

Groton Daily Independent

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Community Calendar

Wednesday, Aug. 19

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Senior Menu: Chicken alfredo, tossed salad, broccoli, fruit, breadstick.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Nominations Committee Meeting, 6 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 20

Senior Menu: BBQ pulled pork with Mac n cheese, cucumber salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA "Do Day", 1:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 21

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

Soccer at Belle Fourche (Girls at 5 p.m., boys at 7 p.m. MT)

Football at Miller/Highmore-Harrold, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 22

Soccer at St. Thomas More/Rapid City Christian (girls at 11 a.m., boys at 1 p.m. MT)

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

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Sunday, Aug. 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monday, Aug. 24

Senior Menu: Ground beef stroganoff with noodles, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

Senior Citizens meet at the Community Center, with potluck at noon

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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.

Record Drone Strike

Ukraine launched roughly 800 drones against Russia yesterday, potentially its second-biggest drone strike since 2025. The attack is the latest example of Ukraine's monthslong strategy to pressure Moscow into peace negotiations by attacking deep within Russian territory.

The strike came days after another large-scale Ukrainian attack killed at least seven people and wounded dozens more. Many recent strikes have targeted Wildberries, Moscow's main e-commerce site, destroying up to \$10B in goods and property (why target "Russia's Amazon"?). Meanwhile, a Russian missile strike yesterday reportedly killed at least 10 people in Ukraine's Kharkiv region and wounded 17 others. See updates [here](#).

Russia reiterated last week that it would not accept a ceasefire on the current front lines, and has also rejected Turkey's request for a moratorium on strikes against ships in the Black Sea.

ABC Challenges FCC

Disney and ABC sued the Federal Communications Commission yesterday, seeking to block an early review of broadcast licenses for ABC-owned stations. They say the review is retaliation for programming critical of President Donald Trump and violates the First Amendment.

Broadcast stations are generally licensed by the FCC for eight-year terms, with ABC's eight stations not due for renewal until between 2028 and 2031. In April, the FCC ordered them to submit renewal applications by May 28, the first time in over 50 years the agency has required stations to seek early renewal. The move followed Trump's criticism of ABC host Jimmy Kimmel, while FCC Chair Brendan Carr says the review concerns whether Disney's diversity policies violate federal law. (See a [timeline of major moments](#).) ABC is asking a federal court to halt the proceedings while its case is heard.

Why are traditional broadcast stations subject to government licensing while cable networks aren't? The distinction stems from a century-old principle that broadcast frequencies are a scarce public resource.

👉 **Humankind:** California woman gives \$1M in bonuses to the teachers in her local school district.

Fraternity Drug Ring

A 24-year-old accused of leading a fraternity-affiliated drug ring at Penn State surrendered to authorities yesterday. He is being held in jail without bail after failing to appear for an arraignment Monday.

Agostino Abbatiello is one of 14 people, including 13 current or former students, charged in connection with the alleged drug ring. Court documents released this week allege the operation was run out of off-campus fraternity houses from 2023 to 2024, with Delta Upsilon and Sigma Chi brothers and pledges accused of cutting, bagging, and distributing cocaine to the student body. Abbatiello and fellow former student Thomas Robinson, 23, allegedly sourced bulk cocaine from Philadelphia and New York (see [how cocaine gets to the US here](#)). Records show Robinson and his father, a Pittsburgh lawyer charged with concealing evidence, posted bail Monday.

In 2020, federal prosecutors charged several current and former UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, and Appalachian State University students in connection with a drug ring that generated an estimated \$1.5M in sales.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

ESPN cofounder Bill Rasmussen dies at age 93 from complications of Parkinson's disease.

Drummer Frank Beard of blues rock trio ZZ Top dies at age 77.

Madonna leads VMA nominations with 11 nods, followed by Taylor Swift with nine, and Ariana Grande and Sabrina Carpenter with seven each; award show airs Sept. 27 (More, w/full list)

National Symphony Orchestra to play 2026-27 season across six Washington, DC-area venues following Kennedy Center board's approval of renovation project pushed by President Donald Trump; season begins Sept. 26.

Science & Technology

OpenAI launches ChatGPT for Teens, with restrictions on explicit content and additional guardrails to deter emotional dependence.

Poll shows 55% of adults under 30 are now more concerned than excited about AI.

Instrumental music and listening to spoken stories can activate the same brain networks involved in imagination and meaning-making, new research shows.

Eavesdropping on dolphins reveals they may snoop on their prey and prefer different locations for hunting and socializing

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.7%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq -1.3%), driven by AI and chip stock sell-offs.

Google pays \$10M for defunct Spirit Airlines' internal business data, including 100 million emails, 500 million Microsoft Teams chats, and 7.5 billion passenger transaction records from 2008, to help train its AI models.

Costco to launch branded Medicare plans with nonprofit insurer SCAN Group, entering the more than \$600B Medicare insurance market.

Politics & World Affairs

Rep. Byron Donalds (R) and Republican-turned-Democrat David Jolly will face off in Florida's gubernatorial race in November; see live updates on all races in Alaska, Florida, and Wyoming.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung calls for more military independence from the US after President Donald Trump announced this week he will cut back on joint exercises to prioritize relations with North Korea.

President Donald Trump posts map with Strait of Hormuz labeled as a US territory after earlier suggesting the US could annex the area.

School Building Project costs exceeds \$31 million; but only \$23.5 million to paid by general obligation bond

The proposed Groton Area middle/high school addition and renovation project now carries an early conceptual price tag of approximately \$31.3 million, with district officials considering a combination of a general obligation bond and capital outlay certificates to finance the work.

The Groton Area School Board heard detailed presentations Tuesday night from its construction manager and financial adviser as it continues preparing for a possible November bond election. No decision on the amount of the bond could be made Tuesday because action on the financing proposal was not included on the agenda.

The board is expected to determine the proposed ballot question at its Sept. 14 meeting.

Dallis Preheim presented the first detailed conceptual construction budget, emphasizing that the \$31.3 million figure remains an early estimate because much of the project's final scope and design has yet to be determined.

"This is a very early, high-level budget," Preheim said.

The proposal includes new academic space, a commons addition, career and technical education space and extensive renovation work in portions of the existing school.

The construction plan has generally been organized around work on the east and northeast side of the building followed by work on the south side. Under the current concept, the two-story academic addition and commons would be completed together to gain construction efficiencies before crews move to the south side.

Renovation work would include portions of the existing shop, auxiliary gym, locker rooms, kitchen and band and vocal areas.

Preheim said the locker rooms and kitchen are currently budgeted as extensive renovations. The auxiliary gym work includes a new floor, bleachers and improvements near the stage. Money has also been included for audiovisual improvements and a new curtain at the stage.

One of the more substantial renovation items involves the band and vocal area, where the plan calls for filling existing riser areas and raising the roof to provide additional clear height.

Work in the existing shop area would include structural changes resulting from demolition of the 1934 portion of the school, along with roof replacement and other improvements.

Mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades are also included in the estimate.

Preheim said the estimate assumes normal, durable school finishes rather than either high-end finishes or bare-bones construction.

"We're not giving you the Taj Mahal, we're not going to give you a concrete box," Preheim said, describing the budget as based on typical school construction finishes.

More decorative and durable materials could be used in highly visible areas such as the commons, while classrooms would generally use more economical finishes.

The construction estimate also includes contingencies, insurance, general conditions and escalation. Other costs outside the construction contract include architectural and design expenses, testing, asbestos-related work and furniture, fixtures and equipment.

Preheim said furniture, fixtures and equipment could become an important part of future budget discussions because classroom furniture, televisions, artwork and similar items can require a substantial investment.

The current estimate includes a construction escalation factor. Preheim said the company commonly uses approximately 1.05 percent per quarter during early budgeting, although actual construction costs can change because of market conditions and material prices.

The preliminary construction schedule calls for approximately 27 months to complete the entire project, including all additions and renovation work.

The academic addition and commons are expected to become available before the entire project is finished.

Preheim said one of the challenges will be scheduling renovation work around students and staff.

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"Kids' safety at number one priority, staff safety," Preheim said.

Board members also discussed whether portions of the project could be separated into phases if the district decided not to complete everything at once.

It was mentioned that the public may want to know what individual portions of the project would cost.

"Maybe the only thing people want is phase one, potentially," one person said.

Preheim said those scenarios can now be developed because much of the initial estimating work has been completed. Costs could also be adjusted to show what would happen if one phase began in 2027 and another was delayed several years.

The discussion drew several questions from members of the public, including whether the district should have someone independently monitoring construction costs and workmanship.

The district selected Hausmann Construction after receiving approximately 10 applications and interviewing four firms, according to the discussion.

Preheim said Hausmann's construction management fee if the project moves forward would be 1.95 percent. The pre-bond cost to the district was described during the meeting as approximately \$5,000.

The company would also have an on-site construction superintendent during the project, with another representative making regular visits.

Questions were also raised about why the project had previously been discussed at approximately \$27 million and is now estimated at more than \$31 million.

Board members said the earlier figure came from a preliminary architectural estimate and was presented as a range. They said the new estimate is based on considerably more detailed work by the construction manager and subcontracting trades and should therefore provide a better picture of anticipated costs.

The proposed demolition of the 1934 school building generated some of the evening's most extensive public discussion.

Bob Swisher urged the district to consider preserving the building because of its historical and emotional significance to generations of Groton graduates.

"When you knock down a building like that, it's like when your kids come home and you've moved into a new house," Swisher said. "They're not home until they go back and see where they grew up at."

Board President Grant Rix said architects have discussed preserving elements and the character of the historic school even if the structure itself cannot economically be retained.

Board members said renovation of the 1934 building has been studied previously and the conclusion was that modern electrical, plumbing and other building requirements make renovation impractical.

Insurance is also becoming a concern.

Board Member Marty Weismantel said the district's insurance carrier has raised questions about the older building and cited another South Dakota school district that was forced to demolish an older portion of its school in order to maintain coverage for the connected facility.

"We've already had questions raised about it from the underwriters," Weismantel said. "And it's not going to get better."

Recent water problems in portions of the Groton school were also cited as an example of the continuing challenges presented by aging infrastructure.

Another member of the public asked whether the district should instead demolish the entire existing complex and construct a completely new school.

Board members said that option had previously been studied and was estimated at more than \$50 million for the building alone. Moving athletic facilities would add several million dollars more.

Board Member Heather Lerseth-Fliehs said community surveys conducted during the planning process did not show strong support for an entirely new school.

The current proposal would retain portions of the school considered structurally sound, including much of the 1969 construction, but subject them to substantial renovation.

Chad Locken questioned whether investing \$31 million in a combination of new and renovated facilities would leave the district facing another major replacement project in several decades, suggesting the com-

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munity may want to consider whether spending more now for an entirely new facility could make sense over the long term.

That question could continue to be discussed during upcoming public meetings.

"Nothing's a for-sure deal until you get the public to vote on it," Grant said.

The second major presentation Tuesday dealt with how a \$31 million project could be financed.

Tom Grimmond from Colliers Securities outlined one possible structure consisting of approximately \$23.5 million in general obligation bonds and \$7.5 million in capital outlay certificates.

The \$23.5 million bond amount was selected because it would result in an estimated levy of approximately 99 cents per \$1,000 of taxable valuation over 30 years.

For a property with \$100,000 in taxable valuation, the additional general obligation bond tax would be approximately \$99 per year, or \$8.25 per month.

Grimmond estimated the impact on agricultural property at approximately \$3 per acre for cropland and 81 cents per acre for grassland, based on average Brown County valuations used for the presentation. He stressed that individual taxpayers should use the taxable value appearing on their property tax statement to calculate their actual impact.

The remaining approximately \$7.5 million could be financed with capital outlay certificates over 20 years.

Initially, Grimmond calculated that amount as representing approximately 38.5 cents per \$1,000 of valuation. District officials clarified, however, that they are considering paying those certificates from within the district's existing capital outlay levy rather than adding another tax levy.

"The capital outlay certificate is going to be paid with existing, within the existing tax structure of the district's capital outlay budget," Superintendent Joe Schwan explained.

That would make the general obligation bond the portion creating the new tax increase.

The district has existing capital outlay debt from the elementary school project that is scheduled to be paid off in 2036. Grimmond said the district could structure the new certificates around that debt to reduce the initial impact on the capital outlay fund.

Lerseth-Fliehs asked administrators to further study the district's capital outlay budget before the September meeting to make certain dedicating \$7.5 million of new debt to the fund over 20 years would be sustainable.

Grimmond also reminded residents that a general obligation bond requires approval from district voters, while capital outlay certificates may be authorized by the school board.

A school general obligation bond requires a 60 percent supermajority for passage.

The ballot question must include both a maximum dollar amount and maximum term. Grimmond said those are "not to exceed" figures, meaning the district would not have to borrow the entire amount or use the full 30-year term if construction costs or interest rates allowed it to borrow less.

Interest rates are considerably higher than when the district refinanced previous debt in 2021. Grimmond said current rates could be around 4 to 4.25 percent for 20-year financing, compared with approximately 2.25 percent during the earlier refinancing.

Future refinancing could be possible if interest rates fall.

Grimmond said the construction market in South Dakota is currently somewhat softer than it had been, which could result in more bidders and competitive construction pricing.

The construction manager-at-risk approach could also allow the project to be divided into smaller bid packages, potentially giving local contractors a better opportunity to participate.

Public discussion repeatedly returned to whether residents have received enough information about the project.

Several residents said they only recently became aware of the scope of the proposal and encouraged the board to increase its efforts to reach taxpayers before November.

Swisher suggested delaying the proposal for a year to give the community additional time to understand the project and its tax implications.

"I suggest you put a one-year moratorium on this and think about what you're doing and get the people

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in behind you," Swisher said.

Others said the board has been discussing the condition of the school and the project for approximately a year and a half and has already conducted surveys, focus groups and a public school walkthrough.

Lerseth-Fliehs said separate focus groups were conducted with students, teachers and members of the public.

Board members also noted that meetings had been held in Columbia and Bristol without additional members of the public attending.

Board Member Samantha Weber said the district has repeatedly tried to make the information available.

"The public has chosen to be uninformed," one person said during the discussion.

Other speakers said busy family and work schedules can make it difficult for residents to attend school board meetings even when information is technically available.

Suggestions for improving communication included automated telephone calls announcing public meetings and placing information in additional locations online.

It was said many people may not be actively looking for information because they do not yet realize how far the project has progressed.

It was encouraged that those attending Tuesday's meeting to help spread information about upcoming meetings.

"We love public insight," Weber said.

Schwan said additional public meetings are expected before the November election and representatives of Hausmann Construction, Co-op Architecture and the district's financial adviser are expected to participate.

Those meetings would include more detailed explanations of the building plan, financing and estimated tax impact.

Grant said the district first needs a firm proposal to present.

"We've got to get good, solid budget numbers," Schwan said. "What's the ballot question going to be? What's the bond ask going to be? And what's the tax impact of that question?"

Board members emphasized that the project has not yet been approved and that Tuesday's meeting was intended to provide the information necessary for the board's next decision.

The board is scheduled to meet at 6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 14, when it expects to determine what, if anything, will be placed before voters in November.

Weismantel also told those attending that even if a larger general obligation bond were rejected, the district could potentially move ahead with the academic classroom portion of the project through capital outlay financing.

That academic addition is considered the district's highest priority because it would replace the classroom space in the 1934 portion of the school.

Schwan said addressing those educational spaces remains at the heart of the proposal.

"That's the pressing part," Weismantel said, "making sure students are taught and they're taught well."

Tax impact on a 30-year financing

\$23,500,000

Groton Area School District 6-6, South Dakota General Obligation Bond

Equalized/Taxable Property Value	Estimated tax payment based on current interest rates	
	Annual	Monthly
\$1,000	\$0.990	\$0.08
\$100,000	\$99.00	\$8.25
\$150,000	\$148.50	\$12.38
\$200,000	\$198.00	\$16.50
\$250,000	\$247.50	\$20.63
\$300,000	\$297.00	\$24.75
\$400,000	\$396.00	\$33.00
\$500,000	\$495.00	\$41.25
\$600,000	\$594.00	\$49.50
\$750,000	\$742.50	\$61.88

Tax impact on a 30-year financing

Quarter Section (crop soils) - 160 acres

	Annual (quarter)	Annual (acre)
\$479,716	\$474.92	\$2.968 / Acre

Tax impact on a 30-year financing

Quarter Section (grass soils) - 160 acres

	Annual (section)	Annual (acre)
\$131,464	\$130.15	81.3 Cents / Acre

Tax impact on a 30-year financing

*Information provided by Colliers Securities, Sioux Falls, SD

Girls soccer team shuts out Lennox

LENNOX — The Groton Area girls soccer team broke through early and never let up Tuesday, earning a 3-0 road victory over Lennox.

Groton Area took a 2-0 advantage into halftime before adding one more goal in the second half, while goalkeeper Tori Schuster and the Tigers' defense kept Lennox off the scoreboard.

Sydney Locke opened the scoring in the 12th minute, finishing a play set up by McKenna Tietz to give Groton Area the early 1-0 lead.

The Tigers doubled their advantage in the 30th minute when Emerlee Jones converted a penalty kick, sending Groton Area into the halftime break with a 2-0 cushion.

Coach Matt Baumgartner said getting an early goal made a difference after the Tigers had started well in each of their first few matches.

"A new week, and a great opportunity to take hold of our season," Baumgartner said. "We came out again very positive minded and fast moving for a thick grass field for the opening 10 minutes once again for the third time this season. The difference today was we got a goal in the opening stages and kept with it all game."

Groton Area continued to control the match after halftime and added an insurance goal in the 63rd minute when Avery Crank found the net to make it 3-0.

The Tigers also experimented with a different look defensively, something Baumgartner was pleased to see produce positive results.

"Today we played a different look throughout our back line and I'm happy I saw organization in those spots, and it's something we plan to build off," Baumgartner said.

Schuster finished the match with nine saves as Groton Area recorded the shutout.

Baumgartner was especially pleased with the Tigers' overall effort away from home.

"Proud of the way we showed up, performed on the road, and played together," he said.

The victory gives Groton Area some momentum heading into a busy weekend on the road. The Tigers will travel west to face Belle Fourche on Friday and St. Thomas More on Saturday.

"Excited for our road trip west to play Belle Fourche and St. Thomas More Friday and Saturday," Baumgartner said.

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Groton council discusses social media concerns, pool season, funding program, new hire

By Elizabeth Varin

Groton City Council members addressed concerns circulating on social media Tuesday evening, with officials emphasizing their commitment to safety and encouraging residents to bring questions directly to city leaders.

Councilman Brian Bahr spoke during the public comment section of the meeting about comments suggesting that he and Mayor Scott Hanlon did not care about safety at the city's baseball complex or had been critical of the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation. Bahr said those claims were not true.

"If you watch the whole video (of the Aug. 4 meeting), I do say I strictly believe in safety out there," he said. "I think I said that several times. And I do appreciate everything the foundation does. I wanted to clear the air."

Mayor Hanlon also addressed the social media discussion, encouraging residents to speak directly with council members or himself rather than relying on rumors and speculation posted online.

"If you have an issue, come in and talk to us," he said. "I'd love if you'd come in and visit with us. ... Because, guys, we are a community, and we work together, for the best of our community, for everything. Our community has a lot of aspects to it, but united we stand, so let's be united."

In other business Tuesday, the council received an update on operations at the city swimming pool, declined to participate in the Project Rural Practice Funding program and approved the hiring of a public works employee.

With the swimming season winding down for the year, pool co-managers Kami Lipp and Tricia Keith reported about the last couple of months at the pool.

The Back to School Pool-a-Bash took place Sunday, Aug. 16, and there were a lot of great comments about this year's event, Keith said. There have also been quite a few people from surrounding communities come to the Groton pool and express appreciation that the pool is still open for the season.

At the last lifeguard in-service event of the summer, the managers ask the lifeguard staff about the positive and negative things from the summer. Lifeguards appreciated that all the pool staff had positive attitudes and there was no drama, Lipp said. A negative mentioned was the amount of flies and mosquitoes in the pool building.

Keith said both she and Lipp let the guards know it's probably the last year the two will manage the pool, so guards expressed concerns about the transition in management. Some of the certification processes need to be started in January, so the two may have to meet with whoever may take over managing the pool earlier to get things figured out.

The council opted out of participating in the Project Rural Practice program, which provides qualified attorneys with an incentive payment if they agree to practice for five years in an eligible rural county or municipality.

Councilman Mike Shilhanek said that he sees the program being more useful in a rural setting, but not necessarily for Groton due to its proximity to Aberdeen. It doesn't seem to be the intent of the program, and the city would have to find funding to contribute to the stipend.

Shilhanek opted to "just be fiscally and financially responsible," he said. "It's challenging, but unfortunately I'll make the motion to not participate with the Project Rural Practice Funding Program."

If the city council voted to participate, the city would cover about 35% of a \$12,513.60 per year for Kaelyn Somsen, who graduated from the University of South Dakota's Knudson School of Law and recently took the bar exam to become a lawyer. Somsen plans to work with her mother Kari Bartling at Kolker Law Office.

The council voted against participating in the program.

In their final action of the evening, the council approved hiring Aaron Severson as public works laborer. Severson has previously been a seasonal summer public works laborer and park caretaker.

Severson was hired with a wage set at \$25 per hour.

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- The council agreed to move forward and contract with IT Outlet for remote IT management services. The initial quote presented to the council totaled \$299 per month, though the number may change when IT Outlet visits Groton to create a specific plan for the city.
- The council discussed dates for the first September meeting. Council members tentatively agreed to meet Thursday, Sept. 3.
- The council approved declaring the old seesaw from the Groton City Park as surplus and donating it to the James Valley Threshing Association.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Staffing costs drive fee increase for program meant to deter livestock theft

Lawmakers approve per-animal price hike for the first time in over a decade

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — South Dakota's Brand Board will raise its livestock ownership inspection fee for the first time since 2013, after a legislative committee approved the rule change Tuesday.

The committee, made up of three state senators and three state representatives, voted 5-1 in favor of the change. Sen. Taffy Howard, R-Rapid City, voted no.

The Brand Board is responsible for tracking livestock ownership in South Dakota counties west of the Missouri River, where cattle are more likely to roam across wide open spaces. Inspectors check to make sure that horses, cattle and mules sold or moved from those counties belong to the people who sell or move them.

Livestock sold at markets in western South Dakota are inspected for ownership when they arrive. Livestock sold privately also need inspections. At markets, the per-animal fees are withheld from the sale price and remitted to the Brand Board.

The new fee will be \$1.45 per head starting Oct. 1. Brand Board Executive Director Debbie Trapp told lawmakers they need the additional funding to pay for the ownership inspection program.

"This change is needed due to increasing personnel and operating expenses, and the brand board operates entirely on funds generated by the programs it administers," Trapp told lawmakers.

Over the past two years, the board had to rely on \$900,000 from its other programs to maintain the ownership inspection program, according to Brand Board Vice President Cory Bierle, "and we're still behind."

With a projected number of livestock inspected at 1.5 million, the fee is expected to generate an additional \$601,000 through the remainder of the current fiscal year and \$675,000 per fiscal year going forward. The state fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30.

Though the number of animals is decreasing, "the numbers that we still have are there, and they all still need to be inspected," Bierle said. "And we have to have the staff on hand inspect the ones that are present."

Livestock inspection fees largely pay for staffing and staff-related expenses. The state Bureau of Finance and Management increased its per-mile reimbursement for state employees from 67 cents to 70 cents a mile last year.

There are 12 full-time inspectors, four of whom are regional supervisors, as well as office staff and livestock investigators. All are considered state employees, who typically receive annual lawmaker-approved salary increases. The most recent increased state employee pay by 1.3%. The board also employs 129 part-time local brand inspectors.

The board gets most of its funding through brand renewal registrations, which are \$90 fees that livestock owners pay every five years to maintain the brands they use to identify animals as theirs. In recent years, the board's needed to dip into those funds to pay for the inspection program.

Opponent says ranchers can't afford fee hike

Rick Fox, a rancher from Hermosa, spoke in opposition to the change. He said it could be delayed a year to provide some financial relief for producers affected by the drought. The change would cost him about \$400, he said.

"Most ranchers don't have any kind of reserves. If their hay fund is low, then you've got to get it from

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a different fund or borrow the money," Fox said. "The Brand Board has a pool of money sitting there that they can borrow from."

Sen. Howard said that "now is not the time for a 45% increase," citing financial struggles of West River ranchers.

Brand Board leaders said the increase represents an amount the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, South Dakota Stockgrowers Association and South Dakota Cattlemen's Association could agree on.

The Brand Board still hasn't reached the legal cap on how much it can charge per head for the inspection fee. Earlier this year, lawmakers and the governor set the cap at \$1.65 per head.

"And based on projections," for ongoing costs to the program, Trapp said, "chances are, we will be back in a few years, probably to increase it again towards the cap."

Fox, the rancher who opposed the fee increase, told lawmakers that the ownership inspection program is "the best theft deterrent we have."

"If I was not to brand my cattle, I'd be a little nervous about if one gets gone somewhere," Fox said. "That's our return address."

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

South Dakota governor expands rural fire response amid drought

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden authorized state firefighting resources to support local governments in fire suppression.

Volunteer fire departments, often supported in part by local governments and fundraising, supply the first responders for blazes across most of South Dakota's land area.

"As a volunteer firefighter, I understand that every second counts when attacking a fire. And as a lifelong rancher, I recognize the difficulty feeding livestock during this ongoing drought," Rhoden said in a news release Tuesday. "Supplementing local resources with approved state assistance will improve response time, saving lives and property."

Rhoden's executive order, signed Tuesday, expands South Dakota Wildland Fire's resources to areas outside the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District. That region starts at the Wyoming-South Dakota border and runs east through parts of the Black Hills region, but does not include any area within any nearby city limits.

A majority of the state is in abnormally dry to severe drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Parts of southwestern South Dakota are under extreme drought conditions.

Wildfires in western parts of the state burned through thousands of acres this year — including the Qury Fire in Custer County which burned more than 9,000 acres. The False Bottom Fire near St. Onge burned 242 acres over the weekend. The Bear Butte Fire burned 400 acres the week before in Meade County, where the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally was taking place.

Rhoden also extended a July order that eases restrictions on hay haulers, allowing producers to move hay two hours before sunrise and two hours after sunset. That measure is meant to make sure livestock have enough food in spite of parched grasses and depleted feed supplies.

In May, Rhoden activated the Drought Task Force, a group of state agencies that evaluates potential drought impacts on agriculture, fire management and water supply.

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

Mice may drive Lyme disease more than deer

BY AMANDA WATFORD

For more than three decades, researchers have been tracking ticks, mice, oak trees and other wildlife in a New York forest to better understand what makes Lyme disease more likely to spread.

Their latest findings challenge some long-held assumptions — including the idea that deer are a major driver of Lyme disease risk.

Researchers at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, a nonprofit environmental research group, found that white-footed mice, not white-tailed deer, are closely linked to the number of young blacklegged ticks, the life stage most likely to infect people with Lyme disease.

A year with a large mouse population was followed by about a 40% increase in nymphal ticks the following year. But more mice don't necessarily mean a higher percentage of ticks carrying Lyme bacteria. Researchers initially expected the two to rise together because white-footed mice are especially good at transmitting the bacteria to ticks.

The researchers found that other animals, including skunks, squirrels and opossums, also feed larval ticks. Because those animals are less efficient at transmitting the bacteria, the mix of hosts can affect how many ticks become infected.

In other words, mouse populations can help predict how many ticks there will be, but not necessarily how many will carry Lyme bacteria.

The researchers also found that large crops of acorns can set off a chain reaction: More acorns mean more food for mice, which can mean more ticks two years later.

The findings come as tick-borne diseases are an increasing public health concern. Lyme disease is the most commonly reported tick-borne disease in the United States, with nearly half a million people diagnosed each year, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The study, published in the peer-reviewed Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal, draws on data collected since 1991 at a 2,000-acre research site in Dutchess County, New York.

The researchers also found that extreme heat and cold don't necessarily kill blacklegged ticks in the wild. The ticks appear able to shelter in soil and leaf litter during extreme temperatures. The team plans to continue monitoring how ticks, wildlife, trees and climate interact — and what those changes could mean for human health, according to a news release.

This new research comes as scientists and public health officials are also watching ticks expand into new parts of the country.

Lone star ticks, once primarily associated with the Southeast, are now established across much of the South, Midwest and Northeast. An adult female is distinguished by a white dot or "lone star" on her back. The ticks can transmit several diseases and are associated with alpha-gal syndrome, an allergy to a molecule found in red meat and other products from mammals.

As lone star tick populations have spread, more states are paying attention to alpha-gal syndrome, which experts believe is significantly underdiagnosed.

Massachusetts, Missouri and Oklahoma have expanded surveillance or public education efforts in recent years, and all three have joined the growing list of states that require alpha-gal syndrome to be reported to public health officials.

At least 14 states have added or will soon add alpha-gal syndrome to their lists of reportable diseases, according to the Alpha-gal Alliance Action Fund, a nonprofit advocacy group. In those states, health care providers and laboratories must report cases to state health departments.

Lawmakers in Ohio also are considering a similar measure that would make alpha-gal syndrome a reportable disease. The bill has passed the House and remains under consideration in the Senate. The legislature will adjourn in December.

Unlike Lyme disease, alpha-gal syndrome is not required to be reported nationwide, making it difficult to determine how common the condition is or how its prevalence is changing. The CDC estimates that as many as 450,000 people in the United States may have the disease.

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Stateline reporter Amanda Watford can be reached at awatford@stateline.org.

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

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

Trump's ballroom 'illegal' without congressional approval, high court told

BY ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Historic preservationists asked the U.S. Supreme Court Tuesday to deny President Donald Trump's appeal to continue construction on his \$400 million White House ballroom on the grounds of the demolished East Wing.

In response to Trump's application to the high court, the National Trust for Historic Preservation argued irreparable harm would result if construction continued, and that the project is "illegal" without authorization from Congress.

The Trust lawyers highlighted that the Trump administration has argued in court the ballroom will be "virtually impossible to deconstruct" because it will be constructed out of nuclear power plant-grade concrete.

"That is the essence of irreparable harm," the Trust argued in the 48-page filing.

"Petitioners make no secret of the fact that if the Court permits construction to continue, they will declare the case over," according to the Trust, a private nonprofit chartered by Congress in 1949 to encourage the protection of historic sites.

By contrast, the organization argued, the president and his administration would not be harmed if the Supreme Court left intact a lower court order halting above-ground construction.

Security complex

Court filings from the administration have publicly revealed that a security complex under the ballroom will descend five stories, and is well on its way to completion.

The concrete-and-steel "superstructure," reaching five stories deep and 70 feet high, already encompassing about 50,000 square feet, is 65% finished, according to the administration.

Plans include a 1,000-seat ballroom incorporated into a "highly integrated military complex" with drone-proof ceilings, bomb shelters, sniper nests, "military-grade venting," and "state-of-the-art hospital and medical facilities."

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit panel on Aug. 7 upheld, 2-1, the lower court order blocking all but underground construction while litigation continued.

The Trust further argued Tuesday that any above-ground construction happening is already illegal because Congress didn't authorize it, which means the administration would not likely win the case should the Supreme Court take it up.

"The question is simply who decides whether a ballroom can be built on federal property. Our constitutional system and federal law commits that choice to Congress," the Trust argued.

"If Petitioners believe there is a pressing need for a ballroom, nothing prevents them from asking Congress for one — today, tomorrow, or any time in the future," the brief reads. "But Petitioners' efforts to foil judicial review and arrogate Congress's exclusive powers should not be rewarded with a stay that allows Petitioners to complete a ballroom they lacked any authority to commence in the first place."

Democrats back preservationists

More than 30 Democratic U.S. senators, U.S. House Democratic leaders and committee ranking members from both chambers filed a brief Tuesday in support of the Trust.

Lawmakers who signed the brief are from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode

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Island, Virginia and Washington.

"The White House is, indisputably, federal property. It was built only after Congress authorized its construction and appropriated funds to cover that expense," the lawmakers wrote. "And for over two centuries since, the White House has been renovated and maintained pursuant to congressional authorizations and appropriations."

But Congress "neither authorized the demolition of the White House's East Wing and construction of a ballroom nor appropriated funds to carry out that project," they continued.

Trump maintains the ballroom project is being funded entirely by private donations.

U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer, who was Trump's personal attorney before joining the government, told the Supreme Court in the administration's application last week that \$200 million has already been spent or committed to the project.

Sauer argued that a statute governing the Department of the Interior allows private donations to cover projects on land administered by the National Park Service. The service, an agency within the Interior Department, manages the White House and President's Park.

The Democratic senators who signed onto the amicus brief were Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse and Jack Reed of Rhode Island, Dick Durbin of Illinois, Angela Alsobrooks and Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, John Hickenlooper of Colorado, Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Ed Markey of Massachusetts, Gary Peters of Michigan, Adam Schiff of California, Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Ron Wyden of Oregon.

The Democratic House leaders who joined the brief were Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, of New York, Minority Whip Katherine Clark of Massachusetts and Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar of California.

The other representatives who signed on were Robert Garcia, Jared Huffman, Ro Khanna, Mark Takano, Maxine Waters and Zoe Lofgren of California; Jim Hines of Connecticut; Rick Larsen and Adam Smith of Washington state; Jamie Raskin of Maryland; Bobby Scott of Virginia; Bennie Thompson of Mississippi; and Gregory Meeks and Joe Morelle of New York.

Republican AGs want ballroom

A brief led by the Republican Attorneys General Raúl Labrador of Idaho and Todd Rokita of Indiana argued the Supreme Court should side with Trump because the National Trust allegedly built its case on the "associational standing" of one of its board members who would not suffer harm.

"This case is about more than a ballroom. It is about whether a passerby's aesthetic objection to a government construction project furnishes not just the passerby standing, but an uninjured association standing to air its grievances in court," the attorneys general wrote.

The argument echoed Trump's many public statements that the case against his ballroom rests on the objection of one person who sometimes walks by the White House.

That risk is "of significant interest to States across the Nation," they wrote. "Amici States have extensive experience litigating against organizations that invoke associational standing as their ticket into court."

The attorneys general concluded: "The Court should not allow groups whose members claim offense to sue over virtually anything and everything."

A federal district judge in December had already denied the Trust's initial request for a temporary restraining order based on the lack of irreparable harm for an initial plaintiff.

The most recent lower court decision is based on an amended complaint filed by the Trust in early March.

In addition to Idaho and Indiana, the Republican attorneys general who signed the brief are from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Two members of the Arizona state legislature also signed it.

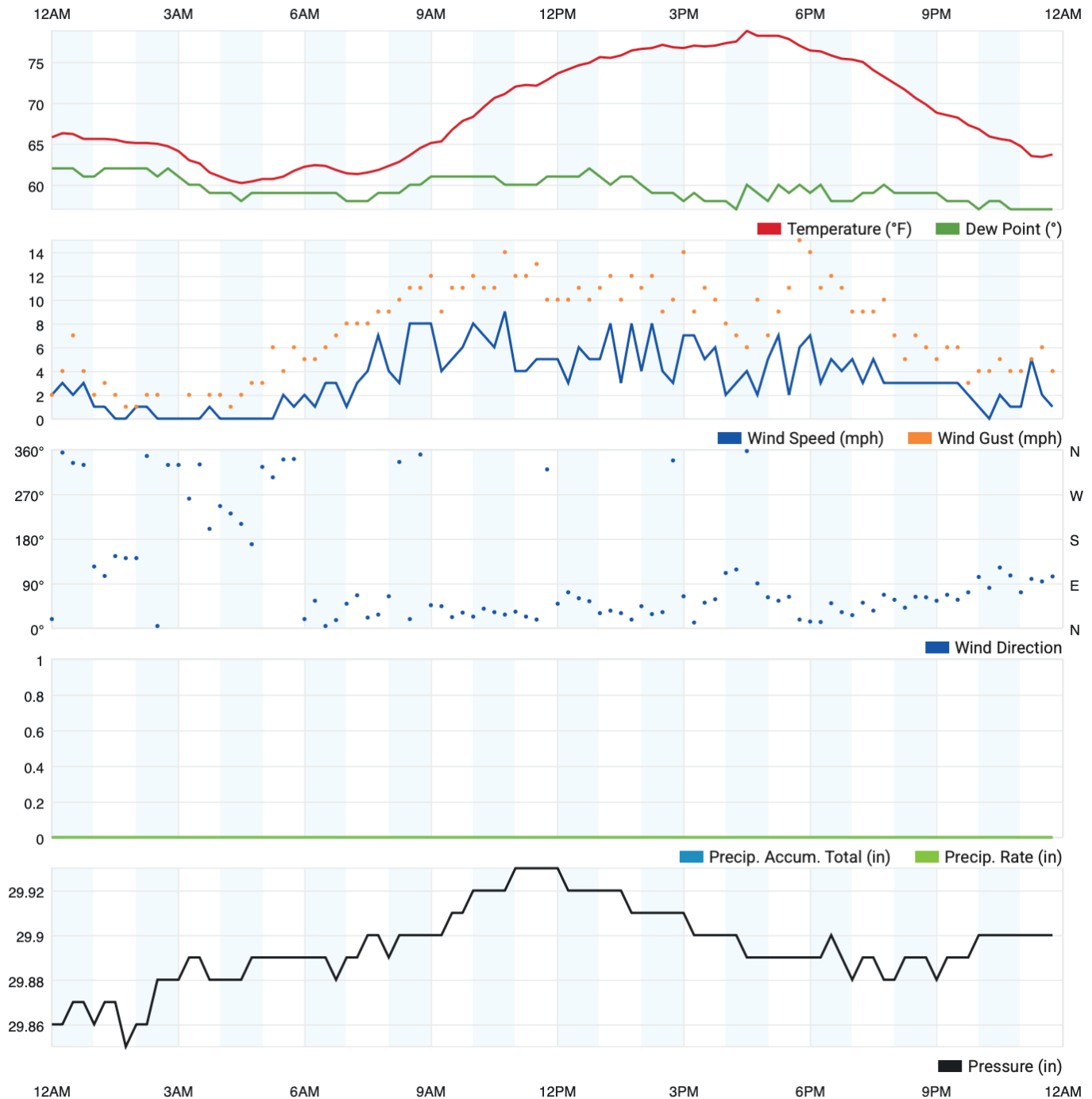
Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 18, 2026



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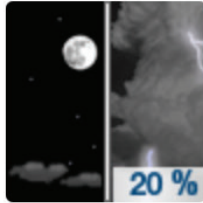
Today



High: 82 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 61 °F

Mostly Clear
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Thursday



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 56 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 86 °F

Sunny

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

**This evening and
overnight**
across portions of central
and northeastern SD

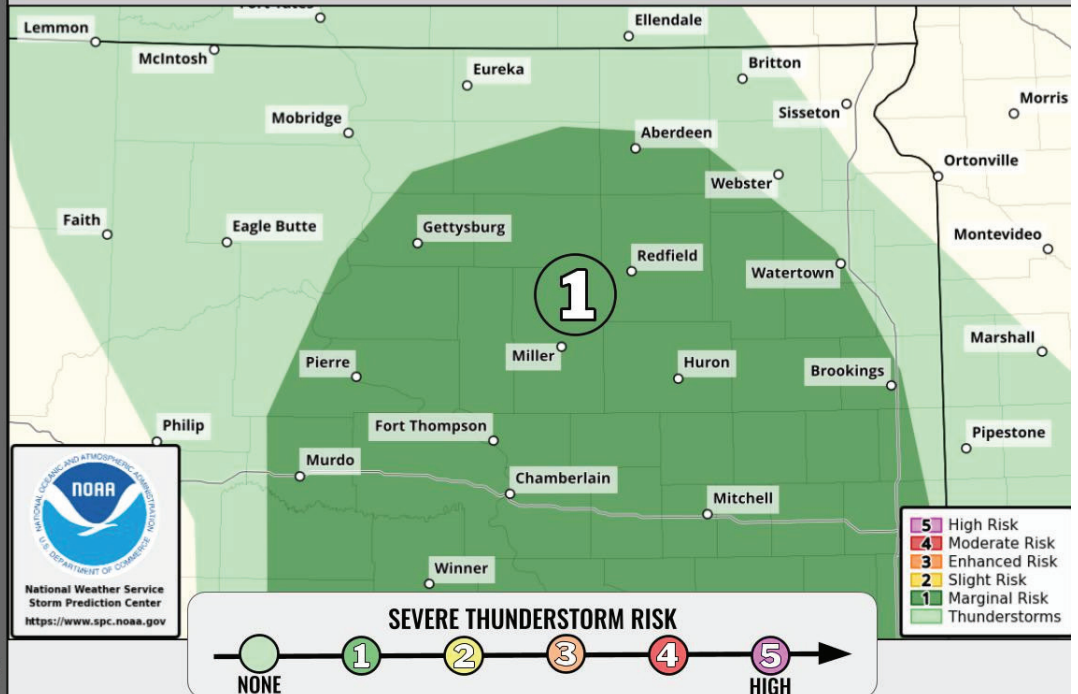
PRIMARY THREATS


DAMAGING
WIND
GUSTS
of 60 mph


LARGE
HAIL of 1"
in diameter

NWS
Aberdeen, SD

Marginal Risk For Severe Storms Today



Once again, there is a Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) for isolated severe storms across portions of central and northeast SD this evening and overnight. The main threats are wind gusts of 60 mph and 1 inch diameter hail.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 4:30 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 4:28 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 5:44 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1976

Record Low: 34 in 2004

Average High: 83

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.37

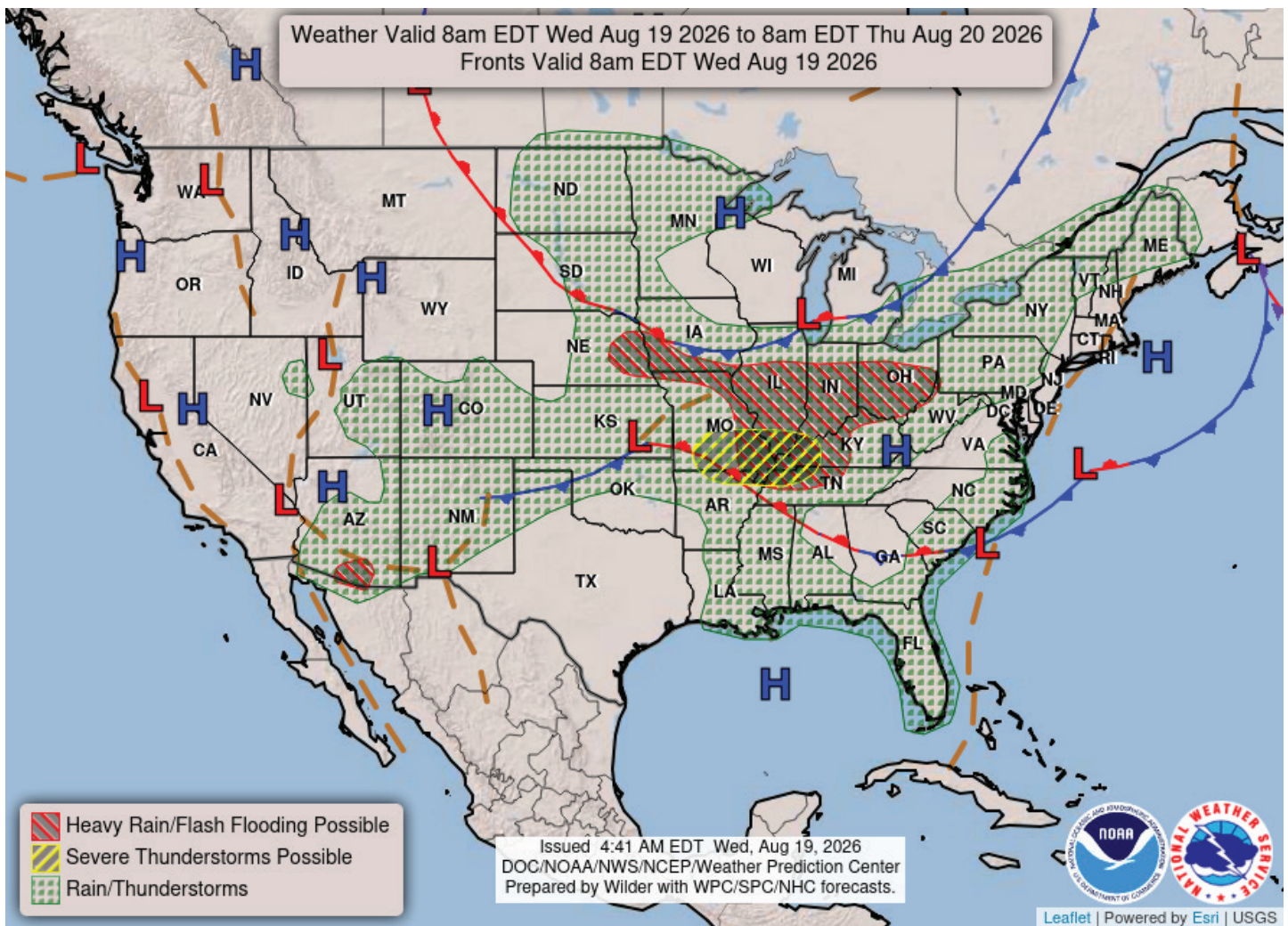
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.14

Average Precip to date: 15.47

Precip Year to Date: 19.61

Sunset Tonight: 8:34 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:39 am



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Today in Weather History

August 19, 1899: An estimated F3 tornado passed 3 miles north of Clear Lake. The tornado killed a man by flying debris as five homes, and many barns were destroyed.

August 19, 1983: Between 0155 and 0330 CST, thunderstorm winds blow through Brown County. At 0155, an estimated 64 mph wind gust was observed on the southeast corner of Warner. A 60 mph wind gust was measured at the Aberdeen Airport at 0218. By 0330 an estimated wind gust of 75 mph was observed in Ordway.

August 19, 1991: A thunderstorm produced about five inches of rain, strong winds, and hail in Ridgeview, Dewey County. Three-grain bins were blown over. One of the bins hit a house causing considerable damage. Wind gusts were estimated to be 60 mph. High winds continued into Sully and Hughes Counties.

1788 — A small but powerful hurricane inflicted great havoc upon forests along a narrow track from New Jersey to Maine. A similar storm track today would cause extreme disaster in the now populated area. (David Ludlum)

1890: An estimated F3 tornado hit South Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. About 400 buildings were destroyed in the industrial and more impoverished residential section of town. The death toll was 16 and damage was estimated at \$400,000.

1896: The famous Cottage City (Oak Bluffs) waterspout occurred off Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. The vortex was 3,600 feet high, formed three times, and was well photographed.

1969 — 'Never say die' Camille let loose a cloudburst in Virginia resulting in flash floods and landslides which killed 151 persons and cause 140 million dollars damage. Massies Hill VA received 27 inches of rain. (David Ludlum)

1986 — The temperature at San Antonio, TX, soared to an all-time record high of 108 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 — Thunderstorms moving out of southeastern Nebraska spread severe weather into eastern Kansas and western Missouri during the day. Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced hail three inches in diameter at Albion, and high winds which downed a large tent at Waterloo injuring a dozen persons. Thunderstorms in Kansas produced baseball size hail northwest of Topeka, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Fulton. Ten persons were injured in a thunderstorm at Princeton KS, and damage to crops in southern Franklin County KS was estimated at 3.5 million dollars. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Raleigh, NC, reported a record hot temperature reading of 103 degrees. Afternoon thunderstorms in Oklahoma produced wind gusts to 75 mph in southern Pittsburgh County. Thunderstorms in Indiana produced 4.50 inches of rain at Morgantown. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Early morning thunderstorms deluged southeastern Delaware with six to ten inches of rain in four to six hours, with local reports of 13 to 20 inches of rain. Twenty-six major roads were closed or damaged, and fourteen bridges were washed out. Flooding caused nearly four million dollars damage to local businesses. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)



Staying in the Light

God invites us to experience intimate fellowship with Him. Walking in the light is our response to His call.

1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 2:1-2 : 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

As we saw yesterday, John uses the imagery of darkness and light to describe a life of sin versus a life in Christ (1 John 1:5-7). God is pure and perfect light shining through an obedient person. However, when we invite the darkness of sin into our life, there is conflict.

The way to keep a pure spirit in this world is to confess sin (v. 9). We are made clean by Jesus' work on the cross, and nothing can change a redeemed believer's identity as God's holy child. However, wrongdoing does interfere with the fellowship between us and the Lord (Isaiah 59:2).

What restores fellowship is confession, which simply means we agree with God that our actions, thoughts, or words are in violation of His will. While it is tempting to confess in a general sort of way—"I'm sorry if I've sinned against You"—the most helpful method for removing darkness from our life is through being specific about our transgressions. The Holy Spirit isn't general in His conviction; He points to the exact problem.

Believers who acknowledge their sin and take responsibility for it stay in right relationship with the Lord. John's letter confirms God's desire to cast out darkness and keep us fully in the light of His love.

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

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The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.18.26

4 18 29 32 37 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 45 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.18.26

5 19 30 38 59 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$113,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 30 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.17.26

5 8 10 24 27 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,650,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 45 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.15.26

4 16 18 29 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$31,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.17.26

13 34 39 45 56 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.17.26

8 15 25 49 65 22

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$48,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Mobile gold miners in eastern Congo complicate health workers' efforts to contain Ebola

By CONSTANT SAME BAGALWA and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

IGA-BARRIERE, Congo (AP) — Isaac Batisa is only a child but he spends his days digging for gold at a mining site in eastern Congo, hoping to earn enough money to support his family.

The 11-year-old is among hundreds of people, many of them children, working at the artisanal gold mine in eastern Congo's Ituri province, where the country's fast-moving Ebola outbreak is concentrated.

For Batisa, though, his immediate concern is not the disease which has killed more than 2,300 people among over 5,000 cases. He just wants to return home with some earnings, sometimes as little as \$2 a day.

"We don't know about Ebola here," he said.

As the outbreak spreads and kills people faster than any other outbreak of the disease in history, a major source of concern for monitoring efforts is miners constantly on the move and in hard-to-reach, unsafe territories.

The Associated Press gained rare access into one of Ituri's largest mines, in the locality of Iga-Barrière, where miners crowd into pits to dig for gold. Although there are no known reports of the outbreak reaching any of Congo's mining sites, officials say it's difficult to know the true situation in hard-to-reach areas. Most new cases and deaths are reported among groups not being monitored, they say.

Ebola spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person or through contaminated objects and surfaces. However, measures in place to limit the spread, such as regular handwashing and social distancing, are not followed at the artisanal mining sites, where work to extract gold is done by workers using basic hand tools like shovels and pans. Many of the mines are illegal, with miners making efforts to evade local authorities.

The Bundibugyo virus causing the current outbreak in Congo is less common than others that cause Ebola disease, which is complicating the response, because there are no specific treatments or vaccines.

Health workers say it's difficult to track miners

In parts of the east, including Ituri, artisanal gold mining draws a highly mobile workforce as miners travel across villages in search of gold and related work while small-scale traders travel between mining areas and population centers to trade the mineral.

But that constant movement is also making Ebola harder to contain, complicating efforts to find infected people and trace those who may have been exposed, said Mari Ndika, an Ebola response worker involved in disease monitoring.

"Artisanal miners may come into contact with several communities as they move from one place to another (which) can facilitate the transmission of the virus if a person is infected," she said.

Health workers recently lost track of two miners who had been identified as Ebola contacts after they moved to another mining site, according to Anna Ndroy Kansime, a community worker who helps educate people about the disease.

"They left for a destination that, to this day, remains unknown," said Kansime.

The danger is particularly acute because health authorities are already struggling to keep up with the virus. People can become infected in one place and travel elsewhere before monitoring teams know they have been exposed, potentially creating new chains of transmission that are difficult to trace.

Complicating the effort, there is no reliable system for registering mine workers and tracking their movements, Kansime said.

Workers left with little choice but to work mining jobs

The minerals in eastern Congo, not only gold but also coltan, tin and tungsten, have been a source of decades-long conflict and of economic opportunities for its residents.

The 11-year-old Batisa said his parents and two of his brothers were killed in an attack by Congolese

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rebels. He now lives with his aunt together with five siblings, and said he was encouraged to work at the mine by his aunt, whom AP was unable to reach for comment.

More than 100 militant and other armed groups operate in eastern Congo, including the Allied Democratic Forces, affiliated with the Islamic State group, and the CODECO militia in Ituri. Fighting has displaced large numbers of people and deepened the poverty that drives families toward artisanal mining.

About 2 million people work in artisanal and small-scale mining across Congo, according to a 2024 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. There is no reliable recent estimate of how many are children like Batisa.

UNICEF estimates 15% of children ages 5 to 17 in Congo are engaged in child labor.

In Ituri province, where conflict has uprooted families and where jobs are scarce, the mines offer the possibility of cash, however dangerous the work.

At the Iga-Barrière site, the search for gold takes miners beneath the earth through shafts that can extend dozens of meters (yards) underground. Tunnels are dug largely by hand, often with little reinforcement. Above ground, others work in open pits, digging through and sorting earth in search of gold.

Children work alongside adults. Pregnant women can also be found in the open pits, sometimes late into their pregnancies, Kansime said.

Singoma Aimé, a 36-year-old miner, said they lack adequate protection in their work at the sites. "We especially need hand-washing facilities because everyone comes from home to work at the site," Aimé said.

An outbreak that continues to outpace response

The outbreak unfolding across six provinces in eastern Congo is already the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in history and is on track to become history's deadliest if it surpasses the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak that killed more than 11,000 people.

Nearly 5,000 people have been infected by the disease in Congo, including 2,325 deaths, with Ituri accounting for nearly 90% of the cases. Experts believe the virus was spreading in the mining town of Mongbwalu as early as February, months before authorities declared the outbreak on May 15.

Last week, the Mercy Corps aid group warned that Ebola cases have been reported along a major travel route about 35 kilometers (22 miles) from Congo's border with South Sudan, expressing concern over the outbreak's "widening footprint."

Its speed remains "extremely concerning" as it continues to outpace efforts to track and slow it, Trish Newport, emergency coordinator with humanitarian group Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym MSF, told AP on Monday.

"We see family members that come in who have had 15 people in their family die. We rapidly need to scale up to be able to prevent more deaths from happening, more families and communities from being impacted," she said.

According to Ndiaka, the response worker, that includes educating miners about prevention and working with local authorities, mine managers and communities to identify and track suspected cases.

But challenges remain, including impassable roads, the presence of armed groups and the movement of people displaced by violence. It's also not easy to slow down the miners as they move around, Kansime said.

"For many families, gold is what pays for food," she added.

Shares in Chinese humanoid robot maker Unitree soar in its Shanghai trading debut

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Shares of Unitree, one of China's largest humanoid robot makers, initially soared as much as 629% in its public stock trading debut Wednesday in Shanghai, in the latest highlight of investor optimism over China's technological advances.

The company, founded in 2016 by entrepreneur Wang Xingxing in the eastern Chinese technology hub of Hangzhou, raised around 6.1 billion yuan (\$904 million) in its listing on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's Nasdaq-style STAR market. The shares were priced at 150.80 yuan (\$22.36) a share. Its shares closed

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460% higher at 845 yuan (\$125.31).

Advanced robotics, often referred to as “embodied” artificial intelligence, is a key sector in the heated technology rivalry between China and the U.S. China leads the U.S. in terms of production capacity of humanoid robots and the ability to scale up manufacturing.

Last year, of the roughly 15,000 humanoid robots shipped globally, Unitree and AGIBOT, another major Chinese humanoid robot maker, each shipped more than 5,000, according to technology research and advisory group Omdia, way ahead of their U.S. counterparts. For the first half of 2026, Omdia’s estimates put Chinese humanoid robot makers’ total global shipments at around 18,500 units.

But analysts say for now, many of these humanoid robots are still mainly used for demonstrations, performances and research rather than real-world applications. Unitree’s humanoid robots, for example, dazzled audiences at China’s annual Spring Festival gala by performing backflips and martial arts.

“The real competitive test will be whether companies – Chinese or American – can achieve reliable performance and attractive returns on investment in large-scale industrial and commercial deployments,” analyst Kangyuxiao Li at investment research firm Morningstar said in a commentary.

Unitree said proceeds from the IPO will be used for advanced robot research and development and development of its robot manufacturing base.

The company is the first publicly traded humanoid robotics maker in mainland China. Analysts believe the IPO could set a precedent for valuations of other robotic company stock offerings.

It “gives mainland investors direct exposure to one of the sector’s leading companies,” said Li at Morningstar.

Unitree’s debut coincided with the World Robot Conference in Beijing, featuring more than 300 exhibitors. Chinese leaders made robots a development priority.

UBTech, another major Chinese humanoid robot maker, has shares traded in Hong Kong. Its shares fell more than 10% on Wednesday.

Unitree reported about 1.7 billion yuan (about \$250 million) in revenue in 2025, mainly from sales of its humanoid robots and quadruped robots, often referring to four-legged robot dogs. More than 40% of that revenue was from overseas.

Last year, the U.S. accounted for roughly 13% of Unitree’s revenue, the company said. But that was before the U.S. Federal Communications Commission banned imports of new foreign-made humanoid and quadruped robots in July on national security grounds.

Unitree cautioned that the U.S. ban, which it said applies to its new models, could affect its future sales in the U.S. market. Existing models of its advanced robots can still be sold, but Unitree faces the risk that the U.S. could further expand its restrictions.

Lian Jye Su of Omdia said Chinese robot makers will likely seek to expand in major markets outside of the U.S., such as Europe.

Ousted Ukraine defense minister urges wartime elections, warning of a governance crisis

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine’s ousted Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov called Tuesday for elections to be held even as the war against Russia continues, saying the country was gripped by a crisis of governance.

The move by one of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s most loyal and longstanding team members until recently could become the most significant internal challenge Zelenskyy has faced since Russia’s full-scale invasion.

The appeal came in a video address posted to YouTube by Fedorov, who lost his post in July.

“We must find a legal, safe, and realistic mechanism that will allow Ukraine to restore a full democratic process even amid a prolonged war,” Fedorov said.

Zelenskyy’s office did not immediately comment on Fedorov’s address.

Ukrainian law prohibits elections while the country is under martial law, which was imposed on Feb. 24,

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2022, the day that the Russian invasion began.

Fedorov said the country was facing a systemic crisis in how it is governed, arguing the current system is oriented toward protecting itself and resisting change. He also condemned corruption among officials without naming anyone, saying it had weakened Ukraine's ability to fight the war.

Fedorov has said he believes a factor in his removal was an overhaul he led of the Defense Ministry's procurement system, which oversees billions of dollars in equipment purchases.

"Corruption in wartime is not merely a financial issue. It is a matter of our capability to survive and win," said Fedorov. "Every single hryvnia intended for defense must work for defense. Not for a private pocket."

Fedorov released the address hours after Ukraine's Parliament received a submission from Zelenskyy nominating Yevhenii Khmara to be the new defense minister, Parliament speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk said on Facebook Tuesday.

Large crowds of protesters have taken to the streets of Kyiv in support of Fedorov over the past month following his abrupt dismissal. The demonstrations have lost some of their initial force but still draw crowds of thousands during weekend marches, with demonstrators carrying handmade signs demanding Zelenskyy reinstate Fedorov.

South Korean and US militaries shorten drills by about half after Trump ordered a reduction

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The South Korean and U.S. militaries have agreed to sharply scale back their drills at the U.S.'s request, South Korean officials said Wednesday, a move that likely reflected President Donald Trump's hopes to reengage with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un but that could undermine a U.S.-South Korean defense readiness.

Trump had ordered his Pentagon chief to downsize the allies' summertime Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, just before they began Monday for an 11-day run. Trump cited what he said was a good relationship with Kim and South Korea's refusal to support him over Iran.

South Korea's military said in a statement the ongoing drills with the U.S. would end Friday, not Aug. 27 as initially planned. It said the allies also agreed to downsize some joint field training exercises.

The statement said South Korea and the U.S. will discuss and carry out various steps to achieve objectives of their drills and establish combined defense postures.

Drills' cut raise worries about military readiness

Many experts say Trump's move threatens to hurt the combined U.S.-South Korean defense posture and eventually weaken their decades-long alliance.

A reduction or suspension of military drills matters because military commanders change periodically. A one-year suspension of drills would mean commanders unfamiliar with the procedures of the drills would be taking part when they resume, according to Yang Uk, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

Ulchi Freedom Shield is largely a computer-simulated command post exercise meant to hone the allies' ability to deal with potential North Korean aggression. The two countries usually hold a set of field training exercises during the command post exercise period.

The drills and a similar springtime exercise are a central pillar of the U.S. -South Korea alliance, which dates to the 1950-53 Korean War. But it's also a long-running source of tensions with North Korea, which has denounced the exercises as a rehearsal for an invasion and responded with provocative missile tests. Days before this month's drills began, North Korea launched two ballistic missiles into the sea.

This month's drills were reportedly supposed to be held in two phases. The first part until this Friday will focus on defensive operations in simulation of North Korean attacks and the second part until Aug. 27 will practice counteroffensive operations. North Korea is extremely sensitive to counteroffensive drills.

North Korea lambasts US-South Korea drills and vows responses

North Korea hasn't responded to Trump's overture. But earlier Wednesday, its state news agency, KCNA,

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published a commentary slamming the U.S.-South Korean military drills as “frantic” and “extremely dangerous” and vowing to completely frustrate its rivals’ hostilities.

“The dangerous escalation of the war drills staged by the U.S. and its vassal forces is posing a more serious threat to the security” of North Korea, the commentary said. “Our exercise of right to self-defense will continue to completely neutralize the enemies’ military threat.”

Many experts said Kim, now emboldened by his advancing nuclear program and expanding military cooperation with Russia, won’t likely embrace Trump’s overture and return to talks anytime soon unless he’s promised bigger concessions. In response to Trump’s previous outreach, Kim suggested last year that he can only return to talks if the U.S. drops its demand of a North Korean denuclearization as a precondition for diplomacy.

Trump and Kim met three times from 2018-2019 but their high-stakes diplomacy eventually fell apart over wrangling over a North Korean demand for extensive sanctions relief in return for limited denuclearization steps.

On Monday, the office of South Korean President Lee Jae Myung expressed hope that a “friendly relationship” between Trump and Kim would lead to “meaningful dialogue” between their countries to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula. Lee is a liberal who wants better ties with North Korea.

But his office’s statement drew a strong backlash from conservatives, who alleged Lee’s government was prioritizing the resumption of Kim-Trump diplomacy over security concerns caused by Trump’s move.

Trump’s move may focus on South Korea over Iran

In his social media post, Trump said the drills are not only costly but “send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile” to North Korea, which he said “has been unthreatening and respectful” during his time in the White House. Trump said he asked Lee if South Korea would join the U.S. in the “denuclearization” of Iran, “and they said, ‘No thanks!’”

At separate parliamentary hearings Wednesday, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun and Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back said neither South Korean nor U.S. officials were informed of Trump’s move before his social media post.

Cho said the alliance remains strong, while Ahn said South Korean and U.S. defense officials were maintaining close consultations.

Some experts say Trump’s cut of the drills was more likely designed to apply pressures on South Korea to give him substantial support over the Iran war than reaching out to North Korea.

“Trump’s message is that if you don’t cooperate with us on Iran, we’re not cooperating you” on the drills either, said Yang, the analyst. “It’s like he’s asking South Korea to show it’s helping him over Iran” by taking steps like sending warships or reinforcing missile defenses in some areas.

South Korean officials said South Korea and the U.S. are closely discussing practical and military contributions that South Korea can make to help restore freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

It wasn’t the first time that U.S. and South Korea have scaled back or canceled their drills.

In 2018, Trump abruptly announced the cancellation of a major war game with South Korea, after his first summit with Kim. Announcing the decision, Trump said suspending the “provocative” war games would “save us a tremendous amount of money.”

The U.S. and South Korea have since canceled or reduced other joint drills to support diplomacy with North Korea and cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts say reducing those drills has undermined the combined South Korea-U.S. readiness.

Shares fall in Asia, with Kospi down 5.7%, while oil prices jump

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares slipped Wednesday in Asia after Wall Street pulled further from its all-time high as artificial-intelligence stocks resumed their decline.

South Korea’s Kospi led the regional retreat, dropping 5.7% to 6,487.34. The two biggest companies benefiting from the AI boom tracked losses for their U.S. rivals. Samsung Electronics shed 7.5%, while

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memory chipmaker SK Hynix tumbled 8.8%.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 sank 3.2% to 65,332.04 as worries over rising bond yields coupled with selling of tech shares pulled the benchmark lower.

The yield on 10-year Japanese government bonds has been trading near a three-decade high of over 2.9% due to expectations that the Bank of Japan will soon raise its benchmark rate to counter inflation.

The Shanghai Composite index shed 2.2% to 3,903.61. Shares in humanoid robot maker Unitree soared nearly 630% initially in their trading debut on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's Nasdaq-like STAR market. The company reaped about \$900 million with its initial public offering.

But shares in UBTECH, another major Chinese humanoid robot maker, whose stock is traded in Hong Kong, fell 10.6%.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong lost less than 0.1% to 25,460.46.

Taiwan's Taixes fell 1.7%, and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.2% to 9,053.00.

Apart from renewed jitters over criticism that AI-related stocks have shot too high, rising oil prices have been clouding market sentiment.

Crude prices have been swinging sharply due to uncertainty about when and whether the United States and Iran can reach a deal to allow oil tankers to exit the Persian Gulf freely again. Brent was going for \$72.87 per barrel just before the start of the war.

Brent crude, the international standard, gained 0.6% to \$91.57 per barrel. U.S. benchmark crude oil gained 0.7% to \$84.66 per barrel.

On Tuesday, Wall Street pulled further from its all-time high. The S&P 500 fell 0.7% for a third straight modest loss. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.3%.

Stocks that have been big winners in the boom around AI technology led the decline. They've been veering up and down this summer on worries that their prices have shot too high and that the strong demand for memory, processors and other building blocks of data centers may fizzle if AI proves less profitable than promised.

Micron Technology dropped 7%, and the seller of computer memory was one of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500. So were chip companies Nvidia, which fell 2.3%, and Broadcom, which sank 3.2%.

Even with their recent swings, such stocks remain big winners, and Micron has more than tripled this year.

Bond yields have been another concern. They have jumped since the war began because high oil prices are pushing inflation higher. That adds to worries over huge debt loads for governments, while surging borrowing keeps yields high.

The yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury edged down to 4.70% from 4.72% late Monday but remains well above its 3.97% level from just before the war with Iran began. The 30-year Treasury yield also ticked lower but is still near its highest level since 2007.

When bond yields are high, investors are less willing to pay high prices for stocks and other kinds of investments, particularly those seen as the most expensive.

High yields have already sent the average long-term U.S. mortgage rate near its highest level in a year, which has hurt the housing industry. A report on Tuesday said homebuilders broke ground on fewer new houses last month than economists expected.

High yields could also slow borrowing by Big Tech companies to pay for data centers, threatening a big source of growth for the U.S. economy.

In other dealings early Wednesday, the U.S. dollar fell to 159.26 Japanese yen from 159.61 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1582 from \$1.1577.

Jason Arday's death sparks UK debate over academic rigor, racism after media 'frenzy'

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — In 2012, a smiling Jason Arday was photographed by the British press carrying the Olympic flame in the torch relay that preceded the London Games. He was back in the news in 2023 when

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Cambridge University hailed him as the youngest Black professor in the institution's history.

Three years later, after weeks of news stories presenting evidence that he was a plagiarist and fabulist, Arday, 41, was found dead on Friday at his apartment in south London.

His death quickly led to a blame game. Cambridge has been criticized for elevating Arday in a rush to promote diversity — despite red flags about his qualifications — and the news media has been targeted for driving him to despair when his credentials and life story began to unravel under intense scrutiny.

Universities' 'due diligence' criticized

James Cleverly, a Black member of Parliament who held Cabinet positions in past governments, said a number of universities "failed to do the proper due diligence" on Arday.

"We see now that he was not completely honest and he clearly did have frailties and failings," Cleverly told Times Radio. "But he was teed up by a number of academic institutions because they desperately wanted a wunderkind. They desperately wanted to play on the fact he was young and Black and good-looking, and they wanted him to be their poster child."

But Patrick Vernon, who was recently knighted for his work on racial equality, is focused on the media.

Coverage of the Arday story was out of proportion to his position in society, reflecting the higher standard to which people of color are held when compared with their white peers, Vernon said.

"The level of scrutiny that the late Professor Jason Arday faced was unprecedented," Vernon said.

"He's not the prime minister of this country. He's not a current secretary of the civil service or local government or the (National Health Service) or a chief executive of a major PLC. ... But he was treated at the same standard, which is outrageous," Vernon said.

Cambridge trumpeted Arday's arrival

Cambridge hired Arday as a professor of sociology of education in February 2023, when he was 37.

In announcing the appointment, Cambridge highlighted his place as the youngest Black professor in the university's history and described him as a "respected scholar" focused on increasing the representation of Black, Asian and other minorities in higher education. Arday achieved this stature, the university said, even though he was born with a form of autism spectrum disorder that left him unable to speak until he was 11 and unable to read or write until his late teens — aspects of his biography that have since been questioned in news stories.

British universities have been working to hire more academics from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds so that their faculties better reflect the broader society.

There were 270 Black professors at U.K. universities during the 2024-25 academic year, up from 120 in 2016-17, according to data published by the Society for Research into Higher Education. Black scholars still represent just 1% of all U.K. professors, even though Black people make up about 4% of the working age population, the data shows.

Questions about Arday's qualifications became public last month.

Nathan Cofnas, a one-time Cambridge researcher who left the university after his vitriolic comments about diversity programs and minorities sparked widespread protests, said he had found evidence of plagiarism in Arday's Ph.D. thesis. The Times of London and other newspapers picked up the story, publishing an analysis of the thesis and highlighting multiple passages they said were "identical or near-identical" to an earlier paper by another academic.

The news media also questioned Arday's claims about astounding personal accomplishments, such as running 30 marathons in 35 days, and raising 5.5 million pounds (\$7.4 million) for charity over 20 years.

The public scrutiny was partly fueled by the impending publication of Arday's memoir, "Great and Unfortunate Things." Simon & Schuster published the book last week in the U.S., and it is scheduled to be published in the U.K. on Aug. 27.

After initially standing by Arday, Cambridge said Aug. 5 that it was opening an investigation after receiving "new information" about his qualifications. Arday resigned later that day. The University of Glasgow and Durham University, where Arday previously taught, have announced their own investigations.

The ceremonial head of Cambridge on Sunday defended the university's decision and criticized media

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coverage of Arday.

"I do believe it is possible to hold to two principles at the same time: To believe in the importance of academic integrity, and, where criticisms of plagiarism arise about any academic, whoever they are, ensure that they are rigorously investigated, and also to refuse to join in a racist feeding frenzy over a particular academic," Chancellor Chris Smith told the BBC.

Demand for investigation of media coverage

By Tuesday afternoon, more than 107,000 people had signed an open letter calling on the government to commission a public inquiry into media coverage of Arday.

The letter alleges that media organizations kept up their coverage of Arday even after Simon Baron-Cohen, director of Cambridge University's Autism Research Centre, publicly warned that their focus on a "vulnerable autistic man" raised "safeguarding issues." Circulated by the Good Law Project, a campaign group, the letter says Arday and other prominent Black people have been subject to "press harassment with racist overtones."

Steven Barnett, a professor of communications at the University of Westminster, put the onus on British newspapers, not social media. The mainstream press published 289 stories about Arday in 22 days, almost two-thirds of them after he resigned, Barnett said.

No one should doubt that he was overwhelmed by the scrutiny because Arday himself said it was more than anyone could bear, Barnett said. "I don't think it's possible to overestimate the impact that those newspapers, those publishers, have had in this particular case," he said.

Charles Moore, a former editor of the Daily Telegraph who writes about education, rejected that criticism in a column on Monday.

If Cambridge had properly investigated concerns about Arday that surfaced as early as 2023, he wouldn't have suffered the shame caused by widespread media coverage, Moore wrote.

Rather than trumpeting Arday's position as the university's youngest ever Black professor, Cambridge "could quietly have nurtured his talents and sorted out his problems, which were surely those of a young man out of his depth rather than a brazen impostor," he said.

"It was the university, not the press, which was obsessed with the color of Dr. Arday's skin," Moore wrote.

Sarah Ditum, writing in the Times of London, said Arday was a legitimate news story because his actions hurt the academics he plagiarized, public confidence in the rigor of his discipline and other early-career lecturers against whom he competed. But she acknowledged that the story was given extra oxygen because it broke during the summer, when Parliament is closed and journalists are desperate for something to write about.

"Academic plagiarists don't usually make headlines, but Arday was not any old academic," Ditum wrote.

"He was publishing a high-profile memoir with celebrity blurbs," she added. "He had chosen the spotlight."

Vernon, meanwhile, is encouraging people to remember that there was a man, a husband and father behind the headlines. He has created a GoFundMe campaign to help Arday's family that has already raised more than 193,000 pounds (\$261,000).

"This tells you that Britain still cares about justice, they care about inequalities," he said. "And more importantly they really want to support Jason and his family in their hour of need."

Election takeaways: Donalds joins historic field and progressive scores upset victory in Florida

By JILL COLVIN and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

As the long, contentious primary season nears its end, Democratic voters elevated another progressive Senate candidate in Florida, while President Donald Trump's chosen candidate in his adopted home state, Republican Rep. Byron Donalds, won the nomination to be the state's first Black governor.

It was a mixed bag for incumbents in the state, where Republican-led redistricting efforts scrambled congressional maps. Voters in Alaska, Wyoming and California were also choosing their nominees, sometimes considering multiple people running with matching last names.

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Tuesday's contests will help shape the midterms this fall to determine control of Congress, where Republicans have a narrow edge.

Here are some takeaways from this round of primaries.

Another progressive beats a far better-funded establishment rival

Progressives notched a surprise victory as the battle between outsider and establishment candidates that has roiled the Democratic Party in states like Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan moved to more conservative territory.

In a major upset, progressive state lawmaker Angie Nixon easily defeated retired Army Lt. Col. Alex Vindman, a former National Security Council official who delivered searing testimony against Trump in his 2019 impeachment trial. Vindman had outraised Nixon by more than 16-to-1, with Nixon bringing in less than \$1 million.

Now she will face Sen. Ashley Moody in a campaign to fill the last two years of Secretary of State Marco Rubio's former Senate term. Moody was appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis after Rubio stepped down.

But in another matchup in South Florida, U.S. Rep. Jared Moskowitz won the nomination for reelection in a new Republican-friendly district against union organizer and democratic socialist Oliver Larkin.

Donalds joins historic slate of Black candidates for governor

Donalds, a rising star in the Republican Party, won his party's nomination to succeed the term-limited DeSantis, joining a historic slate of Black gubernatorial nominees across the country as he vies to become the first Black governor of the state.

They include Republicans Rep. John James in Michigan and Lisa Demuth, who defeated pillow-selling conspiracist Mike Lindell in Minnesota. On the Democratic side, David Crowley won a razor-thin primary against a democratic socialist in Wisconsin, joining Attorney General Aaron Ford in Nevada, State Rep. Jermaine Johnson in South Carolina and former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms in Georgia.

Either Bottoms or Demuth could be the country's first Black woman governor.

There is currently only one Black governor in the nation, Democrat Wes Moore of Maryland, who is seeking reelection in November.

Donalds will face David Jolly, a Republican-turned-independent-turned-Democrat, who won the Democratic nomination Tuesday night.

Wasserman Schultz wins diverse, redrawn Florida seat

A Republican-led redrawing scrambled Florida's congressional map, creating some awkward matchups for Democrats.

But longtime U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz easily won the most contentious race, beating U.S. Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick and three other Black candidates in a South Florida district that is a plurality-Black district. Cherfilus-McCormick had resigned earlier this year under a pending federal indictment and threat of House ethics sanctions, but wanted her seat back.

Wasserman Schultz, a former national party chair seeking a 12th term in Congress, was the only white candidate competing to represent an area of Broward County that has helped send Black Democrats to Congress since 1992.

Her decision to run had stirred deep animosity, including charges by one rival that "she stabbed us in the back."

Trump pick loses in race featuring transplants and scandal-plagued candidates

While Trump-backed Donalds emerged victorious, the candidate Trump had endorsed to fill his seat — Catalina Lauf — lost to Jim Schwartzel, owner of conservative talk radio station 92.5 FOX News.

The race had featured a cast of characters akin to a reality show reunion, including several who had spent time in prison and a handful who had run in other states.

They included two former members of Congress mounting comeback bids after departing in scandal: Former North Carolina Rep. Madison Cawthorn's tenure was marred by repeat traffic stops, guns at airport checkpoints and a claim he had been invited to a Washington orgy. Former New York Rep. Chris Collins, who resigned before pleading guilty to insider trading charges, served prison time before he was pardoned

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by Trump.

Trump-endorsed Lauf had run twice for Congress in Illinois. She lost the 2020 primary to Jim Oberweis, a former state senator, who has also decamped to Florida and ran for the seat.

Another candidate, Ola Hawatmeh, previously ran unsuccessfully for Congress in New York, while Linda Sawyer once tried in Michigan.

Also in the race: John Strand, a former television actor, underwear model and romance novel cover model, who served prison time for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021 assault of the U.S. Capitol.

Republicans lose an incumbent

While Democratic incumbents won their races, Republican Rep. Cory Mills lost his bid for a third term to Ryan Elijah, a former television reporter.

Mills faced a series of scandals, including allegations of domestic violence involving a former girlfriend, which he denies. He had also been abandoned by DeSantis and other state officials.

Trump initially backed Mills in February but did not include him in a list of endorsements on Monday.

Double-checking the name in Alaska

Will Alaska voters need to contend with two Dan Sullivans going forward? It's too soon to tell.

The primary ballot for the state's Senate race, which is expected to be one of the country's most closely watched this fall, included both Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan, a Trump ally seeking a third term, and another candidate also named Dan Sullivan.

Republicans had claimed the second Sullivan — who appeared on the ballot as "Daniel J. Sullivan Jr." — was a sham candidate running at the behest of Democrats to cause confusion. Dan J. Sullivan Jr., a retired teacher, has denied the charge.

Under the state's open primary system, all candidates appear on the same ballot, and the four who receive the most votes move on to a ranked-vote general election. Sullivan, the incumbent senator, and former U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, who would become the first Alaska Native senator if she wins in November, swiftly advanced Tuesday, but it was too early to call the other two spots on the November ballot.

Another Trump pick for governor loses their race

While he had success with Donalds, another governor candidate endorsed by Trump lost her race, this time in Wyoming. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Megan Degenfelder was defeated by state Sen. Eric Barlow, a U.S. Marine veteran and livestock veterinarian who is also a former Wyoming House Speaker.

Trump's picks for governor have occasionally struggled in primaries this year, including Lindell in Minnesota, Randy Feenstra in Iowa, Burt Jones in Georgia and Pamela Evette in South Carolina.

Trump had better luck in the Senate race in Wyoming, where his endorsed candidate, Rep. Harriet Hageman, easily captured the Republican nomination for the seat being vacated by retiring Sen. Cynthia Lummis.

Pro-Israel group spending in former Swalwell seat

In California's Bay Area, voters are choosing a replacement for Democratic Rep. Eric Swalwell, whose resignation amid sexual assault allegations ended his run for governor.

California's 14th District will remain under Democratic control as state Sen. Aisha Wahab and Bay Area Rapid Transit Board President Melissa Hernandez advanced from a special open primary.

However, the race was too early to call on Tuesday night, and California is notorious for counting slowly.

The campaign reprised a theme that dominated other Democratic primaries this year: outside spending, particularly from pro-Israel lobbying groups. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee's super PAC spent more than \$2 million against Wahab and in support of Hernandez, and another group funded by the super PAC has spent nearly \$2 million in support of Hernandez.

Pro-Israel group spending seemed to backfire in Michigan's recent Democratic Senate primary, where Abdul El-Sayed emerged victorious despite tens of millions of dollars backing his opponent, Rep. Haley Stevens.

National security question trips up Sen. Darline Graham in South Carolina debate

By MATTHEW JUNKROSKI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Darline Graham, who is competing in next week's runoff election in South Carolina, stumbled over a question about foreign policy in a debate on Tuesday night.

"Are Taiwan and the South China Sea national security issues for the United States and if so, why or how?" asked one of the moderators.

Graham started her answer by saying, "I'm just going to be honest here."

"I'm not that informed on national security," she said, then paused. "But I do support the military."

Graham's brother, Lindsey, died unexpectedly on July 11. She was appointed to fill his seat temporarily, and now she's running in a special election for her own term. Her opponent is Rep. Ralph Norman.

Her answer was noteworthy because her late brother was known for his involvement in foreign policy, something that Graham mentioned in her answer.

"My brother was in the Air Force for 33 years so I will do everything I can to support the military," she said. "My dad was in the Army. I'm not a polished politician up here, national security is not my thing, not my area of expertise, but I do support the military."

Graham was endorsed by President Donald Trump. She and Norman advanced to the runoff in last week's primary.

In Israel, military service debate spotlights ultra-Orthodox Jews and their growing clout

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Ultra-Orthodox Jewish families are an unmissable facet of Israeli life. Immediately recognizable, the men dress in black suits and hats, the women in modest long sleeves and skirts with wigs, turbans or scarves covering their hair, and numerous children tag along, often in matching outfits.

They are growing in numbers and in political and cultural clout. That's bringing their vision of faith, Jewish identity and civic practices into conflict with other Israelis, both religious and secular. Distrust spirals on all sides.

Mass protests over proposed changes to the exemption from the military draft for ultra-Orthodox men highlight the most contentious issue as the country approaches three years of war on multiple fronts — and national elections where ultra-Orthodox parties are likely to be kingmakers.

At the core of ultra-Orthodox doctrine is the belief that studying scripture — and teaching it to family and community — is the highest duty, above working or joining the armed forces even in wartime.

Judith Rosenblum, who has seven sons and one daughter, believes that ultra-Orthodox practice is under threat from secular culture, and that conscripting young men into the military can "compromise" their religious practice.

But when she ran into an acquaintance whose grandson lost two legs and an arm in the war in Gaza, she was proud to relay that three of her sons also signed up to serve after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel.

"If all my kids were cut out for full-time Torah learning and had the money to support themselves doing so, for sure that would be a preference," Rosenblum said. "But my kids who left full-time Torah study are amazing human beings. And I believe that they did the right thing by going into the army and participating in the defense of the country."

Full-time Torah study anchors ultra-Orthodox beliefs

In Hebrew, the ultra-Orthodox are called Haredim. The term was first used in the late 19th century by several rabbis and is derived from the Prophet Isaiah's description of being "fearful or astounded by the word of God," according to Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld.

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"God's word is not supposed to be intuitive; you have to look deeply," said Gershenfeld, who grew up in Philadelphia but has lived in Israel, studying and teaching the Torah, for half a century. "Understanding the Torah is the crucial mission of life."

He runs two Jerusalem yeshivas — or seminaries — for ultra-Orthodox boys and men.

Such institutions are "the beating heart of the community," said Rabbi Heshy Grossman, an administrator at a prominent yeshiva in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramot.

Inside the residential yeshiva, students aged 17-22 in white shirts and black pants spend long days praying, studying and discussing sacred texts and commentaries. Etl Lovy, 22, is completing his five years of study at the age when families start matchmaking for marriage.

"We have a lot of belief in what we're learning," he said a day before the start of summer break.

The Torah guides every moment of daily life

Lovy enthusiastically described how days begin at 7 a.m. with a prayer and continue with Talmud studies until late evening, learning "all commands from God and how to get close to him."

As he took a sip of water on the hot day, he whispered a prayer. "Everything comes from the one above," he explained with a smile.

For the ultra-Orthodox, each commandment and each good deed is not just a God-given obligation, but a way to find fulfillment and holiness.

And the highest one is studying God's word — especially for men. Women receive a broader education in secular subjects like math, and they are expected to work while also raising large families. Ultra-Orthodox Jews believe many forms of birth control are opposed to God's will, a view held by other conservative faiths but not all branches of Judaism.

"My life is not about making money, or building a nice house," said Lovy, who plans to continue to study the Torah while his future wife works.

For the ultra-Orthodox, "every second of life is devoted to God," said Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, adding that other Jews will either follow suit or "disappear into the mainstream."

"The Orthodox are fighting assimilation," said Feldman, who in his late 90s has witnessed the growth of the practice and still writes columns for a popular Haredi weekly magazine. "If you don't study Torah and observe the commands, you become like any other Mediterranean country."

He added that the ultra-Orthodox follow civil law so long as it doesn't interfere with religious belief, such as forbidding or "affecting" the study of the Torah.

The ultra-Orthodox Jews' complicated relationship with Israel

Much of the Torah studies tradition was lost during the Holocaust. When the state of Israel was founded shortly after, it gave ultra-Orthodox scholars special rights so they could rebuild, said Shlomit Ravitsky Tur-Paz, director of the Israel Democracy Institute's Religion and State Program.

That included an exemption from the military draft, originally for a few hundred scholars and in later decades broadened by conservative governments to everyone who wanted to engage in Torah learning full-time, she said. The same body of men was also largely outside the workforce.

But the ultra-Orthodox have grown rapidly, outpacing other Israelis. Ravitsky Tur-Paz estimates they will be about 25% of the population by 2050, and about 40% of the potential army draft.

"Israelis aren't concerned about the Haredi way of life; they're concerned about their way of life," she said, adding that includes everything from welfare tax impacts to how much time non-Haredi Israelis might need to serve in the reserves. "The question is, who's paying the price for your choice of life? This has become the issue everyone is talking about."

For many ultra-Orthodox, there's no debate — they're fulfilling their individual obligation to God, and nothing else matters more.

"The importance of the Torah is a genuine feeling, and not just an escape, not just an excuse," Rosenblum said. "Haredi world will put Torah first, and then Israel."

Fewer than 10% of ultra-Orthodox men reaching the conscription age of 18 enlist, according to a parliamentary committee, and they usually join separate units accommodating their religious practices. Reacting to a recent bill protecting the ultra-Orthodox from draft evasion prosecution, the Israeli army's

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chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, called such exemptions “inconceivable” while troops are being asked for “unprecedented sacrifice.”

But most ultra-Orthodox rabbis are adamant about their youths’ exemption from the draft, to avoid “diluting their piety” at a critical age. Other Jewish men in Israel are required to serve for nearly three years, and women for two years.

“Studying the Torah is itself a spiritual protection,” Feldman added — an argument wearing thin with many Israelis, especially since about 1,000 troops have been killed fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon since the 2023 attack.

Asked if he had any qualms about his peers serving as soldiers while he devotes his life to studies, Lovy, the yeshiva student, said he prays “all the time” for soldiers.

“But we think because we believe in the Bible, we believe this is the right way to live. We don’t apologize,” he said. “I’m doing what God wants.”

A warehouse burns near Moscow. In Ukraine, drone crews prepare to strike again

By EFREM LUKATSKY Associated Press

Waves of Ukrainian drones targeted the massive logistics center outside Moscow overnight. The next morning, it was still ablaze, dark smoke rising into the sky from what was one of Russia’s largest retail warehouses.

Hundreds of miles away, Ukrainian drone crews had barely paused after the night’s work before starting to prepare for another attack.

A small group of soldiers quickly assembled in a sunflower field in southern Ukraine, gathering around 20 small planelike drones laden with explosives, before launching them toward Russia.

The launch by the Ukrainian 413th “Raid” Unmanned Systems Regiment on Sunday morning was observed by a team of Associated Press journalists — a rare glimpse into a rapidly expanding part of Ukraine’s war effort.

It’s Ukraine’s latest tactic — long-range drones designed to carry the war deep inside Russia, striking military, industrial and logistical sites far from the front line.

Kyiv has stepped up its attacks on Russia this year, with long-range missiles and swarms of drones targeting military industries and energy facilities. It has also increasingly pummeled giant Wildberries depots, burning billions of dollars’ worth of merchandise belonging to the Russian online retail giant.

Those attacks have brought the war home to the Russian public, nearly 4½ years into Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The scale of the attacks has also forced Russia’s military to stretch air defenses over a larger area, disrupted airports, sparked fuel shortages and undermined morale in Russia.

The regiment’s commander, Yevhen Karas, said his unit had also taken part hours earlier in the strike on the Wildberries warehouse, about 45 kilometers (28 miles) south of Moscow, during one of Ukraine’s largest attacks on Russia to date.

Ukraine will need to punish the Kremlin “if we want to get a stable and long period of peace, and normal peace,” Karas said.

“The bigger casualties they have,” the sooner they will go for peace, he added.

Kyiv officials aim to make the Russian public feel the war’s consequences and pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin into negotiating a peace settlement. Putin has so far shown no sign he intends to end the war.

Karas, however, believes the impact of Ukraine’s long-range strike campaign on Russia’s economy is bringing home the cost of the war to ordinary Russians and hopes this will drive Moscow back to the negotiating table after months of U.S.-brokered talks between the two sides stalled.

On Sunday morning, before the drones took to the skies, Karas took out a black marker and wrote a message on the fuselage: “Moscow burns under the sky, red flame rises so warm and high, dark smoke moves above the town, fire lights the night all around.”

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Like the majority of Ukraine's serving military, Karas had a very different life before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

But on that day, the 38-year-old who majored in philosophy in his university studies and his brother Volodymyr both volunteered for the front. His brother was killed while defending the Kyiv region. In the months that followed, Karas rose through the ranks to become an officer in Ukraine's Special Operations Forces.

In 2024, Karas was appointed commander of the newly-formed 413th Raid Unmanned Systems Regiment, which began as a unit using drones for reconnaissance and other battlefield tasks.

As drone technology developed and flight range increased from hundreds to over a thousand miles, his unit was tasked with mounting long-range operations using Ukraine's domestically produced FP-1 drones against targets deep inside Russia.

Others in the unit include a former opera singer, a computer programmer, a rapper and a cellist. Their routine now focuses on a very simple sequence of tasks: prepare the drone, check the systems, move it into position and launch.

Wait for the result, then repeat.

The unit's medallion — something militaries across the world refer to as a "challenge coin" — carries the troops' insignia on one side, a stylized, three-prong arrow. On the other is a relief depiction of a Kremlin in flames, with a drone flying over it.

Karas said that in this phase of the war, Moscow should fear the skies.

"Muscovites should spend their nights in their wonderful metro, just as residents of Kyiv have spent years going underground to escape Russian missile and drone attacks," Karas said.

Back in the sunflower field, once the drones were airborne, the soldiers packed up their equipment and drove away, leaving hardly any traces of their activity.

They were on to the next launch site.

China recovers rocket stage on land for first time, after earlier recovery at sea

BEIJING (AP) — China has successfully recaptured the first stage of a rocket on land for the first time, state media reported Wednesday, as the country seeks to advance its space program.

Although this marks China's first successful recovery on land, it is the second time the country has recovered a rocket stage, following a successful recovery on a sea platform in July.

Chinese state news agency Xinhua said the reusable rocket, Zhuque-3, was launched Wednesday morning and that the rocket's first stage was recovered afterward.

Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin have been recovering rockets since 2015, helping drive down launch costs by reusing hardware that would otherwise be discarded after carrying satellites and other payloads toward space.

Xinhua said that Wednesday's recovery also marked China's first use of deployable landing legs and deemed the result "a major breakthrough in the country's reusable rocket technology."

On July 10, the first stage of a Long March-10B rocket separated from the second stage after liftoff and returned to a platform at sea. That time, it was recovered using a net-capture system.

The next day, on July 11, Japan conducted the first test flight of an experimental reusable rocket, which took off and safely landed.

Japan is also trying to catch up with the technology needed to cut launch costs and compete in the global space market.

Trump says US and Canada have reached last-minute deal to delay 50% US tariffs on Canadian imports

By PAUL WISEMAN and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he was delaying the 50% U.S. tariffs on \$20 billion worth of Canadian imports after the two countries reached a last-minute deal less than two hours before the sanctions were to go into effect.

The announcement, which Trump made on his social media platform, buys time for more negotiations and avoids, for now, another strain in already tense relations between the historic allies.

"I have paused the 50% Tariffs against Canada, that were scheduled to kick in tomorrow morning for a three day period, based on the fact that Canada and the U.S.A., subject to the finalization of documents, have a DEAL!" Trump posted on Truth Social.

If they had gone into effect as scheduled at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, Trump's import taxes would have hit Canadian products ranging from hockey sticks to tongue depressors.

But the political impact would likely have been bigger than the economic one. Canada had threatened to retaliate against any new tariffs with levies of its own, aggravating a trade fight between countries that sold each other \$880 billion worth of goods and services last year.

A White House proclamation said Canada had expressed a commitment to remove measures the Trump administration considers discriminatory against U.S. alcohol, dairy and motor vehicle exports. Canada did not immediately confirm those commitments.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement "substantial progress" had been made but that important work remained, confirming Canada had agreed to the three-day delay while negotiations continued.

Carney and Trump had spoken twice by phone in the past two days about the ongoing negotiations, including a call Tuesday afternoon, Carney's office said, underscoring the last-minute push for a deal.

Both countries had reason to step back from the brink. Nearly 72% of Canada's goods exports last year went to the United States. And the Trump administration would be taking a risk by imposing a hefty new tariff — paid by U.S. importers who try to pass along the cost to consumers via higher prices — ahead of November's midterm elections. U.S. voters are already frustrated with the high cost of living.

"I don't think either side really wants these tariffs to come into effect," Ryan Majerus, a partner at King & Spalding and a former U.S. trade official, said before the delay was announced. "There's a pretty strong push on both sides to find an off-ramp here."

Canadian Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Candace Laing said in a statement that the three-day tariff delay offered businesses some relief but fell short of the certainty a signed interim agreement would provide.

"This limbo state is not anyone's preferred outcome," she said, urging negotiators to reach a deal quickly.

Trump's approach to dealing with Canada marks an extraordinary departure from the traditionally cooperative relationship between the two countries. Trump has hit Canadian goods with tariffs — in a push to bring manufacturing back to the U.S. — and has repeatedly made inflammatory comments about turning Canada into America's 51st state.

Trump has made tariffs the centerpiece of his second-term economic agenda. Last year, he imposed double-digit import taxes on almost every country, justifying them by declaring the longstanding U.S. trade deficit a national emergency. The Supreme Court in February ruled that he'd overstepped his authority, striking down those tariffs and setting the stage for the federal government to pay refunds to importers.

So Trump has looked for other legal authority to impose tariffs.

To hit Canada, he reached back to the Great Depression, invoking Section 338 of the Tariff Act of 1930 to threaten 50% tariffs on products that account for about 5% of Canadian exports to the United States.

Nearly a century ago, with the U.S. and world economies in collapse, Congress passed the 1930 tariff law, imposing taxes on imports from around the world. Known as the Smoot-Hawley tariffs, named for their congressional sponsors, they are notorious among economists and historians for limiting world com-

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merce and making the Great Depression worse.

Section 338 tariffs have never been used before.

Section 338 authorizes the president to impose tariffs of up to 50% on imports from countries that have discriminated against U.S. businesses. No investigation is required to justify the levies. Nor is there any limit on how long the tariffs can stay in place.

The U.S. is renegotiating a North American trade pact — the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement — that Trump strong-armed America's neighbors into accepting in his first term. The threat of Section 338 tariffs gives the United States leverage to seek fresh concessions from Ottawa.

US Rep Byron Donalds wins GOP nod for Florida governor against Ex-Rep David Jolly for the Democrats

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds won the Republican nomination for Florida governor and former Rep. David Jolly picked up the Democratic nod in Tuesday's primaries, setting the stage for a fall campaign to replace outgoing Gov. Ron DeSantis and decide the state's future political direction.

November's election will test President Donald Trump's grip on his adopted state and Democrats' ability to resurrect Florida as a national political battleground. Florida has moved notably to the right since Trump's victory in 2016, though Democrats hope to regain ground from his slumping popularity ratings.

DeSantis, a leading conservative figure who has both clashed and collaborated with Trump over the years, is barred from running for a third consecutive term.

Also Tuesday, progressive state Rep. Angie Nixon won the Democratic nomination for a U.S. Senate special election, defeating retired Army Lt. Col Alexander Vindman, a onetime National Security Council official who testified in Trump's first impeachment in 2019.

Nixon, who was heavily outspent by Vindman, will face Sen. Ashley Moody, winner of the Republican nomination, in November to fill the last two years of Marco Rubio's Senate term. Rubio left the seat to become Trump's secretary of state last year.

Donalds could be a historic figure in Florida

Donalds would be Florida's first Black governor if he wins in November. He defeated a former DeSantis running mate, Lt. Gov. Jay Collins, political newcomer James Fishback and others Tuesday.

The 47-year-old congressman Donalds told his supporters at a Universal Studios resort hotel that he'd heard from Republican rivals who pledged their help in winning the general election.

"The primary is over," Donalds said. "Tonight we put aside our differences. Tonight we are one united Republican Party."

Donalds described Trump's backing as important but not determinative.

"Obviously, he has the strongest following of anybody in our party," he said. However, he added, "you can't just sit back and think the president's endorsement is going to carry you."

Donalds has promised to push tax cuts, overhaul Florida's insurance regulations to lower consumer costs and seek greater price transparency from healthcare providers.

The Democrats' candidate for governor, Jolly, is a former Republican congressman who switched parties last year. He did not shy away from his partisan history as he addressed supporters Tuesday night.

"To my Democratic friends, thank you for welcoming me into the party," he said.

Jolly's speech detailed a platform that balances between both political parties: an embrace of capitalism and a lean government, but one that "needs to do its part to fill the gaps," such as with education and housing.

"As an old-school Republican, I talk about ending the culture wars not to celebrate some progressive platform," he said, "but because I still believe in the old school Republican, Libertarian policy that government should simply stay out of your life, and stay out of your bedroom."

It's the second time in a row that Democrats have nominated a onetime Republican for governor.

Four years ago, they backed former Gov. Charlie Crist, only to see him lose by nearly 20 percentage

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points to DeSantis.

Rich Chamberlin, a retiree in Port St. Lucie, said he supported Jolly in Tuesday's primary, spurred on by attack ads against him.

"I saw anti-Jolly ads. I said 'Ok, if they are against him, then I must be for him,'" Chamberlin said, adding it didn't matter to him that Jolly was once a Republican.

A progressive gets Democratic nomination for Senate

Florida voters haven't sent a Democrat to the U.S. Senate since 2012, and this year's race was always going to be an uphill climb.

Moody, a former state attorney general, was appointed by DeSantis to fill Rubio's seat last year after he became Trump's secretary of state. She's now running to finish the last two years of his term.

Moody will face Nixon, a progressive state lawmaker who scored an upset victory over the Army veteran Vindman. Nixon would be Florida's first Black U.S. senator if elected in November.

"Rep. Nixon ran a strong campaign," Vindman posted on social media. "I will be standing by her side in the fight against Ashley Moody. I hope you'll join me.

Wasserman Schultz wins in a new plurality Black district

In U.S. House primaries, Tuesday's biggest contest saw longtime Democratic U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, defeat former U.S. Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick and others in a redrawn south Florida district.

Wasserman Schultz, who is white, urged voters in the new, plurality Black district to help her return to Washington for a 12th term. Cherfilus-McCormick had sought a comeback after resigning earlier this year under a pending federal indictment and threat of House ethics sanctions.

Wasserman Schultz entered a new district after DeSantis' successful push for new congressional maps intended to boost Trump's midterm election prospects.

Her four Black primary opponents — including Cherfilus-McCormick — had argued that the district should have a Black representative. But the voters went with a candidate who touted long experience from serving in Congress since 2005.

Surrounded by her campaign staff Tuesday night, Wasserman Schultz tearfully thanked voters for having confidence in her. She said she wanted to "make all of you proud, to make sure that the people we spoke to all across this district know that I will fight so they can pay their rent."

Republican Rep. Cory Mills is ousted by a challenger

Former television news reporter Ryan Elijah won the Republican nomination for Florida's 7th Congressional District, ousting the scandal-plagued Mills.

A two-term congressman, Mills has denied allegations of domestic violence against a former girlfriend and other controversies.

But Florida Republicans including DeSantis had abandoned Mills ahead of the primary and the congressman was not included on Trump's final list of Florida endorsements. Elijah advances to the general election in a central Florida district that is considered reliably Republican.

Trump says US has no talks planned with Iran and other news from the Middle East

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. President Donald Trump said Tuesday the U.S. has no talks planned with Iran but insisted the Strait of Hormuz remains "open and operating," despite limited traffic and a reported strike on a ship exiting the waterway.

Earlier this week, Trump also threatened to bomb Oman as the country sought a deal with Iran to manage shipping traffic through the strait, two regional officials said Tuesday, a day after Trump reportedly leveled the threat if Oman "gets in the way." Iran says the waterway will not be reopened until the U.S. meets its conditions.

As talks between Iran and Oman continue, a projectile hit a ship in the strait and Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed they fired drones at an oil refinery in Saudi Arabia.

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Here's a look at the latest developments Tuesday in the Iran war and the wider Middle East. Full coverage can be found [here](#).

Trump looms over negotiations to reopen Strait of Hormuz

As Oman and Iran say they are nearing a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, Trump said on social media Tuesday that the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports remains "in full force and effect," but asserted that all water mines have been removed and that other marine traffic was free to pass.

Trump posted a map depicting the strait as U.S. territory.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi appeared to respond to Trump's post.

"Just as Trump correctly wrote the name of the eternal Persian Gulf, soon his delusion regarding the Strait of Hormuz will either be corrected or we will correct the delusions of this deluded man," he wrote on X.

The Trump administration has told Oman it opposes parts of the yet-to-be-announced deal, according to officials briefed on the U.S. position. Those include joint Iranian and Omani management of the passage's exit route and the collection of voluntary fees from vessels, even if the money is used for security and maritime environmental protection.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to journalists.

The White House on Tuesday referred to Trump's remarks in the Oval Office and declined to comment further about Oman.

— By Samy Magdy in Cairo

Egypt says Iran-Oman agreement could open door to Iran-US deal

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that the Iranian-Omani deal could pave the way for Washington and Tehran to return to negotiations for a "comprehensive and permanent deal that addresses all concerns and enhances regional security and stability."

The statement came after a meeting between Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Omani counterpart Badr al-Busaidi. But it did not address Trump's latest threat against Oman.

The 60-day negotiating period ended this week between the U.S. and Iran with no clear end to the war in sight.

Ship traffic drops significantly in Strait of Hormuz

Ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz dropped significantly last week, with confirmed crossings falling 19.5% to 95 transits. Only three vessels made it through the waterway on Sunday, according to shipping data platform Kpler.

The ships used the Iranian-designated route through the strait, with no crossings recorded through the Omani routes.

Crossings through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait increased 6.7% to 254 transits, while so-called dark transits, in which ships turn off the transponders that broadcast their location, fell from 40 to 16, Kpler said.

Projectile damages ship in strait causing a casualty

An unidentified projectile damaged the engine room of a ship in the Strait of Hormuz near Oman and "resulted in a crew casualty," according to the British military's UK Maritime Trade Operations center.

The maritime monitoring agency did not release any details about the ship or its cargo, and it was not clear whether the crew member was killed or wounded.

No environmental damage has been reported and the agency said the Omani Coast Guard was assisting other crew members and authorities were investigating.

Iran-backed Houthis claim an attack on a Saudi oil refinery

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed they fired drones at an oil refinery in neighboring Saudi Arabia, the latest attack threatening to reignite Yemen's civil war and open another front in the Middle East.

The attack targeted a facility run by Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, according to a report by the Houthi-run SABA news agency. There were no immediate reports of damage or comment from Saudi Arabia.

The Houthis have escalated attacks against government forces in Yemen and oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, which supports the Yemeni government, and the kingdom's shipping in the Red Sea, an important alternative to the Strait of Hormuz.

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Israel strike on Gaza City kills 6 people

An Israeli strike hit Gaza City on Tuesday, killing six people, including a child, and wounding 14 others, according to Shifa Hospital, where the casualties were taken.

The Israeli military said it struck Hamas commanders in the Shati area who it said were planning to carry out attacks against Israeli forces.

The heaviest fighting has subsided since a ceasefire in the more than two-year war took hold in October. Israeli forces have carried out repeated airstrikes since then, killing at least 1,266 Palestinians, according to health officials in Gaza.

The Gaza Health Ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. But it does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants.

Missiles fired at the United Arab Emirates

The defense ministry of the United Arab Emirates said two ballistic missiles were launched from Iran toward the UAE on Tuesday.

One landed outside of the country's waters, and the other landed within them, the Emirati Defense Ministry said. It was unclear whether the missiles were shot down by air defenses or fell. No damage or injuries were reported.

Iran early Wednesday rejected the UAE's claims that it launched missiles toward the country.

In a post on social media, the spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Esmail Baghaei, said Dubai's accusations were "detrimental to ongoing efforts to strengthen trust among the countries of the region and prevent a further deterioration of security." He called on the nations in the region to not make "baseless accusations" against Iran.

In the weeks after the U.S. and Israel launched a war against Iran on Feb. 28, the UAE was frequently targeted by Iranian missiles and drones, but Tuesday's reported attack was the first in weeks.

Crews work to restore power to thousands after Lala raked Hawaii

By JOSH KELETY Associated Press

Crews were working to restore power to thousands of Hawaii residents Tuesday after the outer bands of Lala battered the archipelago over the weekend, causing destructive flooding and killing one person, before weakening from a hurricane to a tropical storm.

Crews on the Big Island were working to clear and restore roads. Most public schools across Hawaii reopened but Hawaii County's non-emergency operations were still suspended, officials said.

Tourists were among those impacted by power outages. Sydney Ambrose, a California resident who was visiting Maui with her son and mother, said that they had just sat down to order at a restaurant in Kaanapali on the island's west side when the power went out. Their hotel also lost power, forcing them to try to sleep without air conditioning in a hot room. Hotel guests gathered on the ground floor to use the few working power outlets to charge their phones and other devices, she said.

"We were pretty anxious," Ambrose said. "My mom was a little bit freaked out."

The storm has since moved west, according to the National Weather Service. It is expected to eventually turn north toward the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, a massive and remote federally protected area of the Pacific with islands, atolls, sea mounts, shoals and coral reefs.

Hawaiian Electric said inspections are showing significant damage, especially in remote areas, and crews were working overnight to restore power to thousands across the Big Island, Maui, and Oahu. Many large trees in Maui's upcountry region fell and toppled power lines and damaged infrastructure, according to Maui County officials.

"Roads are getting cleared, debris is getting cleaned up, and the people, while hurting, remain strong," Hawaii County Mayor Kimo Alameda said Monday.

Officials said the storm caused one death — a 90-year-old woman who had been reported missing in Naalehu and then found dead on Monday.

In the hard-hit southern end of the Big Island, communities were isolated as they were cut off from

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communication. Floodwaters disturbed some grave sites. While water service was restored to customers in Pāhala, a boil water notice was issued out of an abundance of caution.

Hawaii Gov. Josh Green said Monday that the damage was not as catastrophic as feared and that recovery will be "somewhat brisk."

Frank Beard, drummer of boogie-rock trio ZZ Top, dies at 77

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Frank Beard, the drummer for the Texas boogie-rock trio ZZ Top who kept the tempo for the band's biggest hits like "Sharp Dressed Man," "Gimme All Your Lovin'" and "Legs," has died. He was 77.

Beard was in hospice care when he died Tuesday at his ranch in Richmond, Texas, with family members at his side, according to publicist Bob Merlis. Band co-founder and guitarist Billy Gibbons, on tour with bassist Elwood Francis, hailed Beard in a statement.

"Today, Elwood and I lost a great friend and collaborator, and the world lost one of the most naturally innovative drummers and a great and true son of Texas. His signature backbeat was key to keeping ZZ on top. The band of which he was part for six decades is going to keep on keeping on as he had wished," Gibbons said.

ZZ Top sold more than 50 million records and had six singles that reached No. 1 on Billboard's Mainstream Rock Airplay chart. Seven of their albums have been in the Billboard 200's Top 10 and they earned three Grammy Award nominations.

"I've found the people I was meant to play with," Beard says in the 2019 documentary "ZZ Top: That Little Ol' Band from Texas." "I never wanted to quit, and never wanted to get fired."

Drummers went to social media to pay tribute to Beard's influence, including Rage Against the Machine's Brad Wilk, who wrote his mind was blown seeing Beard's two-hand shuffle live in high school. Former Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum called Beard "a very special and unique man behind the kit."

How the band came together

Beard, from Frankston, Texas, met Gibbons in a band called The Moving Sidewalks and later introduced bassist and vocalist Dusty Hill who had been in several bands with Beard.

The trio formed ZZ Top in 1969, naming themselves in part after blues singer Z.Z. Hill and influenced by the British power trio Cream and Jimmy Reed. They maintained their original lineup for more than five decades. Their signature look — long, bushy beards on Gibbons and Hill, and dark sunglasses for all — didn't change much, either.

When Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards helped induct the trio into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2004, he joked: "These cats know their blues and they know how to dress it up. When I first saw them, I thought, 'I hope these guys are not on the run, because that disguise is not going to work.'"

ZZ Top songs — with their sly and humorous lyrics — were popular in Hollywood, which used "Gimme All Your Lovin'" in "Happy Feet," "Sharp Dressed Man" in "Evan Almighty," "Legs" in "Air," "Sleeping Bag" in "I, Tonya," "Tush" in "Dazed and Confused," "Mexican Blackbird" in "From Dusk Till Dawn" and "La Grange" in "Armageddon."

"The best way to describe ZZ Top is we're interpreters of a great American art form," Gibbons told The Dallas Morning News.

Their debut release, "ZZ Top's First Album," came out in 1970. Their sound was described as a hybrid mixing elements of rock, blues and funk into a steaming-hot Houston stew. They called themselves a "Little Ol' Band From Texas."

Breaking through

Three years later, they broke through commercially with "La Grange," a funky blues song on the album "Tres Hombres" that paid tribute to the Chicken Ranch, a brothel outside of the Texas town of La Grange that operated from 1905 until 1973 and was immortalized in the Broadway show and the film "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." Gibbons has ascribed the power of "La Grange" to its simplicity — just two

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chords and a Robert Johnson-inspired guitar solo.

The band went on to have such hits as "Tush" and "Cheap Sunglasses." But their 1983 "Eliminator" — named after one of Gibbons' custom cars — added more production elements, synthesizers and drum machines to their stripped-down sound and yielded the hits "Gimme All Your Lovin'," "Legs" and "Sharp-Dressed Man." The band toured with a Texas-shaped stage, live rattlesnakes and a longhorn steer.

Long beards weren't always part of the band's look. Gibbons said it happened by accident: In 1976, the trio took a long break and scattered. Beard went to Jamaica, Hill went to Mexico and Gibbons went to France.

"Although we were speaking by phone, this was pre-video phone. And Dusty and I did not know that we had gotten so lazy that we had decided to forget to shave," Gibbons told The Tribune in San Luis Obispo in 2010. "So after three years we returned and showed up, and lo and behold here was this sort of wacky-looking image. And it just kind of stuck with us."

A boost from MTV

The band's rock-chic cool played well on the nascent MTV crowd and their videos, featuring models in short skirts emerging from one of Gibbons' custom roadsters, became a mainstay.

They kept the beards, hats and cheap sunglasses in the video trilogy of "Gimme All Your Lovin'," "Sharp-Dressed Man," and "Legs," made with director Tim Newman.

"ZZ Top reveled in the humor and ridiculousness of it all, busting their synchronized dance moves and spinning their white-fur guitars. These guys always got the joke, at a time when other bands were still just nervously lip-syncing in front of brick walls," Rolling Stone said in 2021.

In 2012, superstar producer Rick Rubin helped update the trio's sound with the band's comeback album, "La Futura." The album landed at No. 6 on the Billboard chart, their highest position since 1990's "Recycler," some 22 years previously.

Hill died in 2021.

In March 2025, the band announced via Instagram that Beard would temporarily step away from the band's tour to tend to foot and ankle problems. Beard died weeks after ZZ Top called off its Aug. 5 concert at the Hollywood Bowl due to his health issues.

Beard is survived by his wife, Debbie Meredith, and three children.

Minnesota attorney general sues Texas governor to compel extradition of ICE agent for trial

By MARK VANCLEAVE and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota's attorney general sued the governor of Texas on Tuesday, seeking to compel the extradition of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent charged with wounding a man and then lying to justify the shooting during the agency's crackdown in Minneapolis.

Attorney General Keith Ellison is asking a federal judge to bar the sheriff in Cameron County, Texas, from releasing ICE agent Christian Castro, and to order Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to sign his extradition warrant so that Minnesota officers can take custody.

Minnesota officials have clashed with the federal government over who has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute federal officers for on-duty conduct. Ellison is a Democrat and Abbott is a Republican ally of President Donald Trump.

Castro was arrested in Texas in May on Minnesota charges of assault and falsely reporting a crime in the Jan. 14 wounding of Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis. Castro, 52, is accused of firing a gun through the front door of a Minneapolis home, striking Sosa-Celis in the leg with a bullet that lodged in a child's bedroom wall. Prosecutors say Castro then falsely accused Sosa-Celis and another man of attacking an ICE officer with a broom handle and a snow shovel.

Minnesota officials fear ICE agent could flee

Ellison told a news conference that unless he's extradited, Castro could be released from jail as early as next week — 90 days since he was detained — under Texas law. And if he's freed, Castro could slip into Mexico from the border town where he's being held, Ellison said. The lawsuit said Castro has been

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making calls from jail to a woman in Mexico, talking "about marrying her and buying a house in Mexico when he is released."

If Castro was to reach Mexico, "it may be difficult or impossible to locate and have him re-arrested," with the process slowed further by a complex international extradition process that normally requires requests from the U.S. Department of Justice, according to a legal memo filed by Ellison's office.

Complicating the situation, travelers face few difficulties crossing from the U.S. into Mexico. Pedestrian border crossings typically have no immigration checks for people leaving the U.S., and only occasional requests for passports on the Mexican side.

"Christian Castro has been charged with breaking the law in Minnesota," Ellison said. "He must face justice in Minnesota. Gov. Abbott should have granted Gov. Walz's extradition request long ago and is required to do so now."

Ellison's office later said Castro could be freed as early as Aug. 26.

Abbott said Tuesday that he has no immediate intention to respond to extradition requests from Minnesota. He cited ongoing investigations of fraud in government social service programs in Minnesota, which Trump used to justify his immigration crackdown there.

"I will not respond to them at all until they step up and do what's right and they acknowledge their fault in the fraud that took place," Abbott said during a news conference on an unrelated topic in Austin, Texas.

Moriarty said that since Castro's arrest, Texas has extradited three unrelated criminal defendants without incident to Minnesota.

"Gov. Abbott has received communication with us on an ongoing basis, including recently," Ellison said. "We have to take the position that they are refusing to honor the extradition request."

The lawsuit Ellison filed in U.S. District Court in Texas cites a 1987 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that compliance with the Constitution's extradition clause is mandatory, affording no discretion to the governor of a state where a defendant is being held.

Peter E. Larsen, an assistant professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, said Ellison's argument was based on a "fairly straightforward legal principle" that requires states to hand over criminals, or accused criminals, to other states when they are asked.

Abbott's rationale, tying the extradition to unconnected fraud cases, makes the Minnesota argument even clearer, he said.

"I don't think that the courts (even the fairly partisan Roberts Court) would consider that as a legitimate basis for noncompliance with the extradition request," he said in an email.

It was not immediately known if Castro had a lawyer who could speak for him. Online court records in Minnesota and county jail records in Texas did not list a defense attorney. The jail holding Castro declined to relay a message to him from The Associated Press.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said the legal action to compel Castro's extradition "should be a completely unnecessary lawsuit." She said jail officials and prosecutors in Texas have been "very cooperative," and that an extradition "is not supposed to be controversial."

The office of Cameron County Sheriff Manny Trevino declined to comment Tuesday on the case.

Federal agency has called agent's prosecution a 'political stunt'

Authorities say Sosa-Celis was shot after Castro and another officer chased a different man, Alfredo Alejandro Aljorna, to the Minneapolis apartment duplex where he and Sosa-Celis lived. Sosa-Celis and Aljorna were legally in the U.S., according to Minnesota officials.

Federal authorities initially accused Sosa-Celis and Aljorna of beating an officer. A federal judge later dismissed the charges, and ICE and the Justice Department opened an investigation into whether agents lied about what happened.

Regardless, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has called Moriarty's prosecution of Castro "unlawful and nothing more than a political stunt," saying only federal authorities have jurisdiction in the case.

The federal government took a similar stance following the fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti during the Minneapolis enforcement surge. Moriarty sued the Trump administration to gain access

to evidence in those cases before federal prosecutors turned it over last month.

Before-and-after NASA images show crater carved by a SpaceX rocket that slammed into the moon

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A NASA spacecraft circling the moon is providing the sharpest views yet of the crater carved by a crashing SpaceX rocket.

The space agency released before-and-after photos of the impact area on Tuesday.

The Falcon rocket's upper stage plowed into the moon at 5,400 mph (8,700 kph) on Aug. 5 after drifting through space for more than a year. It launched a pair of private moon landers with experiments and even a tiny rover in 2025 as part of NASA's push to commercialize lunar exploration.

Based on these new photos by NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, the fresh crater appears to be 60 feet (18 meters) across and less than 10 feet (3 meters) deep, according to scientists.

Dark and bright streaks are clearly visible emanating like butterfly wings from the crater. The darker lines represent excavated material that was close to the surface and shaped by eons of solar wind, cosmic rays and micrometeorite strikes. The brighter rays indicate fresh rocks and dirt that were hurled from farther down.

The spacecraft photographed the crater a week after the collision from 60 miles (96 kilometers) up, while zooming along at one mile per second. Flight controllers had to tilt the spacecraft so its cameras pointed toward the impact scene.

The orbiter completes a lunar polar orbit every two hours, as the moon rotates beneath. It took six days before the crash scene came into view.

South Korea's Danuri spacecraft was first on the scene to beam back photos.

The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter has been orbiting the moon since 2009, serving as NASA's up-close eyes as the space agency works to return astronauts to the lunar surface.

Hayden Panettiere's on-and-off boyfriend was at apartment where she died, police report says

GREENVILLE, S.C. (AP) — Hayden Panettiere's on-and-off boyfriend Brian Hickerson and his brother Zach Hickerson were at the South Carolina apartment where the actor died over the weekend, according to a police report released Tuesday.

A Greenville police officer who responded to the residence Sunday afternoon was met by the brothers and then observed paramedics performing CPR on an unresponsive woman, the report states.

"The patient did not seem to have any obvious physical reasons to be unresponsive," the officer notes. After attempting lifesaving measures, the emergency workers declared Panettiere dead at 2:31 p.m.

No cause has been determined, and her death remains under investigation. An autopsy found no signs of trauma, and police said officers saw no signs of foul play.

The onetime child star, who soared to fame in the TV shows "Heroes" and "Nashville" while enduring struggles with alcohol addiction and depression, would have turned 37 on Friday.

Tumultuous relationship

Panettiere and Brian Hickerson had been in a tumultuous relationship for years, with allegations the 37-year-old aspiring actor physically abused her.

He was charged in 2020 with multiple counts of felony abuse, and he pleaded no contest to two counts of injuring a spouse or partner and served a short time in jail due to the case. He was sentenced to four years of probation and anger management and Alcoholics Anonymous sessions.

He completed the terms and recently asked a judge to reduce his conviction to misdemeanors; that request was denied Thursday by a Los Angeles judge. Messages were sent Tuesday seeking comment from Pat Carey, an attorney for Hickerson.

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Panettiere wrote of Hickerson's time behind bars, and how she hoped it would change him, in her memoir, "This Is Me," which came out in May.

"I wanted Brian to be in jail just long enough to scare him, but not long enough where'd he become a worse person," she wrote. "I needed him to admit his wrongs and change because of them, but I didn't want to traumatize him in an irreversible way."

She wrote about her decision to "let go of my resentment" and try to forgive Hickerson, who she'd met at a West Hollywood restaurant in 2018 after noticing his "charming smile."

Police report has redactions

The police report, which is heavily redacted, said the responding officer first spoke with Zach Hickerson, who said the unresponsive woman was his brother's girlfriend.

"I observed Zach to be very emotional while EMS were working on Hayden. Brian did not become emotional until EMS declared her officially deceased," the officer said.

After she was declared dead, the officer escorted the brothers out of the apartment. The officer spoke with Brian "more in depth," but the details of that conversation are redacted in the police report.

Also redacted is a list that of medications that Panettiere had been taking.

She had been open about addiction issues

In her book, Panettiere described lifelong scars from her early fame, and acknowledged being addicted to alcohol and enduring postpartum depression after the birth of her daughter, Kaya, with Ukrainian boxer Wladimir Klitschko in 2014.

Panettiere's daughter, now 11, began living with Klitschko full-time in Ukraine when she was 2. At the time, the actor was struggling with mental health and addiction. She entered rehab in 2015, while filming "Nashville."

"I think there's been this very common misconception that I just gave up my child," she said in an interview with podcaster Jay Shetty in May. "That could not be farther from the truth."

In a statement Tuesday, Klitschko said he will make sure their daughter always remembers her mother.

"She built an incredible career through immense talent, while also facing the darker sides of a very demanding industry. Nothing will erase the times we shared or the place she had in our lives," Klitschko said on Instagram.

Panettiere had endured numerous family struggles, and tragedy. Her parents' marriage was strained, and eventually ended. Her younger brother, Jansen Panettiere, who was also an actor, died of a heart condition in 2023, at age 28.

Started out as a child actor

Panettiere was one of two children born to Skip Panettiere, a former New York City fire captain, and Lesley Vogel, a former soap opera star who had been the prime force behind her early career before the two became estranged. Panettiere began acting in commercials and soap operas, including as the ever-troubled Lizzie Spaulding on "Guiding Light." In "This Is Me," she wrote that the traumas her character endured, from being kidnapped to killing her mother's boyfriend, led her to associate "catastrophe with adoration."

"Is it any wonder why I've faced so many real struggles in my life?" she wrote.

She had much warmer memories of her role as a cheerleader with supernatural powers in "Heroes," which propelled her to fame in 2006. The series revolved around the mantra: "Save the cheerleader, save the world."

She went on to win three Teen Choice Awards for that role. She was also nominated for a Grammy for a children's spoken word album, "A Bug's Life: Read-Along."

Panettiere later played a brash country upstart opposite Connie Britton on "Nashville," which aired on ABC for four seasons before being canceled and revived on CMT. She did her own singing in the show, which scored some hits on country charts, spawned U.S. tours and earned Panettiere two supporting actress Golden Globe nominations.

Trump threatened to bomb Oman because he's unhappy with country's deal with Iran, officials say

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to bomb Oman because he is unhappy the country is close to a deal with Iran to manage ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, two regional officials said on Tuesday, a day after Trump leveled the threat.

The officials said the Trump administration has told Oman it is opposed to parts of the yet-to-be-announced deal, including the joint Iranian and Omani management of the exit route out of the passage that's critical to global supplies of oil and natural gas. The officials were briefed on the U.S. position and how the administration views Oman's position.

Meanwhile, a projectile hit a ship as it sailed out of the strait, and a cargo vessel was rendered a "constructive total loss" by multiple projectiles off the coast of Yemen, according to the British military's maritime monitoring agency. The defense ministry of the United Arab Emirates said two ballistic missiles were launched from Iran toward the UAE.

An Iranian official said the strait would not reopen until the United States meets Iran's conditions.

US believes Oman has not been tough enough with Iran

The U.S. believes Oman has not been tough enough in its negotiations with Iran and is unhappy with Oman's agreement to collect voluntary fees from vessels, even if the charges are related to security and maritime environmental protection, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to journalists.

Trump on Monday threatened to bomb Oman as it works with Iran on a deal to open the strait and pave the way for the U.S. and Iran to resume negotiations to end the war.

He posted a map on social media on Tuesday depicting the strait as U.S. territory. The president first mentioned the idea in an offhand comment last week. On Monday, he told reporters in the Oval Office, "I like the idea of declaring it a territory," without providing details.

The White House on Tuesday referred to Trump's remarks in the Oval Office and declined to comment further about Oman.

Iran refers to Trump's 'delusion' about the strait

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi appeared to respond to Trump's post on social media depicting the strait as American territory.

"Just as Trump correctly wrote the name of the eternal Persian Gulf, his delusion regarding the Strait of Hormuz will soon either be corrected, or we will correct this deluded man's delusions for him," Gharibabadi wrote on X.

Trump's comment on Monday was not the first time he has threatened Oman. In May, he told reporters during a Cabinet meeting that Oman "will behave just like everybody else, or we will have to blow them up."

Iran reiterated Tuesday that Tehran plans to maintain its grip on shipping traffic until Washington meets its conditions.

"Until the United States fulfills its commitments under the agreement, including lifting the blockade, releasing frozen assets, lifting oil sanctions, ending threats and military operations on all fronts, and implementing the other conditions to which it committed, the Strait of Hormuz will not reopen," said Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Iran's parliamentary speaker and negotiator in previous talks with the U.S.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that the Iranian-Omani deal could pave the way for Washington and Tehran to return to negotiations for a "comprehensive and permanent deal that addresses all concerns and enhances regional security and stability."

The statement came after a meeting between Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Omani counterpart Badr al-Busaidi. But it did not address Trump's latest threat against Oman.

Trump insists the strait is open as more attacks are reported

Trump said on Tuesday the U.S. has no planned talks with Iran but insisted the strait is "open and operating," despite limited traffic, the reported boat strike and the end on Monday of the 60-day negotiating

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period between the countries.

Trump wrote on social media that a U.S. blockade of the strait remains “in full force and effect,” adding that all water mines have been removed.

As the talks between Iran and Oman continue, more attacks were reported in the region.

Both missiles fired at the UAE fell into the sea, the UAE Defense Ministry said. No damage or injuries were reported. Iran disputed the UAE’s claim that it launched missiles toward the country.

The ministry later said assessments showed that the missiles targeted maritime traffic. It was not clear whether they directly targeted UAE ships or the country’s territorial waters.

In the weeks after the U.S. and Israel launched a war against Iran on Feb. 28, the UAE was frequently targeted by Iranian missiles and drones, but Tuesday’s reported attack was the first in weeks.

An unidentified projectile hit a ship early Tuesday in the strait off the coast of Oman, damaging the engine room and causing a casualty, according to the U.K. Maritime Trade Operations center.

The monitoring agency did not release any details about the ship or its cargo, and it was unclear whether the crew member was killed or wounded. The agency said the Omani Coast Guard was assisting other crew members and that authorities were investigating.

Elsewhere, the cargo ship that was deemed a loss was struck about 40 nautical miles (74 kilometers) southeast of Mokha, Yemen, the UKMTO center reported.

The center did not identify the projectiles or those responsible.

The Iran-aligned Houthi rebels resumed attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea in July and escalated attacks on Yemen’s Saudi-backed government forces. The renewed assaults have threatened shipping through the Bab al-Mandab Strait, another key global trade route.

In other developments, the Houthis claimed they fired drones at an oil refinery in neighboring Saudi Arabia, the latest attack that threatened to reignite Yemen’s civil war and open another front in the Middle East.

The attack targeted a facility run by Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia’s state-owned oil company, according to a report by the Houthi-run SABA news agency. There were no immediate reports of damage or comment from Saudi Arabia.

Fake polling from mysterious company highlights danger of unvetted election surveys

By STEVE PEOPLES, AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX and KEN SWEET Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Locked in a competitive reelection race, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass declared on social media last week that a new poll was evidence that her campaign was “gaining momentum.”

Just a few days later, the truth emerged: The poll was fabricated.

The California results were among at least three “polls” across three states posted online this month by Median Strategies, a previously unknown organization that admitted to the Los Angeles Times on Monday that the purported results were fake. The company wrote before shuttering its website this week that it “was created as a short-term social experiment examining how purported polling information could enter and spread through the political information ecosystem without independent verification.”

The post offered no explanation of who was behind the “experiment” or for what purpose.

The trajectory of the California poll offers a cautionary tale about the perils of trusting unvetted polling. While high-quality independent polls still exist, they appear amid a slew of other surveys produced by outside groups, campaigns or super PACs or using undisclosed or questionable methodologies. It can be a struggle to make sense of the findings — and as the latest episode shows, even campaigns may end up falling for falsified data.

“This is much bigger than one fake poll,” said Chris Wilson, a veteran Republican pollster who now leads the public opinion firm EyesOver. “It’s never been easier to make invented numbers look legitimate, and campaigns and outside groups have every incentive to amplify anything favorable before anyone verifies it.”

The Median Strategies fake polls, none of which appeared in AP coverage, claimed to evaluate support in the Democratic primary for governor in Wisconsin, the gubernatorial race in Nevada, and the mayoral

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race in Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles poll, which purported to show Bass, an incumbent Democrat, leading councilmember Nithya Raman, a progressive Democrat, by about 12 percentage points in the mayoral race, was shared by the Bass campaign on social media and covered by the California Post before it was revealed to be bogus.

The Bass campaign has since deleted its social media post promoting the poll, but defended itself by saying that it “was reported on by multiple news outlets.”

“Any bad faith attempts to influence elections should be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” Bass campaign spokesman Alex Stack said.

Transparency is critical for evaluating poll findings

Median’s “findings” were shared by polling aggregation accounts on social media. They were not, however, included in the databases of major independent aggregators, including The New York Times, Real Clear Politics or FiftyPlusOne.

The New York Times and FiftyPlusOne noted that the polls were released without basic information that was needed for vetting, such as who was running the firm. When they reached out, Median Strategies did not respond to requests for more information.

“When the poll was released, it lacked basic information about how it was conducted and who was behind it,” Will Davis, director of Election Data Analytics at The New York Times, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. “Releasing this type of information is standard practice for pollsters, and because that information was not provided, we did not include it.”

Mary Radcliffe, Head of Research at FiftyPlusOne, also thought the methodology statement for the Wisconsin poll was missing key details, including the source for the voter file the company claimed to have used and the vendor who fielded part of the sample.

Median did not respond to her questions, so the polls were not included in FiftyPlusOne’s database. But Radcliffe noted that her method for screening polls is not infallible.

“There is a universe where they could have come up with plausible answers to my questions,” she said. “This is an industry built on trust. I have to trust that people are answering my questions in good faith.”

While admissions of falsified polling data are rare, they are not without precedent.

In 2010, for instance, the left-leaning blog Daily Kos said that polling for its website, conducted by a firm called Research 2000, was fraudulent.

But it’s common for pollsters to release polls with minimal information about how the survey was conducted, what questions were asked, or who was behind it. Higher-quality polls rely on expensive methodologies, such as randomized sampling, so many pollsters opt for cheaper solutions. In addition, many election polls are conducted by campaigns or super PACs with a stake in the outcome of the race. This can leave few — if any — reliable and independent polls to evaluate in contests like midterm primaries.

Before writing about any poll, AP verifies that it meets high standards of transparency and methodological rigor. But even high-quality polls have some amount of error, which underscores the importance of examining each finding with caution.

Prediction markets introduce more complexity

The introduction of prediction market platforms like Kalshi and Polymarket gives polls a different significance for people betting on election outcomes.

The posts about Wisconsin and Nevada drew little reaction and were not accompanied by any discernible movement on the two prediction markets when they were released, but there were some shifts on both platforms after Bass shared the false Median Strategies numbers.

On Kalshi, the price of a “yes” contract on Bass winning the Los Angeles mayoral election rose two cents, from about 63 cents to about 65 cents, within fifteen minutes of Median’s post. On Polymarket, roughly twenty separate accounts traded thousands of contracts in Bass’s favor six minutes after the tweet.

In the days leading up to Bass’s post about Median, trading on the LA mayoral election had been thin, with a typical trade over that week being under ten dollars.

While the price movements were small, the concentration of trading on both platforms shortly after the

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release of Median's fake poll was not.

Before it was taken down, the Median Strategies website included a statement claiming that "no individual involved held or traded any position in an election prediction market, betting market, or other financial instrument tied to the races covered by Median Strategies."

Motivations for the fake data remain unclear

More than a week after the firm began sharing "results," it remains unclear who is behind Median Strategies.

No one responded to AP's questions sent to an email address listed on its website, which was created little more than a week ago. Before it was taken offline, the only content on the site was a statement indicating that the firm "has concluded its polling project and will not publish additional polls."

"All previously published polling releases have been withdrawn and should not be cited or treated as genuine polling data," it wrote.

The firm highlighted what it called "a credibility problem" in its first social media post earlier in the month.

"Polling has a credibility problem. Ours is the fix: no partisan clients, no campaign or party money, numbers that go wherever the data takes them even when it's inconvenient. Trustworthy polling, rebuilt," it wrote.

Liberia agrees to take 1,200 third-country deportees from the US

By MARK MENGONFIA Associated Press

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) — Liberia has agreed to accept up to 1,200 third-country deportees from the United States, authorities in the West African country said Tuesday, in one of the largest such arrangements under the Trump administration's broader crackdown on immigration.

The deportees will be received within a year, with the first batch of 20 expected on Thursday, Liberia's Information Minister Jerolinmek Piah told reporters. The 1,200 deportees will include Africans as well as nationals from North America, South America and the Caribbean, Piah said.

Under a series of often-secret agreements, the Trump administration has deported thousands of people to nearly two dozen countries that are not their own, advocates say, with about 10 of them in Africa.

A key issue in the agreements is that they can involve migrants with protection orders from a U.S. immigration judge not to be returned to their home countries because of concerns for their safety. The Liberian minister did not say if the deportees expected in Liberia had such protection orders.

Liberia's Justice Minister Natu Oswald Tweh said at Tuesday's briefing that the country has screened the list of migrants ahead of their arrival.

"Most of them are people who had immigration violations and offenses," he said.

They "may wish to seek asylum" in Liberia after their arrival or "can leave the country whenever they desire," Piah said.

Piah added that Liberia will receive support from the U.S. to manage the program and strengthen its migration system.

"Liberia's gesture is entirely humanitarian and in keeping with the country's longstanding traditions," he said.

"The government of Liberia intends to provide the transferred persons with the necessary support to seek protection in Liberia and to be safe during their stay here."

Immigration lawyers have said the Trump administration uses deportations to third countries as a legal loophole to indirectly force asylum seekers back to their home countries.

In many cases, migrants are deported to countries they've never been to or where they face safety risks and are left with little choice other than to return to the home countries they were fleeing from.

Sinking AI stocks pull Wall Street further from its record

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street pulled further from its all-time high on Tuesday as AI stocks got back to sinking.

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The S&P 500 fell 0.7% for a third straight modest loss since setting its all-time high on Thursday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 116 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.3%.

Leading the way lower were stocks that have been big winners in the boom around artificial-intelligence technology. They've been veering up and down this summer on worries that their prices shot too high in the AI frenzy and that the strong demand for memory, processors and other building blocks of data centers may fizzle out if AI proves less profitable than promised.

Micron Technology dropped 7%, and the seller of computer memory was one of the heaviest weights on the S&P 500. So were chip companies Nvidia, which fell 2.3%, and Broadcom, which sank 3.2%.

Even with their recent swings, such stocks remain big winners, and Micron has more than tripled this year.

But stocks that critics call too expensive get more scrutiny when interest rates are high, and yields remained that way in bond markets worldwide Tuesday.

The yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury edged down to 4.70% from 4.72% late Monday but remains well above its 3.97% level from just before the war with Iran began. The 30-year Treasury yield also ticked lower but is still near its highest level since 2007.

Yields have jumped since the war began because high oil prices are pushing upward on inflation. All the while, continuing worries about huge debt loads for governments and their increases in borrowing keep yields high.

When yields are high, investors are less willing to pay high prices for stocks and other kinds of investments, particularly those seen as the most expensive.

Much of the pressure on yields has come from oil prices, and Brent crude added 0.2% to \$91.02 per barrel. It's been swinging sharply on uncertainty about when and whether the United States and Iran can reach a deal to allow oil tankers to exit the Persian Gulf freely again. Brent was going for \$72.87 per barrel just before the start of the war.

High yields have already sent the average long-term U.S. mortgage rate near its highest level in a year, which has hurt the housing industry. A report on Tuesday said homebuilders broke ground on fewer new houses last month than economists expected.

Such data helped to restrain Home Depot's stock, which slipped 0.1% even though the retailer reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Chief Financial Officer Richard McPhail said Home Depot saw its customers continue to pursue smaller projects.

High yields could also slow the borrowing Big Tech companies are doing to pay for data centers, putting at risk one of the big sources of growth for the U.S. economy.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Klarna fell 22.8% even though the payments company reported stronger results for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The buy-now, pay-later company cut some of its financial forecasts for 2026, largely because of expectations for Germany, its largest market by volume.

Meta Platforms fell 4.4% as opening statements began in a pivotal trial in a California federal court, where states are seeking billions of dollars in damages for social media harms to children.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 53.30 points to 7,691.76. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 116.38 to 53,343.40, and the Nasdaq composite sank 355.20 to 26,289.71.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe and Asia.

South Korea's Kospi fell 1.5%, which counts as relatively modest move for it. It had swung by at least 2.4% in each of its three prior days. Seoul's market has been home to some of the world's sharpest AI-induced swings because it's dominated by two tech giants, Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix.

Gold mine collapses in Central African Republic, killing at least 30 miners

By JEAN FERNAND KOENA Associated Press

BANGUI, Central African Republic (AP) — A gold mining site collapsed Tuesday in the western part of Central African Republic, killing at least 30 miners and leaving others trapped, authorities and residents said.

The low-tech, artisanal mine collapsed Tuesday morning in the Abba region of the Nana-Mambere pre-

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fecture, according to Florian Gaguende, one of the surviving miners. He said rescuers were searching for additional miners believed trapped, but that the chance of finding them alive "is getting slimmer."

The sub-prefecture's deputy mayor, Souleymane Bi, said rescuers and residents managed over several hours to pull 30 bodies from the collapsed mine, and that injured miners were receiving treatment.

"It is horrible and we are calling for help from organizations and all people of good will to help pull from the hole those who are unable to do so," Bi said.

Footage that appears to be from the scene captured chaotic rescue efforts. Miners, mostly young men and women covered in mud, could be seen pulling out a body from the pit while dozens of other miners and workers were scattered around the expansive site, some shouting for help.

Government spokesman Evariste Ngamana sympathized with families of the victims and said authorities are "working hard to provide relief and assistance" to those affected.

Artisanal mine collapses are common in the Central African Republic, where several thousand people work in small-scale extraction mining. The work is risky because miners typically do not have enough protection and the accidents are often deadly.

US Navy destroyer with 300 sailors aboard broke down for four days in the Pacific

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. Navy destroyer with about 300 sailors aboard suffered a major breakdown in the Pacific Ocean last month that left it without power for four days, the Navy confirmed in a statement.

The USS Benfold "reported an engineering casualty involving its generators, causing a loss of power" on July 24, Navy spokesman Cmdr. Matthew Comer said in the statement. The breakdown meant the crew went without drinking water, meals, functioning toilets and air conditioning for days aboard the ship, Comer said.

The incident, which only became public on Friday when it was first reported by USNI News, comes as the Pentagon grapples with serious questions about the quality of life aboard naval vessels and the military's ability to supply ships during the conflict with Iran.

Democratic lawmakers are calling for investigations into conditions aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. Reports last week revealed that the ship, which has spent a record-setting 250 uninterrupted days at sea, has experienced shortages of supplies, including food and hygiene products, while crew members have suffered from stress and poor mental health.

Comer stressed that there were no injuries to the crew of the Benfold, "who demonstrated resilience, grit, professionalism, and unwavering steadiness in their response," but that the ship needed assistance from the George Washington carrier strike group.

The cruiser USS Robert Smalls provided meals to the stricken destroyer.

Ultimately, Comer said the Benfold had to be towed to Subic Bay, in the Philippines, for repairs, arriving on July 28. The crew was then provided food and lodging off the ship. On Aug. 8, the Benfold left port "with all engineering, combat systems, and crew support systems functioning normally," the statement said.

Meanwhile, the ships from the George Washington strike group, including the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, were spotted heading toward the Middle East. The carrier was expected to replace the Lincoln, which the acting navy secretary, Hung Cao, said last week would be returning home soon.

This would leave the waters of the Pacific without a U.S. carrier presence for an unknown period of time. The Trump administration sees China, the dominant power in the region, as "a settled force" that only needs to be deterred from dominating the U.S. or its allies and not the top global adversary that it was under the Biden administration.

Congresswoman says target of ICE operation in fatal Maine shooting wasn't up for removal

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The person Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents targeted in Maine last month when an officer shot and killed a motorist was a roommate who was not subject to a final removal order, a Democratic congresswoman from the state said.

Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a 25-year-old Colombian national, was shot and killed by an ICE agent in a car near his Biddeford home on July 13. Rep. Chellie Pingree said during a hearing in Maine on Monday that ICE's intended target was Durán Guerrero's roommate, who was the owner of the car Durán Guerrero was driving.

Pingree called the discovery a "shocking revelation in clear contradiction to what ICE" and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security have said about the shooting. She added that it was previously established Durán Guerrero was not the intended target and also did not have a final order of removal, but did have a pending asylum case and a valid work permit.

"Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero should be alive today," Pingree said during the hearing. "More than a month later, there are still so many basic questions that remain unanswered by ICE and the Trump administration."

The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement late Monday that it stands by its prior assessment of the shooting. ICE was conducting "targeted surveillance on the last known address of an illegal alien with a final order of removal," a spokesperson for the agency said.

"We are not going to disclose law enforcement sensitive intelligence and methods. Nowhere did we state that Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero or his roommate were the target of the operation," the spokesperson said.

The shooting of Durán Guerrero remains under investigation by the Office of the Maine Attorney General. Pingree was among several Democratic House members who spoke at a hearing in Biddeford on Monday to discuss ICE's use of deadly force in the state. The Department of Homeland Security said at the time of the shooting that Durán Guerrero attempted to flee the scene and the ICE officer discharged his weapon because he feared for public safety.

Pingree and other Democratic Congress members have also called for answers from Homeland Security about its training and vetting of agents after it was disclosed that the ICE officer involved in the shooting had a history of violent behavior and mental health issues. The shooting also appeared to lead to a policy change in which ICE would suspend most vehicle stops, but President Donald Trump swiftly expressed opposition to that change.

ABC sues FCC over challenge to its broadcast licenses, saying actions present 'existential threat'

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Further escalating its battle with the Trump administration, ABC on Tuesday took the rare step of suing the Federal Communications Commission on First Amendment grounds, saying the agency's demand for early review of its broadcast licenses posed an "existential threat" to the network.

In the lawsuit, ABC, its parent company Disney and the eight ABC-owned stations whose licenses are affected asked a federal court to stop the early renewal proceedings.

The FCC under Chairman Brendan Carr, an ally of President Donald Trump, had ordered the early review in April — itself a rare move — of all eight licenses owned by ABC, years before they are set to expire. Licenses are issued for eight-year periods. The FCC cited the network's diversity and inclusion practices as a reason, but the development came shortly after a joke by ABC's late-night host Jimmy Kimmel — an outspoken Trump critic — had infuriated the president, who has called for Kimmel's firing.

"Again and again, the Administration has attacked ABC's speech — the stories its journalists report and

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the viewpoints its network programs air," the network alleged in its lawsuit Tuesday. "Over time, those attacks have escalated into express demands that ABC be stripped of its broadcast licenses because of its speech."

"Facing this existential threat," it added, "Plaintiffs have no choice but to seek redress from the judicial branch for the Administration's blatant retaliation for their First Amendment speech."

It said ABC had "no alternative means to eliminate these ongoing and immediate threats other than total capitulation to the Administration's demands." It asked the court to "immediately enjoin Defendants from taking or threatening to take any action against Plaintiffs in relation to the early license renewal applications."

There are already clashes between ABC and the administration

The early license review is only one part of a long-simmering confrontation between ABC and the FCC.

The network has also been fighting Carr's efforts to make the morning talk show "The View," whose hosts and guests are often critical of Trump, subject to equal-time rules. That's a question ABC says the agency itself decided — in the network's favor — more than two decades ago. ABC argues "The View" is a bona fide news program, meaning it's exempt from equal time rules, which require granting equal airtime to competing candidates for office.

The ABC lawsuit Tuesday also spoke of broad ramifications that go well beyond one network.

"The consequences of the Administration's campaign against free speech reach well beyond ABC," it said. "If the Administration gets its way, the message to every media company in the country will be unmistakable: tell only the stories the Administration deems favorable, or face the coercive machinery of the federal government. In such a world, the press could in no way be described as free."

It added: "The FCC Chairman has left little doubt that this is his goal."

The lawsuit also quoted Carr as saying, when Kimmel made comments that angered the administration, "We can do this the easy way or the hard way. These companies can find ways . . . to take action . . . on Kimmel, or there is going to be additional work for the FCC ahead."

Carr, a longtime FCC commissioner, was named chairman by Trump in November 2025. He has indeed made it clear that he is considering revoking ABC's licenses, or trying to, in what would surely be a drawn-out legal process.

Longtime free-speech attorney Floyd Abrams noted that tensions between the press and the commission are not new — but have never been this pronounced.

"There has long been a level of tension between the broadcast media, which seeks full First Amendment protection, and the FCC," Abrams wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "But not until the Trump Administration has the government so directly, so deliberately and so dangerously sought to limit the freedom of the broadcast press to cover and discuss the news."

The lone Democrat on the FCC praises the lawsuit

The sole Democrat on the commission, Anna Gomez, commended ABC and Disney for pushing back against the FCC's actions.

"For months, the FCC has waged a campaign of censorship and control against Disney's ABC stations," she said in a statement, "using the threat of broadcast license revocations to punish a company for speech this administration doesn't like."

"I have long called on companies to push back against this kind of government intimidation, and I'm glad Disney has shown courage and stepped up," she said. "This should be a welcome sign for every broadcaster who has felt the weight of this overreaching government pressure in silence."

In late July, Carr defended his agency's actions against ABC, saying broadcasters have a duty to "operate in the public interest." The FCC, he said, was merely trying to restore that standard. Besides investigating ABC, Carr has also opened separate investigations into CBS News and NBC News.

Broadcasters like ABC, Carr said in an interview on the Fox Business Network, "struck a deal with the American people. You broadcasters get subsidized access, free access to a valuable public resource, the airwaves, worth billions of dollars. In exchange, you have to operate in the public interest."

"Look, as a country, we should have a trusted, respected news media, and we're not there," Carr said.

"So I hope more broadcasters return to their public interest obligations."

On Tuesday, an FCC spokesperson reiterated that position.

"All broadcasters have a legal obligation to operate in the public interest — even Disney," said a statement from the commission, responding to the lawsuit.

"The FCC has been examining claims that Disney engaged in illegal DEI discrimination for over a year. Disney is obviously very concerned about the FCC's proceeding, as evidenced by their ongoing campaign of disinformation as well as their decision to ask a court to stop the FCC from further pursuing matters. The FCC will continue to follow the facts and law wherever they lead."

The Moscow region is hit by a drone blitz as Russian missiles kill 10 in a Ukrainian village

By HANNA ARHIROVA and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces launched one of their biggest drone attacks on Russia since Moscow's invasion over four years ago, firing almost 800 drones only two days after a similar salvo, officials said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a Russian missile strike on a village in northeastern Ukraine's Kharkiv region killed at least 10 people and wounded 17 others as the barrage demolished homes, officials said.

The countries are locked in an escalating duel of long-range aerial strikes. Fighting on the roughly 1,250-kilometer (780-mile) front line in eastern and southern Ukraine is restricted by large numbers of drones and ground robots threatening troop movements, and neither side is making significant battlefield progress, analysts say.

Putin resists pressure for peace talks

In the past year, Ukraine has devised and deployed domestically produced long-range drones for strikes deep inside Russia. Its drone technology has impressed governments and defense manufacturers around the world.

Officials in Kyiv aim to make the Russian public feel the war's consequences and pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin into negotiating a peace settlement. Putin has so far shown no sign he intends to stop the invasion.

"Putin continues to drag out the war instead of accepting Ukraine's realistic ceasefire proposals and ending the bloodshed," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said in a post on X.

Russian air defenses overnight intercepted 791 Ukrainian drones over a number of regions, as well as annexed Crimea and the Black and the Azov seas, the Defense Ministry in Moscow said, in what was the second-largest drone attack since January 2025, according to an Associated Press tally.

More than 600 Ukrainian drones flew toward the Moscow region, where 180 were shot down, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said without elaborating.

Officials reported no deaths or major damage. Ukraine has increasingly launched swarms of hundreds of drones to try to overwhelm Russian air defenses.

In the region that surrounds the capital, three people were wounded, Gov. Andrei Vorobyov said.

Three people were also wounded in the adjacent Ryazan region where three private houses were damaged, Gov. Pavel Malkov said.

The overnight attack started a fire at a warehouse of Wildberries, Russia's biggest online retailer, in an industrial zone. Ukraine has repeatedly targeted the company, which it says helps supply the Russian military, an allegation Moscow denies.

Wildberries said its facility sustained "insignificant damage."

Russian TV doesn't report news of the attack

Coverage of the attack in state and Kremlin-backed Russian media was mostly muted, as is often the case. Russia's main TV channels — state-run Russia 1 and Channel One — did not mention the attack at all in their morning news bulletins.

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But Russian state news agency RIA Novosti featured it among the main news on its website's homepage, describing it as "one of the most large-scale attacks on Moscow since the beginning of the summer."

State newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta on its website prominently featured a roundup of what Moscow regional Gov. Andrei Vorobyov reported about the attack, describing it as "massive" in the headline. Pro-Kremlin tabloid MK featured a news brief about it on its home page.

Zelenskyy accuses Russia of a 'brutal attack' on civilians

A Russian missile strike on the village of Pechenihiy in Ukraine's Kharkiv region killed 10 civilians, according to preliminary information, said Oleh Syniehubov, head of the Kharkiv regional military administration.

Another 17 people were wounded, he said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it "a brutal attack" that damaged 10 homes, a cafe, a post office, a store and at least seven vehicles, according to Syniehubov.

"We will definitely respond to this Russian strike," he said on social media.

Also, three people were killed and three others were wounded over the past day in Russian attacks on Ukraine's Sumy region, Ukraine's National Police said.

UK vows continued Ukraine support

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, who took office last month, said the U.K. will continue to stand by Ukraine after Russia said that Kyiv's reported use of British drones for attacks on Russian soil would bring unidentified consequences.

"We are providing support so that Ukraine can defend itself, and that's been the British position all the way through this conflict by previous prime ministers," Burnham said. "It remains the case with me."

British newspaper The Sunday Times reported that two U.K. companies made drones used by Ukraine to hit Russia.

Following the report, the Russian Embassy in the U.K. said in a statement that "London's actions will inevitably carry consequences."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told Russian state TV that Moscow has the right to view British involvement in strikes on Russian territory as "participation in the war, with all the ensuing consequences."

Preservation group urges Supreme Court to suspend Trump's White House ballroom project

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A historic preservation group that sued to block construction of President Donald Trump's White House ballroom urged the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday to suspend the project while it considers whether the work can continue.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation filed its request less than a week after the Trump administration asked the nation's highest court to allow the White House to continue construction on its \$400 million ballroom project during the appeals process.

Lawyers for the trust accused the administration of trying to "outrun judicial review" rather than obtain permission for the work from Congress, as required by federal law.

The administration "cannot identify any statute granting them 'express authority' to destroy a third of the White House and replace it with a massive, privately funded ballroom, because none exists," trust attorneys wrote.

The building of the 90,000-square-foot (8,400-square-meter) ballroom has included demolishing the East Wing of the White House and is part of Trump's plans to quickly remake Washington. The project includes the addition of an underground military facility that the administration says is necessary to protect the president.

The petition comes after a divided appeals court panel upheld an order to pause aboveground construction on the project. The ruling was suspended to let the administration appeal.

The ruling left intact an order by U.S. District Judge Richard Leon, who was nominated by Republican President George W. Bush. Leon wrote that "no statute comes close to giving the President the authority

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he claims to have.”

The administration argues that the president, not Congress or the courts, has unimpeded authority to renovate the White House. The current state of the project, essentially an open construction site, makes it harder to protect the White House, the Justice Department contends.

The administration also says the National Trust for Historic Preservation does not have the legal right, or standing, to sue over the ballroom.

Trust attorneys said the preliminary injunction issued by the lower court is “already narrowly tailored, and limited in scope and duration.”

“It expressly allows (the administration) to continue building their underground military facility, to protect the President, his family, and his staff, and to maintain the safety and security of the White House complex,” they wrote.

Chief Justice John Roberts had set a deadline of Tuesday for the trust to respond in writing to the administration’s petition. Solicitor General D. John Sauer, who represents the administration, asked the Supreme Court to rule on its stay petition before the appeals court panel’s decision takes effect on Friday.

“This case involves an extraordinary and unlawful injunction that will halt the ongoing construction of the integrated military complex, including a totally secure ballroom space, at the East Wing of the White House, which is vitally required by national security,” Sauer wrote.

The ballroom has been under construction for 10 months. The administration says the work is roughly 65% finished.

Penn State frat pledges were made to cut and bag cocaine for college drug ring, authorities say

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) — Penn State fraternity pledges were made to cut and package cocaine for a drug ring that was run out of two off-campus frat houses, authorities said.

The illicit initiation was revealed Monday as Pennsylvania Attorney General Dave Sunday charged 14 people — including 13 current or former Penn State students — in connection with the alleged drug ring.

The man accused of leading the operation, 24-year-old Agostino Abbatiello, surrendered on Tuesday after failing to appear for a scheduled arraignment on Monday on charges including possession with intent to deliver and conspiracy. He was ordered jailed without bail.

A message seeking comment was left for Abbatiello’s lawyer.

According to court documents, the drug ring operated in 2023 and 2024, fueled by bulk quantities of cocaine that two of the charged men obtained from contacts in Philadelphia and New York.

They cut and bagged the drugs mainly at the Sigma Chi and Delta Upsilon fraternity houses, using frat brothers and pledges as labor, then distributed it through Penn State students, court documents said.

One of the men said a co-defendant was the “largest distributor of cocaine” at Penn State and would “boast about how much money he was making from selling cocaine.” At least four of the defendants are current students, Sunday’s office said.

“This is very serious criminal conduct. There was nothing junior or childlike about this type of conduct,” Sunday said at a news conference on Monday. “This was an upper-level trafficking organization for this region in Pennsylvania.”

Four people are charged with conspiracy, dealing in proceeds of unlawful activity, felony corrupt organizations and other offenses. Another defendant is charged with felony conspiracy and criminal use of a communication facility.

Eight defendants are charged with misdemeanor drug possession.

Paul Robinson, the father of a student who was accused with Abbatiello of being one of the ring’s two main suppliers, is charged with felony tampering, hindering apprehension and obstructing the investigation. Authorities say he took steps to conceal evidence, including a safe containing drugs and cash.

Court documents did not list a lawyer who could speak on Robinson’s behalf.

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Penn State said it placed Delta Upsilon on interim suspension, noting Sigma Chi is not recognized by the university and is not subject to its oversight.

Delta Upsilon Executive Director Justin Kirk said anyone involved in the drug ring who had ties to Delta Upsilon was expelled or suspended from the fraternity if they did not resign.

Sigma Chi's executive director, Michael Church, said the three Sigma Chi members who were charged have been suspended pending the outcome of the judicial process. He said the fraternity has suspended all operations at its Penn State chapter on an interim basis "while we determine whether these allegations reflect individual conduct or organized chapter activity."

"This conduct is an egregious violation of our values and has no place in our fraternity, community, or society," Church said, adding that any members involved "will be held fully accountable to the extent available to our fraternity."

Senator presses Hegseth, Caine for commitment to keep US military out of the midterm elections

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin asked Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Tuesday to confirm he won't send U.S. troops to polling places during November's midterm elections, as Democrats have raised concerns that the Trump administration could use the military to interfere with the vote.

"I'd ask you to confirm a simple statement: the Department of Defense will not send Federal troops to the polls or to seize election materials of any kind," Slotkin wrote to Hegseth and to Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in letters Tuesday.

The Pentagon said in an email that it will respond directly to Slotkin, as it does with all congressional correspondence. The Joint Chiefs did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Slotkin told The Associated Press that Trump has been laying the groundwork to claim the midterms were stolen. She noted that Trump contemplated using the military to seize voting machines after his loss in 2020 and has deployed the National Guard to cities against the wishes of Democratic leaders. He also deployed active duty Marines to Los Angeles during his immigration crackdown in 2025.

"He's very clearly laying the breadcrumbs to be able to say the day after the election that he didn't really lose the House or he didn't really lose the Senate," Slotkin said.

Slotkin asked Hegseth during an April congressional hearing if he would follow orders to seize ballots. Hegseth called the question a "gotcha hypothetical," but said, "I've never been ordered to do anything illegal, and I won't."

White House chief of staff Susie Wiles denied in a Vanity Fair interview last year that Trump would use the military to suppress voting in the midterms.

"I say it is categorically false, will not happen. It's just wrongheaded," she said.

Federal law prohibits the deployment of armed federal forces to election locations unless "necessary to repel armed enemies of the United States." If any element of the military were to get involved, it would likely be the National Guard under state control.

In 2020, Gen. Mark Milley, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responded to a similar letter from Slotkin, then a congresswoman.

"I believe deeply in the principle of an apolitical U.S. military," Milley wrote. "In the event of a dispute over some aspect of the elections, by law U.S. courts and the U.S. Congress are required to resolve any disputes, not the U.S. military."

Drills cut by Trump are central to the US-South Korea alliance, observers say

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — For decades, the United States and South Korea have regularly staged

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military drills to prepare their soldiers to work together smoothly in the event of a crisis or conflict with North Korea.

But this year's Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise, one of two main drills conducted by the allies annually, could be disrupted after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered his Pentagon chief to "substantially" scale it back just before its start Monday.

He cited what he said was a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea's refusal to join the U.S. war against Iran. It was unclear what parts of the 11-day exercise were being cut and to what extent, but many experts say Trump's move threatens to hurt combined U.S.-South Korean readiness and eventually weaken their decades-long alliance.

The exercise is central to the US-South Korea alliance

The Ulchi Freedom Shield, or UFS, is largely a computer-simulated command post exercise meant to hone the allies' ability to deal with potential regional security threats like North Korean aggression. The two countries usually hold field training exercises during the command post exercise period.

South Korea's military had earlier said this year's exercise would be similar in scale to previous years, with the participation of about 18,000 South Korean soldiers. The U.S. military said it would incorporate lessons from recent conflicts such as North Korea's battlefield experiences on the Russia-Ukraine front. Local media reported South Korea and the U.S. had planned 14 field training exercises.

The UFS, along with a similar joint war game in the spring, is a central pillar of the U.S. -South Korea alliance, which dates back to the 1950-53 Korean War. But it's also a long-running source of tensions with North Korea, which has denounced the exercises as a rehearsal for war and responded with provocative missile tests.

On Friday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry accused the U.S. and South Korea of plotting more provocative drills this year and vowed to respond with "a new level of a deterrent." The U.S. and South Korea have said their regular drills are defensive in nature.

Field training will likely be affected by Trump's decision

In a social media post, Trump called the exercise costly, "with much of these costs paid for by the United States of America." During his first term, Trump complained about the cost of drills with South Korea, suspending joint exercises in 2018 to advance now-stalled nuclear negotiations with North Korea.

Gen. Xavier Brunson, commander of about 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, visited South Korean Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back on Tuesday for talks likely focusing on the adjustment of this year's drills, according to media reports. South Korea's Defense Ministry said it couldn't confirm the reports.

Yang Uk, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said the U.S. will likely participate in the command post exercise but cancel "some costly field training that requires large-scale movements of troops."

Yang said that a downsizing or suspension of military drills matters because commanders of the allies change periodically. He said a one-year suspension of drills would see commanders unfamiliar with procedures of those drills taking part when they resume.

Trump's move could strain the US-South Korea alliance

Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, said Trump's move could result in the U.S. downsizing other regular drills with South Korea, posing "a big, crippling blow" to their joint operation posture.

Lee Illwoo, an expert with the Korea Defense Network, said downsizing the exercise will likely delay the planned transfer to a system in which wartime operational control would be exercised by a binational command led by a South Korean general.

Under the current system, the U.S. military would command joint forces in the event of war.

The South Korean and U.S. militaries had earlier said the exercise would be an opportunity to support preparations for the transfer. South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Tuesday stressed the need to complete the transition during his term that ends in 2030.

Many South Koreans view the transition to South Korean leadership of the combined forces in wartime to be a matter of national sovereignty, but others worry that could weaken the alliance.

Texas puts 4 players on preseason AP All-America team; 14 of the 27 first-team picks are from SEC

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Texas leads all teams with four players named to the preseason Associated Press All-America team announced Tuesday and the Southeastern Conference has 14 of the 27 first-team selections on the eve of the college football season.

The Big Ten has eight players on the first team, led by Oregon quarterback Dante Moore and two of his teammates.

Defending national champion Indiana, Georgia and Oklahoma each has two players on the first team, as determined by media members on the AP Top 25 voting panel.

The Texas players on the team are offensive lineman Trevor Goosby, wide receiver Cam Coleman, defensive lineman Colin Simmons and linebacker Rasheem Biles.

Defensive lineman A'Mauri Washington and safety Koi Perich are the Oregon players joining Moore, who edged out Mississippi's Trinidad Chambliss for first-team honors.

Wide receiver Jeremiah Smith, the Big Ten preseason offensive player of the year, is the only selection from Ohio State, the No. 1 team in the preseason AP Top 25 poll.

Smith, Missouri running back Ahmad Hardy and Notre Dame cornerback Leonard Moore are returning AP first-team All-America picks who are on the preseason team.

Iowa's Kade Pieper was voted first-team center by a wide margin even though this will be his first season playing the position. He moved from right guard to replace 2025 consensus All-American Logan Jones.

The AP All-America team for this season will be released in December.

First team offense

Quarterback — Dante Moore, fourth year, Oregon.

Running backs — Kewan Lacy, third year, Mississippi; Ahmad Hardy, third year, Missouri.

Tackles — Carter Smith, fifth year, Indiana; Trevor Goosby, fourth year, Texas.

Guards — Evan Tengesdahl, fourth year, Cincinnati; Shadre Hurst, fifth year, Houston.

Center — Kade Pieper, fourth year, Iowa.

Tight end — Trey'Dez Green, third year, LSU.

Wide receivers — Jeremiah Smith, third year, Ohio State; Malachi Toney, second year, Miami; Cam Coleman, third year, Texas.

All-purpose player — Wayne Knight, fifth year, UCLA.

Kicker — Tate Sandell, fifth year, Oklahoma.

First team defense

Edge — Colin Simmons, third year, Texas; Dylan Stewart, third year, South Carolina.

Tackles — A'Mauri Washington, fourth year, Oregon; David Stone, third year, Oklahoma.

Linebackers — Rasheem Biles, fourth year, Texas; Xavier Atkins, third year, Auburn; Rolijah Hardy, third year, Indiana.

Cornerbacks — Leonard Moore, third year, Notre Dame; Ellis Robinson IV, third year, Georgia.

Safeties — KJ Bolden, third year, Georgia; Koi Perich, third year, Oregon.

Defensive back — Bray Hubbard, fourth year, Alabama.

Punter — Evan Crenshaw, fifth year, Troy.

Second team offense

Quarterback — Trinidad Chambliss, fifth year, Mississippi.

Running backs — Mark Fletcher Jr., fourth year, Miami; LJ Martin, fourth year, BYU.

Tackles — Cayden Green, fourth year, Missouri; Jordan Seaton, third year, LSU.

Guards — Greg Johnson, fourth year, Minnesota; Luke Montgomery, fourth year, Ohio State.

Center — Drew Bobo, fifth season, Georgia.

Tight end — Terrance Carter Jr., fifth year, Texas Tech.

Wide receivers — Duce Robinson, fourth year, Florida State; Charlie Becker, third year, Indiana; KJ Duff, third year, Rutgers.

All-purpose player — Cam Cook, fourth year, West Virginia.

Kicker — Lucas Carneiro, fifth year, Mississippi.

Second team defense

Edge — Anthony Smith, fifth season, Minnesota; John Henry Daley, fourth year, Michigan.

Tackles — Tyrique Tucker, fifth year, Indiana; Will Echoles, third year, Mississippi.

Linebackers — Sammy Brown, third year Clemson; Raylen Wilson, fourth year, Georgia; Kyngstonn Viliamu-Asa, third year, Notre Dame.

Cornerbacks — Brandon Finney Jr., second year, Oregon; Zabien Brown, third year, Alabama.

Safeties — Brauntae Johnson, third year, Notre Dame; Ty Benefield, fourth year, LSU.

Defensive back — Kelley Jones, fourth year, Mississippi State.

Punter — Palmer Williams, fourth year, Baylor.

Flight attendants and pilots have highest risk of dying from radiation-linked cancers, study says

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Flight attendants and pilots are at the highest risk of dying from radiation-related cancers — even more than people who work with radioactive materials, according to a new study.

Cosmic radiation comes from space. Only a small amount reaches the Earth's surface, but exposure is greater for people flying at high altitudes.

There's been limited evidence from small studies suggesting that the exposure translates to higher cancer death rates among people who fly often — particularly pilots and flight attendants. The new study "brings important new evidence to bear on this question," two Australian radiation experts who weren't involved in the research wrote in an accompanying commentary.

The latest study, published Monday by JAMA Internal Medicine, used national data from more than 12 million death certificates that included information about occupations. The authors looked at death rates from cancers that are tied to radiation exposures, including leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and cancers of the skin, breast, thyroid, prostate and central nervous system.

Among more than 500 occupations, flight attendants had the highest percentage of deaths from radiation-related cancers, and pilots were second, the researchers found. For those two occupations, the odds of dying were unusually high for each type of radiation-related cancer.

Neither group showed higher-than-normal death rates from cancers that aren't tied to radiation exposure, noted the commentary writers, Catherine Olsen and Ken Karipidis. That fact "supports the hypothesis that occupational radiation exposure, rather than lifestyle or socioeconomic factors, underlies the observed excess," they wrote.

The researchers found that flight attendants had about 50% higher odds of dying from a radiation-related cancer than the general working population, and pilots had about 36% higher odds.

In terms of absolute risk, about 6.9% of flight attendant deaths were from these cancers — roughly 1 in 14. Among pilots, it was 6.7%. For the general working population, it was 5%, said the study's first author, Dr. Vishal Patel of Harvard Medical School.

The authors acknowledged some limitations in their study. They do not know how much exposure each flight attendant and pilot got in the air or from other sources. It's also possible occupations were misclassified on some death certificates.

They also could not account for another possible contributor specific to the professions: Cancer risk can be worsened by frequent disruption of the body's internal clock, which can be affected by jet lag, crossing time zones and irregular work schedules.

The Federal Aviation Administration has acknowledged that aircrews are exposed to ionizing radiation, but the government does not set federal dose limits or require monitoring, the authors noted.

"You can't manage an exposure you've decided not to measure," Patel said in an email.

Sara Nelson, who leads a union representing 55,000 flight attendants, said the report reinforces that radiation exposure needs to be taken seriously, as the union has suggested for years.

"The risk is known, but crew are not educated or informed. And, no one is taking responsibility," said Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA.

Annual skin examinations may be warranted for all people working on high-altitude flights, and women in those jobs may want to get mammograms earlier or more frequently, Olsen and Karipidis wrote. Doctors who care for pilots and flight attendants also should have a "heightened index of suspicion" for cancer when evaluating these patients, they said.

Madonna leads 2026 MTV Video Music Awards nominations, followed by Taylor Swift

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Madonna leads the 2026 MTV Video Music Award nominations, the network announced Tuesday.

The pop superstar has been nominated in every decade of her musical career. She has 19 competitive MTV VMA wins and in 1986 became the first solo female artist to receive the Video Vanguard Award.

She is up for 11 awards at this year's ceremony, including video, artist and song of the year as well as best collaboration, dance, direction, art direction, cinematography, editing, choreography and visual effects.

If she were to sweep, she'd tie Beyoncé and Taylor Swift for the title of most-awarded musician in VMA history. They have 30 each. (Eminem is the male artist with the most VMAs, with 15.)

Speaking of Swift: She follows Madonna with the second-most nominations, with nine. If she takes home even one award, she will become the most-awarded artist in VMA history.

Swift is up for video and artist of the year as well as best pop, direction, art direction, cinematography, editing, choreography and visual effects.

Madonna and Swift are followed by Ariana Grande and Sabrina Carpenter with seven nods to their name as well as Bruno Mars, PinkPantheress and Zara Larsson with five. Blackpink's LISA has four and Shakira, Tate McRae, GENER8ION and Yung Lean are tied for three.

Rounding out the artist of the year category nominees are Grande, Mars, Carpenter and Morgan Wallen, in addition to Madonna and Swift.

The top prize of the night, video of the year, sees Swift's "The Fate of Ophelia" compete against Madonna's "Confessions II — The Film," Grande's "Hate That I Made You Love Me," Mars' "I Just Might," Carpenter's "Tear" and GENER8ION's "Storm" starring Yung Lean.

The two-hour show will broadcast live on CBS on Sunday, Sept. 27, at 7:30 p.m. Eastern and 4:30 p.m. Pacific, from the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. It will also simulcast on MTV and be available to stream on Paramount+ in the U.S.

The show will become available to stream globally the next day on Paramount+ and MTV.

CBS is home to a number of award shows, including the Tony Awards and the American Music Awards. It has aired the Grammys since 1973, though that show will head to ABC in 2027.

This year's Video Music Awards features 26 first-time nominees, which include GENER8ION and Yung Lean (with their aforementioned three nods, for their "Storm" collaboration) and the K-pop boy band CORTIS and viral "Boston" singer Stella Lefty with two each. Other notable first-time nominees include Don Toliver, Kali Uchis, Noah Kahan, Olivia Dean, Tucker Wetmore and Sienna Spiro.

The best dance category has returned for the first time in seven years. Nominees include McRae's "Nobody's Girl," Bebe Rexha and Faithless' "New Religion," Harry Styles' "Aperture," Lady Gaga and Doechii's "Runway," Madonna's "Confessions II — The Film," PinkPantheress' "Stateside" with Larsson and Slayyyter's "Dance ..."

Fan voting began online Tuesday across 13 categories and ends Sept. 25 at 6 p.m. Eastern and 3 p.m. Pacific.

Voting in the best new artist category will remain active during the show.

A physics graduate, a soccer player, a teen who couldn't swim: They died in the Ceuta migrant surge

By AKRAM OUBACHIR Associated Press

CASABLANCA, Morocco (AP) — Ayoub Akbili needed money for his mother's surgery. Hamza Haibouri wanted a shot at a professional soccer career. Abdelouahed Iken was chasing the glossy life a friend posted about on Facebook from Italy.

So when they heard rumors that Morocco's border with Spain was open, they decided to join the rush to try to reach Europe.

All three died attempting to cross, becoming victims of the deadliest migration crisis between Morocco and Spain.

Fueled by misinformation, poverty and lack of opportunities, more than 70,000 would-be migrants from Morocco and beyond swam or climbed over a breakwater last month to try to reach Ceuta, a Spanish territory on the North African coast. At least 90 people died attempting to cross the border, according to official figures; rights groups reported a much higher toll. Many families still haven't been able to retrieve the bodies.

Nearly all the survivors have returned to Morocco, and both countries have intensified security measures. Moroccan and Spanish authorities blamed social media rumors and human smuggling networks for the surge, while migrants cited unemployment and low wages as major factors.

The pull of the crowd

Akbili, 31, lived in Tangier, about an hour from the coastal Moroccan town of Fnideq. Migration had been on his mind for some time, but friends and family said he had never considered crossing illegally.

He held a college degree in physics, but couldn't find a job in his field and worked at a car parts factory. He earned about \$421 a month, slightly above the median salary in the North African country.

Buoyed by ambitions to become a regional hub for the auto industry, Morocco's economy is expected to grow by 4.5% this year. But policymakers face a persistent challenge: turning that growth into jobs that offer higher wages.

Akbili was working the 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. shift when he saw Facebook posts about people crossing into Ceuta. He wanted to try his luck in hopes of finding a job that could help his mother pay for hernia surgery.

"His mind changed completely. He went from someone who wasn't thinking about illegal migration to wanting to go by all means," Abdelhakim Saadaoui, a relative and Akbili's apartment mate, told The Associated Press.

Akbili persuaded Saadaoui to go with him. On July 31, they paid a driver \$129 to take them near the border with Ceuta — the equivalent of two months' rent.

When they arrived, Saadaoui said, there was complete chaos. From a distance, the crowds looked like ants, he said, as streets filled with people heading toward the frontier. Police fired stun grenades and tear gas in an attempt to disperse them, he said.

Saadaoui decided not to continue. Akbili went on. The two remained in contact by phone.

Then Akbili stopped answering.

A Moroccan Interior Ministry document obtained by the AP says Akbili died at midnight on July 31. His death was classified as "unnatural," attributed to "severe head trauma." He was buried in his hometown of Khenifra.

His family was told he died after falling from a cliff. The Interior Ministry said one of the 11 deaths recorded on the Moroccan side was caused by a cliff fall.

But a cousin suspects foul play and wants further investigation.

"His phone and wallet stayed intact. How is it possible for someone who fell from a cliff?" Zakaria Akbili told the AP.

Soccer dreams drove one victim

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Hamza Haibouri, who played soccer for Morocco's second-division Kenitra Athletic Club, was buoyed by dreams of making it big playing in Europe, said his childhood friend Bilal Ratib.

The 28-year-old Haibouri was vacationing in Martil, a Moroccan beach town about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Ceuta, when he saw people heading there and decided to join them. His death in the frenzied attempt to cross was announced by the soccer team's fan club.

Ratib said Haibouri visited France when he was young and had always wanted to return.

"He always had this idea of living abroad and going to France, to get better soccer and a better life," Ratib said.

"He was a great man, even when we were young and reckless, he would always go to the mosque early for the first prayer," Ratib said. "He was deeply religious."

Haibouri, whose income came entirely from soccer, earned around \$540 a month when he played, but he hadn't played at all this year, Ratib said.

Families learn of deaths through Facebook

Abdelouahed Iken, 19, was finishing high school in the southern city of Agadir. He regularly admired photos on Facebook posted by a friend who had migrated to Italy.

When he heard rumors the Ceuta border was open, he asked his mother for money to travel to his home village.

But instead of going home, Iken traveled more than 530 miles (850 kilometers) north to Ceuta with friends, according to family member Housine Zligui. Zligui said he learned about Iken's death on Facebook, and the family is now working to bring his body home.

Iken could not swim, so he bought a life jacket for the crossing. Friends who returned told the family they saw him struggling in the water before he drowned, Zligui said.

For many Moroccans, Europe represents the possibility of work, stability and a better future. Those who make it abroad often return home with designer clothes, cars and euros, becoming symbols of success — and envy.

Money sent home by Moroccans living overseas reached \$6.6 billion in the first six months of this year, according to government figures, equivalent to more than 3% of the country's GDP.

Families asked to pay huge repatriation costs

Families were asked to pay some 2,500 euros (\$2,900) in repatriation costs to bring the bodies of their loved ones home from Ceuta, according to Ratib and Zligui.

The AP was unable to confirm the cost. But repatriating a body from Spain to Morocco generally requires authorization from the Moroccan Consulate and a Spanish mortuary transit document. Moroccan rules typically call for a sealed coffin and a certificate confirming the death wasn't caused by a contagious disease.

A spokesperson for Ceuta's government said Friday the paperwork to repatriate the bodies of those who died in the crossing was complete, but Morocco's government had not accepted it. The Moroccan government did not respond to an AP email with detailed questions about what was holding up repatriation, who was responsible for covering the costs and whether the Moroccan government would assist families in paying to have their loved ones returned.

Autopsies on 82 migrants brought ashore in Spain have been completed, said Manuel Aparcero, director of Ceuta's forensic team.

Haibouri's sister underwent DNA testing so that Ceuta authorities could confirm her brother's identity. Authorities in Ceuta gave Haibouri's sister his identification card and driver's license but did not allow her to see his body, Ratib said.

"It will take around 20 days or more" for the body to be returned, he said. "You can't imagine the families' suffering."

The Trade Union Network for Migration in Morocco called on Morocco and Spain to cover the costs of returning the dead to their families.

Back in Tangier, Saadaoui moved in with co-workers. He couldn't bear living without Akbili.

"He was telling me at the border, 'I will never come back,'" Saadaoui said. "And indeed, he will never come back."

South Korea president stresses US alliance as many baffled by Trump order to cut exercises

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president said Tuesday a solid alliance with the United States underpins national security, after U.S. President Donald Trump's abrupt order to "substantially reduce" joint military exercises left many many South Koreans baffled and concerned.

Trump made the surprise announcement in a social media post just before U.S. and South Korean soldiers began Monday's annual Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, which are largely designed to sharpen readiness against North Korean threats.

Trump cited what he said was a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea's refusal to join the U.S. war against Iran.

Trump's move was apparently taken without consultations with South Korea and meant to reach out to Kim, deepening concerns about the reliability of the U.S.-South Korean alliance forged in the turmoil of the 1950-53 Korean War.

A weakening of the U.S. defense commitment could shake South Korea's national security as it has no nuclear weapons and is under the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" protection, which guarantees a devastating American response in the event of an attack on its ally by nuclear-armed North Korea. The U.S. has about 28,500 troops in South Korea.

Confidence in the U.S. has already eroded among many South Koreans because of Trump's tariff war and last year's immigration raid in the U.S. state of Georgia that led to the detention of hundreds of South Korean workers.

Trump's announcement "reveals the stark reality of a faltering Korea-U.S. alliance, fueling public anxiety," South Korea's Hankook Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial Tuesday. "It's absurd that the U.S. appears to treat North Korea more respectfully than its ally South Korea."

South Korean leader calls for solid US alliance

In a regular Cabinet meeting, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung stressed the importance of a firm military alliance with the U.S., saying that "national security will be further strengthened when the alliance is solid."

"When we build up our strengths, our value and importance as an ally will further grow," said Lee, a liberal who has called for a stronger, self-reliant defense posture.

It was unclear which parts of the 11-day South Korea-U.S. exercises were being downsized. The South Korean and U.S. militaries earlier said their drills this year would be similar in scale to previous years and incorporate lessons from recent conflicts such as North Korea's battlefield experiences on the Russia-Ukraine front. They also said the drills are defensive in nature.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry accused South Korea and the U.S. of plotting more provocative drills this year and vowed to respond with "a new level of a deterrent."

Prospects unclear for reengagement between Trump and Kim

Kim has shunned any talks with the U.S. and South Korea since his earlier high-profile diplomacy with Trump fell apart in 2019.

Experts say Kim won't likely embrace Trump's overture and return to talks anytime soon unless he is promised bigger U.S. concessions. Kim has boosted his military and diplomatic credentials in recent years by enlarging his nuclear arsenal and aligning with Russia over its war against Ukraine.

Lee's presidential office on Monday expressed hopes that a "friendly relationship" between Trump and Kim would lead to "meaningful dialogue" between their countries to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula. That invited a backlash from conservatives, who criticized Lee's government for allegedly prioritizing resumption of Kim-Trump diplomacy over security concerns.

"South Korea's security bulwark is being shaken to its very foundations," Park Chung-kwon, a spokesperson for the main conservative opposition People Power Party, said in a statement.

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Doubts about US alliance grow in South Korea

In his social media post, Trump said the military exercises with South Korea are not only costly but "send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile" to North Korea, which he said "has been unthreatening and respectful" during his time in the White House. Trump said he asked Lee if South Korea would join the U.S. in the "denuclearization" of Iran, "and they said, 'No thanks!'"

Lee's office said South Korea and the U.S. are closely discussing practical and military contributions that South Korea can make to help restore freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

"Trump thinks of an alliance as an investment that should pay regular dividends, or a rainy-day fund he can withdraw from when another project isn't going well," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"South Korean leaders understand that relations with the Trump administration will be a constant renegotiation linking economic and security issues. Seoul is thus cautiously responding to recent developments within that framework," Easley said.

Today in History: August 19, last U.S. combat troops leave Iraq

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 19, the 231st day of 2026. There are 134 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On Aug. 19, 2010, the last American combat brigade exited Iraq, seven years and five months after a U.S.-led invasion marked the beginning of the Iraq War.

Also on this date:

In 1692, four men and one woman were hanged after being convicted of witchcraft at Salem in the Province of Massachusetts Bay; the story of one of the men, John Proctor, inspired Arthur Miller's play "The Crucible."

In 1812, the USS Constitution defeated the British frigate HMS Guerriere off Nova Scotia during the War of 1812, earning the nickname "Old Ironsides."

In 1814, during the War of 1812, British forces landed at Benedict, Maryland, with the objective of capturing Washington, D.C.

In 1854, 31 U.S. soldiers were killed after one of the soldiers fatally shot Brule Lakota Chief Conquering Bear, sparking the First Sioux War.

In 1909, Indianapolis Motor Speedway hosted its first automobile race.

In 1934, German voters approved the vesting of sole executive power in Adolf Hitler.

In 1953, Iran's elected prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq, was overthrown in a coup backed by the U.S. and U.K. that ultimately restored Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to power.

In 1955, torrential rains caused by Hurricane Diane resulted in severe flooding in the northeastern U.S., claiming some 200 lives.

In 1960, a tribunal in Moscow convicted American U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers of espionage. (Although sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, Powers was returned to the United States in 1962 as part of a prisoner exchange.)

In 1980, 301 people aboard Saudia Flight 163 died as the jetliner made a fiery emergency return to the Riyadh airport.

In 2013, South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius was indicted in Pretoria, South Africa, on charges of murder and illegal possession of ammunition in the shooting death of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, at his home on Valentine's Day; Pistorius maintained he'd mistaken her for an intruder. (Pistorius would be found guilty of murder and sentenced to prison; he was released on parole in January 2024.)

In 2022, armed Islamic militants stormed a hotel in Somalia's capital, engaging in an hourslong firefight with security forces that left at least 20 people dead and dozens wounded. Authorities said more than 100 hostages were rescued during the 30-hour siege in Mogadishu.

Today's Birthdays: Former tennis player & coach Renee Richards is 92. Actor Jill St. John is 86. Author

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Jack Canfield is 82. Rock singer Ian Gillan (Deep Purple) is 81. Former President Bill Clinton is 80. Actor Jim Carter ("Downton Abbey") is 78. Rock bassist John Deacon (Queen) is 76. Actor-director Jonathan Frakes is 74. Actor Peter Gallagher is 71. Actor Adam Arkin is 70. Football Hall of Famer Anthony Munoz is 68. Musician Ivan Neville is 67. Football Hall of Famer Morten Andersen is 66. Actor John Stamos is 63. Actor Kyra Sedgwick is 61. Country singer Lee Ann Womack is 59. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella is 59. Country singer Clay Walker is 57. Olympic gold medal tennis player Mary Joe Fernandez is 55. Actor Erika Christensen is 44. Actor Melissa Fumero is 44. Author Veronica Roth is 38. Actor Ethan Cutkosky (TV: "Shameless") is 27. Actor Brighton Sharbino is 24.