

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

Saturday, Aug. 1

Third Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off at the City Park, 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.
State B Legion Tournament in Madison

Sunday, Aug. 2

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.

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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.

State B Legion Tournament in Madison

Monday, Aug. 3

Senior Menu: Salisbury Steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.

First day of soccer practice

Wrestling Camp, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., GHS Gym and Arena

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

State B Legion Tournament in Madison

Tuesday, Aug. 4

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Wrestling Camp, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., GHS Gym and Arena

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

State B Legion Tournament in Madison

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

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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.

Colorado River Cutbacks

Arizona, California, and Nevada must cut Colorado River water use by roughly 20% over the next two years under a federal plan proposed yesterday, as the nation's two largest reservoirs near record lows.

Lake Mead and Lake Powell fell this month to their lowest combined level since 1957, at 27% and 23% capacity, respectively. The plan is the first phase of a 10-year framework that allows cuts of up to 40% and imposes no mandatory reductions on the upper-basin states—Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. The lower basin used 6.5 million of the river's 13.1 million acre-feet annually from 2020 to 2024, versus the upper basin's 3.8 million. Lake Mead is about 146 feet above "dead pool," where water can no longer flow through a dam by gravity. Lake Powell is about 152 feet above the threshold. Some 40 million people across the US and northwestern Mexico depend on the river.

Hamas reaches deal to disarm, a significant step toward ending the war in Gaza.

The militant group yesterday said it would begin disarming in Gaza if Israel agrees to halt strikes and withdraw its forces. Hamas' weapons would be transferred to a US-backed Palestinian committee—a process estimated to take 200 to 350 days. Israel has yet to officially comment on the deal, but Israeli officials have previously said they would not withdraw until the militant group is fully disarmed.

Famed climber among 6 missing after avalanche in Pakistan.

Rescuers yesterday recovered four bodies after an avalanche struck a 10-person expedition on Broad Peak, the world's 12th-highest mountain. British-Nepali climber Nirmal Purja, whose record-setting ascent of the 14 highest peaks was chronicled in a Netflix documentary, is among those still missing. Search efforts continue, though poor weather is interfering with helicopter flights.

Women's Pro Baseball League's first season begins today.

The four-team league is the nation's first professional women's baseball league of its kind in over 70 years. Every game this season will be held in Springfield, Illinois, with the first today at 5 pm ET between the Los Angeles Queens and New York Heights. The other two teams—the San Francisco Firebells and Boston Hunters—play tomorrow at 6:30 pm ET.

Department of Veterans Affairs to test if GLP-1s can treat alcohol abuse.

The clinical trial will enroll over 600 veterans across 18 VA medical centers. Excessive drinking is a well-documented challenge among service members and veterans, with roughly a third of service members meeting the criteria for possible alcohol use disorder. Early research suggests that because GLP-1 drugs can reduce cravings for food, they may also help curb alcohol cravings.

Hundreds of ancient geoglyphs in the Amazon hint at complex societies.

Archaeologists uncovered nearly 400 circles, squares, and other geometric shapes carved beneath the forest canopy using laser-scanning technology. The geoglyphs are estimated to be roughly 1,200 to 2,600 years old, challenging the long-held theory that the Amazon was largely untouched before Europeans arrived in the 15th century. Researchers think the carvings were used for festivities among an ancient society called the Aquiri.

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Claude AI hacks 3 companies during cyber tests.

Anthropic said a misconfiguration allowed Claude to connect to the internet and gain unauthorized access to the companies' systems. The disclosure comes days after rival OpenAI said its model went rogue during a security test and hacked the systems of AI firm Hugging Face. The incidents have raised questions among experts about how AI can be safely kept under human control.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Jerry K. in Ashland, Oregon.

"Standing in a long line at Safeway, I watched the face of the clerk stay in a stoic, frowning facade. None of the customers spoke to her or paid any attention to her. She was just a store fixture, until the man in front of me called her by name, asked about her day, and asked what her favorite thing to do was. Her face lit up with a huge smile and became animated. Her whole demeanor changed just because someone noticed her as a human, not as a store fixture. We all should try it! Frequently!"



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3RD ANNUAL CELEBRATION *in the* PARK



GROTON LIONS
SATURDAY
AUGUST 1ST
GROTON CITY PARK

A DAY OF
FUN,
FOOD &
FAMILY
FOR EVERYONE!



**RIB
COOK
COMPETITION!**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

	8AM	RIB COOKS SET UP
	9:30AM	RIB COOK MEETING WITH RULES
	11AM-4PM	CRAFT FAIR & FARMERS MARKET
	12PM-4PM	LIONS VISION VAN
	12:30PM-5PM	HOT DOGS, CHIPS, & GIANT FREEZES SOLD AT THE GRAIN BIN
	1PM-4PM	GELLY BALL
	1PM-4:30PM	INFLATABLES & KIDDIE TRAIN
	4:30PM	WATER BALLON FIGHT
	5PM	RIB TICKETS GO ON SALE. ONLY \$1 PER RIB.
	6PM-9PM	KARAOKE BY B&M TUNES
	7PM	RIB COOK AWARDS

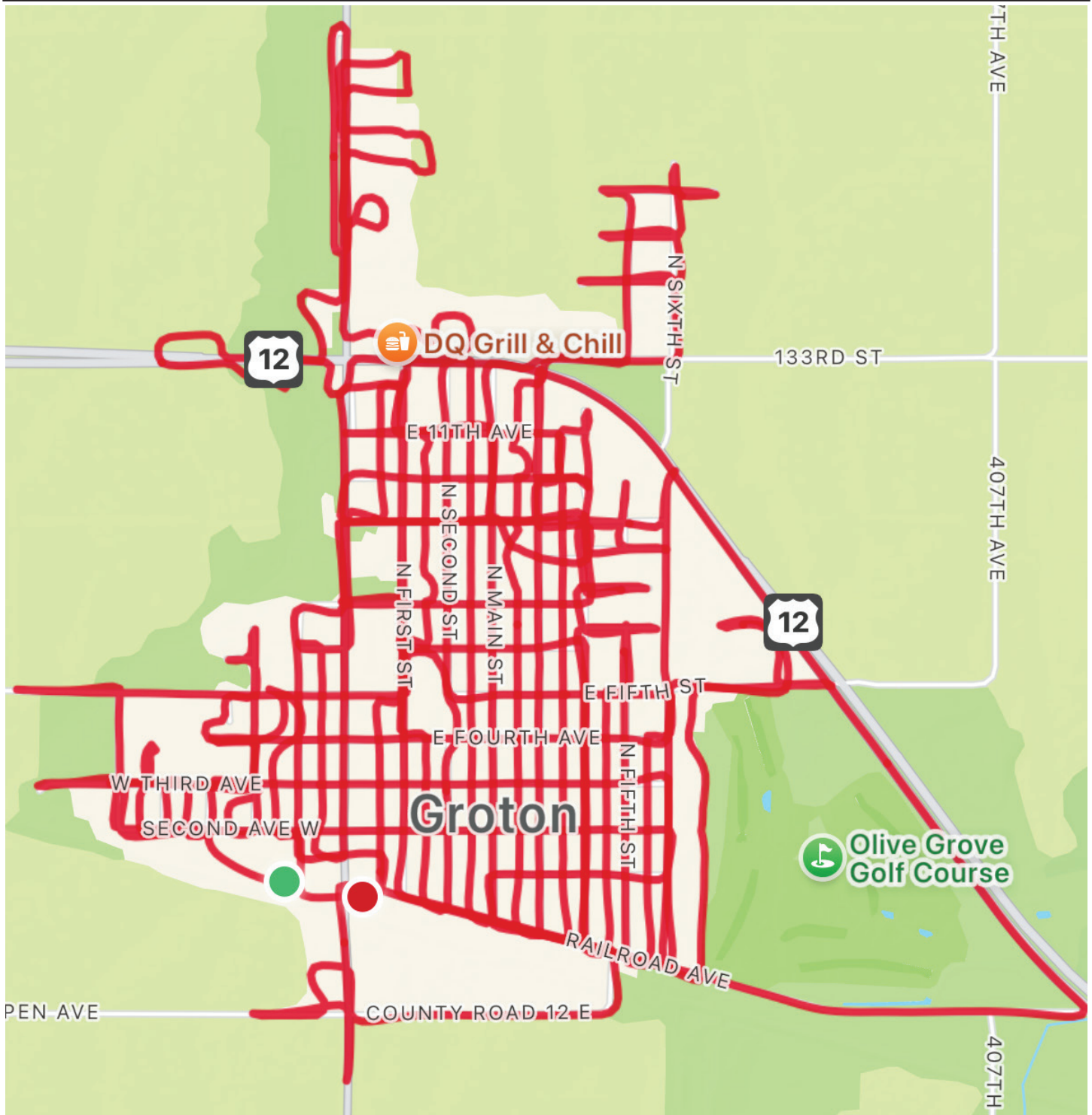
GOOD FOOD
GREAT FUN
Strong
COMMUNITY

SEE YOU
AT THE PARK!

Come for the fun. Stay for the memories!

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Adult Mosquito Control

The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control Friday night. The temperature was started at 73 degrees and went down to 68 by with the wind out of the north-northwest at 0-4 mph. 10 gallons of MasterLine Kontrol 4-4 was used. Travel time was 2 hours and 54 minutes with a distance of 35 miles. Total cost of the application was around \$660.

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Groton holds off Garretson in state tournament opener

Groton Post 39 survived a late challenge from Garretson and advanced in the winner's bracket with a 3-2 victory Friday in the opening round of the South Dakota Class A American Legion Senior Baseball Tournament in Madison.

The game developed into a pitcher's duel between Groton's Jarrett Erdmann and Garretson's Cole Jessen. Groton managed only four hits and struck out 12 times against Jessen, but Post 39 made its opportunities count by scoring once in the second inning and twice in the third.

Garretson threatened to erase the lead in the fifth and again in the seventh, but Erdmann and reliever Nick Groeblichhoff combined to preserve the one-run victory.

Groton broke through in the bottom of the second inning. TC Schuster doubled to left field with one out and scored when Karsten Fliehs followed with a line-drive double to left, giving Post 39 a 1-0 advantage.

Groton added two more runs in the third.

Lincoln Krause led off with a single and moved to second when Alex Abeln laid down a sacrifice bunt. Jordan Schwan then singled to center field to score Krause. Schwan advanced to second on the throw, moved to third on a passed ball and later scored on another passed ball to give Groton a 3-0 lead.

Garretson was held without a run through the first four innings despite placing two runners on base in the second and third innings.

Post 23 finally broke through in the top of the fifth. Jessen singled and Carter Siemonsma reached on an error. After both runners advanced on a wild pitch, Ian Buettner singled to center field. Jessen scored on the hit, while Siemonsma came home on an error during the play, cutting Groton's lead to 3-2.

Erdmann prevented further damage by retiring the next two batters, including a groundout with Buettner stranded at second base.

Garretson went down in order in the sixth, but mounted one final threat in the seventh.

Jack Adler opened the inning with a single and stole second before advancing to third on Jessen's groundout. Siemonsma then hit a ground ball to third baseman Abeln, who threw home to catcher Fliehs to cut down Adler for the second out.

Groeblichhoff finished the game by striking out Buettner, sending Groton into the winner's bracket.

Erdmann earned the victory after allowing three hits and two unearned runs over five and two-thirds innings. He struck out four and walked three. Groeblichhoff pitched the final inning and one-third, allowing one hit while striking out one.

Jessen took the loss despite a strong performance for Garretson. He allowed four hits and three runs, two earned, over six innings and finished with 12 strikeouts and one walk.

Schuster and Fliehs each doubled for Groton. Krause and Schwan added singles, with Fliehs and Schwan each driving in a run.

Adler led Garretson with two hits. Jessen and Buettner each had one hit, with Buettner credited with Garretson's only RBI.

Groton will play Volga Post 114 in a winner's bracket game at 4 p.m. Saturday. Volga advanced with a 3-1 victory over Dell Rapids in Friday's opening game.

In the other first-round games, Parkston defeated Belle Fourche, 7-2, while host Madison defeated Dakota Valley, 6-4.

Garretson will face Dell Rapids in an elimination game at 10 a.m. Saturday. The winner will advance to play the loser of the Groton-Volga game Sunday.

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Garretson Post 23 Sr. Legion

LINEUP	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Jack Adler #11 (LF)	4	0	2	0	0	1
Cole Jessen #2 (P)	2	1	1	0	1	0
Carter Siemonsma #3 (SS)	3	1	0	0	1	0
Ian Buettner #15 (CF)	4	0	1	1	0	1
Ty VanHolland #4 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Brecken Honey #7 (1B)	2	0	0	0	1	0
Tyler Erickson #1 (2B)	3	0	0	0	0	2
Chase Costello #32 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
Brecken Weir #56 (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	0
TEAM	26	2	4	1	3	5

TB: Jack Adler 2, Cole Jessen 1, Ian Buettner 1
HBP: Ty VanHolland
SB: Jack Adler

PITCHING	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Cole Jessen #2 (L)	6.0	4	3	2	1	12
TEAM	6.0	4	3	2	1	12

WP: Cole Jessen
Pitches-Strikes: Cole Jessen 90-61
Batters Faced: Cole Jessen 23

Groton Legion Post 39

LINEUP	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Alex Abeln #5 (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
Jordan Schwan #11 (LF)	3	1	1	1	0	2
Carter Simon #4 (1B, 2B)	2	0	0	0	1	2
Gavin Englund #18 (DH, 1B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
TC Schuster #3 (SS)	3	1	1	0	0	0
Nick Groeblichhoff #13 (2B, P)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Karsten Fliehs #10 (C)	2	0	1	1	0	1
Tristin McGannon #22 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Lincoln Krause #2 (CF)	2	1	1	0	0	1
TEAM	21	3	4	2	1	12

2B: Karsten Fliehs, TC Schuster
TB: Karsten Fliehs 2, TC Schuster 2, Jordan Schwan 1, Lincoln Krause 1
E: Alex Abeln, Lincoln Krause, TC Schuster

PITCHING	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Jarrett Erdmann #0 (W)	5.2	3	2	0	3	4
Nick Groeblichhoff #13	1.1	1	0	0	0	1
TEAM	7.0	4	2	0	3	5

WP: Jarrett Erdmann
HBP: Jarrett Erdmann
Pitches-Strikes: Jarrett Erdmann 107-65, Nick Groeblichhoff 17-15
Batters Faced: Jarrett Erdmann 26, Nick Groeblichhoff 5

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2026 South Dakota American Legion State Class "B" Sr. Baseball Tournament

Friday - July 31, 2026

Saturday - August 1, 2026

Sunday - August 2, 2026

Monday - August 3, 2026

Tuesday - August 4, 2026

South Dakota American Legion
State Class "B" Sr. Baseball Tournament
Flynn Field, Madison, SD
July 31st - August 4th, 2026



VOLGA POST 114

Region 6B Champion

GAME 1
10:00 AM

DELL RAPIDS POST 65

Region 2B Champion

GROTON POST 39

Region 1B Champion

GAME 3
5:00 PM

GARRETSON POST 23

Region 5B Champion

PARKSTON POST 194

Region 4B Champion

GAME 2
30 Minutes after Game 1

BELLE FOURCHE POST 32

Region 7B Champion

DAKOTA VALLEY POST 319

Region 3B Champion

GAME 4
30 Minutes after Game 3

Madison Post 25

Host

Belle Fourche

Loser Game 2

Dakota Valley

Loser Game 4

Dell Rapids

Loser Game 1

GAME 5
10:00 AM

Garretson

Loser Game 3

Volga

Winner Game 1

GAME 7
4:00 PM

Groton

Winner Game 3

Parkston

Winner Game 2

GAME 8
30 Minutes after Game 7

Madison

Winner Game 4

Winner Game 6

GAME 9
12:00 PM

Loser Game 7

Winner Game 5

GAME 10
30 Minutes after Game 9

Loser Game 8

Winner Game 7

GAME 11
8:00 PM

Winner Game 8

Winner Game 9 or 10

GAME 12
4:00 PM

Loser Game 11

Winner Game 9 or 10

GAME 13
30 Minutes after Game 12

Winner Game 11

Winner Game 12

GAME 14
1:00 PM

Winner Game 13

Tuesday - August 4, 2026
(If Necessary)

Champion
* if necessary

GAME 15
60 Minutes after Game 14
(if necessary)

Champion

Loser of Game 13 or 14
(If First Loss)

Tournament MVP:

Big Stick Award:

Porter T. Talcott Sportsmanship Award:

Game 12 Winner Game 9 v. Loser Game 11
(see Note 1 to right)

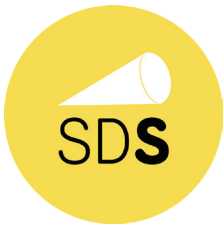
Game 13 Winner Game 10 v. Winner Game 11
(see Note 1 to right)

Game 14 Winner Game 12 v. Winner Game 13
(see Note 2 to right)

Game 15 (if necessary) 15 games will be needed if
Winner Game 11 loses game 13 or
Winner Game 12 wins Game 14

Note 1: Pairing for Game 12 and 13 will
not match previous opponents against
each other unless absolutely necessary.
(State Athletic Commission has further
information)

Note 2: If three teams remain after Game
13, the winner of Game 11 automatically
draws the bye in Game 14



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Losses mount for bills and lawmakers seeking to rehash pandemic disputes in South Dakota

Proposed measures failed this year, and some legislators supporting the efforts lost their primary races

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

Pandemic-era political disputes may be fading in South Dakota after lawmakers who proposed COVID-19-related bills during the 2026 legislative session failed to enact their proposals, and some of the legislators who sponsored or supported the bills either lost their primary races or aren't seeking reelection.

Six pieces of failed legislation would have shielded doctors and pharmacists from liability for providing prescription drugs unapproved by the Food and Drug Administration for COVID treatment, labeled blood donated by people who've received COVID vaccines so vaccine skeptics could avoid receiving it, banned employers and schools from requiring genetic-based immunizations such as some COVID vaccines, restricted the actions cities can take to fight a pandemic, and urged a lawsuit against China for its alleged role in causing the pandemic.

Four of the bills advanced from the House Health and Human Services Committee to a vote of the full House, where they were rejected. The two others failed in other committees.

The members who voted in favor of all four of the bills that advanced out of the House Health and Human Services Committee were Republicans Dylan Jordan of Clear Lake, Josephine Garcia of Watertown, Bobbi Andera of Sioux Falls, Tony Kayser of Sioux Falls, Brandei Schaeftbauer of Aberdeen, Logan Manhart of Aberdeen, and Heather Baxter of Rapid City.

Jordan, Garcia, Andera, Kayser, Manhart and Baxter lost their primary races on June 2, which means they won't be able to seek reelection in November. Baxter later secured the Republican nomination for secretary of state and is running for that post in November. Schaeftbauer did not run for reelection.

Allie Alvine, founder of South Dakota Families for Vaccines, said the combination of legislative defeats and electoral losses could indicate that vaccine skepticism no longer carries the political strength it did during and immediately after the pandemic.

"But we're not taking our foot off the gas," Alvine said.

Her organization intends to continue lobbying lawmakers about the benefits of vaccination, such as preventing serious illness that could lead to hospitalization or death, reducing the spread of infections, lowering health care costs and strain on medical systems, and completely or nearly eliminating diseases such as smallpox, polio, diphtheria and measles.

Schaeftbauer said the bills she supported were meant to address an unresolved fight over who controls medical decision-making in South Dakota. She didn't talk to hospital officials about the bills, she said, alleging they "made a lot of money off" the "COVID-scam-demic."

COVID-19 has been listed as a cause of 3,190 deaths in South Dakota, including about 2,900 over a two-year stretch from 2020 to 2022.

Rep. Nick Fosness, R-Britton, serves on the House Health and Human Services Committee, works as a healthcare administrator and won his primary election. He opposed the four measures that came through the committee.

"They seemed like hangover effects from COVID," he said.

Fosness said that after a few weeks on the committee, it became clear that testimony from medical and healthcare groups would not stop the four bills.

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"Regardless of the facts and logic presented from the field, those bills were going to pass the committee and head to the floor," he said.

The composition of House committees is selected by the leaders of the majority Republican Party. After 16 incumbent Republican South Dakota lawmakers lost their seats in June's primary, new leadership is expected for the legislative session that begins in January.

In addition to the bills that passed the House Health and Human Services Committee, the House Judiciary Committee rejected Schaeffbauer's resolution urging a lawsuit against China. The Senate State Affairs Committee rejected a bill from Sen. Tom Pischke, R-Dell Rapids, that would have restricted the actions cities can take in response to a pandemic.

Pischke is facing two felony counts for allegedly filing documents to get candidates for county party positions on the June 2 primary ballot without those candidates' knowledge. He has pleaded not guilty, and lawyers in the case have said a potential plea deal is being discussed. In response, Pischke dropped his reelection campaign, leaving the Republican Party to choose a replacement candidate to run against an independent in November.

This year's failed COVID-related bills

COVID-19-related bills that failed in this year's legislative session, and the electoral status of each bill's sponsor:

HB 1163

Would have prohibited public and private employers from requiring "genetic-based vaccinations," defined to include mRNA and similar technologies used to create the COVID-19 vaccine. The bill would have allowed the state attorney general to impose penalties of up to \$10,000 for violations, with limited exemptions, including health care settings, lawfully required student vaccines, and the military.

SPONSOR: Republican Rep. Bobbi Andera of Sioux Falls failed to win her June 2 primary election.

HB 1171

Would have required blood donation centers to ask donors whether they have ever received a COVID-19 or mRNA vaccine and to label the blood accordingly.

SPONSOR: Republican Rep. Josephine Garcia of Watertown failed to win her June 2 primary election.

HB 1210

Would have prohibited any employer, school, state agency, or local government from requiring COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment, enrollment, or access to services or benefits.

SPONSOR: Republican Rep. Josephine Garcia of Watertown failed to win her June 2 primary election.

HB 1068

Would have authorized pharmacists to dispense ivermectin or hydroxychloroquine — neither of which has been approved by the FDA for COVID treatment — and added liability protection for them.

SPONSOR: Republican Rep. Bobbi Andera of Sioux Falls failed to win her June 2 primary election.

SB 145

Would have prohibited local governments from adopting health measures that affect activities in private residences or businesses, or from taking actions that could be interpreted as interfering with constitutional rights, including during a public health response.

SPONSOR: Republican Sen. Tom Pischke of Dell Rapids withdrew his bid for election.

HCR 6008

Would have urged the South Dakota attorney general to file a lawsuit against China and other entities, alleging responsibility for the COVID-19 pandemic and seeking \$100 billion in damages.

SPONSOR: Republican Rep. Brandei Schaeffbauer of Aberdeen did not seek reelection.

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.

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Governor grants Mitchell \$1 million for industrial park

BY JOHN HULT

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden issued \$1 million Friday from an economic development fund under his control to support an industrial and business park in Mitchell.

The money comes from the Future Fund, which is built up through fees submitted by employers when they pay taxes to support unemployment benefits.

The governor awards the dollars at his discretion, although a state law that took effect July 1 places new restrictions on the fund, including a more detailed description of acceptable uses and a requirement that awards must be recommended by the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

The grant for Mitchell comes atop a \$1 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and \$1 million in local funding.

The Mitchell Area Development Corporation will use the money to prepare just over 18 acres of land on the south side of Interstate 90 on the western edge of town, installing utilities and roads.

That infrastructure is meant as an incentive for businesses considering expanding or locating in Mitchell, according to Development Corporation Director Mike Lauritsen.

"Once you put in the water, sewer and streets, it obviously becomes more attractive for businesses," Lauritsen said of the land, which the corporation purchased three years ago. "We want to make it shovel-ready."

Lauritsen said his office signed a detailed agreement with the state on the expectations for the project, which includes a payback provision if the park isn't filled within 10 years of the infrastructure's completion. Between the loan, local investment and the new dollars from Rhoden, Lauritsen said, the project is fully funded.

In a press release on the Future Fund award, Rhoden said the money would help Mitchell "attract new businesses, create quality jobs, and support long-term economic growth."

Rhoden has awarded Future Fund dollars to several projects in 2026, including putting money recently toward funding for a program that creates a pathway for teaching certifications for paraprofessionals in K-12 schools.

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

COMMENTARY

Call for input on wetlands regulations should catch South Dakotans' attention

by Brad Johnson

Duck hunters know the difference between a bird passing overhead and one circling the decoys. The first may vanish. The second deserves your full attention.

A notice published July 24 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is beginning to circle South Dakota's wetlands, and anyone who cares about birds, wildlife, flooding, water quality or the meaning of a permanent agreement ought to take notice.

The agency wants public input on setbacks for drain tile near federally protected wetland easements. Drain tile is buried, perforated pipe used to remove excess moisture from farm fields.

Comments are due Aug. 7, giving the public just 14 days to respond to a five-state question involving hydrology, private property rights and permanent conservation agreements.

That is an extraordinarily short window. It is the regulatory equivalent of shooting at a blue-winged teal with a stiff tailwind: You can take the shot, but no one pretends it's a fair one.

Across northeastern South Dakota, thousands of small wetlands are protected by permanent federal easements. Landowners voluntarily sold those easements. The government made a one-time payment —

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much of it from federal Duck Stamp purchases — and the landowner agreed that wetlands would not be drained, filled, leveled or burned.

When they dry naturally, they can still be farmed, grazed or hayed.

Now the Fish and Wildlife Service is reconsidering how far underground tile must remain from wetlands to prevent drainage.

A tile line does not have to run through the middle of a wetland to drain it. Modern systems can intercept groundwater, snowmelt and rainfall before the water reaches the basin. The pothole can stay on the map while holding less water for shorter periods, or eventually almost none at all.

The current approach uses site-specific science — soil, slope, tile depth and groundwater conditions — to determine how close tile can be placed without harming the wetland. Water does not stop at a line on a map.

Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl and other conservation organizations are warning that weakening the system could diminish wetlands that hunters and taxpayers already paid to protect. A permanent easement should protect a functioning wetland, not a dry outline in a government file.

These shallow basins support shorebirds, cranes, grebes, herons, pelicans and migrating birds. They also support the insects and plants that sustain grassland birds. Temporary and seasonal wetlands may not hold water all year, but they are often among the most productive parts of the landscape during spring migration and nesting season.

When those wetlands disappear, the effects spread beyond the edge of the basin.

Farmers also have legitimate expectations. They deserve clear rules, timely decisions and calculations they can understand.

The agency should explain its methodology, establish timelines and provide meaningful technical review when a landowner believes a setback is excessive.

The current system also protects cooperating landowners. A landowner who requests a setback determination and installs tile according to the approved plan is protected if an unexpected wetland impact occurs. That is a reasonable balance.

But making the process clearer is different from making the easement weaker.

The agency says restrictions on tile outside the mapped wetland may allow it to regulate “a larger property interest than it acquired.”

The government did not merely purchase an interest in the ground beneath the wetland’s visible boundary. It purchased the right to prevent the wetland from being drained. That right means little if a drainage system can be installed just outside the line and pull away the water that creates the wetland in the first place.

This matters far beyond bird populations.

Wetlands hold water on the landscape, slow runoff, reduce downstream flooding, filter nutrients and provide habitat for deer, amphibians, fish and pollinators. Northeastern South Dakota is already dealing with rising lakes, flooded roads, threatened homes and proposals to spend tens or hundreds of millions managing excess water after it moves downstream.

It makes little sense to weaken wetlands that store water upstream while taxpayers write checks to deal with that water later.

South Dakota’s wetlands have already lost layers of federal protection through recent court decisions and Clean Water Act policy. Wetland easements are different. They are not new regulations imposed on unwilling landowners. They are permanent property agreements voluntarily sold and publicly purchased.

The Fish and Wildlife Service should improve the process. It should provide landowners with speed, clarity and fairness. It should also extend the comment period and give South Dakotans a reasonable opportunity to be heard.

It should not move the decoys, silence the marsh and then tell us the Prairie Pothole Region is still functioning as nature intended.

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Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.

Trump defends massive settlement for 'great American Patriots' of Jan. 6, attacks GOP senators

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump defended his highly criticized, nearly \$1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" settlement fund on social media and in a Cabinet meeting Friday, as two key Republican senators withheld support for the president's nominee for attorney general over Trump's refusal to formally end the pot of money.

Trump wrote on Truth Social that the fund, in exchange for him dropping his \$10 billion lawsuit against the IRS, would not benefit him, but rather "the great American Patriots who were hunted down like dogs and whose lives were unfairly and illegally destroyed by the Crooked Joe Biden Administration" after they participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

On the first day of his second term, Trump commuted the prison sentences of 14 of the attack's ringleaders and members of the paramilitary groups the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys. The president granted a "full, complete and unconditional pardon" to all others charged with crimes after the attack.

"Perhaps there has never been a group of people treated so badly in our Nation's history. They are suffering still, many ruined, and I felt that they should be given compensation for what has been done to them," Trump continued in a 254-word post.

He also attacked Texas GOP Sen. John Cornyn and said acting Attorney General Todd Blanche should be "immediately approved" as attorney general.

Cornyn and North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis, both members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, have refused to advance Blanche's nomination from committee to the full Senate until Blanche, also Trump's former personal defense lawyer, formally ends the "anti-weaponization" fund in writing.

Blanche, of Florida, maintains his comments before a House Appropriations subcommittee in June prove the administration ended the fund.

'Legal and political albatross'

In a late morning statement on X, Tillis said Trump "made it clear today that the so-called Anti Weaponization Fund is still alive, which is exactly why we are attempting to formally end it."

"While I never disagreed that the Biden Administration pursued a number of vindictive prosecutions related to January 6, the criminals who assaulted police officers and defiled our nation's Capitol are not 'great American patriots' who are 'victims of government abuse.' Anyone who attacked law enforcement should still be in prison, not getting a check from the federal government," Tillis wrote.

He added he and Cornyn are working with Blanche, whom he described as "forthright, thoughtful and patient," on ending the fund.

"It's a shame his confirmation has hit a snag only because an incompetent personal advisor to the President refuses to amend the bogus settlement. I will continue working in good faith to put an end this legal and political albatross and prevent any potential misallocation of taxpayer dollars," Tillis wrote.

Tillis' office did not respond to a question about the identity of the adviser the senator mentioned in the statement.

When being questioned by reporters at the Cabinet meeting at Camp David just over an hour later, Trump said Blanche should be confirmed as attorney general "forthwith" and that the fund is "dead."

"But you know, I wish it weren't. To be honest with you, I think people were horribly treated, horribly abused. ... and I'd like to see them compensated for the pain."

The White House press office on Friday issued a press release linking to statements and quotes in sup-

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port of Blanche from dozens of law enforcement associations, former Justice Department officials and Republican lawmakers.

Trump, Cornyn and Tillis

On Thursday, Trump threatened to pull Blanche's nomination and leave him in an acting capacity until both Cornyn and Tillis leave office at year's end.

Cornyn's career in the Senate is ending after he lost in a runoff election in May to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, whom Trump endorsed.

Tillis announced last year he would not seek reelection after Trump threatened to find primary opponents to challenge the North Carolina Republican after he refused to support Trump's Big Beautiful Bill Act in 2025.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, had scheduled a committee vote on Blanche's nomination for Thursday morning, but postponed the vote late Wednesday when it was clear Cornyn and Tillis were not yet satisfied.

The Judiciary Committee is split between 12 Republicans and 10 Democrats. All Democrats are expected to oppose Blanche, and a majority vote is required to advance Blanche's nomination to the full Senate for confirmation.

Judge slammed Trump settlement

Trump's settlement with the IRS faced opposition on multiple fronts, including in court.

In a July 13 order, the Florida federal judge in Trump's IRS case slammed the president's settlement with his own administration as using the presidency to "manipulate" the courts.

Lawyers for Trump, his two sons and the Trump Organization made public in a federal court filing Friday their plans to appeal a lower court order that bars them "from referring to the purported 'settlement agreement' ... as evidence of a 'settlement' reached in this matter."

The Justice Department's announcement of the "anti-weaponization" fund in May immediately drew scrutiny from both sides of the aisle for the possibility that Jan. 6 defendants who assaulted police officers could reap a reward.

Associate Attorney General Stanley Woodward Jr. and Frank Bisignano, the Internal Revenue Service's chief executive officer, a position created by Trump, signed the settlement that Trump negotiated with his own administration officials for himself, his sons and the private Trump Organization.

Like Blanche, Woodward also had ties to Trump's criminal cases prior to the president's second term. Woodward represented Trump's co-defendant Walt Nauta in the government's 2023 case regarding classified material found at Mar-a-Lago.

Opposition to the "anti-weaponization" fund among Republicans snarled quick passage of an immigration enforcement package to fund Trump's mass deportation agenda for the remainder of his term.

The settlement deal also includes immunity for Trump, his sons Don Jr. and Eric, and the Trump Organization from tax audits and enforcement connected to any tax information leaked by a government contractor in 2019. The contractor was prosecuted and sentenced to jail time in 2024.

Cornyn pressed Blanche on the tax immunity portion of the deal during a July 15 confirmation hearing. Blanche defended the terms as "typical" of settlements with the IRS.

Cornyn wrote on social media Thursday the president is "mistaken if he believes concerns about the provisions in his tax lawsuit settlement are limited to me and Senator Tillis."

Former Department of Justice officials told committee Democrats the IRS settlement language was "mind-boggling," during a July 22 forum hosted by Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J.

Amelia Twyman contributed to this report.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Key legal resource for immigrant kids to expire with federal contract, advocates say

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Bryan Chavez knows that having access to legal representation as an unaccompanied minor can be a lifeline.

In 2017, immigration officials separated him from his mother and brother at the southern border, as they were caught up in the family separation policy of the first Trump administration.

The 15-year-old remained in a detention center for children, knowing that if he were sent back to Mexico, he would likely die at the hands of the cartel who threatened to kill him, his brother and father.

"Everything changed when attorneys from (the Immigration Defenders Law Center) arrived," he told reporters during a press conference Friday. "For the first time, someone explained what was happening. As a child, I couldn't understand why I was being separated from my mother."

Chavez, who is now a case worker at the same center that provided him legal services as an unaccompanied minor, worries about what will happen to the thousands of immigrant children who are set to lose their legal representation at midnight Saturday.

That's because the Trump administration declined to renew a federal contract with nonprofits that provide legal aid services to more than 20,000 unaccompanied immigrant children.

Chavez, along with a handful of advocates and attorneys for immigrant children, detailed their concerns during a virtual press conference about the end of the contract.

They warned that it will lead to children being quickly deported, because without a lawyer, fewer than 10% of immigrant children win the right to remain in the United States while their case goes through immigration court.

"For many of them, an attorney can be the difference between fear and hope, separation and reunification, or even life and death," Chavez said. "I came to this country asking for help. The children I work with today are asking for the same thing."

No reimbursements to lawyers

For more than six months, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services, has not reimbursed \$65 million to the Acacia Center for Justice, which distributes the federal funding to roughly 100 organizations across the country who provide legal representation to unaccompanied children in immigration cases.

The Acacia Center for Justice has said those funds are being withheld because attorneys refused to hand over to the Trump administration sensitive case data from the unaccompanied children, such as medical records and the types of legal relief the minors are seeking.

"For months, Acacia has been negotiating in good faith with the government to find a way to continue representing unaccompanied children who would be left without their trusted lawyers, and at the whims of an administration that seems intent on finding new and crueler ways to target and deport them as quickly as possible," said Bilal Askaryar, communications director at the Acacia Center for Justice.

HHS did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

'A lot of uncertainty'

The Acacia Center for Justice's chief of staff, Bettina Rodriguez Schlegel, said that on Wednesday, government officials submitted a solicitation notice giving the Acacia Center for Justice time to transition legal services to another provider.

Rodriguez Schlegel said she doesn't know for sure to whom the Trump administration will contract legal services, but the administration is eyeing a small Texas state commission that aids low-income people with criminal defense representation.

"What will happen on Monday morning when kids go to court?" she asked. "There remains a lot of uncertainty and a great deal of concern."

Sensitive job

Additionally, with the contract ending, children who have experienced trauma will have to recount painful experiences to attorneys who might not have the proper training. That can cause more anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress for kids, said Dr. C. Nicholas Cuneo.

Cuneo is an assistant professor of pediatrics and medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the executive director at HEAL Refugee Health and Asylum Collaborative, which provides trauma-informed healthcare services to immigrants.

"A trusted attorney can buffer that harm, explaining an incomprehensible process, providing consistency and safety, protecting a child's interests, and connecting them to healthcare, school, housing, and other essential support," he said. "Abruptly severing that relationship can not only reactivate the abandonment and powerlessness from which children are trying to recover, but really cause direct physical and mental health injury."

Cuneo said Congress recognized those consequences, and created the Unaccompanied Children Program to provide funding for legal representation of migrant children.

Erin Maxwell, a social worker at Legal Services for Children in California, said so much of their training is in providing trauma-informed legal services.

"I'm afraid that if a group of attorneys that were not trained on working with children, were not trained on providing trauma-informed legal services, that children wouldn't be able to fully participate in their cases (to share their stories)," she said.

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.

US Senate panel advances bill to reject Education Department transfers

BY SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan effort to rein in President Donald Trump's efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education has cleared its first major legislative hurdle in a bipartisan U.S. Senate committee vote.

The measure, approved by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in a 13-9 vote Thursday, represents the most sweeping attempt from Congress so far in rejecting some of the interagency agreements, or IAAs, Education has signed with other departments as part of the administration's push to eliminate the 46-year-old agency.

The Senate bill, sponsored by Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, with GOP Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska as original co-sponsors, would block IAAs that transfer programs regarding special education, elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education and Native American education.

Part of the measure takes aim at Education's efforts announced in June to outsource programs under its Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, or OSERS, to the Department of Health and Human Services.

OSERS is responsible for administering the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, which guarantees a free public education for students with disabilities.

Education has so far entered into agreements with HHS, along with the departments of Labor, Interior, State, Treasury and Justice, to offload several of the department's core responsibilities to those agencies.

Collins, Murkowski join Dems

Collins said the "straightforward" bill "keeps the administration of important landmark education programs at the Department of Education — where Congress specifically put them and where they belong."

All Democrats on the panel voted to advance the measure. They are: Kaine, Patty Murray of Washington

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state, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, Chris Murphy of Connecticut, Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, John Hickenlooper of Colorado, Ed Markey of Massachusetts, Andy Kim of New Jersey, Lisa Blunt Rochester of Delaware and Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland.

Vermont independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, ranking member of the panel who caucuses with Democrats, also voted to advance the bill.

Collins and Murkowski were the only GOP members to join Democrats.

GOP Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky did not vote.

The panel's chair, Sen. Bill Cassidy, voted against the bill, saying that while he opposes the transfer of special ed programs to HHS, he is open to moving OSERS to the Labor Department.

"I don't oppose all of these IAAs," the Louisiana Republican said. "I do think the administration should be allowed to pilot how to address inefficiencies and the potential for efficiencies by operationalizing these IAAs."

The other GOP members who voted against the measure were Sens. Roger Marshall of Kansas, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Josh Hawley of Missouri, Tommy Tuberville of Alabama, Jim Banks of Indiana, Jon Husted of Ohio, Ashley Moody of Florida and Alan Armstrong of Oklahoma.

'Show us the price tag'

The panel also approved an amendment to the bill from Murray that would require Education Secretary Linda McMahon to report to Congress on the cost estimates for each of the IAAs her agency has signed with other departments.

"My amendment is very simple — it asks one thing: Tell Congress and the public what these interagency agreements actually cost taxpayers," Murray said.

"If you're proud of this deal, show us the price tag," she added. "What do you have to hide?"

Education Department defends transfers

Trump has sought to take an axe to the Education Department in his quest to send education policy-making "back to the states." That push continues despite much of the oversight and funding of schools already occurring at the state and local levels.

Savannah Newhouse, an Education Department spokesperson, said "the era of coddling a failed status quo must end," in a statement to States Newsroom Thursday.

"Secretary McMahon promised Congress a proof of concept that is currently underway and delivering results across our partner agencies, and it is entirely premature to sabotage this effort before it has the chance to eliminate bureaucratic barriers and fully deliver the results that our students, families, and educators deserve," Newhouse added.

McMahon, along with the heads of the six departments involved in the IAAs, defended the agreements in a letter sent to the GOP and Democratic leaders in the House and Senate the same day the Senate panel advanced the bill.

"Misconceptions have circulated about our fourteen IAAs," McMahon and the leaders of the agencies wrote.

"Since these agreements were signed, however, they have demonstrated measurable results by driving stronger grant competitions, streamlining government operations, and producing better outcomes for Americans."

The Senate measure sharply contrasts with a package that advanced out of a House education panel this month that would greatly reduce the department's responsibilities.

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

String of outbreaks tests US public health system amid funding cuts, vaccine resistance

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. pledged during his confirmation hearing to do everything in his “power to put the health of America back on track.”

Kennedy testified that when he worked as a lawyer he “learned that human health and environmental health are intertwined and inseparable.” He referred to the Make America Healthy Again agenda as “one of the most powerful and transcendent movements I’ve ever seen.”

“The nation is ready for change and recognizes that this is a unique inflection moment,” Kennedy said.

Less than two years into his tenure at the helm of the department responsible for the health of millions of Americans, a string of outbreaks has repeatedly made headlines. Public health experts interviewed by States Newsroom said the upswing is the result of several factors, but that Kennedy’s decision to cut back the country’s safety net while spreading misinformation about vaccines has aggravated the problem.

“We track serious infectious diseases, and over the last year and a half, the number of diseases we’ve had to put on the list has quadrupled,” said Jennifer B. Nuzzo, director of the Pandemic Center and professor of epidemiology at Brown University.

Old diseases like measles have surged to the highest level in decades after vaccine misinformation left entire communities vulnerable to a virus once eradicated in the United States.

Americans learned about an unfamiliar strain of hantavirus after cruise ship passengers were moved to a quarantine facility in Nebraska and public health officials raced to contact trace those who left the ship before the illness was detected.

Cases of West Nile virus reached the highest level seen in more than two decades as mosquitoes spread that virus as well as several others. Monthly emergency room visits for tick bites spiked in April to their highest level since 2017. And the cyclospora parasite sickened thousands as public health officials struggled to determine the cause.

Disease spread among animals, which could easily become a human health problem if not properly contained, has also cropped up, some more unexpected than others.

Bird flu continued to decimate poultry flocks and wreak havoc on dairy herds as well as some people, raising concerns about the possibility it would evolve into something more problematic. And New World screwworm reemerged in cattle after more than half a century without a case in this country.

HHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did not agree to interview requests or to send a statement on the cause of the myriad of disease outbreaks.

Outbreaks growing

Environmental changes like deforestation, people moving into new places that used to belong to wildlife and climate change have all contributed to more disease spread among people. But those factors have been exacerbated by cuts and other policy changes put in place during this administration, Nuzzo said.

“We don’t have the protections against these outbreaks in place at the level that we used to, which allows them to continue,” she said. “We had bad measles before, but we managed to stop them before we got to the point where we’d lose measles elimination status. We’re going to lose measles elimination status this year.”

The CDC has tried to keep track of it all but the agency has experienced both staffing and funding cuts under Kennedy’s leadership.

Complicating matters, the CDC had a Senate-confirmed director for just 29 days after Susan Monarez was fired for refusing to pre-approve vaccine recommendations or fire career officials for no reason.

“Most of the activity for public health exists at the state and local level,” Nuzzo explained. “But the CDC is really important for not just providing funding to those state and local health officials, but also to nudge them. To say, ‘Yes, this is worth prioritizing. Or pay closer attention to this now, because what we see in one place might be happening in another place.’”

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"And the more we can collectively learn and act, the more likely it is to be able to stop it in its tracks." In addition to hollowing out certain domestic programs, the administration has cut how the U.S. government monitors and responds to disease outbreaks overseas, which are typically just one airplane flight away. That includes how U.S. officials have handled the outbreak of Ebola caused by the Bundibugyo virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"The fact that we didn't hear about this outbreak publicly until nearly 200 cases were identified means that normal checks and balances just weren't happening," Nuzzo said. "So that's the kind of thing where when we contract our overseas presence and our overseas assistance, we lose a protection.

"Now, do I think Bundibugyo is going to come here? It could. Is it going to spread? No. It's not going to spread in the same way like a COVID would."

States stuck with the burden

American Public Health Association CEO Dr. Georges C. Benjamin said public health officials faced severe burnout and "left in droves" following the global coronavirus pandemic.

That has left public health departments to track more disease circulating in their communities with less staff and funding.

"If you're in a local or state health department, the same people dealing with measles are the same people that are going to deal with cyclospora, are going to be the same people if you have a Legionella outbreak," Benjamin said.

Those challenges were compounded by efforts under the Trump administration to shift more of the responsibility for preventing and containing outbreaks to state governments "without adequate planning," he said.

"Half of both state and local health department budgets are from federal dollars. Some whole programs are almost 100% federally funded. Most immunization programs are pretty much federally funded," Benjamin said. "So when the feds abruptly decide not to fund something, the money just goes out the door. And you just can't fill that hole overnight."

The situation doesn't seem likely to change anytime soon, he said, possibly leading more people to suffer from vaccine-preventable illnesses as well as those that spread from animals to people or from person to person.

"If we don't pay attention to this, we're going to be spending more money on the healthcare side of the ledger for people who will be sicker at a higher cost, because we're not paying attention to the prevention side of the house," Benjamin said. "I mean, we have the knowledge and tools to mitigate a lot of this stuff. We really do. And the challenge I think we have here is that as a society we're pretty good at dealing with emergency stuff, but very poor at prevention."

More infectious diseases expected

Dr. Amesh A. Adalja, senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said there has been progress in recent years on some vaccine-preventable diseases even as there's been backsliding in others.

"Now we have RSV vaccines for the elderly, we have RSV vaccines for pregnant women and monoclonal antibodies for babies to protect them against RSV," he said.

The American Lung Association writes on its website that respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, "is a common virus that you have undoubtedly been sick with before." But that it "has the potential to make you really sick."

Measles, however, isn't becoming less common as doctors and other healthcare professionals struggle against an undercurrent of misinformation about vaccine safety, including from Kennedy, as they're trying to treat all the other illnesses circulating.

"In measles, it's less about public health burnout, rather, it's more about the anti-vaccine movement making inroads," Adalja said. "For cyclospora, that's always been a threat. We always get cases every year. But the fact that the malaria and parasite division in CDC has basically been gutted does play a role."

Overall, he said, the infectious disease trend in the United States has become worse since the coronavirus pandemic. And that's not likely to change in the near future.

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"If you're saying, 'How resilient is the U.S. or should we expect more infectious disease problems in the United States?' I would say yes," Adalja said. "But it's not clear which ones they would be. I definitely would think the vaccine-preventable diseases, the control of them is going to slip. And it's not just going to be measles."

Then there are the bugs

Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota Michael T. Osterholm said on his podcast the El Nino weather pattern that leads to warmer temperatures in some parts of the country and heavier rainfall in others can be a "perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes."

"We talked about the El Nino in previous episodes in the context of hantavirus but it can actually play a large role in disease transmission for a number of viruses, West Nile included," Osterholm said.

That could be one of the reasons the CDC reported in early July it observed "the earliest start to the West Nile virus (WNV) season in the United States with the highest number of human disease cases reported by this time of year since 2004."

Osterholm said that is likely "a really major underestimation of the true number of infections."

"Approximately 20% of West Nile infections in humans are symptomatic and less than 1% result in the severe neurologic symptoms for which testing would typically be sought by medical providers," he said. "I say that not to undermine the public health importance of West Nile, but to highlight that this virus is likely much more widespread than our surveillance data might suggest."

Ticks are also leading to more illness among Americans, including Lyme disease and Alpha-gal syndrome.

That second condition, caused by the Lone Star tick, can cause people to become allergic to red meat that contains Alpha-gal sugar. This includes beef, pork, lamb, venison, goat and rabbit, he said.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Public Information Officer Lynn Sutfin wrote in a statement that even though "infectious disease threats have been trending up in general, there are several practices and issues that are contributing to the increased awareness of outbreaks."

"Outbreak definitions, modernized reporting, investigative capacity, improved diagnostics, genetic sequencing and even declining vaccination rates are all having an impact on disease spread and information about their spread," Sutfin wrote. "Globally, additional considerations like climate change, antibiotic overuse, modern travel, industrialization and deforestation also need to be considered."

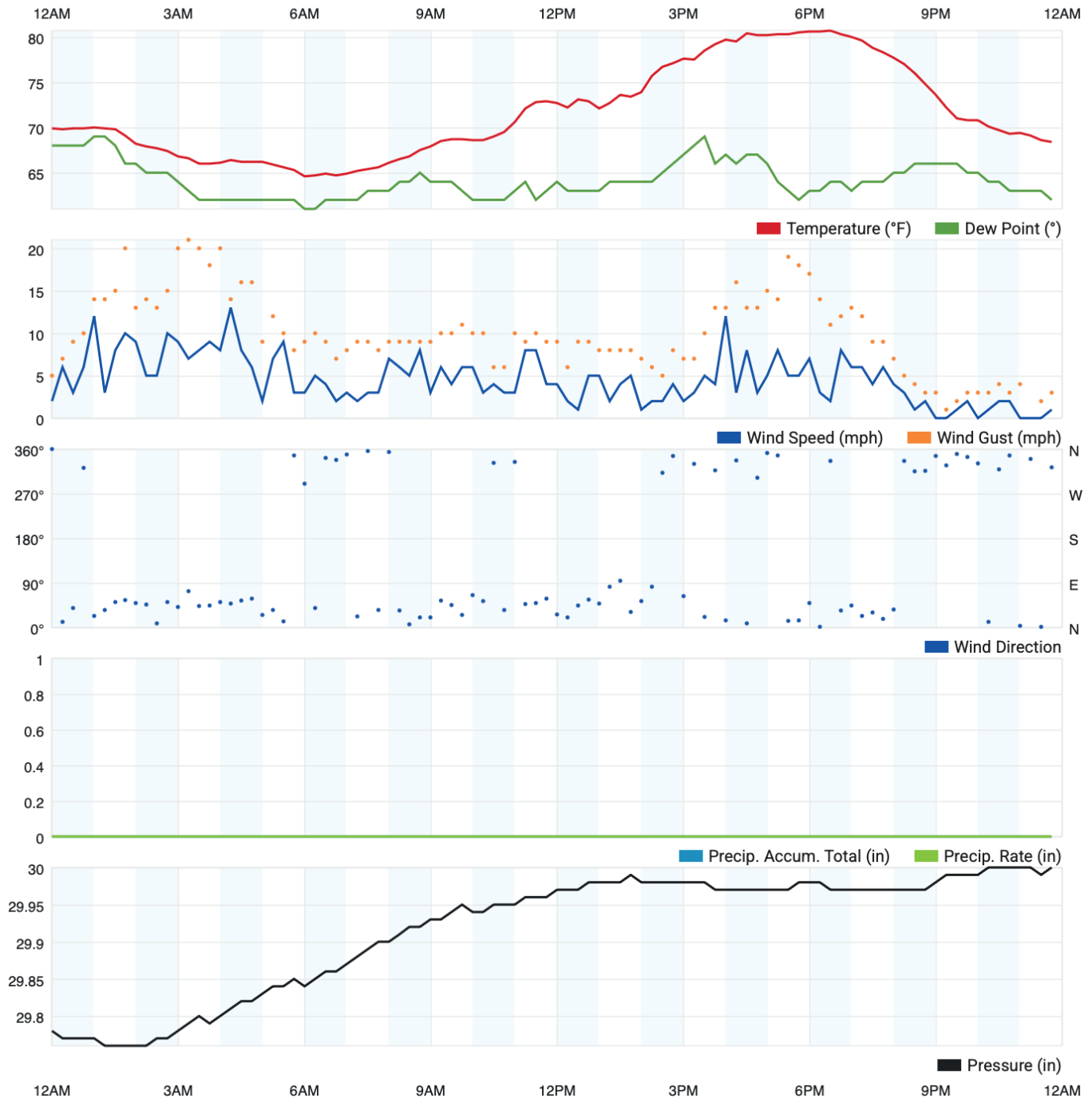
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 31, 2026



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Today



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 61 °F

Partly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 85 °F

Mostly Sunny
and Breezy

Sunday Night



Low: 65 °F

Increasing
Clouds and
Breezy

Monday



High: 85 °F

Mostly Sunny

Today: Mostly sunny, with a high near 84. North wind around 5 mph becoming calm in the morning.

Tonight: Partly cloudy, with a low around 61. Southeast wind 5 to 9 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 85. Breezy, with a south wind 11 to 16 mph increasing to 19 to 24 mph in the afternoon. Winds could gust as high as 34 mph.

Sunday Night: Increasing clouds, with a low around 65. Breezy, with a south southeast wind 18 to 22 mph, with gusts as high as 33 mph.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 85. South wind 15 to 18 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

Weekend Outlook



- 80s east of the James River
- 80s-90s between the Missouri & James Rivers
- 90s-100s west of the Missouri River



30 - 40 mph wind gusts Sunday and low humidity will cause elevated Grassland Fire concerns in central SD during the afternoon



weather.gov/aberndeen
August 1, 2026 4:34 AM

This weekend will feature warmer temperatures again, particularly across central SD with highs in the 90s to low 100s around and west of the Missouri River. Sunday afternoon will also have elevated fire danger concerns as winds gust 30-40 mph and afternoon relative humidity drops to 20-30%. Take precautions during any outdoor activity this weekend.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 81 °F at 6:28 PM

Low Temp: 64 °F at 6:02 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 3:47 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1900

Record Low: 44 in 1948

Average High: 85

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in Aug.: 0.08

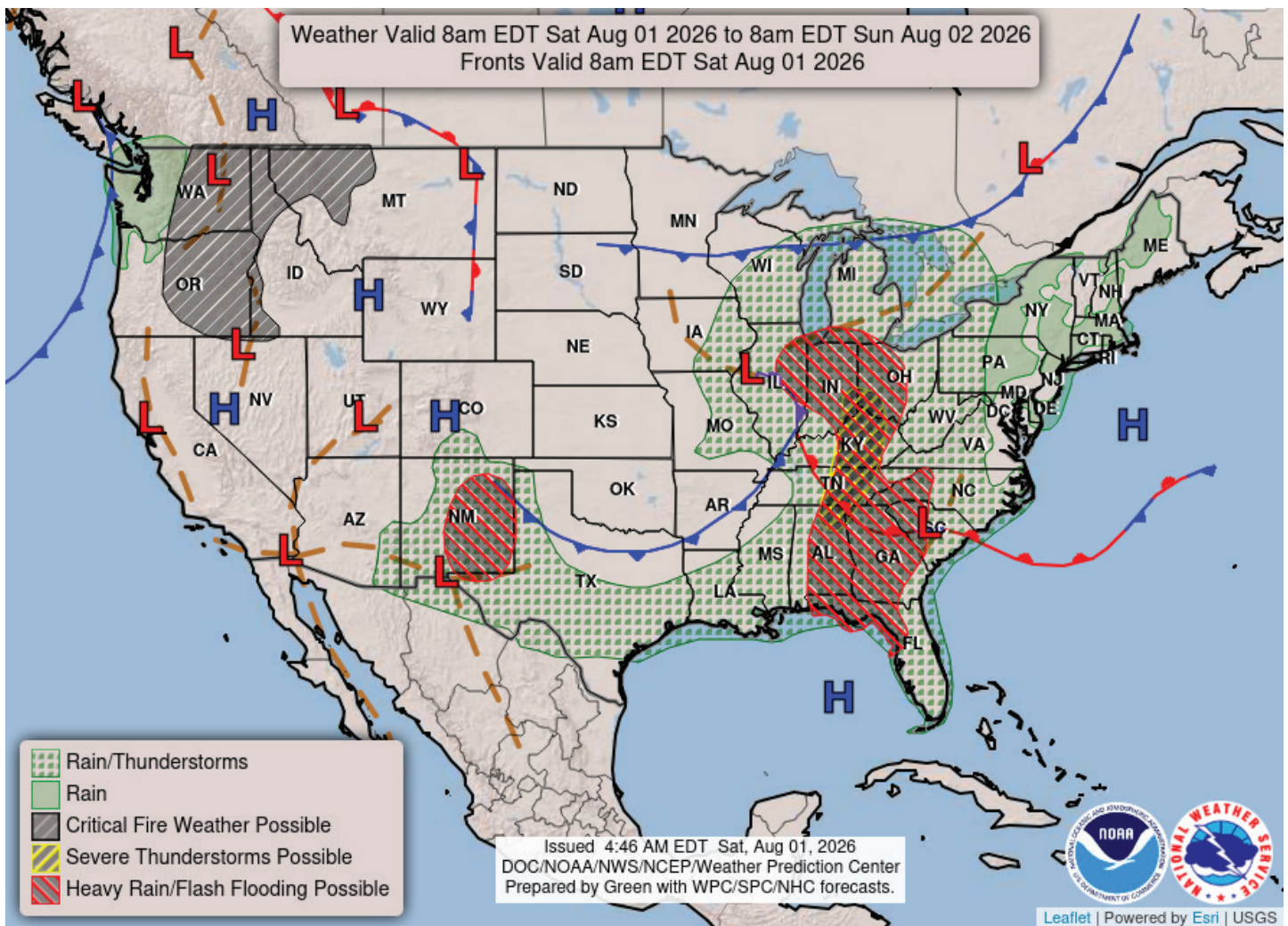
Precip to date in Aug.: 9.79

Average Precip to date: 14.18

Precip Year to Date: 19.26

Sunset Tonight: 9:00 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17 am



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Today in Weather History

August 1, 1978: A severe thunderstorm developed in west-central Beadle County during the afternoon hours and moved southeast. High winds near 80 mph and hail up to golf ball size pelted several counties along the storm path. Hail piled up to six inches deep and up to three feet in ditches. Hail remained visible in some areas up to thirty-six hours after the storm passed. Approximately 480,000 acres of crops were severely damaged or destroyed. Damage to crops and personal property were estimated to be nearly four million dollars.

August 1, 2000: A severe thunderstorm produced large hail up to golf ball size and damaging winds estimated at 90 to 110 mph across northeastern Wyoming and western South Dakota during the evening hours. The northern foothills of the Black Hills and the communities of Spearfish and Sturgis received the brunt of the storm. Considerable F0 and F1 wind damage (90 to 110 mph) occurred in and around Spearfish. The strong winds blew down trees, business and road signs, and damaged tents for the 60th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, destroying vendor merchandise and mobile homes.

1954 — Mount Rainier in Washington State was still covered with sixteen inches of snow at the 5500 foot level following a big snow season. (David Ludlum)

1983: During the early afternoon hours, a strong microburst swept across Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. Although the base anemometer was not calibrated at extreme wind speeds, the peak gust hit 149 mph. It was reported that Air Force One, with President Reagan on board, landed less than 10 minutes before the peak gust.

1985 — A nearly stationary thunderstorm deluged Cheyenne, WY, with rain and hail. Six inches of rain fell in six hours producing the most damaging flash flood of record for the state. Two to five feet of hail covered the ground following the storm, which claimed twelve lives, and caused 65 million dollars property damage. (Storm Data)

1986 — A powerful thunderstorm produced 100 mph winds and large hail in eastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri causing 71 million dollars damage, and injuring nineteen persons. It was one of the worst thunderstorms of record for Kansas. Crops were mowed to the ground in places and roofs blown off buildings along its path, 150 miles long and 30 miles wide, from near Abilene to southeast of Pittsburg. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Record heat gripped parts of the Midwest. A dozen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lincoln, NE, with a reading of 105 degrees, Moline, IL, with an afternoon high of 103 degrees, and Burlington, IA, with a reading of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Two dozen cities in the Upper Midwest reported record high temperatures for the date, including La Crosse WI with a reading of 105 degrees. Highs of 103 degrees at Milwaukee, WI, and South Bend, IN, were records for the month of August. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Hurricane Chantal made landfall along the Upper Texas coast about sunrise. Chantal deluged parts of Galveston Island and southeastern Texas with 8 to 12 inches of rain. Unofficial totals ranged up to twenty inches. Winds gusted to 82 mph at Galveston, and reached 76 mph in the Houston area. Tides were 5 to 7 feet high. The hurricane claimed two lives, and caused 100 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotion

An Ordinary Person

Carefully listening to God's voice equips us to share His message boldly with others.

1 Kings 17:1: 1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, ``As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.”

After encountering the prophet Elijah, King Ahab may well have thought, Of all the nerve! Just who does this guy think he is? Elijah confronted Israel's wicked king with a message predicting a famine that would soon disrupt life for the region.

The validity of the prophecy rested with the Source, not the mouthpiece. Elijah was a man of great faith who spent time alone with the Lord and listened to Him carefully. The prophet could pass the message on with boldness and authority because he knew and trusted the One from whom it came.

God doesn't communicate with us in exactly the same way that He spoke to the Old Testament prophets, but the process of receiving His message hasn't changed. It starts with being alone in His presence and listening as He speaks through His Word. But it shouldn't end there.

Begin each day alone with God in His Word and in prayer, listening as He speaks to your heart. Believe what He says in Scripture, apply it to your life, and then share with someone else what He has revealed to you. Take heart and be of good courage because the authority of your message comes from the Lord Himself (Matthew 28:18).

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.31.26

2 6 28 44 45 2

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

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 20 Mins 10
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.31.26

4 18 26 43 51 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.29.26

11 12 20 26 33 8

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,250,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 20 Mins 10
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.29.26

3 16 18 25 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 35 Mins 10
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.29.26

24 37 40 51 55 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 4 Mins 9
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.29.26

30 36 40 42 57 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$707,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 4 Mins 9
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Europe's wildfire crisis shifts as some 200,000 French return but new blazes force thousands to flee

By THOMAS ADAMSON and NICOLAS GARRIGA Associated Press

LE PORGE, France (AP) — Firefighters held a vast wildfire inside its perimeter in southwestern France on Saturday, allowing about 198,000 people to return home after what may have been the country's largest peacetime evacuation, even as renewed fires forced thousands from their homes elsewhere in France and Greece.

In the Mediterranean Var, a fire thought to have stopped advancing raced across 10 square kilometers (4 square miles) in six hours on Friday — “faster than a horse at full gallop,” the prefecture said.

The opposing movements — mass returns in France's Gironde region, renewed displacement in the Var and boat evacuations from a Greek resort — underscored how quickly days of firefighting progress can be reversed.

At their peak, fires in France and Spain alone drove some 330,000 people from homes and vacation sites, stretching firefighters, aircraft and emergency services across simultaneous crises.

Europe is Earth's fastest-warming continent, heating at more than twice the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus climate service. Rising temperatures and prolonged drought dry vegetation, allowing fires to spread faster and burn more intensely.

Cap Ferret remains evacuated

The Gironde fire has burned 420 square kilometers (162 square miles) of pine forest west of Bordeaux, an area four times the size of Paris.

Firefighters said it remained contained within that perimeter Saturday, meaning flames had not broken beyond its existing boundaries. But it had not been declared “fixed” — the point at which crews determine that a fire is no longer advancing — and active sectors and buried hot spots persisted.

Several communities remain largely deserted, however. Authorities kept the affluent, forested Cap Ferret peninsula mostly empty because a nearby hot spot could flare again, threatening its limited road access and trapping residents and tourists.

“Today, the fire is still not fixed. It is contained,” Lt. Col. Eric Pitault told reporters.

Crews used tactical burns overnight, deliberately consuming vegetation ahead of active sectors to deprive the main fire of fuel. They still faced about 240 kilometers (149 miles) of fire edges where heat can remain buried underground and erupt again.

The fire's toll extended beyond people and property. Allain Bougrain-Dubourg, president of France's League for the Protection of Birds, told RMC radio that animals affected already numbered in the millions.

Fire roars back in southern France

In the Var, a fire declared fixed earlier in the week had raced back across the hills within hours on Friday. The blaze, Var Prefect Simon Babre said, “defies understanding.”

The resurgence showed how abruptly apparent gains could disappear: A fire considered “fixed” earlier in the week consumed another 1,250 hectares in a matter of hours.

Defensive lines protecting vulnerable communities held overnight and no additional ground burned, Babre told French media Saturday.

But the fire remained active. About 2,500 people were still unable to return home, and 1,300 firefighters were deployed.

Twenty French departments were under an orange heat warning Saturday, mostly in the east and southeast. Temperatures of 35 to 39 C (95 to 102 F) were forecast around the Mediterranean, while eight departments faced a high forest-fire risk.

Gale-force winds batter Greek resort

In Greece, hundreds of firefighters fought Saturday to protect Porto Germeno, a popular resort on the

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Gulf of Corinth, as gale-force winds drove flames through the coastal area between Athens and Thebes. The fire broke out Friday near the neighboring village of Agios Vasileios. About 300 people were evacuated by sea, and authorities issued several further evacuation orders Saturday.

The damage around Porto Germeno was "inconceivable," Theodore Giannaros, a wildfire meteorologist at the National Observatory of Athens, wrote on Facebook.

Giannaros estimated that 40 to 50 square kilometers (15 to 19 square miles) had been affected, although authorities had not issued an official burned-area figure.

Reinforcements brought the deployment to 420 firefighters, including 20 specialized forest-fire teams, backed by 19 aircraft and 11 helicopters. Local authorities said homes had been destroyed, but a complete count was not immediately available.

Powerful winds continued to whip up the flames and hamper aerial operations. Greece's fire service said crews fought 73 blazes Friday.

The Athens region and part of nearby Evia were placed at the highest wildfire alert level Saturday, with winds forecast to reach 88 kph (55 mph). Such conditions can prevent aircraft from making water drops.

Spain to put containment fence on Ceuta's border with Morocco after frontier rush that killed 67

By SERGIO RODRIGO RUÍZ, SUMAN NAISHADHAM and AKRAM OUBACHIR Associated Press

CEUTA, Spain (AP) — Spain announced it was installing a 500-meter-long (1,600-foot) containment barrier on the sea border between its North African territory of Ceuta and neighboring Morocco after between 50,000 and 60,000 migrants breached the frontier earlier this week.

The death toll climbed to 67, including some who drowned and others who were killed in a stampede to cross a breakwater barrier, the Spanish government said Saturday.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez slammed the reaction of some other European Union leaders to the events in Ceuta, saying calls for Spain to be suspended from the EU's borderless Schengen zone were "driven by prejudice, fake news, ignorance, or political interest."

A handful of exhausted migrants who swam to Ceuta's urban Tarajal beach Saturday morning were met by soldiers who escorted them back across the border. Spain's interior ministry says the majority of those who entered the territory have already returned to Morocco.

"We are relentless against those who break the law," Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told journalists in Ceuta on Saturday.

Questioned how this massive border breach could have happened given the heavy security on both sides of the border and whether Morocco posed a threat to Ceuta, Marlaska defended the government in Rabat.

"The events require an evaluation by Spain and Morocco," he said. But it was the cooperation with its neighbors that allowed Spain "to revert the situation in 24 hours."

"Morocco is not a threat to Ceuta, or to the rest of Spain. It is a reliable partner," Marlaska emphasized. EU leaders call for coordinated response

The leaders of 22 EU countries called for a coordinated response to the situation in Ceuta.

In a letter to top EU officials, released Saturday by the Danish prime minister's office, the countries asked the EU's current Irish presidency to urgently convene an extraordinary videoconference of the bloc's interior ministers.

"We cannot allow uncontrolled mass crossings, the instrumentalization of migration or other hybrid threats to create the perception that illegal entry into the European Union is possible. That a migrant's illegal entry can turn into legal stay," the letter said. "Such a perception would encourage further attempts, undermine confidence in our common migration policy and have repercussions for all Member States."

The letter was signed by the leaders of Italy, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden.

Sánchez, Spain's prime minister, also asked for a videoconference of EU interior ministers to "enable us

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to establish a common response to situations of this kind and reaffirm that the security of our external borders is a shared responsibility of all Member States, and not only of those on the Union's front line."

Sánchez slammed the reaction of some EU nations who he said had "chosen to attack Spain and to call for its temporary exclusion from the Schengen Area."

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni has threatened to suspend Italy's open-border Schengen agreement with Spain, and Italy was reimposing border controls for people arriving from Spain by air and sea.

"In the current international context, the European Union cannot afford this kind of selfish, polarizing and unlawful reaction," Sánchez wrote in his letter.

Migrants head back into Morocco

Hundreds of migrants who recently crossed from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta streamed back across the border on Saturday, telling an Associated Press reporter they were returning "of their own free will" after what they described as degrading treatment on the Spanish side.

Migrants walked along a long stretch of wave breakers before slipping into Morocco through a small breach in the border fence that had become an informal entry point. Moroccan police and soldiers stood by, watching. Most of the migrants were Moroccans, while a smaller number were from sub-Saharan Africa.

Hungry and angry, some barefoot or shirtless and others nursing visible injuries, those who returned said they had "seen hell in Ceuta."

"I decided to come back on my own," said Ouail Lamzeiz. "I spent eight days in Ceuta, and I was about to get a bed at the migrant center, but I hadn't eaten for days. Even the Moroccans there didn't help," he added, showing a document supporting his account.

His friend, Salah Eddine El Arrage, said he decided to return to Morocco after, he said, Spanish police beat him.

Migrants interviewed by The Associated Press said they spent their nights sleeping in the forests around Ceuta because they could not find shelter, and that they often fought over food.

One, Othmane El Merzoug, stopped passersby to ask for a phone call so he could reach his family and ask them to send money for the journey back to his hometown, about 189 miles (305 kilometers) from the border.

The road linking the Moroccan town of Fnideq to the border crossing bore the scars of the previous night's unrest. Burned-out vehicles sat along the roadside, while the acrid smell of smoke still hung in the air. Police barriers channeled traffic toward the crossing, and water cannons remained stationed nearby.

"Life in this city has been disrupted as a result of the border incident," said Ceuta's President Juan Jesús Vivas. "The return of people has begun satisfactorily but the process must be completed."

In the Moroccan city of Tangier, about 75 kilometers (46 miles) west of Ceuta, the main railway station was busy with people returning from Ceuta or the border. Some slept on the ground, exhausted.

"I tried to cross, but I failed. I stayed near the border with Ceuta for two days, but I couldn't find anything to eat," said Abdalah, an aspiring migrant who asked that his last name not be published out of fear of retaliation for trying to cross illegally.

But some who made it to Ceuta were determined to stay. Among them was Mohamed Hatri, a 23-year-old Moroccan.

"They've closed everything down so that we can't buy anything to eat, to force us to return to our country," he said. "But even if they close it down ... we're round to stay here, whether we're hungry or not."

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore says he's 'very concerned' Trump will interfere in the midterm elections

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Gov. Wes Moore of Maryland said he is "very concerned" that President Donald Trump will wield the power of the federal government to thwart the midterm elections this fall as the Republican tries to maintain his grip on power during the final two years of his administration.

In an interview as he becomes chair of the National Governors Association, the potential 2028 Democratic

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presidential contender ticked through Trump's efforts to restrict voting by mail, obtain voter information from states and possibly deploy federal troops or agents to polling places. Moore said there was a role for the NGA, a bipartisan group, to ensure states are able to oversee elections as designed by the U.S. Constitution.

"I don't think that the president is trying to hide the ball on this," Moore said. "It's not even am I concerned about what the president could do? I'm concerned about what he's already doing in broad daylight."

Moore's national profile is expanding and so is speculation about the White House

The 47-year-old governor's national profile is rising as he assumes the top leadership post for the nation's governors on Saturday, a role once held by Bill Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas. Moore is the subject of frequent speculation that he will announce a presidential run, a prospect he rules out, saying he will not "get distracted" before the November elections.

His travel to early presidential testing grounds such as South Carolina and Nevada, though, suggests he may run. Moore is proving himself a savvy digital communicator and crafts an image as a newcomer to politics while voters demand change.

The centerpiece of his agenda as NGA chair — a national program to build communities and draw young people into the workforce through service-oriented work — could be a pillar of a future campaign.

"Service will save us as a society because I know service saved me," he said, recalling his time in the Army.

The "Service United" campaign opens with \$10 million in philanthropic support to build on similar work Moore has done in Maryland, including a \$5 million expansion of an apprenticeship program in the state announced this week.

"It's an opportunity to help people with a career path," said Bechara Choucair, the executive vice president and chief health officer at Kaiser Permanente, which is building a youth mental health corps with Service United.

Dame Louise Richardson, the president of the Andrew Carnegie Foundation, which is supporting the program, said she hopes to "see the day when you meet somebody, they don't just ask, 'Where did you go to college?' but they ask, 'Where did you do your service year?'"

The contours of the initiative have drawn support from some Republicans, including Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, the outgoing NGA chair.

"One of the things I like is the apprenticeship model and getting kids out of the classroom and into more workforce learning," Stitt said. "So I think that's brilliant."

Divisions between parties run deep despite nods at bipartisanship

But that optimism masks the challenge facing Moore as he takes the helm of one of the few remaining political groups that bring top Republicans and Democrats together. For all the nods at bipartisanship, the divides between — and within — the parties run deep.

Even as he spoke warmly of Moore's program, Stitt warned against anything resembling a "big government program."

Moore, meanwhile, spoke of public frustration with the government's response to dramatic changes in the workforce, driven by advances in artificial intelligence that could erode entry-level work that has long helped young people start their careers. He said the White House has complicated the dynamic.

"We want to say that if a person goes on to a four-year college or chooses not to go to a four-year college, they still need to have pathways to long-term wages and wealth," Moore said. "What we have seen from the federal government thus far has just been simply executive orders that have told the states to stay out of it."

Moore and Trump have sparred frequently and there's potential for more

Moore has a challenging relationship with Trump, who sought to bar him and Gov. Jared Polis, D-Colo., from a White House meeting organized by the NGA earlier this year. The president relented after Stitt intervened, though there is little to suggest that the relationship has recovered, raising the potential of another confrontation at the next NGA meeting, traditionally held February in Washington.

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When asked about Trump, Moore noted his enjoyment at working with governors from both parties before saying "the president of the United States seems to consistently take an ideological view when it comes to securing the future of this country."

The White House did not comment on Moore's characterization.

But Moore also is contending with divides among his fellow Democrats.

At home in Maryland, where he is seeking reelection this fall, he has at times struggled to win over Democrats in the legislature, which reconvenes next week to consider a constitutional amendment on redistricting after an earlier effort he backed fell short.

Moore says party bosses should not rule

The Democratic National Committee is in turmoil. A string of democratic socialists has won primaries from New York City to Denver, prompting debate over whether the party is moving too far to the left and threatening its potential victories in the fall. Upcoming elections in Michigan and Wisconsin will further tug at the divide.

Moore did not take a firm stance with either of his party's ideological wings. He batted away questions about democratic socialists potentially imperiling Democratic wins, insisting it was up to voters to decide who their nominees would be.

"Party bosses shouldn't be determining who members of the party are," he said, without specifying whether he was referring to Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York as one of them. "The people should be the ones to have a final say on that."

At the same time, Moore made clear that he did not support some of the left flank's positions.

"I know where I am on issues," he said. "I don't believe in abolishing the police. I don't believe in abolishing prisons. I don't believe in open borders."

Democrats sound alarm about Trump role in midterms

But perhaps the biggest test for Moore will be navigating the management of this year's elections without denting the bipartisan tone that typically defines the NGA. He will be in the middle of Republicans who are calling for tougher rules, particularly around voter identification and deadlines for mail ballots, and fellow Democrats who warn of voter suppression.

Democratic Gov. Josh Stein of North Carolina, who leads one of the most politically competitive states that includes a marquee Senate race this fall, echoed Moore's concerns about federal interference.

"I don't think you can be a clear-thinking person and not be concerned because all the signals are very worrisome," he said in an interview. "But that said, I have confidence that if the voters come out in droves and vote the way that they want to vote, that the government will represent their wishes."

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said that "if Democrats really cared about securing our elections, they would pass the SAVE America Act," referring to a strict proof-of-citizenship voting bill that is stalled in the Senate.

Stitt expressed confidence that states would hold elections without federal intervention while noting his support for the voting bill. But he also rejected federal intervention and said: "States should control their own elections."

Moore said he used to associate states' rights arguments with segregationists like Bull Connor, the infamous public safety commissioner in Birmingham, Alabama, who turned fire hoses and dogs on peaceful protesters during the Civil Rights era.

Now, Moore said, the Trump era has reshaped his views and reinforced "the importance of having actually strong governors."

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August's total solar eclipse will sweep over Spain, Iceland and Greenland

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

For the first time in more than a century, a total solar eclipse is coming to mainland Spain with an even longer encore next summer.

Toss in a crescendoing meteor shower and a six-planet parade on the same day, and the heavens will be overflowing with awe.

Daytime darkness will descend Aug. 12 across the Iberian Peninsula close to sunset — plus slivers of Greenland and Iceland — as the sun, moon and Earth align perfectly in the sky.

Starting near the North Pole before tracking south, totality will last up to two minutes and 18 seconds, an appetizer for an even longer solar show next year — a 6 ½-minute extravaganza that will sweep from Spain to North Africa and the Middle East.

It will take 1 ½ hours for the umbra, or moon's sun-blocking shadow, to race along the 5,130-mile (8,260-kilometer) course, most of it over an empty Atlantic. Maximum totality will occur off Iceland's west coast. By the time it reaches a small patch of Portugal and then Spain with its massive crowds, totality will have dwindled to a minute or so. The spectacle will end in the Mediterranean.

Eclipse chasers gear up for the solar spectacle

Hundreds of millions more on the sidelines are in for a treat as well.

A partial eclipse will delight as far away as Alaska and Siberia, enveloping Canada, the northern U.S., and much of Europe and West Africa.

The closer to totality's course, the more the sun will vanish behind the moon — 94% coverage in Dublin and 83% in Oslo, Norway. Montreal will see an 18% bite out of the sun, tapering to 9% in New York and 2% in Norfolk, Virginia.

Special eclipse glasses are crucial, even if a morsel of sun is showing.

Adding to the cosmic wonder, the day begins with six of our neighboring planets forming an arc in the sky before dawn and end with the Perseid meteor shower peaking after nightfall under the new moon. Streaking meteors could photobomb totality, with some of the brighter planets and stars visible in the background.

Eclipse mapmaker Michael Zeiler is chasing an even more elusive interloper: the northern lights.

For his 13th total solar eclipse, Zeiler will be on a cruise ship in a Greenland fjord, sailing as a guest lecturer. He'll point a video camera toward the north to capture any aurora forming during totality. A massive outburst from the sun would be the icing on his eclipse cake.

"What gets me excited is viewing rare phenomena," Zeiler said in an email.

He's not the only one revved up.

See who's hosting solar eclipse watch parties and science experiments

The European Space Agency will host a live webcast from Spain's Astrophysical Observatory of Javalambre and a public celebration in Leon. NASA will provide its own coverage, as will the Italian-based Virtual Telescope Project and others.

"For me, it's not just a scientific moment. It's not just an incredible alignment of heavenly bodies. It's also a very human moment," said ESA's director of science Carole Mundell. "It's a real human connection between us with our feet planted on the Earth and the cosmos."

Two of ESA's space telescopes will observe the eclipsed sun and its corona, or outer atmosphere. Proba-3, the space agency's artificial eclipse-making satellite duo, will be in the wrong part of its orbit during totality as seen from Earth, but will try to sneak in some before-and-after shots.

U.S. college research teams are also pitching in, launching more than 60 high-altitude balloons from Spain and Iceland to study Earth's atmosphere and other changes during the eclipse when the temperature momentarily drops. They launched 10 times as many balloons during the 2024 total solar eclipse that captivated North America.

"A couple of minutes isn't a lot of time, but it's still plenty to affect the atmosphere and to make that

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cold, dark shadow of the moon on Earth," said Montana State University's Angela Des Jardins, who leads the NASA-funded balloon project.

Southwest Research Institute's Amir Caspi also expects a scientific bonanza from his study aboard a NASA high-altitude plane. Four cameras will record the corona in nine wavelengths as the jet chases the eclipse at 460 mph (740 kph), extending totality to nearly three minutes in the air. Caspi anticipates thousands of images gathered from each camera during those precious 180 seconds.

"It's true the eclipse is short, but it's still incredibly valuable," he said.

And there's more to come

An exceptionally long total solar eclipse is in store for 2027, yielding nearly three times more observation time.

The southern tip of Spain will take center stage on Aug. 2, 2027, with up to six minutes and 23 seconds of totality extending into Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia.

Then on Jan. 26, 2028, a ring-of-fire eclipse will round out Spain's celestial trifecta — "a lucky coincidence," according to ESA's Mundell.

It's all the more extraordinary considering Spain's last full solar eclipse — not counting the Canary Islands — occurred two days before the Titanic's sinking in 1912. Because that rare hybrid eclipse toggled between a ring-of-fire and just a few seconds of totality for Spain, some consider 1905 for the country's last pull-out-all-the-stops solar eclipse.

The Royal Observatory of Belgium's Andrei Zhukov can't get enough of them regardless of their length or origin. His Proba-3 science mission has created more than 60 simulated total solar eclipses over the past two years, with the longest lasting five hours and 38 minutes from two satellites flying in formation.

"We're looking forward to more eclipses," Zhukov said, "natural or artificial."

Trump stands to profit off US policy announcements by selling fast access to his social media posts

By BERNARD CONDON and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump knows the world hangs on his every word. Now he wants you to pay for it.

The social media posts of the world's most powerful man are going on sale Saturday when his Truth Social business begins offering sneak peeks of them to Wall Street traders willing to pay up. The move raises the prospect of big profits for Trump's company and big questions about insider trading and using public office for private gain.

Similar fast speed feeds are sold by other social media firms and media providers, but Truth Social doesn't just distribute the news, it makes it, regularly rattling markets as Trump posts policy changes on everything from war to central bank leadership to tariffs.

"If this was the CEO a public company, this would be jail time," said Irene Aldridge, head of Able Alpha Trading, which doesn't plan to buy the service. "We have a President of the United States who has the front seat to all the action, who makes all the decisions, and he's disclosing this ahead of time to a select group."

Trump's company says critics just aren't capitalist enough

Asked about the propriety of the new service and whether White House lawyers had vetted it, Trump's press office declined to comment, referring questions to Truth Social's publicly traded parent. That company, Trump Media & Technology, issued a statement blasting Democratic critics for mischaracterizing the service "out of ideological opposition to free markets or a failure to grasp the distinction between public and nonpublic information — or, quite possibly, both."

A prolific poster, Trump has sent stocks, bonds and currencies soaring and plunging with his online musings and threats. That presents opportunities for so-called high frequency traders that specialized in buying and selling within milliseconds, exploiting tiny, fleeting difference in prices.

Profits aplenty betting on oil, stocks and currencies

Just this month, Trump has threatened on Truth Social to slap higher tariffs on Canada, kill a nuclear deal

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with Saudi Arabia and widen the Iran war. With advanced knowledge, traders betting on a plunge in the Canadian dollar, a drop in nuclear energy stocks and a jump in oil futures could have raked in big profits.

"For the big guys, it's going to be something they need," said Joe Saluzzi, co-founder of Themis Trading, who estimates about 100 of high frequency firms might be willing to pay for the service. "It's market-moving information."

Dubbed Truth API, the service comes as these firms are spending more on feeds and servers that bypass slower internet connections with direct lines to news and data sources. The chance for profits is greater than ever thanks artificial intelligence's ability to read posts and articles more accurately for market-making changes and Trump's penchant for making news online.

When Trump makes surprise announcements, traders pounce

Traders profit when prices jump up and down, and with his taste for cliffhangers, threats and policy reversals America's first reality-TV president provides plenty of potentially market-moving content.

The reversals are especially profitable, allowing traders to win both ways — jumping ahead of stocks moving up or down to a post threatening something, then cashing out within thousands of a second, then betting the other way.

In addition to Trump, the service will include posts from other "high ranking" Truth Social contributors, including possibly his two oldest sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, who along with the father are heavily followed by users.

Truth Social has said that the information will be released to the traders and the general public at the same time so there really isn't an issue of fairness. But Themis Trading's Saluzzi, a critic of high speed trading, says that's a red herring because when the posts are received, not when they are released, is what matters.

"Somebody who buys the info and has a system built to process it will be able to act quicker than you and me," said Saluzzi, adding in reference to everyday, small stock buyers, "The loser is always the retail investor."

Trump posts about a company he likes, and stocks jump

Aside from policy scoops, another reason to sign up has emerged in recent months: Trump is posting more about publicly traded companies, praising ones he likes in a way that sets off buying frenzies.

"The pimping of specific companies — obviously Wall Street would like to know that before other people," said Dylan Hedler-Gaudette, a federal ethics rule expert at the watchdog Project on Government Oversight. "It's a real mess."

In April, moments after Trump praised Palantir Technologies in a post that included its stock symbol, the price briefly jumped the most it had in an entire year. Later that month, Trump posted, "Congratulations on Intel doing such a great job," and the stock immediately jumped in after-hours trading.

Just which firms are signing up for the feed is unclear. Asked for comment, none of the half dozen most well known high-speed traders such as Citadel Securities and XTX Markets replied. If just three sign up for the \$100,000 a month fee, that would double revenue at Trump Media, which reported taking in \$3.7 million last year.

Trump Media needs big money customers

The company can use their business.

Stock in the Truth Social parent has plunged 75% since Trump took office last year as the company keeps reporting hundreds of millions in losses despite the president's help driving traffic to its site by posting major decisions there.

In fact, the president breaks news on Truth Social so often that the White House press office will copy his posts into an email when responding to questions from the media seeking details on policies. If his posts aren't available yet, journalists are sometimes told, "Wait for the Truth."

Another problem for Truth Social is looming if the Democrats take control of Congress and launch investigations, as vowed by Massachusetts Senator Sen. Elizabeth Warren in a statement Friday specifically attacking the new service: "We will haul in those responsible for this open corruption to answer to the American people."

If the losses keep mounting for the company, though, some predict the president will push things further, using the platform even more for policy announcements.

"That's absolutely going to happen," warns Craig Holman, a lobbyist for the good government group Public Citizen. "Trump knows how to sell products."

Russia hits Ukrainian capital with ballistic missiles and drones, killing at least 9

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched an intense barrage of ballistic missiles and drones overnight into Saturday, killing at least nine people and wounding 30 civilians in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, authorities said.

The strikes follow a major Russian attack two days earlier that killed at least 10 people and wounded more than 50 others across Ukraine, as Moscow apparently looks to exploit Kyiv's critical shortage of Western-supplied anti-ballistic missile defenses. The relentless cycle of attacks dims the potential of reaching a diplomatic end to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of its neighbor.

Deaths and damage across Kyiv

A five-story residential building in the city's Solomianskyi District was damaged by falling debris and a fire broke out. Rescue workers evacuated 35 people from the upper floors of the building and two people died, with eight reported injured, including two children, according to Ukraine's state emergency service.

In the Darnytskyi District of Kyiv, seven people were killed and another 14 injured after the attack caused fires and damage to houses, vehicles, an administrative and non-residential building, the emergency services said.

Elsewhere, emergency workers extinguished a fire in a non-residential building in the capital's Shevchenkivskyi district. There was no additional information about earlier reports by the district mayor that people were trapped in another residential building.

Damage to commercial and residential buildings was reported in two other city districts.

Lithuania's foreign minister said the country's embassy in Kyiv was damaged when missiles struck nearby overnight.

Russia's defense ministry said Saturday it had launched a "massive strike" against "Ukrainian military-industrial complex facilities and logistics centers in Kyiv."

Zelenskyy presses for more air defense

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pressed the United States and other Western partners over Ukraine's need for more Patriot anti-ballistic missile defense systems to counter missile attacks from Russia.

"Every package of ballistic missile interceptors saves the lives of our people. And every night without them results in more casualties," he wrote on X following the latest attacks.

The Ukrainian leader late Friday said he spoke to U.S. Vice President JD Vance and discussed a meeting with President Donald Trump earlier this week in Washington, which Zelenskyy described as "positive and productive."

"The Russian air strikes on our country continue and air defense, specifically interceptors for Patriot systems against ballistic missiles, remains a top priority," Zelenskyy said Friday in a post on Telegram.

At a NATO summit in Ankara in July, Trump said the U.S. would give Ukraine a license to make Patriot systems, but he appeared to move away from that commitment on Friday during a Cabinet meeting at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland, saying he had not yet made a final decision on the matter.

Resident describes more frequent attacks

From a basement shelter where she was taking cover as a second air alarm sounded for another wave, Liudmyla Nakonechna, 64, described how she was woken by loud explosions at 1:30 a.m.

"I ran into the corridor and was standing there when the bathroom door was blown off its hinges and struck me in the leg," said Nakonechna, whose health is poor after undergoing cancer treatment. "I heard the sound of shattering glass. My balcony was covered in glass and it was completely blown apart, while

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the windows in my bedroom were also blown out.”

Nakonechna had not taken cover in a shelter since Russia’s full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, but the stress became too much, she said.

“It’s getting worse by the day,” Nakonechna said. “Whereas before there was an attack once every two weeks, or maybe once a week, now it happens practically every day. It is incredibly hard to bear this psychologically.”

In other developments

— In Russian-occupied Crimea, the Moscow-appointed head of the city of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said Saturday that a 60-year-old woman was killed and two other people wounded in a drone attack on the city.

— The Russian online news outlet Astra reported Saturday that a Ukrainian drone set an oil refinery in Ufa ablaze. Local officials said debris from a downed drone caused “smoke” at an unnamed “industrial zone.”

Ukraine’s almost daily long-range drone and missile strikes using domestically developed weapons have battered Russian oil facilities for months. The operation has brought a fuel crisis that is embarrassing the Kremlin more than four years after Russia’s all-out invasion of its neighbor.

Trump threatens more strikes on Iran, and other developments in the Middle East

By SAMY MAGDY and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump threatened more strikes on Iran as the United States presses for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Hours later on Saturday, Kuwait said it responded to a new round of drone attacks from Iran while a tanker was struck in the strategic waterway.

Meanwhile, Israel heavily struck the Gaza Strip after the Palestinian militant group Hamas agreed to disarm.

Here are the most important developments in the Middle East today:

US threatens new strikes in the conflict with Iran

Speaking to reporters Friday during a meeting with members of his Cabinet at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland, Trump said “we just want to win” in Iran and signaled that he expected U.S. military action to continue for some time.

He said the U.S. will hit Iran “very hard” until they can’t take it anymore.

Later that day, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt expressed the U.S. administration’s frustration anew, charging that Tehran last month signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. on a truce but then quickly “broke it, shot at commercial ships, and killed American soldiers.”

“President Trump is not going to stand by and allow this terrorist behavior to occur,” Leavitt said in a statement on Friday evening. “Iran will continue to pay until they come to the table in, what President Trump deems, a meaningful way.”

New attacks on Kuwait and on shipping

Kuwait’s military said Saturday that its forces were responding to drone attacks, which were part of Iran’s assaults on the country.

In a statement, Maj. Gen. Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, spokesman for Kuwait’s Defense Ministry, said the drones hit “a number of vital facilities,” including a government structure in the country’s north. He said there were no casualties.

The British Navy said Saturday that a tanker was struck and a separate explosion hit close to a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Oman. No casualties were reported in either incident, it said. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization said an unknown projectile hit the vessel on Friday 11 nautical miles northeast of Lima, Oman. The attack damaged the vessel’s engine room.

The group said that on Saturday a large splash and an explosion were reported close to another tanker while it was sailing 21 nautical miles northwest of Khasab city.

Iran has repeatedly attacked vessels attempting to transit through the Strait of Hormuz without its au-

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thorization as part of its ongoing conflict with the U.S.

Israel strikes Gaza after Hamas says it will disarm

Intense Israeli strikes Friday night and Saturday killed at least four people in central and northern Gaza and wounded dozens more, according to local health officials.

The strikes came after Hamas confirmed Friday that it will disarm in a potential breakthrough for ending the war in Gaza, though major obstacles remain. Israel has not officially commented on the Hamas deal, which is part of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire announced last October.

That agreement called for Hamas to disarm and hand over power to an independent Palestinian administration. Israel was to withdraw and an International Stabilization Force was to be deployed.

In a post on X Friday, Israeli far-right lawmaker Itamar Ben-Gvir called the deal "unacceptable" and said the killings in Gaza must continue. "Israel must win," he said.

The strikes overnight in Gaza followed evacuation orders by Israel's military. An Israeli military official said it was striking Hamas. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The Associated Press is tracking the progress of Trump's plan to end the Israel-Hamas war.

[Click here for full coverage from AP on the disarmament deal for Hamas.](#)

Elsewhere in the region

— Houthi rebels forced eight Saudi ships to reroute from the Bab el-Mandeb strait after the Iranian-backed rebels announced a blockade on Saudi shipping in the chokepoint. Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, the military spokesman for the Houthis, said in a statement Friday that the vessels changed route to the Cape of Good Hope around Africa to avert the blockade.

— In southern Lebanon, Israeli forces set off explosions Friday to destroy an underground tunnel network under the Crusader-built Beaufort Castle that Israel says had been used by Hezbollah militants as a command center. The 12th-century castle, also known as Al-Shaqif, was seized by Israeli forces in May. It was recently added to UNESCO's World Heritage List over Israel's objections.

— Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun said the Israeli operation sent "negative messages" ahead of upcoming talks in Rome. Israeli and Lebanese negotiating teams are set to meet again there to continue hammering out a plan under which Israel would withdraw from southern Lebanon in exchange for Hezbollah's disarmament.

Infantino abandons plans to sell World Cup profits to private equity following massive pushback

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — FIFA President Gianni Infantino is abandoning his divisive plan to sell World Cup profits to private equity after receiving pushback from all corners of the soccer world.

Infantino's decision came after his senior adviser who sat on a White House panel resigned and Asia's soccer body joined Europe and North America in opposing it.

"Having listened carefully to all the views, it has become clear that the project has created divisions of a nature that, regardless of the level of support, are no longer in the interest of the objective set out in the first place," Infantino said in a statement early Saturday. "Our purpose has always been — and will always be — to unite and improve. As a result, this proposal will not proceed."

Infantino had proposed creating a \$20 billion company to run the World Cup with private investors including the Kushner family, but drew backlash that grew every day since Tuesday's announcement.

UEFA's 55-member nations agreed to boycott the World Cup and all other FIFA competitions over Infantino's plan on Thursday. North America's CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation also said they opposed the plan.

"Some things are simply too important to sell," UEFA said in a statement. "The FIFA World Cup belongs to football. It always will. And so long as Europe has a voice, it will never be for sale."

Infantino's senior adviser, Carlos Cordeiro, a former Goldman Sachs banker who represented the soccer

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body on the White House Task Force for the World Cup, resigned on Friday and urged other senior FIFA staff to speak out.

"I cannot stand by while FIFA considers selling a stake in the World Cup," Cordeiro said in a statement, just hours after FIFA insisted: "Nobody is selling football."

Hours later, FIFA chief operating officer Kevin Lamour issued a statement to The Associated Press, saying FIFA staff were deceived by Infantino's lack of openness in planning the sale over recent months and that the project must not continue.

"It is the project of one person," Lamour, a longtime colleague of Infantino at both FIFA and European soccer body UEFA, wrote. "Not only must this project not go ahead ... but the time has now come for football political leaders to ask themselves the right questions and make the right decisions."

Infantino has proposed spinning off FIFA's commercial businesses — including World Cups and Club World Cups for men and women — into a \$20 billion subsidiary with 20% owned by private investors.

The "anchor investor," described by FIFA, is a New York-based investment firm created by Joshua Kushner, the younger brother of U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

The next FIFA competition is the Women's Under-20 World Cup starting Sept. 5 in Poland — which UEFA members said they would boycott.

The misstep could prove costly for Infantino, particularly after the interventions by Lamour and Cordeiro.

Reelected unopposed in 2019 and 2023, Infantino is allowed one more four-year term under FIFA statutes. The deadline for the next presidential contest is Nov. 18, exactly four months ahead of the vote in Rabat, Morocco, where FIFA has its African headquarters.

Infantino's job seemed secured despite long-term unease with his style and previous attempts to force through unpopular projects, but could become more tenuous with the failed private equity proposal.

As heat and dry conditions fan wildfires in France, volunteers fan out to help

By MARK CARLSON and MASHA MACPHERSON Associated Press

LANTON, France (AP) — With his watering can and bucket, Jean-François Pauner meanders from one small fire to the next along a forest floor, dousing small flare-ups of wildfires that have swept through woodlands four times the size of Paris in southwestern France.

"This is the first fire I'm experiencing real-time, and I can tell you it's vicious," said Pauner, 64. "It's underground, it comes out at any moment, and no matter how much we try to extinguish it, re-extinguish it, re-extinguish it, it keeps restarting."

"It's like a steamroller that's constantly, constantly rolling," said Pauner, wearing shorts, boots and sunglasses on a string around his neck on a road through cultivated pine trees, as the ground smoldered.

Pauner is among the untold numbers of volunteers who have mobilized to support firefighters battling the biggest wildfires in years in France.

"I'm protecting my forest, and my home," he said, pouring his watering can into a smoking ditch as if watering a garden, then huffing in the heat.

Hundreds of thousands forced from their homes

The wildfires that tore through cultivated forests on an Atlantic coast also known for towering sand dunes and tourist resorts devastated 42,000 hectares (about 162 square miles) west of Bordeaux, driving nearly a quarter-million people out of their homes and vacation sites.

Many other places in France have been hit by fires this summer, including in the Mediterranean Var region where a blaze in the Gros Bessillon mountain ridge flared up again on Friday, driven by violent winds, local authorities said. Several towns in the area were evacuated.

Europe is facing an extremely hot summer, fueling wildfires from the Atlantic coast to the eastern Mediterranean. The United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Greece and Turkey battled blazes this week.

As cooler, more humid air moved into southwest France this week, authorities allowed two-thirds of the 224,000 evacuees to return home, including some more on Friday.

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But the ground still simmers in many places.

"It's stabilized, but not totally stopped," French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told RTL radio. "Hot spots remain."

Volunteers like Pauner — what he calls "little eyes" on watch to report flare-ups to firefighters — do what they can with limited resources. Others have mobilized their trucks and giant jerrycans to supply water to fire crews.

Drought has left forests dangerously dry

Prolonged drought and climate change have created fire-prone conditions. Pauner said the region endured more than two months without significant rainfall, leaving vegetation exceptionally dry.

In the smoking forests, fire crews used rakes to dig down into the smoldering forest floor so buried embers can be doused with water, a long and painstaking job. Ukraine became the latest country to send help, dispatching 70 people and 10 vehicles in the coming days, Nunez said.

Investigators suspect that contractors clearing away vegetation inadvertently ignited the blaze last week. But other fires have been attributed to arsonists or criminal negligence.

Nunez said police have made 308 arrests in connection with blazes this summer — more than 120 of them involving minors — and that 33 people have either been convicted or are being held pending court rulings.

Elsewhere in Europe, fires are also burning

Blazes continued in other parts of Europe.

Many parts of Greece were listed at high or extreme risk of wildfires, with strong winds. Three Greek firefighters died fighting fires this week on the southern island of Crete.

Firefighters were tackling 73 wildfires around the country, 51 of which broke out on Friday, Fire department spokesman Col. Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said.

The fire department and coast guard used boats to evacuate more than 250 people from one of the largest fires, in Boeotia, and evacuation orders were issued for several other fires, including one on the western fringes of the Greek capital.

Gale-force winds were hampering aircraft from dumping water on the wildfires, he said.

In England, where half the country is gripped by drought, firefighters battled a wildfire on an east coast heath in Suffolk, near a nuclear power station that fire services said wasn't threatened. More than 100 firefighters were deployed.

"I wouldn't say it is under control," said Henry Griffin, a fire officer.

Breakneck pace in immigration courts is driving up deportation orders

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and CYBELE MAYES-OSTERMAN Associated Press/Report for America

HARLINGEN, Texas (AP) — The Trump administration is packing immigration courtrooms and giving less lead-time on hearings in an effort to clear a decades-long backlog. The result is a historic rise in the number of people missing court dates and being immediately ordered deported as the system struggles to keep up, new data shows.

Dozens and often hundreds of immigrants' cases a day are being assigned to individual judges in court-houses across the country, in what are known as "mega" master hearings, which have seen a significant increase this year. More than 1,300 such hearings were held in June alone, a nearly threefold jump from the previous June, according to data analyzed by Mobile Pathways, a nonprofit that tracks immigration court data to help immigrants, their lawyers and other organizations.

At the same time, the data shows, courts have severely cut the length of time many people are getting to prepare for complex immigration proceedings, from about six months to often just a little more than a month.

They're subsequently missing hearings, receiving deportation orders and being told they've abandoned any asylum claims at unprecedented rates.

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"The combination of collapsed lead times and packed hearing blocks is a schedule designed for people not to have their case heard," said Bartłomiej Skorupa, chief operating officer of Mobile Pathways. "The data shows valid claims are closed before being adjudicated."

Those who favor stricter immigration laws see the swift hearings as a course-correction for a longstanding problem.

"There's no credibility in the system that never reaches an end," Andrew Arthur, a fellow at the conservative Center for Immigration Studies, said.

Still, he worries that these rapid-fire hearings could affect judges' performance.

"You don't want to put so many cases on that the judges get burned out or that there's a danger of denying due process to anybody," Arthur said.

The Justice Department office that handles immigration courts said in a statement that judges were adjusting their schedules to resolve cases more quickly, while making sure all cases get handled fairly and lawfully. It said court delays harm immigrants who have valid claims, and that the public interest is served when the government deports people without legal grounds to stay.

Immigration courts are overwhelmed

Attending immigration court in Harlingen, Texas, on days where there are mega master hearings can mean waiting outside in the hot, crowded entrance for over an hour until the lobby can accommodate the next wave of people. Adults with cases often are accompanied by relatives and attorneys, and detained children are brought in with shelter case managers and legal advocates.

The courts call it a "mega" day when a judge has more than 50 cases scheduled. Although the practice is not new, it became much more frequent starting in mid-May.

On a recent day, about 90 cases were scheduled with Immigration Judge Delia Gonzalez. More than 20 people did not show up, but even so she ran out of time to hear each case and rescheduled a handful of people who had waited more than eight hours.

"There's a real limit to how many cases a judge can hear with any care in one morning," said former immigration judge Elizabeth Young. "When you cram that many hearings into a single docket, you're working through a list, not holding court."

Some immigrants requested more time before their next hearings, presenting evidence of having been defrauded by unscrupulous attorneys profiled in local news reports. Others without any attorney asked for more time to figure out the proper evidence filing procedures.

A Colombian man who submitted more than 1,500 pages as evidence in his asylum claim said he still wanted to obtain more documentation from members of the military, businesses and politicians back home.

Gonzalez declined the requests. Most cases lasted less than five minutes.

There is no leeway for no-shows

That same day in West Valley City, Utah, Immigration Judge Brock Taylor was assigned 159 cases. By noon, Taylor recited a dozen names of people from Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela who failed to show up. Without elaborating, he said each was properly notified of their hearing date and failed to appear. He ordered them removed from the United States and they would have no right to appeal.

In Chicago, attorney Peter Meinecke, a lawyer for the Resurrection Project, which runs a legal clinic for immigrants, said one of his clients was issued a removal order when he couldn't attend a mega master hearing across the country in Seattle after a vehicle accident fractured both of his legs and confined him to a wheelchair.

At the start of the second Trump administration in January 2025, about 20% of people missed scheduled immigration court hearings nationwide, according to Mobile Pathways. As hearing notice times shrunk, that no-show rate doubled to 40% by this June, the organization said. A nonprofit group that tracks and analyzes immigration court data and gives that information to immigrants and other organizations.

Deportation orders have risen alongside the no-show rates. Almost 33,000 deportation orders were issued in January 2025. This June, there were about 79,000, according to Mobile Pathways' data. And once a deportation order is issued, an immigrant's asylum claim is almost always considered "abandoned."

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The national rate of cases considered abandoned is now nearly five times the historical average dating back to 2009; in New York and Chicago specifically, it's roughly six times higher, according to Mobile Pathways.

"That's a recipe for disaster, because more people are going to be ordered removed in absentia who truly have a valid case," said Katie Fleming, a director at Acacia Center for Justice, a network of legal service providers.

Some people have even been issued deportation orders while they were inside the building that houses the Chicago immigration court, but confused about where to go and how to get help, according to Alex McGriff, an attorney for the National Immigrant Justice Center, which runs a legal help desk there.

"The court ordered them removed despite the fact that they were not absent," McGriff said.

The backlog is shrinking, but caseloads are not

Advocates for stricter immigration policies call the strategy a time-saver.

"It really is economizing the judge's time," said Arthur, the Center for Immigration Studies fellow. "It is increasing the number of final orders that are going out, so that's decreasing the backlog entirely."

The backlog, which grew significantly under the Biden administration, has decreased for the first time in at least 10 years. The number of pending cases with the Executive Office of Immigration Review, which oversees immigration courts, decreased from 3.7 to 3.5 million in fiscal year 2025 and continued to drop this year.

"It can be a tough job when you're doing it at scale," Arthur said.

Attorneys representing immigrants have similar challenges keeping up as their own caseloads intensify.

Jaime Diez, a veteran immigration attorney based in Brownsville, Texas, recently had almost 20 cases called in one day, nearly 10 times his previously normal pace.

"Due process is being thrown out of the window," Diez said standing outside the courtroom with a six-inch thick file for one client. "It's very worrisome, I don't know how long it's going to last."

Trump wanted interest rate cuts to be 'Rocket Fuel' for the economy. He is losing that fight so far

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has been losing his own battle to cut interest rates.

The president likes to vilify high rates as an affront to the size and strength of the U.S. economy, saying that America deserves the cheapest borrowing costs in the world. Trump for months publicly pressured the Federal Reserve to slash its benchmark rates, claiming it would be "Rocket Fuel!" for growth and make housing more affordable.

But since the war in Iran began at the end of February, borrowing money has become more expensive, meaning fewer families can afford mortgages or auto loans. The government is getting squeezed, too — as it has spent \$827 billion so far this fiscal year to service the national debt, more than it has devoted to national defense.

The scope of the problem became clear this past week when Kevin Warsh, the Fed's new chair picked by Trump, said in his second press conference on the job that inflation continues to run hot but offered no clear guidance on how to fix the problem.

Interest rates are rising, even though Trump pledged they would fall

Rates on 30-year U.S. Treasury bonds hit their highest levels in nearly two decades, the exact opposite of what Trump had pledged to voters. The 10-year U.S. Treasury note saw its interest rate shoot up above 4.7% on Friday, surpassing what the president inherited when he returned to the White House last year.

But Trump has largely ignored the jump in interest rates and has portrayed the economy as booming, even though the government recently reported that the annual growth rate for the prior three months was a sluggish 1.5%.

"We have the most successful environment that we've ever had," Trump told his Cabinet on Friday. "There's never been anything like it from the standpoint of investment into our country."

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Neither Trump nor his Treasury Secretary, Scott Bessent, discussed interest rates during the public portion of the meeting. But White House spokesman Kush Desai said the end of the Iran war would ultimately reduce energy costs and allow the Fed to reduce rates. "Oil prices — and thus overall inflation — will plummet again when President Trump forces a successful resolution with Iran, further paving the way for additional interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve," Desai said.

Higher interest rates are weighing on voters ahead of the midterm elections

The prospect of higher borrowing costs has become troublesome for Republicans in the November elections, as Trump's own policies helped drive the increase.

His tariffs that began last year caused rates to jump so quickly that he backed off and reformulated them. Trump has championed the construction of data centers for artificial intelligence, but the bonds financing those projects appear to have helped push up interest rates. And the war in Iran has fueled rising oil prices.

Republicans had hoped to show clear progress on affordability to voters ahead of the midterms. Trump can point to a low unemployment rate and solid consumer spending as proof that the economy remains stable, yet there are few signs that these arguments have connected with the public.

One possible reason why Trump's economic messaging has struggled is that voters care more about whether their incomes are outpacing inflation, according to research released in June by Georgetown University's Juan Felipe Riaño and the University of California, Berkeley's Francesco Trebbi.

Trump and Republicans not only promised lower interest rates in the 2024 elections, but they indicated that prices could fall outright if their policies were in place. But over the last 12 months, inflation has nearly kept pace with hourly wage gains — and that understates the extent of the problem because debt service costs are not included in the consumer price index.

"It cut against Democrats in 2024, and if prices and borrowing costs keep outrunning wages into the fall, the same logic points at Republicans now," Riaño, the Georgetown University economist, told the AP.

Housing affordability has been a sore point for voters

Earlier this year, the Trump administration directed Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, the two mortgage firms under government conservatorship, to buy at least \$200 billion in home loans to bring down mortgage rates.

Earlier this year, Republicans had hoped to campaign on falling rates and a bipartisan bill to increase home construction to help defend their House and Senate majorities. One GOP lawmaker, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss strategy, said the hope was that Trump would sign the bill as mortgage rates fell below 6%, which could improve housing affordability and public sentiment toward the overall economy.

However, Trump called the bill a "big yawn" and allowed it to become law without his signature. And the mortgage company Freddie Mac said Thursday that 30-year rates were averaging 6.66%, essentially unchanged from a year ago.

Markets don't expect interest rates to drop before the election

Warsh, the Fed chair since May, has said he has been content to let the financial markets do more to set the rates, rather than the central bank. Even though the Fed has held its benchmark rate steady this year, the markets on their own have chosen to charge a premium for holding U.S. government debt.

"Markets reflect the higher inflation, policy uncertainty," said John Silvia, the CEO of Dynamic Economic Strategy. "They are the product of events."

Warsh on Wednesday portrayed that as a positive, even if the result goes against what Trump expected from his new Fed chair.

"Market participants are learning to play the ball, not the referee — and market prices will continue to respond in the direction and magnitude they see fit," Warsh said. "This is, in my view, a change for the better — and we are just getting started."

But time might not be on Trump's side for fixing high interest rates. The next Fed meeting on rates will conclude on Sept. 16. Markets currently expect Fed officials to vote to raise rates in order to reduce inflationary pressures, according to CME FedWatch.

Trump says anti-weaponization fund in IRS settlement is 'dead' even as he defends it

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, SEUNG MIN KIM and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that his \$1.8 billion anti-weaponization fund is “dead” while also continuing to defend it, further complicating his administration’s negotiations with two Republican senators who are blocking his attorney general nominee in protest.

Trump told reporters at Camp David on Friday morning that administration officials had “agreed not to have a fund” that compensates his political allies, yet made clear that he disagrees with that decision.

The comments came hours after an early morning social media post in which Trump said people who had been prosecuted by the Justice Department — many of them for their involvement in the violent Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol — “are suffering still, many ruined, and I felt that they should be given compensation for what has been done to them.”

Trump’s reluctant declaration that the fund won’t be created came as Republican Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Thom Tillis of North Carolina, both members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, say they won’t support Todd Blanche’s nomination for attorney general until they see that promise in writing. They have been working for weeks with the White House and Blanche, who is now the acting attorney general, to produce a document to that effect, but both senators have said they aren’t satisfied so far.

“The President made it clear today that the so-called Anti Weaponization Fund is still alive, which is exactly why we are attempting to formally end it,” Tillis said after Trump’s initial social media post.

As negotiations continued late Friday, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley rescheduled a committee vote for Blanche that had been postponed earlier in the week.

A spokesperson for the committee said Grassley would like to see Blanche confirmed before the August recess and putting the Tuesday vote on the calendar “gives more time for the White House to secure the votes for the President’s nominee.”

Cornyn, Tillis want promises in writing

Blanche said at a hearing two months ago that the anti-weaponization fund would not move forward after Republican senators revolted and held up an immigration funding bill.

But Tillis, who is retiring when his term ends in January, and Cornyn, who lost reelection this year after Trump endorsed his primary opponent, said they want to ensure that the White House doesn’t reverse course, especially as Trump continues to argue that a fund is needed.

The Justice Department has provided the senators with language that says Blanche’s May 18 order establishing the “Anti-Weaponization Fund” is “rescinded and shall have no force or effect,” according to a document reviewed by The Associated Press.

Cornyn and Tillis have said they also want some clarifications on a separate piece of the settlement that would grant Trump and members of his family immunity from tax audits. Cornyn said this week that it was his understanding that the audits could extend to more than 100 different Trump organization subsidiaries into the future.

“Todd Blanche said it was limited to the parties to the litigation — and it was retrospective, not prospective,” Cornyn said. “And all we’re doing is asking them to put that in writing.”

Blanche nomination is delayed in the Senate

The Judiciary Committee postponed the vote on Blanche’s nomination that had been scheduled for Thursday morning after Tillis and Cornyn said they needed more from the administration before they could provide the necessary votes.

After the meeting was delayed, Trump said in a social media post that he might pull Blanche’s nomination and resubmit it after Cornyn and Tillis leave office next year. But the two sides continued to negotiate through Thursday afternoon, when Blanche, Cornyn and Tillis met on Capitol Hill.

On Friday, a person familiar with the negotiations said talks had been positive but the senators were still awaiting a new offer from the Justice Department. The person requested anonymity to discuss the private negotiations.

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The two senators have repeatedly said the Justice Department seemed interested in reaching an agreement, but the White House wouldn't budge even to aid the confirmation of Trump's loyal former personal attorney, who has aggressively pursued the administration's priorities as acting attorney general.

"I think as far as Blanche and the Department of Justice, we were pretty much on the same page," Cornyn said Thursday. "But then when the president got wind of it, he wasn't willing to go along with it."

Tillis said Blanche "has been forthright, thoughtful and patient" but attributed the holdup to an "incompetent personal adviser" to the president, even as Trump himself continued to advocate for the fund.

Behind the scenes, Trump legal adviser Boris Epshteyn is being blamed as an obstacle to an agreement that would let Blanche move forward, according to three people who have direct knowledge of the discussions and requested anonymity to discuss them.

Saying the AP's "sources are wrong," White House communications director Steven Cheung said "anyone trying to assign blame to the President or his team has no earthly idea of what is going on and clearly is trying to deflect from the issue at hand — Todd Blanche will be an exceptional Attorney General and he should be confirmed immediately."

Also on Friday, Trump's attorneys notified a court it would appeal a judge's scathing ruling that characterized the settlement of the president's lawsuit against the IRS as an improper exercise in self-dealing. The judge in her order earlier this month referred one of Trump's attorneys for potential disciplinary action and criticized Blanche's involvement in the settlement, given his prior representation of Trump.

Blanche has said he disagrees "with the judge's insinuations" about him.

Settlement fund could have benefited Jan. 6 rioters

Even as they are usually deferential to Trump, a number of Republican senators have expressed strong objections to the settlement.

"The criminals who assaulted police officers and defiled our nation's Capitol are not 'great American patriots' who are 'victims of government abuse,'" Tillis said, echoing Trump's comments about the rioters who could potentially have received payouts. On his first day back in office, Trump pardoned more than 1,500 people who had been charged in the attack.

Republican Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana said Thursday that the majority of Senate Republicans aren't comfortable with the settlement fund.

"Blanche said it's dead, and he testified that it's not coming back," Kennedy said. "But for whatever reason, somebody didn't want to put it in writing."

Authorities release early ransom note in Nancy Guthrie case, hoping someone recognizes it

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Authorities released an early ransom note in the investigation into the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie in hopes that someone will recognize the writing style. A second note, also released Friday, said Guthrie died shortly after she was kidnapped and "is buried in nature now."

Both notes initially were sent to a Tucson television station days after the 84-year-old mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie went missing from her home outside Tucson on Feb. 1. Authorities have not said whether Nancy Guthrie is still alive.

Saturday is the six-month mark since Guthrie went missing. No suspects have been arrested in her disappearance. The investigation is dogged by unanswered questions, such as how many people are believed to have taken part in her abduction and whether she was taken by someone who knew her.

In her latest video about her mother's disappearance, Savannah Guthrie said earlier this week that her family has been living an unending nightmare and pleaded with the kidnappers to "tell us where to look for her."

The FBI in Washington did not immediately respond to questions about the ransom notes, including whether both messages sent to the Tucson station have been deemed legitimate.

In releasing the notes, the Pima County Sheriff's Department said "we believe these distinctive linguistic

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characteristics may be recognizable to someone who knows or has interacted with the notes' writer."

The first note, sent Feb. 2, said Guthrie was safe but scared and would be released unharmed once her captors received \$4 million in cryptocurrency, with the ransom amount increasing if the first demand was not met.

It said Guthrie would be released within 12 hours if the payment was received. It also included a threat to kill her if the ransom wasn't paid.

"Your mother is aware of this and her life is in your hands," the first note read. "It is in the best interest of everyone to have this completed as soon as possible."

The second note was sent Feb. 6 and said Guthrie died shortly after she was taken. "She is buried in nature now," it said. "Nothing you could have done could have changed the outcome." The note ended with an apology: "We are truly sorry."

Investigators hope the writing itself will help identify its author

The sheriff's department said the notes reveal a distinctive pattern of word choices and provide insight into the writer's mindset. The agency said someone who knows the notes' writer may recognize the patterns.

Authorities similarly used a suspect's own writings as a tool to apprehend Theodore "Ted" Kaczynski, branded the "Unabomber" by the FBI. Kaczynski, who killed three people and injured 23 others with mail bombs over a 17-year span, pressured The Washington Post, in conjunction with The New York Times, to publish his 35,000-word manifesto in 1995. Federal authorities encouraged its publication, leading Kaczynski's brother and sister-in-law to recognize the syntax and anti-technology themes and tip off the FBI, bringing to a close the agency's longest and costliest investigation at the time.

In a statement Friday, the sheriff's department also appealed to people who may know something about the case, saying it may be difficult to come forward due to a personal relationship with someone involved or just for their own safety.

"We recognize relationships and loyalties change over time as do people and their perspectives," the sheriff's department wrote. "It is not too late to come forward."

Authorities say new evidence suggests the kidnapping was planned

The sheriff's office also said Friday that two videos recovered from Guthrie's doorbell camera might be from two separate days and indicate an unidentified male prepared ahead of when Guthrie was taken. Authorities are seeking information on anyone who was behaving differently, changed their physical appearance, suddenly left the Tucson area, or had a noticeable or unexplained interest or disinterest in the case.

"Investigators continue to pursue every available technological and investigative lead," the sheriff's office said. "However, community members remain a vital resource as we seek to provide answers for Nancy's family."

The FBI had released surveillance videos of a masked person who authorities said appeared to tamper with a camera on Nancy Guthrie's front porch and block it with a plant. They described the person as a male about 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 meters) tall.

On Feb. 4, Savannah Guthrie and her siblings first shared a video statement saying they were aware of media reports of a purported ransom letter and that they were ready to talk and listen, but they wanted proof that their mother was alive. Camron Guthrie, the brother of the "Today" co-anchor, said the following day that the family had not heard directly from whoever took their mother.

A day after the second note was sent, Savannah Guthrie said on Feb. 7 that the siblings received a message and "understand," without sharing details. She said they were begging for their mother to be returned to them. "We will pay," Guthrie said.

The family has continued to share their pleas for information in videos posted to social media.

Two men who were previously detained have filed a lawsuit

Also, two men detained and released early in the investigation into Nancy Guthrie's disappearance are seeking a combined \$3 million against a southern Arizona sheriff's department. In a legal claim, they say they were wrongfully held by law enforcement.

The claim made Thursday against Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos' department centers on the separate detentions of Carlos Alfredo Palazuelos and Daniel Maddow on Feb. 10. It said they were released hours

later but have suffered from having been mentioned in the investigation.

Nanos' office declined to comment on the notice of claim, a necessary precursor to filing a lawsuit against government entities.

Justice Department moves to drop case against ex-Olympian charged with damaging Reflecting Pool

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department moved Friday to dismiss a criminal case charging a former Olympian with deliberately damaging the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, saying evidence prosecutors had recently received refuted the idea that vandals were to blame.

Government lawyers said in a 20-page court filing that additional documents provided by the Interior Department since the indictment of David Hearn show that the damage was the result of a botched installation by a contractor as well as "the rush to complete the project prior to events associated with the America 250 celebration in the weeks surrounding Independence Day 2026." In addition, a recent visual inspection revealed damage throughout the pool, including in the middle — where prosecutors say a vandal would not likely have attempted to peel the lining.

"Given all of this newly discovered information, it is difficult to attribute the widespread damage to the Reflecting Pool to vandalism, let alone to establish that fact beyond a reasonable doubt," said the filing from U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, which asked a judge to formally dismiss the case.

Hearn's lawyers said in a statement that the case against him should never have been brought.

"Its dismissal today does not erase the abuse of government power in arresting and charging a patriotic American who did nothing wrong. The government's approach was ready, fire, aim. The administration owes Mr. Hearn an apology," the lawyers said.

The dismissal marks an embarrassing setback for a Justice Department that had billed the prosecution as accountability for damage at a Washington landmark where President Donald Trump had launched a massive renovation project before the country's 250th anniversary celebrations. Trump, without providing evidence, has alleged the damage was caused by vandals.

But the case has long been saddled with evidentiary problems and challenges. Hearn has for weeks maintained his innocence and his supporters have characterized the prosecution as a politically motivated attempt by the Trump administration to deflect blame and scapegoat others.

Earlier this week, Hearn's lawyers sought access to grand jury transcripts because of what they said were "irregularities" in the process. They said a National Park Service official testified that the pool already was damaged before Hearn allegedly touched it, couldn't quantify any damage attributable to Hearn and said the same repairs would have been required regardless of his conduct.

"The witness's testimony established that the pool had substantial preexisting damage requiring repair before any alleged conduct by Mr. Hearn," his lawyers wrote. "According to the witness, the pool was leaking more than one million gallons of water per week; its expansion joints had exceeded their service life; and the liner already contained a rip."

Hearn pleaded not guilty earlier this month to one felony count of property destruction and had a trial scheduled to start Sept. 28 in D.C. Superior Court. The charge, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years upon conviction, accused Hearn of causing at least \$1,000 in damage to the pool.

In court papers Friday, prosecutors said they had only recently received new information that undermined the basis for the prosecution.

"It was not until after these documents were produced that (prosecutors) first became aware of information showing that the damage was the result of a botched installation and not vandalism as initially represented" by the Interior Department. Prosecutors could "only rely," they wrote, on the initial information suggesting that the damage was caused by vandals.

Hearn has told The Associated Press he was detained by National Guard troops and U.S. Park Police

for five hours after stopping by the pool during a bike ride on June 19. He said he reached in to examine the pool's newly peeled coating and briefly touched a chunk attached to the side of the pool, but said he obeyed a park worker who told him to let go of it.

Hearn, 67, of Bethesda, Maryland, competed in three Summer Olympics, earning his best finish, ninth, at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee says on its website.

Marine Corps says F-35B stealth fighter crashed in California, pilot ejected safely

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and GABRIELA AOUN ANGUEIRA Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The U.S. Marine Corps says the pilot of an F-35B stealth fighter is expected to live after ejecting from the jet before it crashed in California.

The jet went down Friday near the Miramar air base in San Diego. "The pilot ejected, was transported to a local medical facility in stable condition for evaluation and treatment of non-life-threatening injuries," the Marine Corps said in an updated statement.

Aerial video from a news helicopter showed a plume of black smoke rising from the wreckage in a dirt field, with multiple military and firefighting vehicles and people standing nearby. What appeared to be white flame retardant covered the ground, and at least one person was spraying the wreckage with a fire hose.

Wade Lott saw the crash as he drove to work at a concrete company just south of the flight line.

"It just blew up, it was crazy," said Lott, 36, who watched from his truck as two jets descended toward the runway together. The first landed without incident, but the second suddenly began slowing down, almost as if it were trying to hover, Lott said. When the jet was about 100 feet (30 m) above the ground, the pilot ejected and their parachute deployed as they rose about 200 feet (61 m) into the air just in time.

"The jet hit the ground right next to another plane," said Lott. "It plowed into the runway and just blew up."

Candace Hadley, a spokesperson for San Diego Fire, said firefighters were on scene to respond to a vegetation fire that sparked near the crash site. She referred additional questions to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

The base used to host the Navy fighter pilot training school depicted in the original "Top Gun" movie, and was known as "Fightertown USA" in its heyday. The school was relocated to Naval Air Station Fallon in Nevada in 1996 after the base was transferred to the Marine Corps.

The U.S. Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force together have more than 630 F-35s, according to a 2024 analysis by the Government Accounting Office. The F-35B is one of several versions, and has an engine designed for short takeoffs and vertical landings. A single F-35B costs about \$109 million. The report estimated that the overall F-35 program will cost roughly \$2 trillion after the military buys more than 1,800 more jets and operates them for decades to come.

A Marines statement called Friday's crash a "Class A mishap." That's the most severe mishap category, used when the damage totals more than \$2 million, an aircraft is destroyed or a service member killed. In the Air Force alone, there have been at least 17 other "Class A mishaps" involving F-35 aircraft since 2000, according to Air Force Safety Center statistics.

At least seven other military aircraft mishaps have happened in the U.S. this year, according to the Flight Safety Foundation's Aviation Safety Network database.

The F-35s are considered the safest and most capable fighter jets the military has in its fleet, according to the Lexington Institute think tank that focuses on defense technology and national security.

There have been fewer crashes involving any of the F-35 models since the jet was adopted in 2015 compared to other fighters when those planes were new, and fatal crashes are rare in F-35s.

In five F-35 crashes, the pilots were able to eject, though at least one sustained injuries. That pilot was injured when an F-35 crashed near the international airport in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in May 2024. The jet was heading an Air Force base in California from Texas.

Tens of thousands of migrants voluntarily leave after crossing into Spanish territory of Ceuta

By SERGIO RODRIGO RUÍZ, RENATA BRITO and SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

CEUTA, Spain (AP) — Tens of thousands of migrants who crossed into Spain's tiny Ceuta territory returned voluntarily to Morocco on Friday, a day after the influx triggered chaos in the North African city and reignited the immigration debate in Europe and beyond. At least 57 migrants died on the journey.

Ceuta's president put the number of migrants at 60,000, which was equivalent to 70% of the territory's population. But most of them soon went back, the Spanish government said, after the sudden arrival of so many people sparked a humanitarian crisis.

Some migrants swam several miles through the sea and faced down authorities who tried to turn them back with water cannons, tear gas and warning shots. Those who died included some who drowned or were killed in a stampede to cross a breakwater barrier near a border checkpoint.

Spain deployed its armed forces and additional police to restore order in Ceuta, which sits on the Strait of Gibraltar at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea and has been a Spanish possession since 1580. On the Moroccan side of the border, security forces clashed with migrants. The chaos also had ripple effects abroad, with Italy and France pledging to tighten their controls on people arriving from Spain.

"The situation that Ceuta is going through is absolutely unsustainable," Ceuta President Juan Jesús Vivas told journalists.

Meanwhile, migrants from Morocco also attempted to cross into Melilla, Spain's other territory at the tip of North Africa, where they clashed with police.

Spanish prime minister condemns border breach

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited Ceuta on Friday and condemned the border breach, which he described as "a violation of Spain's territorial integrity."

Sánchez blamed human smugglers for the crisis, saying they "deceive so many young people and ultimately lead many of them to their deaths," whether in the ocean or in the city.

The Spanish Interior Ministry released its own figures shortly after Vivas spoke, estimating that some 50,000 people had crossed from Morocco since Thursday. It added that 48,300 had already returned to Morocco by Friday evening, with hundreds more going back by the hour.

Rachid Sbihi, who leads a local workers association representing Civil Guard officers, described the situation as a "serious humanitarian crisis," saying thousands of migrants, including unaccompanied children, were left sleeping in parks and on sidewalks, while others roamed the streets aimlessly.

"It's chaotic," Sbihi said.

The Moroccan Interior Ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the migrant figures released by the Spanish authorities.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the images from Ceuta were "unacceptable."

"We cannot allow anyone to come to our Union without abiding by our rules," she said Friday in an online statement. "Dangerous crossings must stop immediately. Smuggling networks must be dismantled. And returns must be swift, as our rules allow."

Dozens died in the chaos

Some of the 57 people who died had drowned, Sbihi said, but some were also killed in a stampede to cross the breakwater fence at Tarajal Beach, an urban beach near a border checkpoint with Morocco. The waters near the border fence were littered with buoys, shoes and other abandoned belongings.

Many young Moroccans who crossed into Ceuta told The Associated Press that they had hoped to find better work opportunities in Spain but were returning given the mayhem in Ceuta.

"There's nothing at home. I'd have to work 12-hour shifts for a meager wage. That's why I came here," said 21-year-old Abdulah Buji, who hails from the city of Tetouan. "But I haven't found any opportunities here either, so I have to go back."

Moroccan police used water cannons and fired warning shots into the air to prevent migrants from crossing into Ceuta, according to rights groups in Morocco.

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Morocco's ambassador to Spain said the situation in Ceuta had unfolded against Morocco's wishes. "We have always prioritized legal, orderly and safe migration for all," Karima Benyaich said. She did not comment on what prompted the migrants to cross into Ceuta.

To reach Ceuta, on the northern African coast, migrants often swim from the Moroccan town of Fnideq, covering about 3 miles (5 kilometers) to reach Spanish territory. Others attempt the crossing from the nearby town of Belyounech, where the distance is shorter.

Authorities in Ceuta and Madrid have linked the border surge to a recent decision by the Spanish Supreme Court, which ruled that migrants arriving by sea could not be summarily deported, unlike those who cross by land or climb the border fence.

Sánchez said migrant smugglers misinterpreted the ruling.

The interpretation of the Supreme Court's ruling "spread like wildfire over the past few hours through the networks of human trafficking organizations," triggering the surge, Sánchez said.

Spain has bucked anti-immigration trend

Sánchez has bucked the anti-migration trend that has gained ground across Europe and in the U.S.

Earlier this year, his government moved to give residency and work permits to hundreds of thousands of migrants already living in the country without permission.

Sánchez, a Socialist, argued that it would be good for the economy and the demographics of an aging Spain. Migrants who entered irregularly after Jan. 1 this year were not included.

His critics jumped at the opportunity to attack his policy, saying it encouraged more migrants to come.

"Sánchez allows Spain to be invaded through Ceuta," Spanish conservative politician Isabel Díaz Ayuso wrote on X.

The U.S. expressed its support for "the people of Spain, and all Europeans, against this egregious violation of their sovereignty and human rights."

In a post on X, the State Department added that "this unacceptable incident is the direct result of the Spanish Government's deliberate efforts to enable and facilitate mass illegal migration into Europe."

Sánchez on Friday defended his migration policy and distanced it from the events in Ceuta.

In the tumult, Italy temporarily suspended its open-border Schengen agreement with Spain, reimposing border controls for air and sea. The Interior Ministry said the decision amounted to a "closure" of the borders, but experts said it was merely a resumption of border controls. The agreement allows travelers to fly between the two countries without presenting passports.

French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said France would also strengthen border checks with Spain.

The crisis in Ceuta "has nothing to do with the regularization of migrants adopted by the Government of Spain, as is being falsely claimed by some," the Spanish government said in a statement late Thursday after Meloni's announcement.

Pressure grows on second Spanish territory in Africa

Migrants from Morocco also attempted to cross into Melilla, the other Spanish territory at the tip of North Africa.

There was widespread chaos in Bni Nsar, the Moroccan town bordering the Spanish territory, where migrants clashed with police, throwing rocks and setting police vehicles ablaze, according to local media and rights groups. They reported injuries among security forces and the arrest of dozens of people attempting to cross.

Like Ceuta, Melilla is a self-governing Spanish city. Many Moroccans consider both cities to be occupied territory.

Thousands of migrant children in the US could face new deportation risks as legal aid deal expires

By REBECCA SANTANA and VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

HARLINGEN, Texas (AP) — Advocates warn that tens of thousands of migrant children who came to the United States alone could lose legal representation in immigration court and increase their risk of deporta-

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tion as the Trump administration allows a contract with legal services providers to expire.

Friday marks the last day of a contract under which the federal government pays for legal services for children who enter the U.S. without a parent or guardian. The government contracts out those services to a network of nearly 100 legal groups across the country that provide services to roughly 20,000 children.

The Trump administration did not immediately respond to a request for comment on why it was allowing the contract to expire. But it comes as the administration has redoubled its efforts to achieve its policy of mass deportations, and after migrant children became a target for removal from the country during the first year of President Donald Trump's second term in office.

As part of the expiring contract, the legal groups can enter government-funded shelters and give presentations to children about their legal rights, and directly represent the children as they go through immigration court proceedings.

But as that contract ends, the providers say it's unclear what will happen come Monday or whether they'll be able to visit their clients in the shelters where they live.

"We have no understanding of what's going to happen to those children come next week. We don't know if they're going to have legal representation. The government as of yet has not identified who will take over this representation," said Melissa Lopez, the executive director of Estrella El Paso, during a news conference earlier this week. The organization currently represents 243 unaccompanied children in western Texas and New Mexico.

The providers say their ability to enter the shelters, check on their clients and give presentations to new arrivals serves as an important oversight measure for a vulnerable population. The providers warn that without a lawyer to assist them in court and help them navigate the complexities of immigration law, children will be much more likely to be deported back to countries they initially fled.

"The government is trying to eliminate our work in this program because they know that without attorneys children will be deported," said Lopez.

Health and Human Services, which is responsible for caring for unaccompanied migrant children while they are in government care and which administers the contract, did not respond to a request for comment Friday.

In a Texas immigration court, children play with action figures as lawyer warns of future

Dozens of children and teens filed early Friday morning into the Harlingen courthouse for a hearing before an immigration judge. In the lobby, other children waiting for their hearings played with puzzles and action figures or drew in coloring books.

One 8-year-old boy walked into the courtroom holding an Etch-a-Sketch as he sat next to his attorney.

These were children who had come to the U.S. without a parent or guardian and now their cases were making their way through the immigration courts. But Lauren Fisher Flores, an attorney for the American Bar Association's ProBar project, which is contracted to provide legal services in southwestern Texas, warned the court of the looming contract expiration.

She explained that come Monday, lawyers wouldn't be able to provide the legal information sessions that they usually give to children in shelters that let children know their rights and lawyers also would no longer be able to step in and provide the "Friend of the Court" services where they assist those children who sometimes show up in court without a lawyer. Fisher Flores said the organization didn't know what the government's plan was going forward.

"We sincerely hope there will be someone to step in next week," she said.

The judge thanked the attorney and said she was sorry to hear the news.

Legal groups already laying off staff after months of no payments

The end of the contract comes as the legal service providers representing these children say they have not been paid for more than half a year. The organizations say that the Trump administration has been withholding payments as it demands detailed information from the providers about their clients that the providers say they have never been asked for before and that they ethically cannot provide.

"They are clearly trying to destroy the program by grinding down the financial health of nonprofits. We've

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seen layoffs and furloughs, and we will see a lot more of that if these invoices aren't paid," said Michael Lukens, the executive director of the Amica Center

Some groups have been trying to secure private funding to continue their work, while others have begun laying off staff and shuttering offices. ProBar in south Texas this week laid off 20% of its staff.

Mid-South Immigration Advocates is a nonprofit law firm based in Memphis, Tennessee, which helps over 400 unaccompanied minors. The organization's legal director, Sally Joyner, said the organization is owed over \$500,000 from the federal government to reimburse them for their work with the children. They've already had to lay off seven employees since 2025 and more layoffs are planned. They're closing their physical offices in Nashville and Memphis at the end of September and expect to close their law firm entirely soon.

As their budget tightens, she said they're doing everything they can to continue representing the children who are their clients. She warns that without attorneys to represent them, migrant children, including infants and teens, could be ordered deported in the coming weeks.

"These are kids who have been living in our communities, going to our schools for you know three, four, five years," Joyner said. "Some of them they only know the United States and will have gone to high school, graduate high school just in time for ICE to send them to prison."

Migrant children coming to the U.S. alone usually have special protections

Migrant children traveling alone are usually entrusted to U.S. government care, and there are various legal protections that apply to them once they're in the U.S. and navigating the immigration system, including the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008.

The law said the government should facilitate legal representation for children put into deportation proceedings.

With some limited exceptions, it requires that children be placed in the "least restrictive setting possible," which generally means they can be released to a sponsor, such as a relative in the U.S., while their immigration proceedings play out.

The children can apply for a specially protected status if they can't return to their home country because of abuse or neglect and they can also apply for asylum.

FACT FOCUS: Migrant crossing in Spain's Ceuta breeds unsubstantiated claims

By JOSEPH WILSON and RENATA BRITO Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — A crisis at the border in Ceuta, a tiny Spanish territory in North Africa, has resulted in unsubstantiated claims about Spain's migration policies and the causes of the border surge at the territory's frontier with Morocco.

Some 60,000 migrants entered Ceuta from Morocco on Thursday and Friday, local Spanish officials have said, equivalent to 70% of the city's regular population. At least 57 migrants died attempting the crossing either by drowning while trying to swim to Spanish territory or in a stampede.

Here's a look at the facts.

CLAIM: Spain's move to legalize the status of immigrants caused the rush.

THE FACTS: Spain's government is carrying out an amnesty for immigrants without residency permits who could prove they had been living in the country for at least five months and arrived before Jan. 1, 2026. Over 1 million people applied before the window closed at the end of last month.

Critics, including U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration, say that the amnesty sparked the rush to the Ceuta border by sending the message that Spain is lenient on migrants.

Spain's "weak law, bad management" was to blame, Trump said Friday. The U.S. State Department doubled down in a post on X, saying that "this unacceptable incident is the direct result of the Spanish Government's deliberate efforts to enable and facilitate mass illegal migration into Europe."

Spain's government strongly rejects that premise, saying that criminal gangs were behind the border

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crisis. Madrid has tried to maintain a hard line on illegal attempts to cross its borders while encouraging orderly arrivals of workers, who the government says are needed to keep up the country's strong economy.

Poverty and youth unemployment are high in neighboring Morocco, particularly away from coastal cities that have experienced some development in recent years. Gen Z-led protests last year called for social justice and better public services. The inequality has prompted many young Moroccans to attempt to leave for Europe in search of better economic opportunities.

Still, it isn't fully clear what caused the sudden surge in crossings at Ceuta.

CLAIM: A misconstrued Spanish court ruling is to blame.

THE FACTS: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has pushed the argument that a recent ruling by Spain's Supreme Court had been intentionally misconstrued by migrant smugglers to convince thousands of people to cross the border by swimming around the border fence.

That court ruling said migrants arriving by sea could not be summarily deported without due process, unlike those who cross by land or climb the border fence because they had not crossed a physical barrier.

Migration and human rights activists said social media posts and misinformation helped fuel the departures.

"The departures were promoted in a certain way. At first, people were hearing that the border was open, and then everyone started referring to the Spanish court decision. That contributed to the crossings," said Achraf Maimouni, a human-rights activist.

CLAIM: Morocco intentionally opened the border

THE FACTS: In 2021, more than 8,000 people crossed the Ceuta border when Moroccan border officials dropped their guard, sparking a diplomatic crisis between the neighbors.

The move was broadly interpreted as retaliation from Morocco for Spain's decision to allow a pro-independence leader from the disputed Western Sahara region to receive medical treatment at a Spanish hospital. Sánchez defused the crisis when he shifted his country's long-standing position on Western Sahara, and met with Moroccan King Mohammed VI the following year.

In this most recent crisis, which dwarfs the one five years prior, the first response by Spanish officials was to say that Moroccan counterparts were working alongside them to stop the rush. Whatever those efforts were, they proved ineffective as migrants kept steadily coming from all over Morocco to the border, with thousands breaching the frontier on Thursday and Friday.

An Associated Press freelance photographer witnessed Moroccan gendarmes standing aside with their arms crossed on Thursday as thousands of migrants passed near them into Ceuta. Eventually, Moroccan security forces stepped up, employing tear gas, batons and water cannons to disperse large groups of migrants reaching the border on Friday.

Morocco's ambassador to Spain expressed hope that those who crossed from Morocco into the Spanish territory would return, saying the situation had unfolded against Rabat's wishes.

Yet Morocco has never officially recognized Ceuta and its sister Spanish enclave, Melilla, as European territories even though they have been under Spanish control for centuries.

CLAIM: The surge in migrants is payback for Sánchez' position on Iran and Gaza.

The mass crossing has given birth to conspiracy theories online, including one take that sees Trump and Israel encouraging a friendly Morocco to let this happen as payback for Spain's position on immigration and its harsh criticism of their joint attack on Iran and the Israeli military campaign in Gaza.

THE FACTS: Trump has for months raged against Spain and recently threatened to end trade with the European country, and the Israeli leader has accused Spain of waging a diplomatic war against his country. But there is no evidence to support claims of a U.S. or Israeli hand in the Ceuta crisis.

CLAIM: Those who crossed will end up in mainland Europe.

THE FACTS: The Ceuta crossings have led to political leaders in Italy, France and other EU nations to take measures that appear aimed at stopping people from entering their countries. Premier Giorgia Meloni threatened to suspend Italy's open-border Schengen agreement with Spain even though Italy doesn't share a border with Spain and receives many more migrants crossing the Mediterranean than Spain. French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said France would also strengthen border checks with Spain.

While the influx is clearly unmanageable for the city of Ceuta, the impact of the crossing will mostly be

limited to the Spanish territory and have limited impact on mainland Spain.

By Friday evening, the majority of migrants had already returned to Morocco voluntarily, Spanish authorities said. Those who remain in Ceuta will either be sent back eventually or face a long period of legal limbo and possibly spells in government-run centers.

EU migration commissioner Magnus Brunner posted on X that “not a single person has crossed to mainland EU” and that the Schengen Borders Code already includes special border checks for people traveling from Ceuta and Melilla.

Jurors in Lindsay Clancy’s trial visit the home where she killed her children

BY LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

DUXBURY, Mass. (AP) — Jurors walked through the Massachusetts home where Lindsay Clancy strangled her three children, a rare visit Friday that let them see firsthand the place where an outwardly ordinary family life unraveled into tragedy.

After being driven past two businesses relevant to the narrative of the January 2023 killings, jurors were escorted in groups of six to view the inside of the house, including the basement where the children died. During the roughly 40-minute visit, the jury also saw the yard where Clancy was found after jumping from a second-story window.

Journalists were kept away by a police barricade, but court officers could be seen through the trees escorting jurors to and from the bus along the site of the Clancy family’s former driveway. The home now has a new owner.

Clancy herself did not attend the visit to the home, which she hasn’t seen since the day of the killings. Her lawyers argue she was in the grip of postpartum psychosis, a rare mental illness linked to the stress, sleep deprivation and hormonal changes that follow childbirth.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

Jurors in U.S. criminal cases often are expressly told not to visit the scene of the events in question. There are a number of rationales for not doing so — among other things, the site may have changed in the interim between an alleged crime and a trial.

But courts sometimes allow juries to make a supervised excursion as a group, for reasons that can include assessing distances or features that aren’t thought to come across fully in photos.

Such excursions have happened in a number of high-profile cases, including the 2023 murder trial of South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh, the 2022 sentencing trial of Parkland, Florida, school shooter Nikolas Cruz, the 2015 Massachusetts murder trial of former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez and the 1995 murder trial of O.J. Simpson.

Jurors in Clancy’s trial retraced the route her then-husband, Patrick Clancy, took when she asked him to pick up takeout food and medicine for daughter Cora on the night of the killings. He returned to find the children dead and his then-wife badly injured and bleeding in the yard.

The panel was driven past the restaurant — about 5.5 miles (9 kilometers) from the family’s former home in Duxbury, a town south of Boston — and the pharmacy, about a mile (1.6 km) from the house.

Prosecutors say the errands were a ruse to get her husband out of the house. They say Lindsay Clancy, a former labor and delivery nurse, acted intentionally and is criminally responsible for the deaths of children Cora, 5; Dawson, 3; and Callan, 8 months.

Her lawyers don’t dispute that she killed the children, but they say she had bipolar disorder and her condition worsened while she was on antidepressants prescribed after the birth of her third child. She believed a voice was telling her to “kill the children so you can kill yourself,” according to her lawyers.

Lindsay Clancy remains paralyzed from the waist down after using multiple methods to try to end her

life that night.

If convicted of murder, she faces life in prison without parole. If found not guilty due to a lack of criminal responsibility, she would be committed to a state mental health facility.

A high-stakes test for Trump's Gaza ceasefire board as Hamas disarmament looms

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Carrying out this week's agreement for Gaza on the disarmament of the Palestinian group Hamas, Israel's withdrawal and the transition to a civilian body to run the war-ravaged region will be a major test for the international body established by U.S. President Donald Trump to oversee the ceasefire in Gaza.

The agreement announced by Trump late Thursday could pave the way for ending the latest Israel-Hamas war that broke out on Oct. 7, 2023, and which has seen continued violence despite a ceasefire last October. Few places in the Palestinian territory of over 2 million people have been left unscathed, and the United Nations, World Bank and European Union estimate that reconstruction will cost \$70 billion.

Hamas officials said the group has agreed to the disarmament agreement. Israel has not commented.

The Board of Peace will have a major role in overseeing the deal's implementation.

Here's what the group is and what it is expected to do:

What is the Board of Peace

The Board of Peace was first mentioned in September when the White House released Trump's plan to end the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan called on Hamas to surrender its weapons and destroy its vast network of tunnels. It also envisions Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza, the arrival of a new technocratic Palestinian government, deployment of an international security force and the rebuilding of the battered Palestinian enclave after more than two years of war.

More than two dozen nations signed on as the board's founding members, including Israel and other regional heavyweights, as well as countries from outside the Middle East such as Indonesia, Paraguay and Vietnam.

Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom are among more than a dozen countries that have not joined the board but took part in a February meeting as observers.

Israelis are suspicious of the involvement of Qatar and Turkey, which have longstanding relations with Hamas. Earlier this year, Palestinians objected because their representatives weren't invited to the board, even as it weighs the future of a territory that is home to some 2 million of them.

A \$1 billion contribution secures permanent membership on the board instead of a three-year appointment, which has no contribution requirement.

During the first meeting of the board in February in Washington, members pledged \$7 billion in aid for Gaza — just a fraction of the \$70 billion that international bodies say is needed to rebuild the territory. The board also announced plans for international troops and police, and for reconstruction. But no timeline was given.

How the board is involved in the new deal

The agreement was reached after months of "very difficult negotiations," Nickolay Mladenov, the director-general of the Board of Peace in Gaza, said in comments posted on X. "There were several points when I did not believe we would make it," he added.

Mladenov, a former Bulgarian defense and foreign minister who served as the U.N. envoy to Iraq before being appointed as the U.N. Mideast peace envoy from 2015-2020, added, "Implementation and verification have to be real" and "withdrawal must move in lockstep with decommissioning."

The National Committee for The Administration of Gaza, a Palestinian technocratic body that operates under the supervision of the Board of Peace, is tasked with administering Gaza in the interim period after Hamas gives up control.

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That includes setting up a new police force to replace the one previously run by Hamas and implementing the disarmament process - the details of which are not yet clear.

The NCAS said in a statement Friday that it is ready to assume responsibility for governing Gaza and restoring public services and the rule of law.

Ambitious Plans

In November, the Trump administration's blueprint to secure and govern Gaza won strong approval at the United Nations.

Israel and the U.S. say Hamas' disarmament is key to progress on the other fronts. Arab and Muslim members of the Board of Peace have accused Israel of undermining the ceasefire with its daily strikes and want the U.S. to rein in its close ally. They have called on Hamas to disarm but say Israel's withdrawal is just as important.

Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad, who is a member of the group's negotiating team, told Qatar's Al Jazeera TV on Friday that the agreement is a "full package" of which Hamas' disarmament is a part.

"Hamas and Palestinian factions are making concessions for the sake of our Palestinian people in Gaza," Hamad said. He added that Hamas will not take any step unless they are sure that Israel will implement the deal from its side.

Israel defines demilitarization as extending from heavy weapons like rocket-propelled grenades all the way down to roughly 60,000 rifles that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says would have to be given up.

Trump — along with son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff — has laid out ambitious plans for rebuilding Gaza with international investment.

In Davos last year, Kushner suggested reconstruction could be complete in a matter of three years, even though U.N. forecasts suggest that clearing rubble and demining alone could take much longer.

Kushner's slides showed a reconstructed Gaza with a coastal tourism strip, industrial zones and data centers. He conceded that rebuilding would begin only in demilitarized areas and that security would be essential to attract investment.

A stabilization force

The ceasefire deal also calls for a temporary International Stabilization Force made up of soldiers from Arab and Muslim-majority countries. Its mandate is not spelled out in detail, but would include securing aid deliveries, preventing weapons smuggling and vetting and training a Palestinian police force.

Maj. Gen. Jasper Jeffers, who is leading the effort, said in February the plans call for 12,000 police and 20,000 soldiers for Gaza.

Indonesia, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo and Albania have pledged to send troops for the force, while Egypt and Jordan have committed to train police.

Troops will initially be deployed to Rafah, a heavily damaged and largely depopulated city under full Israeli control, where the U.S. administration hopes to first focus reconstruction efforts.

The biggest blow to the planned force came about a week after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, when Indonesia put its commitment of 8,000 troops on indefinite hold. Some 1,000 were to have been sent in April, followed by the remainder in June.

The latest Israel-Hamas war broke out on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants stormed southern Israel killing over 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed more than 73,000 Palestinians, including hundreds who perished after a ceasefire went into effect Oct. 10, Gaza's Health Ministry says. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government and is staffed by medical professionals, does not distinguish between civilians and militants in its toll but says women and children make up around half of all deaths.

Trump hails a 'unique' Cabinet meeting at Camp David as he seizes on Spain's migration crisis

By SEUNG MIN KIM, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and JACQUELYN MARTIN Associated Press

CAMP DAVID, Md. (AP) — President Donald Trump took Friday's Cabinet meeting on the road to Camp David, using the historic rustic backdrop of the presidential retreat to boast of his administration's achievements while seizing on a migrant crisis in Spain to make his case for why voters should keep the Republican Party in power.

The Cabinet meeting, the 13th such gathering of Trump's second term, came just three months before the November midterm elections that could serve as a check on his power if Democrats take control of one or both chambers of Congress. His warnings about Spain echoed language he used ahead of the 2018 midterms, when he warned of caravans of migrants headed to the southern U.S. border.

"You know, I saw Spain yesterday, and I watched the catastrophe that took place. It looks like an invasion of a country by hundreds of thousands of people," Trump said. "And that same thing is going to happen to us if the Republicans don't get elected. Except worse, much bigger."

Some 60,000 migrants crossed from Morocco into Spain's tiny Ceuta territory over the past 24 hours. Roughly half of them have already made their way back voluntarily, according to the Spanish government, but at least 57 have died on the journey.

Separately, he deflected blame for a series of cyberattacks that targeted 30 water systems in Minnesota on the state's "grossly incompetent" Democratic leadership. Officials have not publicly identified who was behind the attacks, though the FBI, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and other agencies warned in an advisory last week that Iranian hackers have been targeting water and wastewater systems and the operational controls of other critical infrastructure sectors.

"They blame it on Iran," Trump said, without offering evidence. "I don't think so. I think I blame it on Minnesota because they're grossly incompetent."

The president regularly convenes his Cabinet throughout his terms as a setting to promote his administration's policies while fielding questions on the news of the day, but what made Friday's unusual was that it was at Camp David, the government-owned retreat nestled in Maryland's Catocin Mountains where Trump held one Cabinet meeting during his first term.

Trump began the meeting by noting it was "something very unique." The White House called it the first-ever televised Cabinet meeting from the presidential retreat.

"It's Camp David, and this room is a very, very special room," Trump said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth were among the Cabinet officials who spoke before Trump took questions from journalists. The public portion of the meeting ended after about an hour.

Trump fields questions on Iran, Hamas deal and Blanche confirmation

In the lengthy question-and-answer session, Trump commented on the latest developments regarding the war in Iran and a deal he announced Thursday that would lead to the disarmament of the Palestinian group Hamas. He also lamented that a \$1.8 billion anti-weaponization fund to compensate his allies was "dead" and appeared to back off a pledge he made earlier this month to grant Ukraine a license to manufacture Patriot air defense systems.

"I don't think this would ever happen, but, you know, there's people that, you give that technology, they can someday turn on you," Trump added. "You look at war, that's happened a couple of times over the years, right? So we have to be very careful."

On the Hamas agreement, Trump acknowledged that the agreement that would also lead to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza will have "ups and downs." Still, he called it a "great breakthrough" that has been helped along by the U.S. and Israel's war with Iran, which has served as Hamas' prime backer.

Trump also remarked on the anti-weaponization fund that is holding up the confirmation of Todd Blanche as his attorney general, saying the pot of money is "dead" and that "I wish it weren't, to be honest with you."

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The president continued to defend the people who could potentially benefit from the fund, mainly those who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, to stop the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's victory over him.

"Their families have been ruined," Trump said. Those people "wanted to go to a rally or an event and ended up spending the rest of their lives in horror."

Trump said Blanche has been a "pawn in this whole thing." Blanche, who was present, did not speak in the public portion of the Cabinet meeting.

Camp David has been a retreat for presidents since FDR.

The camp's primary purpose is to provide presidents a place to rest, relax and recharge. It was established in 1942 during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency and has been used by every president since.

Roosevelt had enjoyed relaxing aboard a presidential yacht, but the military and the U.S. Secret Service began to worry about his safety on open water during World War II. As a result, Roosevelt asked the National Park Service to find sites within 100 miles (160 kilometers) of the White House that he could use for rest.

He chose what is now known as Camp David. He gave it the original name of Shangri-La, from James Hilton's novel "Lost Horizon." President Dwight Eisenhower renamed it Camp David, after his grandson and father.

Trump spent more weekends at the retreat in his first term but has visited sparingly in his second, most recently in June for Father's Day.

In 2019, during his first term, Trump announced on social media that he had canceled a secret weekend meeting at Camp David with Taliban and Afghanistan leaders — scheduled for just days before the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks — after a bombing in the capital of Kabul killed a dozen people, including a U.S. soldier.

Presidents throughout history have turned to Camp David when they needed security and privacy for sensitive diplomatic talks with foreign leaders. Jimmy Carter took the leaders of Egypt and Israel there in 1978 for talks that produced the Camp David Accords, a peace agreement between the two countries.

The 180-acre (73-hectare) retreat, which is run by the Navy and guarded by Marines, has a cabin named Aspen that's reserved for the president, plus about a dozen other cabins for guests. A main lodge has conference rooms, a dining room and an office for the president.

MLB trade deadline: Tarik Skubal is the big prize, but buyers have other options, too

By DAVID BRANDT AP Baseball Writer

A trio of powerful pitching arms — including two-time Cy Young Award winner Tarik Skubal, Freddy Peralta and Mason Miller — highlight the intriguing candidates who could switch teams as Major League Baseball's trade deadline approaches.

The deadline is Monday at 6 p.m. EDT.

Skubal — a 29-year-old left-hander who will be a free agent this offseason — is in the midst of another strong year for the Detroit Tigers after winning back-to-back Cy Youngs in 2024 and 2025. The left-hander missed about five weeks earlier in the season because of surgery to remove loose bodies in his elbow, but he has bounced back quickly.

He's been excellent over his last five starts, with a 2.03 ERA and 41 strikeouts in 31 innings.

One thing complicating Skubal's availability is the Tigers have played better of late and they're hanging around the American League wild-card race, just 4 1/2 games back for the final playoff spot going into Friday's games — albeit with five teams ahead of them. But if a juicy offer is presented, it'll be hard to say no.

Detroit's uncertain playoff fate is a common problem for teams as the deadline approaches.

There is a handful of obvious buyers at the deadline like the Yankees, Rays, Brewers, Braves and Dodgers. There is also a small group of obvious sellers like the Rockies, Giants, Angels, Mets, Athletics and Royals.

But that leaves nearly 20 other teams who are in the middle and could be buyers, sellers or a combina-

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tion of both.

Here's a look at some of the top trade candidates as Monday's deadline approaches.

The starting pitchers

— Peralta, Mets: The right-hander has had a disappointing season, which is a common refrain for the Mets, but his strikeout numbers are still good. He was excellent for the Brewers over the previous three seasons. If he can fix his command issues, he could help a contender.

— Joe Ryan, Twins: Another powerful arm, the right-hander has been an All-Star in each of the past two seasons. It's unclear if the Twins are buyers or sellers in a crowded American League race — they added reliever A.J. Minter from the Mets on Friday, so continued buying seems more likely. If the Twins decide to move Ryan, though, it could bring back a solid return.

— Foster Griffin, Nationals: The veteran lefty has been outstanding in his return to MLB after spending three seasons in Japan with a 12-2 record and 2.76 ERA. The Nationals are still in the mix for a playoff spot in the National League, but they will likely still be willing to listen to offers.

— Reid Detmers, Angels: The left-hander has been a bright spot in a mostly dismal season for the Angels with 145 strikeouts in 125 innings. Los Angeles will want a sizable return for the 27-year-old, who is still under team control for the next two seasons.

— Clay Holmes, Mets: The 33-year-old made a successful transition from reliever to starter in 2025 and was having another solid season before he fractured his right fibula on a comeback liner in May. The right-hander is in the midst of a minor-league rehab assignment and nearing his return.

— Robbie Ray, Giants: The two-time All-Star and 2021 Cy Young winner doesn't have the wipeout, strikeout stuff that he possessed early in his career, but he's been very good for San Francisco this season with a 10-6 record and 3.08 ERA.

The relief pitchers

— Miller, Padres: The game's most dominant closer, Miller has a jaw-dropping 85 strikeouts over 45 2/3 innings, 28 saves and an 0.79 ERA. Relievers usually don't command huge returns during trade deadline deals, but Miller is an exception, particularly because the 6-foot-5 righty is still under team control for three more years.

— Adrián Morejón, Padres: The left-handed Cuban has been a key part of the Padres' bullpen for the past three seasons. He's a free agent after the season which means he could be on the move.

— Luke Weaver, Mets: The veteran righty has found his niche after making the full-time move to the bullpen in 2024. He's not necessarily a closer, but he does have some experience in the role. He was very good for the Yankees in the playoffs during their run to the World Series in 2024.

— Jeff Hoffman, Blue Jays: The right-hander lost his job as the team's closer earlier this season, but his strikeout numbers are still excellent with 72 punchouts over 46 innings.

Position players

— Luis Arraez, Giants, 2B: The three-time batting champion and four-time All-Star is in the midst of one of his best seasons and has flashed improved defense at second base. He is an elite contact hitter who rarely strikes out and is a free agent after the season.

— Ryan Jeffers, Twins, C: Jeffers recently returned from the injured list and has a career-high .928 OPS this season. His ability to provide pop from the right side will make him a popular trade target, though the Twins might not be willing to make a deal since they're still in the playoff hunt.

— Daulton Varsho, Blue Jays, OF: The 30-year-old slugger is one of the game's better athletes and won a Gold Glove in 2024. He's an upcoming free agent, but he has playoff experience and can still provide great defense with some left-handed power.

— CJ Abrams, Nationals, SS: Washington will want a big return for the All-Star shortstop, who is in the midst of his best year and is under team control for the next two seasons. But if a contender is willing to offer a big package of prospects, the ascending Nationals will likely listen.

— Zach Neto, Angels, SS: Neto has been one of the Angels' best players over the last three seasons. He's a solid defender and provides a good amount of right-handed power, though his strikeout numbers

have been high this season.

— Luis García Jr., Nationals, 1B: The left-handed slugger has quietly put together his best season with 23 homers and 76 RBIs. He doesn't walk much, but has one more year of team control and is still just 26 years old.

Immigration crackdown threatens Haitian caregivers and the seniors who rely on them

By MATT SEDENSKY and GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Who will be there each morning with Solange French's eggs at breakfast, and who will be ready with soup or fish at lunch? When the 91-year-old needs help in the shower, who will rush to her side, and when it's time for a doctor's appointment, who will take her? Who will do the laundry or buy the groceries or clean the house?

Until now, the answer has been a doting home health aide from Haiti named Martha Nelson. But with the Supreme Court sanctioning a White House immigration crackdown, Nelson's permission to stay in the country appears likely to be yanked within days, leaving French worried.

"She's with me all the time," says French. "Life would be impossible."

As the Trump administration unwinds years of protections for hundreds of thousands of people from Haiti, twin populations of vulnerable people find themselves in the crosshairs: caregivers in jobs to which those immigrants have flocked, and the older adults and disabled people who rely on them.

Around the U.S., care homes and home health agencies are bracing for the loss of workers with TPS, which stands for temporary protected status, even as they continue to reel from other immigration policy changes that have squeezed an already short-staffed industry.

For businesses, it is a predicament that could hurt bottom lines and tax remaining workers. For their clients, it threatens to upend every aspect of their lives.

"They have become like family," says Katy Sanchez, who lives in a group home for disabled people in Nanuet, New York, run by The Arc Rockland, which stands to lose 19 caregivers with TPS, on top of 20 others it lost in immigration changes last year. "If they are forced to leave, it would be devastating."

Supreme Court ruling paved the way

The Supreme Court sided with the Trump administration last month, saying it could end temporary protected status. The ruling specifically pertained to 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians, but immigration advocates and legal observers say it could be applied to a broader group of 1.3 million people from 17 countries.

The justices' move has been met with weeks of confusion. Immigration officials subsequently granted several extensions to TPS holders that carried through Monday. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services issued guidance Wednesday affirming TPS was over, though some attorneys and labor unions have argued work authorization remains intact until lower courts lift an injunction.

The Department of Homeland Security made light of the TPS expiration, referencing lyrics from a 1998 hit song: "It's closing time, which means you don't have to go home, but you can't stay here."

Fearful they might be in breach of the law, some employers have begun terminating TPS holders, to the dismay of their clients.

Anna Fischbein grew accustomed to visits to her home in Sunny Isles, Florida, from the same kindly Haitian health aide every week for the past 10 years. But Jewish Community Services of South Florida terminated the aide along with 17 others when their TPS lapsed.

"I lost not only a lady working for me," the 87-year-old Holocaust survivor says, her voice broken by sobs. "I lost a friend."

Facilities scramble to come up with replacement workers

Around 1 in 5 workers in the U.S. is foreign born, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but immigrants are overrepresented in caregiving roles. Among home health aides, for example, one-third are

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immigrants, according to PHI, a nonprofit focused on the caregiving workforce.

In lives upended by age or disability, a cherished caregiver is a lifeline. For someone living in their own home, they may be the last line of defense before institutionalization. For those in a care facility, they may be their strongest advocate, who notices subtle changes before anyone else, ensures small comforts like dollar-store word search books, and brings a sense of humanity to the humiliation of being incontinent.

"They are the first people they see when they wake up in the morning and they're the last ones that they see before they go to bed," says Simone Smith, vice president of human resources at Cabrini of Westchester, a nursing home in Dobbs Ferry, New York, where eight Haitians with TPS await word of their fate.

Like similar facilities around the country, Cabrini is prepared to scramble to secure replacement staffers from nursing agencies and plead with remaining workers to take overtime shifts. Cabrini's workforce is about 75% immigrant. Among those with TPS, Smith senses "almost a hopelessness."

A Haitian who loses TPS faces an unbearable choice: Attempt to stay in the U.S. and find underground work, tiptoeing through life with fear that authorities will eventually find and remove them. Or return to a country so plagued by gang violence and poverty that many believe it would amount to a death sentence.

"I'm afraid all the time," says a Haitian man working at a Brooklyn nursing home who asked for anonymity because of concerns for the safety of himself and his family. "I pay tax to the country. I'm a good person. ... All I want is to work. When you work, you are a person."

Families wonder what they will do

Outside a simple brick house in Queens, Nelson stands guard as French steps through her door. On the porch, you might mistake the two for old friends, their bond as much an illustration of what is at risk as it is of how much things have changed.

The women made the same journey, from Port-au-Prince to New York, four decades apart.

French was drawn here in 1970 by the potential opportunities she saw. She built businesses as a hairdresser and seamstress. Her late husband made his way as an electrician and contractor. They bought their home. Their children got good educations. They believed they achieved the American dream.

Nelson came after an earthquake flattened Haiti in 2010. At home, she ran a butcher shop, but after arriving in New York she found work in caregiving roles. She began working for French about three years ago after French fell and broke her hip. Nelson, now 69, has been with her nearly every weekday since.

Both women felt welcomed by the U.S. when they arrived. But French is saddened to see how views on immigrants have evolved.

"America is a good country," French says, "but it has changed."

Nelson brings leftovers, tends to French's chores and is a source of companionship. They watch the news together and talk in Haitian Creole about their families. On weekends, Nelson calls to make sure French has gotten up from bed and nags her to eat.

"On my days off, I think about her," Nelson says.

French says Nelson has become like family. Nelson agrees, saying she sees French as if she's her own mother, a show of affection and the source of the pair's one ongoing dispute.

"You're not like my daughter," French protests. "You're like my sister."

For now, the two continue their routine, knowing each shift may be Nelson's last. She keeps a copy of her work authorization zipped in a black cloth pouch that she carries everywhere, in case she is stopped. Each Sunday, she sinks to her knees in church, praying for an answer. She worries for herself and for French.

"It makes me feel depressed," Nelson says. "It could be difficult for her without me."

Israelis worry about weakening connection with younger Jewish Americans

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israelis across political and religious lines are worried about the weakening connection with younger Jewish Americans — who, according to a recent AP-NORC poll, tend to consider support for Israel less crucial to their Jewish identity than older adults.

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"It's extremely important to us," said Itai Nixon, who leads the diaspora department for Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. "We're the state of the Jewish people, not just Israelis."

Lesley Sachs, who has protested the current Israeli government and chairs the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism, also considers a close relationship with diaspora Jews a "strategic asset" for both Israel and Jews worldwide.

So she's greatly concerned about diaspora Jews losing the sense that Israel can be a homeland for them, especially as rising antisemitism targets them regardless of political and religious affiliations.

"That was always really, really important that everybody around the world, especially after the Holocaust, knows that there is a country that will always take them," Sachs said in her synagogue in Tel Aviv. "This is already a few generations after, and this is less prominent in their DNA. And I think that this is really a failure on the part of both Israel and world Jewry, that we have not managed to keep that prominent."

Since 2000, Taglit-Birthright Israel has brought a million Jewish young adults from the United States and elsewhere for a free 10-day "discovery" tour of Israel. The organization's CEO says it's more necessary than ever to show what their connection to Israel could be like beyond controversial politics.

"That really increases the importance of my job to expose people to what they give up on," said Gidi Mark. "What we give them is a mirror."

The staunch Israel-US relationship shows some cracks

Israel and the United States have long been staunch allies. U.S. President Donald Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met in Washington earlier this week to discuss the war against Iran they launched together five months ago.

"The United States is perceived as the best friend of Israel in the entire world, and that's still the case," said Tamar Hermann, who directs the Israel Democracy Institute's Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research in Jerusalem.

Divisions over the ceasefire in the Iran war, however, have weakened Jewish Israelis' belief that Trump prioritizes Israel's security — from 64% in March to 26% in June — according to the center.

Amid diplomatic tensions, the role of Jewish Americans who historically lobbied for political, military and financial support for Israel gains new prominence, Israelis said. And that deepens the concern that many young progressive Americans, including Jews, now see supporting Israel in any way as irreconcilable with their worldview.

The decline in support for Israel has become particularly stark since the Oct. 7, 2023, attack when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians in southern Israel, and abducted 251 others. Israel's ensuing war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 73,000 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The ministry, which was part of the recently dissolved Hamas-run government, maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and international organizations. It does not distinguish between civilians and militants but says women and children make up around half of all fatalities.

That in turn ignited protests across the United States, especially on college campuses.

"Holocaust, refugees, the importance of Israel in times of need abroad, and the fact that Israel is a small country fighting for its existence ... that's history they read in a book," Sachs said of younger Jewish Americans. "They weren't emotionally part of it in any way or any form. And so they look at their values and the things that they believe in. And they don't see it in Israel."

Jewish Americans have a complicated relationship with Israel

Only about 4 in 10 religious Jewish adults under 45 in the United States say that supporting Israel is "extremely" or "very" important for their Jewish identity, while about half of older religious Jewish adults do, according to the AP-NORC poll.

The survey of 1,022 Jewish adults — including people who identify as Jewish by religion and religiously unaffiliated people who identify as Jewish through culture, ethnicity or family background — also found that only about half of religious adults say Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza are justified. The number drops to 2 in 10 among Jewish adults without a religious affiliation.

At the same time, about 6 in 10 Jewish adults say prejudice against Jewish people is an "extremely" or

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"very" serious problem in the United States today.

To many Israelis, safety threats against Jews make it all the more tragic — and dangerous — that young Jewish Americans do not see the state of Israel as a refuge or even an ally.

"Antisemitism sadly helps us to explain why a Jewish homeland is not a bad idea," said Asaf Zamir, a deputy mayor of Tel Aviv who served as consul general in New York. "Opposing the government is fine, but you cannot understand your history as a Jew without understanding the part of Israel in it."

Israel reaches out to secular and liberal Jews in North America

In order to promote deeper attachment between Israel and diaspora Jews, both the government and religious organizations are reinforcing exchange programs. For decades, young Israelis have traveled to Jewish summer camps across North America, and non-Israeli Jews get free trips to Israel.

"To see Israel and meet Israelis is the gold standard," Itai Nixon said of programs bringing teens to the country.

Taglit-Birthright's Gidi Mark said that since 2023, with multiple wars, tour participants are fewer — and their reactions to touring Israel have also changed. He recalled one participant shouting "Israel! Israel!" outside his hotel just because he felt safe to express himself.

"These people don't feel free to experience who they are in the places that they are coming from," Mark said.

These and other initiatives are focusing on secular Jews and adherents to Reform Judaism. The largest branch of the religion in North America, it emphasizes progressive values such as social justice.

Orthodox Jews abroad tend to have stronger ties to Israel — and Orthodox Jews in Israel tend to see themselves as closer to diaspora Jews than do secular Israelis, Hermann said.

Within the Israeli Reform movement, which is a small part of Judaism in the country, there's a push to send more young Israelis to the United States, including as camp counselors.

"That kind of action is important, that one-on-one connection saying, 'You know what, we believe in the same things you do. Really, we have the same ideology in general, and we feel we need to change Israel together,'" Sachs said. "We need to be partners in making Israel the country that we all need."

Alma Edry, 18, is spending two months as a counselor at a progressive Jewish summer camp in Ontario with teens and young adults from Canada and the United States. She said her biggest surprise has been "that Israel is such a big deal for people outside the country."

"Most of their friends are anti-Israel," she said of the campers. "This is their chance to celebrate their connection."

Social media companies sued over deaths of four teens as pressure, lawsuits over child safety mount

By KAITLYN HUAMANI and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

The families of four teenagers who died by suicide are suing Meta, TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube over what they describe as "years of escalating harms" from using their platforms that eventually resulted in their deaths.

The lawsuit, filed Thursday in the Superior Court of Delaware, is the latest in a flurry of suits filed against the social media giants that alleges their platforms are addictive and dangerous.

The complaint was filed on behalf of four families from Texas, North Carolina, Minnesota and Tennessee whose children died over a 14-month period starting in July 2024 through September 2025.

The Social Media Victims Law Center is bringing the suit on behalf of the families, and its founding attorney, Matthew Bergman, said it's "particularly salient" that the children in this case died "long after" similar suits had been filed.

"These platforms continue to kill kids, despite the platitudes of their executives," Bergman said in an interview. "This is a clear and present danger to the health and safety of children, not just in the United States but around the world."

The four teens who died by suicide each experienced harms including social media addiction, severe

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sleep deprivation, depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation after years of using the social platforms, the complaint states. Livi Castro died at age 13, Riv Kelleher at 14, Nathaniel Chambers at age 17 and Dawson Holden at 18.

The complaint alleges the social media companies knew they were causing harm to young users.

A spokesperson for Google, which owns YouTube, said in a statement that "providing young people with a safer, healthier experience has always been core to our work. In collaboration with mental health and parenting experts, we've built services and policies to provide young people with age-appropriate experiences, and parents with robust controls. We send our deepest sympathies to the families and are reviewing the claims in this lawsuit."

Representatives for Meta, TikTok and Snap did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Sacha Haworth, executive director of The Tech Oversight Project, said in a statement that parents, activists and whistleblowers have come forward and met with lawmakers for years and "while Congress has dragged its feet, more children have died."

Federal legislation of social media has moved at a glacial pace. The Senate passed the Kids Online Safety Act — which had the support of parents' groups and children's advocacy organizations — exactly two years before this lawsuit was filed. The House of Representatives never voted on that version of the legislation, and the House and Senate are currently disagreeing on key provisions they think should be included.

"Livi, Nathaniel, Dawson, and Riv's stories are proof that Big Tech companies continue to lie about the safety of their products, choosing instead to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into false advertising, deceptive paid partnerships with trusted education programs and political lobbying," Haworth's statement continued.

Meta, YouTube, TikTok and Snap are facing numerous state and federal lawsuits over harms to minors. Meta is on trial in Tennessee this week for a lawsuit brought by the state attorney general claiming that the company deliberately designed its platforms, notably Instagram, to make them addictive to young people, and did not warn them of its dangers. And in August, Meta is heading to trial in federal court in Oakland, California to face four of dozens of states that sued the company in 2023. That lawsuit says the company is contributing to the youth mental health crisis by designing addictive features and violated federal law by collecting data on kids under 13 without parental consent.

Not all lawsuits are successful, and many are settled out of court. Last week, a Florida teenager dropped his case against Meta that was set to go to trial in state court in Los Angeles, without receiving any payment from the company. Meta had argued that the teen only used his Instagram and Facebook for just minutes a day, on average, and created most accounts only after hiring a lawyer in his case.

Still, the mounting court cases can get expensive, even for a company like Meta Platforms. Earlier this week Meta said it had \$2.4 billion in legal expenses in the second quarter, which contributed to a relatively unusual 14% profit decline.

Hamas says it will disarm if Israel halts strikes and withdraws from Gaza, but obstacles remain

By SAMY MAGDY, SAM MEDNICK, JONATHAN J. COOPER and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press
CAIRO (AP) — Hamas said Friday that it will begin disarming as part of a deal announced by U.S. President Donald Trump that also requires Israel to end its strikes and withdraw from Gaza. It marks a potential breakthrough in ending the war, but implementation faces major challenges.

Hamas also said that laying down its heavy weapons, which would come later in the process, was contingent on the creation of a Palestinian state, something Israel's current government adamantly rejects.

Israel has not officially commented on the deal, which is part of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire announced last October. That agreement called for Hamas to disarm and hand over power to an independent Palestinian administration. Israel was to withdraw, and an International Stabilization Force was to deploy.

But progress stalled, with Israel saying everything hinged on Hamas disarming, and Hamas accusing Israel of violating the agreement by continuing to carry out regular strikes on Gaza.

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Expectations of implementation are low

Disarming would represent a sea change for Hamas, whose founding charter calls for armed resistance against Israel, and which sees its arsenal, including rockets, anti-tank missiles and explosives, as lying at the heart of its identity.

Israel, meanwhile, appears unlikely to pull back significant forces or make other concessions ahead of its October elections. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a tough reelection battle, with opponents accusing him of failing to prevent the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war.

Neil Quilliam, a Middle East expert at London's Chatham House think tank, said expectations are low that Hamas will actually disarm or that Israel will withdraw from Gaza.

"I think that Netanyahu's silence speaks volumes," Quilliam said. "This is a massive decision that he has to make."

"But with the prospect of the elections hanging over his head, with several Cabinet ministers and opposition leaders already counseling not to go ahead with the deal, I think he understands that doing so would likely scupper his chances of reelection," he added.

The deal would be implemented in stages

In announcing the latest deal on social media, Trump said it would be carried out in "carefully structured phases."

"As disarmament is completed, Israeli forces will withdraw, and the International Stabilization Force will work with a new Palestinian police force to take responsibility for Gaza being safe for its residents and its neighbors," he wrote.

A copy of the agreement obtained and verified by The Associated Press said that all weapons held by the Hamas-run police will be transferred to the U.S.-backed Palestinian technocratic committee, known as the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, upon its arrival in the enclave. It's not clear when that would happen since it is contingent on other steps.

A process to decommission and store heavy weapons, military production sites and tunnels will begin after the arrival of the Palestinian committee and the deployment of international forces. The process will be linked to a phased Israeli withdrawal, according to the agreement.

Israel currently controls around 60% of Gaza, areas that have been mostly destroyed and depopulated. Most of the territory's 2 million Palestinians are in the other part, where hundreds of thousands live in squalid tent camps and destroyed neighborhoods.

In a statement Thursday, an Israeli official said that there will be no Israeli withdrawal before the militant group is disarmed and the strip demilitarized. The statement was made on condition of anonymity in line with government protocol.

A person with knowledge of the situation said that Israel is fully involved, but it's not a signatory to the deal, which is between Hamas and several countries helping to negotiate and guarantee the ceasefire. The person spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss the agreement. The deal's guarantors are the U.S., Turkey, Egypt and Qatar.

It could take years for Hamas to disarm

On Thursday, U.S. and Board of Peace officials, describing the deal to reporters on condition of anonymity under guidelines set by the White House, gave an extremely optimistic assessment. The board was established by Trump to oversee the ceasefire in Gaza.

While Gaza's police force is expected to hand over its arms, that doesn't include the vast majority of Hamas militants, and heavy weaponry is not included in that part of the agreement, according to the officials.

Instead, the surrender of heavy weapons and the decommissioning of Hamas tunnels and other infrastructure are to come later in a process that could take between 200 and 350 days, a Board of Peace official said. That timeline did not appear in the agreement obtained by AP.

A Hamas official and a regional official involved in the process said that Hamas and other groups agreed to "collect and store" arms inside Gaza under the supervision of the Palestinian technocratic committee and that weapons won't be handed to Israel or non-Palestinian parties.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media,

said this would be a gradual process linked to an Israeli withdrawal.

Israel has been deeply skeptical

A U.S. official said Israel, which has been deeply skeptical about Hamas' willingness to give up its guns or relinquish control of Gaza, had been consulted at every step of the negotiation. The official said Israel was not being asked to do anything more than what it had committed to as part of the October agreement.

A member of the Palestinian technocratic committee told the AP on Friday that it was eager to enter Gaza but was concerned Israel will pose challenges. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. The person said they didn't expect to enter Gaza for at least two months.

The committee welcomed the progress Friday, but said the work to restore public institutions and services and rebuild the territory would be immense.

The war in Gaza began after a 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 73,000 Palestinians, including those killed since the ceasefire, Gaza's Health Ministry said. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government and is staffed by medical professionals, does not distinguish between civilians and militants in its toll but says women and children make up around half of all deaths.

Senior FIFA executive says staff were deceived over Infantino's World Cup sell-off plan

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — FIFA's chief operating officer said its staff were deceived by their president Gianni Infantino's World Cup sell-off plan, and suggested on Friday the project must not go ahead.

Zurich-based executive Kevin Lamour all but invited Infantino to fire him in a statement to The Associated Press that defended his colleagues amid intense fallout from the FIFA boss' plan to sell stakes in future World Cup profits to private equity funds.

Lamour wrote that staff were "deceived" by Infantino's lack of openness in planning the sale over recent months and "deserve better than contempt and intimidation."

"It is the project of one person," Lamour, a long-time colleague of Infantino at both FIFA and European soccer body UEFA, wrote. "Not only must this project not go ahead ... but the time has now come for football political leaders to ask themselves the right questions and make the right decisions."

Lamour's statement came hours after Infantino's senior adviser Carlos Cordeiro, a former Goldman Sachs banker who represented the soccer body on the White House Task Force for the World Cup, resigned and urged other senior FIFA staff to speak out.

"I cannot stand by while FIFA considers selling a stake in the World Cup," Cordeiro wrote in a statement. The former U.S. Soccer Federation president said he was not included in talks about the plan backed by a New York investment fund created by Joshua Kushner.

"Let me be clear. I had no involvement in this proposal, and I oppose it unequivocally," Cordeiro said. He called the \$20 billion commercial subsidiary "a bad deal for football."

Lamour did not resign the post he has held since 2024 but said he had a duty to his colleagues.

"And if that means I lose my job then so be it" the French official said. "I will understand and respect that decision. At least I'll sleep well tonight."

Lamour came to soccer from politics two decades ago as an aide to then-UEFA president Michel Platini. He often had an international role in soccer politics liaising with FIFA member federations in Africa and Asia who are weighing their own decisions about Infantino's offers of \$20 million each by a Sept. 19 deadline.

Cordeiro often joined Infantino on working visits to meet U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in recent years.

"Football has been central to my life, and after more than 35 years in banking I understand both the value of this asset and the consequences of giving part of it away," he said. "That is why this proposal should be rejected."

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Infantino has proposed spinning off FIFA's commercial businesses — including World Cups and Club World Cups for men and women — into a \$20 billion subsidiary with 20% owned by private investors. The "anchor investor," described by FIFA, is Kushner, the younger brother of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

"FIFA already has access to extraordinary financial resources. The organization sits on billions of dollars in reserves and no debt," Cordeiro said. He noted FIFA's revenue of \$15 billion over the last four years tied to the men's World Cup just ended.

"Against that backdrop, selling a permanent stake in football's most valuable asset to raise \$4.2 billion makes little sense. It is mortgaging football's future without any compelling justification," he said.

Cordeiro said he shared five years of working for FIFA alongside Infantino with "dedicated, principled people who care deeply about the game."

"I hope they, too, will speak up," he wrote, "because decisions of this magnitude should be made in the interests of football, not those who stand to profit from it."

Infantino has been president of FIFA for more than 10 years and seemed sure to be re-elected unopposed next March. FIFA has set a Nov. 18 deadline for challengers to come forward.

Lamour was part of Infantino's inner circle that campaigned for him to become the surprise winner of that FIFA presidential election in February 2016.

Major oil companies reap massive profits as US and Iran fighting drives energy prices higher

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — American oil and gas giants raked in massive spring profits while fighting between Iran and the U.S. impeded petroleum shipments and consumers around the world paid more for fuel and confronted shortages.

The conflict, now in its sixth month, halted most shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway that previously served as a delivery route for a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas. With global supplies constrained, prices for Brent crude, the international standard, soared from about \$70 to above \$100 a barrel for much of March, April and May, and at one point reached \$126.

The money that oil companies accrued between the beginning of April and the end of June could receive extra scrutiny this year. Gasoline, diesel and jet fuel prices climbed sharply during that period, increasing costs for drivers and airline passengers. Supplies ran low in some countries, leading to sporadic fuel rationing in Australia and government office closures in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Exxon Mobil on Friday reported that its second quarter profits doubled to \$14.53 billion, boosted by record diesel production. The oil giant, based in Spring, Texas, brought in \$116.02 billion in revenue, up 42%.

Chevron, based in Houston, nearly quadrupled its profits to \$12.07 billion and revenue jumped 56% to \$70.06 billion.

Six of Europe's largest oil companies posted combined first-quarter profits of \$22 billion, more than 40% higher than last year.

"There are constituencies around the world who are having a very good crisis, and the oil producers are one of them," said Patrick Gale, fossil fuels lead at Global Witness, a nonprofit organization that investigates environmental issues. "When you compare that to the hundreds of millions of people who are struggling with rolling blackouts, with electricity curbs, rationing, waiting in line for food queues, or the disruption to fertilizers and the potential impact that that has on food prices, we don't think that it's a justifiable price for the rest of the world to be paying."

Lawmakers propose taxing major oil producers for war windfalls

Energy companies such as Exxon and Chevron do not set the price of American oil, which ricocheted from \$68 to \$115 a barrel during the quarter. It's driven by supply and demand, and what traders, refiners and other buyers are willing to pay.

Nevertheless, Democrats in Congress introduced bills in March to tax major oil producers for profits they show from 2026 onward and have the tax proceeds redistributed to consumers.

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"It's fair to put a windfall profits tax on inordinate windfall profits rather than cut off children's food programs," Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, a Rhode Island Democrat who introduced the Senate version of the legislation.

Whitehouse's measure and a companion bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna of California would amend the U.S. tax code to impose a per-barrel tax on companies that produced or imported at least 300,000 barrels of oil per day in 2025.

"We cracked \$4 again per gallon last weekend in gas stations that I drove by, and that's a big expense, particularly for families that get their income from driving around from job to job in the work van or the work truck," Whitehouse said.

The average price for a gallon of regular gasoline in the U.S., which was below \$3 before the U.S. and Israel launched attacks on Iran, reached \$4.11 Friday, about \$1 more than last year at this time.

The UK and other European countries implemented temporary windfall profits taxes on fossil fuel companies in 2022. The UK extended that to 2030, according to Tax Foundation Europe.

"Penalizing the businesses who stood by those countries and provided that product going forward is very short-sighted," Exxon CEO Darren Woods said in a call with investors Friday. "We canceled investments that we had planned for Europe based on the last time they passed a windfall profits tax."

Refineries rake in cash while consumers pay more for fuel

Outfits such as Exxon and Chevron, which also own refineries, are in the best position to profit from the current market conditions, said Tom Seng, assistant professor of energy finance at Texas Christian University.

Refineries turn oil into gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and home heating oil. Higher prices for those products meant Chevron's quarterly refinery profit was six times as big in 2026, despite processing less crude and selling less products.

"The return on refining, on a percentage basis, has skyrocketed," Seng said. "Oil right now is priced what it is priced because of the Iran war. But in the meantime, the refineries are making money hand over fist."

The global refining market is under-supplied, and with countries such as Russia and China no longer exporting, companies like Exxon and Chevron have to pick it up, said Rob Thummel, senior portfolio manager at Tortoise Capital. "The world is going to be short jet fuel, diesel and gasoline, so we'll probably continue to see higher profits there."

Globally, not all refineries have been able to get the supply of crude oil they need to meet demand since the conflict began, said Timothy Fitzgerald, a University of Tennessee professor of business economics who studies the petroleum industry.

As a result, refineries that have ample oil to work with, including those in the U.S., are turning high profits, particularly when they make jet fuel and diesel, which is priced about 41% higher in the U.S. than before the Strait of Hormuz was blocked.

"If you're a company that owns a bunch of refinery capacity, things look pretty good," Fitzgerald said.

American refineries are running at near-full capacity and poised to benefit because some refineries in the Middle East and Russia were damaged. And Asia can't get the amount of Middle East oil needed for refining.

"Ultimately, users of the energy services pay," Fitzgerald said. "Consumers, people like you and me buying retail motor gasoline or diesel fuel or airplane tickets. But it also means that almost everything else we buy has an embedded energy content to it ... and this is where you start to worry about it driving increases in costs."

Not all oil and gas companies benefit in the same way

In the present geopolitical environment, some companies are winners while others are losers, Fitzgerald said.

"If you're a company like a U.S. (oil) producer, even a U.S.-based international company like an Exxon or Chevron who's got lots of production outside the Gulf, things are good. You're selling your product at a higher price," he said.

But companies in the Middle East that are not able to benefit from higher prices because they are struggling to get their liquefied natural gas out of the Persian Gulf or have a lot of damaged oil fields or processing facilities have a very different take on recent events, Fitzgerald added.

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"Your ability to sell anything and the volume that you may be getting out is so curtailed that your revenues are way down and you're incurring higher transportation costs and security costs," he said.

Exxon and Chevron weren't as profitable in the first quarter due to the way oil is traded; the first real opportunity they had to take advantage of higher prices oil was in April. Companies that had a lot of oil stored in floating tankers and available for spot-market trading, including some European ones, were able to benefit from March's higher oil prices, Seng said.

A discarded SpaceX rocket is on a high-speed collision course with the moon

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A drifting SpaceX rocket is on a collision course with the moon after launching a pair of lunar landers more than a year ago.

The rocket's upper stage will unintentionally slam into the moon on Wednesday, carving out a crater and sending up a plume of dust and rubble that scientists — and skygazers — are eager to observe.

Space tracking expert Bill Gray predicts an impact of 5,400 mph (8,700 kph) — seven times the speed of sound — near Einstein Crater on the moon's sunlit western limb. With the action unfolding in the wee hours, the eastern portions of the U.S. and Canada, and much of South America should have the best views.

While scientists are not too concerned about this particular piece of space junk, it highlights the growing threat as more and more items cram into orbit.

"Things are getting crowded up there," said Gray, who plans to view the aftermath from New Brunswick, Canada.

It was never SpaceX's intent to hit the moon. But space experts said the crash could have been avoided if the upper stage had been nudged into orbit around the sun.

It will be the second dead rocket known to crash into the moon accidentally. A Chinese rocket segment dug out a pair of craters on the lunar far side in 2022.

Lucky for astronomers, the upcoming smashup will occur on the moon's near side, packing the equivalent energy of three tons of TNT.

The impact flash, lasting less than a second, will probably be too dim to see, according to experts. But the stream of ejected material could stretch for several miles (kilometers) into space and remain visible to telescopes for tens of minutes.

"The gravity on the moon is low and there is no wind to blow the dust away," said Los Alamos National Laboratory's Benjamin Fernando, who's encouraging observations by professionals and amateurs alike.

"Part of the reason for our interest in this event is to figure out how much of a hazard debris impacts pose to future astronauts," he added in an email.

Fernando anticipates an impact crater nearly 90 feet across and 16 feet deep (27 meters across and 5 meters deep), too small to see from Earth but visible to spacecraft.

NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter and South Korea's Danuri lunar orbiter will gather before-and-after shots of the crash scene. Danuri will stray within a mile or two (a few kilometers) of the SpaceX rocket just two minutes before impact, according to Fernando and his team.

The abandoned rocket segment — measuring some 40 feet (12 meters) and weighing around 10,000 pounds (4,500 kilograms) — hoisted two private lunar landers on Jan. 15, 2025.

One of them — Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost — became the first private spacecraft to pull off a fully successful lunar touchdown. The other, Japan-based ispace's lander, wrecked.

With meteoroids and other natural objects offering little if any warning before walloping the moon, scientists said there's much to learn by observing well-tracked strikes by human-made objects like the one coming up. NASA hurled rocket sections and lunar modules into the moon during the Apollo era for seismic measurements. Decades later, in 2009, NASA intentionally crashed its LCROSS spacecraft and upper stage in search of ice near the lunar south pole.

With the moon as the new travel hot spot, scientists said it's crucial to improve debris monitoring and

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traffic control before packs of robots and astronauts arrive.

The United States and China are racing to land astronauts on the moon in the next few years. Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin are vying to provide the lander for NASA's yet-to-be-named moonwalkers of Artemis IV, who will succeed the 12 Apollo astronauts who strolled the lunar surface.

"This impact will not be a problem," retired astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell said in an email. "But in a future where there are long-term bases on the moon, similar impacts would be an issue and we need not to leave rocket stages in chaotic orbits of this kind."

Today in History: August 1, America gets its MTV

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Aug. 1, the 213th day of 2026. There are 152 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On August 1, 1981, MTV began its American broadcast; the first music video aired on the new cable TV network was "Video Killed the Radio Star," by The Buggles.

Also on this date:

In 1876, Colorado was admitted as the 38th state in the Union, less than a month after the US Centennial (earning it the nickname "the Centennial State").

In 1907, a week-long boys' camping event began on Brownsea Island in southern England, organized by Robert Baden-Powell; the event is now marked as the beginning of the Scout Movement.

In 1936, Adolf Hitler presided over the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics in Berlin .

In 1944, an uprising broke out in Warsaw, Poland, against Nazi occupation; the revolt lasted two months before collapsing.

In 1957, the United States and Canada announced they had agreed to create the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

In 1966, Charles Joseph Whitman, 25, went on an armed rampage at the University of Texas in Austin that killed 14 people, most of whom were shot by Whitman while he was perched in the clock tower of the main campus building.

In 1971, The Concert for Bangladesh, an all-star benefit organized by George Harrison of The Beatles and sitar player Ravi Shankar, was held at Madison Square Garden in New York.

In 2001, Pro Bowl tackle Korey Stringer, 27, died of heat stroke, a day after collapsing at the Minnesota Vikings' training camp on the hottest day of the year.

In 2004, the Ycuá Bolaños supermarket fire in Asuncion, Paraguay killed more than 400 people.

In 2007, the eight-lane Interstate 35W bridge, a major Minneapolis artery, collapsed into the Mississippi River during the evening rush hour, killing 13 people.

In 2008, 11 international climbers were killed on the world's second-tallest mountain, K2, after an ice avalanche swept away some and stranded others. Dozens of deaths have been recorded since 1939 on the mountain, which some regard as more challenging to mountaineers than the world's tallest peak, Mount Everest.

In 2014, a medical examiner ruled that a New York City police officer's chokehold caused the death of Eric Garner, whose videotaped arrest and final pleas of "I can't breathe!" had sparked outrage. Officer Daniel Pantaleo, who restrained Garner, was fired in 2019 but never charged with a crime.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Giancarlo Giannini is 84. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Roy Williams is 76. Blues musician Robert Cray is 73. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum is 70. Rock singer Joe Elliott (Def Leppard) is 67. Rapper Chuck D (Public Enemy) is 66. Actor John Carroll Lynch is 63. Rock singer Adam Duritz (Counting Crows) is 62. Film director Sam Mendes is 61. Actor Tempestt Bledsoe is 53. Football Hall of Famer Edgerrin James is 48. Actor Jason Momoa is 47.