national election doesn’t have to be held until 2029.

New prime ministers have come with increasing frequency in recent years. Burnham will be the U.K.’s seventh leader since 2016.

He faces strong and sometimes conflicting pressures.

Unions welcomed his focus on living standards but said the test would be whether he can deliver. Business group the Confederation of British Industry praised his emphasis on economic growth, but also aid that “the challenge is execution.”

Ukraine fights under an interim defense chief after Zelenskyy’s contested government shake-up

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine fought Russia’s more than 4-year-old invasion under an interim defense minister Friday, a day after a government reshuffle exposed a deep split between the military’s old guard and young innovators over how to fight the war.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s major shake-up of his government on Thursday, which included the dismissal of Mykhailo Fedorov as defense minister and the appointment of a new prime minister, unsettled the country’s military leadership and triggered a public outcry. It tested Zelenskyy’s authority and was an unwelcome difficulty after Ukraine in recent months gained traction in the war.

Zelenskyy said he had asked Maj. Gen. Yevhen Khmara, acting head of the state’s security service and a highly regarded special operations expert, to take over the defense minister’s duties.

Zelenskyy said late Thursday he would ask Parliament to formally approve Khmara’s appointment as defense minister, as required by law.

That step could be delayed by bureaucratic hurdles, however. Ukrainian law requires the defense minister to be a civilian, so a serving soldier or security service officer must leave active duty before being formally appointed. Also, lawmakers will be on summer recess through mid-August.

It was not clear whether Khmara would have enough votes in Parliament to be confirmed in the job.

Relations between 35-year-old Fedorov and Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, the 60-year-old commander of Ukraine’s armed forces who started his military career in the former Soviet Union, had broken down, according to Zelenskyy, and made Fedorov’s position untenable.

Fedorov, who is credited with pushing forward Ukraine’s innovative drone technology that has brought advantages on the battlefield and fighting corruption in the military, defended his record after just six

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months in government.

"We transformed Ukraine into a global tech leader and a defense powerhouse," he said Friday on social media.

A second day of Kyiv protests demand Fedorov's return

The surprise departure of Fedorov, a youthful, digital-savvy modernizer, drew thousands of people to demonstrate against his dismissal in cities across Ukraine on Thursday.

Further street protests took place in Kyiv on Friday, where one sign read, "Don't ruin something that works."

"I don't think they should replace an effective leader and manager like Fedorov," Olha Horoshkova, one of the protesters, told The Associated Press.

She said her father has been serving in the armed forces since 2022 and told her he has seen "noticeable changes" under Fedorov.

"There's a little less bureaucracy now, and things have genuinely become easier," she reported her father saying.

Another protester, Yehor Pohrebniak, said army chief Syrskyi had had some notable triumphs during the war.

But he added: "Syrskyi's vision of war is already outdated, because war is changing very rapidly ... We need more technological solutions."

Ukraine's interim defense minister is a special operations expert

Khmara, tapped by Zelenskyy to replace Fedorov, has been in charge of the SBU security service since January.

He had previously led the SBU's elite Alpha special forces unit and is known for being an architect of Operation Spiderweb, one of Ukraine's most spectacular attacks when it struck Russian air bases last year.

He joined the Alpha unit in 2011 and became its commander in 2023 before being promoted to major general the following year.

Russia and Ukraine trade more long-range attacks

Moscow's response to its recent battlefield difficulties and Ukraine's targeting of Russian oil facilities, which has caused severe fuel shortages, has focused in part on relentless strategic bombing of civilian areas of Ukraine.

Russian attacks on Ukraine overnight killed at least four civilians and wounded 20 other people, Zelenskyy said.

Two people were killed and 10 others injured, including children, in a Russian missile attack on Ukraine's southern port city of Odesa, regional military administration head Oleh Kiper said. One of those killed was a woman who had been walking in a park with her children, who survived, he said.

In the Zaporizhzhia region, two people were killed and five were injured in a strike, according to Zelenskyy. He said three people were injured as a result of Russian shelling in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

Officials said more people were injured in Russian strikes on five other regions of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said air defenses downed 243 Ukrainian drones overnight into Friday.

Three civilians were killed and seven others injured in Ukrainian drone attacks over the previous 24 hours, according to Vladimir Saldo, the Moscow-appointed head of the Russia-occupied part of Ukraine's Kherson region.

Ukrainian drones struck 12 Russian vessels in the Black Sea overnight, Robert "Madiar" Brovdi, head of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces, said Friday. The vessels included nine dry cargo ships, one tanker, one gas carrier and one tugboat, according to Brovdi.

Ukrainian forces struck 159 Russian vessels in the Black and Azov seas over the past 12 days, he said, in its campaign to stop Russian shipping.

Ukrainian forces also destroyed a Russian Tu-95 strategic bomber in Engels, about 800 kilometers (500 miles) from the Ukrainian border, Zelenskyy said.

Wildfire smoke kills tens of thousands of people a year. Here's how it attacks the body

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Smoke from wildfires — which are burning more of the Northern Hemisphere as Earth warms — attacks nearly every system in the human body, killing tens of thousands of people a year, numerous medical studies show.

It attacks the body immediately, spiking asthma cases with increased ambulance runs within hours, swamps emergency rooms in a day or so with people suffering from heart attacks and other cardiovascular and lung issues, as well as mental health issues, doctors and scientists told The Associated Press.

Smoke also harms pregnant women, increasing the risk of premature births and low-weight babies who could have breathing problems the rest of their lives, doctors and studies say. And then there are long-term risks connecting prolonged smoke and other air pollution exposure to some cancers and dementia.

After huge global fires in 2018 and 2019, the medical and science communities started looking at the health effects from the smoke with “more and more studies coming out finding that there’s all types of impacts that may not have been so obvious before,” said Dr. Mary Johnson, a Harvard School of Public Health environmental health scientist.

Smoke causes inflammation by triggering the body’s immune system to go into overtime to fight the irritant. Scientists have found it can harm the brain, the skin and men’s sperm, with almost no system of the body spared, Johnson said. People over 60 become more prone to stroke in wildfire smoke, she said.

“Wildfire smoke is the toxic product of combustion of whatever burned,” which could include houses and cars, said Dr. Courtney Howard, an emergency room physician, chair of the Global Climate and Health Alliance and president-elect of the Canadian Medical Association.

“So really it’s a big giant toxic soup of particles and gases.”

Scientists have counted at least 1,000 toxins in wildfire smoke, according to Colorado State University environmental toxicologist Luke Montrose.

“If I gave you a list, you would recognize some of these as being very bad, oftentimes associated with the burning of diesel fuel or cigarette smoke, things like formaldehyde or volatile organic compounds,” Montrose said. “So just the smoke itself can be bad.”

Rising global temperatures from climate change means more fires

So far this year, more than 5,740 square miles (more than 14,860 square kilometers) of the United States has burned from wildfires, which is 31% more than the average of the previous 10 years on this date, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. The amount of U.S. land burned each year in the 2020s — averaged out over a decade — is now more than twice what it was 30 years ago.

Europe saw a record high amount of land burned in 2025, Canada has had several record or near-record fire years in the 2020s and the Arctic recently has had unprecedented levels of burning.

“Wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense because of climate change, and when a fire happens, you have smoke,” said Colleen Reid, a University of Colorado geographic health professor.

Most of the biggest particles in wildfire smoke fall close to where a blaze is burning, while the smallest particles — the ones that scientists say do the most damage — travel the farthest. In a typical wildfire, the nasty particles that harm human health are about the size of one micron, Reid said.

Inside the body, particles attack

First those particles have to get by your body’s protection, mainly nose hairs and mucus, then they get into your lungs and from there the bloodstream.

Montrose said the particles can be coated in lots of chemicals and have large surface areas. That triggers the body’s defense system to “send signals to other cells that say, ‘We have a problem. We need to mount an immune response to this.’ And that’s where you get your acute effect or your effect within minutes, hours or even that day.” It’s mostly happening in the hearts and lungs, he said.

And many people die.

On average 24,100 people died each year in the Lower 48 states between 2006 and 2020 due to long-

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term exposure to tiny particles from wildfire smoke, according to a study this year in the journal Science Advances. A Stanford study projects that U.S. wildfire smoke deaths will increase with climate change and by midcentury hit an annual cost of \$244 billion in terms of the economic value the government puts on each life.

On a global scale, wildfire smoke particles cause 677,745 deaths annually, with almost 39% of them children under age 5, according to a 2021 study that combined observations, studies on how the body responds to the particles and computer models to calculate the toll.

The biggest nonlethal effects have to do with the way people breathe, especially those with asthma.

"We did a study here in 2014 after we had about two-and-a-half months of smoke off and on, because we're in the subarctic so we're warming at triple the global rate, so in a way we're kind of canaries in the coal mine of the health impacts of climate change," Howard said on a clear day from Yellowknife, Canada. "We found a full doubling of emergency department visits for asthma and about 50% increase in pneumonia."

"Even in individuals that don't have asthma, the air can be so irritating that you could have difficulty with your respiratory system regardless," Johnson said, "whether it's coughing, whether it's chest tightness, whether it's sore throat, headache."

There are ways to minimize the risks

Studies have linked smoke to people having more trouble with decision making and other cognitive issues. People come to the emergency room depressed, Howard said. That's why it's important to find a place with clean air — including designated shelters or libraries — to get a break from the smoke and possibly exercise, she said.

Experts suggest people wear high-quality masks when outdoors, even though they don't provide perfect protection. Inside, check windows and doors for seals, invest in a good ventilation system and check air filters, they say.

"Staying away from the smoke is No. 1 if you can," Johnson said.

Andy Burnham, a mayor from England's north, is poised to become Britain's next prime minister

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Andy Burnham got to the top through a mix of patience and risk-taking.

A decade ago, Burnham abandoned a 20-year climb up the Labour Party ladder in London to head north and run for mayor of Greater Manchester. A month ago, he returned to Parliament by winning a risky special election. On Monday, he will become Britain's 59th prime minister.

The sudden downfall of Prime Minister Keir Starmer after just two years in office has swept the 56-year-old Burnham into office — unelected and largely untested. He will enter No. 10 Downing St. carrying the heavy weight of expectation, and big questions about how he will shoulder it.

"A whole range of people across the Labour movement and in the country have projected onto Andy Burnham their hopes and their fantasies about how the country should be run and what Labour should stand for and what Andy Burnham stands for," said Joshi Herrmann, founder of Manchester news site The Mill, who has covered Burnham for years.

"He has got lots of people's hopes up."

He was born in Liverpool and attended Cambridge

Burnham has made his name in Manchester, but he was born in Liverpool, and grew up in a commuter village between the rival northwest English cities.

His father worked as a British Telecom engineer and his mother as a receptionist, and he was raised in a close-knit Catholic family. Burnham has said he's "not particularly religious," but Catholic teaching, along with the center-left Labour Party, helped forge his values and sense of social justice.

Burnham and his brothers were the first generation of their family to go to university. And not just any university — Burnham attended Cambridge, one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions.

"He needed a lot of persuading to apply because he felt that as a working-class boy, going off to Cam-

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bridge wasn't for him," Stephen Harrington, Burnham's former English teacher at St. Aelred's Catholic High School, told the BBC. "He didn't believe in himself. But he did it, and the rest is history."

Burnham has said he felt out of place at Cambridge, where many of his classmates had gone to posh private schools in the more affluent south of England. But he got a degree in English and met his future wife, Dutch fellow student Marie-France Van Heel, now a marketing executive. The couple married in 2000 and have a son and two daughters.

After graduating, Burnham worked as a journalist at trade magazines before becoming a researcher and adviser to Labour politicians.

Elected to Parliament for the Manchester-area district of Leigh in 2001, he rose through the government ranks under Labour Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. He served in Brown's Cabinet between 2007 and 2010 as chief secretary to the Treasury, culture secretary and health secretary.

A formative experience came in 2009, when he was heckled at a commemoration of the 1989 Hillsborough Stadium disaster, when 97 Liverpool soccer fans were crushed to death. Bereaved families had fought for years to overturn a false narrative offered by police that unruly fans had been to blame.

Burnham became a champion for the families and helped push for a new inquest, an apology and a law that imposes a duty of candor on public officials to tell the truth about tragedies whatever the impact on their reputation.

As mayor, he became known as King of the North

After Labour lost power in 2010, Burnham ran for leadership of the party that year and in 2015, losing both times. He quit Parliament in 2017, a low ebb for Labour nationally, to run for mayor of Greater Manchester.

Being mayor played to his strengths: an ability to bring people together, a sharp eye for opportunities and a wide streak of pragmatism. His approach became known as "Manchesterism," a brand of business-friendly socialism that aims to harness private and public money to invest in areas like transport, housing and infrastructure.

Manchester was a former manufacturing powerhouse — known as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution — that had been hollowed out as British industry crumbled. During his tenure the city boomed, with skyscrapers blooming on vacant post-industrial sites. Burnham won praise for taking a piecemeal public transport system under public control and improving it.

He shed suit and tie for jeans and dark T-shirts, spoke about his love for Oasis, The Smiths and New Order and spent spare time playing soccer or spinning 1990s tunes during DJ battles.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he harangued Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson over what he called a "London-centric" approach to the crisis that was punishing northern cities. That's when he gained the nickname King of the North, a "Game of Thrones"-inspired nod both to his championing of his home region and his political ambition.

He has said he saw his work in central government as "unfinished business," and got his chance when Starmer was pushed to resign by Labour colleagues alarmed at the party's unpopularity.

But Burnham still needed a seat in Parliament. A Labour lawmaker agreed to resign, triggering a special election for the Manchester-area district of Macclesfield. Burnham trounced the candidate from anti-immigration party Reform UK, cementing his credentials as a winner.

In the subsequent contest to replace Starmer as Labour leader, he was the only candidate.

He's promising to restore hope

Now he says he will deliver "a new politics based on unity and hope" and "an economy that works for everybody," no matter where they live. A key plank is giving regional leaders more powers, and he plans to move part of the prime minister's office to a "No. 10 North" in Manchester.

Herrmann said Burnham has clear strengths, especially an ability to tell a persuasive story and a sense of empathy that many politicians lack.

He added that the incoming prime minister has "a set of principles about trying to make the country fairer, trying to bring people out of poverty, that he really does believe in."

Critics claim Burnham's politics are vague on key points, such as where the money will come from to pay for his pledges. He will face many of the same political and economic challenges that stymied Starmer,

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including a sluggish economy, overstretched public services and a cost-of-living squeeze. He has little experience of foreign policy issues, from the Ukraine war to dealing with U.S. President Donald Trump.

And running a country of 70 million is a lot different from overseeing a region of 3 million.

But Sacha Lord, a Manchester music entrepreneur who served as Burnham's nighttime economy adviser, said the politician has a steely side that will help him rise to the occasion.

"He's not scared of locking horns with people," Lord said. "Everybody thinks Andy's this nice, cheeky-chappy guy. But trust me, when he wants something ... he tends to get it."

World Cup beer sales are hopping. Brewers hope the stout demand outlasts the tournament

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

The World Cup has been a bonanza for beer in the U.S. Bars in Boston reported needing emergency deliveries to keep taps from running dry on some game days. Fans downed a total of 290,000 stadium beers during the six matches in Philadelphia, FIFA organizers said.

But all that frothy foam obscures a cold reality: Beer sales have been struggling globally, and it's unclear if soccer's world championship tournament can reverse the trend despite having three countries and 16 cities as co-hosts this year.

In the U.S., beer consumption has fallen steadily for a decade, according to the Brewers Association, a trade group for craft brewers. Canada has seen a similar decline, according to the national statistics agency. The Brewers of Europe trade association says the story is the same in the European Union.

Consumers are buying less regular beer and more 'wellness' drinks

Many consumers are cutting back on alcohol for health reasons. Last year was the first time in Gallup's polling that a majority of Americans – 53% -- said drinking "one or two drinks a day" was bad for one's health.

While sales of non-alcoholic beer have grown, they still make up only around 1% of the U.S. market, according to the Beer Institute, a trade group for brewers.

Economic worries also have taken a toll on sales. U.S. consumption of all types of alcohol – including wine and spirits – fell 5% last year, and affordability concerns were partly to blame, beverage market research company IWSR said.

Craig Purser, the president and CEO of the National Beer Wholesalers Association, said he thinks smart-phones and Netflix have taken consumers away from socializing with a cold beer in hand.

"If you have this behavior where we're cocooning and we're not spending time with other folks, that's going to affect beer consumption," Purser said.

World Cup host cities saw a bump in beer sales at stadiums, bars and restaurants

Enter the World Cup and the soccer fans who traveled from around the world to support their national teams and engage in communal celebration or sorrow.

In the first four weeks of the tournament, beer sales in bars, restaurants, stadiums and other venues rose 14% in U.S. host cities compared to the same period last year, according to the Beer Institute. The bump extended beyond host cities; sales were up 4% nationally, the institute said.

Jim Koch, the brewer, founder and CEO of the Boston Beer Co., which makes Samuel Adams and other brands, said the company had to make two emergency deliveries to its Sam Adams Boston Taproom on the first day that Scotland's fans were in town.

"At one point, we were pouring them a Sam Adams Boston Lager every 12 seconds. What a wonderful group of people," he said.

But that wasn't all that warmed Koch's heart.

"I didn't see a single soul on their phone," he said, "They had a beer in their hand and they were talking to each other. They were doing what beer is meant to do, which is helping people enjoy each other's company."

The plentiful drinking on display in stadiums stood in stark contrast to the World Cup held four years

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ago in Qatar, where the government banned the sale of alcoholic beer in match venues.

Brewers leaned heavily into this year's tournament. Budweiser and Michelob Ultra maker AB InBev, the World's Cup's official beer sponsor, doled out marketing support to bars and hosted 200,000 watch parties in 40 countries.

Molson Coors said it would spend 60% more than last year on marketing in June and July; it also debuted a limited edition soccer ball that can hold 12 cans of Miller Lite.

A team's loss can make supporters cry, but not in their beer

Maybell Romero, a law professor at Tulane University School of Law in New Orleans, usually prefers cocktails over beer. But she says she opts for beer during the World Cup since it has lower alcohol content than liquor or wine and watching games can be an all-day affair.

"If I drink cocktail after cocktail, I will not be functional after a few hours," Romero said.

Romero, who has been watching this year's matches at bars in Mexico City, said she's enjoyed trying new beers, especially those with novel ingredients like champagne yeast. She might order an occasional beer once the World Cup ends but expects to go back to mostly drinking cocktails.

Beer consumption was expected to fall in some markets even before the World Cup ended. Shares in AB InBev and Constellation Brands — which owns the U.S. rights to Mexican beer brands like Corona and Modelo — tumbled after Mexico and Brazil were eliminated from the tournament.

Romero observed the mood shift in Mexico City after those losses.

"The city is collectively depressed," she said. "Everything is a lot quieter, and people aren't going out as much."

Major sporting events on the horizon allow the beer industry to hold out hope

Purser remains hopeful the World Cup will remind people how much they like to gather and cheer on athletes, especially with the Summer Olympics heading to Los Angeles in 2028. Occasions are expanding, he said; college and professional football games are now played on more nights of the week, for example. And beer's consumer base is widening as more brands put out low- and no-alcohol versions, he said.

In May, the NCAA reversed its long-standing ban on alcohol advertising during March Madness, allowing makers of beer, wine, spirits and hard seltzer makers to sponsor the college basketball tournaments for the first time starting next season.

The Boston Beer Co.'s Koch said he's not fretting until then.

"People worry that the beer business has declined for a few years, and I always remind them that beer has been a part of human society, human civilization, for 10,000 years," he said. "Beer will always be a part enhancing our enjoyment of our lives and the time we spend on this earth."

Today in History: July 18, Nadia's perfect 10

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 18, the 199th day of 2026. There are 166 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 18, 1976, at the Summer Olympics in Montreal, Nadia Comaneci of Romania became the first gymnast to receive a perfect score of 10 from Olympic judges for her performance on the uneven bars.

Also on this date:

In 1536, the English Parliament passed an act declaring the authority of the pope void in England.

In 1863, during the Civil War, Union troops spearheaded by the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, made up of Black soldiers, charged Confederate-held Fort Wagner on Morris Island, South Carolina. The Confederates were able to repel the Northerners, who suffered heavy losses; the 54th's commander, Col. Robert Gould Shaw, was among those who were killed.

In 1918, South African anti-apartheid leader and future President Nelson Mandela was born in the village of Mvezo.

In 1925, Adolf Hitler published the first volume of his autobiographical manifesto, "Mein Kampf (My

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Struggle)."

In 1944, Hideki Tojo was removed as Japanese premier and war minister because of setbacks suffered by his country in World War II.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed a Presidential Succession Act which placed the speaker of the House and the Senate president pro tempore next in the line of succession after the vice president.

In 1964, nearly a week of rioting erupted in New York's Harlem neighborhood following the fatal police shooting of a Black teenager, James Powell, two days earlier.

In 1984, James Huberty shot and killed 21 and injured 19 at a McDonald's in the San Ysidro neighborhood of San Diego, California, before he was killed by a police sniper.

In 1994, a bomb hidden in a van destroyed a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 85 people.

In 2005, an unrepentant Eric Rudolph was sentenced in Birmingham, Alabama, to life in prison for an abortion clinic bombing that killed an off-duty police officer and maimed a nurse.

In 2013, Detroit became the biggest U.S. city to file for bankruptcy, its finances ravaged and its neighborhoods hollowed out by a long, slow decline in population and auto manufacturing.

Today's Birthdays: Olympic gold medal figure skater Tenley Albright is 91. Movie director Paul Verhoeven is 88. Singer Dion DiMucci is 87. Actor James Brolin is 86. Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Torre is 86. Singer Martha Reeves is 85. Business mogul Richard Branson is 76. Actor Margo Martindale is 75. Musician Ricky Skaggs is 72. World Golf Hall of Famer Nick Faldo is 69. Actor Elizabeth McGovern is 65. Actor Vin Diesel is 59. Author Elizabeth Gilbert is 57. Retired NBA All-Star Penny Hardaway is 55. Singer-songwriter M.I.A. is 51. Actor Elsa Pataky ("The Fast and the Furious" films) is 50. Movie director Jared Hess is 47. Actor Kristen Bell is 46. Actor Priyanka Chopra is 44. Actor Chace Crawford is 41. Boxer Canelo Alvarez is 36. Olympic sprinter Noah Lyles is 29.