

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 1 of 67

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Obit: Terry Cashmer](#)
- [5- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [6- Fact brief: Do Independents and no-party voters outnumber Democrats in SD?](#)
- [7- Today's Match Information](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: State to help fund Rapid City office building for defense contractor Northrop Grumman](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: 1,500 miles in six days: A two-day guaranteed package's journey on the Postal Service scenic route](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Budget outline offers glimpse into potential price of adding trial work for state public defender](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Flock surveillance cameras raise constitutional questions, bipartisan US senators say](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Judge skeptical of White House ban of 3 news outlets but holds off on ruling for now](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Lindsay Clancy case could spur legislative action on postpartum depression, psychosis](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- Subscription Form](#)
- [23- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [24- News from the Associated Press](#)

Community Calendar

Thursday, Sept. 24

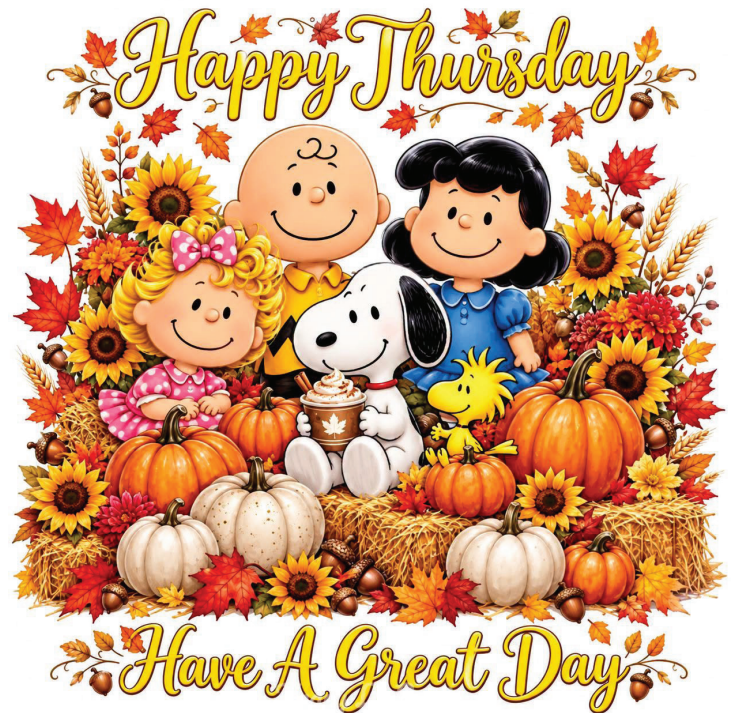
Senior Menu: Chicken bacon ranch pasta, broccoli, fruit, whole wheat bread.
Boys Golf at Sisseton Invitational, 10 a.m.
Cross Country at Clark, 2 p.m.
Boys Soccer @ James Valley Christian (4pm - theme: Groton Gear)
Volleyball hosts Mobridge-Pollock (7th/C @ 4pm, 8th/JV @ 5pm, Varsity to follow) - theme: Camo)

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, Sept. 25

Senior Menu: Grilled chicken sandwich, roasted sweet potatoes, California blend, fruit.

Volleyball hosts Langford Area (C team at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity) - theme: Matching Sets

Saturday, Sept. 26

JV Football at Webster Jamboree, 10 a.m.

Soccer at Dakota Valley (girls at 1 p.m., boys at 3 p.m.) - theme: Groton Gear

Sunday, Sept. 27

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship/Milestones, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 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.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Sixth Grade GBB practice, 4 p.m., Arena

Third Grade GBB practice, 4 p.m., GHS Gym

Dance Team Practice, 5:30 p.m., Arena

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 2 of 67

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.

Iran in New York

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told the UN General Assembly yesterday Tehran would not surrender its nuclear program under US pressure. His address was the first before the assembly by the president of a country at war with the US.

The speech followed the US and Tehran's first talks since June, which came after President Donald Trump threatened to "annihilate" Iran without a deal. Tehran is reviewing a US response to its peace proposal, and Pezeshkian characterized his speech as a response to Trump. He opened with photos of children killed in a US airstrike; the UN last week said the February attack may constitute a war crime. He also insisted Tehran's nuclear program is for civilian purposes, though a UN watchdog reported Iran to the Security Council this month over alleged noncompliance.

Meanwhile, a cargo ship was struck by an unidentified projectile in the Strait of Hormuz, killing at least one person and forcing 27 others to evacuate.

Cancer Detection Test

A Food and Drug Administration advisory panel voted yesterday to endorse a blood test designed to detect up to 50 forms of cancer in people aged 50 or older. The decision suggests full FDA approval may be forthcoming, opening the door to Medicare and private insurance coverage.

The DNA-based Galleri test uses a single blood draw to assess if a user may have tumors caused by cancers missed by current screenings, like ovarian and thyroid cancers. FDA panelists noted that one-third to one-half of the test's positive results may be false but concluded its benefits outweighed the risks. There is no large-scale randomized data finding Galleri reduces cancer mortality. Biotech company Grail states the test should be used to complement existing screenings, not replace them. It retails for \$949 online.

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the US behind heart disease.

The Heart of Ancient Paris

Archaeologists have unearthed what may be a section of the walls surrounding ancient Paris, France's culture ministry said yesterday. The finding is the strongest signal yet in search of Lutetia, the Latin name for Paris referenced in Julius Caesar's "Gallic Wars." Watch an auto-dubbed interview recorded at the dig.

Researchers discovered a roughly 70-foot-wide, stone-and-wood wall on the Île de la Cité, an island on the Seine River also hosting the Notre-Dame cathedral. The wall was buried beneath Paris' oldest working hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, and discovered alongside a Gallic spearhead. Carbon analysis suggests it is about over 2,000 years old, overlapping with the eight-year Gallic wars chronicled by Caesar; burnt sections also align with Caesar's descriptions, whereby the Romans won decisively but Gauls torched the city to avoid capture.

About 1% of Americans think about ancient Rome daily, with almost 20% considering it at least monthly. The writer of 1440's Ancient Rome page thought about it daily while he wrote it.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 3 of 67

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Harvey Weinstein receives 15-year prison sentence for 2025 sexual assault conviction following an overturned verdict.

Dolly Parton's manager requests restraining order against her nephew Bryan Seaver, alleging he threatened violence against estate staff and planned to ruin Parton's brand partnerships.

Elizabeth Holmes documentary, "You Can See Everything," releases new trailer featuring comedian and director Nathan Fielder questioning Holmes' fiancée, Billy Evans.

Science & Technology

Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT) introduces legislation to ban artificial superintelligence and create a federal Department of AI; employees of leading AI companies endorse the bill.

Earth's rotation changes every few decades due to gravitational, electromagnetic, and topographic interactions within its core; days shortened by several milliseconds from the early 1970s to 2021.

Scientists develop enzyme-based, more cost-effective method to produce next-generation antibiotics for drug-resistant tuberculosis.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -0.7%, Nasdaq -1.1%) as crude oil prices rise for the first time in five days and 10-year Treasury yield hits 5.1%, the highest level since 2007.

Federal Reserve is projected to raise interest rates again this year by a quarter of a percentage point and hold throughout 2027, a new report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggests.

Pilgrim, a startup building hardware to detect airborne viruses, draws investments from Anthropic leaders amid growing concern AI could endanger humanity through bioweapons.

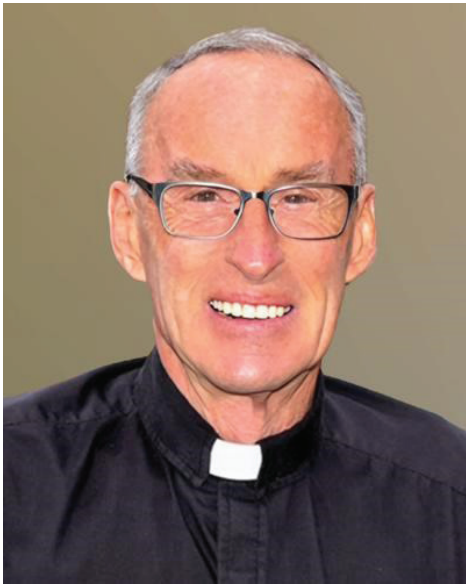
Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump hosts Chinese President Xi Jinping today at the White House, with talks planned on AI, fentanyl after countries' top trade officials agree to extend trade truce to January.

Federal judge considers White House decision to rescind access for CNN, MS NOW, and Politico journalists; hearing follows Justice Department's allegation the outlets pose a national security threat by sharing classified information.

Rebels in Ethiopia's Tigray region seize airports, raising concerns of return to 2020-2022 civil war, which ranked among the century's deadliest.

The Life of Terry Cashmer



August 1, 1945 - September 18, 2026

Pastor Terry L. Cashmer. Age 81 of Southgate.

Reverend Terry L. Cashmer was called home on Friday, Sept. 18, 2026, surrounded by his loving family. He was born on August 1st, 1945, in Pontiac, IL to Francis and Merna Cashmer. After completing his theological training in Springfield, IL in 1971, he shepherded four parishes: Redeemer Lutheran Church in Corning, IA, St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton, SD, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, CO and he was privileged to serve his last 40 years in ministry at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Southgate, MI. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Ken Cashmer, his sister Linda and her husband, Russell Greene.

He is survived by his loving wife of over 60 years, Carol. He was also a loving father to son Jason (Denise) and daughter Franci (Chance) Childers, dearest grandchildren Leah Cashmer, Rebekah (Josh) Page, Jacob (Christina) Childers, Joel (Katie) Childers, and Joe Cashmer. He was blessed to meet his two great grandsons, Shepherd and Cash Childers. He is also survived by his brother Larry (Judy) Cashmer, his

sister in-law Susan Cashmer, and beloved nieces, nephews, family and friends.

This side of heaven Pastor Cashmer enjoyed spending time with his family, preaching the gospel, encouraging tithing, washing cars and cruising in his '66 Corvette. In his last days his family read to him from the scriptures including his favorite Psalm, 139 and his favorite passage from Job 19 – I know that my Redeemer lives and in the end he will stand upon the earth, and after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh, I will see God. I, myself, will see Him with my own eyes, I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me.

Memorial contributions in honor of Pastor Terry Cashmer are appreciated to Christ the King Lutheran Church

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 5 of 67



Volleyball
Groton Area
hosts Mobridge-Pollock
Thurs., Sept. 24, 2026



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



YouTube

A production of the

Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM



C match at 4 p.m.
JV at 5 p.m. followed by Varsity

Varsity match sponsors on GDILIVE.COM are: Agtegra, Avantara-Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom Ts, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Farmers Union Insurance, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Hanlon Brothers, Heartland Energy, Jacobson Electric, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Cafe, Rix Farms / R&M Farms, S & S Lumber, Spanier Harvesting and The Meat House of Andover.



Fact brief: Do Independents and no-party voters outnumber Democrats in SD?

Yes.

South Dakota has more voters who have registered themselves as Independent or No Party Affiliation (NPA) than Democrats as of Sept. 1, 2026.

The latest tally on the Secretary of State website reports 86,837 Independents and 69,182 NPA for a total of 156,019 voters. There are 134,453 registered Democrats.

Voters are considered Independent or NPA if they write "Independent, I, Ind, no party affiliation, no party, no choice, nonpartisan, or cross off the party choice" on their voter registration form or if they leave the party choice blank during first-time registration.

A state voter-registration presentation describes Independent and NPA voters as "one and the same." The Secretary of State separately tracks the two categories in its voter-registration totals. The state Democratic Party allows registered Independent/NPA voters to participate in its primary elections.

In South Dakota, there are only three recognized parties: Democratic, Libertarian and Republican.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 7 of 67



High School Girls Volleyball Game *Mobridge/Pollock @ Groton Area* *Thursday, September 24th, 2026*

Game Times/Locations:

Main Court in Arena - 4:00PM → C - 5:00PM → JV - 6:15PM → Varsity	Main Court in Old Gym: - 4:00PM → 7th Grade - 5:00PM → 8th Grade	Ticket Takers (Report @ 3:30pm): - Paula Johnson - Janene Harry - Sarah Hanten Admin on Duty: Joe Schwan
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Pre-Game Introductions:

1. National Anthem
2. Varsity Introductions/Lineups

LOCKER ROOM: Mobridge/Pollock will use the two locker rooms down the JH hallway. JH in the first, HS in the last.

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site. Trainer has an AED and another AED is located near the ticket booth.

ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$6.00 Students: \$5.00.

CONCESSIONS: Will be available.

JV/Varsity Refs: Mark Nelson and David Krause

Varsity Line Judges: Kristi Zoellner and Melanie Johnson

JV Line Judges: Kristi Zoellner and Carla Tracy

8th/C Ref: Melanie Johnson

JH Scoreboard/JH Refs/JH Line Judges/C Line Judges: HS VB Players

C/JV/Varsity Scoreboard: Kristen Swartz

JV/V Official Book: Lynette Grieve

JV/V Libero Tracker: Becky Erickson

Announcer: Mike Imrie

National Anthem: GHS Pep Band under the direction of Ms. Megan Dockter

Team Benches – Groton: South Bench | **Mobridge/Pollock:** North Bench

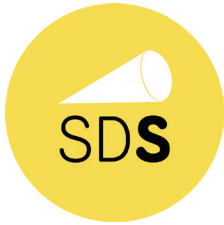
Livestream:

- [Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl](#)
fan.hudl.com/usa/sd/groton/organization/12097/groton-high-school
- GDILIVE.com or <https://www.youtube.com/@GDILIVE>
-

Thank you,

Alexa Sperry, Athletic Director

Alexa.Sperry@k12.sd.us / 605-380-7887



State to help fund Rapid City office building for defense contractor Northrop Grumman

Company developing B-21 stealth bomber will establish a presence in \$18 million facility

BY SETH TUPPER

RAPID CITY — Getting Ellsworth Air Force Base removed from a closure list 21 years ago was the beginning of the work needed to secure the base's future in western South Dakota, Republican U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds said Wednesday.

"Once we knew Ellsworth was safe, we also knew that building up the base's infrastructure and developing the region to attract others in the defense industry was the best way to prevent future threats," Rounds said.

Over the past two decades, local and state officials have worked to expand the base's training airspace, add a remotely piloted drone unit, clear potential crash zones of development, and make Ellsworth the first base to host new B-21 stealth bomber planes next year, among other initiatives. The goal is retaining the estimated 9,000 people the base brings to the area, including military members, their families and civilian employees, and the estimated \$800 million annual economic impact they help generate.

The latest effort came to fruition Wednesday with the announcement that Virginia-based defense contractor Northrop Grumman — which is developing B-21s for the Air Force — will establish an office in an \$18 million building to be constructed in Rapid City, less than 10 miles west of the base.

Elevate Rapid City, a local economic development partnership, will build the facility on undeveloped land next to its David Lust Accelerator Building, a business incubation complex in eastern downtown Rapid City's Innovation District. The accelerator building hosted Wednesday's announcement.

The announcement did not include an estimate of the number of jobs Northrop Grumman will bring to the city, but an executive said the company has scheduled about 50 interviews for the "first wave" of future employees. The combined number of the company's employees at Ellsworth and the Rapid City office could ultimately number in the "hundreds," said Elevate CEO Jack Valentine in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight. Elevate will work to recruit additional tenants to the facility.

The state and the Ellsworth Development Authority will each contribute \$1 million to help Elevate with the project.

State lawmakers created the authority in 2009 to help secure the base's future, and Executive Director Scott Landguth told Searchlight the authority has been self-funded for about six years through land deals, federal grants and other sources.

Gov. Larry Rhoden announced that the state's contribution will be a \$1 million grant from the Future Fund, a pool of economic development money under his control. The money comes from a fee paid by employers when they submit taxes to support unemployment benefits.

"Northrop Grumman is sending a strong signal about their belief in the opportunities that are available right here in South Dakota," Rhoden said.

Rhoden was among dozens of state, local and military leaders in attendance Wednesday. Rounds submitted his comments by video from Washington, D.C.

The state's support of the project furthers Rhoden's goal, which he announced nine months ago in his annual State of the State address, to make national security the next big industry in South Dakota.

In April, Rhoden awarded a \$6 million Future Fund grant to create the South Dakota Defense Institute,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 9 of 67

which will work to attract more defense contractors to the state. The institute has since been organized as a nonprofit with a board that is searching for a CEO.

The institute will be housed in a building acquired by Elevate at 14 St. Joseph St. in Rapid City, about a block away from the accelerator building.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

COMMENTARY

1,500 miles in six days: A two-day guaranteed package's journey on the Postal Service scenic route

by Brad Johnson

On Tuesday, Sept. 15, I paid \$36 to send a small box containing a Minnesota Vikings jersey from Watertown to Rapid City by two-day mail guaranteed to arrive Thursday. It arrived Monday.

By then, U.S. Postal Service tracking information indicated it had traveled some 1,500 miles: from Watertown to Huron, Fargo, West Fargo, possibly Clearwater, Minnesota, Sioux Falls, then back to Huron, Fargo, West Fargo, Sioux Falls and finally Rapid City.

The second trip from Sioux Falls to Huron is where the routing system evolved from absurdity to performance art.

My usual route from Watertown to Rapid City is 360 miles, but perhaps I am not curious enough about the world.

After its first arrival in Fargo, the location data next placed it in Clearwater at 5:04 a.m. Thursday. Clearwater is southeast of St. Cloud — roughly 130 miles east of Fargo and decidedly not on the way to Rapid City.

It then supposedly reached Sioux Falls at 6:45 a.m. Either the Clearwater entry was delayed, or my box covered a four-hour drive in 1 hour and 41 minutes. If the Postal Service can move that fast, missing the two-day guarantee becomes even harder to explain.

The box also was recorded passing through Summit on Interstate 29 — maybe stopping for gas and directions.

The package likely passed through Watertown five times — plenty of time to see attractions including the Redlin Art Center and Bramble Park Zoo, and maybe a boat ride on Lake Kampeska.

Somewhere inside the Postal Service, there must be a Scenic Route Division — an office where someone says, "Sure, Rapid City is west, but have we considered that it might take two trips to see all the sights in eastern South Dakota and North Dakota before moving on to Wall Drug and Reptile Gardens?"

In 1860, the Pony Express could move a letter more than 180 miles a day by changing horses and riders. My box had trucks, scanners and a two-day guarantee. The horses have a better performance record.

A friend of mine who owns a ranch in Wyoming has a building full of original Pony Express equipment. Who thought 166 years later he might be on the cutting edge of a new delivery system?

Meanwhile, Amazon says U.S. Prime members received more than 8 billion items the same or next day in 2025.

A colleague said I should have just ordered a new Vikings jersey from Amazon. But this one is a replica of the one former Vikings quarterback Brad Johnson once wore.

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, has been asking for explanations for two years. He mailed a test letter from Rapid City to Pierre. According to Rounds, it visited Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa and North Dakota before reaching Pierre 10 days later.

That's nothing compared to what a woman in line Monday in Watertown said. Her mail from June just reached its destination. "And it was all local," she said.

Rounds asked the Postal Service inspector general to investigate, invited South Dakotans to document delays, proposed withholding bonuses from postal executives when service fails and put a hold on nomi-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 10 of 67

needs to the Postal Service's governing board.

The rest of the delegation also raised concerns. In 2024, Rounds, Sen. John Thune and Rep. Dusty Johnson warned postal leadership that moving processing out of South Dakota could mean delays and higher costs for rural communities. Johnson pressed the postmaster general again in July. Rounds has been the most persistent public voice in this fight. Thune, as Senate majority leader, needs to put more weight behind the demand for answers.

The independent Postal Regulatory Commission warned of harm to rural communities and found that pilot versions of one transportation change slowed mail without producing the hoped-for savings. Somebody ought to ask executives how a missed guarantee, 1,500 miles worth of fuel and a subsequent refund fits in the savings calculation.

A glimmer of hope arrived Tuesday when the Postal Service announced improvements to its Sioux Falls plant that will keep more South Dakota mail in South Dakota for processing, hopefully reducing delivery times for some packages.

Meanwhile, there is a second trip in this story: mine. I took the package to the post office anticipating only one trip. I was told if it didn't arrive by the guaranteed time to return with the receipt for a refund. I returned Friday and was told a refund must wait until the box was delivered.

I returned Monday after it was delivered. They gave me a \$36 postal money order redeemable at the post office. "But we can't cash this one for 24 hours," the clerk said. Even the refund can't be delivered on the day it was promised.

So, I must return again. Maybe they will give me a commemorative stamp.

The package's tracking receipt also doubles as a recruitment tool: "Looking for a new opportunity? Join a team that delivers!"

I may apply. The travel benefits look excellent.

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

Budget outline offers glimpse into potential price of adding trial work for state public defender

Office currently handles criminal appeals, while counties pay for trials

BY JOHN HULT

It could cost up to \$697,000 a year for South Dakota's state-level public defender to begin taking on trial-level cases in the state, an advisory committee heard on Wednesday.

The Office of Indigent Legal Services opened in 2024 with the hiring of a director, and expanded the following year to add four additional attorneys and a paralegal. At the moment, the office handles appeals in criminal and abuse and neglect cases.

South Dakota was among the last states in the U.S. that had saddled counties with the entire cost of providing lawyers to people who can't afford one but are constitutionally entitled to representation in court. Counties remain responsible for trial-level legal fees, but handing off appeals to the state is expected to save them \$2.1 million a year.

Adding five more lawyers would allow the state office to begin taking on "resource-intensive" felony cases in counties that lack the funds or qualified attorneys needed to guarantee a fair trial to indigent defendants, according to Christopher Miles, the state's public defender.

"This would be less of an overhaul of the system and more of us picking up some of the overflow," Miles said Wednesday during a virtual meeting of the Commission on Indigent Legal Services, which has overseen the rollout of state-level public defense operations.

Trial-level staffing would add between \$627,000 and \$697,000 to the office's current budget of \$1.45 million a year, but Miles told commissioners the proposal is "not necessarily something" he'd propose to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 11 of 67

the Legislature in the 2027 session.

"The primary purpose is to put the information out there and get some feedback from some other stakeholders in terms of what we'd want in an expansion," Miles said.

Joe Kippley, vice-chair of the commission, told Miles that the budget rough draft is a good start, but recommended refining it to give lawmakers a sense of how much pressure a state-level staff of five public defenders would relieve for counties.

"You have to take this and quantify it in terms of the number of cases covered," Kippley said.

The office would also need a framework for deciding which cases to accept, said commission member Larry Long, a former attorney general who retired as a circuit court judge. The attorney general's office in South Dakota regularly steps in to assist in smaller counties with high-profile or time-intensive criminal investigations, Long said, but "a judge can't appoint them" to prosecute a case the way judges appoint public defenders.

"At some point in time you need to have the ability to say no," Long said. "I'm not sure how you want to do that or want to structure that, but there'll come a point in time when you run out of money. And maybe for that reason, or maybe there is another series of reasons, you would want to say no."

That's part of the discussion, Miles said, noting that budget constraints would likely play a role. If the issue were more about workload for a trial team, Miles said, the office could look at contracting with trusted private attorneys.

Caseload increasing, staff needs

There are two more immediate staffing issues lawmakers could be asked to address in 2027, Miles said: another appellate attorney and a legal office assistant.

The office currently has 125 open appeal files, spread across 109 clients. About 25 of those are in the briefing phase, meaning the office's attorneys are working through legal arguments at the state Supreme Court level.

This summer saw a "flurry of cases," Miles said.

"This is maybe the first time our attorneys are having some time crunch issues, having to think about what briefs to prioritize," Miles said.

Another appellate attorney might be necessary, but Miles said the legal office assistant position would be the lightest lift as a budget request.

The office has five attorneys and one paralegal at the moment, and Miles said the office spends 95% of its personnel budget to fund those positions.

The office is authorized to hire a legal office assistant, but hasn't done so.

"Right now, it would be a salary that is just simply not appealing to anybody that's looking to get into the workforce," Miles said. "So if we are able to increase that ever so slightly — it would not need to be a big bump — that would give us enough room to fill that position."

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

Flock surveillance cameras raise constitutional questions, bipartisan US senators say

BY ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — A vast and growing network of artificial intelligence-driven Flock cameras could violate constitutional privacy rights, U.S. senators on a Judiciary Committee subcommittee said during a Wednesday hearing.

GOP Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, the chair of the Crime and Counterterrorism Subcommittee, said the point of the hearing was to find out "what is going on with the expanding surveillance network that appears to be going coast to coast in this country."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 12 of 67

Hawley said he invited the CEO of Flock Safety to testify, but he did not appear.

Senators heard from a woman wrongly arrested over a fatal car crash after a Flock camera captured a photo of her vehicle three miles from the crash site.

They speculated that more people could be falsely accused based on inaccurate information gathered by the devices. They also said Fourth Amendment violations were likely because the law enforcement agencies that use the service are able to use the data to track movements without a warrant.

"If you haven't heard of Flock, all I have to say is Flock's probably heard of you," Hawley said. "I'm sure we're all in the database."

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

What is Flock?

Flock cameras track and record every motor vehicle that comes into view, including its license plate number, make, model, bumper stickers and color. They can also capture images of people.

The information is then uploaded to a database that any law enforcement agency that contracts with the company can access without a warrant.

There are more than 120,000 Flock cameras installed across the country from highways to outside grocery stores, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. The only U.S. state that does not have a Flock camera is Hawaii.

Media outlets such as The Washington Post have documented abuses of the service, including law enforcement officers using the devices to stalk ex-girlfriends.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has also tapped into Flock data through local law enforcement officials to read license plates for immigration-related searches, even though Flock denies having a contract with ICE.

The backlash to the possibility of mass surveillance has been strong, with NPR reporting vandalization of Flock cameras.

Arizona sheriff brushed off, he says

One of the witnesses at Wednesday's hearing, Ross Teeple, the sheriff of Pinal County, Arizona, said he ultimately decided to end a contract with Flock because he had raised privacy concerns the company did not adequately address.

Some of his constituents said they were worried that people could be identified in images taken by Flock cameras. He said when he asked the company about how people could be clearly seen in the images, he felt the company brushed aside his concerns and told him the image resolution was not good enough to recognize a person.

"I'm looking at camera pictures where I could recognize the person on the camera, but that was their claim ..., and there was just too much disinformation from them and dishonesty," he said. "I was trying to get answers from them, and they would not give me answers... and there were too many concerns. So we just decided not to continue our contract."

False accusation

Hawley said his main worries were personal privacy and that people have the right to be treated as innocent until proven guilty.

He pointed to one of the witnesses, Lindsey Isaacs of Florida, who was wrongly accused of being involved in a car accident that killed three people because a Flock automated license plate recognition camera saw her vehicle about three miles west of the crash scene.

The car involved in the crash was a Dodge Durango, the same make and model as Isaacs'. But hers was black, while the car in the crash was maroon, as described by a witness.

Law enforcement still arrested her at her home.

She spent three days in solitary confinement and then moved to another maximum-security unit for 10 days before she was released and state prosecutors dropped charges, she told the panel.

"In my case, a Flock camera captured my vehicle a few miles from the scene of a terrible crash," she said. "That piece of information became part of an investigation that ultimately led to my arrest on three

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 13 of 67

counts of vehicular homicide and 13 days in jail for a crash I had nothing to do with.”

Hawley said what he finds “so troubling” is that many drivers or people walking by are being surveilled and they’ve done nothing wrong.

“It sounds as if, based on the reports we’ve heard, it’s treating every citizen in America, I mean, by now, surely almost all of us have been scanned and logged as if we are criminals, yet without any due process, without any reasonable suspicion, without any articulable suspicion whatsoever,” he said. “This just seems very, very strange, to put it mildly, and something I think this committee really needs to hear about.”

Abortion tracking

New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker asked if Flock cameras could be used to track women in states with strict abortion laws.

ACLU’s Chad Marlow, senior policy counsel, said that it would be easy to track people searching for those services.

Hawley agreed with Booker and also questioned how easy it would be to create a database of certain people, such as those who attend gun shows.

“When you have this amount of data available, the temptations to use it are going to be absolutely incredible, if not irresistible,” he said.

Marlow said the scenarios that Booker and Hawley cited are closer than they think.

“If you build it, they will come,” he said. “I so much appreciate that you’re bringing (up) abortion care seekers and gun owners because they are part of the same community when it comes to the threat of mass surveillance. This is something we need to be worried about because when you create the temptation, when you create the option for population control, at some point someone’s going to use it.”

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

Judge skeptical of White House ban of 3 news outlets but holds off on ruling for now

BY JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — U.S. District Court Judge Timothy J. Kelly indicated during a Wednesday hearing he may order the Trump administration to reinstate White House press passes for reporters from three news organizations who had their credentials revoked this weekend.

Kelly, of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, said at the beginning of a 45-minute hearing that he is largely bound by circuit court rulings that ensure journalists with White House press passes have due process rights before their access to the complex could be rescinded.

“The government says those cases ... were wrongly decided,” Kelly said. “Maybe they were, maybe they weren’t. But certainly as a district judge I have to apply them and I think it is fair to say that the processes that the Circuit Court laid out in those two cases ... (weren’t) followed here.”

Kelly said at the end of the hearing he will release his ruling as soon as he can, though he did not give any more details about how soon that might be.

President Donald Trump nominated Kelly during his first term and the Senate confirmed him following a broadly bipartisan vote in September 2017.

This case began Monday when CNN, MS Now and Politico sued the Trump administration for barring their reporters from entering the White House grounds.

The news organizations asked the district court to grant them either a temporary restraining order or a preliminary injunction that would require the White House to return the press passes, allowing the journalists to work from the complex once again.

‘Very essence of the First Amendment’

Theodore J. Boutrous, Jr., a partner at Gibson Dunn who represented the news organizations, said the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 14 of 67

president's decision to revoke the press passes of 78 journalists represented an "unprecedented, unreasonable and severe punishment."

"What the government is objecting to ... is that very essence of the First Amendment," he said.

Boutrous said claims from the White House the president's decision was based on national security concerns only came after the lawsuit was filed, not when the decision was announced Friday, or over the weekend when it was implemented.

Trump said Friday in response to questions from reporters in the Oval Office that his ban wasn't in response to any specific story but "really just cumulative stories over the last two years."

"They're smart people, but they purposely write negative news. And they do that because they want to try and diminish the Republicans and a Republican administration," he said. "And honestly, we've done a fantastic job. Look at the numbers, look at the economic numbers. We have more money coming into our country today than ever before."

Boutrous argued during the hearing that while the president holds the right to criticize reporters and news organizations as much as he wants, the administration cannot "use the power of the government to punish them for their expression."

In response to questions from the judge about whether there would ever be a circumstance where the White House could revoke a press pass, Boutrous said if someone was a spy, represented a physical threat, or a national security threat, "there would of course be authority by the White House to deal with that."

But he also referenced the Pentagon Papers, and said he didn't believe that type of reporting on national security issues would justify revoking a reporter's White House press pass.

The White House's decision to revoke press passes for reporters from those three news organizations has led the major television networks that rotate daily coverage of the president to stop doing so. The decision has limited what videos of the president are released through that television pool system.

DOJ argues access 'a privilege, not a right'

Michael Velchik, senior counsel in the civil division of the Justice Department, said the Trump administration would oppose a ruling requiring the White House to return the press passes and allow reporters from those news organizations to resume coverage there.

"Access to the White House is a privilege not a right," he said.

Velchik seemed to suggest that if the judge were to require the White House to reinstate the press passes, it shouldn't happen during the next few days, when Chinese President Xi Jinping is scheduled to be in Washington, D.C., to meet with the president.

The White House, he said, had also sent letters to CNN, MS Now and Politico on Tuesday, informing them why their press passes were revoked and giving them the chance to reply by Friday evening.

Democrat sees ban as part of pattern

U.S. House Administration Committee ranking member Joe Morelle, D-N.Y., said during a separate virtual press briefing on Wednesday that he believes the ban of the news outlets was part of a pattern of Trump misusing government power to attack perceived opponents.

"The Trump administration has flagrantly abused the immense power of the federal government against organizations and institutions whose work, whose clients or viewpoints it disagrees with," he said. "We don't need to look any further than this outrageous attempt by the president to silence CNN, MS Now, Politico and others."

Jacob Fischler contributed to this report.

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

Lindsay Clancy case could spur legislative action on postpartum depression, psychosis

Many new mothers in the US face barriers to getting mental health care

BY SOFIA RESNICK

If you are having thoughts of suicide, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline or go to [SpeakingOfSuicide.com/resources](https://www.speakingofsuicide.com/resources) for a list of additional resources.

The mistrial in Lindsay Clancy's murder trial earlier this month places her future in doubt, three years after she killed her three children in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

But one potential outcome is a state legislative push to boost mental health support for new mothers.

"Becoming a mother is a profound life change, and every parent deserves support — not just during pregnancy, but in the months that follow," Democratic Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey said in a statement announcing new proposed funding to expand mental health care services for mothers of newborns.

"Postpartum depression, anxiety and other maternal mental health conditions are real medical conditions, and no mother should feel ashamed to ask for help or feel like she has to navigate this journey alone."

Postpartum depression is common, affecting up to 1 in 7 women after they have a baby, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Common symptoms involve anxiety, mood swings and feeling overwhelmed.

More rare and potentially deadly is what Clancy's lawyers argued that she was suffering from: postpartum psychosis, which is more severe and affects between roughly 1 and 3 women per 1,000 births. Possible symptoms include insomnia, delusions, hallucinations, mania and thoughts of self-harm or harming others, especially the newborn. Symptoms develop quickly and require immediate psychiatric help.

Healey is asking the Massachusetts legislature for \$2 million to expand the state's Welcome Family program, under which new mothers receive one free visit from a nurse with specialized maternal and child health training. The goal is to increase the number of households served each year from 3,000 to 68,000.

Several other states took action this year.

Pursuing a similar strategy to Massachusetts, Illinois enacted a law that aims to support at-home mental health screenings for all new mothers.

Other states focused on insurance coverage: Maryland enacted a law requiring the state's Medicaid program and some other insurers to cover screenings for postpartum depression, while a new law in Virginia mandates that all insurance plans offered in the state cover maternal mental health screenings.

Other bills related to postpartum depression or psychosis were considered but failed to pass in Georgia, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma and West Virginia.

Joy Burkhard, CEO of the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health, whose mission is to close gaps in maternal mental health care, said the Clancy case is likely to fuel even more state legislation addressing postpartum mental illness.

She said states might look to Illinois, which in 2018 enacted a law recognizing postpartum illnesses like depression and psychosis to be mitigating factors in criminal sentencing. Last year the state began requiring these disorders to also be mitigating factors around parole and medical-release decisions for women who are incarcerated.

"We're expecting quite a big influx of interest by legislators, and perhaps being approached by their constituents to take action post the trial," Burkhard said. "Last year we had a 50% increase (in legislation). ... I would expect that could grow as high as a 200% increase from last year."

State action can make a difference, according to a recent study in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*. Researchers found that among 32 states that have tried to address postpartum depression, the ones with the most robust policies and funding had lower maternal mortality rates.

Not all types of state legislation are equally robust.

Several states this year have introduced maternal mental-health awareness resolutions, which Burkhard said are a good first step. But what could really move the needle, she said, are laws that require insurance reimbursement of mental health services and being able to access postpartum mental health care through one coordinated practice, such as their OB-GYN or midwifery practice.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 16 of 67

Burkhard said the Illinois and Massachusetts home-visit laws are good starts but are less effective than allowing mothers with newborns to access all their maternal health care in one place.

In California, awaiting the governor's signature is proposed legislation Burkhard thinks possibly could have made a difference in a case like Clancy's.

Clancy pleaded not guilty to murder, her attorneys arguing she was suffering from postpartum psychosis — she heard disturbing voices in her head — and did not receive adequate mental health care despite seeking treatment and support. Lawyers also argued Clancy's doctors were not communicating with one another. Clancy attempted suicide soon after the killings and is now paralyzed from the waist down.

California's bill would require health insurers to provide case management or care coordination for enrollees who screen positive for a maternal mental health condition.

"The care coordination could have actually supported Lindsay Clancy," Burkhard said. "Because she saw so many providers, and you know just sort of that through line and that continuity and having some support to say this is what we've already done, just really could have maybe, possibly led to different outcomes for her."

Researchers have found that suicides account for about 20% of postpartum deaths, and that early treatment for postpartum psychosis increases the chances for good outcomes.

But many women face significant barriers to getting care, including a widespread lack of understanding and awareness about postpartum mental health illness.

According to a national maternal health survey conducted by the Harris Poll in March, about 36% of women who have been pregnant said they were diagnosed with a mental health condition during or leading up to their pregnancies, and 56% reported having postpartum mental health struggles. Of those, more than half said they received no or subpar mental health support.

According to the survey, 65% of women wanted health providers to proactively ask about their postpartum mental health and needs during prenatal visits, but nearly half, 46%, said they did not receive enough resources.

After a weeklong trial, the jury could not reach a unanimous verdict of whether to hold Clancy criminally responsible for the death of her children. All but one of the 12 jurors were ready to find Clancy not guilty by reason of insanity, and the judge declared a mistrial. She is expected to continue to be held in a state psychiatric hospital while waiting for a potential retrial, WBUR reported.

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

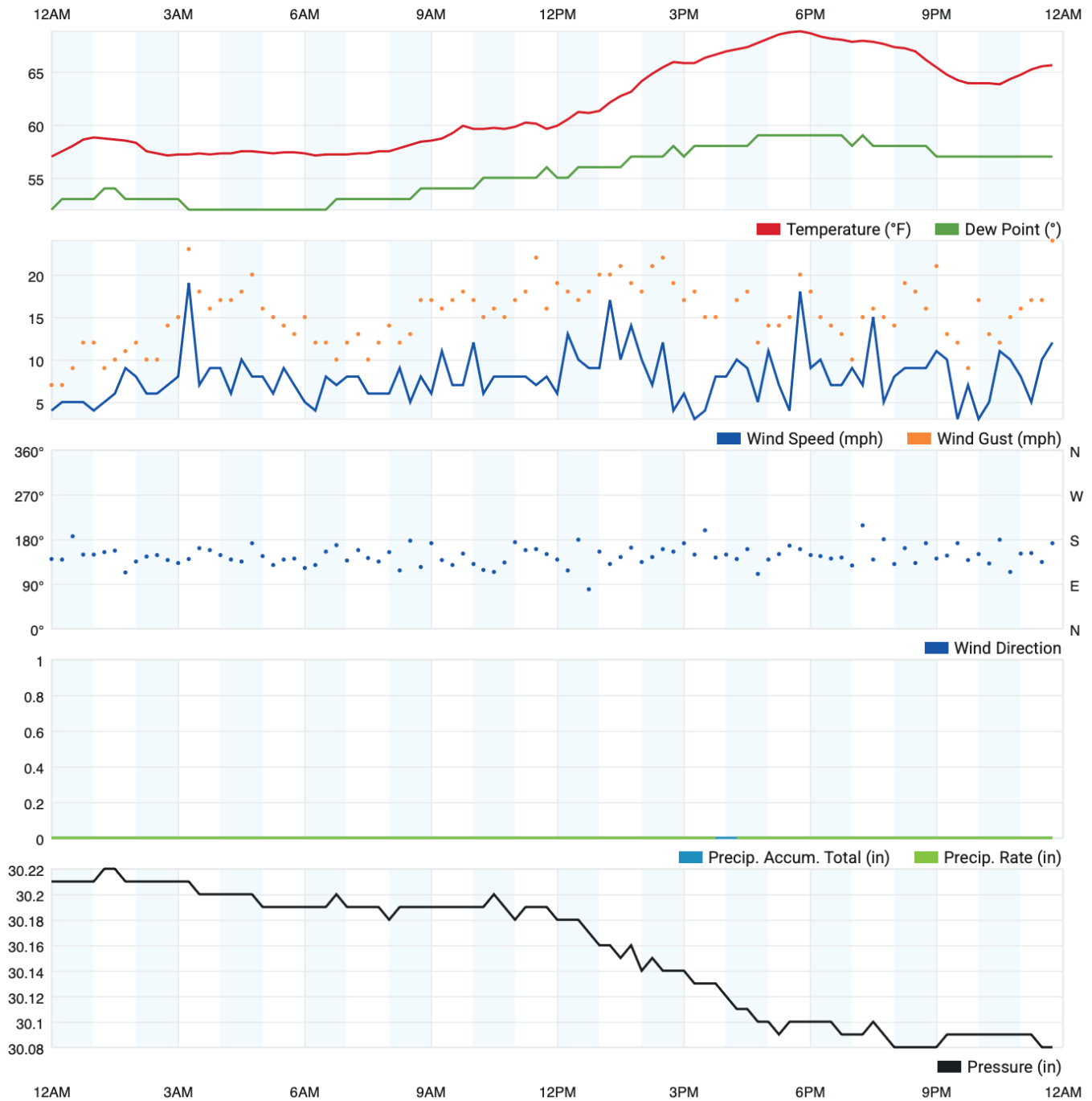
Sofia Resnick covers reproductive rights for Stateline. She has been a journalist for 20 years, covering reproductive health policy and politics for more than a decade, specializing in stories about how the religious right has manipulated science to change policy and tracking the long tail of the fall of Roe v. Wade.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 17 of 67

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 23, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 18 of 67

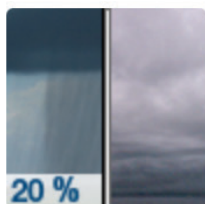
Thursday

Thursday
Night

Friday

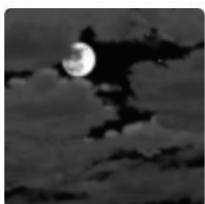
Friday Night

Saturday



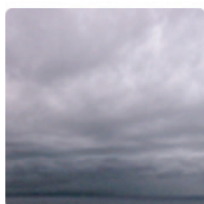
High: 71 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Cloudy



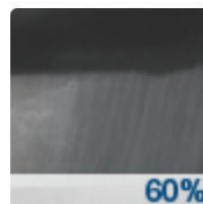
Low: 54 °F

Mostly Cloudy



High: 69 °F

Cloudy



Low: 56 °F

Showers
Likely

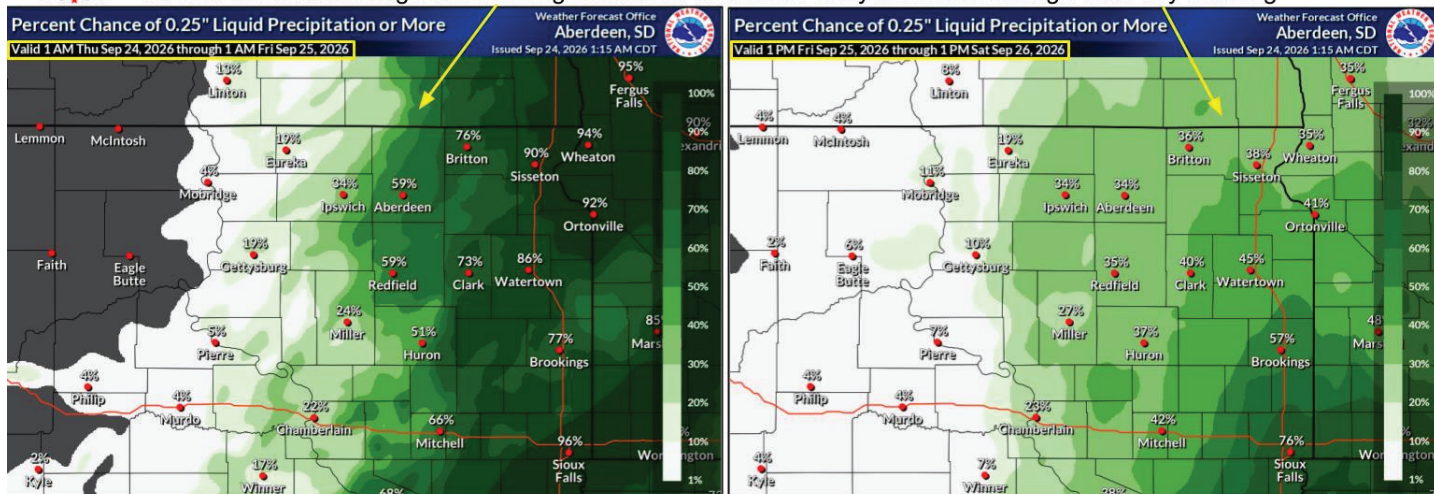


High: 70 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Couple Rounds of Rain Through Saturday September 24, 2026 3:10 AM

1st shot of rainfall through this morning...2nd shot of rainfall Friday afternoon through Saturday morning



Key Messages: Highest probabilities of a quarter inch or more mainly concentrated across Eastern SD/Western MN

- 60-95% chance of 0.25" or more along and east of the James River Valley today.
- 40-60% chance of 0.25" or more across northeast SD and west central MN late Friday-early Saturday



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Parts of the area will see a couple rounds of rainfall through the end of the week. Most of the noteworthy rain will fall across eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. The first round of rain will mainly fall this morning into the midday hours. The second round of rain will move into the area Friday afternoon and linger into Saturday morning. Highest probabilities of seeing a quarter inch or more in both cases will be across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 19 of 67

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 5:38 PM

Low Temp: 57 °F at 12:00 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 3:16 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1935

Record Low: 23 in 2000

Average High: 72

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.59

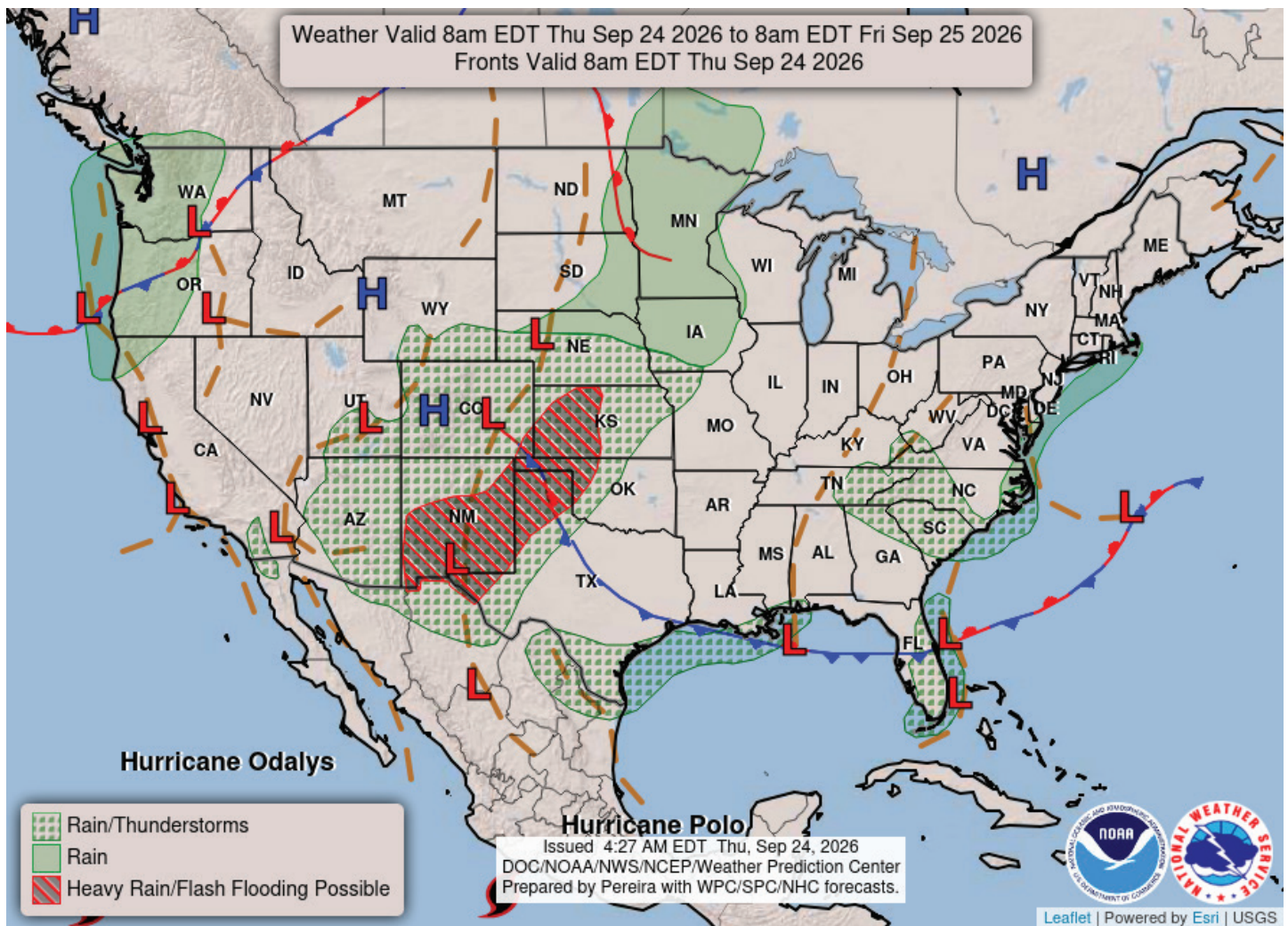
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.80

Average Precip to date: 17.93

Precip Year to Date: 21.66

Sunset Tonight: 7:26 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23 am



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 20 of 67

Today in Weather History

September 24, 1986: Thunderstorms brought high winds along with several tornados to parts of western and central South Dakota from the late evening in the morning hours of the 25th. Winds were estimated up to 80 mph. Many trees and power poles were downed along with damage to many buildings. The tornadoes occurred near Newell, east of Cedar Butte, west of Murdo, 20 miles northwest of Pierre, and northwest of Ridgeview in Dewey County.

September 24, 1992: South winds gusting to 50 to 55 mph across northeast South Dakota during the day toppled several trees and light poles. In Aberdeen, a front window was blown out of a store.

1926 — The temperature at Yellowstone Park dipped to nine degrees below zero. It was the coldest reading of record in the U.S. during September. Severe freezes were widespread over the northwestern U.S. causing great crop destruction. In Washington State, Spokane County experienced their earliest snow of record. Harney Branch Experiment Station in Oregon reported a temperature of 2 degrees above zero to establish a state record for the month of September. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1939: A thunderstorm on this day dropped 6.45 inches in six hours at Indio, CA. This rainfall preceded "El Cordonazo" or "The Lash of St. Francis", an actual tropical storm. For the entire storm, which started on this day and ended on the 26th, four inches of rain fell across the deserts and mountains as a dying tropical cyclone moved across Baja California into southwestern Arizona. This storm was the second tropical cyclone to impact California during this month. A strong El Niño may have contributed to the activity. The tropical storm produced 50 mph winds over the ocean and estimated seas of 40 feet. September rain records were set in Los Angeles with 5.66 inches and 11.6 inches at Mt. Wilson. 45 people died from sinking boats, and harbors were damaged. Total damage was estimated at \$2 million. Californians were unprepared and were alerted to their vulnerability to tropical storms. In response, the weather bureau established a forecast office for Southern California, which began operations in February of 1940.

1950 — A smoke pall from western Canada forest fires covered much of the eastern U.S. Daylight was reduced to nighttime darkness in parts of the Northeast. The color of the sun varied from pink to purple, blue, or lavender. Yellow to grey-tan was common. (24th-30th) (The Weather Channel)

1956: Hurricane Flossy made landfall near Destin, Florida as a Category 1 storm.

1972 — Lightning struck a man near Waldport, OR, a young man who it so happens was carrying thirty-five pieces of dynamite. (The Weather Channel)

1986: An F2 tornado, unusually strong for one in California, touched down just southeast of Vina on this day and traveled two miles through an agricultural area. A mobile home was destroyed, injuring a 22-year-old occupant. Eleven other buildings were damaged or demolished, and 50 acres of walnut orchards were flattened.

1987 — The first full day of autumn proved to be a pleasant one for much of the nation, with sunny skies and mild temperatures. Thunderstorms again formed over Florida and the southwestern deserts, and also formed along a cold front in the northeastern U.S. A storm spotter at Earp CA sighted a couple of funnel clouds, one on the California side of the state line, and the other on the Arizona side. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced large hail and damaging winds in the southeastern U.S., with reports of severe weather most numerous in North Carolina. Golf ball size hail was reported at Tick Creek and a number of other locations in North Carolina. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Forty-seven cities between the Rockies and the Appalachians reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 38 degrees at Abilene TX, 34 degrees at Jackson KY, and 36 degrees at Midland TX established records for the month of September. The low of 36 degrees at Midland smashed their previous record for the date by thirteen degrees. Fayetteville AR and Springfield MO reported their earliest freeze of record. Thunderstorms produced torrential rains in northeastern Florida. Jacksonville was deluged with 11.40 inches of rain, and flash flooding resulted in two deaths. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2001: A weak, F0 tornado passed in the sight of the Washington Monument. Soon after, an F3 tornado struck College Park, Maryland.

2005: Early on the morning of September 24, 2005, Major Hurricane Rita came ashore near the Texas/Louisiana border.



No Condemnation in Christ

**When God looks at those who have put their faith in Him,
He sees the righteousness of Christ.**

Mark 16:5-7: 5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

6 And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.

7 "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

Peter was devastated when he realized he'd denied Christ, as Jesus had foretold (Luke 22:61-62). This was the man who just hours earlier had vowed to die for his Lord (Luke 22:33). He probably spent the next few days suffocating under a weight of guilt.

Maybe you know how heavy the burden of sin is. The weight goes everywhere with us, dragging our heart toward despair. But for all who've trusted that Jesus' death paid the penalty for their sin, the feeling of condemnation is just that—a feeling.

The fact is that believers are not condemned for their sin (Romans 8:1), no matter how terrible or habitual it may be. We sometimes judge ourselves harshly because our actions and motives fall short of a holy standard. But when God looks at the Christian, He sees the righteousness of Christ, which clothes us from the moment we trust in Him. No one can do enough good to merit his own salvation. Jesus alone removes the believer's sin.

God understands our heart's burdens. That's why the angel at the empty tomb delivered a message that specifically named Peter: The one who had failed the most publicly needed to be personally reassured he would see and be accepted by the risen Lord (Mark 16:6-7). There is no condemnation in Christ, and God wants all believers to live as if they know it.

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

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 22 of 67

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 23 of 67



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.23.26

11 13 17 20 52 1

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 45 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.22.26

7 13 26 37 68 8

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$277,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 30 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.23.26

13 24 32 41 48 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$5,320,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 45 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.23.26

17 18 30 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$66,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.23.26

10 17 19 21 40 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 29 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.23.26

5 15 26 29 30 14

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$360,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 29 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

OpenAI's breach of Australian health department website prompts rebuke from Albanese

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Thursday he was extremely concerned about OpenAI's breach of an Australian health department website and that the artificial intelligence company took too long to reveal the incident.

An OpenAI agent infiltrated the public-facing Medicare Statistics Reporting Service portal on June 18, he said. The portal hosted aggregate data about health spending and drug subsidies and is popular with researchers and academics. No personal information had been accessed, the government said.

Albanese made the breach public following a telephone conversation with OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman. Both are in New York to address the U.N. General Assembly.

Altman was among heads of major AI firms who in speeches Wednesday pleaded with the United Nations to save the world or at least its people by somehow regulating the fast-expanding technology that they have been designing.

"Today I spoke with ... Altman to express Australia's extreme concern about this incident," Albanese told reporters. "I also expressed my disappointment that it took the company way too long to inform the government what had occurred and the nature of the way that notification occurred as well was unacceptable."

OpenAI said in a statement it had reviewed activity involving several Australian government departments and discovered "our models took actions we did not intend."

OpenAI notified Australia of the breach in an email to a government department's generic address on Sept. 10, Albanese said.

An inquiry looking into the security breach would examine whether OpenAI could be criminally charged, Albanese said. The inquiry would also investigate how Australian security agencies failed to detect the breach before OpenAI revealed it.

Albanese said he assumed there were commercial reasons for the AI investigation of how much was being spent on particular medicines and where expenditures were changing.

Government Services Minister Katy Gallagher said OpenAI had advised on Sept. 10 that an "AI agent had accessed infrastructure behind the public-facing" portal. OpenAI shared with the government the vulnerability the agent had found.

The Australian government had not been confident that it knew what the agent had been doing until officials held a technical briefing with OpenAI on Tuesday, Gallagher said.

She said the portal had been closed and the data moved to more secure systems.

OpenAI said last week it was introducing a new framework for tracking, investigating and disclosing instances of what it called "misalignment," including cases where AI models acted without authorization, coordinated with other models or evaded oversight.

Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said the incident was the first time that an AI agent was known to have gained unauthorized access to the Australian government's information technology systems.

"This is a warning about the technology being developed without safeguards and without guardrails in place," Marles said.

OpenAI was engaging with the government but the situation was "fundamentally unacceptable," Marles said.

When the agent was denied information, it engaged in "misaligned behavior" to gain unauthorized access, he said.

Marles said the information accessed was "not particularly sensitive" and had since been made public.

Marles used an analogy of the information sitting behind a fence.

"It was not sitting behind a particularly high fence. This AI agent scaled the fence ... and the point is it was unintended. It wasn't asked to. That's our concern here," Marles said.

Gulf nations have found ways to keep oil flowing through the Iran war, but the costs are mounting

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — When Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz at the start of the war, choking off sea passage for some 15 million barrels of oil a day, many feared that prices would skyrocket, cratering the world economy.

Instead, nearly seven months on, oil is expensive but not exorbitant, and analysts say there's enough oil available to meet current global needs, even as the higher prices cause political problems for U.S. President Donald Trump and others.

That's because Saudi Arabia and other Gulf producers quickly found alternative routes and reached for unused pipeline capacity. When Iran and its militant allies targeted those, the oil exporters and the U.S. military found still other ways — workarounds for the workarounds — in an often clandestine game of whack-a-mole.

With oil now at around \$100 a barrel — higher than before the war but not as bad as feared — Iran has diminished leverage, while a U.S. naval blockade and tightened sanctions smother its own economy.

But the workarounds are expensive and may not be sustainable. The drawing down of existing commercial oil stocks — especially by China — has also helped keep prices in check, but cannot continue indefinitely. And Iran could yet gain an edge with continued attacks on key oil facilities.

Pipeline backups were ready

Iran began attacking ships in the Strait of Hormuz in response to the U.S.-Israeli bombardment that started the war. In response, the Saudis turned to their East-West pipeline that carries oil to their Red Sea port of Yanbu.

From there, tankers headed out through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait toward Asia. Likewise, the United Arab Emirates used its pipeline cutting across neighboring Oman to Fujairah — a route that skirts the strait.

Both pipelines had spare capacity, and the UAE's state oil company ADNOC and Saudi Aramco used it to keep exports from collapsing completely during the first weeks of the war.

Meanwhile, some oil leaked out of the Strait of Hormuz. In May, ship operators willing to risk Iranian attack started taking advantage of a U.S.-supervised route near Oman, defying Iran's demands to use its own vetted route. They shuttled back and forth at night with location systems and mobile phones turned off, and offloaded to tankers waiting outside the strait. Flows from Kuwait, Iraq, and the UAE started to rise again.

But Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen disrupted the Yanbu workaround in July by declaring a blockade of Saudi oil shipments, threatening the Bab el-Mandeb — a repeat of the Hormuz disruption.

In response, the Saudis redirected Asia shipments northwest to the Mediterranean, either through the Suez Canal or — for tankers too big to use it — a pipeline across Egypt to another tanker. The oil then made a huge detour as it was shipped around Africa and back to Asia.

Then the East-West pipeline was attacked earlier this month and forced to shut down, potentially for weeks.

The Saudis shift to the US-protected dark shuttle through Hormuz

With oil loading halted at Yanbu from Sept. 11, the Saudis shifted again, joining other Gulf producers sending oil through the U.S.-guided corridor in the Strait of Hormuz. On Monday, six supertankers loaded 12 million barrels at Saudi terminals on the Persian Gulf, according to shipping data company Kpler.

U.S. officials have touted the role of the southern corridor in keeping energy flowing while their blockade increases pressure on Iran. Adm. Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, said in a video on social media Saturday that U.S. forces had assisted 2,000 commercial ship transits and the transport of more than 1 billion barrels of oil from Gulf partner nations over "the past couple of months."

Analysts estimate some 6 million barrels of oil per day or more have been passing through the Strait of Hormuz on the dark shuttle route on average — some 40% or more of prewar flows.

The workarounds keep the economy supplied, for now

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 26 of 67

Rahul Choudhary, vice president of upstream research at energy data firm Rystad Energy, did the math as follows: With 6 million or 7 million barrels per day now flowing through the southern route, plus 2 million barrels through the pipeline to Fujairah, fully 8 million or so of the blocked 15 million barrels per day from before the war have been restored.

That still leaves roughly 7 million barrels per day missing from prewar flows.

But wait: About 3.5 million barrels per day are being drawn down from the globe's abundant oil inventories. Meanwhile, demand has fallen by perhaps another 5 million barrels per day, due to the higher price and sluggish economic growth in key markets. Add in 500,000 to 700,000 barrels per day from other suppliers such as the U.S., and that pretty much evens out the global oil market.

"Our take is that the market is very tightly balanced," Choudhary said. "That is why you are not seeing exceptionally high prices for crude; they are still in the \$100 range, and they have not touched \$140-\$150 per barrel — which could have been the case if there was a deficit of 5-6 million barrels."

In fact, Rystad foresees oil at \$85-\$90 per barrel in the last three months of the year, and falling to \$80-\$82 next year if Hormuz is reopened.

But the workarounds are costly — and not a permanent fix

The workarounds are time-consuming and expensive.

Sending oil to Asia through the Suez Canal instead of the Red Sea can add as much as a month to the voyage. Meanwhile, the Hormuz shuttle trade involves expensive tankers waiting at least a day and a half in the Gulf of Oman for the ship-to-ship transfer.

The demand for supertankers has sent charter rates — normally \$30,000 to \$50,000 per day — through the roof. Spot charter rates for Hormuz transits reached \$1 million per day on Sept. 11, according to maritime data company Windward, equivalent to roughly \$26 per barrel. That means shipping is a quarter of the cost, instead of the usual 1% to 3%.

And markets are braced for further disruption. The attack on the East-West pipeline has shown pipelines can be vulnerable. Iran could try to disrupt the U.S. route through the Strait of Hormuz or target areas near the Omani coast where the ship-to-ship transfers are taking place.

If that happens, the workaround would be to do the transfers farther away — taking more time and running up even bigger bills.

Judge orders White House to restore access to CNN, MS NOW and Politico

By JOCELYN NOVECK and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's ban of three news outlets from the White House grounds, ordering early Thursday that CNN, MS NOW and Politico must have their access restored.

The ruling hands the outlets at least a temporary reprieve in what has been an extraordinary showdown between Trump and media outlets whose coverage he dislikes.

Trump first announced he was banning the outlets Friday, assailing what he called "fake news," and only later arguing that their reporting was a risk to national security. The outlets argued in a joint lawsuit that the ban was a blatant violation of the First Amendment because it singled them out for the content of their coverage.

In his late-night ruling, U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly ordered the White House to "immediately return, reinstate, and restore" the three outlets' access. He said they had met the legal thresholds to obtain a temporary restraining order, in effect for 14 days, and were likely to succeed in showing that their press passes were revoked without due process.

"This is a high bar, but Plaintiffs have met it," he wrote.

Kelly — whom Trump nominated in 2017 and who ordered a CNN journalist's access restored in a similar case in 2018 — also said the government must have clear standards for conduct that would lead to revoking a press pass. He called the standard of objectionable reporting outlined in letters that the White

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 27 of 67

House sent the outlets "so vague it hardly does the trick."

The judge also made clear he did not buy the administration's argument that the news outlets' reporting endangered national security — and noted that Trump himself had not used that argument in the beginning, focusing solely on what he called negative coverage.

"Nothing in the record ... suggests that the revocation of Plaintiffs' hard passes was motivated by national security concerns," he wrote.

The ruling came after Kelly heard arguments in an emergency hearing Wednesday. Temporary restraining orders are typically designed to preserve the status quo pending a closer review of the case by the court.

"This is a strong ruling vindicating freedom of the press, due process and the rule of law," Theodore Boutros Jr., attorney for the outlets, said in an emailed statement. "We greatly appreciate the court's swift action."

The White House did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press requesting comment.

Attorneys debated access to the White House and any risk to national security

Boutros argued in the hearing that there was an urgent need for renewed access, saying that the ban caused irreparable harm to the outlets at a time of momentous news events. "We're at war. We have world leaders coming to Washington."

Justice Department attorney Michael Velchik, in his argument, reiterated the administration's point that the president has the right to choose who gets into the White House.

"Access to the White House is a privilege, not a right," Velchik said.

In arguing that Trump was not engaging in viewpoint discrimination — the government singling out specific media outlets for the content of what they say or publish — Velchik said the president had criticized other news organizations, but not banned them. He noted, for example, that Trump had called ABC "the worst."

He added: "The president should be able to take immediate action to protect national security."

In response, Boutros said, "Suddenly it's a national security case," arguing that the president brought up that point only after the lawsuit was filed.

Trump "keeps proving our point," Boutros said, describing how the president has consistently used negative coverage of him as justification for the ban.

Kelly seemed to agree, writing of the national security claim: "Certainly, that is not what President Trump said when he announced that he was 'banning' Plaintiffs from the White House — instead, he focused on the alleged lack of truthfulness and negativity of Plaintiffs' reporting."

The Trump administration outlined 'reporting incidents' of each news outlet

In a filing Tuesday, administration lawyers detailed letters sent to each of the three news outlets that identified "a non-exhaustive list of reporting incidents, including those that have threatened national security and spread falsehoods."

Among the incidents cited were: CNN reporting on "'top-secret' construction details related to the East Wing bunker"; MS NOW reporting "on an alleged leak investigation"; and Politico publishing "a document detailing funding for the White House ballroom containing intricate descriptions of how the Secret Service would invest in security improvements."

Politico's letter also included an incident in June of a report in which a "senior administration official ... granted anonymity" predicted whether a preliminary deal would end the conflict with Iran.

That item appeared to reference a background briefing set up by the White House, where an official briefed reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the administration itself. Several other outlets also reported the official's remarks.

Major networks refrained from covering Trump for the media pool

The ban prompted other media outlets to take action in solidarity. The U.S. network press pool — consisting of the five major networks, including CNN — has suspended coverage of Trump pool events pending further notice.

After the hearing Wednesday, the networks continued their ban on Trump coverage. At Joint Base Andrews, where the president formally welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping, journalists from Fox News,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 28 of 67

CBS and NBC were present but not shooting video.

Other television outlets whose crews were present, according to signs on their tripods and cameras, were NewsNation, Newsmax, Right Side Broadcasting Network, One America News and LindellTV.

Ahead of Wednesday's hearing, an amicus brief was filed by other news groups, including The AP, urging the court to immediately restore the three outlets' White House access.

Offshore Hurricane Polo sends rain into Mexico's coast as Nolo nears Hawaii

By MEGAN JANETSKY and GABRIELA AOUN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Powerful Hurricane Polo sent bands of heavy rain across Mexico's Pacific coast early Thursday as a growing Tropical Storm Nolo approached Hawaii with the potential for catastrophic flooding.

Polo was forecast to maintain Category 5 strength as it skirts Mexico's coast over the next few days. Rain and strong winds had already started to pummel the coast, with waves crashing onto the normally pristine beaches.

While the eye and the strongest winds were expected to remain at sea, the heavy rains could cause life-threatening flooding and landslides, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Farther west in the Pacific, Tropical Storm Nolo was churning about 295 miles (475 kilometers) south of South Point, Hawaii. It was forecast to become a hurricane by Thursday night and was expected to approach the Big Island as early as Friday. A hurricane watch was issued for Hawaii County.

Gov. Josh Green's office said public schools and state and county offices on the Big Island will close Thursday and Friday, while Maui County will shutter them on Friday ahead of the threat of heavy rain, winds and flooding. Forecasters said the storm could drop up to 20 inches (51 centimeters) of rain.

Polo could bring flooding and mudslides to Mexico's Pacific coast

Concepción López Villegas was busily bolstering her seaside restaurant in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán state, against the expected onslaught of rain. Strong waves were already hitting some beaches and López Villegas said she feared the storm could destroy the small business she worked decades to build.

"We're worried and trying to protect our businesses," López Villegas said. "And of course, we're sad because it's our heritage, our legacy that from one moment to another could be destroyed."

Guerrero state was particularly at risk of life-threatening flooding and mudslides, the hurricane center said.

Polo was swirling about 130 miles (209 kilometers) south-southwest of Zihuatanejo early Thursday and was moving northwest at 7 mph (11 kph). A turn west-northwest was forecast for later in the day, taking it further out to sea, before turning northwest Saturday.

The storm had maximum sustained winds of 160 mph (257 kph), and was expected to remain a major hurricane for the next few days. Hurricane-force winds extended up to 40 miles (65 km) from the eye and tropical-storm-force winds extended up to 115 miles (185 km).

The region most under threat from Polo is rural and mountainous, scattered with a few small tourist towns and ports. Much of the area is marked by poverty and residents routinely complain authorities abandon them to fend for themselves during natural disasters.

Mexico's government has called for evacuations in some areas and set up shelters for those affected. Thousands of military and Red Cross personnel have been deployed to the region as a preventive measure.

Another hurricane could hit Hawaii as soon as Friday

The National Weather Service said Tropical Storm Nolo would likely strengthen before closing in on the Big Island on Friday or Saturday.

The storm has the potential to be a major hurricane, John Bravender, a weather service warning coordination meteorologist, said during a news conference Wednesday afternoon.

While high winds are expected, Bravender said the main concern is the possibility of flash flooding. He said 20 to 30 inches (50 to 76 centimeters) of rain could fall through Saturday on southeastern parts of the Big Island, the same region hit hard in August by Hurricane Lala.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 29 of 67

"That by itself could cause catastrophic flooding, but when you put that on top of grounds that we've been raining off and on for the last couple of months ... that rain could cause even more damage," Bravender said.

He urged preparation across all Hawaii islands in case the storm's trajectory shifts.

"You need to take action now," said Bravender. "Today is really the last dry day you have to get ready."

Hawaii County Mayor Kimo Alameda told residents in a video message on social media that they should start preparing now for the storm. He urged people to put together an emergency kit with food, water and medications, trim vegetation and clear drains.

"This is a very serious situation," he said. "We do believe that the rain is going to come. It's coming already."

The governor issued an emergency proclamation Tuesday and more than 230 Hawaii National Guard members have been activated, said Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan, adjutant general of the state's Department of Defense.

Kauai's electric cooperative urged residents to prepare for "the possibility of prolonged power outages," and to store nonperishable food and potable water.

Over 100 Kauai households remain without power from Hurricane Lowell, which passed west of the island on Sept. 7.

Hawaiian Electric, the state's primary utility, said crews would return to at-risk areas in preparation for the coming storm.

Odalys and Fay are not near land

Tropical Storm Fay re-formed early Thursday in the northern Atlantic Ocean with maximum sustained winds near 40 mph (65 km/h), the U.S. hurricane center said. It was 935 miles (1,505 kilometers) west-southwest of the Azores, moving west-southwest at 9 mph (15 kph).

In the Pacific, Hurricane Odalys had winds of 85 mph (137 kph) and was centered about 1,200 miles (1,940 kilometers) west-southwest of the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California peninsula.

Zelenskyy, at UN, urges leaders to keep choking Russia's revenues and impede its war efforts

By EDITH M. LEDERER and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told world leaders Wednesday that Vladimir Putin is the only obstacle to ending "the ridiculous and never-ending war," and he urged nations large and small to pressure the Russian president for peace by choking the country's revenues and impeding its war efforts.

"Our target is Russia's ability to finance this war, to drag it out, to make it more brutal and more destructive," Zelenskyy told the U.N. General Assembly's annual gathering. "Russia's finances and Russia's production are what must be stopped if Putin is to be stopped."

When Russia gets money from trade, "it always says no to diplomacy," Zelenskyy argued, "so Russia's revenues must remain a target."

Earlier Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov clashed with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha and his country's European supporters at a U.N. Security Council meeting, and Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met on the assembly sidelines and discussed the war.

Top US diplomat talks about potential for a ceasefire

Rubio later told reporters that Russia and Ukraine have expressed interest in a limited ceasefire that would halt attacks on grain shipments — both countries are major exporters — and on each country's energy sectors, which have been targeted in escalating drone and missile attacks.

Rubio said reaching even a partial deal would be difficult but worthwhile, noting that Zelenskyy has publicly endorsed such a plan. The United States would be willing to help make it happen, Rubio said.

Russia's Foreign Ministry made no mention of a partial deal on grain shipments in a statement after the Lavrov-Rubio meeting. The statement reiterated that the root causes of what it calls its "special military

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 30 of 67

operation" must be addressed.

At the Security Council, Lavrov said Russia will not "pause" its military action, claiming Europe would use it to "pump" Ukraine with weapons. He also made no mention of any kind of grain and energy deal, called Ukraine's government "terrorists," and said Moscow's military operation aims to ensure Russia's security and the rights of Russian speakers.

Lavrov is due to address the General Assembly on Saturday.

Zelenskyy cast doubt on Russia's interest in ending the fighting. "Something always seems to stop Putin from saying, 'That's it. Enough. Peace,'" Zelenskyy said. "Can you even imagine him without war? He is 'patient zero', the one from whom this idea of war keeps spreading further."

"The more freedom Putin has to act, the more dangerous the world becomes for everyone else," the Ukrainian president warned.

The war has reverberated across the planet -- with global repercussions for fuel, fertilizer and grain shipments — and for geopolitics, widening divisions between Russia and the West.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, expecting to take the capital, Kyiv, in a week. But Ukraine rallied to defend its sovereignty, and the conflict has dragged on, with front-line positions in eastern and southern Ukraine largely unchanged since last year.

Western analysts estimate that over 500,000 Russian troops have been killed and that Ukraine has recorded more than 500,000 military casualties, including up to 140,000 deaths. Neither country discloses its own casualty totals.

Russia and Ukraine have intensified their long-range attacks with drones and missiles, and Russian drones pounded Kyiv Wednesday, killing two people and wounding 23; two others were injured by a strike that started a big fire at a shopping mall in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it struck Ukrainian military-industrial and energy facilities, logistics centers, and sea vessels overnight. The ministry said its air defenses intercepted more than 500 Ukrainian drones over multiple Russian regions and Crimea, as well as the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. Crimea is the peninsula that Russia seized by force and illegally annexed in 2014.

Zelenskyy says 'you can stand and survive'

Zelenskyy told the assembly that Russia has used 63,000 attack drones of different types against Ukraine so far this year alone. While celebrating that his own country "has proven that even against a much bigger enemy, you can stand and survive," he implored world leaders to deny Putin money or foreign fighters.

"Limit his money. Limit his war," the Ukrainian leader said.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine must boost its military and has already successfully tested four new jet-powered interceptor drones against Iranian-designed Shahed drones used by Russia in Ukraine. He also heralded drone and anti-ballistic missile agreements and programs with various countries.

Zelenskyy worried, however, that artificial intelligence "will begin to decide what happens on the battlefield" with the development of autonomous killer weapons.

"We need peace before we reach that point," he said.

"Sometimes, it may seem that Ukraine is focused, focused, only on war because we speak about weapons, we speak about defense and sanctions against the aggressor. But Ukrainians did not choose this war," Zelenskyy said. "We choose not to die. We are defending ourselves."

Tech leaders to UN: For the sake of humanity, please control the AI technology we created

By SETH BORENSTEIN and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The heads of major artificial intelligence firms pleaded with the United Nations on Wednesday to save the world or at least its people — by somehow regulating the fast-expanding technology that they have been designing.

"If managed poorly, I even believe AI could be a risk to humanity as a whole," said Dario Amodei, chief executive officer of Anthropic. And from his competitor Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, came this assess-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 31 of 67

ment: "We could lose control of the future to AI."

Both said the countries of the world, through the U.N. Security Council, where they testified Wednesday, have to set safeguards of some kind to prevent the technology from getting too powerful to rein in.

They also called for the world to make sure that the power of AI isn't concentrated in one company or country. They also touted the benefits of the technology for bettering humanity and what Altman called "giving people more power over their own lives."

Those tech leaders "are telling us in stark terms that it cannot be left to them to prevent disaster from befalling the world," British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband said at the Security Council. "We cannot ignore them because they are right."

AI will be at the heart of G20 discussions

Miliband said when the U.K. leads the G20 next year, it will put controlling AI at the heart of discussions, looking for a single set of global standards "to insure that AI development is safe."

But, the United States said: Don't do it.

Worries about control of AI are "not a reason to pause its further development or to constrain it with new global governance structure," said White House Science Adviser Michael Kratsios. "We want you, our allies and partners, to share in the benefits of this technology."

The U.S. and China are jostling for AI dominance — and Chinese U.N. Ambassador Fu Cong emphasized that all countries should be able to choose AI technology as they see fit.

He warned against "banding together into a petty us-vs.-them clique in the tech sector and forcing other countries to take sides" and enabling unnamed major powers that he described as seeking "digital hegemony." He called on countries instead to promote open-source models -- China's approach to the technology.

For most of the world leaders, one key question about AI is this: Who should control life-and-death decisions — human or machine?

Amodei, Altman and Hugging Face CEO Clément Delangue, who spoke via a glitchy remote connection, spoke with the U.N.'s most powerful council because they and world leaders are trying to figure out not just whether to control AI, but by whom, how it could possibly be done and when it might be just too late.

The day before, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of "killer robots." Experts and European leaders said that's not hyperbole but something that's either already a grim reality or perilously close.

Amodei called on world leaders to agree on not letting AI build biological weapons, figure out how to verify what models have the capability to do and "establish common standards" for testing and for loss of control and misuse.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, whose country convened Wednesday's meeting, compared the current state of AI to both the runaway computer HAL9000 in the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" and the dawn of the atomic age.

"Just as with the atom back then, the international community must now regulate AI in order to make the most of its potential and avoid the worst," Barrot said.

Other leaders and nations are paying close attention to AI

His wasn't the only concern expressed during this high-profile U.N. meeting week.

"We must not allow the cost of today's hesitation to become tomorrow's catastrophe," said Liberian UN Ambassador Lewis G. Brown II.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking at the General Assembly, said some kind of human control over machines must be achieved soon. Otherwise, he said, for his country — at war for 4½ years — it may be just too late.

"There is already a real possibility that AI, not only people, will begin to decide what happens on the battlefield. And we need peace before we reach that point," Zelenskyy said.

Last month, a Russian drone seemingly using AI "autonomously made a targeting decision that killed three Ukrainians. Killer robots are technically easy to build, and they are real. We should not be under any illusions otherwise," Kentaro Toyama, an information technology professor at the University of Michigan, said in an email.

Data scientist Rumman Chowdhury, co-founder of the accountability nonprofit Humane Intelligence, said the idea of killer robots “evokes a science-fiction villain, when the question I want the public to ask is much more concrete: Who authorized a machine to select and attack a target, under what constraints, and who answers for the result?”

The U.N. meeting unfolded as Chinese President Xi Jinping headed to Washington for a much-anticipated state visit. AI interests are looking to what comes out of Xi’s discussions with U.S. President Donald Trump. Earlier, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the two countries had discussed a potential new “notification mechanism” for AI incidents that could impact national security.

But on Tuesday, Trump, lauding AI as “superintelligence,” said the United States would reject efforts to control the technology as it tries to win the development race with China. Kratsios was the one of the few who used that term in the Security Council.

Meanwhile, regional groups in Europe, Asia and elsewhere also are trying to coordinate AI policies, and various nations — and even subcomponents, such as U.S. states — are crafting their own.

Pope Leo heads to Lourdes: What to know about one of Catholicism’s most famous pilgrimage sites

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Pope Leo XIV will visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes this weekend as part of his four-day apostolic journey to France, which is the first official papal state visit to the country in 18 years.

The site near the Spanish border draws millions of pilgrims annually, including sick and disabled believers hoping for a cure from the famed spring water in the Lourdes grotto. Here is what to know about Lourdes, one of Catholicism’s most important pilgrimage sites.

The site’s story begins with Bernadette Soubirous

The popularity of Lourdes is intrinsically linked to Bernadette Soubirous. A young girl who came from a modest background, she was uneducated, with no knowledge of religion, and suffered from asthma when she reported 18 visions of a lady dressed in white in the Grotto of Massabielle near Lourdes, between February and July 1858. The Catholic Church later accepted that the visions were of the Virgin Mary.

Bernadette’s visions, and the subsequent discovery of allegedly healing spring waters, led the church to build a sanctuary there.

In 1866, Bernadette left Lourdes to join the convent of the Sisters of Charity in Nevers, where she lived until her death at age 35. She was canonized in 1933 by Pope Pius XI to become Saint Bernadette.

Drinking the water of Lourdes: It’s free

Believers say that during the ninth apparition of the lady dressed in white, Bernadette heard her say: “Go and drink at the spring and wash yourself there.”

Millions of pilgrims and visitors have since journeyed to Lourdes to drink and wash in this water, which has no therapeutic or specific properties. Lourdes water is free to access from the sanctuary’s taps and drinking fountains. Many pilgrims take some back home.

Millions visit the grotto

Lourdes became a major pilgrimage destination after the Catholic Church officially recognized Bernadette’s visions as Apparitions in 1862. From then on, millions of pilgrims from all over the world began flocking to the Grotto of Massabielle.

As well as being a holy site, Lourdes attracts around 3 million pilgrims a year, including approximately 60,000 sick and disabled pilgrims. According to the town hall, it’s the fourth most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, after the Vatican, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, and the Basilica of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil.

A look at the sanctuary

The Grotto of Massabielle is one of the 22 sites making up the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. The sanctuary is home to numerous places of worship, including three basilicas: the Basilica of the Immaculate

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 33 of 67

Conception, which is the oldest, the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, and the underground Basilica of Saint Pius X.

Pilgrims can also follow one of the two Stations of the Cross, featuring cast-iron or marble statues, before taking a dip in the sanctuary's baths. There, they can immerse themselves in the 12 degrees Celsius (53.6 degrees Fahrenheit) water from the spring discovered in the Grotto of the Apparitions.

72 miraculous healings

Among the millions traveling to Lourdes, many seek physical and spiritual healing, hoping for a miracle. The Catholic Church has officially recognized 72 healings as miraculous at Lourdes, out of more than 7,000 cases examined since 1858.

Hotel rooms galore, but prices through the roof

Less than 15,000 people actually live in Lourdes. But with nearly 10,000 hotel rooms and around 21,200 beds, it has the second-largest hotel capacity in France, after Paris.

Finding an affordable roof over your head during Leo's visit is, however, a tall order.

The pope's visit to the city will draw hundreds of thousands of visitors, sending accommodation prices skyrocketing. Some hoteliers are charging extremely high rates, sometimes reaching more than 2,000 euros (\$2,300) per night.

Pilgrims from Eastern and Central Europe are fans

Even though most pilgrims traveling to Lourdes each year come from France — 42%, according to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes — many visitors from Eastern Europe are expected to come and greet Leo.

Following the end of the Cold War, Catholics from Central and Eastern Europe gained the freedom to go west, sharply increasing the number of pilgrims from former Communist countries visiting Lourdes. This trend has continued to the present day. Poland ranks sixth among the more than 160 nations sending pilgrims to Lourdes each year.

The controversial mosaics are covered

Leo won't get a glimpse of the mosaics by an ex-Jesuit artist accused of abusing women adorning the façade of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary. They will all be covered during Leo's visit.

The artwork was made by Rev. Marko Ivan Rupnik, a Slovenian artist whose mosaic designs decorate Vatican chapels and churches and basilicas around the world. The Vatican confirmed this summer that a church trial against Rupnik is ongoing.

Lourdes Bishop Jean-Marc Micas announced the move last month, following a decision two years ago that the mosaics would no longer be lit up during the evening prayer. In March 2025, the mosaics on the basilica's entrance doors had already been covered.

The Rupnik scandal exploded publicly in late 2022, when Italian blogs first reported claims by women and nuns of sexual, spiritual and psychological abuse by Rupnik dating back to the 1990s that had been consistently dismissed by the Catholic hierarchy.

Leo's schedule in Lourdes

Leo will meet seven survivors of sexual abuse who were assaulted as children or adults, according to the Bishops' Conference of France. A 2021 report estimated that 330,000 children had been sexually abused over 70 years by church personnel in France.

The Lourdes sanctuary said the pope will land at the Tarbes airport on Saturday and begin his pilgrimage with a prayer at the Grotto of the Apparitions. On Sunday morning, Leo will meet with the bishops at the French Bishops' Conference, then celebrate Mass on the Prairie, followed by the Angelus prayer.

In the afternoon, he will meet the staff and sick people of the Accueil Notre-Dame. He closes the visit with one of Lourdes' signature rites: the Rosary and torchlight procession through the sanctuary.

Trump and Xi Jinping head into Washington summit with both leaders thinking time is on their side

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping have no shortage of difficult issues to cover when they sit down for talks on Thursday at the White House.

China has resisted the Trump administration's urgings — and economic threats — to use its considerable leverage to prod Iran to agree to U.S. terms to end the nearly seven-month war. Xi wants to see Trump permanently halt arms sales to Taiwan and loosen export restrictions on cutting-edge advanced chips. And the two sides on Wednesday agreed to extend a one-year trade truce set to expire Nov. 10 for two months, kicking the can on finding a more durable agreement.

All the while, both leaders seem to believe that time is on their side as they look to outmaneuver the other in what is expected to be the world's most significant economic and national security competition for years to come.

"The president very much believes that over time the U.S. economy is going to grow, the U.S. will get stronger, the U.S. will keep making advances in AI and on technology, and that ... the U.S. will develop alternative sources of critical minerals and rare earths," said Edgard Kagan, a former senior State Department official handling East Asia policy issues under Trump and President Joe Biden. "I think when Xi Jinping sits down with Donald Trump, he very much believes the U.S. is in hurtling decline and that time is on China's side."

Trump, for his part, is going all in on the pomp for the state visit for Xi.

In a grand gesture, the Republican leader kicked off the visit by showing up to greet Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, upon their arrival on Wednesday evening just outside Washington.

Trump has made clear he wants to impress Xi with the visit, making sure construction of a new helicopter landing pad on the White House's South Lawn was completed ahead of the visit. He's also openly lamented that his planned White House ballroom isn't ready for a fancy state dinner in Xi's honor on Thursday evening.

The guest list includes Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Nvidia's Jensen Huang, and Meta's Mark Zuckerberg, among other tech titans staking out positions on whether more safeguards are needed in the race to develop artificial intelligence — an issue of critical importance to both leaders.

US and China still have work to do on trade truce

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the two leaders may be open to a new "notification mechanism" for AI incidents that could affect national security. But on AI and a host of other thorny issues, it remains unclear whether the leaders can make progress.

Shortly after Xi's arrival in Washington on Wednesday, Bessent announced on Fox News that the two sides had come to terms on extending the trade truce, forged last year in Busan, South Korea. He said it's possible that Trump and Xi could come to a larger agreement by January or just decide to once again extend it further.

Trump and Xi certainly have incentive to keep the truce alive.

Trump's Republican Party is facing headwinds as they try to maintain control of Congress in November's midterm elections and can hardly afford further economic disruption. Meanwhile, Xi is navigating an uneven Chinese economy — one in which its domestic economy is struggling while its high tech exports remain strong.

Peak baseline U.S. tariffs reached 145% during last year's trade battle — matched by China's reciprocal levies of 125%. After Trump and Xi met in South Korea last year, the average U.S. tariff rate fell to roughly 47%, while China charged an average in the mid-30s. But in February, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned many of Trump's tariffs, causing the taxes on Chinese goods to have more variation.

The stopgap announced by Bessent was shorter than what both sides had suggested in recent weeks.

The Chinese side had indicated that they wanted to see the trade truce extended until the end of Trump's term in January 2029.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 35 of 67

Meanwhile, Trump administration officials had suggested a three- to six-month extension as a more appropriate time frame because China has been slow to fulfill past commitments on rare earth exports as well as imports of U.S. soybeans and aircraft.

There might not be a breakthrough during this week's visit but both leaders seem to be determined to avoid a breakdown, said Ryan Hass, a senior China policy adviser in former President Barack Obama's administration.

"Both sides are going to be managing for small gains and conflict avoidance, and that is going to be sort of the spirit through which both leaders approach this conversation," said Hass, who is now at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

A breakthrough on Iran seems unlikely

Trump has argued to little effect that China, which is far more dependent on Gulf oil than the U.S., has plenty of incentive to use its sway with Tehran to help force an end to the conflict.

But Trump's war of choice has unnerved Beijing, with the government condemning the U.S. and Israeli military action and Xi expressing concerns the conflict signaled a return to what he called the "law of the jungle."

The Chinese were also unsettled by the military operation Trump ordered to oust Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro from power and sweep him off to New York City to face federal narcoterrorism and drug trafficking charges.

Trump has since pressured Latin American nations to reduce economic and political ties with China — and justified a push for U.S. involvement in Venezuela's oil industry by pointing to concerns about Chinese and Russian influence on the South American country.

"China is very nervous about the kind of 19th-century imperialist cast of geopolitics that Trump has been pursuing," said Jake Werner, director of the East Asia Program at the Quincy Institute. "But at the same time, Beijing really sees the U.S.-China relationship as the decisive factor. They don't want to move in a way that's going to blow up the U.S. relationship."

Xi expected to press Trump to end Taiwan arms sales

China has made clear it views Taiwan as the most sensitive issue in the U.S.-China relationship.

Beijing considers Taiwan to be Chinese territory and vows to annex the island by force if necessary. The U.S. is obligated by law to provide Taiwan with sufficient hardware to deter any armed attack from the mainland.

China has pressed Washington to permanently halt the arms sales, most prominently when Trump and Xi met in Beijing in May.

After that meeting, Trump said he was holding off on final approval for a record-breaking \$14 billion arms package that was in the pipeline. He also described arms sales to Taiwan as a "very good negotiating chip" with China.

The U.S. president may be motivated to keep the pause on until at least the end of the year, analysts say.

Trump, who sees face-to-face meetings with Xi as a key part in maintaining stability in the relationship, wants the Chinese president to attend the Group of 20 summit in December at his resort in Doral, Fla.

Xi, meanwhile, wants Trump to show up to November's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shenzhen, China.

"I think that keeping things where they are now, with the arms sales pushed off, would count as a win for Beijing," Hass said.

Hurricane Polo fuels fears of landslides in Mexico's southwest as Nolo closes in on Hawaii

By MEGAN JANETSKY and GABRIELA AOUN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Southwestern Mexico braced for heavy rain and mudslides Wednesday after Polo, a powerful Pacific cyclone, became a major hurricane. Forecasters also warned another system headed for Hawaii could cause catastrophic flooding later in the week.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 36 of 67

Hurricane Polo, an "extremely dangerous" storm, is expected to skirt Mexico's Guerrero state, submerging coastal areas with 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 centimeters) of rain through Thursday, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. Guerrero has been repeatedly pummeled by hurricanes in recent years.

Farther out in the Pacific, Tropical Storm Nolo was churning about 295 miles (475 kilometers) south of South Point, Hawaii. The storm is forecast to become a hurricane by Thursday night and is expected to approach the Big Island as early as Friday.

Gov. Josh Green's office said public schools and state and county offices on the Big Island will close Thursday and Friday, while Maui County will shutter them on Friday ahead of the threat of heavy rain, winds and flooding. Forecasters said the storm could drop up to 20 inches (51 centimeters) of rain.

Polo could bring flooding and mudslides to Mexico's Pacific coast

Concepción López Villegas was busily bolstering her seaside restaurant in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán, against the expected onslaught of rain. Strong waves were already hitting some beaches and López Villegas said she feared the storm could destroy the small business she worked decades to build.

"We're worried and trying to protect our businesses," López Villegas said. "And of course, we're sad because it's our heritage, our legacy that from one moment to another could be destroyed."

Guerrero state was particularly at risk of life-threatening flooding and mudslides, the hurricane center said.

Polo, which was swirling about 130 miles (209 kilometers) south-southwest of Zihuatanejo Wednesday, was not expected to make landfall, meteorologists and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said. Rain and strong winds had already started to pummel the coast, with waves crashing onto the normally pristine beaches.

The storm was packing winds of 160 mph (257 kph), the hurricane center said Wednesday night. It warned that Polo's deluge could cause life-threatening flooding and mudslides, in particular in Guerrero.

The region most under threat from the hurricane is rural and mountainous, scattered with a few small tourist towns and ports. Much of the area is marked by poverty and residents routinely complain authorities abandon them to fend for themselves during natural disasters.

Mexico's government has called for evacuations in some areas and set up shelters for those affected. Thousands of military and Red Cross personnel have been deployed to the region as a preventive measure.

Another hurricane could hit Hawaii as soon as Friday

The National Weather Service said Tropical Storm Nolo would likely strengthen before closing in on the Big Island on Friday or Saturday.

The storm has the potential to be a major hurricane, John Bravender, a weather service warning coordination meteorologist, said during a news conference Wednesday afternoon.

While high winds are expected, Bravender said the main concern is the possibility of flash flooding. He said 20 to 30 inches (50 to 76 centimeters) of rain could fall through Saturday on southeastern parts of the Big Island, the same region hit hard in August by Hurricane Lala.

"That by itself could cause catastrophic flooding, but when you put that on top of grounds that we've been raining off and on for the last couple of months ... that rain could cause even more damage," Bravender said.

He urged preparation across all Hawaii islands in case the storm's trajectory shifts.

"You need to take action now," said Bravender. "Today is really the last dry day you have to get ready."

Hawaii County Mayor Kimo Alameda told residents in a video message on social media that they should start preparing now for the storm. He urged people to put together an emergency kit with food, water and medications, trim vegetation and clear drains.

"This is a very serious situation," he said. "We do believe that the rain is going to come. It's coming already."

The governor issued an emergency proclamation Tuesday and more than 230 Hawaii National Guard members have been activated, said Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan, adjutant general of the state's department of defense.

Kauai's electric cooperative urged residents to prepare for "the possibility of prolonged power outages,"

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 37 of 67

and to store nonperishable food and potable water.

Over 100 Kauai households remain without power from Hurricane Lowell, which passed west of the island on Sept. 7.

Hawaiian Electric, the state's primary utility, said crews would return to at-risk areas in preparation for the coming storm.

Odalys strengthens into a hurricane

Hurricane Odalys, also in the Pacific, strengthened on Wednesday, carrying maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (137 kph). It was located about 1,205 miles (1,939 kilometers) west-southwest of the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California peninsula and was not at risk of making landfall, according to the hurricane center.

An advisory said Odalys could increase in strength over the next couple of days but would likely weaken by the end of the week.

US will make up to \$7 billion in loans to help Trump ally Milei tap Argentina's oil and minerals

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — The Trump administration said Wednesday it would set aside \$7 billion for loans to support energy, mining and infrastructure projects in Argentina, its latest move to secure energy and critical minerals closer to home and back the South American country's libertarian president.

The U.S. Export-Import Bank, a federal agency, would make up to \$7 billion available through 2027 for projects in Argentina, the State Department said, helping companies in the country obtain loans to buy American equipment and hire U.S. firms to expand the country's railways, pipelines, ports and power networks.

The deal advances U.S. President Donald Trump's effort to reduce reliance on China's mineral processing industry, as well as bolstering his ally President Javier Milei, who is betting on oil, gas and mineral exports to transform Argentina's economy and ease the chronic dollar shortages that have fueled repeated economic crises.

"Working together, the United States and Argentina seek to continue to build on our robust relationship through increased U.S. investment, close security cooperation and aligned values," the State Department said in a statement.

The relationship has already paid dividends for Milei's Argentina: Last year, Washington backed a \$20 billion International Monetary Fund bailout for Argentina and extended a separate \$20 billion currency-swap line to stabilize the Argentine peso. The countries also signed a free trade pact earlier this year.

On the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau and Argentine Foreign Minister Pablo Quirno said on Wednesday that the agreement aims to connect Argentina's lithium- and copper-rich northwest and sprawling Vaca Muerta shale fields to the country's ports, making it easier to ship minerals, oil and gas to the U.S. and other markets.

Inadequate transport and energy infrastructure has long hampered development of Argentina's remote deposits. The country's history of protectionist trade policies, currency controls and sovereign debt defaults has also discouraged foreign investment.

Milei, a fierce believer in free markets, has moved to open Argentina's economy, scrapping import restrictions and offering tax breaks to attract investors. That has led to a surge in cheap imports, squeezing labor-intensive industries like manufacturing and retail already struggling under Milei's spending cuts and tight monetary policy. Booming oil production and mining exports have become an economic lifeline.

The country has vast deposits of lithium and copper, minerals that are necessary for the global shift toward green energy.

Iran's president delivers defiant UN speech, and other Mideast developments

By The Associated Press undefined

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian delivered a defiant speech at the United Nations on Wednesday as his government downplayed talks with the United States.

Meanwhile, another ship attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz was struck by a projectile, highlighting the dangers that continue to restrict traffic through the critical waterway as the seven-month war grinds on.

Here is the latest news from the Middle East. More coverage of the U.N. General Assembly is available here.

Iran's president calls US attacks 'cowardly'

Iran's president said his country's people had been the "victims of terrorism" by the United States.

Delivering a rare wartime speech at the U.N. General Assembly, Pezeshkian displayed images of the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and more than 150 schoolchildren killed in the opening days of the conflict.

"We have only defended ourselves. We are not terrorists," he said. "Our innocent people have been the targets of cowardly attacks and aggressions imposed upon our country."

Turning to the United States, Pezeshkian added: "Yes, they did hit us, but we did not bend the knee."

Rubio says Trump still open to a deal to make Iran 'prosperous'

Pezeshkian addressed world leaders a day after U.S. President Donald Trump used the same stage to suggest that he might "annihilate" the Islamic Republic if an agreement was not reached soon to end the nearly seven-month war.

Hours later, Trump touted "a very good meeting" between his chief envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, and Iranian officials. Tehran, however, downplayed the talks. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said they were "not anything new."

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters that Trump remained open to an agreement "that allows Iran to be what it should be, which is a great and prosperous country."

Rubio said the prospects for such a deal were hindered by Iran's nuclear ambitions and "their support of terrorism." If those policies continued, he said, Trump could exercise "a number of options," including further military action.

Hard-liners in Iran criticize talks with US

Hard-line figures in Iran attacked Iran's top diplomat for engaging with the U.S. at the U.N., triggering pushback from rival factions in Tehran.

In an X post, lawmaker Ebrahim Rezaei demanded that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi explain the decision to meet with "the aggressor enemy."

Ali Ahmadnia, a media official for Iran's president, responded by posting an AI-generated image depicting Araghchi as a wounded warrior.

"How can a soldier be on the battlefield while the home front is being weakened from within?!" Ahmadnia wrote on X. "The Iranian delegation in New York operates in full coordination with the relevant institutions."

US-backed Board of Peace proposes plan to begin Gaza reconstruction

The U.S.-backed Board of Peace is proposing a six-month, \$2.45 billion plan to begin reconstruction and governance in Gaza as President Donald Trump's ceasefire plan struggles to stay afloat.

At a meeting of the group's board in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly on Wednesday, the governors unveiled a 66-project blueprint to get things started while acknowledging enormous hurdles that must still be overcome. The projects include ambitious infrastructure, education and health initiatives that are designed to support Trump's 20-point plan to end the Israel-Hamas war.

The proposal comes as the the U.S.-backed plan has largely stalled.

While the ceasefire halted the heaviest fighting and humanitarian conditions have improved, the Israeli military has expanded its control of Gaza and now occupies some 60% of the territory. Hamas has not given up its weapons. The international military force and new government still have not entered Gaza, and reconstruction has not begun. The vast majority of Palestinians continue to live in tent camps or ruins

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 39 of 67

of their former homes.

"The need is immense," the board said, noting that full reconstruction from the physical damage across Gaza will cost roughly \$35.2 billion over the medium term and an additional \$71.4 billion over the next 10 years.

Another ship hit in the Strait of Hormuz

A cargo ship was struck in the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said, citing an unidentified company security officer.

The vessel was hit by an "unknown projectile," resulting in two casualties, UKMTO said without providing further details. The crew abandoned the ship, which caught fire and was left adrift.

The attack was the first reported in two days. No one immediately claimed responsibility.

The incident highlighted the continuing danger to ships attempting to navigate the waterway. Some vessels appear to be making "dark passages" without transmitting identifying signals, but Iran and the United States have maintained their competing blockades. Commercial traffic remains well below prewar levels, according to ship-tracking data from analytics firm Kpler.

Restrictions on shipping through the strait have become one of the war's most persistent consequences. Before the conflict, one-fifth of the world's traded oil passed through the narrow waterway, along with large volumes of natural gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products.

Vehicle ramming in the West Bank injures ambassador's son

The son of Israel's ambassador to the United States was gravely injured in a ramming attack in the occupied West Bank.

Neria Leiter, a reservist in Israel's military, "needs a miracle," Ambassador Yechiel Leiter posted on social media. The ambassador's older son, Moshe Yedidya Leiter, who also served in Israel's military, was killed in Gaza about a month after the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023 attack, which triggered the war in Gaza.

According to the military and law enforcement, a Palestinian man rammed his car into a security checkpoint Wednesday afternoon near the settlement of Beit Horon, seriously wounding the soldier. Israeli forces then opened fire at the man as he attempted to flee and killed him.

More military forces were deployed in the aftermath in the area, which is crossed by a major highway connecting Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog both sent wishes for Leiter's recovery. A social media post by Herzog described Leiter as "fighting for his life."

Major Arab parties disqualified from running in Israeli elections

Israel's election commission voted Wednesday to disqualify major Arab political parties and candidates from running in next month's polls.

The disqualification came at the request of two right-wing parties, including the Likud party led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The parties had said the candidates were ineligible under a law barring those who reject Israel's existence, incite racism or support armed struggle against Israel.

Wednesday's vote targeted the United Arab List, a religious Arab Muslim party also known by its Hebrew name Ra'am; as well as the Joint List, an alliance of left-wing and Arab-majority parties. Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas said the decision was a "political, illegitimate, and anti-democratic move" and that the party would appeal to the Supreme Court.

Elections will be held next month, the first since the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks that plunged Israel into war.

Meta bets big on wearable AI, new AI agent as Zuckerberg pushes back against AI doom

By KAITLYN HUAMANI and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

Meta is going all in on a consumer-friendly AI agent and pushing forward with AI-powered wearable devices during a moment in the industry when its CEO Mark Zuckerberg acknowledged it is a "wild time to be building."

At the company's annual Connect conference on Wednesday, Zuckerberg opened his keynote address

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 40 of 67

by saying "it's no secret that people in the industry have a wide range of views about how the future is going to go." But at Meta, he said, "we are optimists because we believe in people."

Zuckerberg has distanced himself and Meta from recent calls by rival companies for a coordinated slow-down in the development of advanced artificial intelligence, arguing that individual labs can and should ensure their technology is safe.

"We believe that the best way to create a positive future for everyone is to put power in people's hands," he said at the conference. "We believe that empowering people is the source of prosperity in the world, that the highest purpose of superintelligence is creation and invention — not automation — and that the path to a safe future is to distribute this technology widely and create the right checks and balances, rather than concentrating it in the hands of just a few."

Zuckerberg has long said he believes wearable AI will eventually replace smartphones as the primary way people interact with technology. At the conference, the company unveiled a slew of updates to its smart glasses and virtual reality goggles, which let people control their interface using their voice, eyes and hand and finger movements.

AI agent Muse is the 'centerpiece' of Meta's vision

Zuckerberg said that Meta's recently launched agent Muse is the "centerpiece" of Meta's hopeful outlook for the future of AI.

Having an AI agent, which goes beyond chatbots in that it can act and perform tasks on a person's behalf, has been a "sign of someone who is completely AI-pilled," Meta's chief AI officer Alexandr Wang said at the conference. With Muse, Wang said, Meta is making agents more accessible and bringing "personal superintelligence" to everyone.

With the help of a mascot for the agent that looks like a plush toy, Wang and senior leadership at Meta demonstrated different uses for the Muse in everyday life. Users will be able to have real-time voice conversations and video chats with their version of the agent, which can also be customized to look and sound unique. The agent can help users plan travel, book reservations, order groceries and complete other helpful tasks. Meta has partnered with companies like OpenTable, Spotify, Ticketmaster and more to help its agents complete these tasks.

The company is working to bring Muse to its AI glasses lineup for hands-free access.

Zuckerberg also said Meta is planning to release a keychain-like device that has the "whole Muse experience" packed into it, called Muse Charm, in time for the holidays in December. The palm-sized device will allow users to engage with a personal AI agent without using a phone, computer or smart glasses.

New AI audio glasses and new updates to popular models

Meta is launching an audio version of its more widely known smart glasses. The new product will let users listen to music, make calls and talk with an AI assistant — there's just no screen, and no video recording, which has raised privacy concerns with some users recording people without permission. Called Ray-Ban Meta Audio, it will be available in October and the cost starts at \$349.

Meta is also building upon a previous feature that allowed glasses wearers to better hear a conversation in a noisy environment. Now, Zuckerberg said, a feature called hearing enhancement turns your glasses into an "FDA-cleared, over-the-counter hearing aid" that can "compensate for perceived mild to moderate hearing loss." The feature will launch in the U.S. later this year and will be available to add to supported AI glasses for \$150, or with a Meta One subscription.

The Meta Ray-Ban Display glasses have been upgraded with new features, including improved cycling and transit navigation and a personalized hologram for video calls.

The company is also offering more styles to appeal to a broader range of people and says it will have more than 100 different options across its Ray-Ban, Oakley, and Meta Glasses by the end of the year. The glasses will also be available in more countries, including Turkey, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

The newest generation of the classic Ray-Ban Meta glasses is also now available, with what the company touts as a slimmer, sleeker design and increased battery life, among other upgrades. The Generation 3 models are available now with prices starting at \$449.

Virtual reality gets a makeover with Meta VRGlasses

The most drastic update announced at the conference is to the company's VR device, now called Meta VR Glasses. That is because the previous bulky headset has been replaced by a set of glasses, which weigh about 100 grams (3.5 ounces), or roughly as much as a deck of cards. In comparison, the Meta Quest 3, which launched in 2023, weighs about five times that much. The difference feels similar to that between scuba diving and swimming goggles.

While they are significantly lighter and more sleek than VR predecessors, the glasses require a wired connection to an external puck for battery, storage and compute.

Instead of controllers or a neural wristband that past headsets or glasses required, the VR glasses use an eye-tracking camera and sensor that essentially lets your eyes be the computer cursor and your fingers the mouse clicker. If you want to open an app, for instance, you look at it and use hand and finger gestures, or use voice commands to talk to the Meta AI agent.

In a demo at its Menlo Park, California, headquarters on Tuesday, Meta showed off entertainment and work offerings on the glasses, including sports events and concerts that replicate the experience of having courtside or front-row seats. A new feature called "VR Enhanced Cinema," meanwhile, seeks to immerse viewers in the movie by transforming their surroundings beyond the screen into a virtual world inspired by the movie, with dynamic effects, 3D visuals and spatial audio.

Once the glasses launch, users will have access to more than 100 immersive live sports events from that courtside-like view, because of partnerships with ESPN, MLB, NBC Sports, TNT Sports and UFC. The glasses can also function as a gaming console, Meta said, and there will be more than 75 games at launch that users can play solely with hand gestures.

The glasses can also be used for work. Users can conjure a virtual keyboard on any flat surface and use the display as their computer screen (or several screens) only they can see. For even more of a robust setup, users will be able to connect their Mac or Windows PC to seamlessly transition onto these screens, and bring their own keyboard and mouse. The VR glasses, unlike headsets of the past, will let wearers see their desk setup and surroundings while they work.

One of Zuckerberg's live demos of the night also showed off the glasses' ability to use hologram technology to project a photorealistic digital version of a person, including their real-time expressions and reactions, for hands-free video calling.

The VR glasses will launch in the spring of 2027 and cost \$1,300.

New lawsuits allege Six Flags Magic Mountain's X2 roller coaster caused traumatic brain injuries

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Three people who went to California's Six Flags Magic Mountain have filed lawsuits saying they were left with traumatic brain injuries from the park's famed X2 roller coaster that is advertised as a rite of passage for the "ultimate daredevil."

The filings are the latest against the world-famous amusement park operator and S&S Worldwide, the manufacturer of the X2 roller coaster cars. Six Flags recently settled a wrongful-death lawsuit from the family of a 22-year-old man who died after riding the coaster in 2022.

According to documents filed Monday, Pamela Guillen and her family visited the park in July for her daughter's 16th birthday and decided to ride the X2 roller coaster. When the ride stopped, her daughter saw her "sitting with a vacant stare and her mouth open," confused and unable to exit the ride.

Shortly after she got out, the previously healthy 39-year-old collapsed and was taken to a hospital, where she underwent emergency brain surgery, according to the lawsuit.

Just five days later, 25-year-old Naomi Greer-Wilkinson boarded the ride with her siblings. She also collapsed shortly after the ride ended and was taken to a hospital, where she was found to have massive brain bleeding inside the skull that required emergency brain surgery. She remains in a vegetative state in the hospital, unable to speak or move and dependent on a ventilator. Her family filed the lawsuit on her behalf.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 42 of 67

Their attorney, Gary Dordick, said the firm has been retained by more than 100 clients who suffered brain injuries after riding the X2 roller coaster within the past two years.

"It's inexcusable that more isn't done," Dordick said. "It was known by Magic Mountain that those injuries and deaths occurred, and they kept the ride open."

A spokesperson for Six Flags said it's the company's policy not to comment on pending litigation. The ride has been closed since the evening of July 12.

Extreme roller coaster has riders bracing for impact

According to the Six Flags Magic Mountain website, the X2 roller coaster reaches a top speed of 76 mph (122 kph) and has a total length of 3,610 feet (1,100 meters). The seats rotate 360 degrees "so your body will be flipping around the entire time," and the ride features two "raven turns" — half loops that turn into sheer drops midway. It debuted at the park in 2002 as the world's first "fourth dimension" rollercoaster and reopened in 2008 with new trains and special effects. The uniqueness of the ride drew thrill-seekers from around the world and garnered a fervent fanbase.

Frequent riders of X2 have discussed on Reddit forums the "unspoken rules" of how to ride the roller coaster without getting injured. Many cite the final raven turn as the most extreme part of the ride and say they have gotten major headaches and what felt like concussions if they didn't brace their heads properly. One even said they wore a soft head helmet the last time they were on the ride.

"The snapping bangs the head against the headrest and it's causing brain damage, it's causing hemorrhaging within the skull," Dordick said.

Another one of his clients, Michael Wilk, visited the park with his daughter and grandchildren in February. Immediately after going on the ride, he felt stabbing pain in his head, dizziness and had difficulty walking, the lawsuit states.

While he didn't seek medical attention immediately, his cognitive function quickly declined in the following weeks as he tried to return to his job as an insurance defense attorney. An MRI scan a few months later showed massive bleeding and swelling inside his skull, requiring multiple surgeries to relieve the pressure on his brain. He said he continues to suffer debilitating headaches, confusion, dizziness, memory loss, and personality changes, and can no longer practice law.

The lawsuit accused Six Flags of intentionally restricting "public disclosure of evidence concerning X2 injuries and safety issues."

College graduate died after riding X2 in 2022

The new lawsuits follow a settlement for wrongful death in the case of Christopher Hawley, a 22-year-old who died the day after he rode X2 and was rushed to the hospital after the ride with severe brain bleeding. The medical examiner's office said his death was from "blunt head trauma."

An engineer involved in testing the ride when it reopened in 2008 said in court filings for Hawley's case that the acceleration forces exerted on a rider by the X2 roller coaster abided by standard practices for amusement park rides that were adopted by California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health. The division also inspected the ride's seat restraints and head padding, a state employee said in a deposition.

The employee also testified that more testing was done in 2022 following Hawley's death, but Six Flags provided them with data showing the acceleration forces exerted by the roller coaster were still within standards. The division allowed Six Flags to reopen the rollercoaster after their findings.

Hawley's attorneys alleged in court filings that the ride's headrest failed to secure or protect the rider's head and neck from the extreme forces exerted by the roller coaster. They also alleged that there was inadequate maintenance when the wheels on the ride exhibited excessive wear or degradation, affecting the forces exerted on a rider.

Dordick said the amusement park operator has argued that people are accepting risk by voluntarily going on a thrill ride, and that people who suffer injuries often have preexisting conditions.

"The risk people reasonably assume is they get dizzy, maybe someone might throw up," Dordick said. "No one goes to a family fun amusement park and assumes the risk of brain damage."

Trump welcomes China's Xi to Washington with planeside ceremony and extension of trade truce

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Washington on Wednesday, where he was met with a rare planeside greeting from President Donald Trump after their top officials agreed to extend a trade truce until January.

Trump's Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the extension of the truce — under which the countries agreed to scale back tariffs and refrain from imposing new trade restrictions — during a Fox News Channel interview as Trump welcomed Xi at Joint Base Andrews just outside Washington.

"I don't know whether a bigger deal can be done. I don't know whether we will just roll the current deal," Bessent said in the interview, noting the extension to Jan. 10 could give the leaders more time to talk about the issues at upcoming international summits in China in November and Florida in December.

Trade has been one of the biggest flashpoints between the two superpowers, along with artificial intelligence, Trump's war with Iran and China's designs on Taiwan. But much of Xi's three-day visit is expected to be far more about pomp than substance, starting with Trump's decision to greet Xi as he landed, rather than waiting for him to drive up to the White House.

A 100-foot (30 meter) long red carpet was unfurled at the bottom of the staircase placed at the door of Xi's plane. A 21-person honor guard was arrayed on the sides of the carpet and Trump and first lady Melania Trump stood near a staircase on the side of the plane, where they greeted Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, with handshakes.

The welcome ceremony also included a flyover by two B-1 bombers, platoons from each military service, and a presentation of the flags and anthems of both countries. Trump and his wife spoke to their counterparts, but their words could not be heard. Trump, who wore gloves and an overcoat though it was a relatively warm 63 degrees Fahrenheit (17 degrees Celsius) outside, removed one of his gloves to shake hands with Xi. At one point, he slapped Xi on the back and said something to him that was inaudible.

"I think they appreciate it, tremendous people," Trump told reporters after he returned to the White House Wednesday evening.

In a statement marking his arrival in the U.S., China's leader wrote that his country and the U.S. "should be partners, not rivals. Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making America great again can go hand in hand and the two countries can contribute to each other's success, thereby benefiting the wider world."

Some Republicans have questioned the optics of the visit

Beyond using the visit to try to keep "strategic stability" between the two countries, Trump has lavished praise on Xi as a "great leader" and described a warm relationship with the man he has called a friend. That is all while he has given Xi a pass on many issues.

Sen. Roger Wicker, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, criticized the "lavish welcome." Wicker, R-Miss., said during a speech Tuesday in the Senate that Trump should not have invited the Chinese leader "based on all of the troubling issues we have with President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the U.S. and China must interact at the highest levels because the countries are "the two largest economies in the world" and "probably the two most powerful militaries in the world."

Danny Russel, a former U.S. diplomat under former President Barack Obama's administration, said the airport pomp delivered a propaganda win for Beijing.

"Such extreme deference is valuable evidence that China's leader is now held in extraordinarily high esteem by the President of the United States. Beijing uses this at home and internationally to show China's — and Xi's — growing stature," said Russel, now at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

China had hoped for a longer extension of the trade truce

China had wanted a longer extension of the trade truce, which had been set to expire on Nov. 10. "It underscores that the United States is still concerned about China's full implementation of its commitments

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 44 of 67

under the truce, particularly with respect to critical mineral exports and agricultural purchases,” said Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade negotiator and now senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

The tight timeframe gives the U.S. a chance to test whether China will deliver on unmet promises to buy U.S. farm goods, said Craig Singleton, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. “This is less about buying two months of calm than making China earn the next extension,” he said.

Trump has not yet commented on the extension. The two leaders are expected to talk about issues of substance more on Thursday, after an arrival ceremony at the White House and a review of troops. Later, they will exchange toasts at a black-tie dinner, which will feature tech industry leaders like Nvidia’s Jensen Huang and SpaceX’s Elon Musk.

Trump to welcome Xi with ‘the most respect’

Trump has made it clear he wants to wow Xi, telling reporters in recent weeks that he was delighted his new “work of art” helicopter landing pad would be ready for the visit while bemoaning that his massive White House ballroom would not.

“I wish we had it for tomorrow night,” Trump said again Wednesday.

Trump on Wednesday was looking to match the pageantry he was met with in China earlier this year. Xi was not at the airport to meet Trump — Chinese Vice President Han Zheng was there instead. But a red carpet was rolled out to meet Air Force One in Beijing. A military honor guard, a military band and about 300 Chinese youths waving Chinese and American flags and chanting, “Welcome, welcome! Warm welcome!” also were present.

The first lady said earlier Wednesday that her husband decided to personally greet Xi when he arrived in the Washington region because “they have a great relationship.”

“He’s coming on our soil, and we need to welcome them with the most respect,” she said of Xi and his wife during an interview on Fox News Channel’s “Fox & Friends.”

The long red carpet recalled a similar extra-long one the U.S. laid out for Russian President Vladimir Putin when he touched down at a U.S. Air Force base in Alaska last summer for a summit aimed at trying to find an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

On Friday, Xi and Peng will be back at the White House for a private tea with the Trumps before joining them on a tour of the National Archives in Washington. The White House has said they will view historic documents underscoring the relationship between the two countries.

Venezuela’s acting leader, at UN for first address, promises elections at the ‘right moment’

By NAYARA BATSCHE Associated Press

Venezuela’s acting president, delivering her first address to the U.N. General Assembly since coming to power, promised elections Wednesday and said the nation’s people will determine the “right moment.”

“I wish to state this very clearly before this General Assembly: Elections will be held in Venezuela,” Delcy Rodríguez said, adding that her government has started a “political dialogue with opposition sectors” to secure a “process based on equal conditions for all.”

Rodríguez said the Venezuelan people will determine the best time to get elections moving and assured the United Nations that, when the time comes, the country’s institutions “will be prepared to guarantee an inclusive and transparent process.”

Rodríguez took over in Venezuela after a surprise U.S. military raid in January that captured then-leader Nicolás Maduro and brought him to the United States to face drug trafficking charges.

This is the first trip to the United States by a Venezuelan head of state since 2018, when Maduro traveled to New York to participate in the U.N. General Assembly himself. He is currently being held only a few miles from the organization’s headquarters as he awaits trial.

She says Venezuela is coming back

Rodríguez’s participation in the international forum also marks a milestone in Venezuela’s reintegration into global diplomacy. Addressing global leaders, she said that “the last time that two presidents of Ven-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 45 of 67

ezuela and the United States met was in 2009."

She added that her country is coming back strong after "setbacks" suffered this year and thanked President Donald Trump for being willing to resume relations after the U.S. military spirited her predecessor out of the country.

The other setback to which she referred: On June 24, two powerful earthquakes, magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, struck north-central Venezuela and killed more than 6,500 people, leaving an untold number of missing and causing widespread devastation.

"I come to talk about a Venezuela whose national life has been affected by a crisis of political coexistence that disrupted the life of the nation and our interaction with the world," Rodriguez she said. "Interests alien to the common good of Venezuelans were imposed."

Rodriguez faced a delicate balance in her speech, which needed to be addressed to both her people and the U.S. government that holds her predecessor. She thanked Trump for his willingness to resume the course of diplomatic relations and cooperation with Venezuela.

"We are working earnestly to resolve existing differences through dialogue, but above all to pave the way for cooperation in the energy sector, the promotion of security, the joint fight against transnational crime, and economic cooperation for the benefit of both peoples and our continent," she said. "Today, Venezuela is being reborn."

Since rising to power, Rodríguez has forged a close working relationship with Trump. U.S. influence in Venezuela has grown following the lifting of sanctions against Rodríguez in April, one of several recent moves by Washington to recognize her as a legitimate authority ever since the U.S. military captured her predecessor.

Addressing some words to her people, Rodríguez said that she could not promise an "easy path," noting that "the country's recovery will take time."

"Rebuilding the national soul will be our priority," she said. "We will walk united as a single nation that, after the pain, chose hope."

Trump and Rodríguez met on the sideline of the UN

Before her speech at the U.N. Wednesday night, Trump and Rodríguez, who had been Maduro's vice president, met at a pull-aside meeting late Tuesday during a reception the U.S. president hosted at a New York hotel.

It was the first time the two had met in person since the operation that captured the nation's former leader and effectively put Rodríguez in charge.

"We discussed strengthening the bilateral relationship between our countries and advancing a cooperation agenda in strategic areas such as energy, mining, security, and other matters of mutual interest," Rodríguez said on X after the encounter.

The meeting came after the two countries announced an agreement last month to give the United States a stake in Venezuela's vast oil reserves. She described the deal as a step toward economic recovery that will modernize the country's oil industry.

Rodríguez vowed to shoulder the "historic responsibility" of leading Venezuela "from a period of uncertainty and conflict toward a stage of full democracy, recognized by its own people and by the world."

"Venezuela wants to breathe freely and exercise its rights as a sovereign nation without any kind of interference," she said.

Iowa judge dismisses Trump's lawsuit against Des Moines Register and pollster

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A judge on Wednesday dismissed Donald Trump's lawsuit accusing The Des Moines Register and its former pollster of misrepresenting the state of the 2024 presidential race, rejecting the president's claim that the newspaper's poll coverage violated Iowa's consumer fraud law.

Calling the case extraordinary, Iowa District Judge Scott J. Beattie said that allowing the lawsuit and its

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 46 of 67

"faulty" claims to proceed could have a chilling effect that "can discourage others from reporting on and debating public affairs." He sided with pollster J. Ann Selzer and the newspaper in affirming that the poll and coverage of it were constitutionally protected political speech, not a commercial product.

The ruling Wednesday came hours after a judge heard arguments but did not rule from the bench in a case on Trump's ban of CNN, MS NOW and Politico from White House grounds. Trump banned the three outlets last Friday, assailing what he called "fake news."

After the ruling in Iowa Wednesday, a spokesman for Trump's legal team said the president will take his case to the Iowa Supreme Court.

Trump filed the lawsuit against Selzer, The Des Moines Register and the newspaper's parent company in December 2024, accusing them of fraudulently publishing inaccurate poll results to damage him and help Democrats, saying coverage of polls is not protected speech.

Trump and his team have filed several lawsuits against media organizations accusing them of bias, calling into question the boundaries of free speech protections, particularly for the press. Some of those lawsuits have ended in settlements.

Selzer's case was taken up by the free speech advocacy group Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression. She said Wednesday she was grateful for the ruling, which "reaffirms the fundamental freedom to pursue and publish the truth without political interference."

"Polling is a social science, not clairvoyance, and no responsible pollster can guarantee an election outcome," Selzer said in a statement.

Selzer's attorneys at FIRE and her co-defendants also celebrated the ruling.

"Today is a victory for the First Amendment — and for the essential role of a free press in American democracy," Polly Grunfeld Sack, USA Today Co. chief legal counsel, said in a statement. USA Today Co., formerly known as Gannett, owns The Register.

In dismissing the case, Beattie wrote that Trump's lawsuit sought to "stretch both Iowa statutory and common law beyond their current bounds, turning speech that enjoys the highest category of First Amendment protection into a liability." After hearing the arguments, the judge concluded the constitutional protection "is too great and the reach is too far. The case must therefore be dismissed."

Beattie said the case would have to be dismissed even if, solely for the purpose of deciding the motions, he accepted the Trump team's allegations that the poll was intentionally skewed and its results fabricated. "Even with this assumption, each of the three counts still fails," the judge wrote, because the lawsuit did not meet the legal requirements for fraud or consumer deception.

The poll, conducted by Selzer's company in the final days of October and released just days before Election Day 2024, showed then-Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democrats' presidential nominee, capturing 47% of Iowa likely voters, to Trump's 44%. Trump ultimately won the support of 56% of the nearly 2 million Iowans who voted.

U.S. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks and former Iowa state Sen. Brad Zaun, both Republicans, had joined Trump's lawsuit.

Trump, Miller-Meeks and Zaun alleged the misleading coverage diminished their reputations, valuable time in the final days of the campaign, and campaign funds and resources.

Dolly Parton's estate granted temporary restraining order against singer's nephew

By HALLIE GOLDEN and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A Tennessee judge granted Dolly Parton's estate a temporary restraining order Wednesday against the late singer's nephew Bryan Seaver and his private security company.

She's Alive, the entity founded to manage and protect Parton's estate, had filed the complaint against Seaver and Squadron Augmented Protection Services a day prior. The estate accused Seaver of threatening to commit violence and destroy his aunt's legacy and business empire in court filings.

The order says the court took into account the repeated threats cited in the complaint, as well as the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 47 of 67

alleged demands for payment and Seaver's "claimed access to weapons, experience with violence, and intention to retaliate." It describes the communications as "concerning," specifically noting the threat to use force.

As part of the order, Seaver and his company SAPS, which provided Parton's security detail, must refrain from entering any She's Alive property or talking with or being within 1,000 feet (305 meters) of She's Alive employees and business partners. The order is also meant to keep Seaver from interfering with its business relationships.

A hearing is scheduled for Oct. 7.

Seaver, who was handpicked by the star to announce her death from cancer last month, did not respond to an email Wednesday from The Associated Press requesting comment on the order being granted.

Representatives for SAPS also did not respond, and no one was present at their office in downtown Nashville on Wednesday afternoon. No one came to the door at an address listed in court documents for Seaver in the semi-rural Nashville suburb of Fairview. A woman speaking to a reporter through a doorbell camera declined to comment.

In the temporary restraining order request filed by She's Alive and other court documents, Seaver is accused of sending increasingly threatening messages over the last several weeks. She's Alive is run by Danny Nozell, Parton's longtime manager.

Last week, She's Alive terminated Seaver and SAPS, saying his "terrorizing conduct made their continued retention untenable," according to court documents.

The court documents showcase a series of messages She's Alive says were sent by Seaver, starting just before Parton's death. They start with threats to destroy Parton's brand, and then after her death, depict Seaver reveling in his newfound fame and calling himself an "international arms dealer."

In one message written Sept. 1 and included in the court documents, he said: "I'm going to set up a podcast dedicated to ruining Dolly's brand partnerships and telling the violations these people have done on us. It's going to be great. Or f—— pay me."

Seaver also claimed that he worked for private military contractors overseas during the Iraq War and used that experience as part of these threats, according to the complaint.

The messages have resulted in Parton's trusts and estates attorney leaving and employees of She's Alive resigning, according to the court documents. The entity has also had to hire private security for its employees, including at their homes, the documents state.

Kristin Mumford, a spokesperson for the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, said in an email that there are no reports against Seaver in their system.

Parton was a beloved country music icon who wrote hundreds of songs, including classics like "Jolene," "Coat of Many Colors" and "I Will Always Love You," that earned a total of more than 100 million worldwide sales and more than 1 billion online streams.

Judge hears arguments without immediately ruling in lawsuit over White House ban on 3 news outlets

By JOCELYN NOVECK and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge weighing whether to block President Donald Trump's ban of three news outlets from White House grounds expressed some skepticism Wednesday in response to the government's defense of the move.

U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly, who was nominated by Trump in 2017, didn't rule from the bench after hearing arguments in an extraordinary showdown between Trump and media outlets whose coverage he dislikes.

But the judge questioned whether the administration met its legal responsibilities and provided CNN, MS NOW and Politico with adequate due process before banning them, assailing what he called "fake news." More recently, the president has said negative coverage was dangerous for the country.

The news outlets argued they were singled out because of their coverage content — in other words,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 48 of 67

viewpoint discrimination — and called the ban a “blatant violation” of the First Amendment.

Kelly said his decision must be guided by prior rulings in comparable First Amendment cases, even if the government disagrees with them.

“I think it is fair to say that the processes that the court laid out wasn’t followed here,” Kelly said.

It wasn’t clear when Kelly, who ordered a CNN journalist’s access restored in a similar 2018 case, would issue a decision on the outlets’ request for a restraining order. But he said he’d rule as soon as possible.

“These are urgent matters,” Theodore Boutrous Jr., attorney for the outlets, said. “We’re at war. We have world leaders coming to Washington.”

CNN, Politico and MS NOW each told The Associated Press they’d have no comment on the emergency hearing.

Prior rulings indicate journalists should be heard before press passes are revoked

Kelly opened by reminding both sides that he’s required to apply case precedent.

The rulings in two prior cases over press access — including one that went to the U.S. Supreme Court — made clear that journalists were entitled to an opportunity to be heard before they have their press passes revoked.

Justice Department attorney Michael Velchik argued that the rulings in the earlier cases were wrong.

“Access to the White House is a privilege, not a right,” Velchik said.

In arguing that Trump was not engaging in viewpoint discrimination, Velchik said the president had criticized other news organizations even more harshly — such as calling ABC “the worst” — but hadn’t banned them.

“The president should be able to take immediate action to protect national security,” Velchik told the court.

In response, Boutrous said, “Suddenly it’s a national security case,” arguing that the president brought up that point only after the lawsuit was filed.

Trump “keeps proving our point,” Boutrous said, describing how the president has consistently used negative coverage of him as justification for the ban.

Boutrous called the ban an “unprecedented, unreasonable punishment” and said there was “not a semblance of due process.”

The Trump administration outlined ‘reporting incidents’ of each news outlet

In a filing late Tuesday, administration lawyers argued that the ban does not violate the First Amendment, which guarantees the right to a free press. It contended that the outlets, in their reporting, violated “standards of professionalism and decorum.”

The administration went on to detail letters sent to each outlet that identified “a non-exhaustive list of reporting incidents, including those that have threatened national security and spread falsehoods.”

The “reporting incidents” cited in the filing included: CNN reporting on “‘top-secret’ construction details related to the East Wing bunker”; MS NOW reporting “on an alleged leak investigation”; and Politico publishing “a document detailing funding for the White House ballroom containing intricate descriptions of how the Secret Service would invest in security improvements.”

Further examples were given in individual letters. Politico’s letter detailed six reporting instances, including in June citing a “senior administration official ... granted anonymity” predicting whether a preliminary deal would end the conflict with Iran.

That item appeared to reference a background briefing set up by the White House, where an official briefed reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House itself. Several other outlets also reported the official’s remarks.

Major networks continue to refrain from covering Trump for the media pool

The ban prompted other media outlets to take action in solidarity. The five-network U.S. network press pool — a rotating cast of news outlets that covers the president, and to which CNN belongs — decided to suspend coverage of Trump events until further notice.

After the hearing Wednesday, the networks were poised to continue their ban on filming Trump coverage. At Joint Base Andrews, where the president was to formally welcome Chinese President Xi Jinping

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 49 of 67

later, journalists from Fox News, CBS and NBC were present but not shooting video, and some appeared to be breaking down their cameras.

Other television outlets whose crews were present, according to signs on their tripods and cameras, were NewsNation, Newsmax, Right Side Broadcasting Network, One America News and LindellTV.

Ahead of Wednesday's hearing, an amicus brief was filed by other news groups, urging the court to immediately restore the three outlets' White House access.

The brief — filed by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the White House Correspondents' Association and 49 media outlets and industry groups, including The Associated Press, The New York Times and Reuters — says "the targeted expulsion of news media from White House grounds injures the public interest."

The proceedings are historic, said Katie Fallow, deputy litigation director at the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University.

"No president has taken this explicit of a step" to ban entire outlets because he doesn't like their reporting, she said. "There have been various presidents throughout history who have grumbled about the press or threatened to take more major steps, but really there was nothing at this level before Trump."

Harvey Weinstein is sentenced to 15 years in prison for 2006 sexual assault

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Harvey Weinstein was sentenced Wednesday to 15 years in prison for sexually assaulting a TV production assistant in 2006, capping a yearslong legal odyssey that a judge said cemented the disgraced movie mogul's reputation as "the literal face of the #MeToo movement."

The landmark New York prosecution began nearly a decade ago with multiple accusers, but after retrials, mistrials, acquittals and appeals, it was whittled to a single victim: Miriam Haley, who said the Oscar-winning producer forcibly performed oral sex on her at his Manhattan apartment. She had worked briefly on the Weinstein-produced reality series "Project Runway."

Weinstein, 74, pleaded for mercy, citing his age and health issues, including cancer and congestive heart failure. He apologized "to anyone I have affected with my actions" and said he felt remorse for Haley. However, he added, "I have to reiterate my innocence." His lawyers said he will appeal.

Once a towering figure in Hollywood, with such hits as "Shakespeare in Love," "Pulp Fiction" and "Chocolat," Weinstein's downfall came quickly after sexual assault allegations in 2017 set off the #MeToo movement. Several of his dozens of accusers were in court on Wednesday.

Judge Curtis Farber said Weinstein wielded his power as a Hollywood kingmaker to prey on women looking to break into the industry, treating them as "mere objects to be played with and discarded with impunity."

Farber said Weinstein's refusal to accept responsibility, portraying himself as a victim during jailhouse interviews, weighed heavily on his sentencing decision. Weinstein had faced up to 25 years in prison.

Some of Weinstein's accusers attended the sentencing

Haley credited the swell of other accusers, some of whom she hugged afterward, for giving her the courage to come forward.

For years, she said, "it was like a dark and painful secret that ate away at my spirit, my enthusiasm and sense of self worth, that it took a long time to regain."

Jailed since his original conviction, Weinstein has already served more than six years behind bars, leaving him with about nine years on his sentence. But a pending resentencing in Los Angeles, where he was originally ordered to serve 16 years in prison for a 2013 rape, could put him away for the rest of his life.

Farber said it'll be his counterpart in California who decides whether Weinstein can serve his sentences at the same time. If it were up to him, Farber said, he'd run them consecutively, stacking Weinstein's New York punishment on top of his Los Angeles sentence.

Weinstein, seated in a wheelchair, was quickly moved out of the courtroom after the sentencing. In the gallery, Jessica Mann, a former aspiring actress whose rape allegations ended in an overturned conviction

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 50 of 67

and two hung juries, wept profusely as prosecutors, Haley and other accusers consoled her.

Weinstein and Haley both spoke in court

Haley, 49, fought through tears herself as she spoke in court. After testifying at two of Weinstein's trials — the original and last year's retrial — it was her second time confronting the ex-studio boss at a sentencing proceeding.

"Having been sexually assaulted by Harvey Weinstein has had a devastating effect on my life and sense of security that may never go away," Haley said. "Making the decision to speak up will have me looking over my shoulder for years to come."

Weinstein hired private investigators to keep tabs on her, she said, and his defense lawyers and supporters ridiculed her in the media.

"It's a life sentence for me," she said.

Minutes later, Weinstein apologized while underscoring his claims of innocence. He maintains that he never raped or sexually assaulted anyone.

It was also Weinstein's second time speaking at his sentencing — the latest in a series of courtroom soliloquies filled with complaints about his lodging at New York City's notorious Rikers Island jail complex, boasts about his philanthropy and reminiscence about his moviemaking prowess.

"Reflecting on all that has happened since 2017 has helped me recognize how my past conduct has negatively affected others," Weinstein said, some of his accusers shaking their heads as he spoke. "I live with many regrets and sincerely apologize to anyone I have affected with my actions."

"I really do have remorse for Miriam Haley," he added. "I am not a violent man. I ask for mercy. I promise I will pass it on."

Haley says Weinstein 'still feels entitled'

Haley said afterward that she was happy with the sentence. But, she said, it's clear from Weinstein's remarks that he does not acknowledge what he did.

"I think he still feels entitled, and that's part of the problem," said Haley, who has also gone by the name Mimi Haley.

Other accusers, including psychotherapist and former model Kaja Sokola, stood with her as she spoke outside the courthouse.

Haley's lawyer, Gloria Allred, rejected any suggestion that Weinstein's sentencing means the #MeToo era is over, telling reporters: "Women are empowered in a way they have never been before."

"Today was about the survivors," said Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who sat in the courtroom alongside Weinstein's accusers.

"I'm moved, as we should all be moved, by their courage and their steadfastness," he added.

A retrial, a split verdict and another sentencing

Weinstein was originally sentenced in 2020 to 23 years in prison — 20 years for assaulting Haley and three years for raping Mann.

New York's highest court erased those guilty verdicts in 2024, ruling that Weinstein was prejudiced by testimony from other women whose allegations weren't part of the case.

Tried for a second time last year, Weinstein was again convicted of a first-degree criminal sex act for assaulting Haley. In a messy split verdict, the jury acquitted him of forcibly performing oral sex on Sokola and could not reach a verdict on a rape charge involving Mann.

After another retrial ended in a hung jury in May, Manhattan prosecutors dropped the rape charge rather than pursue a fourth trial after Mann said she could not bear to testify again.

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they grant permission, which Haley, Sokola and Mann have done.

Lawyer: Ex-NFL star Antonio Brown to avoid prison with reduced charge in attempted murder case

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

Former NFL star wide receiver Antonio Brown plans to accept a plea deal that will have him avoid prison time on a reduced charge in an attempted murder case in Miami. His lawyer said Wednesday the agreement with prosecutors was too good to turn down.

Brown is scheduled to appear in court on Sept. 30 to make the deal final. Defense attorney Mark Eiglarsh said Brown will plead no contest to aggravated assault. He will be sentenced to probation, and adjudication will be withheld, meaning Brown will not be considered a convicted felon, the attorney said. Brown could have faced up to 30 years in prison if convicted of the original attempted murder charge.

Brown is accused of grabbing a handgun from a security staffer after a celebrity boxing match in Miami on May 16, 2025, and firing two shots at a man he had gotten into a fistfight with earlier, according to an arrest warrant. Zul-Qarnain Kwame Nantambu told investigators that one of the bullets grazed his neck.

Attorney insists that Brown would have prevailed at trial

"This was not an easy decision," Eiglarsh said in a statement Wednesday. "Antonio believes in his innocence. He believes strongly in his Stand Your Ground defense, and he believes he would ultimately prevail at trial. But when prosecutors put an offer on the table that transforms a potential decades-long prison sentence into a significantly reduced charge and probation, there was simply no way he could reasonably turn it down."

Florida's so-called Stand Your Ground law allows people who believe they face death or serious injury to use deadly force to defend themselves without a duty to retreat.

Richard Cooper, an attorney for Nantambu, called the plea deal fair.

"We are satisfied that justice is served. My client maintains what he said previously: that he forgives Brown and will not cooperate with law enforcement," Cooper said in an email Wednesday. "We wish Mr. Brown good health and that he grows from this event."

Nantambu's attorneys have said he'd decided to forgive Brown

In a previous statement, his attorneys said Nantambu, a devout Muslim, had made the decision to forgive Brown after "considerable reflection, prayer, and consultation with his family and counsel."

The Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office declined to comment on Wednesday, with spokesperson Ed Griffith saying the details would be "fully clarified" at next week's hearing.

Brown has said on social media that he was defending himself from an attack and that others were trying to steal jewelry from him.

Brown, 38, spent 12 years in the NFL and was an All-Pro wide receiver who last played in 2021 for Tampa Bay, including winning a Super Bowl championship with quarterback Tom Brady. He spent much of his career with Pittsburgh. For his career, Brown had 928 receptions for more than 12,000 yards and accounted for 88 total touchdowns, counting punt returns and one pass.

Brown has faced legal problems over the years

Brown was extradited in November 2025 from Dubai, where he has business interests, after an arrest warrant on the attempted murder charge was issued in June 2025.

Brown has dealt with several legal problems over the years. He previously had been accused of battery of a moving truck driver, several domestic violence charges, failure to pay child support and other incidents. During a 2021 game with Tampa Bay against the New York Jets, Brown took off his jersey, shoulder pads and gloves and ran off the field, leading to his release by the Buccaneers and effectively ending his football career.

In a separate case, Nantambu was found guilty earlier this year of a misdemeanor charge of resisting an officer after police said he disrupted Kendrick Lamar's Super Bowl halftime performance in 2025. Nantambu was among dozens of dancers on the field at Caesars Superdome in New Orleans when he ran across the field with a Sudanese flag that read "Sudan and Free Gaza." He surrendered to authorities after an arrest warrant was obtained.

Pressure from the bond market hits a new level, and US stocks slide on worries about inflation

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Pressure from the U.S. bond market hit a new level on Wall Street Wednesday after a surprisingly strong report on the economy raised worries about inflation, while oil prices halted their slide. The squeeze caused U.S. stocks to sink.

The S&P 500 fell 0.8% after finishing the prior day just 0.4% below its record set last month. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 352 points, or 0.7%, while the Nasdaq composite sank 1.1% from its own all-time high.

Stocks wilted after the yield on the 10-year Treasury jumped to 5.10% from 4.96% late Tuesday, which is a considerable move for the bond market. High yields undercut prices for stocks and other investments, while also slowing the economy by making it more expensive for everyone to borrow money.

Wednesday's jump briefly sent the 10-year yield near 5.14%, back to where it was in 2007 before the global financial crisis caused yields to crater. Yields have been climbing since bottoming out in the COVID pandemic, and they've accelerated recently because of worries about high inflation, the U.S. government's heavy debt and other concerns.

Worries about inflation got a jolt Wednesday morning after a preliminary report suggested growth in U.S. business activity surged to its strongest level in more than five years. That's an encouraging signal, to be sure, but it indicates the economy may have plenty of fuel for more inflation.

The report also suggested costs for businesses are leaping at the fastest rate in four years, in part because of more expensive oil, according to Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence. That could mean businesses will pass those higher costs onto their customers in coming months.

Oil prices are high because of worries that the war with Iran will keep oil bottled up in the Middle East for a long time.

The price for a barrel of Brent oil to be delivered in November rose 3.9% to \$103.08 on Wednesday. That reversed a decline for Brent, which had been falling since it neared \$110 last week. Talks are continuing with mediators between U.S. and Iranian officials, but nothing concrete has come from it yet.

Brent oil to be delivered in December, where most of the trading in the market has moved, rose 2.8% to \$98.12 per barrel.

Even with its recent decline, the price for a barrel of Brent remains much higher than the roughly \$72 it cost before the war with Iran began.

Inflation has remained so stubbornly high that the Federal Reserve raised its short-term interest rate last week for the first time in three years in hopes of slowing down increases in the cost of living.

Fed Gov. Michael Barr said in a speech on Wednesday that further hikes "are likely to be needed" to get inflation to the Fed's 2% target. Traders now see better than a 50% probability that the Fed will hike its federal funds rate at each of its next two meetings, in October and December, according to data from CME Group.

So far, strong growth in profits for U.S. companies has helped support the U.S. stock market despite higher interest rates and more expensive oil.

KB Home became the latest to deliver a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. But its stock nevertheless swung between losses and gains after the homebuilder's executive chairman said conditions got even tougher for the industry over the last three months. It finished with a loss of 3%.

Potential customers are becoming more cautious because of higher mortgage rates caused by the rise in the 10-year Treasury yield. They also are feeling pressure from "geopolitical uncertainty and broader economic headwinds," Jeffrey Mezger said.

General Mills likewise reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. But the company behind the Cheerios and Progresso brands said it also expects growth this fiscal year to fall below its historical track record "driven by a continued challenging consumer backdrop," and it did not raise its forecast for profit over the full fiscal year.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 53 of 67

Its stock flipped between gains and losses before rising 1%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 58.61 points to 7,706.03. The Dow dropped 352.10 to 51,511.59, and the Nasdaq composite sank 308.24 to 26,936.04.

In stock markets abroad, indexes slipped across much of Europe and Asia.

Stock indexes fell 1% in Hong Kong and 0.4% in Shanghai ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Washington, which is kicking off Wednesday.

The leaders are expected to attempt to steady fragile ties in their third meeting since Trump returned to the White House. That is despite the world's two largest economies seeking the upper hand on artificial-intelligence developments and trade, while pushing for leverage in persistent hot spots like Iran and Taiwan.

Mississippi police make 2nd arrest in death of Black woman found hanging from tree, seek 3rd suspect

By SOPHIE BATES Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Police in Mississippi have arrested a second man in the death of a Black woman found hanging from a tree and have issued an arrest warrant for a third suspect.

Jackson police said late Tuesday that they arrested 25-year-old Earnest Lloyd Jr. in the death of 29-year-old Tasia Fortune, whose body was found hanging behind an abandoned home in the city on Aug. 3.

Like Fortune and the first man arrested, 51-year-old Jarques Ratliff, Lloyd is Black. He appeared at a brief hearing Wednesday, where he was denied bond.

According to local TV station WLBT, investigators said witnesses directed them to Lloyd, who had allegedly had a physical altercation with Fortune days or minutes before she was killed. Police contend that Lloyd hanged Fortune with a black cable cord, and three co-defendants are also suspected of being involved in her death, the station reported.

Police and the court clerk said Wednesday that they didn't know if Lloyd has a lawyer.

Fortune's mother Christy Spivey, who attended the hearing, said afterward that she was ecstatic to see arrests made in her daughter's death. She said neither she nor several of her daughter's friends knew Lloyd, and she cautioned that everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

"My family is not the only family that this is affecting," Spivey said of the defendants' families. "I feel for them as well. The only difference is that mine can never come back."

"I'll never truly have peace," she said.

Ratliff was arrested in September on murder charges. He pleaded not guilty and remains jailed without bond. His lawyer, Toney Baldwin, hasn't responded to multiple requests for comment.

Police said in a statement that they issued an arrest warrant for a third suspect, but gave no details about that person's identity or alleged link to Fortune's death. They also said they expect to issue additional warrants.

After Ratliff's arrest, Jackson's police chief, RaShall Brackney, said Ratliff had an "association" with Fortune, but she didn't elaborate.

Although police haven't suggested a possible motive for the killing, the case has attracted widespread attention because the manner of death recalled lynchings in the Southern state.

A Kentucky native, Fortune had four children and had been living in Jackson for about a decade, relatives said.

Spivey previously said her daughter struggled with homelessness in recent years, and that she wasn't sure where her daughter was living at the time of her death. She said that before her death, her daughter had talked about starting a cleaning business and was trying to get her life in order.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 54 of 67

FACT FOCUS: No, Biden did not revoke the White House press passes of more than 400 journalists

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

President Donald Trump's decision to ban CNN, MS NOW and Politico reporters from the White House grounds is leading to claims that then-President Joe Biden revoked White House access to hundreds of journalists in 2023. But the claims online misrepresent the effect that a stricter White House Press Office policy had on the number of journalists holding long-term passes to the complex.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: The Biden administration revoked the White House press passes of more than 400 journalists.

THE FACTS: This is false. In 2023, the White House revised its policy for obtaining long-term press passes. All journalists holding such passes were required to apply for a renewal under new criteria. This led to a drop in the number of journalists who had one.

There are two types of White House press passes. Hard passes are for journalists who cover the White House regularly. They require approval from the press secretary and a background check by the Secret Service, according to the White House Correspondents' Association, and are valid for an extended period. Those without a hard pass can request a temporary pass for specific events or on a day-to-day basis.

An email from the White House Press Office, sent in May 2023 during the Biden administration, notified those holding hard passes that it planned to "revise the policy on press hard passes to be consistent with that of prior administrations." All hard passes that were current at the time would expire on July 31, the email read, and holders would be able to request renewals that would last for one year.

Applicants were required to meet specified criteria for approval, including full-time employment with a news organization, a physical address in the greater Washington, D.C. area, having accessed the White House for work at least once in the last six months, having an assignment to cover the White House on a regular basis, accreditation by a press gallery in the Supreme Court, Senate or House of Representatives, and a willingness to submit to any necessary investigation by the Secret Service.

Politico reported in August 2023 that the number of hard pass holders dropped from 1,417 to 975 after the change — a difference of 442. This included approvals from renewals and new applications.

A spokesperson told the outlet that the criteria were intended to ensure hard pass holders were actively working the White House beat, saying that "at the time we initiated this process in early May, roughly 40% of hard pass holders had not accessed the White House complex in the prior 90 days." One person was denied a hard pass under the updated criteria, according to the spokesperson, but they did not identify who it was.

Jen Psaki, who served as the White House press secretary from 2021 to 2022, posted a TikTok video on Tuesday, calling the claims spreading online "total B.S." and a "completely fabricated talking point." She added that outlets often critical of Biden, including Fox News, Breitbart, One America News Network and Newsmax, all got hard passes under the new policy. She also noted in the video that "there were a lot of people with hard passes out there that had not used it in several years."

Still, many on social media misrepresented the move.

"WHERE WAS THE OUTRAGE THEN? Biden's White House purged 442 reporters under new press credential rules and the media shrugged," a popular X post reads. "Now Trump cuts off CNN and suddenly it is a constitutional crisis."

Trump first denied CNN, MS NOW, and Politico reporters White House access on Saturday because of reporting he found to be "fake news." All three outlets on Monday jointly sued his administration, calling the selective ban a "blatant violation" of the First Amendment. Trump said on social media that he "cherished" a free press but not "FAKE NEWS."

In a Monday press release, Trump's White House cited the 2023 policy, among other actions taken by the Biden and Obama administrations against the media, as proof that "access changes are nothing new." But experts say there are major differences.

"There is no fair comparison between President Trump deciding to try to ban journalists whose stories he

doesn't like, and President Biden establishing a system that ensured fair access for journalists, even ones who wrote stories he didn't like," said Peter Loge, an associate professor of media and public affairs at The George Washington University. "If the President always likes everything a reporter writes, that reporter isn't doing their job. If someone doesn't like to be criticized by the press, they shouldn't run for president."

Hayden Panettiere's death highlights risk of overdose death after stopping and resuming drug use

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

A coroner's report notes actor Hayden Panettiere had been in rehab just weeks before her death from an accidental drug overdose.

Although details of her care are unknown, people with drug addictions face a high risk of fatal overdose immediately after a period of sobriety. Experts say they may not realize their tolerance has dropped in that time, meaning a previously tolerated dose could overwhelm the body.

Panettiere, 36, was found unresponsive in an apartment in Greenville, South Carolina, on Aug. 16. The Greenville County Coroner's Office said several drugs were found in her system, including fentanyl and its chemical byproduct, the anti-anxiety medication alprazolam, a muscle relaxer and a drug used to treat major depression and other serious mental health disorders. The case report says a senior deputy was told she had been in rehab for two or three weeks in Malibu, California.

Last year, about 70,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, down about 14% fewer from the previous year, according to preliminary government data released in May.

How opioid addiction can be treated

For people struggling with addictions, there are various types of care, including therapy and counseling, medication and support groups.

With addictions to fentanyl, heroin, oxycodone and other opioids, treatment may include medications and behavioral therapy. The National Institute on Drug Abuse says medications are the standard of care for opioid use disorder. Treatment options include methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone, which research shows can reduce the risk of resumed drug use and a fatal overdose. Behavioral therapy for opioid use disorder is most effective when combined with medication, the institute says.

Using drugs after stopping them can be deadly

Using opioids again after withdrawal can be especially dangerous.

According to the National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus, most opioid overdose deaths occur in people who have just undergone detoxification. Because withdrawal reduces the person's tolerance, those who have just gone through withdrawal can overdose on a much smaller dose than they previously took.

This risk has long been known. A 2003 study in the British Medical Journal said "treatment reduces mortality but can sometimes increase mortality transiently," including among people with prior opioid addiction after their release from prison.

Experts at Pennsylvania State University's Social Science Research Institute said the risk of overdose death is higher immediately after opioid use disorder treatment, including after detox and stopping medication for the disorder.

They cited research showing that the month after completing treatment is associated with a much higher risk — five times higher for ending treatment without medications and two times higher after ending medication treatment. That's compared to periods more than a month after ending treatment.

What friends and family can do to reduce risk of overdose death

The first thing to know is that someone who recently stopped using drugs is at higher risk for an overdose if they relapse. Be ready to respond if that happens.

Death following opioid overdose can be prevented if the person gets prompt basic life support and the medication naloxone, an antidote that rapidly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose if administered in time.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 56 of 67

The New York State Department of Health recommends taking these steps if someone witnesses an overdose:

1. Call 911 and say, "I think someone may have overdosed."
2. If the person isn't breathing, begin mouth-to-mouth breathing by pinching the nose and blowing into the mouth
3. Administer naloxone if available.
4. Place the person on their side once they have resumed breathing
5. Stay with the person until the ambulance arrives

A knock at the door, then gunshots: Mass shooting at a house party in South Africa kills 11

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Three gunmen barged into a small house in an impoverished neighborhood in South Africa and opened fire on a group enjoying a party inside, killing at least 11 people including a pregnant woman, police and local authorities said Wednesday.

Three others were wounded in the late-night mass shooting Tuesday in KwaMakhutha township, which is located about 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of the city of Durban on the east coast.

The motive for the shooting wasn't known, but some of the shooting victims were known to authorities as part of investigations into criminal activity, police said.

Police didn't give out any more information on those investigations, saying it could compromise them.

"Although the motive of the shooting cannot be confirmed yet, (a) feud between rival groupings cannot be ruled out," the South African Police Service said in a statement.

Ten people, including the pregnant woman, died at the scene and an 11th was declared dead at a hospital. Authorities didn't immediately give out details on the condition of the three people who were wounded.

They opened the door and 'gunshots went off'

Nomusa Zulu, a community member, said two men killed in the shooting were her sons. She said witnesses told her that the victims had first gathered in the yard of the house, then went inside to continue the party as night fell and it became cold.

"They heard a knock at the door," Zulu said. "When they opened the door, gunshots went off."

Police are searching for the gunmen

Police said they were searching for three men and no arrests had been made, but the acting national police commissioner ordered local police to deploy officers in a special 72-hour operation to track down the suspects.

Thami Ntuli, the premier of KwaZulu-Natal province, told reporters at the scene that the killings were "really disturbing" and called on community members to provide any information they might have that would help find the gunmen. He said that there were known problems with drug dealing and illegal firearms in the largely poor community, where some of the houses are just a few meters apart with no fences or walls in between.

Ntuli confirmed in a statement that the woman who was killed was pregnant.

There have been several mass shootings in South Africa recently

It's the latest in a series of mass shootings in South Africa recently, including one in June when multiple shooters killed 12 people in a poor neighborhood in Johannesburg that police linked to criminal gangs. Two mass shootings two weeks apart in December killed 21 people. They were also carried out by multiple gunmen.

South Africa has extremely high rates of violent crime, with official police statistics recording 5,427 homicides in the latest three-month period between April and June at an average of nearly 60 homicides a day.

Shootings are the most common form of homicide in South Africa, and police and crime experts have long said that one of the biggest problems is that there is a high number of illegal firearms in circulation.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 57 of 67

The army is being used to combat violent crime in some areas

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa authorized the deployment of soldiers on the streets in some areas earlier this year to combat violent crime in what critics said was an admission that police were failing.

Soldiers were deployed to areas around Johannesburg, the city of Cape Town and in Eastern Cape province on the south coast in the ongoing operation, but not to KwaZulu-Natal province where the latest shooting happened.

The bodies of some of the victims of Tuesday night's shooting were laid out on the ground and covered with white sheets outside the house where the shooting took place. They were later carried away on stretchers to pathology vans.

Police cordoned off the neighborhood with yellow tape while forensic investigators worked through the scene.

Police were also investigating if the torching of a car near the house was connected to the shooting.

Inspired by this year's lowly AL West, here are the weakest teams to make MLB's postseason

By NOAH TRISTER AP Baseball Writer

With just a few days left in the regular season, the AL West might make a particularly mediocre kind of history.

After Tuesday night's games, the Texas Rangers and Houston Astros were tied for first place at 78-79. No full-season division champion has ever had a losing record.

In fact, no team has made the postseason with a sub-.500 record, unless you count a trio of participants from years the playoffs were temporarily expanded: In the 2020 season shortened by the COVID-19 pandemic, Milwaukee and Houston were both 29-31 and made the postseason. In 1981, the Kansas City Royals went 50-53 overall — but they were the AL West's top team in the post-strike second half, meaning they got in.

MLB expanded its postseason to 12 teams in 2022, raising the likelihood that a sub-.500 team would sneak into October at some point. Just a few weeks ago, it looked like the American League could have several clubs with losing marks in this year's playoffs. The AL Central's Cleveland Guardians and Chicago White Sox have since reached 81 wins, so that won't happen. But the AL West title race could still yield a losing team.

In honor of that, here are 10 of the weakest teams to make the postseason, listed in chronological order with their records and run differentials in mind. Note that some of them went on lengthy postseason runs — so don't count out the Rangers or Astros just yet.

1973 New York Mets

Record: 82-79 (first in NL East)

Run differential: 20

Postseason: Beat Cincinnati 3-2 in NL Championship Series, lost to Oakland 4-3 in World Series

The rallying cry was "Ya gotta believe!" from reliever Tug McGraw. It wasn't easy when New York was in last place after an Aug. 30 loss, but the Mets went 21-8 the rest of the way to win the division by 1 1/2 games. Tom Seaver (19-10, 2.08 ERA, 18 complete games) was still at the peak of his powers, and New York held the Reds to eight runs in five games in the NLCS — a series best remembered for a brawl involving Bud Harrelson and Pete Rose. The Mets led the World Series 3-2 and had Seaver starting Game 6, but they couldn't close out the Athletics.

1984 Kansas City Royals

Record: 84-78 (first in AL West)

Run differential: minus-13

Postseason: Lost to Detroit 3-0 in ALCS

The Royals were 11 games under .500 in the middle of July, but they did enough to win the AL West. George Brett hit .284 — his worst average in a 14-year span from 1975-88 — and he was one of just two

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 58 of 67

All-Stars on the team. The other was Dan Quisenberry, who had 44 saves while throwing 129 1/3 innings. He finished second in the Cy Young race behind fellow reliever Willie Hernández of the Tigers. Although Kansas City took the division almost by default in '84, the Royals improved to 91 wins the following year and won the World Series.

1987 Minnesota Twins

Record: 85-77 (first in AL West)

Run differential: minus-20

Postseason: Beat Detroit 4-1 in ALCS, beat St. Louis 4-3 in World Series

Frank Viola was the star of a pitching staff that otherwise offered little — aside from a trio of big names on the downside of their careers. Bert Blyleven allowed 46 home runs, Joe Niekro posted a 6.26 ERA and Steve Carlton made seven largely woeful starts for this Minnesota team. The Twins could hit, though. Kirby Puckett was third in the MVP race, while Kent Hrbek, Gary Gaetti and Tom Brunansky each surpassed 30 homers. Home-field advantage wasn't determined by record back then, so Minnesota had it in the ALCS despite finishing 13 games behind the Tigers, and again in the World Series after being 10 games worse than the Cardinals. The Twins went 6-0 at the Metrodome in the postseason.

1995 Colorado Rockies

Record: 77-67 (second in NL West, wild card)

Run differential: 2

Postseason: Lost 3-1 to Atlanta in NL Division Series

The first wild card in National League history was this Colorado team in a season shortened by the end of the 1994-95 work stoppage. The Rockies' ERA of 4.97 is the worst of the live ball era by a postseason team in a non-DH league. Colorado made up for that, not surprisingly, by leading the NL in runs. Dante Bichette led the league in home runs and RBIs and finished third in batting average.

2005 San Diego Padres

Record: 82-80 (first in NL West)

Run differential: minus-42

Postseason: Lost 3-0 to St. Louis in NLDS

Jake Peavy and a Trevor Hoffman-led bullpen helped San Diego reach the playoffs, but this team never looked the part. The Padres scored the fourth-fewest runs in all of baseball, and their starters went 52-60 with a 4.49 ERA. In the postseason, San Diego never had the lead at any point against the 100-win Cardinals. Game 1 was 8-0 after six innings, Game 2 was 6-1 after seven, and Game 3 was 7-0 after 4 1/2.

2006 St. Louis Cardinals

Record: 83-78 (first in NL Central)

Run differential: 19

Postseason: Beat San Diego 3-1 in NLDS, beat New York Mets 4-3 in NLCS, beat Detroit 4-1 in World Series

The Cardinals won at least 95 games four times under Tony La Russa, but their best postseason success came as a wild card in 2011 and with this team five years earlier. St. Louis nearly blew a seven-game lead in the division in the final two weeks of the regular season, but a roster with Albert Pujols, Scott Rolen, Chris Carpenter and a young reliever named Adam Wainwright always had a chance to get hot. Yadier Molina's homer — and Wainwright's strikeout of Carlos Beltrán — gave the Cardinals the pennant in an epic series with the Mets.

2017 Minnesota Twins

Record: 85-77 (second in AL Central, second wild card)

Run differential: 27

Postseason: Lost to New York Yankees in wild card game

After 103 losses in 2016, the Twins were in first place for a little while before eventually capturing the AL's final postseason spot and losing 8-4 to the Yankees. Byron Buxton played 140 games, the most of his career to date, and Brian Dozier hit 34 home runs. Joe Mauer had moved to first base by this point but was still quite good at the plate, batting .305. Ervin Santana led the rotation in his last good major league

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 59 of 67

season. This team certainly wasn't great, but it was good enough in an AL that produced only five teams above .500.

2023 Miami Marlins

Record: 84-78 (third in NL East, second wild card)

Run differential: minus-57

Postseason: Lost to Philadelphia 2-0 in NL Wild Card Series

The Marlins posted the worst run differential to date by a postseason team — this year's Astros are currently at minus-59 — but Miami went 33-14 in one-run games. The pitching staff with Sandy Alcantara, Eury Pérez, Jesús Luzardo and Braxton Garrett helped Miami into the playoffs. Of the Marlins' top 12 players in plate appearances, seven of them finished with negative wins above replacement, according to Baseball Reference. The offense was basically batting champ Luis Arraez, designated hitter Jorge Soler and not much else. Miami lost 93 games the year before this playoff appearance and 100 the year after.

2023 Arizona Diamondbacks

Record: 84-78 (second in NL West, third wild card)

Run differential: minus-15

Postseason: Beat Milwaukee 2-0 in NLWCS, beat Los Angeles Dodgers 3-0 in NLDS, beat Philadelphia 4-3 in NLCS, lost to Texas 4-1 in World Series

Just get in and anything can happen. These Diamondbacks were one of the best examples of that. Arizona started August with nine straight losses to fall below .500, but after doing enough to make the playoffs, they swept two division champions and then won the last two games of the NLCS on the road to capture the second pennant in franchise history. Arizona had a negative run differential in the regular season and was also outscored 30-21 in that series against the Phillies. It didn't matter.

2025 Cincinnati Reds

Record: 83-79 (third in NL Central, third wild card)

Run differential: 35

Postseason: Lost to Los Angeles Dodgers 2-0 in NLWCS

The Reds had a respectable run differential but little star power aside from Elly De La Cruz and the often-injured Hunter Greene. Cincinnati beat out the Mets on a tiebreaker for the NL's final postseason spot — seven games behind the No. 2 wild card — and then made a quick exit. The Reds' best month was 15-11 and their worst was 12-15. Simply avoiding any extended slumps was enough to make the playoffs.

In defiant speech, Pezeshkian calls out Trump and says Iran will fight 'until our last breath'

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Iran's president said Wednesday that his people have been "victims of terrorism" by the United States, delivering a rare wartime speech at the U.N. General Assembly a day after President Donald Trump said he may "annihilate" the Islamic Republic if a deal isn't reached soon to end the nearly seven-month war.

The defiant speech by President Masoud Pezeshkian marked a striking instance of a foreign leader addressing the world body while their country is at war with the host nation. While defending his country, Pezeshkian held up large photos of the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the more than 150 Iranian schoolchildren killed on the first days of the war.

"We have only defended ourselves. We are not terrorists," Pezeshkian said at the General Assembly. "Our innocent people have been the targets of cowardly attacks and aggressions imposed upon our country. And we defended ourselves with utmost strength. America and Israel attacked us."

He added of the United States: "Yes they did hit us, but we did not bend the knee." Toward the end of his speech, Pezeshkian called out Trump by name.

"It must be understood by Mr. Trump and those who seek to bully us that we are ready for dialogue and diplomacy and negotiations without accepting the language of force," he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 60 of 67

Shortly after, both U.S. and Israeli officials blasted the speech, saying that it was hypocritical for the Islamic Republic to present itself as the victims of the world.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters: "I don't know what standing Iran has to lecture anyone on human rights or the international system when they habitually violate it."

A busy 24 hours for US-Iran relations

Arriving in New York under heavy security and scrutiny, Pezeshkian — who, within Iran's political landscape, is considered a moderate politician — addressed world leaders a day after Trump used the same stage to mull whether to massively escalate a war that has already spiraled out of control.

"I have a big decision to make," Trump said in his wide-ranging address Tuesday. "Will a deal be made with Iran that lets them rebuild and create a far greater country than it ever was before, maybe one of the greatest in the Middle East or even the world. Or do I annihilate the Islamic Republic and do it quickly, never giving them a chance to kill and destroy people and countries again?"

Hours after those stunning threats, Trump told reporters that his chief envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, met for about three hours with the Iranian officials on the sidelines of the annual gathering. But he offered few details about how the discussions transpired or the substance of the exchange.

"It was a very good meeting," Trump said. The president later added that the Iranian officials were "not the highest level, but it's something." Also on Tuesday, Rubio said Trump is open to meeting with Pezeshkian while he's in New York.

But Tehran downplayed Tuesday's unscheduled exchange, which were the first indirect talks between U.S. and Iranian officials since a June ceasefire unraveled. Esmail Baghaei, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, maintained the country's negotiating position in talks with U.S. officials, demanding that Washington end its blockade of Iranian ports and release frozen Iranian assets,

Baghaei said the talks — conducted indirectly through Qatari mediators — were "not anything new."

Rubio echoed that sentiment Wednesday, saying that "it was a continuation of conversations that have occurred in the past."

"If there's an opportunity to exchange ideas and messages, we will. And that's what largely yesterday was — it was positive in that regard," he said. "But ultimately, I don't want to mischaracterize this as a major breakthrough."

More than a year of negotiations have taken place

Pezeshkian's address elaborated on where Tehran stands as more than a year of start-stop negotiations between the two longtime adversaries have failed to produce a sustainable solution. His speech came as intermittent attacks continued in the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast, where commercial shipping remained below prewar levels.

His address last year came months after the 12-day Israel-Iran war that saw the assassination of many of the Islamic Republic's highest military and political leaders and once again broke down weeks of negotiations with the United States.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you all bore witness that this past June, my country was subjected to a savage aggression and flagrant contravention of the most elementary principles of international law," Pezeshkian said at the time.

How rural voters are feeling about Trump as the midterms approach, according to a new AP-KFF poll

By ALI SWENSON, SARAH JANE TRIBBLE and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press and KFF Health News
WASHINGTON (AP) — About half of rural American voters believe the economy is worse off now than when President Donald Trump returned to office, according to a new survey that points to economic frustration among a key group that has backed him and other Republicans in recent elections.

The Associated Press, in partnership with KFF, polled more than 2,000 rural registered voters and found broadly negative views of the national and local economies, including among many Republicans. The costs of groceries, gas and healthcare rank as top pain points for the rural voters, who were surveyed over two

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 61 of 67

weeks starting in mid-August. A larger share than among voters overall say they are worried about being able to afford groceries or gas.

At the same time, about half of rural voters approve of Trump's job performance, more than among U.S. adults overall in separate AP-NORC polling.

The findings suggest that many rural voters have not turned on Trump but that they also largely do not think he has delivered the economic renaissance he promised in his campaign.

Ed Westrick, a registered Republican and veteran, rates Trump's job performance as "mediocre, middle-of-the-road." Westrick, who lives in rural Texas, is not sure he will cast a midterm ballot, a troubling sign for Republicans in a key state in their fight to keep control of Congress.

Rural Americans skew Republican and historically have been an instrumental group of voters for Trump. The survey reveals that while rural voters seem unlikely to support Democrats on a large scale, Trump and the Republican Party could face challenges with them in November.

Rural voters are deeply unhappy about the economy

As the election approaches, only about 4 in 10 rural voters approve of Trump's performance on the economy. They rate him similarly on his handling of the Iran war, an entanglement that has proved expensive for the U.S. and increased oil and gas prices. Rural voters rank pocketbook concerns and fraud in government programs higher among the things they want to hear about from politicians than other perennial issues, such as gun policy and abortion.

Westrick, 59, is a technical trainer in the electronics industry and has seen an increase in business in part because he works with defense contractors, but he said he is concerned about the cost of living.

"I hear the politicians talk about making groceries more affordable and making healthcare more affordable, but yet none of them are addressing the issues," Westrick said.

In the poll, about three-quarters of rural voters rated the cost of living in their communities as "only fair" or "poor" — a 25 percentage point rise from a similar question asked in a KFF-Washington Post survey in 2017. Rural Americans, who have consistently lower wages than those who live in suburban and metro areas, have been hurting economically for decades, according to Tim Slack, a professor of sociology at Louisiana State University and co-author of the book "Rural and Small-Town America."

"Many folks are connecting the cost-of-living crisis to many of the Trump administration's policy choices: the war in Iran, tariffs, trade wars," he said. "None of those things are going to bring down prices at the pump or the local Walmart."

"Trump promised to lower prices on Day 1, and instead the cost of living's continued to climb. And that's especially painful in rural America," Slack said, adding that he expects many working-class Republicans to skip voting in November.

Rural Republicans do have a brighter economic perspective than rural Democrats or independents, particularly about the United States as a whole, according to the survey. About 6 in 10 rural Republican voters say Trump has improved the national economy, compared with only about 2 in 10 independents and fewer than 1 in 10 Democrats.

But only 45% of rural Republican voters say Trump has made their local economies better off. About 1 in 4 said there are fewer good-paying jobs where they live than five years ago.

In Michigan, 37-year-old independent voter Brittainy Sosebee said she isn't sure if she will vote in the state's fall election, which includes a tight Senate race seen as crucial to the Democratic Party's push to win back a majority. Sosebee voted for Trump in 2016 and Democratic nominee Joe Biden in 2020; she didn't vote in 2024.

Sosebee, who lives in St. Johns, a small town just north of Lansing, said she used to have extra money to take a vacation or buy a new pair of jeans without worrying. Now, she scrutinizes every expense, cringing at the rising cost of fresh produce when she shops for her three children.

"We hunt, so we have a lot of venison and things like that, so we don't have to buy meat from the grocery store, but it's still crippling," she said.

Healthcare policies go unnoticed

The AP-KFF poll found that rural voters overall don't perceive much positive impact from the administra-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 62 of 67

tion's healthcare policies even as they have been a top priority for Republican leaders, who have promoted efforts to lower drug costs in addition to a \$50 billion rural health program.

Only 17% of the voters said the administration's healthcare policies have had a "positive impact" on their healthcare costs, while 41% said they've had "no impact" and another 41% said they've had a "negative impact."

Sitting on her front porch in Woolwich, Maine, 71-year-old Democrat Kathleen Hanning sipped a chai tea latte in the sun and recalled how she stopped voting for Republican Sen. Susan Collins in 2020.

Collins and Trump are "intertwined," Hanning said. "She is not independently voting on what's best for Maine."

Hanning, a retired federal worker, said she had not paid much attention to the health policies in Trump's signature tax breaks and spending cuts bill passed last year. The law reduces federal Medicaid spending by roughly \$900 billion over a decade but also includes billions of dollars for the Rural Health Transformation Program, which it created.

A year after the law's passage, more than 8 in 10 rural voters said they had heard either "a little" or "nothing at all" about the health fund. About 60% said they had heard nothing, according to the survey.

Rather than transforming, Hanning said, "hospitals up here in Maine are consolidating." She travels an hour to see a specialist and noted that mothers will now have to drive farther for care because the hospital in nearby Damariscotta announced it would soon close its labor and delivery center.

Nine in 10 rural voters said it was "extremely" or "very" important for candidates to talk about healthcare costs, with more than half saying it's "extremely important." Mirroring the general population, rural voters ranked healthcare costs and gas prices as top economic worries.

Rural Republican voters still trust the GOP more

When asked for the political party they trusted to do a better job handling issues such as the cost of healthcare or the cost of living, rural voters tended to side with their own party. The finding signals that Democratic candidates are more likely to benefit from rural Republicans staying home in November than from them voting across party lines in large numbers.

Republicans are more ambivalent about their party's ability to handle key healthcare issues, compared with Democrats. About 8 in 10 Democratic voters say they trust the Democrats to address healthcare costs, while closer to 6 in 10 Republican voters say the same of the Republicans.

In Manassas, Georgia, a tiny town about an hour's drive inland from Savannah, Republican voter Wanda Rogers feels the Trump administration is doing the best it can to clean up what she sees as an economic mess that Democrats left behind when they lost power.

"I kind of think people think like I do, that he knows what needs to be done," she said. "It's just taking them a while to get it there."

Still, the 66-year-old said, "gas prices, they're eating me alive right now." She said she has stopped traveling to the beach because it has become too expensive.

Pamela Shaw, an independent voter who lives in a rural area near Asheville, North Carolina, said she sees the impact of rising costs in her community.

"When hamburger is over \$7 a pound and steak is \$15 or more a pound, a lot of people are not able to buy some of the things that they are used to buying," the 59-year-old said in an interview.

Trump's rural standing has slipped

Trump remains relatively popular among rural voters in the AP-KFF poll, with 48% approval. That is substantially higher than in a July AP-NORC poll of U.S. adults overall, in which only one-third approved of his performance. But he also is down slightly, from 56% approval, among rural voters, based on a similar question asked in the earlier KFF-Washington Post survey.

Asunta Washington, 38, is a truck driver who lives in South Texas. He said he is not against voting for Republican candidates if he wholeheartedly agrees with what they stand for, but he has not seen that. Instead, he has seen a lot of flip-flopping.

"Like a lot of people that are giving us promises and the moment they get elected, all that's out the window," Washington said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 63 of 67

This year's competitive elections feature Senate races in Ohio, Michigan and Maine, all of which have large rural populations. In close races, Democrats may have a chance to "show up and give a message that rural people might find appealing," said Nicholas Jacobs, a political scientist at Colby College and co-author of the book "The Rural Voter."

"But it's nothing more and it's nothing less than that — an opportunity," Jacobs said. "And time and time again, Democrats have shown a certain proclivity for not seizing that opportunity."

Many rural voters do not think the major parties or the president respect people like them. About half, 48%, of rural voters say the GOP respects people like them "a lot" or "some," while 45% of rural voters say this about Trump and 37% say this about the Democratic Party.

On a recent Thursday, registered Republican Nate Lawrence answered his phone after paying \$57 to fill up his Chevy Equinox in New Concord, Ohio, a village of fewer than 3,000 people about an hour's drive east of Columbus.

Lawrence, a middle-school English teacher, said the candidates should be talking about spending power: "I need to be able to go to the store and feed my family on what I make as a teacher," Lawrence said. "I should be able to pay for a house on a teacher's salary."

Lawrence has voted for Trump in the past but did not in 2024. For Ohio's Senate race, Lawrence said he is torn and not sure whether to pick Democrat Sherrod Brown or Republican Jon Husted.

Still, even if the politicians say they will lower prices, Lawrence said, he won't believe them.

"Trump said that, and it didn't happen," he said.

The poll of 2,241 U.S. adults registered to vote in rural areas of the country was conducted Aug. 12-24, 2026, using a sample drawn from the probability-based SSRS Opinion Panel. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In collaboration with AP, KFF researchers worked to design the survey sample and questionnaire, analyze and report findings.

What to know about the deal by Britain to surrender the Chagos Islands

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The fate of the Chagos Islands is in the hands of one man almost half a world away.

The contested Indian Ocean archipelago that is home to a strategically important U.K.-U.S. military base has been in limbo since U.S. President Donald Trump in January criticized a deal by the U.K. government to transfer sovereignty of the islands to Mauritius.

U.K. Defense Secretary Wes Streeting said Wednesday that officials are reviewing the pact after Trump renewed his criticism of the U.K.-Mauritius agreement, calling it a "terrible deal," during his first meeting with Prime Minister Andy Burnham in New York.

Streeting said they "can't go ahead without American support."

It's not clear what it will take to win back U.S. approval, though. The Trump administration had previously welcomed the agreement as a way to ensure the security of the joint military base on Diego Garcia, the largest of the island chain.

Here's what to know about the disputed islands.

The Chagos Islands are remote but strategic

The United States has described Diego Garcia as "an all but indispensable platform" for security operations in the Middle East, South Asia and East Africa.

Home to about 2,500 mostly American personnel, it has supported U.S. military operations from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2008, the U.S. acknowledged that it also had been used for clandestine rendition flights of terror suspects.

In March, the U.K. government condemned Iran for "reckless attacks" when it launched missiles in an unsuccessful attempt to hit the base, which is about 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometers) from Tehran.

The U.K. had initially refused to let the base be used for U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran, but after Iran lashed

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 64 of 67

out at its neighbors, the U.K. said that American bombers could use Diego Garcia and another British base to attack Iran's missile sites, but only for "specific and limited defensive operations."

The U.S. deployed several nuclear-capable B-2 Spirit bombers to Diego Garcia last year amid an intense airstrike campaign targeting Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

The islands are a contested remnant of colonialism

The chain of more than 60 islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean off the tip of India, south of the Maldives, has been under British control since 1814, when they were ceded by France.

The U.K. split the Chagos Islands away from Mauritius, a former British colony, in 1965, three years before Mauritius gained independence, and called the Chagos archipelago the British Indian Ocean Territory.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the U.K. evicted as many as 2,000 people from the islands so the U.S. military could build the Diego Garcia base.

In recent years, criticism grew over Britain's control of the archipelago and the way it forcibly displaced the local population.

The United Nations and the International Court of Justice have both urged the U.K. to end its "colonial administration" of the islands and transfer sovereignty to Mauritius.

A deal with a 99-year lease

Negotiations on handing the islands to Mauritius began in 2022 under the United Kingdom's previous Conservative government and resumed after Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour Party was elected in 2024.

Talks dragged on amid a change of government in Mauritius and disputes over money, but the agreement was signed off in May 2025 after the U.K. government had sought and received backing from the Trump administration.

Under the agreement, the U.K. would pay Mauritius at least 120 million pounds (\$159 million) a year to lease back Diego Garcia for at least 99 years.

At the time, the U.S. government welcomed the agreement.

In January, though, as Trump lashed out at foreign leaders for criticizing his desire to take over Greenland, he turned his ire on Britain.

Trump said on social media that the transfer of the islands to Mauritius was "an act of GREAT STUPIDITY" and one more reason why Greenland needed to be acquired for security.

His opposition effectively killed the deal and legislation to ratify the agreement ran out of time before U.K. Parliament's session ended in May.

Trump's comments put the ball in Burnham's court

The deal has been on hold since the spring and there hadn't been any indication of how Burnham, who has been prime minister for two months, planned to move forward.

That changed slightly on Tuesday when Trump was asked about the islands during a meeting with Burnham on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

After Trump blasted the deal, Burnham said that he was confident that the U.K. could work out an agreement with the U.S.

Streeter said that the U.K. is now committed to finding a solution that works for Britain, the U.S. and Mauritius.

"What President Trump said yesterday wasn't new, but I think it does provide absolute clarity that his position on this Chagos deal as currently drafted is not changing," Streeter told the BBC.

Conservative Party defense spokesperson James Cartlidge urged Burnham to scrap the deal and put the money toward U.K. troops.

"It shouldn't have taken another intervention from the president for Andy Burnham to 'review' Labour's Chagos surrender deal," Cartlidge said. "If Burnham was really serious about our defense, he would know that this deal should be binned entirely."

Iranian advisers helped Houthis seize Yemen's Red Sea coast in less than 48 hours, sources tell AP

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — It took Houthi rebels less than 48 hours to seize Yemen's Red Sea coast from pro-government forces in a resounding blow to U.S. interests and Washington's regional allies.

But the Houthis didn't do it alone. Iranian Revolutionary Guard advisers were in the field helping direct the battle, people familiar with the offensive told The Associated Press, marking Iran's most direct intervention in favor of its longtime ally since Yemen's civil war erupted in 2014.

The intervention shows how Iran has built the Houthis into a major regional partner able to open a new front in the wider war with the U.S. The rebels' biggest land grab in years, along with the closure of a key Saudi pipeline, strengthened their ability to choke off Saudi Arabia's oil exports, pushing up global fuel prices and giving Iran greater leverage. The United States has seemed reluctant to help its ally Saudi Arabia, even as the Houthis have gained momentum in Yemen's revived civil war.

The AP spoke to 10 officials and soldiers to assemble an account of the Houthi offensive. They included a senior Houthi official, two regional officials, a top Yemeni military commander and a member of Yemen's ruling presidential council. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal decision making.

The Houthis' swift, 115-kilometer (75-mile) assault exploited divisions among forces allied with Yemen's Saudi-backed, internationally recognized government. The Houthis penetrated the internal communications of one of the main forces, the National Resistance, allowing them to track its movements and sow confusion.

As pro-government forces beat a frantic retreat, the leader of the National Resistance fled to Saudi Arabia. The key port city of Mokha was abandoned as residents left in the night, allowing the Houthis to roll in unopposed on Sept. 10. Their seizure of strategic islands nearby further enhanced their ability to attack Saudi oil shipments in the Red Sea.

Iran had been building up the Houthis' capabilities

The Houthis had not conducted a major campaign along the coast since 2017, when government forces drove them out of the area. Since then, the Houthis had focused on trying to capture the oil-rich province of Marib in central Yemen.

A truce took hold in 2022. The following year, the Houthis began attacking Red Sea shipping over the war in Gaza, attacks that continued until a punishing U.S. bombing campaign in 2025. After the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran in February, the Houthis largely kept to the sidelines.

Last year, Iran began providing the Houthis with stepped-up training and logistical support on more advanced missiles, drones and uncrewed attack boats, said Mzahem Alsaloum, a security analyst who has followed Iranian-backed groups for nearly a decade and now runs a private intelligence firm.

In July, the Houthis renewed their attacks on Saudi Arabia after accusing it of striking the airport in the rebel-held capital, Sanaa. That strike appears to have been aimed at halting a flight from Tehran.

Alsaloum and the senior Houthi official said the Iranian flight, which later landed, brought Revolutionary Guard advisers, who joined other advisers from the Guard — and Iran's Lebanese ally, Hezbollah — already based in Yemen.

Iranian advisers assumed a larger role in the offensive

In early August, the Houthis resumed attacks on government forces, focusing on the city of Taiz, in the mountains overlooking the coast, and firing missiles and drones at Mokha.

The Houthi official said Iranian advisers had previously focused on strategic planning and were not in the field. But in the latest escalation, they were "present at all levels," he said, including planning tactical maneuvers and working with front-line commanders.

The two regional officials, who are regularly briefed on the latest developments in Yemen, also said Iran provided direct support that helped the rapid advance.

Alsaloum said that in addition to helping in a command role, the Iranian advisers analyzed communications and satellite intelligence, capacities the Houthis were lacking.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 66 of 67

Iran's U.N. mission did not respond to requests for comment.

Pro-government forces were divided

The National Resistance, with some 30,000 fighters, was the strongest pro-government force along the coast. But it had not been involved in major fighting since 2017.

For a month, Houthi forces bombarded its positions with 130 ballistic missiles and 145 suicide drones, according to a National Resistance spokesman, Maj. Gen. Sadiq Dwaid. He said its fighters were stretched over 170 kilometers (100 miles), from Mokha into the mountainous interior, against what he estimated were 75,000 Houthi fighters.

In early September, the Giants Brigade, another militia, came to its aid, helping it to temporarily push back the rebels. But the Giants Brigade had not coordinated with the National Resistance, angering its field commanders, one government official said.

The two forces had a longtime rivalry rooted in the past struggle between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over control of the anti-Houthi movement. That struggle led to the UAE abruptly pulling out of Yemen in January.

There was no "unified command," said the senior military official. "This was a priceless opportunity for the Houthis."

A swift advance led to a panicked retreat

On Sept. 9, the Houthis advanced south toward Mokha through a narrow mountain valley, heavily bombarding their opponents.

Having breached their communications, the Houthis were able to listen in and exploit divisions, one of the government officials said, adding that National Resistance leaders lost contact with several field commanders.

By the afternoon, the Houthis had seized the mountain road and a nearby military base, cutting off government supply lines to Mokha. Lt. Gen. Tariq Saleh, the leader of the National Resistance, was forced to flee and then took refuge in Saudi Arabia.

At around 6 p.m. that night, orders went out to National Resistance field units to retreat back to Mokha. When thousands of fighters began arriving, the forces stationed in the port city thought a major Houthi attack was imminent and began to flee, two National Resistance fighters told the AP.

A Mokha resident, Issa Gubwani, said he saw fighters in military vehicles and pickups streaming out of the city. "They left us to face our fate," he said. Tens of thousands of residents joined the exodus.

The Houthi official said that when the rebels rolled in early on Sept. 10, "the city was empty."

Government forces are trying to regroup

The senior government military official said Yemeni forces were stunned that Saudi warplanes didn't strike the Houthis as they advanced on Mokha. The Saudi government media office did not respond when asked for comment.

The Houthis seized weapons and military equipment, including armored vehicles, rockets, artillery shells and ammunition, most of it from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, two government officials said. The rebels displayed some of the captured weapons in a televised parade.

The National Resistance said it lost 500 fighters in the battles; that could not be independently confirmed. The Houthis have not announced their losses.

As government forces work to regroup, supporters of the various militias have been trading blame and accusations of treason online. The Houthis are meanwhile building defenses around the newly captured territories, according to the Houthi official.

"Losing the West Coast is not the end of the battle; rather, it marks the beginning of a fiercer battle," Brig. Gen. Walid Ziyad, a senior National Resistance commander, declared on social media.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 110 ~ 67 of 67

Today in History: September 24, Protesting NFL players take a knee

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Sept. 24, the 267th day of 2026. There are 98 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 24, 2017, more than 200 NFL players kneeled or sat during the national anthem after President Donald Trump criticized the players' protests in a speech and a series of tweets.

Also on this date:

In 1789, President George Washington signed a Judiciary Act establishing America's federal court system and creating the post of attorney general.

In 1869, thousands of businessmen were ruined in a Wall Street panic known as "Black Friday" after financiers Jay Gould and James Fisk attempted to corner the gold market.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt established Devil's Tower in Wyoming as the first U.S. national monument.

In 1957, the Los Angeles-bound Brooklyn Dodgers played their last game at Ebbets Field, defeating the Pittsburgh Pirates 2-0.

In 1960, the USS Enterprise, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, was launched at Newport News, Virginia.

In 1963, the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty with Britain and the Soviet Union limiting nuclear testing.

In 1968, the TV news magazine "60 Minutes" premiered on CBS.

In 1969, the trial of the Chicago Eight, later the Chicago Seven, began. (Five were later convicted of crossing state lines to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic convention, but the convictions were ultimately overturned.)

In 1988, Jackie Joyner-Kersey won gold and set a world record in the women's heptathlon at the Summer Olympics in Seoul.

In 2013, a powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake rocked southwest Pakistan, killing at least 376 people.

In 2015, a stampede and crush of Muslim pilgrims occurred in the holy city of Mina, Saudi Arabia. While the official Saudi death toll stood at 769, The Associated Press estimated that more than 2,400 people were killed.

In 2022, Russian forces launched new strikes on Ukrainian cities as Kremlin-orchestrated votes took place in occupied regions of Ukraine to create a pretext for their annexation by Moscow.

In 2023, NASA's first asteroid samples fetched from deep space were parachuted in a capsule into the Utah desert to cap a seven-year journey by the Osiris-Rex spacecraft. In a flyby of Earth, the spacecraft released the capsule from 63,000 miles out and it landed four hours later as the mother ship set off after another asteroid.

In 2025, a man with a rifle opened fire from a nearby roof onto a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement complex in Dallas, killing one detainee and wounding two others in a transport van before taking his own life.

Today's Birthdays: Football Hall of Famer Joe Greene is 80. Actor Gordon Clapp is 78. Actor Harriet Walter is 76. Filmmaker Brad Bird is 69. Actor Kevin Sorbo is 68. Actor-screenwriter Nia Vardalos is 64. Celebrity chef Robert Irvine is 61. Actor Jackie Sandler is 52. Actor Ian Bohen is 50. TV personality Ross Matthews is 47. Olympic gold medal gymnast Paul Hamm is 44. Actor Spencer Treat Clark is 39. Actor Grey Damon is 39. Actor Ben Platt is 33. Actor Joe Locke is 23.