

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 1 of 66

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [4- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [5- Swenson switches from math to shop](#)
- [6- Aberdeen Mayor Schaunaman injured, son killed in paragliding crash](#)
- [7- SD SearchLight: South Dakota airport directors seek additional funding for construction projects](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: One uranium project takes a step toward state permit, while another stays stalled by legal questions](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Poor coordination, missing documents, mismatched training: Report analyzes prison releases in SD](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: US ag exports 'on the right track,' trade rep says, but farmers still wary](#)
- [13- Weather Pages](#)
- [17- Daily Devotional](#)
- [18- Subscription Form](#)
- [19- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [20- News from the Associated Press](#)

Community Calendar

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)

Sunday, Aug. 23

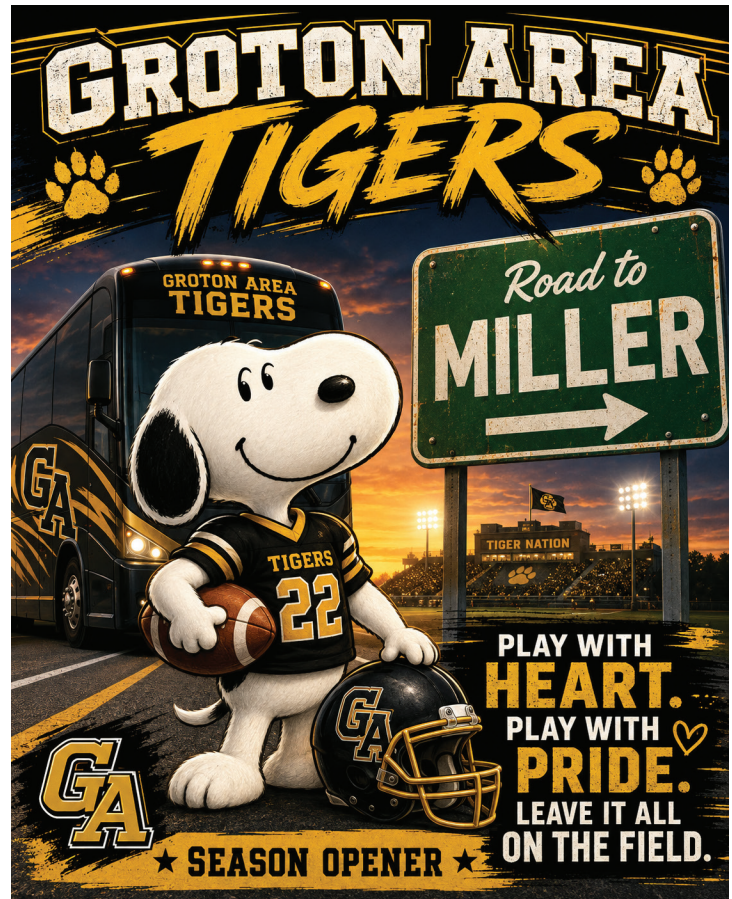
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion and baptism, 9 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., at Zion, 11 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

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

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

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

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

Tuesday, Aug. 25

Senior Menu: Egg salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, fruit, cookie.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

NEC Boys Golf Meet, 10 a.m., Olive Grove Golf Course

Volleyball at Hamlin (C match at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 2 of 66

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.

North Korean Missiles

North Korea fired about 10 short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters yesterday, according to South Korea's military, hours after Pyongyang dismissed President Donald Trump's latest attempt to ease tensions.

The missiles traveled roughly 185 miles before landing in the sea. The test came during the annual US-South Korea Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, which Trump shortened from 11 days to five in a bid to reduce tensions. Washington and Seoul call the drills defensive, while North Korea considers them preparations for an invasion and often responds with weapons tests. Kim Jong Un's sister said the reduction changed nothing, though she described Trump and Kim's relationship as "excellent." Trump, who met Kim three times from 2018 to 2019, said Wednesday he hopes to meet him again this year; Pyongyang has rejected giving up its nuclear arsenal as a condition for renewed talks.

 Humankind: Hospice nurse and local resident fulfill a patient's dying wish to snuggle a golden retriever with "puppy breath." (w/photos)

Property Tycoon Behind Bars

A Chinese court yesterday sentenced the billionaire founder of Evergrande to life in prison, five years after the property developer's collapse triggered a nationwide housing crisis.

Hui Ka Yan, once Asia's richest man, pleaded guilty in April to eight charges, including misuse of funds and fundraising fraud. The 67-year-old founded Evergrande in 1996 as China was urbanizing. The company borrowed heavily from local governments, banks, and other creditors for decades to finance its rapid growth. When Chinese officials in 2020 restricted how much developers could borrow to curb soaring housing costs, the company was forced to default on over \$300B in debt. Hui and other executives were later found to have manipulated financial data, with revenue overstated by roughly \$80B in 2019 and 2020.

China's housing crisis has erased roughly \$18T in household wealth since 2021, outstripping losses seen during the 2008-09 US financial crisis.

Fall Weather Predictions

Nearly all US states are likely to see warmer-than-average temperatures in the coming three months, a new federal forecast reveals.

Summerlike weather is most likely to persist in the Pacific Northwest, where below-average rainfall is also expected—potentially fueling the spread of wildfires. Wetter-than-average conditions are forecast for the Southwest and Southeast. On the East Coast, an El Niño fall is expected to suppress hurricane activity, though high-tide flooding is predicted on the West Coast.

Forecasters could not say whether temperatures would be above or below average in the Ohio Valley, encompassing Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Separately, the Old Farmer's Almanac and the Farmers' Almanac both released their outlooks yesterday. Research shows only about half of the latter's predictions have historically been borne out.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 3 of 66

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Premier League soccer kicks off today, with defending champion Arsenal taking on newly promoted Coventry City at 3 pm ET (More, w/full schedule) | US Open singles champions to earn \$5.5M, the highest winnings in Grand Slam history.

Nearly 40% of music released in July 2026 was at least partly created using AI, per new AI detection tool; about 23% of songs were fully AI-generated.

Apple Music to put labels on songs created with AI later this year.

"The Odyssey" earns nearly \$1.4B globally, surpassing Disney's "Deadpool and Wolverine" to become the highest-grossing R-rated film of all time.

Science & Technology

Saliva samples appear able to detect colorectal cancer and may be a more accurate diagnostic tool than widely used fecal tests.

Colorectal cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among people under age 50; why?.

Researchers develop electronic skin that can detect pressure and temperature with 10 times more sensitivity than current commercial glove sensors, potentially helping amputees gain feeling in their prosthetics.

Mysterious lipid droplets in cats' kidneys may help create unique scent marks that cats use to identify each other.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.9%, Dow -1.3%, Nasdaq -1.0%) as rising Treasury yields increase borrowing costs.

Walmart shares tumble 9.2% after reporting smallest sales growth in over six years; retailer to use its \$2.9B in tariff refunds to lower prices on 11,000 items, including groceries.

Charter Communications, the US' largest cable operator, completes \$34.5B acquisition of Cox Communications; merged company will serve approximately 37 million subscribers across 45 states.

Politics & World Affairs

FBI agents search the Washington, DC, home of former California Rep. Eric Swalwell (D) and seize electronic devices in probe tied to allegations of sexual assault; raid is reportedly part of a federal civil rights investigation.

Russian missile and drone strike kills at least 16 people in Kyiv, Ukrainian officials say, amid the country's ongoing shortages of US-made air defense interceptors.

A 35-year-old woman is charged in thwarted ISIS plot to bomb the New York State Capitol building in Albany.

EMPLOYMENT

Wanted full or part time help for harvest. Someone who can drive combine, semi or tractor. Housing available. Near Aberdeen call 605-380-4898. (0819.0909pd).
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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 4 of 66



Football

Groton Area at
Miller/Highmore-Harrold
Friday, Aug. 21, 7 p.m.



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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Join the voice of the Tigers - Justin Olson,
along with Paper Paul and Savanna Bible for all of the action!
And our halftime interview with Tom Woods!

Swenson switches from math to shop

by Dorene Nelson

Eric Swenson has decided to switch his teaching job here in Groton. "I have been teaching middle school math here for three years but recently decided to switch to teaching shop and technology," Swenson explained.

"I started my teaching career at Roncalli High School, teaching math for four years," he said. "Following this I switched to Groton where I taught math for three years."

"I started my higher education career by getting a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. I worked in this field for only six months," Swenson explained. "In that short period of time, I knew I wasn't meant to be working in that field."

"Next I switched to the education field, getting my Master's Degree in Education at Northern State University," he said, "After getting my degree, I started teaching math at Roncalli."

"With Donley's resignation, I was very concerned that the industrial arts class would disappear," Swenson explained. "Therefore I took the Technology and Engineering Education Praxis test which qualified me to teach high school tech classes."

"I really enjoy working with technology and shop classes and was afraid they'd disappear here in Groton if there wasn't a qualified teacher," he admitted. "I've always enjoyed shop, tech, and machinery classes, so transferring from math to shop classes was just right for me!"

"I have big plans for this program where I teach the students actual skills they can use," Swenson stated. "The potential classes that I could teach will appeal to high school students. It's really great to be teaching actual skills that these students will need to know!"

"My wife and I live in Aberdeen with our eleven year old son who travels with me to Groton to attend school," he said.



Aberdeen Mayor Schaunaman injured, son killed in paragliding crash

Aberdeen Mayor Travis Schaunaman was seriously injured Wednesday night in a paragliding accident that killed his 8-year-old son and injured his 10-year-old daughter, the Brown County Sheriff's Office announced in a press release.

The Brown County Sheriff's Department received a 911 call Wednesday evening, Aug. 19, to report the crash northeast of Aberdeen.

Schaunaman and his daughter were transported to Avera St. Lukes Hospital in Aberdeen.

The Brown County Sheriff's Office has requested the public extend privacy to the Schaunaman family during this time.

The Brown County Sheriff's Office, the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board will continue with the investigation, according to the release.

Aberdeen City Manager Dave McNeil and the City Hall Team posted a statement asking for privacy for the mayor and his family on the City's Facebook page:

"The City Hall team and City Manager Dave McNeil ask our community to please keep Mayor Schaunaman and his family in your thoughts and prayers as they navigate an unimaginable and deeply difficult time.

"At the request of the Mayor and his family, we ask everyone to respect their privacy and give them the space they need to grieve. No details regarding this tragic event will be shared at this time.

"We understand that many in our community care deeply about the Mayor and his family and will want to express their concern and support. The most meaningful way we can support them right now is by honoring their wishes, respecting their privacy, and refraining from speculation or seeking additional information.

"Please keep the Mayor, his family, and all those impacted in your thoughts and prayers in the days ahead. We ask our community and members of the media to approach this situation with compassion, patience, and the utmost respect."



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota airport directors seek additional funding for construction projects

BY JOSHUA HAIAR

The directors of the Rapid City and Sioux Falls airports urged the state Thursday to provide additional financial support for their construction projects.

The two projects are already each set to benefit from \$15 million in low-interest state loans, which the Legislature and Gov. Larry Rhoden authorized from a state housing infrastructure fund earlier this year. The loans carry 2% interest over 20-year terms, with repayments returning to the housing fund for future development projects.

Rapid City Regional Airport Executive Director Patrick Dame and Sioux Falls Regional Airport Executive Director Dan Letellier briefed the South Dakota Aeronautics Commission about the expansion projects. They asked the commission to form a subcommittee to tour their facilities and discuss funding in more depth.

Rapid City Regional Airport

Dame reported a record 452,195 passengers boarded commercial flights in Rapid City last year, up 5.8% and the airport's third consecutive year of growth.

He said gate congestion is a problem, including passengers standing in hallways due to a lack of seating. A shortage of overnight parking is also discouraging airlines from adding routes, he said.

"We actually do get notifications of upwards of 45-minute wait times to get through TSA," Dame said, in addition to baggage being moved largely by hand and gate areas designed for 76-seat jets handling aircraft carrying up to 115 passengers.

A \$70.6 million project to rebuild the Transportation Security Administration checkpoint, baggage screening, and ticketing areas is funded roughly 70% by federal sources, 25% local and 5% state. Dame said the new TSA checkpoint is scheduled to open in October.

The larger project is a \$121 million addition of five gates. Forty million dollars is expected in federal funding. The rest of the funding is state and local, including the \$15 million state loan.

"So there is a considerable amount of local funding going into this project, because our community views us to be a very important project and very instrumental to the future development of western South Dakota," Dame said.

However, Dame said inflation is taking a toll on project costs. He declined to name a specific amount of extra money he'd like to receive from the state, saying he'd rather work through a subcommittee, but when pressed he estimated "\$5 million between the two airports."

Sioux Falls Regional Airport

Letellier's Sioux Falls Regional Airport presentation centered on its \$135 million project to expand the terminal, runways and taxiways, and to relieve capacity and gate constraints.

"We've seen consistent passenger growth, really for the last 25 years, averaging 3.5% per year," Letellier said.

He said gate areas built for 50 to 60 people are now serving flights carrying 180 passengers, and that the existing concourse is "grandfathered" against current fire code standards and would fail them if rebuilt as-is.

The airport has secured \$83.9 million in federal funding, with another \$5 million requested. State funding stands at \$3.5 million, plus the anticipated \$15 million loan. Local funding is projected between \$47 million and \$50 million. Although Letellier's presentation described a \$135 million project, the various requested and obtained funding sources add up to almost \$160 million.

Separately, Letellier said talks earlier this year with Southwest and American Airlines about new routes cooled after fuel prices spiked amid the Iran war, causing airlines broadly to reassess their schedules.

Beyond that, Letellier asked the commission to support additional state funding — either as a match for federal grants already received, or toward an \$8.5 million terminal reconstruction project that is \$5 million unfunded.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

One uranium project takes a step toward state permit, while another stays stalled by legal questions

Both proposals are located along the southern edge of South Dakota's Black Hills

BY MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A long-lingering South Dakota uranium mining proposal restarted its state permitting process Thursday with approval from a state board to commission a study, and the board continued discussing a different proposal to conduct exploratory drilling for uranium in the same area of the state.

Uranium is a metallic, radioactive element used as fuel in nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants. Interest in uranium exploration and mining has risen recently. That's in response to nuclear energy's potential to supply electricity for data centers.

The proposed Dewey-Burdock uranium mine would cover nearly 20 square miles of land in Custer and Fall River counties along the southern edge of the Black Hills, near the city of Edgemont. It requires federal, state and local permits. Legal challenges kept it in a 13-year stalemate since its initial application for a state permit, but the project secured the last of its federal permits earlier this year, according to the federal Permitting Council.

On Thursday, South Dakota's Minerals and Environment Board granted Powertech, a subsidiary of Texas-based enCore Energy, approval to hire a Wyoming-based company to conduct a socioeconomic assessment, which is an initial step in mine permitting.

The study will help evaluate the project's effects, including its economic impact, changes in air or water quality, local employment opportunities and use of resources like grazing land. The board can deny a mining permit application if the negative impacts of a project outweigh benefits.

The mining method for the project is "in situ" — drilling wells to inject a water-based solution underground, dissolving uranium and pumping it to the surface. The water would be pulled from local aquifers and then treated and pumped back underground after being used for mining, causing opponents to fear pollution of local water sources.

Drilling proposal stalled by language interpretation law

Another proposed uranium project in the same general area of the southern Black Hills will stay stalled after board members announced they're seeking a state judge's opinion on a relevant law.

The board indicated it wants clarity on a new state law that took effect in July. The law requires language translation services for some government proceedings.

Clean Nuclear Energy Corp., a subsidiary of Canada-based Nexus Uranium, is seeking a permit to drill dozens of exploratory holes as much as 700 feet deep on state land, while seeking federal permission for additional drilling on federal land. The proposed sites are near the rim of Craven Canyon in the southern Black Hills.

Dozens of people and some organizations have raised formal complaints about the project to the state Board of Minerals and Environment, which will decide on the permit. Opponents have said the drilling could disturb ancient Native American petroglyphs on the canyon's walls, disrupt Lakota ceremonies and potentially contaminate groundwater, among other concerns.

A hearing on the permit began earlier this year in Hot Springs. It was cut short after a project opponent

filed a federal lawsuit against the company, the board and the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. That lawsuit is still pending, and the board has not resumed the hearing.

Project opponent Elizabeth Lone Eagle filed the lawsuit on the third day of what was planned to be a five-day hearing. She alleged "systematic, ongoing, and deliberate denial of meaningful participation to Lakota first-language speaking" project opponents.

The board was not legally obligated to provide interpretation services to Lakota first-language speakers at the May hearing, but agreed to do so anyway, noting that the law requiring translation services would come into effect just a couple of months later.

But on the first day of the hearing, Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources staff said they had not reached agreement with a Lakota translator and did not provide one. The staff later contracted with two Lakota speakers for the following days of the hearing, but project opponents including Lone Eagle accused the board of improperly conducting some parts of the hearing without interpretation.

The board discussed the matter Thursday in a closed meeting known as an executive session, citing the discussion of legal matters. Afterward, the board emerged back into a public session and voted to seek a state judge's declaratory ruling on a portion of state law that includes the new interpretation provision. Board members did not publicly explain their reasoning for seeking the ruling, but the board's lawyer told South Dakota Searchlight that board members are hoping for clarity about their obligations under the new language interpretation law.

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.

Poor coordination, missing documents, mismatched training: Report analyzes prison releases in SD

BY MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota prisons struggle to prepare inmates for release, and the support systems meant to help them on the outside often fall short, according to a report from a national nonprofit.

The assessment found consistent gaps in support, employment, housing and mental health and addiction treatment for people leaving prison. It also found the state lacks the data and oversight structure needed to track and improve outcomes.

The state paid the Council of State Governments Justice Center \$160,000 to study reentry on behalf of the Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force, which met Wednesday in Rapid City.

Gov. Larry Rhoden created the task force to study ways of reducing repeat offense rates and improving rehabilitation programming. The task force came on the heels of a legislative vote to replace the oldest parts of the state penitentiary with a \$650 million men's prison in Sioux Falls, which is under construction. The state opened a new \$87 million prison for women in Rapid City this summer, the state's second for female inmates.

South Dakota's recidivism rate is 50%, meaning half of all inmates released from state prison return within three years.

Ryan Brunner, senior policy adviser for Rhoden, told lawmakers at the meeting that the report will help guide the expansion and operation of treatment and programming at the new prisons.

The Department of Corrections, Brunner said, "is certainly taking this data and focusing on it, and it's good for us to have that conversation."

System inconsistencies

When someone leaves prison, the assessment says, coordination breaks down. Access to support depends more on personal relationships between inmates, staff members and outside organizations than on formal systems, said Megan Pfeiffer, deputy policy director with the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

"There are some deep challenges here," Pfeiffer said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 10 of 66

The Department of Corrections has a reentry initiative in place to help people released from prison reenter society, but the assessment found people frequently leave prison without the transition support they need. Community handoffs are inconsistent and rushed, and inmates often leave without vital documents — identification cards, Social Security cards, birth certificates — that they need to find work or access services.

More than 80% of men and 95% of women serve two years or less in prison — a “narrow window” to address rehabilitative needs, Pfeiffer said. Many inmates leave without programming — 35% of people released in 2025 hadn’t had programming, the report found. Most of those people were incarcerated for less than a year.

The assessment recommends starting reentry planning the day someone enters prison, not weeks before they leave, and says the state should create a permanent reentry council and formalize how agencies share data and coordinate services.

Employment barriers

Participation in vocational programming inside prison is low. Structured referrals to such programs and job placement services are largely absent, and the state has no data on whether people find and keep jobs after release.

Even motivated inmates who get vocational programming in prison frequently lose connection with workforce services the moment they’re released, Pfeiffer said.

“We heard that there’s often competing appointments and needs, and people get lost in the shuffle where employment isn’t prioritized as one of their primary needs,” Pfeiffer said. “Transition can take a long time to walk through the assessment and appointment process, which leaves people unemployed for a longer period of time.”

State laws also restrict where people with felony convictions can work after release.

More than 250 legal and regulatory employment barriers can be triggered by any felony conviction in South Dakota, Pfeiffer said. South Dakota is one of fewer than 15 states without “fair chance” hiring laws, which limit when employers can ask about criminal history.

Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Bobbi Andera said her “biggest concern” is putting state resources toward programming without considering how hireable people are when they’re released.

“Programming is great, but programming is only great if they get a job,” Andera said.

A 2025 Department of Labor and Regulation survey found that 84% of South Dakota employers cite finding skilled workers as their top challenge, but only 40% said they’d hire someone with a criminal record.

The Department of Corrections trains inmates in areas such as welding, electrical work, auto service, plumbing, machining and carpentry — but those skills don’t align with the state’s most in-demand jobs, which include heavy truck drivers, sales representatives, nurses and dental assistants. The gap is especially stark in healthcare, where workforce demand is highest. State laws and regulations for healthcare, however, create more employment barriers for people with felony convictions than in any other industry.

“There’s a real gap here that we talk about as an opportunity,” Pfeiffer said. “There’s the workforce need and there’s a population that wants and needs employment.”

Brunner told lawmakers the state is exploring more employment programming options, including a five-week commercial driver’s license program and a medical technician training partnership with Western Dakota Technical College and Sanford Health. Felons can be medical technicians in South Dakota.

Behavioral health, housing needs unaddressed

About 91% of men and 97% of women in prison were diagnosed with substance use disorder upon admission, according to the 2025 Department of Corrections statistical report.

Staff can coordinate treatment referrals before release, but provider shortages, lack of transportation and fewer options in rural areas often stymie access to care for inmates upon release. The state also doesn’t have enough residential mental health space.

The assessment says the state should improve Medicaid enrollment for departing inmates and work to expand treatment access in rural and tribal areas.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 11 of 66

Sen. Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, said the assessment confirmed his belief that South Dakota shouldn't be "punishing someone with illness," and that the state needs to improve its mental health infrastructure as a whole.

The behavioral health aspect of rehabilitation should not be the Department of Correction's job, he said. "We can look at all the programs we want in recidivism and all the things within our correction system that we want — and we need to do a better job, and I think there's a lot of things we're going to learn — but unless we look at it holistically and from all the different departments, we're not going to do anything," Smith said.

Insufficient affordable housing is also one of the "greatest barriers" to successful reentry, the assessment said, and the state should prioritize housing stability for people leaving prison.

The state has some housing programs in place, but they don't meet demand. Given employment challenges, a person earning a minimum wage would need to work 1.4 full-time jobs to afford a one-bed rental home, the report says. The gap in affordable housing options is worst in rural and tribal areas.

Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen chairs the task force and said the group focuses on programming within the prison system, even as the assessment revealed issues in the community that factor into recidivism.

"We're obviously not going to solve the housing issue," Venhuizen said. "But we can identify that as an issue and talk about some ideas for continuing work on that."

Venhuizen said he plans to have a "good idea" of recommendations for the governor and lawmakers by their October meeting.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

US ag exports 'on the right track,' trade rep says, but farmers still wary

BY JEFF BEACH

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — North Dakota farm group representatives called for more certainty in U.S. ag trade policy, while U.S. Rep. Julie Fedorchak and a U.S. trade representative said tariffs and tough trade negotiations will pay off in the long run.

U.S. Chief Agricultural Negotiator Julie Callahan fielded questions about Trump administration trade policies on beef, soybeans, sugar and other commodities Wednesday at an ag roundtable in Grand Forks hosted by Fedorchak, R-N.D.

The ag sector has been under pressure from lost exports and higher farm operating costs, prompting the Trump administration to offer assistance payments to help farmers stay in business.

"I think, as we move forward, really addressing some of the uncertainty that persists in our markets is really important, and making sure that we have stable trade relationships is key," said Matt Perdue, president of the North Dakota Farmers Union.

Perdue, who farms with his family in northwest North Dakota, said Trump trade policies have affected North Dakota farmers beyond ag markets. He said farmers in his area have had more difficulty getting steel grain bins and parts to repair equipment that come from Canada.

Callahan and Fedorchak pointed to 10 trade agreements reached under the Trump administration and others still to be finalized as signs that some of the market access lost in trade wars with China and other countries is coming back.

"I'm not going to rest until we have an ag trade surplus with the world, and we're really on the right track," Callahan said.

Callahan said the U.S. is "serious about enforcing" commitments from China to buy U.S. soybeans.

Brent Kohls, a representative of the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, said after the meeting

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 12 of 66

that he has seen improvement from the early days of Trump's second term

"It was kind of shock and awe right away," he said. But the soybean market has improved in recent weeks.

North Dakota relies on soybeans exports through the Pacific Northwest with China as the main market.

"The conversation today versus a year ago is a whole lot different with China, and for the better," he said.

But he said he is not certain the roller-coaster ride the ag industry has been on is over yet, with uncertainty on the costs of farm needs such as fertilizer and fuel and whether trade agreements will last.

"We're hanging on. We haven't taken our seat belt off," said Kohls, who farms south of Mayville.

Beef producer Lacey Grann Wirth, representing the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, asked why the U.S. was not putting tariffs on beef imports from Brazil.

Callahan said that was a decision by President Donald Trump as a way to address affordability of beef for U.S. consumers.

Grann Wirth, a beef producer near Sheyenne, has a problem with that. "It takes away the value of our own products," she said.

Fedorchak noted that beef is one of the bright spots in the U.S. ag industry, with consumer demand still high despite inflated prices. She said the U.S. should be trying to expand its beef industry, which has been affected by drought in key states over several years.

"From the producer's standpoint, anything we do as a country to incentivize others to come into the market to lower prices takes away the incentive for people to get into that industry here," Fedorchak said.

Callahan's visit also included a trip to a honey farm and a tour of the state-owned North Dakota Mill and Elevator.

This story was originally produced by North Dakota Monitor, 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.

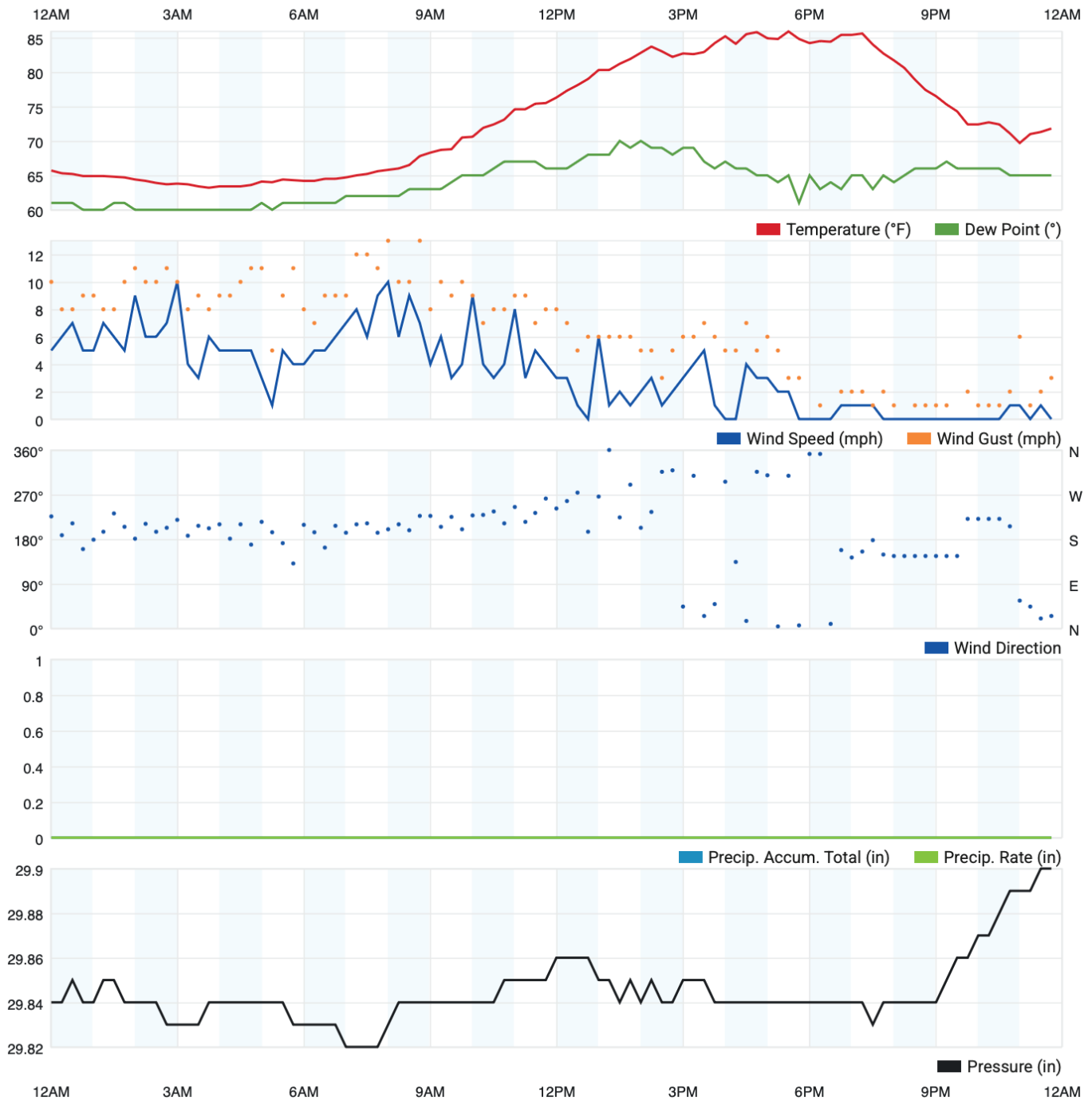
North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach is based in the Fargo area. His interests include agriculture, renewable energy and rural issues.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 13 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 20, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 14 of 66

Today



High: 85 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 81 °F

Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 54 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Sunday



High: 82 °F

Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers

What's Ahead



TODAY

Highs: 80-87°

Mostly sunny. In northeast SD and west-central MN, becoming partly cloudy with a 15% chance of rain showers in the late afternoon and evening.



SATURDAY

Highs: 78-84°

Mostly sunny, with increasing clouds towards evening.



SUNDAY

Highs: 78-85°

Rain showers likely (50-70% chance) and a 20-40% chance of thunderstorms. Southeast winds gusting to 25-35 mph in central SD.



MONDAY

Highs: 80-90°

Becoming mostly sunny by the afternoon.



NWS Aberdeen, SD
Fri Aug 21, 2026 2:27 AM

Other than a 15% chance of rain in northeast SD and west-central MN late this afternoon and evening, expect dry conditions through Saturday. Rain is expected to move through the area on Sunday (50-70% chance), with a few thunderstorms possible in the afternoon and evening.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 15 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 5:31 PM

Low Temp: 63 °F at 3:36 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 8:46 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1947

Record Low: 37 in 2004

Average High: 82

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.52

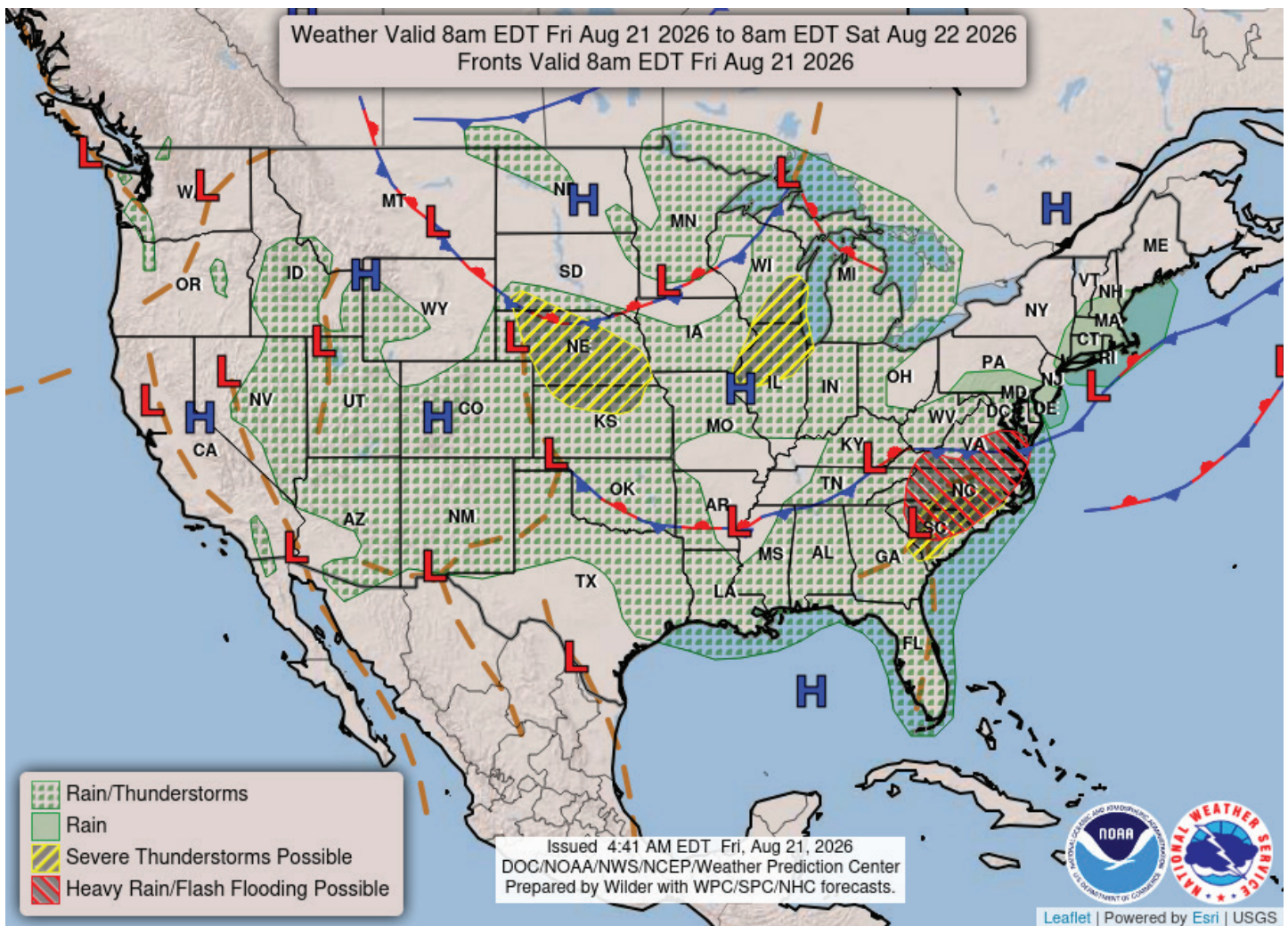
Precip to date in Aug.: 10.14

Average Precip to date: 15.62

Precip Year to Date: 19.61

Sunset Tonight: 8:30 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:41 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 16 of 66

Today in Weather History

August 21, 1989: Baseball size hail caused near 100 percent crop damage to Correll in Big Stone County to 10 miles north of Appleton. Most of Swift County also received 4 to 8 inches of rain.

August 21, 2007: Thunderstorms produced large hail in southeastern South Dakota, mainly near the Missouri River, during the late afternoon and early evening of August 21st. Enormous hail fell in the Dante area in Charles Mix County, including a state record size hailstone certified as 6 and 7/8 inches in diameter, with a circumference of 18 inches and a weight of one pound. The most massive stone was verified at 6 1/8 inches in diameter with a weight of 1.25 lbs. Damage included holes in roofs, broken rafters, broken awnings, numerous broken windows and dented vehicles, damaged siding, divots in the ground up to 12 inches long and 3 inches deep, and damaged crops. The state record hailstone was broken on July 23rd, 2010 with the United States record hailstone in Vivian.

1856: The Charter Oak was an unusually large white oak tree growing from around the 12th or 13th century until it fell during a windstorm on this day in 1856. According to tradition, Connecticut's Royal Charter of 1662 was hidden within the hollow of the tree to thwart its confiscation by the English governor-general. The oak became a symbol of American independence and is commemorated on the Connecticut State Quarter.

1883: An estimated F5 tornado caused extensive damage to Rochester Minnesota on this day. The enormous roar was said to have warned most Rochester residents, as the massive funnel cut through the north side of town. Over 135 homes were destroyed, and another 200 damaged. Many of the 200 plus injuries were severe, and other deaths probably occurred but not listed as part of the 37 total mentioned. This damaging tornado eventually led to the formation of the Mayo Clinic.

1888 — A tornado swarm occurred in Maryland and Delaware. Many waterspouts were seen over Chesapeake Bay. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1893 — Four hurricanes are observed in the Atlantic Ocean at the same time. Over a century would pass, 1998 before four hurricanes would again rage together in the Atlantic.

1918 — A tornado struck Tyler, MN, killing 36 persons and destroying most of the business section of the town resulting in a million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1983 — The temperature at Fayetteville, NC, soared to 110 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Early morning thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Iowa and west central Illinois. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 82 mph at Moline IL, and tennis ball size hail at Independence IA. Rock Island IL was drenched with 3.70 inches of rain. Total damage for the seven county area of west central Illinois was estimated at twelve million dollars. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms spawned several tornadoes in Iowa, produced wind gusts to 63 mph in the Council Bluffs area, and drenched Sioux Center IA with up to 6.61 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from Kansas to Minnesota and North Dakota. Thunderstorms in Minnesota produced baseball size hail from Correll to north of Appleton. Thunderstorms in north central Kansas produced wind gusts higher than 100 mph at Wilson Dam. Thunderstorms around Lincoln NE produced baseball size hail and up to five inches of rain, and Boone NE was deluged with five inches of rain in an hour and a half. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1994 — Hurricane John, about 345 miles south of Hilo, Hawaii had winds of 175 mph and pressure at 920 millibars or 27.17 inches of mercury, making it one of the strongest hurricanes ever in the Central Pacific. The 31-day existence made John the longest-lasting tropical cyclone recorded in both the Pacific Ocean and worldwide, surpassing both Hurricane Tina's previous record in the Pacific of 24 days in the 1992 season and the 1899 San Ciriaco hurricane's previous world record of 28 days in the 1899 Atlantic season. John was also the farthest-traveling tropical cyclone in both Pacific Ocean and worldwide, with distance traveled of 7,165 miles, out-distancing previous record holders Hurricane Fico in the Pacific of 4,700 miles in the 1978 season and Hurricane Faith worldwide of 6,850 miles in the 1966 Atlantic season.



The Consequences of Jealousy

Understanding envy and its destructive impact can encourage us to confront and overcome it.

Romans 13:13-14: 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

In learning about the nature of jealousy, perhaps you realize you struggle a bit with this problem. If so, it's important to address. Left unchecked, envy doesn't just stay in our mind—it spills out and causes great damage (Prov. 14:30 NIV), such as ...

Broken relationships. Jealousy creates distance between us and the people we envy. We pull away, become critical, or struggle to celebrate their good news.

Constant dissatisfaction. When we're focused on what others have, it's hard to enjoy what is in front of us. Jealousy trains us to always look elsewhere for contentment, which we'll never find.

Wasted energy. The mental and emotional energy spent comparing ourselves to others could be better invested in our own growth, relationships, and calling. Jealousy leaves us stuck.

Bitterness and resentment. Over time, jealousy hardens into something uglier. What starts as "I wish I had that" becomes animosity that poisons our entire outlook.

Loss of peace. Jealousy and peace cannot coexist. When we're consumed with envy, we forfeit contentment and rest.

Understanding destructive consequences may encourage you to address this issue in your life. Then, with God's help, you can begin the journey toward healing and restoration.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 18 of 66

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Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.20.26

1 16 26 40 44 4

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 37 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: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

23 31 40 41 45 1

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,700,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 37 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

10 16 17 25 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 52 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

5 18 38 56 67 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 21 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.19.26

10 21 58 61 64 17

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$68,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 21 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

2 organizers of Hong Kong's Tiananmen vigils convicted in national security case

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Two former organizers of Hong Kong's annual vigils in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown were convicted Friday for what the government-approved judges ruled was inciting others to overthrow China's communist leadership.

Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung, former leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, were charged in 2021 with inciting subversion under a China-imposed national security law that has effectively crushed the city's previously thriving pro-democracy movement. They face a maximum prison term of 10 years. The alliance was also found guilty.

The three judges ruled that the alliance's call to "end one-party dictatorship" did not aim to demand that the ruling Communist Party return to the system of multiparty cooperation under the constitution, but to end its leadership status under the constitution. They said the "end" in the phrase carried the meaning of "overthrowing" and "undermining."

In the verdict, they wrote that the defendants persisted in the call after the law's introduction, neglecting that it was in breach of the constitution, which states the party's leadership is a defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. That falls within "other unlawful means" under the security law, the judges said.

The defendants "intentionally encouraged supporters of the alliance to wait for the right time to carry out the goal to 'end one-party dictatorship' by unlawful means," they said.

The judges insisted they were not tried because of their political views.

Lee and Chow smiled and waved at the public gallery before they left the courtroom. They are expected to be sentenced at a later date. They will plead for lesser sentences next week, one of the judges said.

Observers say the trial is a barometer for Hong Kong's civil rights

The verdict is among the latest involving Hong Kong's once-vibrant pro-democracy movement, which has largely been dismantled after the security law's introduction in 2020.

For decades, Hong Kong's annual candlelight vigil was the only large-scale public commemoration of the Tiananmen crackdown and attracted tens of thousands of people annually. The crackdown remains a political taboo on the mainland, where authorities tightly censor discussion of the events and prohibit public commemorations.

Hong Kong's greater political freedoms, granted under Beijing's "one country, two systems" governing framework, allowed the vigil to keep the memories alive, until authorities banned it during the coronavirus pandemic.

Observers said their trial symbolized the erosion of freedom of expression in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Eric Lai, a senior fellow with the Georgetown Center for Asian Law, said the infrastructure of remembrance has been criminalized and dismantled. He said every actor in Hong Kong civil society who assumed that renouncing violence and working within the law would be fine has to revise that assumption.

"Moderation of method offers no protection if the objective itself is held to be unconstitutional," he said.

During the trial, Lee told the court that their call was not about ending the party's leadership but about moving toward democracy, letting the people decide who leads them, and that the Communist Party should not enforce "dictatorship."

In a Patreon post Thursday, Chow recalled being shackled in handcuffs, and in waist and ankle chains, for trips to court from prison, saying she was walked by correctional service officers "like a dog."

"Justice lives in the hearts of the people. There is no need to look up to this kind of top-down ruling, and one verdict doesn't matter much," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 21 of 66

When the trial began in January, codefendant Albert Ho pleaded guilty, which typically could result in a reduced sentence. He will also plead for a lesser sentence next week.

Supporters cast doubt on allegations

After the conviction, Lee's wife, Elizabeth Tang, told reporters she was disappointed and angry about the result even though it was within her expectations. She insisted Lee was innocent.

"I feel it's unfair. I feel the judges did not consider our lawyers' opinions and materials," she said, adding that they would decide whether to appeal later.

Chow's mother, Medina Chow Lau Wah-chun, said she hoped the "environment can be a little healthier."

"Flowers and plants of all colors can bloom," she said.

Dozens of people lined up outside the court under drizzling rain ahead of the hearing.

Tang Ngok-kwan, a former alliance member, said police wouldn't let him join the line if he insisted on bringing along "sensitive" materials, including bookmarks printed with "vindicate June 4." The date is the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown. He decided not to go into the court.

Former vigil goer Margaret Chan, who joined the queue at 6 a.m., said the alliance's name carried the word "patriotic."

"Everyone is patriotic. How to incite? Incite others to be patriotic?" she said.

Hong Kong authorities defend the verdict

Hong Kong leader John Lee said the alliance has long deliberately planted seeds of hatred against the party and the central government in society, and their acts endangered national security.

Steve Li, chief superintendent of the police's national security department, said the case would help with future law enforcement.

"It also lets the public know that it is not that one cannot criticize, or cannot do anything at all. It is simply that there must be no incitement, and no subversion of state power," he said.

Rosie Winterton, the minister for the Indo-Pacific region at the U.K. Foreign Office, said the verdict is a further demonstration that even peaceful acts of remembrance in Hong Kong are now treated by the authorities as threats to national security.

Hundreds of people, and possibly thousands, were killed in the 1989 crackdown as military tanks rolled into the center of Beijing. The Tiananmen Square crackdown was a pivotal moment in China's modern history, showing that the market reform that transformed the country into the world's second-largest economy would not be coupled with political liberalization.

After COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the former vigil site in Hong Kong was occupied instead by a carnival organized by pro-Beijing groups.

Beijing said the 2020 security law was necessary for the city's stability. Many leading activists have been jailed under the same law, including pro-democracy former media tycoon Jimmy Lai. Under the drastic political changes, dozens of civil society groups also dissolved, including the Hong Kong alliance.

Charter plane crash kills 8 near remote radar site in western Alaska, military says

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A charter aircraft carrying eight people crashed at a remote radar site in western Alaska on Thursday, killing all on board, the U.S. military said.

The crash happened at Cape Newenham Long Range Radar Site Airport, approximately 450 miles (725 km) west of Anchorage, Alaska.

"This is a devastating loss for our military family and the communities we serve," U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Robert Davis, commander of Alaskan Command, the Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region and Eleventh Air Force, said in a statement.

The radar site is managed by the Pacific Air Forces Regional Support Center. It's part of a network of remote radar sites that tracks aircraft operating in Alaska's airspace and along its borders, the statement from Alaskan Command said.

The statement did not provide details on the specific work the individuals were doing. It referred to the plane involved as a "civilian-contracted aircraft."

Davis described those on board as "dedicated professionals carrying out a vital mission in a demanding environment. Our absolute priority right now is providing unwavering support to their families, friends and teammates during this devastating time. We are profoundly grateful for the swift and tireless response of our search and recovery professionals."

Clint Johnson, the National Transportation Safety Board's Alaska region chief, said earlier Thursday evening that two pilots and six passengers were on board.

The plane had taken off from Anchorage and was believed to have crashed early Thursday afternoon on approach to Cape Newenham, Johnson said.

Hungary drained its waters for generations. Now drought is exposing the cost

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

GÁRDONY, Hungary (AP) — A fisherman disembarked from his boat in a small harbor on Lake Velence in Hungary last week, trudging up the dock plank that had become extremely steep as the water receded to record lows.

Árpád Selmei said navigating even a small fishing boat on Hungary's third-largest lake is becoming increasingly difficult as the water level has ebbed to around 20 centimeters (8 inches), well below the 150 centimeters (5 feet) optimal for August. Swimming beaches across the lake, once popular with tourists, have been closed.

Lake Velence's decline is part of a broader water crisis confronting Hungary as increasingly prolonged droughts and climate change-driven heat waves have pummeled Europe.

"I've lived on Lake Velence since I was a child, and I've never seen the water so low," said Selmei, 58. "It's terrible. My heart aches every single moment."

This summer, wildfires scorched the continent from the United Kingdom to Greece, while in Hungary, drought has damaged crop yields, led to drinking water shortages and threatened to shut down the country's only nuclear power plant.

Yet the lack of rainfall linked to human-driven climate change is only part of Hungary's water problem. Experts say the country's long-standing practice of channeling water away from its landscape and draining natural wetlands has left it especially vulnerable as droughts become more frequent and severe.

A legacy of draining away water

Around 99% of Hungary's lands are currently under severe or extreme drought conditions, according to the national meteorological service, and desertification, a process where vegetation recedes because of high heat and low rainfall, threatens much of the Great Hungarian Plain.

Yet more than a quarter of Hungary consists of low-lying land that naturally retains precipitation, and in past centuries its many rivers and streams made it rich in freshwater resources. However, a 2023 study published in the journal *Nature* estimated Hungary's historical wetland loss at more than 80%.

Zsuzsanna Ujj, a biodiversity policy specialist and project coordinator with environmental group Friends of the Earth Hungary, said the country "has not been a good steward of its waters in the last 200 years."

A major contributor is Hungary's network of more than 40,000 kilometers (25,000 miles) of drainage canals — a length that exceeds the circumference of the Earth — which drain accumulated precipitation from fields, wetlands and the soil to make room for agriculture and other enterprises.

The priority on draining land rather than allowing natural flooding cycles to occur has contributed to a consistent drop in the water table and the drying out of wetlands and topsoil. With less water available to evaporate, the air dries out, further reducing the chances of localized precipitation.

Ujj said that Hungary — which is among the most drought-exposed countries in Europe and ranks 16th globally, according to a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — "needs to realign its water management practices, shifting from a drainage-based approach to one focused on

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 23 of 66

water retention.”

Disappearing lakes

The drying out of Hungary isn't limited to streams and wetlands. Lake Garancsi, a small recreational lake around 20 kilometers (12 miles) northwest of Budapest, was once a popular destination for fishing, swimming and ice skating, and was the setting of the 2001 cult Hungarian comedy “Üvegtigris” (“Glass Tiger”).

But the lake, present since the Middle Ages, has shrunk so dramatically in recent years that none of the previous recreational activities are permitted, and most of the former lake bed is now exposed, cracked and dry.

What remains of the water is so shallow and warm that all of the fish and most of the other wildlife have disappeared, and authorities have predicted no water will be left by the end of summer.

Zoltán Mettner, who runs the Glass Tiger bar on the shores of the lake, said conditions have gotten worse every year. After spending years beside the lake, he said looking at it now is “terrible, there’s no other way to put it.”

“It’s sad enough that we’ve let things get this far, and that we couldn’t have taken gradual steps to prevent this lake from being completely destroyed,” he said.

Hungary’s government plans a change of course

Hungary’s new government has promised to begin taking those steps.

In late June, on the same day the country set a high temperature record of 42 Celsius (107.6 Fahrenheit), Prime Minister Péter Magyar told lawmakers that his government would put water management policies “on new footing,” and launch a comprehensive water conservation program to mitigate the effects of drought.

“Many have said year after year that water shortage will be one of Hungary’s problems and one of the most important strategic issues to be solved. They were right,” Magyar said.

In addition to poor water retention practices, Magyar said that aging water utility infrastructure causes 20-25% of the country’s drinking water to leak out through damaged pipes, costing some 17 billion forints (\$54.4 million) annually.

“For years, even the existence of the problem was denied and relativized,” Magyar said. Now, he added, “water retention will be the basic principle of Hungarian water management.”

Danube River at historic lows

Yet implementing such sweeping changes will be time consuming and costly, while Hungary’s current water crisis threatens its ability to produce adequate energy.

The Danube, the European Union’s longest river which runs through 10 countries from southwestern Germany to the Black Sea, has set successive records this summer for low water levels, threatening to shut down Hungary’s only nuclear power plant, which uses water from the river to cool its reactors, for the first time in its 44-year history.

Hungary’s government has taken emergency interventions to raise the water level at the Paks plant, including sinking two 80-meter (262-foot) barges just upriver and beginning to install a riverbed sill designed to divert more water toward the plant’s pumps.

In such drought conditions, wetlands near rivers like the Danube normally act as a “natural reservoir” for retaining water when weather gets dry, said Ujj, the biodiversity specialist.

The extremely low level of the Danube — as well as the increased chances for more frequent and intense floods — are effects of human-driven climate change that can be partially mitigated through appropriate land use and restoration of wetlands and other natural habitats, she added.

“We do indeed expect water levels to fluctuate more, and we also expect precipitation patterns to become more extreme with drier summers,” she said. “However, restoring wetlands and increasing evaporation in certain areas could help boost precipitation during the summer months.”

US, South Korean militaries wrapping up drills early, a day after North Korea's missile barrage

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The U.S. and South Korean militaries were wrapping up their annual drills six days earlier than initially scheduled on Friday in a conciliatory gesture toward North Korea, though the North said the step isn't enough to convince it to return to talks.

U.S. President Donald Trump had earlier abruptly ordered the Pentagon to "substantially reduce" the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises just before they began Monday. Trump cited what he described as a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea's refusal to support him over the war in Iran.

Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, brushed aside Trump's overture on Wednesday, saying "the provocative, aggressive nature of the drills" won't change only with the reduction of their duration and size.

The next day, North Korea fired about 10 short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea, apparently following through with its previous threat to respond to the U.S.-South Korean drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

The U.S. Pacific Command said the events didn't pose an immediate threat to U.S. territory or its allies. The command said the U.S. remains committed to the defense of the U.S. homeland and its allies in the region.

Kim Yo Jong's statement dampened hopes for an early resumption of talks between Trump and Kim Jong Un, whose earlier nuclear diplomacy collapsed in 2019. Kim Jong Un has used the diplomatic stalemate to increase his leverage by modernizing his nuclear and missile programs and aligning with Russia over its war against Ukraine. Kim Jong Un suggested last year that he won't return to talks unless the U.S. drops its demand for North Korean denuclearization as a precondition for diplomacy.

Kim Yo Jong still used relatively measured language, avoided typical harsh North Korean rhetoric and touched upon what she called an "excellent" relationship between her brother and Trump. This suggests North Korea doesn't want to completely shut the door for future talks and may seek to win bigger U.S. concessions, such as international recognition as a nuclear state and broad sanctions relief.

With its supply of ammunition and troops to Russia, North Korea is likely receiving economic and military assistance in return, and its expanding ties with Russia provides it with leverage to ask for greater support from China, its biggest trading partner.

"After this strategic play has run its course, Kim may seek further economic and reputational benefits from Washington," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "But that will probably be after the U.S. midterm elections when Trump is expected to be in a weaker domestic political position and in search of headline-grabbing foreign policies."

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said that Kim Yo Jong's statement showed North Korea's position that a personal relationship between her brother and Trump "can't be a factor that moves current North Korean-U.S. relations." He said Kim Yo Jong likely aimed to head off speculation that Trump's move can restore diplomacy so as not to fully take the blame when it doesn't happen.

Kim Yo Jong denied Trump's claim that Kim Jong Un had responded to his request for a conversation. When asked by reporters Wednesday if he would be meeting with Kim Jong Un this year, Trump said that "Yeah, I will be."

The Ulchi Freedom Shield is one of the main military exercises conducted by the U.S. and South Korea annually to enhance their ability to cope with potential North Korean aggression. Its downsizing has caused worries about joint U.S.-South Korean readiness.

Storms and possible tornadoes pummel the Northeast US, flooding roads and damaging beaches

NEW YORK (AP) — Heavy rain and winds pounded the Northeast U.S. on Thursday as storms tore through a beach on Long Island, stranded dozens of people in their cars in New Jersey and knocked out power in parts of Delaware's capital city.

Photos and video shared on social media show debris thrown in the air and pummeling rain as a possible tornado touched down at Atlantic Beach on Long Island's outer barrier. It tore apart a major beach club, leaving broken beach chairs and wood beams littered across the shoreline.

Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman said there were no reports of serious injuries or deaths, but there had been damage to property and a search team was making sure no one was trapped in the cabanas. He declared a state of emergency.

"There are reports of people trapped in their vehicles due to flooding in the south shore, and first responders are assisting in their rescue," he said in a statement.

The Sun and Surf Beach Club said buildings had been significantly damaged and it temporarily closed that club and nearby Silver Point.

The National Weather Service had warned of waterspouts, tornado-like hazards that happen over water, in the area but wasn't able to immediately confirm a tornado on the beach.

Bryan Ramsey, a meteorologist for the weather service in New York, said the storm was moving East offshore Thursday evening and was expected to taper over the next several hours.

In other parts of New York, flooding caused part of the Long Island Expressway in Queens to close in both directions, according to New York City Emergency Management. Photos on social media showed lines of stopped cars as emergency crews traversed the water.

In Jersey City, New Jersey, emergency crews rescued 69 people trapped in cars that had been overtaken by flash flooding Thursday, said Mayor James Solomon. Emergency crews waded through roads with knee-high water with small inflatable boats to help those stranded.

A likely tornado touched down in Dover, Delaware, and caused significant damage across the city, the police department reported. There were no reports of serious injuries, police said.

"Dover — please take this seriously. Stay home. Stay safe," the department said on Facebook.

Photos and video online show fallen trees, downed power lines and flooded roads.

The Delaware Electric Cooperative said more than 1,000 customers didn't have power in the northern part of its service area, but within a few hours most of the outages had been fixed.

More than 2,300 Mexicans sent to Guatemala and Honduras as Trump ramps up third-country deportations

By SONIA PÉREZ D., MARÍA VERZA and MARLON GONZÁLEZ Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — The United States has deported nearly 2,300 Mexicans to Guatemala this year and sent at least dozens more to Honduras, according to official data, a shift from the beginning of U.S. President Donald Trump's second term when such transfers were minimal.

Until now, Mexicans deported from the United States were sent almost exclusively back to their country by air and land. Only a handful arrived in other countries.

Some civil organizations believe this change reported in recent days is a way to increase pressure on Mexico, whose government has protested the deaths of 17 Mexicans in immigration custody or during enforcement operations. This also comes as Trump has expanded agreements with allied Latin American countries to conduct joint operations in the region against criminal groups and has increased its security demands to Mexico.

Sent to Central America by plane and Mexico by bus

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo confirmed Wednesday night that, so far this year, 2,284 Mexicans deported from the U.S. have arrived in the country as part of a "transit stopover" before being taken to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 26 of 66

Mexico as part of an "arrangement" with the Mexican government, and without these individuals being under any refugee or asylum status.

"They are arriving on planes carrying Guatemalan returnees, and what we have done is bring them in transit so that, in coordination with Mexican immigration authorities, we can return them to Mexican territory within 24 hours of their arrival in the country," he explained at a press conference.

The costs of these operations are covered by the Mexican government or, in some cases, by U.S. funding, he added.

Mexico's National Migration Institute (INM) confirmed to The Associated Press in a brief message that Mexicans have been deported by the Trump administration to Guatemala and Honduras, primarily since April, and are then transported by bus to southern Mexico.

"The reason is that the United States wants to prevent them from crossing back into its territory," the institution said. The INM did not provide figures or further details.

Asked about why the Mexicans were sent to Central America and not their own country, and for more details, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees immigration enforcement, said in an emailed statement that the administration "is utilizing all lawful options to carry out the largest deportation operation in history, just as President Trump promised."

"The Mexican government has expressed its opposition to this practice to U.S. authorities and has reiterated that every Mexican citizen has the right to enter the country," the Mexican Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday. It added that Mexico is coordinating with the countries involved to ensure the safe return of Mexican citizens.

Third-country deportations raise concerns for Mexican migrants

Historically, Mexico has always been willing to receive its deported citizens.

Since Trump's first term, it has also accepted deportees from third countries, although the details of immigration agreements with Washington have usually been opaque. In 2025, Mexico received some 12,000 deported foreigners, mostly Cubans and Venezuelans, according to figures provided by Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. The government has not updated these figures since December although the practice has continued.

Authorities in Honduras also did not respond to requests for comment, but according to official documents from the country accessed by The Associated Press, 82 Mexicans deported from the United States arrived in the Honduran city of San Pedro Sula on two flights on August 13 and 15. An additional 35 arrived on Thursday.

Another 165 Mexicans were deported to Honduras between May and mid-July, according to the website Third Country Deportation Watch, run by the NGOs Human Rights First and Refugees International, which track U.S. deportation flights to third countries.

The website does not clarify the source of its nationality figures, but both organizations have expressed concern because these transfers could endanger migrants who possibly sought asylum in the U.S. or have few resources in an unknown country.

The deportation tactic "seems to be to put pressure on the Mexican government," said Savitri Arvey of Human Rights First. "They really don't want any Mexicans crossing the border." Some of those deported arrived in Honduras on U.S. military flights, she added.

A recent change in the deportation pattern

At the beginning of his second term, with immigration control as one of his priorities, Trump reached agreements with Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama to act as "bridge" or destination countries for migrants from third countries expelled from U.S. territory. These agreements gradually expanded to more countries, including some African ones, most recently Liberia.

Until recently, only a handful of Mexicans had been expelled from the U.S. to countries other than Mexico.

Arévalo said on Wednesday that Guatemala received 15 Mexicans in 2025. As of February 2026, Honduras had officially reported the arrival of six. Costa Rica has received 11 Mexicans since Trump's return to the White House, and according to local immigration authorities, they remain in the country. Presumably,

these individuals may have requested not to be returned to Mexico out of fear.

Immigration lawyers believe that the Trump administration is using deportations to third countries as a legal loophole to indirectly force asylum seekers to return to Mexico when the government cannot send them there because it would violate court orders from immigration judges that recognize the dangers. Organizations and politicians both inside and outside the U.S. have also questioned the use of force by U.S. immigration authorities.

A question looms over Harry's return to the UK. Can he rebuild his relationship with Prince William?

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The royal family's long-running American soap opera is returning to Britain. The question is whether it will blossom into a happy reunion or descend into anger, division and chaos.

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, plan to return to the United Kingdom from California in a matter of weeks. They have already enrolled their children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, in British schools so they can start the autumn term with their classmates.

News of the surprise decision, which broke late Wednesday in stories published by the Telegraph and Sun newspapers, has sparked widespread discussion about where the couple will live, who will pay for their security and whether they will return to royal duties one day.

But perhaps the most difficult issue is whether Harry can repair his once-close relationship with Prince William, the heir to the throne, which was decimated by Harry's very public complaints of mistreatment at the hands of Buckingham Palace staff, racism in the royal family and the failings of the monarchy. There are also concerns that Harry and Meghan could try to upstage William and his wife Catherine, when they once again share the British stage.

"That will be something for the palace to deal with ..." Craig Prescott, an expert on the U.K. constitution and the monarchy at Royal Holloway University of London, told The Associated Press. "They wouldn't want Meghan and Harry's presence in the U.K. here to overshadow the work of the monarchy, and there will have to be some discussion and allowance for that."

Harry and Meghan wanted their children to grow up British

The couple are expected to live at a private, nonroyal residence outside of London and they won't resume their royal duties, which they gave up when they moved to the exclusive Southern California community of Montecito six years ago, British media reported late Wednesday.

Their return to the U.K. comes as King Charles III, Harry's 77-year-old father, continues to undergo treatment for an undisclosed form of cancer that was discovered in 2024. The prince said last year that he didn't know "how much time my father has left," and has expressed a desire for his children to have a chance to get to know their grandfather.

While Harry and Meghan's decision is a surprise to many, royal historian Ed Owens said recent events created a pathway for the couple's return.

First, Harry spoke of his desire for reconciliation, then there was the apparently successful meeting between the king, his younger son and daughter-in-law and their children last month at Charles' Highgrove estate in western England. In addition, there is Harry's stated desire for his children to grow up British and that the U.K. looks like a safer place to be right now, given the divisions in American society, said Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?"

Royal experts expect Charles to forgive Harry

Finally, Owens said he expects Charles to forgive Harry because as the supreme governor of the Church of England he has to demonstrate the teachings of Christianity, including the virtue of forgiveness.

William may find forgiving his brother more difficult, but someday he too will become head of the church, Owens said.

"It may be that privately William never fully forgives his younger brother for what he deems the betrayal of the family," Owens told The AP. "But publicly," he will, "because for traditional moralists, traditional

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 28 of 66

Christian values, they demand that there is this public act of forgiveness, that there's reconciliation between the brothers."

Charles was informed of Harry and Meghan's plans on Sunday and the matter wasn't discussed during their recent visit to the U.K.

Relations have been strained in the House of Windsor

Relations between Harry and Meghan and the rest of the royal family have been strained since the couple gave up their royal duties and moved to California in 2020 to earn their own living. The couple later signed lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify.

The rift deepened after the couple gave a series of interviews and Harry published his explosive memoir "Spare," in which he said they left Britain to escape the restrictions of royal life. The couple also criticized palace officials for being insensitive to Meghan's mental health and alleged at least one member of the royal family had expressed racist views when she was pregnant with their first child. Meghan describes herself as biracial.

Oprah Winfrey asked Harry to summarize his reasons for leaving Britain in a 2021 interview that was broadcast around the world.

"Lack of support and lack of understanding," he replied.

Strains are exacerbated by long-running battles with the newspapers

Those tensions were exacerbated by Harry's long-running legal battle with Britain's tabloid newspapers, which he alleges illegally hacked his phones and invaded his privacy when he was younger. The courtroom drama seemed to be nearing an end after Harry and other plaintiffs lost their lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mail last month.

That case left Harry facing a potential bill for millions of pounds after the court ruled the plaintiffs were liable for the publisher's legal fees. Associated Newspapers has filed documents showing that its costs amounted to 34.5 million pounds (\$47 million).

Harry has also been embroiled in a legal wrangle with the British government after a government committee refused to authorize police protection for him and his family when they are in the U.K. The prince says they need armed police protection because they are at risk as members of the royal family, regardless of whether they are working royals.

The couple's security arrangements are a "private matter" for Harry and Meghan to deal with, Prime Minister Andy Burnham said when asked about the issue on Thursday.

After Harry lost his court challenge of the committee's decision in May 2025, the prince said he hoped to reconcile with his family while continuing to vent his anger at those in Britain he feels have mistreated him and his wife.

"I can't see a world in which I would be bringing my wife and children back to the U.K. at this point," he told the BBC at the time. "And the things that they're going to miss is, well, everything. You know, I love my country. I always have done, despite what some people in that country have done."

Although much of the media attention on Harry and Meghan has focused on family tensions and recriminations in recent years, Owens suggested that the story may now shift to the royal's efforts to rebuild family harmony.

"I think time is a great healer. It creates space in a social media-saturated world," he said. "People are always looking for the next thing to talk about and, arguably, that will be reconciliation between first of all father and son, and then potentially the two brothers."

What to know about the Tiananmen vigil organizers convicted of inciting subversion in Hong Kong

BY KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung are two prominent Hong Kong activists who helped lead the group behind the city's massive annual vigils commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. They were charged in 2021 with inciting subversion under Hong Kong's national security law.

The former leaders of the now-disbanded Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China were found guilty of inciting subversion Friday in a national security case that has drawn international attention, with critics saying it highlights the erosion of freedoms in the territory under the law imposed by Beijing.

Here's a brief look at the two activists:

Lee Cheuk-yan

Lee, 69, was the former chair of the Hong Kong Alliance. During the 1989 student-led Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, he brought donations from Hong Kongers to Beijing in late May. When troops and tanks entered the heart of Beijing and opened fire to end the protests in June, he was at a hotel that night hearing the gunshots, he said in his testimony at court. The crackdown killed hundreds, possibly thousands.

Lee later boarded a plane to return to Hong Kong but was asked to leave the plane by police before it took off. He was detained. He was allowed to go back to Hong Kong on June 8 after being questioned and signing a letter of repentance, he said.

His experience made him devote himself to letting the world know about what happened. Beyond his Tiananmen activism, Lee is also a veteran labor activist in the city and a former lawmaker.

The national security trial has focused on the alliance's core demand of "ending one-party rule." The prosecution alleged that the group's advocacy was about inciting others to use unlawful means to overthrow the leadership of China's ruling Communist Party. Lee denied he held enmity toward the party leading the country, saying his desire to see it reform stemmed from his love for the people.

"I have no enmity in my heart, only love," he said.

Chow Hang-tung

Chow, 41, began going to the vigils when she was just a primary school student. A natural sciences graduate of the University of Cambridge, she later studied law and became a vice-chair of the alliance.

Before the alliance voted to dissolve in September 2021, police had sought details about its operations and finances in connection with alleged links to pro-democracy groups overseas, accusing the group of being a foreign agent. But the group refused to cooperate, insisting it was not.

Chow, alongside two other core members of the group, was convicted in 2023 over their refusal and received a sentence of 4 1/2 months each. But last year, the trio overturned their convictions at the city's top court.

While Chow was behind bars, she became one of the first people to be arrested under a newer, home-grown national security law in 2024. Authorities alleged she and several others had used a Facebook page to publish seditious posts, saying they were targeting a "sensitive date."

The authorities have not detailed the content of the posts. But the page published a series of posts to mark the anniversary of the 1989 crackdown.

Despite limited resources in prison, Chow represented herself in the national security trial and stood firm in her defense.

"Speaking the truth has become inciting hatred, seeking justice has become exploiting suffering, accountability and limiting power have become violating the constitution, and returning power to the people has become subverting the state," she argued in her closing statement.

Trump warns of 'economic D-Day' against Iran, but Tehran is well acquainted with sanctions

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nearing the six-month mark of the Iran war and facing diminishing stockpiles of key weapons, the Trump administration is touting a crushing financial campaign against Tehran, promising an "economic D-Day" against a country that has so far withstood nearly five decades of punishing American sanctions.

With sparse details, President Donald Trump announced this week that the U.S. would be imposing an "unprecedented" level of economic warfare and isolation on Iran, aiming to force its leadership to cave to demands to end its nuclear program and fully reopen the crucial Strait of Hormuz to oil and natural gas tankers.

It reflects the dire reality Trump faces with an increasingly unpopular war he can't seem to end just months before pivotal midterm elections that will decide whether his Republican Party keeps control of Congress. Whether out of desperation or strategy, the president is refocusing America's might on bringing Iran to its knees through an accelerated sanctions campaign against one of the most economically penalized countries in the world.

The immediate response from Iran hawks has been praise and a call for patience as it plays out, while other analysts warn that Trump is refusing to learn the lessons of his predecessors.

In an interview Thursday on CNBC, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent offered a small glimpse of what may be ahead, threatening secondary sanctions on nations and companies that conduct business with Iran.

He did not say exactly whom would be targeted as part of this next phase of the administration's "Operation Economic Fury," which earlier had focused on entities and individuals that buy oil from or bank with Iran. China and India, however, are major buyers of Iranian oil.

"If you insist on doing business with them, then the U.S. Treasury and U.S. government will put its full might and force against you," Bessent said. "It's time for our allies and the rest of the world to make a decision."

Some experts see 'uncharted waters' that could force Iran's hand

Despite decades of U.S. sanctions against Iran, the Trump administration is arguing that it's only a matter of time and that striking the right economic target would get Tehran to its breaking point.

Richard Goldberg, who coordinated efforts to put diplomatic pressure on Iran in Trump's first term, said the consequences of U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear sites last year, the war this year and the American naval blockade on Iranian ports have created the perfect storm for capitulation — one that didn't previously exist.

"I think we're watching a strategy, whether it takes a short time or a long time, that is very much about fundamentally changing the future of the world by seeing the end of this regime," said Goldberg, who is now at the hawkish Washington think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

"I caution everyone — including myself, who has worked on sanctions, who's worked on financial warfare — to have the humility to admit that we are in uncharted waters," he said.

He said the decision this week by the United Arab Emirates — once one of Tehran's most important trading partners — to suspend trade with Iran over an alleged missile attack will only further isolate the government.

Beyond trade in domestically produced goods, the Emiratis had helped the country absorb some of the shocks caused by sanctions through its re-export hub.

Targeting allies and partners comes at a price

With nearly all of Iran's energy, financial and transportation sectors already covered by U.S. sanctions, Trump's aim appears to be to apply secondary sanctions on countries, including allies and partners, that have not cut all ties with Iran to starve the country of any remaining income it may still be receiving.

In many ways, it is a redux of Trump's first-term "maximum pressure" campaign, which he has ramped up during his second term to include military action.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 31 of 66

But as Trump and his allies discovered during his first administration, it can be difficult to enforce secondary sanctions without harming U.S. interests and provoking reciprocal measures. There were numerous instances of the administration granting sanctions waivers to countries, particularly those that rely on Iranian oil for their energy needs.

"Trump's strategy now rests on targeting Tehran directly by impeding its touch points and access to the formal financial system and international economy," said Behnam Ben Taleblu, senior director of FDD's Iran program. "This will require making the Iran issue more important in U.S. bilateral relations with countries in Europe and Asia."

Iran doesn't see an 'open door' at the end of the sanctions campaign

Iranian officials and analysts have accused the Republican president of flip-flopping with his latest pivot to economic pressure against Iran. Trump has long derided past leaders who used sanctions to limit Iran's ability to pay for its military and nuclear development.

In a post last week on X, Esmail Baghaei, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, wrote that Washington's pattern of retreating to sanctions when it doesn't want to pursue diplomacy has proven to be futile.

"Iran has demonstrated over decades that it will not be strangled by these exhausted refrains," he said. "The real risk is that American politicians, clinging to this bad habit, will instead strangle their own remaining chances of a less humiliating exit from a crisis of their own making."

Ali Vaez, Iran director at the International Crisis Group, said the Trump administration's decision to take its own "maximum pressure" policy to new heights with military action seems to ignore years of U.S. foreign policy lessons that show Iran does not respond well to pressure.

If anything, he says, the latest economic campaign has only "hardened Iran's position."

"I think (Trump's) blind spot is the fact that the only thing that the Iranian regime views as more dangerous than suffering from U.S. sanctions is surrendering to U.S. terms," Vaez said.

Plus, the past year of start-stop diplomacy has only worsened the already fragile dynamic between the longtime adversaries, Vaez says, adding that Iranian officials' lack of trust in Trump and his mediators has created an untenable foundation.

"They believe that even if they capitulate to U.S. terms under economic duress, Trump would move the goalposts and ask for more," he said. "And this is really the fundamental problem: Pressure without an open door is an exercise in futility."

President Trump to stump for Sen. Darline Graham days ahead of South Carolina's GOP Senate runoff

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. (AP) — President Donald Trump is scheduled to travel to South Carolina on Friday to make a last-minute appeal for Sen. Darline Graham, his chosen candidate to replace her brother, the late Sen. Lindsey Graham, ahead of a Republican runoff next week.

Voters will decide Tuesday whether Graham or Rep. Ralph Norman will be Republicans' nominee on the November ballot.

The Myrtle Beach rally is the sort of campaign trail occasion that Trump hasn't done as much of this year, compared with past midterms, making it a signal of the importance Trump is placing on a win for his pick.

It's also an opportunity for the president to wade into friendly territory ahead of the midterm elections that leave his party's control of Congress hanging in the balance. South Carolina hasn't elected a Democrat statewide in decades, its House delegation has only one Democrat and Trump's own victory in the 2016 presidential primary here helped propel him toward the nomination and ultimately the White House.

In the scramble of a special Republican primary election that was called after Lindsey Graham's sudden death last month, Darline Graham was picked by Gov. Henry McMaster — also a Trump ally — to serve as interim senator and entered the special primary at Trump's urging. The president had said he told McMaster that appointing her would be a "fabulous tribute to Lindsey," although the governor pointed out that he asked Graham to serve "in the wee hours" after her brother's death, adding that Trump "thought

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 32 of 66

it was a great idea" when he later told him of his pick.

The president pressed "RUN DARLINE, RUN" on social media, and gave her his "Complete and Total Endorsement" before she'd officially announced her campaign. And at every turn on the campaign trail, she's reminded voters of this anointing, as well as her commitment to advancing his priorities if elected. On the eve of the primary two weeks ago, he held a tele-rally for Graham.

Trump also considered Lindsey Graham a close ally and friend, though they ran against each other in 2016 and had their ups and downs, so part of the visit is personal for Trump. He eulogized his longtime golfing partner and wartime consigliere at Washington National Cathedral last month.

Like Trump, Darline Graham has portrayed herself as a political outsider

A political newcomer, Graham has stressed that she's "not a politician," as she's hurriedly introduced herself to voters across the state. Regularly touting her support for Trump's policies, as well as his endorsement, she has pointed to her years heading up a state agency, as well as her weeks on the job in the U.S. Senate, as evidence of her readiness.

Saying she's "answering President Trump's call to serve," she has repeatedly said she wants "to fight for President Trump's agenda" and cited his core goals of border security and passing the SAVE Act voting bill as among her top priorities.

Graham has said she's focused on kitchen table issues like gas prices and household spending rather than international affairs. Earlier this week, after stumbling on an elemental foreign policy question related to U.S. interests in Taiwan, Graham defended herself as "not a polished politician up here."

Trump has made no comment on the gaffe, which garnered attention after Graham told moderators, "National security is not my thing."

Trump's rally will be in Myrtle Beach, a conservative — and growing — area

By meeting voters in Myrtle Beach, both Trump and Darline Graham are aiming to capitalize on a growing part of the state that's known to be deeply conservative, loyal to Trump and full of new residents.

It's also the home district of Rep. Russell Fry, the House ally whose name Trump had floated as an "outstanding" possible replacement for Graham after the senator's death. Elected to the House in 2022 with Trump's help, Fry ousted a five-term GOP congressman who had voted to impeach Trump a year earlier.

Running in the Senate primary, Fry touted his support for and previous backing from the president, but was hampered by the absence of it in this race. Finishing third, he swiftly endorsed Graham, a calculated move for the 41-year-old, two-term congressman, who, dating to the origins of his 2022 election, has seen the ramifications for some Republicans who have crossed Trump.

US carries out its first deportations under pact for Liberia to accept 1,200 non-Liberians

By MARK MENGONFIA Associated Press

HARBEL, Liberia (AP) — The United States on Thursday carried out its first deportation under an agreement for Liberia to accept up to 1,200 people who are not from the African country, one of the Trump administration's largest efforts yet to deport people to countries other than their own.

The 20 deportees arrived at Roberts International Airport outside Monrovia.

Deportees will include African nationals as well as nationals from North America, South America and the Caribbean, according to Liberian Information Minister Jerolinmek Piah. Liberian Justice Minister Natu Oswald Tweh has said they could seek asylum in the West African country if they wished.

The U.S. State Department declined to answer questions about the Liberia agreement, but said that implementing the Trump administration's immigration policies was a "top priority." It said it was "unwavering in our commitment to end illegal and mass immigration and bolster America's border security."

The U.S. Homeland Security Department declined to confirm Thursday's deportations "for operational security reasons" and referred additional questions to the State Department.

Third-country agreements are often shrouded in secrecy. Migrants have been deported to countries they

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 33 of 66

have 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.

The Trump administration struck agreements with at least 35 countries to deport people who are from other countries, including Liberia and 13 others in Africa, according to Third Country Deportation Watch, a partnership of Refugees International and Human Rights First that relies on public records requests, news reports and other sources. More than 23,000 people have been deported to 26 countries under the agreements.

The U.S. State Department previously announced that Liberia agreed to accept deportees who are not from Liberia. But a six-page agreement reached in September 2025 and posted on its website does not say how many or from which countries.

In October 2025, Liberia offered to accept Kilmar Abrego Garcia of El Salvador, who was mistakenly deported to prison in El Salvador. Blocked from sending him to his native country, the Trump administration has vowed to send him to a third country, including Liberia.

Abrego Garcia has said he would agree to be deported to Costa Rica, which has said it will accept him. But the government has so far declined to send him there. Abrego Garcia is fighting deportation to Liberia in a federal lawsuit in Maryland.

Trump appears on former fixer-turned-enemy Michael Cohen's radio show after detente

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump appeared Thursday on his former fixer-turned-foe Michael Cohen's radio show, holding a stunning public reunion with the man who once called him a "Cheeto-dusted cartoon villain" and testified against him both in court and before Congress.

For Cohen, who served prison time for his role in what he said was covering up Trump's "dirty deeds," it was the culmination of a behind-the-scenes detente that would have been impossible to imagine several years ago.

The interview, part of which aired on Cohen's 77 WABC radio program Thursday evening and which will air in full Sunday, was an exceptionally friendly affair, with only passing reference to the men's tumultuous history.

"They weaponized you like nobody's ever been weaponized, like few have been," Trump told Cohen.

"I respect the fact that you recanted everything you said," he went on. "That's a big thing that you did."

In an interview with CNN shortly before the radio interview aired, Cohen said he had resubmitted a pardon application to the White House that had been denied by the previous administration, but had yet to receive any response and planned to follow up Friday.

The truce with Cohen makes him the latest in a long line of Trump loyalists who have had public falling-outs with the president but found themselves back in his good graces. Other recent examples include Elon Musk and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

But the split from Cohen was perhaps the most personal. Cohen once boasted that he would "take a bullet" for the president and was by Trump's side during his political rise. After their public breakup, Cohen's testimony in Trump's 2024 criminal hush-money trial instead helped secure Trump's criminal conviction just as he was trying to make his political comeback.

Cohen has since criticized prosecutors in the case — an admission that paved the way for their reconciliation.

'Boss, remember when I was by your side,' Cohen tells Trump

Cohen has said he and the president have had multiple conversations over the past year and introduced the interview by explaining his decision to move on.

"Forgiveness does not mean amnesia. It does not mean that the past did not happen. It does not mean the scars vanish, that the pain was fake or that I have forgotten a single second of what transpired, I

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 34 of 66

have not. Forgiveness isn't about erasing history," he said. "It is about having the courage to decide that yesterday will no longer dictate tomorrow."

He sounded nostalgic about a time when he was one of Trump's most trusted aides.

"Boss, remember when I was by your side," he said at one point.

The clip was introduced with the 1975 War song, "Why Can't We Be Friends," and closed with the lyrics, "Reunited and it feels so good," from the 1978 Peaches & Herb song.

In a long post on his online newsletter Thursday promoting the interview, Cohen said that although his relationship with Trump became "political blood sport," there were 15 years of close friendship between them.

"The good times don't cease to have existed because the bad times came afterward," Cohen wrote.

Simply, he said, "We forgave."

Trump had made no warm public statements about Cohen before Thursday, but in a series of social media posts this year, he linked to some of his former lawyer's comments saying he felt pressured by prosecutors to testify against Trump in the criminal hush money case and a civil fraud case.

Cohen was a key figure in Trump's prosecution in New York

In 2024, Cohen was the star witness in Trump's criminal hush money trial, which resulted in a 34-count felony conviction. He ended up facing no punishment.

But over days of probing questioning by prosecutors, followed by bruising cross-examination, Cohen placed the then-Republican candidate at the center of schemes during the 2016 presidential election to stifle accounts from an adult film actor and former Playboy model who said they had sexual encounters with Trump.

Cohen testified that Trump promised to reimburse the lawyer for the money he fronted and that he was constantly updated on behind-the-scenes efforts to bury stories feared to be harmful to the campaign.

"What I was doing, I was doing at the direction of and benefit of Mr. Trump," Cohen testified.

Cohen's testimony at the time appeared to be the final breach in a once-close relationship between the lawyer and his client that was tested in dramatic fashion in 2018 when FBI agents searched Cohen's office, home and hotel room.

Cohen later pleaded guilty to lying to Congress about a Trump Tower project in Russia as well as to campaign finance violations in which he implicated Trump in payments that went to Stormy Daniels, an adult film star, and Playboy Playmate Karen McDougal. He was sentenced to three years in prison.

Since his trial testimony, though, Cohen has sung a different tune as he's moved closer to Trump, insisting that he had testified under duress.

"I felt pressured and coerced to only provide information and testimony that would satisfy the government's desire to build the cases against and secure a judgment and convictions against President Trump," he wrote in a Substack post in January.

Cohen testified before Congress in 2019, alleging Trump had a history of misrepresenting the value of assets to gain favorable loan terms and tax benefits.

He gave similar testimony in a 2023 civil fraud trial in New York, which found that Trump and his companies had engaged in fraud by exaggerating his wealth for decades. A New York appeals court later threw out a \$550 million judgment against Trump in that case. Trump has asked a court to overturn the remaining parts of the case.

In his tell-all memoir in 2020, "Disloyal: The True Story of the Former Personal Attorney to President Donald J. Trump," Cohen was unsparing, calling Trump an "organized crime don" and "master manipulator."

But, foreshadowing their later rapprochement, Cohen also wrote that he still cared for Trump, writing, "I had and still have a lot of affection for him."

Iran dismisses US economic threats, and other developments in the Middle East

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran on Thursday dismissed threats by U.S. President Donald Trump of economic pain and isolation for the country, while six European nations condemned Israel over a settlement project.

Doctors Without Borders criticized the decision by Israel's military not to investigate two fatal attacks on the medical humanitarian organization's staff, and in Gaza City, a mass funeral was held for 50 people killed in Israeli airstrikes nearly three years ago but whose remains were just recovered.

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

Iran denounces Trump's economic threat

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has rejected the economic threats made against his country, saying that such "failed policies" will stir more hostility among Iranians and "bring more failures."

Araghchi's comments came a few hours after Trump threatened "crushing economic measures" against Iran. The U.S. president promised "Economic Warfare and Isolation on an unprecedented scale," but provided few details.

In a social media post, Araghchi maintained that the threats aim to divert the attention of the U.S. public from domestic financial problems, saying that U.S. "economic terrorism threatens the global economy and the national sovereignty of countries around the world."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Thursday that Iran will face the "greatest coordinated economic isolation in the history of the world."

In a CNBC interview, Bessent threatened secondary sanctions on nations and companies that conduct business with Iran, saying it's time for U.S. allies to make a decision on where they stand.

China's government and India are major buyers of Iranian oil, though Bessent didn't call them out by name.

Doctors Without Borders condemns Israel's military

Doctors Without Borders said that the decision by Israel's military not to open a criminal investigation into two strikes that killed four people shows the country won't take responsibility for attacking civilians.

The international aid group now wants an impartial investigation into the deaths, but didn't specify who should lead the effort.

Doctors Without Borders asked Israel's military to investigate an attack on a Gaza City convoy in November 2023 and a strike on the organization's shelter in Khan Younis in February 2024. Israel's announcement on Wednesday said that it wouldn't launch criminal investigations into the two cases, in which troops killed the organization's employees.

The decision by Israel's military shows "there is no prospect of accountability within the Israeli legal system for the killing of our staff, just as there has been no accountability for Israel's ongoing genocide against Palestinians," Doctors Without Borders said in a statement that cited 15 staff and 1,700 healthcare workers killed in Gaza since October 2023.

Israel denies accusations of genocide and war crimes and says it's targeting Hamas after the militant group's attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people and took 251 hostage on Oct. 7, 2023. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas, because it operates in populated areas in the tiny, overcrowded Gaza Strip.

UK and others rebuke planned West Bank settlement project

Six European countries along with Canada condemned the latest development in a contentious Israeli settlement project near Jerusalem that would effectively cut the occupied West Bank in two.

Israel's Ministry of Construction and Housing issued a tender for constructing several compounds with more than 1,200 homes in total in an open tract of land east of Jerusalem. It's the latest step in a project under consideration for more than two decades, which critics say would prevent the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state in the territory.

The joint statement from the leaders of the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 36 of 66

Canada said international law is clear the settlement is illegal and noted "unprecedented levels of violence by settlers against civilians."

"We urge the government of Israel to retract these plans immediately and end its expansion of settlements in the West Bank. Not only will they take us further from peace, but they further undermine Israel's international standing," the countries wrote.

Egypt and Jordan also condemned Israel's move.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar responded on Thursday by defending "the historic right of the Jewish people to reestablish their national home in the Land of Israel — including in the area in question." Saar criticized the U.K. government for "blaming only Israel while ignoring Palestinian extremism."

Gaza funeral for 50 killed in opening strikes of war

A mass funeral Thursday in Gaza City remembered 50 Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in the opening months of the Israel-Hamas war, but whose remains were only recently recovered from under rubble.

Dozens of mourners carried the remains, draped in Palestinian flags, through debris-strewn streets before lowering them into graves. Some held portraits and posters with photos of the deceased.

"We were able to recover them after three years of war, after three years of anguish, pain and torture. We were able to recover them, and dignify them in their final resting place. We were able to pray over them and bury them," said Lina Karam, who lost her father and other members of her family.

The 50 bodies were from three families who were killed in airstrikes in November and December 2023.

The nearly three-year war has killed more than 73,400 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, which was part of the Hamas-run government, maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and international organizations. It doesn't distinguish between civilians and militants, but says women and children make up around half of the toll.

US sanctions network supporting Hezbollah

The U.S. announced new sanctions Thursday against a network of people who allegedly funneled cash into Lebanon for the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

The network run by Turkish businessman Yunus Alper Yilmaz uses couriers traveling on commercial flights between Lebanon, Turkey, the UAE and Iran "to move up to hundreds of millions of dollars between jurisdictions, providing an avenue outside the formal financial system" to move funds to Hezbollah, the U.S. Department of Treasury said in a statement.

The Treasury also redesignated Hezbollah — which was already sanctioned by the U.S. — as an Iranian proxy acting on behalf of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force rather than a stand-alone operation.

The redesignation aims to underscore that Hezbollah "operates with little to no regard for Lebanese sovereignty, the Lebanese people or the Lebanese state," the Treasury statement said.

Turkey denies delegation had visited air base in Syria

Turkey has denied that a Turkish military delegation had visited an air base in northern Syria that was hit by Israeli airstrikes, and vowed to continue supporting Syria in its efforts to rebuild its military.

The Israeli strikes targeted the Abu Duhur base early on Tuesday, causing damage but no casualties. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said that Israel had attacked the base because Syria was "on the verge of breaching" an agreed-upon "status quo in security matters" by allowing Turkish troops to deploy there.

Syrian officials have said that a Turkish delegation visited the base before the Israeli strike to review rehabilitation work underway there.

Syria's top diplomat discusses Middle East in Pakistan

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani arrived in Islamabad for talks expected to focus on regional issues, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The visit comes days after Israeli airstrikes targeted an air base in northern Syria, causing damage but no casualties.

Pakistan's officials say the country's political and military leadership remains in contact with both Iran

and the United States over efforts to de-escalate tensions and push for the resumption of talks, after a 60-day deadline under a June memorandum of understanding expired. The agreement was brokered by Pakistan with help from regional countries.

Bodies of Pakistani sailors returned after Houthi attack

The bodies of two Pakistanis killed in last week's Houthi attack on a Tanzanian-flagged commercial vessel in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait have been repatriated to Pakistan.

Six Pakistani sailors who were wounded in the attack have also safely returned to the country, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said in a post on X.

Karmelo Anthony's lawyer asks for new trial in Texas track meet killing as new details are revealed

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

MCKINNEY, Texas (AP) — The Texas prosecutor who oversaw Karmelo Anthony's conviction in a deadly stabbing at a high school track meet said Thursday that both sides had agreed to hold back evidence that risked further inflaming a case already boiling with racial tensions and death threats.

That agreement is at the center of whether a judge will order a retrial for Anthony, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison over the killing of 17-year-old Austin Metcalf last year during a confrontation in the bleachers of a high school stadium near Dallas.

Anthony, 19, sat at the defense table as his attorney argued that the pact ultimately marred the June trial, which ended with jurors rejecting his claims of self-defense. Prosecutor Bill Wirsky defended the trial as fair.

The hearing was set to continue Friday, and it was not clear when the judge will rule on Anthony's retrial request.

Anthony is Black; Metcalf was white. Among the details that jurors never heard, according to attorneys on both sides, were that Anthony once sent a text message fantasizing about stabbing someone and Metcalf had a history of fighting and using racist language.

During the trial lawyers on both sides told jurors the tragedy had nothing to do with race, but social media posts amplified the killing nationwide in racial terms.

"All of us wanted the temperature on this, so to say, to be turned down," said Mike Howard, who was Anthony's lead attorney.

Prosecutor says Anthony was angry before meet

In addition to citing the off-the-record agreement, defense attorney Russell Wilson also told the judge a new trial should be allowed because of errors that limited access to the proceedings.

Wilson said the case's original judge allowed a "shadow docket" that shielded character information about both sides. "Everything was done off the record, at an astonishing clip," said Wilson, who didn't represent Anthony at the criminal trial.

Wirsky said Anthony's original attorneys agreed to everything done during the trial.

"Witness after witness came in" and said Anthony did it and it was not self-defense, Wirsky said.

The prosecutor said he agreed not to use evidence that showed Anthony had an obsession with guns and knives and that he was angry on the morning of the stabbing.

"He went there that day spoiling for a fight," Wirsky said about the day of the track meet.

The defense team had information showing that Metcalf used racial slurs in the past and bullied Black classmates, according to Howard and documents shown during Thursday's hearing.

As Howard spoke in the court, Metcalf's parents sat quietly in the gallery. There was no immediate response to an email seeking comment from them through a court spokesperson.

Karmelo Anthony case spurred a wave of threats

As national attention intensified last year, the families of both Metcalf and Anthony said they had been targets of harassment.

The prosecutor said there were threats against a judge who granted Anthony bond, fake autopsy reports

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 38 of 66

circulating online and attempts to intimidate witnesses.

"The lawyers on both sides were worried about their lives in this case," Wirsky said.

New judge deciding whether Anthony will get a new trial

Anthony already won a legal victory on Wednesday when the judge who presided over his trial was removed from the case. Judge Michael Chitty was then assigned to consider the motion for a retrial.

Anthony's attorneys had asked for state District Judge John Roach to be removed in part because of a TV interview in which Roach said jurors "got it right" when they delivered a guilty verdict.

Students who took the stand described a heated exchange over Anthony's refusal on a rainy spring day to leave a tent that belonged to Metcalf's team.

Several schools were competing at the track event when Anthony sat under a tent in the bleachers. Metcalf and others repeatedly told Anthony to leave, witnesses testified, leading to a confrontation.

Prosecutors said Anthony provoked Metcalf, and witnesses testified that Anthony was the aggressor.

Anthony at one point reached inside a bag and replied: "Touch me and see what happens," according to a police report.

Metcalf pushed Anthony, according to witnesses, who said Anthony then pulled out a knife and stabbed him in the chest.

Federal court is asked to block Kennedy Center from returning Trump's name to building

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Joyce Beatty made an emergency request on Thursday that a federal court block the Kennedy Center from returning President Donald Trump's name to the building.

The Trump-aligned board at the Kennedy Center voted earlier this month to inscribe the president's name on the venue's facade so it would read "The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated By President Donald J. Trump." If the Trump Kennedy Center Fund reached \$100 million, another inscription would be added reading "Endowed by the Trump Kennedy Center Fund."

The plaza in front of the Kennedy Center would also be renamed to recognize Trump.

The Kennedy Center has said it wouldn't attempt to engrave Trump's name on the building before Sept. 8 to allow for legal arguments to unfold.

Beatty, an Ohio Democrat and ex officio member of the Kennedy Center, has led the effort to prevent Trump from memorializing himself there. In asking for the court's intervention, her lawyers, Norm Eisen and Nathaniel Zelinsky, wrote that the board's actions amounted to "clear violations" of an earlier court order.

A representative for the Kennedy Center didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. The resolution approved by Trump's allies on the board said the Kennedy Center "would be in financial ruin without President Trump's unique stature as both an unparalleled fundraiser and world-class developer."

Congress named the performing arts center as a living memorial to Kennedy in 1964, the year after he was assassinated. The law explicitly prohibits the board of trustees from making the center into a memorial to anyone else, and from putting another person's name on the building's exterior.

U.S. District Court Judge Christopher Cooper ruled in May that the Kennedy Center illegally added Trump's name to the building, ordering it removed. The institution's leaders complied in June but left a tarp and scaffolding in place where Trump's name once stood.

Lawyers for the Kennedy Center wouldn't commit this week to taking down the scaffolding, saying it's needed as part of a broader system for "water testing and structural repairs to the roof overhang."

California lawmaker Aisha Wahab wins special election to succeed Eric Swalwell in Congress

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California state Sen. Aisha Wahab will serve out the rest of former Rep. Eric Swalwell's term after securing victory Thursday in a special election.

Swalwell, a Democrat who was running for California governor, ended his campaign and resigned from Congress in April after he was accused of sexual assault and harassment, which he denies. Wahab will represent the state's 14th Congressional District, which covers parts of Alameda County on the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay, through Swalwell's term ending in January.

She will be the first Afghan American to serve in Congress. The progressive Democrat defeated Bay Area Rapid Transit Director Melissa Hernandez even after a swell of spending by outside groups opposing Wahab in the race's final stretch. She said her victory shows her district "cannot be bought."

"I will fight for this district that raised me," Wahab said in a statement. "From foster care to Congress, this journey shows the possibility of the American Dream."

The conclusion of the race to replace Swalwell comes as criminal investigations continue into the sexual assault allegations he faces. Over the weekend, federal agents seized electronic devices from Swalwell at the San Francisco airport and later searched his home in Washington, D.C., according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to publicly discuss an ongoing investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity. Swalwell's attorney did not immediately respond to an email and phone message seeking comment.

Wahab became the first Afghan American elected to public office in the U.S. when she won a Hayward City Council seat in 2018.

She has championed housing affordability and access in her time in the Legislature and throughout her campaign. She also wrote a bill in 2023 to ban caste-based discrimination, which garnered national attention. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed it, saying such discrimination is already outlawed by civil rights protections.

Wahab and Hernandez will face off again in a separate November election determining who will serve the next full two-year term.

Wahab won the June primary decisively, but outside spending in favor of her rival poured into the race ahead of the general election. Groups affiliated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, spent millions into supporting Hernandez, and thousands into opposing Wahab.

At a candidate forum in April, Wahab answered "yes" when asked if she considered "what is happening to the Palestinian people" to be a genocide.

Hernandez did not give a straight yes or no answer. She said Israel had a right to defend itself following the October 2023 attack by Hamas but that "the destruction into Gaza has gone too far."

Hernandez, a moderate Democrat, said she was proud to put up a competitive fight after Wahab's success in the primary.

"I've been a fighter my whole life, and when I promised the residents of CA-14 I would fight for them, I never gave up," she said in a statement.

Jurors hear 'Keffe D' say his nephew fired fatal shots at Tupac Shakur in 1996 drive-by shooting

By JESSICA HILL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Jurors on Thursday heard Duane "Keffe D" Davis tell detectives in 2008 that his nephew Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson fired the shots that killed Tupac Shakur.

Davis, who said in the interview that he was also in the car with Anderson, is accused of orchestrating the 1996 killing of the 25-year-old hip-hop superstar in Las Vegas. At the time of the interview, his nephew had been dead for a decade.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 40 of 66

Davis said the white Cadillac he and Anderson were riding in with two other men pulled up alongside a car with Shakur inside, along with hip-hop mogul and Death Row Records head Marion "Suge" Knight.

"If we would have been on my side, I would have blasted," Davis said. Instead, Knight's car was on the other side, so Davis passed his gun back to Deandre "Big Dre" Smith. But Smith didn't want it, Davis said. Anderson, who was also in the back seat, took the weapon and started firing, Davis said.

Jurors watched the screen as the transcript of the audio recording rolled. Some occasionally took notes. At the beginning of the audio interview, Davis and his attorney whispered to each other. Shakur's family sat still, occasionally looking at the screen or looking down to the floor. The room was quiet as Davis described the shooting.

It was the first time Davis directly discussed his involvement in the killing with authorities. The interview is essential evidence in the state's case against the 63-year-old Davis. Prosecutors told jurors in opening statements that they would lean heavily on Davis' own admissions in interviews with police and on podcasts, as well as the 2019 memoir he co-authored, "Compton Street Legend."

He also previously told the FBI that his nephew was not involved in the 1996 shooting of Shakur, and speculated that Knight or Sean "Diddy" Combs were involved.

Davis has pleaded not guilty. His lawyer has called the prosecution's narrative "fiction" and said Davis was "full of crap" when he told stories of his involvement, and that authorities knew it. He argued investigators failed to back up the statements his client made with evidence.

The Los Angeles police detectives had actually brought Davis in to talk about the 1997 shooting death of Shakur's archrival, the Notorious B.I.G.

Davis had briefly been one of the suspects in that still unsolved killing, but he was later discounted.

"Everybody was a suspect at that time," Daryn Dupree, one of the detectives in the interview, said in court testimony Thursday.

The detectives tell Davis that their discussion is confidential.

"Nothing you say today can be used against you," said Greg Kading, the other detective conducting the interview who described it in a book a few years later.

Some in the audience shook their heads when someone in the audio tells Davis that "nothing leaves this room."

Dupree adds, "If you don't say nothing, it's cool, but if you go out there and start talking ..."

Prosecutors say Davis did in fact "go out there and start talking" a decade later when he told stories about the shooting in interviews and the memoir. They said that nullifies any agreement he had with law enforcement over this and other recorded conversations.

Prosecutors allege Shakur was killed to avenge Shakur's entourage attacking Davis' nephew Anderson a few hours earlier at the MGM Grand after a Mike Tyson fight. Davis was at the fight but not the brawl.

Later in the evening, they were in the Cadillac and saw Shakur hanging out of a black BMW with people calling out "Tupac!"

Davis said that after Lane fired the shots, he thought Knight was dead.

Decades after his death, Shakur remains a cultural icon, and one of the most influential and versatile rappers of all time. He died as his popularity was peaking and his film career as an actor was taking off. His legend has only grown in the years since.

Federal agents seize devices from ex-Rep. Eric Swalwell in sexual misconduct probe, AP source says

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal agents seized electronic devices from former Rep. Eric Swalwell and searched his Washington home as part of an investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct by the ex-Democratic congressman from California, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Swalwell's devices were seized at the San Francisco airport on Saturday and agents executed a search warrant at his home a day later, said the person, who was not authorized to publicly discuss an ongoing

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 41 of 66

investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A message seeking comment was left Thursday with an attorney for Swalwell, who has denied allegations of sexual assault and misconduct. The Daily Mail first reported the seizure of Swalwell's devices on Thursday.

Swalwell announced his resignation from Congress in April following allegations that Swalwell had sexually assaulted a woman twice, including when she worked for him. The San Francisco Chronicle, followed by CNN, first reported the allegations. CNN also reported that three other women alleged various kinds of sexual misconduct by Swalwell, including sending them unsolicited explicit messages or nude photos.

The seven-term lawmaker had been seen as one of the leading candidates in California's gubernatorial race before dropping out after the allegations surfaced.

The office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg confirmed in April that it was investigating Swalwell after a former staffer told CNN and the Chronicle that Swalwell raped her at a hotel while he was in New York City for a charity gala in 2024. In a statement, Bragg's office encouraged "survivors and anyone with knowledge of these allegations to contact our Special Victims Division."

A lawyer representing Lonna Drewes, a California woman who in April said she had been raped in 2018 by Swalwell, said his team was cooperating with all law enforcement agencies investigating the former congressman.

"We are encouraged to learn about the escalation of the FBI's investigation into the allegations against Eric Swalwell," attorney Arick Fudali said in a statement.

Drewes spoke of the assault at a news conference days after Swalwell dropped out of the California governor's race. She said it occurred at a hotel in Southern California. Swalwell denied that assault.

Swalwell, an Iowa native, was elected in 2012 and represented a House district east of San Francisco. He launched a presidential run in April 2019 but ended it a few months later after failing to catch on with voters.

He was one of Republican President Donald Trump's top Democratic antagonists in Congress. He was a prominent member of the House Judiciary and Intelligence committees during Trump's first term and served as one of several Democratic prosecutors for Trump's second impeachment after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

Swalwell was removed from the Intelligence Committee by then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., in 2023 based on Swalwell's contact with a suspected Chinese spy, Christine Fang.

Fang was reported to have come into contact with Swalwell's campaign as he was first running for Congress in 2012 and to have participated in fundraising for his 2014 campaign.

Federal investigators alerted Swalwell to their concerns and briefed Congress about Fang in 2015, at which point Swalwell says he cut off contact with her. He was not accused of wrongdoing and a House Ethics Committee investigation that was opened in 2021 closed two years later without any action.

California lawmaker Aisha Wahab secured victory Thursday in a special election to serve the rest of Swalwell's House term, which ends in January. She will run again in the November election to represent the district for a full two-year term.

'Survival mode': Indiana residents endure a ninth day without power

By LAURA BARGFELD, R.J. RICO and ED WHITE Associated Press

GARY, Ind. (AP) — Tens of thousands of residents in northwest Indiana were in survival mode Thursday as they endured a ninth day without power, throwing out spoiled food, lining up for hot meals and searching for places to charge their phones.

In Gary, Indiana, schools remained closed after the deadly Aug. 11 storm downed trees and power lines. Residents turned to social media to find open laundromats and working Wi-Fi, while others sought food, diapers and cleaning wipes for low-income neighbors.

Meanwhile, heavy rains in central Ohio brought flash flooding that covered roadways Thursday morning

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 42 of 66

in Columbus, the state capital, where emergency crews rescued motorists from stranded cars and saved a 12-year-old boy who was swept off a bridge.

Northern Indiana Public Service Co. said 68,000 customers were still without power as of Thursday morning, the majority of them in Lake County beside the Illinois border. The utility said it has restored power to 306,500 others since Aug. 11. But power is not expected to be fully restored until Tuesday in some places, including Gary.

Courtney Page-Tan, an Indiana University Indianapolis professor who studies community resilience, said health concerns grow each day of a prolonged outage. With many people using generators, poor ventilation can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition, those reliant on medical devices risk having them lose their charge, while refrigerated food once safe to eat could pose health risks as it spoils.

"Nine days is a long time for a community to be without power," Page-Tan said.

Residents are exhausted from days without power

Shatiya Hardin, a hair stylist in Gary for 25 years, has been unable to open her salon since the storm. She said residents in her lower-income neighborhood initially took the outages in stride. But now patience is wearing thin.

"We're always in survival mode in Gary. And I think that's probably why it wasn't so much of an uproar because the first few days, it was like, 'OK, we're used to this but this is the second week now,'" Hardin said. "It's not OK for us to continually be in survival mode, doing the best that we can."

More than a week after the initial storm, many residents in East Chicago, Indiana, who lost power regained it, but then lost it again. Kevin Mejia, who has a community Facebook page, was in that category Thursday.

"If I make one post, I get 500 comments," Mejia, 30, said. "A lot of people have been reaching out to me for food: 'Hey, I threw out hundreds of dollars in groceries.' Elderly people don't know who to turn to."

He's been sleeping on the floor because his mattress is too warm. With no power, his window air conditioners are silent.

Raydia Martin, assistant director of the Flourish Community Hub at Flourish Church in Gary, said the "silver lining" has been the response from volunteers and community groups.

"We thrive best, you know, as humans on certainty and predictability," Martin said. "So for something so devastating to happen so quickly, it definitely takes a toll on people mentally. Just not knowing what's coming next, where the next meal is going to come from, and when this is all going to be over. We need to have a light at the end of the tunnel."

The utility, NIPSCO, has called the destruction "unprecedented and widespread," and said crews from around the country have arrived to help repair downed wires, broken poles and damaged equipment.

Illinois, which is served by a different utility, recovered sooner from the same storm, but Melody Birmingham, an executive at NIPSCO's parent company, said that part of Illinois had fewer trees and different infrastructure, including some power lines that may have been buried.

"No storm is created equal," she said. "No service territory is the same."

Schools across northwest Indiana are still closed

The power outages have also disrupted the start of the school year for thousands of children.

Gary's school district, with about 4,300 students, started its school year in early August but has been closed since Aug. 13 and will remain closed through at least Friday, officials said.

Portage Township Schools had to cancel its Aug. 12 start of classes because of the storm and now is planning an Aug. 25 launch of the academic year. Officials this week said there are "existing safety concerns regarding trees down across several properties and damage that needs to be repaired."

Page-Tan said school closures can have significant consequences for vulnerable families.

"For a lot of households that live paycheck to paycheck, if they are missing work because they're unable to find childcare, it can be detrimental to the stability of a family," she said.

Flash flooding brings new woes to central Ohio

About 250 miles (400 kilometers) southeast of Gary, heavy rains drenched Columbus, Ohio, with more than 3 inches (7 centimeters) of rain in 12 hours, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther said.

Two women who were on foot and trapped in a flooded creek were rescued, Fire Division Lt. Nick Davis said. He also reported that first responders saved the life of a 12-year-old bicyclist who was swept off a bridge in high water.

The city was still cleaning up from severe weekend thunderstorms when the heavy rains struck midweek. "We've been all hands on deck supporting residents since last week," Ginther said Thursday morning at a news conference. "We're going to be focused on recovery, even with this curveball from Mother Nature."

A Russian missile and drone barrage kills at least 16 in Ukraine's Kyiv region

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pounded the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and the surrounding region with scores of missiles and drones in a nighttime aerial attack that lasted for hours and killed at least 16 people, officials said Thursday.

Moscow's forces have in recent months intensified their ballistic missile attacks on Kyiv, exploiting Ukraine's chronic shortage of U.S.-made Patriot air defense interceptors, the sole weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down the missiles.

Large-scale Russian missile strikes have become a regular occurrence this summer. Just over two weeks ago, a Russian attack on Kyiv and its surrounding region killed 17 people, and nine were killed in the city two days before that. The United Nations said last week that Kyiv was one of the hardest hit cities in July, with at least 54 civilians killed and 202 injured.

At the same time, Ukraine has shifted the war onto Russian soil through long-range drone strikes on oil facilities that have caused fuel shortages across the country. It has also unsettled the Russian public by striking warehouses of Wildberries, the country's biggest online retailer.

Zelenskyy repeats his appeals for more air defense

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded for countries to send more Patriot interceptors for defense, but international stockpiles are low amid the Iran war and Kyiv's more than four-year fight against Russia's all-out invasion.

Russia's overnight barrage also included cruise missiles and jet-powered drones that further strain air defenses, Ukraine's air force said.

Explosions boomed across Kyiv in the dark, but the air force said hits were recorded at 28 locations across the country. Emergency services said 15 people were killed in the capital, with another death in the wider Kyiv region. About 40 people were wounded, Zelenskyy said, as air raid warnings lasted until after dawn.

More than 38,000 people, including over 2,000 children, sheltered in Kyiv's subway stations overnight, the system's operator said.

"It was a massive attack," Zelenskyy said on social media, adding that Russia "had been preparing (it) for a long time, combining different types of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones, aiming to cause as much damage as possible to civilian infrastructure."

The Russian Defense Ministry said it struck a Kyiv industrial site manufacturing components for Flamingo cruise missiles. Sites involved in the production and storage of drones, an ammunition depot and a logistics center were also hit, it said.

Russia is able to produce more than 200 cruise and ballistic missiles per month, Ukraine's intelligence agency told news outlet Ukrainska Pravda in comments published Thursday. It has stockpiled more than 1,100 cruise missiles and about 130 Iskander-M ballistic missiles, as well as hundreds of missiles of other types, the agency was quoted as saying.

It was not possible to independently verify the report, and Russian officials do not routinely answer questions about the country's arsenal.

Ukraine says it struck more Russian oil facilities

Russia and Ukraine have battered each other with drones and missiles as their armies struggle to gain the upper hand on the 1,250-kilometer (780-mile) front line.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 44 of 66

Ukraine's General Staff said its forces struck an oil refinery in Nizhnekamsk, in Russia's Tatarstan region, starting a fire, and the Tamanneftegaz oil terminal in Volna, in Russia's Krasnodar region, where there was also a blaze. Ukraine has hit both facilities in recent months as part of its campaign to disrupt Russia's vital oil industry.

Tatarstan leader Rustam Minnikhanov confirmed there had been a "massive attack" in the region, state news agency Tass reported, citing his press service. Many of the drones targeted Nizhnekamsk's Zakamsk economic area, disrupting production at industrial sites and damaging residential buildings, Tass quoted him as saying.

The Russian Defense Ministry said air defenses shot down 726 drones overnight over a number of Russian regions, annexed Crimea and the Black and Azov seas, in one of Ukraine's biggest aerial attacks of the war.

Ukraine's neighbors are on alert

Russia's relentless onslaught has spooked other European countries, especially those bordering Ukraine, which fear spreading attacks from Moscow.

Amid the attack on Kyiv, the Polish Armed Forces Operational Command activated its military aviation operations, ground-based air defense systems and radar reconnaissance. Polish and other NATO military aircraft were deployed to monitor its airspace, Polish news agency PAP reported.

Romania's Defense Ministry said an unidentified drone crashed and burned in an uninhabited area near the Ukrainian border. Two Spanish F-18 jets, deployed on a policing mission in Romania, were scrambled overnight to monitor a group of "air targets" near the border, the ministry said.

In addition, two Romanian F-16 fighter jets were deployed to destroy a naval drone seen near a major Black Sea gas project, Romania's acting Defense Minister Radu Miruta said.

Moldova's Defense Ministry also said its airspace was breached by at least one drone.

Russia "is increasingly testing the resolve of NATO and its partners, violating the sovereignty of neighboring states and deliberately expanding the risks posed by its war far beyond Ukraine," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on social media.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen saw a broad threat to the European Union. "An escalating campaign of threats is underway, unsettling our citizens and seeking to divide our Union," she said on X.

Explosions shatter windows and screams fill the air

Russia's overnight strikes hit 12 locations across Kyiv's Darnytskyi, Sviatoshynskyi and Solomianskyi districts, damaging 30 apartment blocks, a school, a children's hospital and a kindergarten, Zelenskyy said.

Larysa Bondaruk, 60, sat on the ground, holding her cat, Chanel, which had been rescued by firefighters. With tears in her eyes, she said her neighbor's grandson had been trapped by the rubble and died. Her apartment was badly damaged.

"A rocket hit the roof. It was incredibly loud. Immediately, debris and doors were blown out. There were columns of smoke, columns of fire, screams, crying and despair," she said. "Two people were killed in our building, but the rescuers responded quickly and professionally. I am grateful to them for that."

In Solomianskyi district, the top two floors of a nine-story residential building were destroyed and fires broke out on other floors. People were also trapped in two residential buildings and a school shelter.

Prince Harry and Meghan are returning to the UK with their children

By DANICA KIRKA and JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, have decided to return to the United Kingdom for an extended stay starting this fall, but they won't resume their roles as working members of the royal family, The Associated Press learned Wednesday.

The couple's children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, have already enrolled at British schools and will start classes in September, according to a person close to the Sussexes who was not authorized to speak publicly. The family plans to live at a private, non-royal residence outside of London, but plans

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 45 of 66

to maintain their home in Montecito, California, and their vacation property in Portugal.

The Daily Telegraph first reported the story. When asked to discuss the reports by the AP at a roundtable event with U.S. veterans in Washington Wednesday night, Harry replied, "Nothing to say."

Harry and Meghan gave up their royal duties and moved to California more than six years ago to earn their living through lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify. Although relations with the rest of the royal family have soured since then, Harry has recently expressed an interest in reconciliation so he could spend more time with his father, King Charles III, who is being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer.

Charles was informed of the couple's plans on Sunday. Harry and Meghan visited the U.K. last month. Buckingham Palace has a policy of not commenting on speculation about non-working members of the royal family. A representative for Harry and Meghan declined to comment.

According to a source close to the Sussexes, Meghan will continue heading her As Ever company from the U.K., while Harry can spend more time working with his U.K.-based charities.

Harry and Meghan have had a stormy relationship with the royal family ever since they decamped to a mansion in the exclusive Southern California enclave of Montecito.

In a series of interviews and Harry's memoir "Spare," the couple said they left Britain to escape the restrictions of royal life and criticized palace officials for being insensitive to Meghan's mental health while alleging that at least one member of the royal family had expressed racist views when she was pregnant with their first child. Meghan describes herself as biracial.

Those tensions were exacerbated by Harry's long-running legal battle with Britain's tabloid newspapers, which he alleges illegally hacked his phones and invaded his privacy when he was younger.

The prince recently lost a lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mail, though he won a 2023 judgment that condemned the publisher of the Daily Mirror for phone hacking. He also reached a settlement with the publisher of the Sun, which apologized for intruding on his life and agreed to pay substantial damages.

The latest trial has left Harry facing a potential bill for millions of pounds after the court ruled he and other plaintiffs in the case were liable for the publisher's legal fees. Associated Newspapers has filed documents showing that its legal costs amounted to 34.5 million pounds (\$47 million).

Harry has also been embroiled in a legal wrangle with the British government after a government committee refused to authorize police protection for the prince and his family when they are in the U.K. The prince says he and his family need armed police protection because they are at risk simply because they are members of the royal family, regardless of whether they are working royals.

After losing a court battle over the security issue last year, Harry said he hoped to rebuild relations with his family.

"I would love reconciliation with my family. There's no point in continuing to fight anymore," Harry told the BBC. "I don't know how much longer my father has."

Last month, Harry returned to the U.K. for a series of charity engagements. Meghan and the children joined Harry for part of the visit and they spent time with the king at his Highgrove estate in western England. It was the first time Archie and Lilibet had seen their grandfather since the late Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee in 2022.

While Harry has recently met with his father, there are no signs of a warming of relations with his brother, Prince William, the heir to the throne.

Peter Hunt, a former BBC royal correspondent, said the surprise announcement would make William "apoplectic."

"In the short term, Harry will be able to deepen his rapprochement with his father," Hunt told Britain's Press Association. "And his presence back home will make it harder for his brother to duck a reconciliation."

Investigators examining foes of Trump seek interviews related to Mar-a-Lago search, AP sources say

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Department investigators have sought to interview law enforcement officials related to the FBI search of Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate as part of a Florida-based inquiry aiming to establish a conspiracy against the Republican president, multiple people familiar with the matter said Thursday.

The requests for interviews, made in recent weeks, suggest that a conspiracy investigation that had mostly appeared focused on the decade-old question of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election is also examining a more contemporary event — the 2022 search of Mar-a-Lago that resulted in the FBI seizing top secret documents from the president's Palm Beach, Florida, estate.

The requests were for voluntary interviews and not made through subpoenas, said the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation with The Associated Press.

It is not clear when or if prosecutors might seek to bring charges, or for what, but investigating conduct that occurred in Florida might give the Justice Department the legal hook it needs to try to anchor a prosecution in the state.

Joe diGenova, the prosecutor brought back to the Justice Department in April to oversee the investigation, declined to comment when contacted by AP on Thursday. The Justice Department didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump was indicted in 2023 on charges of unlawfully retaining classified documents and of obstructing FBI efforts to get them back. But the case was dismissed the following year after a Trump-appointed judge, Aileen Cannon, ruled that the prosecutor who brought the indictment, Jack Smith, had been illegally appointed.

Trump has long maintained that law enforcement and intelligence officials conspired against him over the last decade, drawing a straight line between an investigation into ties between Russia and his 2016 presidential campaign and the more recent investigations related to his retention of classified documents and his efforts to undo the 2020 election.

The Justice Department has for months conducted an investigation in Florida in hopes of proving wrongdoing by the officials involved in scrutinizing Trump.

Much of the questioning known to have occurred so far has centered on the government response to Russian interference in the 2016 election and the creation of an intelligence community assessment that documented the extent of the meddling.

It was not immediately clear why investigators want to question FBI officials in connection with the Mar-a-Lago search, but the act has long infuriated Trump, who decried it as an invasion of privacy.

In addition, congressional Republicans have long seized on accounts of tension between FBI officials and senior Justice Department leaders before the search to raise questions about whether there was an adequate justification for it, though the law enforcement dispute centered not on whether investigators had gathered sufficient evidence for a search but rather on whether there was a less dramatic and intrusive way to recover the records.

The bond market swings back to worries and knocks US stocks lower

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The relief that swept the bond market just a day earlier disappeared on Thursday as oil prices, worries about high inflation and the U.S. government's debt kept rising. That helped knock the U.S. stock market to its worst day in three weeks, and Walmart led the way on concerns about its upcoming profits.

The S&P 500 fell 0.9% for its fourth loss in the five days since setting its all-time high last week. The

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 47 of 66

Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 703 points, or 1.3%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1%.

The bond market remains the center of the action after yields charged higher through the summer. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent made a surprise move Wednesday that brought some temporary relief. His department said it will at least double the size of its planned purchases of longer-term Treasuries from Sept. 9 through Nov. 4.

That helped push yields down after the 10-year Treasury's yield hit its highest level in more than a year and the 30-year yield got back to where it was in 2007. It was a big deal because high yields slow the economy by raising interest payments for people, companies and the government, and they can undercut prices for stocks and other investments.

But analysts had cautioned the effect may be short lived, given how small the purchases are relative to the overall size of the Treasury market and how they don't fix the fundamental concerns that had driven up yields. Plus, more signals arrived quickly to keep those concerns high.

The U.S. government's debt topped \$40 trillion on Wednesday, a staggering record that arrived just months after the national debt first blew past the \$39 trillion mark in April, because Washington continues to spend far more money than it brings in.

And on Thursday, the price for a barrel of Brent crude climbed 2.4% to \$93.78 as uncertainty continues about when the war with Iran will allow oil tankers to freely exit the Persian Gulf again. President Donald Trump threatened Iran with "the MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY" late Wednesday but provided few details.

That helped push the 10-year Treasury yield up to 4.70% from 4.65% late Wednesday. It's almost back to its 4.71% level from late Tuesday, before the Treasury Department made its announcement.

A couple encouraging reports on the U.S. economy also helped raise longer-term Treasury yields, which move with investors' expectations for the economy and inflation in coming years. One said fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week than economists expected, while another said manufacturing in the mid-Atlantic region appears to be much stronger than expected.

On Wall Street, Walmart was the heaviest weight on the S&P 500 and fell 9.2% for its worst loss in four years even though it reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Investors focused instead on an important underlying measure of revenue growth, which slowed again. Its forecast for profit in the current quarter also fell short of analysts' expectations.

Given its massive size, Walmart offers a look at how shoppers are doing across the United States. A surprisingly weak update on sales at U.S. retailers overall last month had raised worries that shoppers may be succumbing to pressure from high inflation and a job market that may be looking less solid.

Advance Auto Parts tumbled 24.5% for its worst loss in three years after the retailer reported weaker revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected, even though its profit topped expectations. CEO Shane O'Kelly said that "tighter household budgets constrained spending more than we anticipated, especially during the last four weeks of the quarter."

Spending by U.S. consumers is the main engine of the economy, and a pullback by them could exacerbate what's already a slowdown in growth for the economy.

A pullback could also mean a double-whammy for travel companies, which would see fewer bookings when they have to pay higher prices for fuel. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings fell 3.4%, while United Airlines sank 3.5% and American Airlines lost 2.5%.

Helping to keep Wall Street's losses in check was Deere, which reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It rose 6.9% as the company said order trends indicate the agriculture equipment business looks set to accelerate after this year.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 66.82 points to 7,641.16. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 703.84 to 52,759.21, and the Nasdaq composite sank 263.92 to 26,067.17.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe following a stronger finish in Asia.

South Korea's Kospi soared 5.9% for one of the world's biggest moves after the two tech titans that dominate its market, Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, jumped. Such swings have become more common for Seoul's market, which has borne the brunt of rising and falling worries that winning stocks in the

artificial-intelligence boom may have shot too high.

Why Treasury Secretary Bessent's moves to calm the bond market haven't worked so far

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and STAN CHOE AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Interest rates rebounded Thursday despite efforts by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to put a lid on longer-term borrowing costs, a sign Wall Street investors remain worried about burgeoning government debt, heavy borrowing by tech firms, and the Federal Reserve's commitment to fighting inflation.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note, a key benchmark for mortgage rates, rose back to 4.69% Thursday. That is nearly where it stood early Wednesday before Bessent surprised financial markets by announcing that Treasury would double the size of a bond buyback program starting next month to \$4 billion per operation from \$2 billion. The buybacks are intended to reduce the supply of 10-year to 30-year bonds and boost their prices. Yields on bonds fall when their prices rise.

Bessent said Thursday on CNBC that the bond repurchase program could be larger than \$4 billion.

"We have a big toolkit so we'll see," Bessent said. "We believe that the yields don't reflect the underlying fundamentals."

Rising bond yields push up borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, and the Trump administration has set reducing interest rates as a top goal. Home purchases have slumped as mortgage rates have moved higher this year.

President Donald Trump has often demanded that the Federal Reserve lower rates, but the ongoing increases are driven primarily by financial markets. The 30-year bond yield rose to 5.23% Thursday, down only slightly from a 19-year high reached Tuesday.

Treasury's move doesn't fix the fundamental problems spooking the bond market

Bessent also said the Trump administration would announce a new effort to reduce the government's budget deficit, possibly by Monday. He argued that the deficit will peak this year, in part because it has been driven higher by tariff refunds, a temporary factor.

While the deficit has been huge for years, overall debt topped \$40 trillion on Wednesday, a staggering record that arrived just months after the national debt first blew past the \$39 trillion mark in April. And the Congressional Budget Office estimated earlier this week that the annual gap between government revenue and spending would top \$2 trillion this year, a remarkable number outside of recessions.

But Gennadiy Goldberg, head of U.S. rates strategy at TD Securities, said reducing the deficit is mostly up to Congress, rather than the Treasury Department.

"What we are seeing is the market is still a little bit skeptical that Treasury can and will be able to back-stop some of these moves," Goldberg said.

Another factor pushing yields higher is how much debt Big Tech companies are raising to build AI data centers. Their deluge of bond offerings is giving bond investors more to choose from, which lowers prices for bonds and pushes up their yields.

Investors are skeptical of the Fed's willingness to fight inflation

Inflation also remains a threat because oil prices keep climbing on uncertainty about when the war with Iran will let tankers freely exit the Persian Gulf again. They rose again Thursday after Trump threatened Iran with "the MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY." The price of Brent crude oil is near \$94 per barrel, compared with roughly \$72 before the start of the war.

The Fed typically combats inflation by raising its benchmark interest rate to slow borrowing and spending and cool the economy. Yet new Fed chair Kevin Warsh hasn't signaled whether the Fed will take such a step. At his most recent press conference in late July, he sowed confusion about whether he sees higher rates as the right approach.

He also suggested the Fed could soon switch the gauge it uses to monitor inflation, which it seeks to keep at 2%. Inflation has topped that level for more than five years, and was 3.7% in June, according to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 49 of 66

the Fed's preferred measure.

Mark Cabana, head of U.S. rates strategy at Bank of America Securities, said that a key reason for higher borrowing costs "is just elevated uncertainty about how the Fed is going to contain inflation" and what it will do "in case things don't go to plan."

Yet Warsh has underscored he doesn't want to provide such signals because he wants financial markets to set interest rates based on economic conditions, not on what it expects the Fed to do. Bessent's intervention appears to be at cross-purposes with that goal, since markets are now considering what next steps Treasury might take to contain rates.

The rise in rates has put pressure on Warsh to clarify his approach when he delivers a high-profile speech next Friday at an annual Fed conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

"Now the ball is in the Fed's court and the ball is really in Kevin Warsh's hands," Cabana said. "And the market is questioning, will Warsh respond? Will he articulate a better plan?"

Warsh was appointed by Trump after his predecessor, Jerome Powell, finished his term in May. Trump relentlessly attacked Powell for not cutting rates, raising concerns that Warsh is inclined to reduce rates to placate Trump.

Shorter-term bond yields dipped after the Fed's July 28-29 rates meeting, while longer-term yields rose. It was an unusual reaction to a Fed meeting, according to strategists at BNP Paribas, and could suggest investors believe the Fed wants to keep its benchmark rate lower rather than higher.

Treasury buyback is small compared to the size of the market

While Bessent is talking about billions of dollars in bond buybacks, the Treasury market is so large that even purchases at that scale may not have much impact. Analysts at Macquarie, an investment bank, estimate that the U.S. government will need to issue nearly \$550 billion in bonds this quarter to finance its operations.

History also shows that government interventions in the bond market have limited effects. "While such measures can reduce volatility and provide temporary relief, they have not permanently lowered borrowing costs when fiscal, inflation, or supply dynamics remained unfavorable," according to strategists at UBS Wealth Management, pointing to prior examples from Japan and the United Kingdom.

Trump keeps embracing data centers even as they become toxic in midterm races

By JESSE BEDAYN, MARC LEVY and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump, speaking alongside cryptocurrency leaders at the White House this week, made a statement that Republican and Democratic candidates alike wouldn't touch with a 10-foot pole.

"If I were the mayor of a town or the governor of a state, and I had a chance to get a big plant in, an AI plant or a data center," Trump said, "I would absolutely want it because the jobs are enormous and the money paid, the taxes paid, are just enormous."

It's not the kind of message anyone is using in competitive midterm races.

The race to build data centers, which power artificial intelligence and cloud computing, has run aground amid frustration from voters who don't want to live near the massive warehouse campuses. Even the Senate Republicans' campaign arm warned that anger over data centers — some of which dwarf football stadiums and use more energy than small cities — could cost them a seat.

Opposition stretches across the political spectrum because of fears that the behemoths will jack up electricity bills, drain people's water wells, create unhealthy amounts of air and noise pollution and forever change a community's character — all while getting lucrative tax breaks from states competing for their business.

Trump has framed data centers as a necessary component of a top national and economic security priority: winning the AI race against China. However, he also has acknowledged concern over rising electricity bills, previously saying "it's only fair" for the companies to shoulder their costs.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 50 of 66

He also suggested this week that data centers need “a little public relations help.” In recent months, he has gotten tech giants to sign a voluntary pledge to shield U.S. consumers from higher utility bills from data centers, even as he pushes to streamline the process for companies and utilities to build their own power plants.

But building power plants doesn’t happen overnight, and the immediate political reality for candidates across the country is far different.

“It is yet another dimension in which the White House appears tone deaf — tone deaf at best and indifferent to the interest of other Republican candidates at worst,” said James Henson, the director of the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas, Austin, a nonpartisan research organization.

Republican committee issues warning over data centers in Ohio

Statewide candidates from Nevada to Pennsylvania, both Republican and Democratic, are weaponizing data centers against their opponents, and candidates who absorb those attacks are subsequently trying to distance themselves from them.

In Ohio, a data center hot spot with closely contested races for governor and U.S. Senate, the National Republican Senatorial Committee warned in a memo Tuesday that Sen. Jon Husted is vulnerable to losing his seat because of the centers.

Democratic nominee Sherrod Brown is airing attack ads against Husted that call him the “face of data centers in Ohio” as people gather signatures for a statewide referendum to ban their construction.

The Republican memo said it’s been a “sleeper issue for the entire election cycle.”

“Brown is using it because it works,” the NRSC said. “More than any other thing in this race, data centers are the anchor hanging around Husted’s neck. If he loses and data centers get the blame, politicians across the country will take notice — and they will not go near the next one.”

The memo suggested voters may balk at Democratic candidates who want to stop data center construction altogether in favor of a Republican candidate who only wants data centers built if a community approves it in a local vote and it pays for its own power, water and other utilities.

Most registered voters oppose building a data center in their area, according to a July Fox News poll.

Still, the issue falls behind other voter concerns, such as cost of living, as November looms. A Quinnipiac Poll conducted in June asked voters what issues were important in deciding who to vote for in U.S. House elections, and about 4 in 10 mentioned AI data centers.

Trump’s statement already put to use in Nevada race

In Nevada, Democrat Aaron Ford quickly tied Trump’s statement to Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo, characterizing them as being in “lockstep on data centers.”

In a statement, Ford said Trump and Lombardo are “Nevada data centers’ biggest cheerleaders” who “only care about catering to their ‘billionaire friends’ while Nevadans pay the price.”

Ford this week unveiled a policy platform in which he said he would halt new state tax breaks for data centers — he estimated them at \$200 million currently — while auditing existing projects to ensure they are delivering on promises. He also said he would ensure data centers pay for their electricity needs, do not deplete Nevada’s water supply and help local governments negotiate strong benefits agreements with developers.

Texas’ governor changed course and got a jab from Trump

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who last November celebrated Google’s announcement of a \$40 billion investment there by calling the state “the epicenter of AI development,” is under attack from his Democratic challenger, Gina Hinojosa, over his pursuit of data center development.

Abbott has since changed course by promising tougher action, such as removing the state’s sales tax exemption and holding up projects to review their energy usage.

Trump criticized the shift, saying “I think it’s a mistake” in a recent interview with Punchbowl News.

Asked about Trump’s support for data centers, Abbott’s office said the governor’s “top priority is to protect Texans’ safety and quality of life and ensure the integrity of our power grid and water supply.”

“Simply put, Texans must come first,” Abbott’s office said.

Data centers complicated Wisconsin governor race

While Trump embraces data centers, even some of his allies are using them for political attacks. U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, running for Wisconsin governor, released a TV ad this week branding his Democratic opponent as "Data Center David Crowley."

The ad includes a clip of Crowley saying Wisconsin could become the "AI and data hub not only for the entire country, but for the entire globe."

Crowley has said local communities must have veto authority while also calling data centers a part of the modern economy that could bring significant economic benefits to the state.

Tiffany, who Trump has endorsed, has also said positive things about data centers. In January, Tiffany called data centers "exciting new technology," in an interview with PBS Wisconsin. And last December, he voted for a bipartisan bill known as the SPEED Act, which is designed to accelerate construction of new AI infrastructure projects like data centers. It hasn't passed the Senate.

Neither Tiffany nor Crowley support a moratorium on new data center construction.

Tiffany has called for repealing the state tax incentive for data centers, while Crowley has not. They both have called for stricter regulation.

Crowley, at an event Wednesday where he received the endorsement of the environmental group Clean Wisconsin, downplayed the attacks Tiffany has made against his data center position.

"He's getting very good at saying one thing and doing something different," Crowley said, pointing to Tiffany's votes in support of the SPEED Act.

"What Congressman Tom Tiffany's doing is lying because he's trying to run away from his record in Congress," Crowley said.

Speedboat driver in fatal New York Harbor capsizing was in the US illegally, authorities say

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The pilot of a speedboat that capsized during a tour around the Statue of Liberty, drowning an infant and her mother, has been arrested by U.S. immigration authorities who say he was in the country illegally.

Manuel Ernesto Hernandez-Umana, who has a pending federal criminal case in connection with the Aug. 8 crash, lied to a border officer and falsely claimed he was a U.S. citizen when he entered the country in Texas in 2007, the Department of Homeland Security said Wednesday.

Hernandez-Umana, 46, a citizen of El Salvador, is being held at a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey, according to online records. Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said he will eventually be deported.

Immigration authorities arrested him after he was released on bail in his criminal case, where he is charged with causing the deaths of 5-month old Antonella Garcia and 27-year-old Sara Sanchez through misconduct or neglect.

According to prosecutors, Hernandez-Umana wasn't licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard, wasn't aware of basic safety rules and told investigators he'd borrowed his friend's personal vessel for the New York Harbor excursion. The boat was illegally chartered and overcrowded, prosecutors said.

"Once he faces justice for his crimes, we will make sure that he is swiftly removed from our country," Mullin said in a statement.

Hernandez-Umana's lawyer, Amy Gallicchio, declined comment.

Hernandez, who had been living in Manville, New Jersey, was not required to enter a plea at his initial court appearance in the criminal case on Aug. 10. He wiped his eyes as he arrived to the courtroom, still wearing the T-shirt, swim trunks and water shoes he'd had on during the voyage. He is due back in court on Sept. 9.

According to Coast Guard investigators, Hernandez was piloting a 21-foot Yamaha AR210 with 14 people aboard — well over its 10 person capacity — when it swamped and sank as it made a U-turn in choppy

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 52 of 66

waters. The tour began around 7 p.m. and the vessel capsized more than three hours into its journey.

The infant wasn't wearing a life preserver because the boat didn't have any for small children, prosecutors said. Instead, Hernandez told Sanchez she needed to wear a life vest and hold the infant throughout the hourslong tour, a violation of federal regulations, prosecutors said.

The tour was organized through Zeus Luxury Rental Inc., which advertises its services on social media platforms including Instagram and TikTok. A boat chartered by the company caught fire last year during a birthday cruise on Long Island Sound.

According to his criminal complaint, Hernandez told investigators he had worked for Zeus Luxury on a freelance or contract basis since last year, starting as a limousine driver. He said that twice recently he used his personal boat, a slightly larger Yamaha AR250, but used a friend's boat on Aug. 8 because his needed repairs, the complaint said.

Messages seeking comment were sent to a phone number and email address listed on Zeus Luxury's website. The phone number's voicemail was full, according to an automated recording.

Prices soar as Gaza smuggling booms. Officials, soldiers and middlemen are accused of cashing in

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Palestinians face inflated prices for groceries and batteries, hospitals have turned to smugglers for medicine and equipment, Israeli soldiers and other middlemen are accused of pocketing millions of dollars, and the Hamas-led government takes a cut as the smuggling of goods restricted by Israel into the Gaza Strip has boomed, according to an Associated Press investigation based on court documents and interviews with traders, truckers and officials.

Cigarettes and tobacco — banned from entry to Gaza since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023 — rake in the biggest profits for smugglers and merchants, officials and residents say. But everything from iPhones and solar panels to fuel and anesthetics are also brought into the tiny coastal territory illegally. Israel restricts quantities of some goods and bans others outright. It defines many as "dual use" — including concrete, vehicle parts and X-ray machines — asserting they could be repurposed by Hamas militants for military functions.

To build a picture of the illicit trade, The Associated Press analyzed Israeli court documents and spoke to five major traders who import smuggled goods, three merchants who sell them, and two truckers — all on condition of anonymity because of their roles in the illegal smuggling business and concerns about their safety in Gaza. AP also interviewed four Palestinian officials, two on condition of anonymity because of worries about retribution from Israel, Hamas or merchants; two U.N. officials, on condition of anonymity over concern for their jobs; and a dozen Palestinian residents, who spoke about how they get everyday items and their skyrocketing costs.

AP found a rush from all sides to profit off the tight restrictions imposed by Israel on Gaza and its 2 million residents, most of whom have been displaced by the war. Smuggling rings — which have long flourished, circumventing two decades of Israeli blockades and building a network of businessmen and collaborators — pull in millions of dollars. Payoffs go to Israeli troops, drivers, warehouse workers and others on both sides of the border, according to traders and court documents.

"The occupation has left no other option before us. Smuggling has become routine," one trader said, noting that some in Israel's military are willing to help — for a price. "We benefit, they benefit and the people in Gaza benefit because we provide goods, including food, to the market."

The Israeli military said via email that it takes the issue of smuggling "very seriously and works to prevent it." It said any cases of suspected involvement by Israeli military personnel are "examined and handled in accordance with the law." But military officials did not answer a list of detailed questions from AP on the roles of soldiers or Gaza's government in smuggling.

Gaza's Hamas-led government also takes in some of the profit, according to merchants and one Palestin-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 53 of 66

ian official. Merchants call it "taxing" — on both smuggled goods and those brought in legally.

Mohammad Barbakh, of the Palestinian Economy Ministry in Gaza, told AP the government receives up to 20% of the price of any smuggled goods if the merchant reports them to authorities, and that increases to 80% if the items go unreported and authorities discover them. But he said authorities don't refer to their cut as "taxes" and that they haven't taxed goods entering legally since the war's start.

How smuggled goods flow into Gaza

Since the war began, Israel has tightly controlled all entry of food, aid and goods into the Gaza Strip, including a total aid blockade that shut off entry entirely for nearly three months last year, pushing parts of the territory into famine. The flow of goods has increased since a fragile ceasefire deal went into effect in October but remains well below prewar levels.

Besides the U.N. and other humanitarian groups bringing in aid, Israel has given 12 traders in Gaza permits to import commercial goods, according to Gaza's Economy Ministry. Contents of shipments must be approved by Israeli authorities, a process aid workers and merchants say can be long and opaque, sometimes ending with a rejection on grounds of "dual use."

The military classifies a list of some 150 broad categories of items as "dual use," including concrete, asphalt, steel pipes and wooden planks, according to documents provided by COGAT, the military department in charge of coordinating entry of goods into Gaza. In a statement to AP, COGAT said it has let in some "dual use" items including generators and X-ray machines, in specific cases under strict monitoring.

Some traders turn to smuggling networks to meet demand in Gaza, where smaller merchants look to sell contraband.

Two merchants and a trucker who is part of Gaza's union told AP that sometimes government agencies ask for specific items to keep functioning — fuel, spare parts for civil defense vehicles or generators. Hospitals also turn to smugglers, for drugs and some equipment.

And tribal elders request smuggled goods for their communities, including medicines that are in short supply, a tribal leader told AP, on condition of anonymity over concerns for his safety.

Two traders who control a large portion of the smuggling scene and an aide to a third told AP they send lists of contraband goods they want to import to "coordinators" — Israeli and Palestinian middlemen in Israel and the West Bank. Coordinators line up merchandise, then arrange a route into Gaza.

Commercial goods and aid mostly go through the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south, where every truck is inspected. The military also has routes in and out of Gaza for its vehicles. Smugglers use both avenues, bribing soldiers to smooth the way for trucks or carry goods in military vehicles, according to the traders and Israeli court documents.

Trucks belonging to humanitarian groups are also used sometimes, though less often, according to merchants and Israeli government statements.

Smuggling accounts for much of Gaza's economy

Smuggling has become vital to Gaza's economy — it's a major source of income as most of the population "lost their source of living," the tribal leader said.

Several top merchants estimated that smuggling makes up over half their total operations and can bring in more than 70% of profits.

Payments go to many players, including drivers and warehouse workers in Israel and Gaza, said one major trader. "You are paying at every step, plus the price of the goods themselves," he said.

All those costs get passed on to the people in Gaza. Residents say a vehicle battery can go for more than \$2,300, compared with \$140 prewar. Solar panels sell for \$3.25 per watt, from 16 cents a watt.

"The smuggling flourished in the second half of 2024 as the market started to dry up," said Mohamed Abu Taha, a Gaza resident and father of one, noting that chicken, meat, and other food staples were brought in covertly. "Baby formula and pet food were also smuggled."

But perhaps no items are as in demand as cigarettes and tobacco. The price per pack, residents say, has hit as much as \$140 recently, and over \$1,000 during Israel's total blockade.

"You could find two or three men sharing one cigarette," Abu Taha said. Some resort to smoking a dried green called molokhia. COGAT did not reply when asked why cigarettes are banned.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 54 of 66

For smugglers, cigarettes and nicotine products are easy to hide and the potential profit huge. Shipments of thousands of packs have been hidden in Israeli military vehicles, commercial trucks, aid shipments and even hollowed-out pineapples, according to traders, court documents and Israeli official statements.

The Hamas-led government is taking in money on smuggled goods, sources say

On smuggled goods, Gaza's government profits primarily by taking its percentage of the price but doesn't engage in commercial smuggling directly or oversee the trade, according to merchants and Barbakh, the economy ministry official.

Two major traders said the government demands for money increased since the ceasefire deal. Both said they were summoned by Hamas authorities over goods they smuggled to Gaza over the course of the war. A settlement was reached, and one of the traders said he paid \$3.5 million; the other, around \$3.75 million.

Two senior officials in the Hamas administration said — on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to journalists — the money helps fund social services and pay salaries for the tens of thousands employed in Gaza's civil service and police force. They estimated up to \$100 million had been collected on smuggled goods since the ceasefire.

Barbakh said the government doesn't have exact figures on smuggled goods "because these operations are conducted clandestinely, away from the oversight of relevant authorities."

In response to AP questions, Ismail al-Thawabta of the government's media office said none of the collected funds go to Hamas' military wing. He said all resources are directed to providing services to people and "maintaining the continuity of public facilities under the exceptional circumstances in the Gaza Strip."

The government destroys any expired goods it confiscates, including groceries.

But the two senior officials — as well as two merchants and one trucker — told AP that Hamas sells confiscated cigarettes. Al-Thawabta did not respond when asked about the claim.

'He is the master,' an official says of one smuggling coordinator

Smugglers appear to wield enormous influence. In court documents, Israeli prosecutors pointed to one mysterious smuggler known only as Abu Bassel who they said has "numerous connections within the Israel Police."

In one instance described in the documents, Israeli police stormed a warehouse in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank full of cellphones and cigarettes that smugglers were loading onto trucks for Gaza. One of the smugglers called Abu Bassel and handed the phone to an officer, the document says, and after a conversation, police called off the raid, leaving without arresting anyone or confiscating any goods.

All of those who spoke to AP said Abu Bassel is the smuggling world's biggest coordinator. They also said they knew nothing about him — his real name, whether he was Israeli or from the Palestinian territories, or how he built his network.

"He is the master," a senior Gaza Chamber of Commerce official said. "Nothing can enter Gaza without his stamp."

One Gaza merchant said he has spoken by phone with Abu Bassel but wouldn't provide AP the number. He said the shadowy figure uses connections with the military and intelligence to resolve problems for shipments. "Many police raids have been thwarted because of him."

The Israeli court documents also have no details about Abu Bassel's identity but said he uses an aid organization, Al-Mughtarib Al-Falastini, as a cover. The group denied in a Facebook post that it was involved in smuggling.

Israeli indictments show some of the scope of smuggling

Since late 2025, Israeli authorities have broken up several alleged smuggling rings, indicting more than a dozen people, including reserve soldiers operating in Gaza. But the traders, merchants and truckers who spoke to AP say that's only a fraction of those involved.

In one of the biggest cases, prosecutors accused two Israeli brothers, Eliran and Avi Algarabli; business partner Yaron Peretz; and another Israeli of running a smuggling ring out of the central town of Kiryat Gat.

According to a series of indictments against them and others, they're accused of bribing reserve soldiers in Gaza, chief among them Bezalel Zini, brother of the head of the Shin Bet, Israel's powerful domestic

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 55 of 66

security agency.

The documents say Zini was a commander in a military engineering unit. The ring allegedly paid Zini the equivalent of about \$120,000 to smuggle three shipments totaling some 6,000 packs of cigarettes in his vehicle, according to the indictments. Two other reservists enlisted by the ring ran four trips into Gaza in one day, ferrying in 20,000 packs of cigarettes, hundreds of iPhones and medical equipment, the indictments say.

Court documents assert that millions of dollars are changing hands in smuggling rings. The Algarabli brothers earned some \$2.2 million from a series of smuggling runs from October to December, when they were arrested, documents say. Other defendants in cases are accused of making \$1 million to \$3 million.

Gaza residents question why items are banned

For Gaza residents, living through another summer with limited resources has become almost unbearable.

Fans that once cost \$100 can run \$500.

"When we ask the merchants why they don't import fans, they say the Israeli army refuses to allow them in because they're dual use," resident Mohamed Abu Olwan said.

Mohamed Abuel-Enein, a displaced man from the southern city of Rafah, said that's illogical.

"I don't understand the harm in allowing fans through the crossings," he said.

"What would they make with them? Rockets? We can't live in these tents. All day long, we use cardboard to light a fire, or we splash water on the children because of the heat."

US aircraft carrier arrives in Middle East, relieving long-deployed USS Lincoln

By BEN FINLEY and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Asia-based USS George Washington aircraft carrier is now operating in the Middle East, the U.S. military said Thursday, relieving a long-deployed carrier following reports of mental health challenges and supply shortages aboard while it was supporting the Iran war.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, said on social media that the carrier arrived in the region Wednesday. It was not clear when the USS Abraham Lincoln would arrive back in the U.S. or whether it would make a port stop along the way, but the journey takes just over a month.

The Washington arrived as concerns have grown about the Lincoln's lengthy deployment, which has included a record-setting uninterrupted time at sea of more than 250 days, and about reports of crew stress and poor mental health, as well as supply shortages, including food and hygiene products.

Several Democratic lawmakers have pressed the Department of Defense for accountability over conditions aboard the Lincoln, which Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has said were "completely misrepresented."

Hegseth spoke with the Lincoln's crew last week, and Adm. Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, visited this past weekend. In an editorial published Sunday by The Wall Street Journal, Cooper said the crew "delivered a performance for the ages, and now you are going home."

Extended deployments of carriers wear on service members who are away from home for long periods and increase strain on the ship and its equipment. While renewed hostilities between the U.S. and Iran calmed in recent weeks, the Navy is enforcing a reimposed blockade on Iranian ports in the Strait of Hormuz, and the Trump administration has offered no clarity on how it intends to wind down the war.

Hegseth has said the U.S. can maintain the blockade "indefinitely."

President Donald Trump this week downplayed reports about conditions on the Lincoln, which left its homeport in San Diego in November and arrived in the Middle East in January. Trump called the nearly nine months at sea that the sailors endured a "good period of time" but added that "over the years, we've had them out there much longer."

Trump told reporters Monday that he spoke with a retired admiral over the weekend who recounted being on ships for "much longer." Trump said the admiral assured him that the Lincoln is "beautifully maintained and beautifully taken care of." Trump did not name the admiral.

In a statement Sunday after visiting the Lincoln, Cooper praised the carrier's leaders for prioritizing

mental health and resilience.

"History will record this deployment as one of the most operationally intense and consequential of the modern era," Cooper said.

The Washington joins the USS George H.W. Bush in the Middle East, leaving Asia without an American carrier strike group at a time when China has shown more signs of aggression.

The lack of a U.S. carrier in the Pacific may be short-lived if the Navy deploys another in the next couple of months. But it shows how the open-ended operations with Iran are running some American sailors ragged, analysts say, while the Trump administration further retreats from the Asia-Pacific region and focuses on the Western Hemisphere.

Walmart is cautious with expectations after slowest sales growth in 6 years

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Walmart reported its slowest growth in U.S. comparable sales in six years during its most recent quarter, and the retailer's guidance for the rest of the year was seen as cautious by Wall Street.

Walmart's second quarter fanned anxiety about the financial well-being of low-income shoppers who are spending cautiously as prices rise at the gas pump and everywhere else.

Company shares tumbled more than 8% Thursday and helped drag the U.S. stock market lower as well.

Walmart's comparable sales in the U.S., which measure sales at stores open at least a year along with online sales tied to those locations, rose 2.6% in the second quarter. That is down from 4.1% in the first quarter.

Excluding the wellness category that includes Walmart's pharmacies, comparable sales increased 3.4% in the second quarter. Sales were hit by federal legislation that requires pharmacies to dispense some high-cost Medicare drugs at capped prices, the retailer said. That was still below Wall Street projections of a 3.8% increase, according to FactSet.

Still, Walmart's quarterly profit, boosted by a \$2.9 billion tariff refund, topped expectations, and so did revenue. Walmart says it continues to take market share.

Walmart is using the U.S. tariff refunds to temporarily lower prices on 11,000 items, it said Thursday, particularly on groceries and general merchandise.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled this year that President Donald Trump overstepped his authority when he imposed double-digit import taxes, meaning U.S. companies were owed refunds from the government.

Yet Walmart is trying to contain prices as it is squeezed by the same pressures hammering the American consumer, namely rising energy costs due to fighting in Iran. The company expects to book an additional \$2 billion in incremental fuel costs this year.

Slowing comparable sales, particularly in Walmart stores, also reflect a strategic shift toward e-commerce, Walmart+ memberships and advertising. Walmart's domestic e-commerce business, which has become a growth engine for the retailer, rose 24%.

U.S. e-commerce now represents 23% in the overall U.S. business., Walmart said, double the share five years ago.

"As these businesses scale, they become a more meaningful part of our mix, and they're changing the shape of our business," CEO John Furner said Thursday.

Walmart is considered a barometer of consumer spending given its vast customer base. More than 150 million customers are on its website or in its stores every week, according to Walmart.

Walmart's trajectory may draw even more attention after U.S. data released Friday showed retail sales were surprisingly weak in July. On the same day, a new read on consumers from the University of Michigan revealed growing pessimism about the economy.

Chief Financial Officer John David Rainey said Friday that when gasoline prices rise above \$4, the company can feel it.

"There's a psychological impact to that ... that there are choices that consumers are making," Rainey

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 57 of 66

said. "June was a little more obvious as we look at the quarter in terms of customers making trade-offs. And it's why we have leaned so heavily into lower prices."

The price of a gallon of gasoline ticked higher again overnight, according to AAA, reaching \$4.10.

With prices higher, Walmart continues to capture a larger share of wealthier consumers. The biggest gains in market share for Walmart are coming from households with annual incomes over \$100,000, the retailer has said.

Walmart's quarterly net income was \$6.37 billion, or 80 cents per share, in the three-month period ended July 31. Adjusted per-share results were 81 cents, easily topping the 74 cents Wall Street had expected, according to FactSet.

Sales rose 5.9% to \$187.94 billion. Analysts were predicting \$186.62 billion, according to FactSet.

For the third quarter, Walmart expects earnings per share of 62 cents to 64 cents. It projects sales to be up 3% to 3.75%, putting sales in a range of \$184.9 billion to \$186.23 billion.

For the full year, Walmart now expects earnings per share to be in the range of \$2.80 to \$2.87, while sales should be up anywhere from 4% to 5%. That would mean a forecast for sales in the range of \$741.7 billion to \$748.8 billion, according to FactSet.

Analysts expected \$2.90 per share and sales of \$752.06 billion for the year, according to FactSet.

Takeaways from a story on the US, Australia and others turning to Brazil for rare earth minerals

By GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA, Associated Press / DIEGO JUNQUEIRA and ISABEL HARARI, Reporter Brasil Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — The world is increasingly turning to Brazil to explore for rare earth minerals that are crucial for technology and renewable energy. The country's large reserves are second only to China and have attracted investors, many of them with foreign support.

An analysis by The Associated Press and Reporter Brasil of all National Mining Agency records through June shows that rare earth exploration applications have surged, with more than 86% filed in the past three years, including 268 in the first half of 2026.

The interest is already raising environmental concerns for the Amazon and other areas.

Here are takeaways from the story:

The US and others are seeking alternatives to China

Rare earth minerals are a group of chemicals essential in digital and defense technologies, used in electronics, magnets and batteries. They are also used in wind turbines and electric vehicle motors, critical to the transition away from fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal that cause global warming. The International Energy Agency estimated in 2022 that demand for rare earths could increase at least threefold by 2040.

China has nearly half of the world's reserves and dominates global processing. Brazil has the second-largest reserves and is becoming increasingly attractive to investors seeking alternatives to China after Beijing restricted exports last year.

By reviewing all National Mining Agency records in Brazil through June, the AP-Reporter Brasil analysis found that foreign investors are driving the growing interest in rare earth exploration, accounting for more than four in 10 applications.

Australian and U.S. firms dominate the interest. Among recent deals was the acquisition of Serra Verde, Brazil's only commercial rare earth producer, by a U.S.-backed company.

Chinese firms had not filed any rare earth exploration applications in Brazil as of June, but they are positioning themselves in the sector. Last year, state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group acquired tin producer Mineracao Taboca and announced plans to assess rare earth potential at its Amazon mine. Separately, Shenghe Resources signed an agreement with Brazilian partners WEG Mineracao and Fenrir do Brasil to pursue rare earth projects, including one in Minas Gerais.

New mining push could impact communities and ecosystems

At least a quarter of the applications overlap with or are within 10 kilometers (6 miles) of protected areas

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 58 of 66

and Indigenous territories, including in the Amazon, according to the Energy Transition Observatory, a collaboration among researchers and Reporter Brasil. Experts say mining projects within this buffer zone can cause environmental damage.

Depending on what is mined, toxic chemicals can be released and radioactive waste generated. Other potential impacts include deforestation and polluted water seeping into rivers and lakes, which can poison fish populations, as well as air pollution and noise.

In Goiás state, in central Brazil, a small Afro-Brazilian community overlaps with mining claims by the Canadian firm Aclara Resources, which last year secured \$5 million in project development financing from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.

Aclara in a statement said its project initially overlapped with the community's territory, but "no mining activities will take place there." Still, residents fear operations that could start as early as 2028 could affect local springs and wildlife.

Brazil is considering safeguards around foreign influence

"The challenge today is that China dominates processing and refining," said Brazilian lawmaker Zé Silva, author of pending legislation that would establish a federal policy on critical minerals and rare earths, set investment priorities and create a national council to monitor significant foreign influence in the sector. "Under our proposal, companies are welcome to invest, but they must transfer technology to Brazil, including processing capacity."

On Monday, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said the Senate would move forward with the proposed law, to defend national interests.

"We will not allow anyone from outside to come here and exploit our mineral resources, because we want their processing and transformation to happen here," Lula said.

Meta defends its child safety efforts but critics say the social media giant falls short

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Meta insists it has a long history of protecting its youngest customers as it defends itself against a swath of lawsuits alleging its social media empire harms children.

In the latest such instance, the social media giant is fighting allegations in a California federal court that it contributes to the youth mental health crisis by deliberately and stealthily designing features to get children hooked on its platforms Instagram and Facebook. Four states are seeking billions of dollars in damages as well as fundamental changes to how Meta runs those apps.

Children's mental health, and what they do and see on social media, are all issues "Meta takes seriously and tries to act on," Paul Schmidt, a lawyer for the tech giant, said in opening statements this week.

Critics say the company's safety record falls short and that many of its protections simply don't work.

They include Marc Berkman, executive director at the Organization for Social Media Safety, who said Meta introduced safeguards promising to protect children in response to public pressure rather than out of concern.

There's been a "lack of real institutional willingness to act here," Berkman said.

Here's a look at some of the changes Meta has introduced, along with the work advocates say could still be done.

Access to users and content-focused protections

Most of the changes Meta has introduced focus on addressing harassment and offensive content.

Instagram users have always been able to block others — and, along with Meta's oldest crown jewel, Facebook — the app has gradually added features for reporting problematic accounts and inappropriate content.

In 2016, Instagram users were given the option to delete or filter comments they found offensive, and later added warnings that prompted users to reconsider posting potentially harmful content, as well as options to limit comments and tags on their posts.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 59 of 66

Meta also says it prevents adults from starting private chats with teens if they are not already connected, and has increased checks to make sure users under 13 — the minimum age for holding a Facebook or Instagram account — aren't online. Schmidt said in his opening remarks that Meta recognizes some users still sign up using incorrect birthdays but that the company takes enforcement of age limits seriously.

The company says it also posts warnings and resources at the top of Instagram search results related to suicide, self-harm and eating disorders, and touts its "Teen Accounts," launched in 2024, as a safe space for teenagers online. It aligns photo and video restrictions for teen accounts with those for a PG-13 movie, unless there's parental permission otherwise.

Critics complain these changes amount to little more than corporate posturing.

A September 2025 report from former employee and whistleblower Arturo Béjar and four online safety advocacy nonprofits accused Meta of not taking "real steps" to address youth safety, instead opting for "splashy headlines about new tools for parents and Instagram Teen Accounts for underage users."

"We really found that overall what Meta was marketing under Teen Accounts was very lacking in actual protections," said Haley Hinkle, policy counsel at Fairplay, which co-authored the report. They evaluated 47 of Meta's 53 safety features for teens on Instagram and found 60% of them were either not available or didn't work as advertised, Hinkle said.

Meta called the report's findings "misleading" and "dangerously speculative."

Scrolling and core design

Researchers say Meta's efforts to reduce the risk of children becoming addicted to the scrolling features of social media platforms have been largely unsuccessful.

Ashley Shea, a Ph.D. candidate specializing in social media and online spaces at Cornell University, points to what academics call "attention-capture deceptive designs" that are not exclusive to Meta's platforms. They include infinite scrolling, "casino style" pulls to refresh content, push notifications and algorithmic recommendations. Those features "prey on the cognitive vulnerabilities" of young people with developing brains, in particular the need to feel rewarded.

Meta has taken important steps to address problematic content, cyberbullies and sexual predators, Shea said, but she has not seen the same level of effort to offset the addictive impact of attention-capture deceptive designs.

Nudges and time management controls

"There's no question that some teens struggle to manage their time with social media," Schmidt said Tuesday, adding that Meta's time management tools prove its evolution on the issue. Those tools include parental supervision controls and in-app "nudges" for teen users who repeatedly look at the same type of content or spend too long on Instagram or Facebook late at night.

Hinkle notes the "entirely voluntary" time management tools are not easy to set up, and amount to "far too little too late."

Béjar, the former Meta employee and whistleblower, agrees. In testimony Wednesday, he said a tool called "Take a Break" is "designed to fail." Users have to turn the feature on themselves and, he said, very few do.

Across the board, tech companies exist to maximize revenue, said Berkman, and for almost every social media platform today, that means "maximizing children using their features for as long as they can."

Legal challenges focused on "the fact that these are defective products by design because of their features, not the content per se" is something new, Shea added. And beyond the courtroom, mounting pressure on lawmakers could bring more industrywide changes.

"The momentum only continues to grow," she said. "Ultimately, these are for-profit companies that respond to economic pressures. And so I think that the more economic pressure they're confronted with through these litigations, the quicker they will have to adapt."

Takeaways from AP's report on the smuggling of restricted goods into Gaza

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The smuggling of goods restricted by Israel into the Gaza Strip has boomed, with items from cigarettes and iPhones to fuel and solar panels making their way to desperate residents of the tiny coastal territory devastated by a nearly three-year war.

An Associated Press investigation — based on an analysis of Israeli court documents and on interviews with traders, merchants, truckers, officials, and Palestinian residents who face skyrocketing prices for everyday essentials — built a picture of the smuggling market and found that soldiers and other middlemen are accused of pocketing millions of dollars in the illicit trade.

Most of AP's sources spoke on condition of anonymity because of their roles in the illegal smuggling business and concerns about their safety in Gaza.

Here are some takeaways from AP's report.

Sources say Gaza's Hamas-led government is taking in money on smuggled items

Merchants and one Palestinian official said Gaza's Hamas-run government takes in some profit from goods coming into the enclave. Merchants refer to it as "taxing" — on both smuggled goods and those brought in legally.

Mohammad Barbakh, of the Palestinian Economy Ministry in Gaza, said the government receives up to 20% of the price of smuggled goods if the merchant reports them to authorities, and that increases to 80% if the items go unreported and authorities discover them. But he said authorities don't call their cut "taxes" and that they haven't taxed goods entering legally since the war's start.

Barbakh and other sources said the government doesn't engage in commercial smuggling directly or oversee the trade.

Two senior officials in the Hamas administration said — on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to journalists — the money collected helps fund social services and pay salaries for Gaza's civil service and police force. They estimated up to \$100 million had been collected on smuggled goods since a fragile ceasefire deal.

Barbakh said the government doesn't have exact figures on smuggled goods "because these operations are conducted clandestinely."

In response to AP questions, Ismail al-Thawabta of the government's media office said no collected funds go to Hamas' military wing.

Israeli indictments show the scope of smuggling, including military links

Since late 2025, Israeli authorities have broken up several alleged smuggling rings, indicting more than a dozen people, including reserve soldiers operating in Gaza.

The traders, merchants and truckers who spoke to AP say that's a fraction of those involved.

In one of the biggest cases, prosecutors accused several people of running a smuggling ring out of the central town of Kiryat Gat. Indictments show they're accused of bribing reserve soldiers in Gaza, including Bezalel Zini, brother of the head of the Shin Bet, Israel's powerful domestic security agency.

Court documents assert that millions of dollars are changing hands in smuggling rings. Two Israeli brothers, Eliran and Avi Algarabli, earned some \$2.2 million from smuggling runs from October to December, when they were arrested, documents say. Other defendants in cases are accused of making \$1 million to \$3 million.

Smuggling fuels Gaza's economy

Smuggling is a major source of income as most of the population "lost their source of living," a tribal leader said, on condition of anonymity over safety concerns.

Several top merchants estimated that smuggling comprises over half their total operations and can bring in more than 70% of profits.

Those costs get passed on to residents, for groceries and other needs. Residents say a vehicle battery can go for more than \$2,300, compared with \$140 prewar.

"Baby formula and pet food were also smuggled," said Mohamed Abu Taha, a Gaza resident and father

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 61 of 66

of one.

Cigarettes rake in the biggest profits

Cigarettes and tobacco products have been banned from entry to Gaza since the war's start.

Perhaps no item is as in demand. Prices per pack, residents say, hit \$140 recently, and over \$1,000 during Israel's total blockade.

"You could find two or three men sharing one cigarette," Abu Taha said.

For smugglers, these products are easy to hide and the potential profit huge. Shipments of thousands of packs have been hidden in Israeli military vehicles, commercial trucks, aid shipments and even hollowed-out pineapples, according to traders, court documents and Israeli official statements.

COGAT, the military department in charge of coordinating entry of goods into Gaza, didn't reply when asked why cigarettes are banned.

Israel bans many items on the grounds of "dual use"

Beyond cigarettes, smugglers also bring in essential goods, like concrete, vehicle parts, anesthetics and other drugs.

Israel restricts quantities of some goods and bans others outright. The military classifies some 150 broad categories of items as "dual use," asserting they could be repurposed by Hamas militants for military functions – including asphalt, steel pipes, wooden planks and X-ray machines, according to documents provided by COGAT.

Besides the U.N. and other humanitarian groups bringing in aid, Israel has given 12 senior traders in Gaza permits to import commercial goods. Shipment contents must be approved by Israeli authorities, a process aid workers and merchants say can be long and opaque, sometimes ending with a "dual use" rejection.

COGAT said it has let in some "dual use" items including generators and X-ray machines, under strict monitoring.

The Israeli military said via email that it takes smuggling "very seriously." It said cases of suspected involvement by Israeli military personnel are "examined and handled in accordance with the law."

But military officials didn't answer a list of detailed questions from AP on the roles of soldiers or Gaza's government in smuggling.

Residents pay the price, and some question Israel's ban list

Payments along the way go to many players, including drivers and warehouse workers in Israel and Gaza, said one trader.

"You are paying at every step, plus the price of the goods themselves," he said.

Gaza residents have faced another summer with limited resources. For example, fans that once cost \$100 can run \$500.

"When we ask the merchants why they don't import fans, they say the Israeli army refuses to allow them in because they're dual use," resident Mohamed Abu Olwan said. "What would they make with them? Rockets?"

Congo to receive 70,000 doses of Ervebo Ebola vaccine which has been effective in past outbreaks

BUNIA, Congo (AP) — Congo will receive 70,000 doses of the Ervebo vaccine, which has been effective in past Ebola outbreaks, the World Health Organization and partners said Thursday, announcing a step seen as a major boost to efforts to contain what officials have described as the fastest Ebola outbreak in history.

The Ervebo vaccine is licensed for use against Ebola virus, one of the viruses that cause Ebola disease, but not for Bundibugyo virus, which is responsible for the current outbreak which has so far killed 2,476 people out of the 5,208 confirmed cases

WHO said in a statement that while it's not known whether Ervebo may protect against the Bundibugyo virus, "early laboratory and animal data suggest it may provide some protection."

The allocation includes 20,000 doses for a Phase 3 clinical trial to understand the impact of the vaccine

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 62 of 66

on the Bundibugyo virus, the agency said. The remaining 50,000 doses will be used for front-line and health workers as recommended by WHO experts.

The outbreak raging in six provinces in eastern Congo has infected and killed more people at a greater speed than any other Ebola outbreak in history, and is spreading about three times faster compared to the 2014-2016 outbreak across West Africa — the deadliest Ebola outbreak on record with more than 11,000 deaths.

The International Coordinating Group on Vaccine Provision, which includes WHO and other partners, said the doses will be released immediately following a request from Congo's government.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called the approval "an important example of global solidarity in action." He said the agency and its partners remain committed to supporting strengthened surveillance, rapid detection, quality care, community engagement and vaccination efforts to bring the outbreak under control.

The lack of approved vaccines or treatments for the rare Bundibugyo virus has been a major issue for responders. Most new cases have been reported outside of the people being monitored, showing the virus continues to spread faster than efforts to track it. That has been a key contributor to the recorded deaths.

The case fatality rate so far is 47.5% although it is far worse in some places where response efforts are more challenging, such as in North Kivu province where the fatality rate is up to 70%.

Experts believe the virus began spreading from the mining town of Mongbwalu as early as February, months before authorities declared the outbreak on May 15.

Chinese court sentences founder of troubled property developer Evergrande to life in prison

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — A Chinese court sentenced Chinese property tycoon Hui Ka Yan to life in prison for financial crimes linked to the collapse of his Evergrande real estate group, once the world's most heavily indebted developer.

The decision marks a milestone in Evergrande's saga after it defaulted on more than \$300 billion in liabilities when Chinese authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing in the real estate industry in 2020. That triggered a crunch among many developers and brought on a downturn in the property market that has weighed on the broader economy ever since.

The Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court said Thursday it convicted 67-year-old Hui, who founded Evergrande, of engaging in large-scale financial fraud in inflating the group's assets and concealing its liabilities.

In a statement, the court said Hui, also known as Xu Jiayin, abused his position in orchestrating fraud and misappropriating company assets.

Evergrande group was fined 8.82 billion yuan (\$1.31 billion) and Evergrande Real Estate Group was fined 7 billion yuan (\$1.04 billion), the court said.

"The amount involved is exceptionally large, the circumstances are particularly egregious, and extraordinarily heavy economic losses have been caused," the statement said. "The harm to society is extremely serious. Therefore, severe punishment should be given in accordance with the law."

Hui's sons, Xu Tenghe and Xu Zhijian, were also sentenced alongside senior Evergrande executives and others linked to the group on charges including illegally taking public deposits, fundraising fraud and the illegal use of funds, China's official Xinhua News Agency said. A total of more than 50 individuals got prison terms of between 22 months and 18 years, it said without providing a breakdown of sentencing details.

A photo of Hui's courtroom appearance released by the Shenzhen court on Thursday showed an aged Hui, who used to be a high-profile figure but had long been out of public view, wearing a navy blue shirt standing between two uniformed officers behind a sign that read "defendant" in Chinese.

Hui pleaded guilty in April to various charges including illegal absorption of public deposits, fraud and bribery after he was detained in China.

China Evergrande was founded in 1996 as China's housing boom was taking off. It defaulted on its debts

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 63 of 66

in 2021 and was ordered to liquidate its assets. The broader downturn in China's massive property sector that ensued has pulled home prices down 20% or more since 2021.

Authorities in Hong Kong and mainland China earlier said their investigations found Evergrande had manipulated its financial data using tactics such as prematurely booking revenue from property sales before completion and delivery of the apartments to buyers. Revenues were overstated by roughly \$80 billion over 2019 and 2020, they said.

Hui was fined 47 million yuan (\$6.5 million) in 2024 and banned from China's securities markets for life by the China Securities Regulatory Commission over inflating company financial results, among other issues.

Once reported to be China's richest man, Hui used to own the football club Guangzhou Evergrande. At one point, he and his companies were involved in investing in and building theme parks and electric vehicles.

His story was one of rags-to-riches. Born in 1958 into a rural family in central China's Henan province, he worked in the steel industry in the 1980s before establishing Evergrande, which then prospered during China's housing market boom. He was one of many businessmen who have also gained political influence by joining a major advisory organization, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

States pour taxpayer dollars into college sports as athlete pay, soaring costs squeeze budgets

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Win or lose, the North Carolina Tar Heels already will be in elite company when they kick off the college football season against Texas Christian University in a game played in Dublin. They will be among a small but growing number of athletic programs receiving taxpayer funding from their home states.

With universities competing to pay athletes millions of dollars, some states now are propping up their strained sports budgets in ways not previously seen. The state dollars aren't going directly to star athletes. But by funding facilities and administrative costs normally borne by the schools, states are freeing universities to use their own dollars for other purposes.

The athletics program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for the first time, is receiving \$3 million earmarked from state sports betting taxes. Wisconsin lawmakers approved \$15 million for athletic costs at the University of Wisconsin. And Connecticut and Louisiana also are using tax dollars to support college athletics. Even more states have considered it.

Sports business analysts see an emerging trend.

"Once one state provides that kind of assistance, schools in competing states can argue that they are being placed at a competitive disadvantage, which could create additional pressure on legislatures to respond," said Daniel McIntosh, faculty director of the sports business program at Arizona State University.

Legal cases have accelerated spending on college athletes

NCAA rules long barred college athletes from getting paid by schools and boosters. But under pressure from lawsuits and states, the NCAA cleared the way in 2021 for athletes to receive money from private entities for the use of their name, image or likeness (NIL). Then a legal settlement last year allowed higher education institutions to directly pay athletes a total of about \$20.5 million annually — on top of any scholarships and other NIL deals they receive.

That cap rose to \$21.3 million for this school year, and is set to rise again the following year.

Many mid-level programs cannot afford that much. But almost all NCAA Division I athletic programs are trying to generate more money to pay athletes in a bid to remain competitive with their peers. At the same time, schools have been incurring greater costs for facilities, coaches' salaries and travel amid conference realignments that discarded old geographic-based rivalries.

Over the past four years, athletic operating expenses at public Division I institutions shot up by nearly a third — notably outpacing revenue and running up deficits, according to an Associated Press analysis using the Knight-Newhouse College Athletics Database.

Federal legislation could drive athletic costs even higher

The Protect College Sports Act, pending in the U.S. Senate, has been promoted as a way to put guardrails

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 64 of 66

on college sports spending. But it could potentially allow even greater spending by schools.

The latest version would allow institutions to pay up to an additional \$27.5 million annually to retain players on their rosters, pushing the overall athlete payment cap close to \$50 million. The higher ceiling could reduce the demand for third-party NIL deals.

But the legislation contains no provision restraining increases in state and institutional funding for athletics, said Amy Privette Perko, CEO of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

"Without some restraint on the underlying spending competition, additional public funding could simply finance the next stage of the arms race," McIntosh said.

States are routing money to schools in creative ways

When North Carolina launched online sports wagering in 2024, it earmarked part of the tax revenue for athletic departments at 13 public universities. But the two largest institutions — the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University — were excluded.

That changed in July under a new state budget that raises the sports betting tax. Those two schools now are projected to receive \$3 million each this year and \$5.8 million next year.

In the meantime, Louisiana also hiked its sports wagering tax and earmarked about \$2.2 million to each of its 11 public universities in conferences with Division I football programs.

Seeking to drum up athletic revenue, Connecticut lawmakers authorized the University of Connecticut to issue vouchers for state tax credits equal to half the amount of donations, sponsorships and licensing endorsements. The program generated \$1.7 million in its first four months, according to a university report.

New Jersey's new budget allots \$5 million for "events attraction and marketing" at Rutgers' flagship campus. A university spokesperson declined to say if the money would be used for athletic programs.

Though not providing new state money, the governing board for Florida's universities last year authorized institutions to transfer up to \$22.5 million to athletics. Florida State University did so almost immediately, and other schools have since followed.

Lawmaker says a bad football team is bad for the state

The Wisconsin budget provides \$14.6 million for athletic facility debt payments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and \$200,000 each for the Milwaukee and Green Bay campuses.

"None of that state funds technically would go toward student athletes," said Republican state Rep. Alex Dallman, who sponsored the legislation.

But with the state covering facility debt, the university could use its own funds "for other things, such as NIL, or just trying to compete," said Dallman, who typically attends a couple Wisconsin football games each year.

"Having a bad football team, having uncompetitive college sports in general, would not be beneficial to our state, both culturally or economically," Dallman said. "So we decided as a state we'd help out."

Democrats narrow their list of 2028 presidential convention sites to Boston, Denver and Philadelphia

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

Democrats on Thursday narrowed the list of potential host cities for their 2028 presidential convention to Boston, Denver and Philadelphia as their party looks ahead to a wide-open primary to succeed President Donald Trump.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Ken Martin said in a statement the cities put forward "incredibly strong bids," and he promised the convention would be an "inspiring celebration of our party's future nominee."

A final decision is expected to be made later this year by party leaders. Republicans have already chosen Houston for the site of their 2028 convention.

The Democratic convention, scheduled for Aug. 7-10, 2028, traditionally gives the party a chance to formally introduce its nominee to the country, rally the base and kick-start the most intense period of

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 65 of 66

campaigning ahead of the general election.

The party didn't specify why Atlanta and Chicago, which was the site of the 2024 convention, were eliminated. Officials visited all five cities in April and May, considering logistical and fundraising capacity among other factors.

The three finalists are liberal strongholds surrounded by the type of suburban areas that have become increasingly important to the party in recent elections. They also provide access to fundraising and key demographic and interest groups, like labor unions.

While Colorado and Massachusetts have gone Democratic in recent presidential elections, Pennsylvania has been among the biggest battlegrounds. Trump, a Republican, won Pennsylvania in 2024.

Philadelphia last hosted the convention in 2016, Denver in 2008 and Boston in 2004.

Before the presidential primary gets into gear, Democrats are looking at this year's midterm elections as an opportunity to flip the narrowly divided Republican-led House and maybe take back control of the Senate.

Democrats face fundraising disadvantages compared with Republicans, along with financial debt, and Martin has confronted criticism over his stewardship of the party.

During a recent DNC meeting in Texas, Martin downplayed the critics and called for the party to unite as it tries to win the midterms and look ahead to 2028 and the end of Trump's second term.

Today in History: August 21, Nat Turner launches rebellion

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 21, the 233rd day of 2026. There are 132 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 21, 1831, Nat Turner launched a violent slave rebellion in Virginia, resulting in the deaths of at least 55 white people; scores of Black people were killed in retribution after the rebellion, and Turner was later executed.

Also on this date:

In 1858, the first of seven debates took place between Illinois senatorial contenders Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas.

In 1911, Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" was stolen from the Louvre Museum in Paris. (It was recovered two years later in Italy.)

In 1944, the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China opened talks at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington that helped pave the way for establishment of the United Nations.

In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a proclamation officially declaring Hawaii the 50th state.

In 1983, Philippine opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr. was assassinated as he exited an aircraft at Manila International Airport. (His widow, Corazon Aquino, would become president of the Philippines three years later.)

In 1991, a hard-line coup against Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev collapsed in the face of a popular uprising led by Russian Federation President Boris N. Yeltsin.

In 1992, an 11-day siege began at the cabin of white separatist Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, as government agents tried to arrest Weaver for failing to appear in court on charges of selling two illegal sawed-off shotguns; on the first day of the siege, Weaver's teenage son, Samuel, and Deputy U.S. Marshal William Degan were killed.

In 1993, in a serious setback for NASA, engineers lost contact with the Mars Observer spacecraft as it was about to reach the red planet on a \$980 million mission.

In 2000, rescue efforts to reach the sunken Russian nuclear submarine Kursk ended with divers announcing that none of the 118 sailors had survived.

In 2010, Iranian and Russian engineers began loading fuel into Iran's first nuclear power plant, which Moscow promised to safeguard to prevent material at the site from being used in any potential weapons production.

In 2015, a trio of Americans, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Spencer Stone, National Guardsman Alek Skarlatos

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Aug. 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 076 ~ 66 of 66

and college student Anthony Sadler, and a British businessman, Chris Norman, tackled and disarmed a Moroccan gunman on a high-speed train between Amsterdam and Paris.

In 2017, Americans witnessed their first full-blown coast-to-coast solar eclipse since World War I, with eclipse-watchers gathering along a path of totality extending 2,600 miles across the continent.

In 2020, a former police officer who became known as the Golden State Killer, Joseph James DeAngelo, told victims and family members in a Sacramento courtroom that he was "truly sorry" before he was sentenced to multiple life prison sentences for a decadelong string of rapes and murders.

Today's Birthdays: Rock and Roll Hall of Famer James Burton is 87. Singer Jackie DeShannon is 85. Film director Peter Weir is 82. Football Hall of Famer Willie Lanier is 81. Actor Loretta Devine is 77. Two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin is 72. Actor Kim Cattrall is 70. Rock musician Serj Tankian (System of a Down) is 59. Actor Carrie-Anne Moss is 59. Google co-founder Sergei Brin is 53. Singer Kelis (kuh-LEES') is 47. TV personality Brody Jenner is 43. Olympic gold medal sprinter Usain (yoo-SAYN') Bolt is 40. Country singer Kacey Musgraves is 38. Soccer player Robert Lewandowski is 38. Actor Hayden Panettiere is 37. Comedian-singer-filmmaker Bo Burnham is 36. Actor Dallas Liu is 25.