

# Groton Daily Independent

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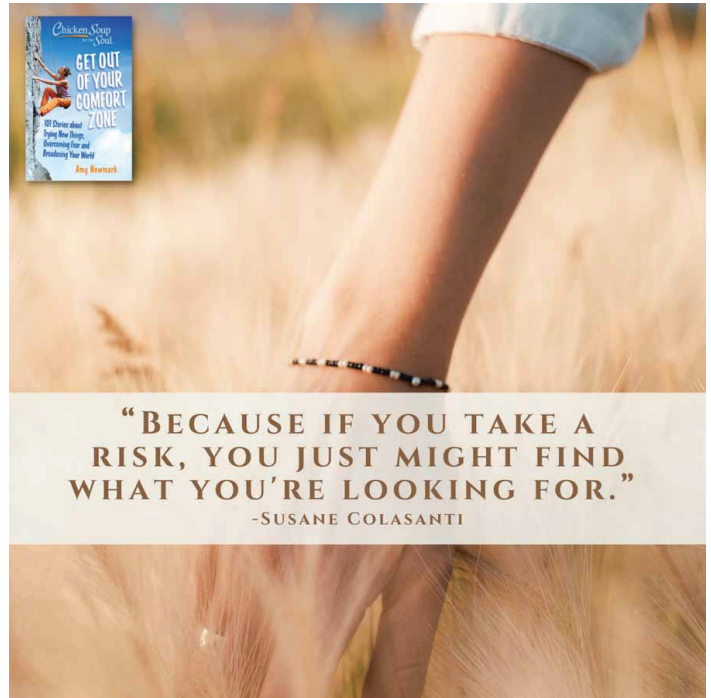
## Thursday, Sept. 7

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meatsauce, tossed salad with dressing, pears, garlic bread.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.  
Boys golf invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course.  
Volleyball at Aberdeen Roncalli: (7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow)

## Friday, Sept. 8

Senior Menu: Ham salad croissant, tomato spoon salad, pineapple tidbits, cookie, peas.  
Youth Football, hosts Clark, 5 p.m.  
Football hosts Clark/Willow Lake, 7 p.m.  
Family Fun Fest, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., downtown Groton

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



## Saturday, Sept. 9

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.  
Football junior high jamboree at Aberdeen Roncalli.  
Girls soccer at Sioux Falls Christian, 1 p.m. (No JV)  
Airport Fly-In/Drive-In  
City wide rummage sale, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## Service Notice: Jennifer Furman

Memorial services for Jennifer Furman, 45, of Groton will be 3:00 p.m., Sunday, September 10th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Pastor Bob Forbes will officiate. Inurnment will follow at a later date in Union Cemetery, Groton.

Jennifer passed away September 3, 2023 at her home in Groton.

## Death Notice: Charles Robinson

Charles Robinson, 78, of Groton passed away September 6, 2023 at his home. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

## **CLOSED:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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# Groton Daily Independent

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## The Bulletin by Newsweek

### World in Brief

Kelly Godsey told Newsweek.

A vulnerability report commissioned by Rep. George Santos before his election to the House has been made public by CBS News, highlighting a series of "red flags" that were allegedly suppressed by his campaign.

Federal prosecutors will seek a grand jury indictment for Hunter Biden by September 29, The Associated Press reported. What those charges are remains unclear, but there are indications they may be linked to an earlier gun possession charge.

Mexico will likely have its first female president after the governing Morena party chose Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum as their candidate on Wednesday. She will go up against an opposition coalition headed by Xóchitl Gálvez.

Danelo Cavalcante, the convicted murderer who escaped from a Pennsylvania prison on August 31, broke free by crab-walking up parallel walls separated by a 5-foot hallway, officials say. A hunt for Cavalcante is ongoing.

Japan successfully launched its lunar exploration spacecraft aboard a rocket and an X-ray telescope which will help study the universe's origins. The lander, "Moon Sniper," will attempt a landing in February if all goes as planned.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, a Russian bombing killed 17 people and injured 32 others in a crowded marketplace in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kostiantynivka. The attack comes as Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced U.S. aid of more than \$1 billion, which includes the controversial uranium-based tank shells.

### TALKING POINTS

"My point is that I'm just trying to counter the misinformation from the Senate doctor. It is basically not believable to come up and say that what's going on is dehydration. It makes it worse in the sense that by saying something that is obviously untrue, it leads to more distrust of the situation," Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul told The Hill in comments challenging the Capitol Hill attending physician's diagnosis of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

"When one of the most influential people in the world, the owner of the platform itself, is engaging with some of these actors who are notorious antisemites or conspiracy theorists or other, sort of, again, what I would describe as bad actors with very hateful intent, that energizes them. That emboldens them," Anti-Defamation League (ADL) CEO Jonathan Greenblatt told CNN after Elon Musk began publicly criticizing the ADL on X, formerly Twitter.

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

President Joe Biden is traveling to India, where he will participate in the G20 Summit taking place September 9-10 in New Delhi.

Vice President Kamala Harris will be attending the East Asia Summit at the Jakarta Convention Center in Indonesia.

Prince Harry is expected to attend an annual awards ceremony hosted by WellChild, a U.K. charity for ill children. This year's event is taking place in London and is scheduled to begin at 6:15 p.m. local time.



**Full time shift supervisor opening at Ken's Food Fair, Groton SD.**

**Looking for a hard working self motivated individual with leadership skills and willing to take on responsibilities.**

**Pay will depend on experience. Benefits available will discuss at interview.**

**Apply at Ken's in Groton SD.**





## Dive team exercise at the Groton Pool

The Brown County Dive Team members came to the Groton Swimming Pool Wednesday evening to refresh local dive members on how to assist people on a scene or help take care of those who may go under. Groton Fire and Rescue has four people on this team with a couple more going through training. According to a post on the Groton Fire and Rescue Facebook page, "We officially have a technical rescue rig stationed here in Groton with dive equipment ready to deploy. Our community sure has dedicated volunteers. It takes lots of hours of training to be a Dive member and keep certified! Thank you all!" (Photos from the Groton Fire and Rescue Facebook page)



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**GDILIVE.COM**

**5:00**

**C Sponsored by**

**Evan and Seth Erickson at  
Erickson Insurance Agency**

**Followed by Junior Varsity  
Sponsored by Adam & Nicole Wright  
then the varsity match**

**GT**  
Groton Area  
Tigers



**Aberdeen  
Roncalli Cavaliers**

**Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023  
at Roncalli**



# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Chamber of Commerce September Meeting

September 6, 2023

- Individuals present: Kellie Locke, Doug Heinrich, Carol Kutter, Ashley Bentz, and Katelyn Nehlich
- Minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Heinrich and seconded by Bentz. All members voted aye.
- Treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$33,741.58. \$1,644 is currently in the Chamber Bucks account. Report was approved by Locke and seconded by Heinrich. All members voted aye.
- Correspondence was received from J&J Magnet that included magnets for disbursement.
- The rack card Facebook post winner of \$50 in Chamber Bucks was Amara Graff.
- Family Fun Fest has been moved to September 8, 2023, from 3:30pm to 5:30pm on Main Street. Lakeview Farms will be in attendance, so reimbursement is not necessary.
- Brief discussion took place regarding benches on Main Street. Further discussion was tabled.
- Discussion took place regarding the use of the Chamber banner at future events, including the upcoming Family Fun Fest.
- Further discussion regarding fundraising for the future park bathrooms will take place at later meetings as the City Council finalizes the details of the project.
- Advertisement for winter events in GDI was approved on a motion by Nehlich and seconded by Bentz.
- Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich to renew the Glacial Lakes & Prairies Tourism City Membership for 2024 at a rate of \$360.00. All members voted aye.
- Motion by Locke and seconded by Bentz to advertise three times (3x) in the South Dakota Magazine at a rate of \$895.00 per advertisement for a 1/2 page. All members voted aye.
- 6 new shirts for Chamber Board members have arrived from Geffdog at a total of \$196.89.
- Discussion took place regarding the south Main Street sign repair. Will refer to Topper for further information.
- Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich to approve a \$300.00 donation to PumpkinFest. All members voted aye.
- Locke will reach out to new cosmetologists at Lavish Luxury.
- Cassie's Confectionology and Connected Couriers would like to wait until October for the welcome to allow additional time for them to get set up.
- The Chamber letter for 2024 will be discussed at the next Chamber meeting on October 4, 2023.
- Next Meeting: October 4, 2023, at City Hall at 12:00pm (BYOL).
- Upcoming events
- 09/09/2023 Back Forty Adventure Farm opens for the season
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest on Main Street 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023- 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming
- 09/15/2023 Presbyterian Lunch
- 09/18-22/2023 Check-R-Board Days at PMS
- 10/04/2023 Chamber Meeting
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival
- 10/14/2023 PumpkinFest
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/31/2023 UMC Trunk or Treat
- 11/01/2023 Chamber Meeting

## Rapid City Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash  
Where: Haines Avenue/Patton Street, Rapid City  
When: 12:27 a.m., Sunday, September 3, 2023

Driver 1: Seth Keim, 26, Rapid City, S.D., Serious non-life-threatening injuries  
Vehicle 1: 2003 Volkswagen Jetta  
Passenger 1: Lexi Hagen, 27, Rapid City, S.D., Fatal injuries

Driver 2: Kyle Kumjian, 25, Rapid City, S.D., Minor injuries  
Vehicle 2: 2021 Dodge Durango/Rapid City Police Department patrol car

Pennington County, S.D.- A Rapid City woman has been identified as the person who died early Sunday morning in a two vehicle crash in Rapid City.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2003 Volkswagen Jetta was traveling southbound on Haines Avenue toward Patton Street. The Volkswagen Jetta was traveling at a high rate of speed with its headlights off. A marked Rapid City Police Department Dodge Durango was making a left turn into a parking lot and was struck by the Jetta.

The driver of the Volkswagen Jetta, Seth Keim, age 26, sustained serious non-life-threatening injuries and was taken by ambulance to Monument Health Rapid City.

He was not wearing a seatbelt.

A passenger in the Jetta, Lexi Hagen, age 27, sustained fatal injuries and was deceased at the scene. She was not wearing a seatbelt.

The driver of the RCPD Dodge Durango patrol car, Kyle Kumjian, age 25, sustained minor injuries.

## Names Released in Mellette County Fatal Driving Incident

What: Fatal Driving Incident  
Where: Rodeo Road in White River, S.D.  
When: 1:36 a.m., Saturday, September 2, 2023

Driver 1: Nichole Lee, 30, Winner, S.D., Not injured  
Vehicle 1: 2016 Chevrolet Suburban  
Passenger 1: Ty Dimond, 33, Wood, S.D., Fatal injuries

Mellette County, S.D.- A Wood, S.D. man has been identified as the person who died early Saturday morning on Rodeo Road in White River, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2016 Chevrolet Suburban was traveling eastbound on Rodeo Road. For unknown reasons, the passenger left the Suburban while it was still in motion.

The driver of the Chevrolet Suburban, Nichole Lee, age 30, was not injured.

The passenger of the Chevrolet Suburban, Ty Dimond, 33, sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene.

## Names Released in Butte County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: McCoy Road and Eaton Lane, 1 mile east of Belle Fourche, S.D.

When: 8:54 p.m., Saturday, September 2, 2023

Driver No. 1: Leroy Fischer, 77, Belle Fourche, S.D., Fatal injuries

Vehicle No. 1: 2017 Dodge Grand Caravan

Passenger: Janet Fischer, 71, Belle Fourche, S.D., Not injured

Driver No. 2: Jet Tracy, 19, Belle Fourche, S.D., Not injured

Vehicle No. 2: 2003 Ford Ranger

Passenger No. 2: Connor Clausen, 20, Belle Fourche, S.D., Minor injuries

BUTTE COUNTY, S.D.- A Belle Fourche, S.D. man has been identified as the person who died Saturday night in a two vehicle crash one mile east of Belle Fourche, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2017 Dodge Grand Caravan was traveling south on McCoy Road near its intersection with Eaton Lane. The Grand Caravan pulled to the east shoulder, partially in the northbound lane and partially off the road. The 77-year-old male driver got out of the vehicle to check his mail which was on the east side of the road.

A 2003 Ford Ranger was traveling north on McCoy Lane. As the 19-year-old male driver of the Ranger approached the Grand Caravan he realized it was on the wrong side of the road, swerved to the right, but was unable to avoid collision. The Ranger struck the driver door of the Caravan, the group of mailboxes, and the 77-year-old male driver of the Caravan. The Ranger and the Caravan driver came to rest in the east ditch.

The driver of the Grand Caravan, Leroy Fischer, age 77, sustained fatal injuries.

Janet Fischer, age 71, a passenger in the Grand Caravan was not injured.

She was wearing a seatbelt.

The driver of the Ford Ranger Jet Tracy, age 19, was not injured.

He was wearing a seatbelt.

Connor Clausen, age 20, a passenger in the Ford Ranger had minor injuries.

He was wearing a seatbelt.



## Names Released in Lake County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: U.S. Highway 81, mile marker 83, 12 miles west of Madison, S.D.

When: 1:25 a.m., Saturday, September 2, 2023

Driver 1: Dwight Hale, 83, Huron, S.D., Fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2017 Chevrolet Cruz

Driver 2: Tatyanna Ekanger, 22, Howard, S.D., No injuries

Vehicle 2: 2007 Ford F-250

Passenger in vehicle 2: Austin Barnhart, 21, Howard, S.D., Minor injuries

Passenger in vehicle 2: Isaac Feldhaus, 21, Howard, S.D., Serious non-life-threatening injuries

Passenger in vehicle 2: Paul Winker, 21, Winfred, S.D., Minor injuries

Lake County, S.D.- A Huron, S.D. man has been identified as the person who died early Saturday morning in a two vehicle crash 12 miles west of Madison, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2017 Chevrolet Cruz was traveling east on U.S. Highway 81. A 2007 Ford F-250 was traveling west on U.S. Highway 81. The Cruz entered the oncoming lane of travel and collided with the F-250.

The driver of the Chevrolet Cruz, Dwight Hale, age 83, sustained fatal injuries and was declared deceased at the scene.

He was wearing a seatbelt.

The driver of the Ford F-250, Tatyanna Ekanger, age 22, was not injured.

She was wearing a seatbelt.

There were three passengers in the F-250.

Passenger Austin Barnhart, age 21, sustained minor injuries

He was wearing a seatbelt.

Passenger Isaac Feldhaus, age 21, sustained Serious non-life-threatening injuries

He was not wearing a seatbelt.

Passenger Paul Winker, age 21, sustained minor injuries.

He was not wearing a seatbelt.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. A

## BECOME A MEMBER!

OVER 85 YEARS OF OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES



**Aberdeen  
Community  
Concert  
Association**



**Vox Fortura:  
International Pop-op Quartet**  
Friday, September 15, 2023 at 7:00 pm



**Ireland's Greatest Showman feat.  
David Shannon: Irish Tenor**  
Monday, October 23, 2023 at 7:00 pm



**The Starlets: Pop Female Trio**  
Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 7:00 pm



**SD Jazz Festival Concert**  
Thursday, February 29, 2024 at 7:30 pm



**Shaun Johnson & The Big Band  
Experience**  
Thursday, April 25, 2024 - 7:00 pm

**\$75 Adults | \$25 Students | \$155 Family/Grandparents**

**Concerts will be held in the Johnson Fine Arts Center Harvey & Cynthia Jewett Theater at Northern State University 1200 S. Jay Street.**

ACCA Memberships can be purchased at Interior Design Concepts located at 21 N. Main Street or online at the ACCA website. All dates are subject to change. Check tickets for concert time.

**WWW.ABERDEENCOMMUNITYCONCERTS.ORG**

## Gov. Noem Appoints Bob Perry as Secretary of Public Safety Craig Price to Retire from State Government

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem appointed Robert (Bob) Perry as Secretary of the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Craig Price, the current secretary, will retire from state government. Perry's appointment will be effective on September 22.

"Craig Price has been an outstanding leader and public servant throughout his law enforcement career. His experience, insight, and discernment have been incredibly valuable to me while serving as Governor," said Governor Noem. "We have seen many unprecedented challenges over the past several years here in South Dakota including floods, storms, violent protests, and a worldwide pandemic. Craig was always a steady hand who brought calm to every situation and focused on finding solutions. He has been one of my closest advisors and a dear friend. He has my highest respect. May God richly bless him in his retirement from the State of South Dakota."



**Bob Perry**

Secretary Craig Price always had a goal to retire from state government in 2023. He submitted a retirement letter to Governor Noem, which can be found [here](#).

"When I started as a State Trooper in 1997, I just needed a job, and retirement in 2023 seemed light years away. I had no idea how rewarding it would be serving our state every day since," said Craig Price. "Serving on Governor Noem's cabinet has been the highlight of my career. I have a lot of people to thank, but no one more than my wife of 26 years Kami and our two daughters Remington and Lavin. My career would not have been possible without their absolute support."

Bob Perry has a long career of impressive law enforcement service. His career began as a Trooper for Pennsylvania State Police in 1990. In 1997, he joined the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a Special Agent, where his service included Pierre, SD. In 2006, he was made Supervisory Special Agent in Rapid City, SD. He rose to Assistant Inspector (Team Leader) out of Washington, DC in 2014. His career at the FBI culminated as Assistant Special Agent in Charge, a leadership role for FBI activities in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Northern Minnesota.

"Bob has big shoes to fill, and he has a strong career in law enforcement – in the field, in investigatory roles, and in leadership – to keep the people of South Dakota safe," continued Governor Noem.

Bob has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Anthropology with a focus on Criminal Justice from East Stroudsburg University.

"I appreciate Governor Noem giving me this opportunity. I look forward to leading the Department of Public Safety," said Bob Perry. "I intend to honor the outstanding values, mission, and accomplishments of the DPS team and to support and lead them in building on those successes. I am excited to support Governor Noem and contribute to her vision for South Dakota."

Bob has been married to his wife Amy for 33 years. They have two adult sons, Owen and Charlie, as well as a grandson Tripp.



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## Groton Community Transit

P.O. Box 693  
205 E. 2nd Ave.  
Groton, SD 57445

Dear Groton family,

Thank you, Thank you, for your loyalty and support through all of these years! We appreciate everyone of you!!

Although we have tried our best to keep the expenses low, our operating costs have increased significantly due to global factors in recent times. After carefully reviewing the finances, we have made a tough decision of increasing our transportation prices.

The change will take effect on Oct. 1, 2023 our rides within the town of Groton will be \$2 per ride, \$4 roundtrip. And, medical rides to Aberdeen from Groton will be \$20 roundtrip. Until then, you can take benefit of the old prices. We will honor old prices till Sept. 30, 2023!

We also offer a discounted pass for \$30 which includes 22 one way rides within Groton area!

We are a non-profit transportation service for the needs of all age groups of people!

As always, thank you for your loyalty and we thank you for your understanding and continued support!

Sincerely,

*Dam Hansen & Eugenia Strom*

Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker

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## West Nile Update – South Dakota, September 06, 2023

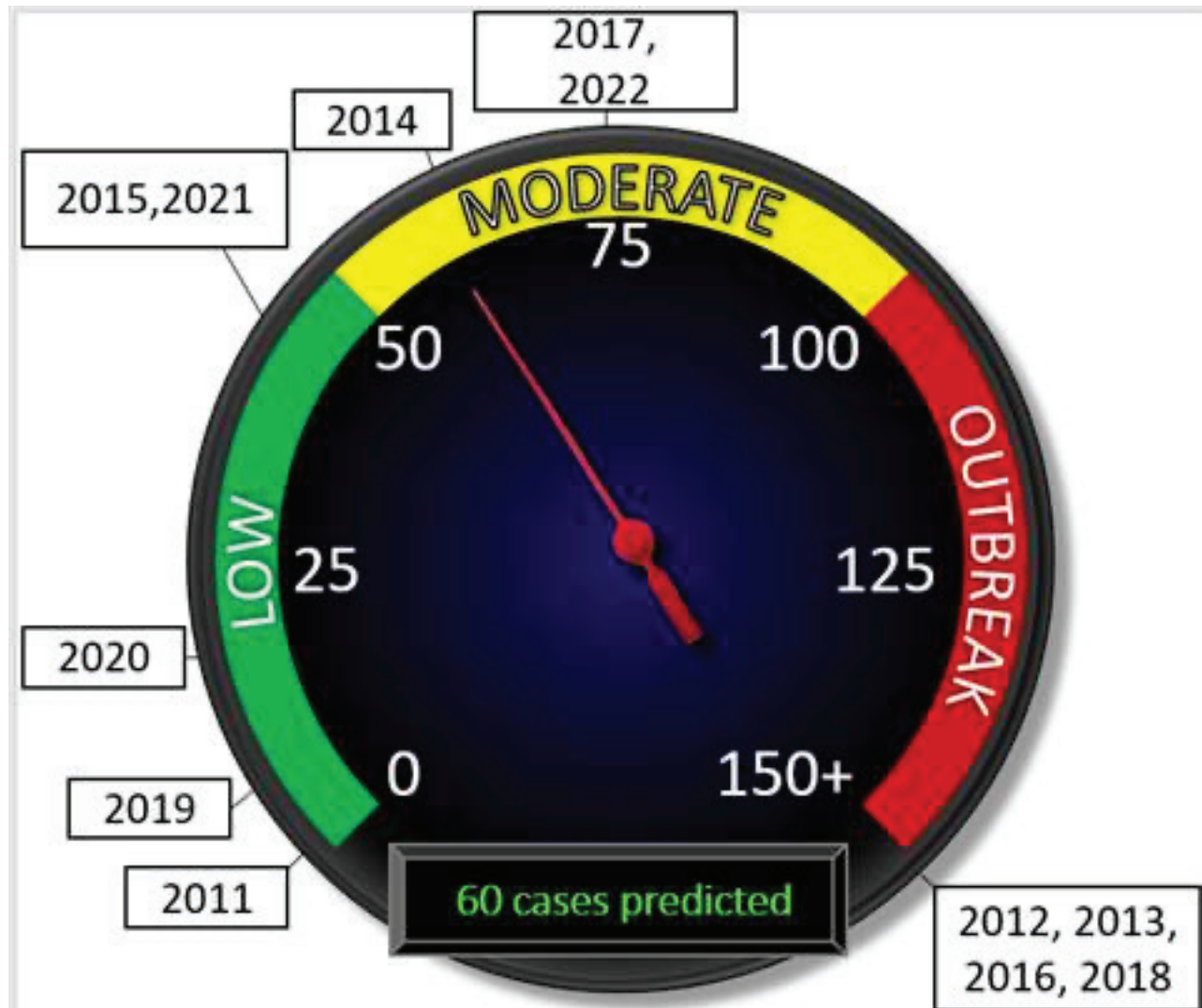
47 human cases reported (Beadle, Brown, Campbell, Codington, Corson, Davison, Day, Deuel, Dewey, Fall River, Faulk, Hamlin, Hand, Hughes, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lincoln, Lyman, Marshall, McCook, Mead, Minnehaha, Oglala Lakota, Pennington, Perkins, Sanborn, Walworth, Yankton )

10 human viremic blood donors (Brown, Custer, Codington, Charles Mix, Faulk, Minnehaha, Pennington, Yankton)

8 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brown, Brookings, Codington, Hand, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of September 5): 552 cases (Al, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OK, OR, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, WI, WV, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2023, South Dakota (as of September 6)





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **South Dakota regulators deny permit for Navigator CO2 carbon pipeline**

**Decision comes after North Dakota rejection of Summit Carbon Solutions**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 1:26 PM**

PIERRE — In a unanimous decision, the three-member South Dakota Public Utilities Commission on Wednesday rejected Navigator CO2's application for a permit to construct the Heartland Greenway carbon capture pipeline in South Dakota.

The commission also unanimously refused the company's request to preempt county pipeline setback ordinances. The ordinances mandate minimum distances between pipelines and dwellings, schools and other places.

In public comments during Wednesday's meeting at the state Capitol, Commissioner Kristie Fiegen listed a number of reasons for denying the permit, including what she described as a failure by the company to adequately disclose carbon dioxide plume modeling, and a failure to provide timely notices to some of the landowners along the proposed route. The commission conducted a hearing on the permit application from July 25 to Aug. 8.

"The burden of proof is on the applicant," Fiegen said Wednesday.

That burden, she added, includes ensuring the project will not negatively impact the social, environmental and economic well-being of the public. Fiegen made the motion, which was supported by the other two commissioners, to deny the permit. The commission's staff will now prepare a formal written order.

#### **Opposing sides react**

Navigator, which is based in Omaha, issued a statement after the meeting.

"While we are disappointed with the recent decision to deny our permit application in South Dakota, our company remains committed to responsible infrastructure development," the statement said. "We will evaluate the written decision of the Public Utilities Commission once issued and determine our course of action in South Dakota thereafter."

South Dakota's denial of a permit for Navigator follows North Dakota's recent denial of a permit for another carbon pipeline project, proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions, which would also cross into South Dakota. Summit has already altered its North Dakota route and is seeking reconsideration of that decision. Summit's South Dakota permit hearing is scheduled to begin Monday, and a weeks-long hearing on Summit's proposed route in Iowa is in progress.

Navigator has not yet pursued eminent domain to obtain land access from unwilling landowners in South Dakota, while Summit has already filed dozens of eminent domain court cases in the state.

When asked by South Dakota Searchlight if Navigator will seek reconsideration of the commission's decision, Navigator spokesperson Elizabeth Burns-Thompson replied by text message that the company "will determine that once we have the chance to review the final written order on Sept. 26."

Rick Bonander, whose rural Valley Springs land would be crossed by the pipeline, told South Dakota Searchlight on Wednesday that he is "extremely happy."

"I was about 50-50 on what I thought would happen today," he said. "Wow. Just, wow."

Brian Jorde, an attorney representing landowners, apologized during Wednesday's meeting for earlier comments he made that suggested a lack of faith in the commission to conduct a fair hearing.

"I was wrong," Jorde said. "The parties had a fair process."



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## Project details

Navigator applied for its state permit in September 2022, outlining plans for a \$3 billion, 1,300-mile pipeline to transport carbon dioxide in liquid form from 21 ethanol and fertilizer plants across five states to an underground sequestration site in Illinois. In eastern South Dakota, the project would cover 111.9 miles in Brookings, Moody, Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner counties.

When Navigator announced its plans in March 2021, it listed Valero Energy Corp. and BlackRock Real Assets as partners. Valero is an international petroleum and ethanol producer. BlackRock is a global asset management company.

Part of the project's attraction is its eligibility for annual federal tax credits of \$85 per metric ton of sequestered carbon. The federal government offers the credit as an incentive to remove heat-trapping carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequester it, as a means of combating climate change. Carbon dioxide is emitted by ethanol plants as part of the process of converting corn into the fuel additive.

Public Utilities Commissioners Gary Hanson and Chris Nelson said Wednesday that Navigator did a poor job of minimizing the public's concerns about the project.

"I would note, not a single South Dakota farmer testified in favor of this project," Nelson said.

## County ordinances upheld

Yet Nelson also said some of the public's concerns about the safety of the project are misinformed and exaggerated. The safety concerns involve the potential for a leak, which could release a toxic carbon dioxide plume. A 2020 carbon pipeline leak in Mississippi caused the evacuation of 200 people, including 45 who sought hospital treatment. Federal regulators are now reviewing carbon pipeline safety regulations for potential changes.

Safety concerns figured into ordinances adopted in Minnehaha and Moody counties in South Dakota requiring minimum setback distances for pipelines.

In June, Navigator filed a motion to preempt local county setback ordinances, citing a state law that allows the Public Utilities Commission to supersede local rules if they are found to be "unreasonably restrictive."

Minnehaha County attorney Alex Hagen said Wednesday the attempt to overrule county ordinances was "an attack on local government."

"The fact that you have that authority does not mean you need to exercise it," he told the public utilities commissioners.

The commissioners determined the ordinances are not unreasonably restrictive, given that a company representative acknowledged previously during a hearing that although it would be more difficult, Navigator could still complete the project while obeying Moody County's setbacks.

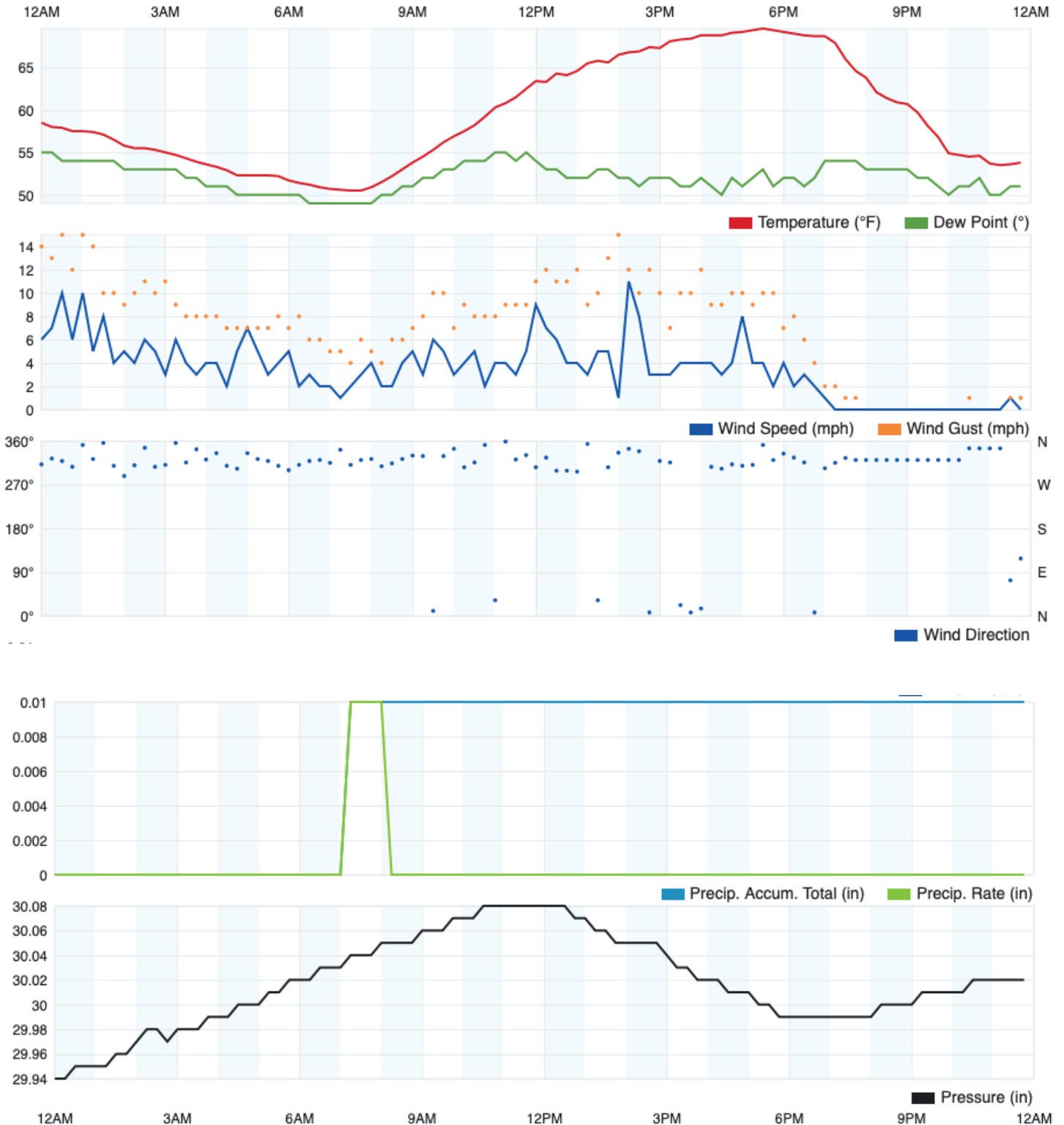
*EDITOR'S NOTE: This story has been extensively updated with additional details since its original publication.*

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

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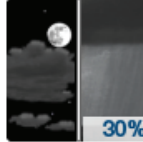

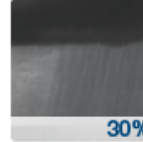

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Showers Likely	Chance Showers	Mostly Sunny
High: 78 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 70 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 71 °F



## Less Smoke - Precip for Central SD


September 7, 2023  
3:12 AM



**Northeast South Dakota & Western Minnesota**  
*Mid & Upper 70s*

**Central South Dakota**  
*Mid 80s*

	Probability of Precipitation Forecast																
	9/7																
	Thu																
	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
<b>Aberdeen</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0
<b>Britton</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	0	0
<b>Brookings</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	10
<b>Chamberlain</b>	0	5	15	20	25	30	40	35	35	35	30	25	20	20	15	15	10
<b>Clark</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	10	10	10	10	10	5	5	5
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	0	0	0	5	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0
<b>Ellendale</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5
<b>Eureka</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>Gettysburg</b>	0	0	0	0	5	10	10	10	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5	0
<b>Huron</b>	0	0	0	0	5	10	15	20	20	25	20	20	15	15	10	10	5
<b>Kennebec</b>	0	0	5	20	30	30	35	30	30	25	20	15	15	10	10	5	5
<b>McIntosh</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0
<b>Milbank</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>Miller</b>	0	0	0	0	15	15	20	25	25	20	20	15	15	10	5	5	5
<b>Mobridge</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0
<b>Murdo</b>	0	5	20	20	20	20	25	25	25	20	15	15	10	10	5	5	5
<b>Pierre</b>	0	0	5	15	20	25	20	20	20	15	15	10	5	5	5	5	5
<b>Redfield</b>	0	0	0	0	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	10	10	5	5	5	5
<b>Sisseton</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5
<b>Watertown</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	5	5	5	5
<b>Webster</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>Wheaton</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

**National Weather Service**  
Aberdeen, SD

Looking at less smoke across the region today. There will also be a weak compact system crossing western and central South Dakota. Overall not much moisture with this system, about a tenth to a quarter inch or so. Dry conditions expected for Friday, but we are also watching another system likely bringing rain to the region Saturday.



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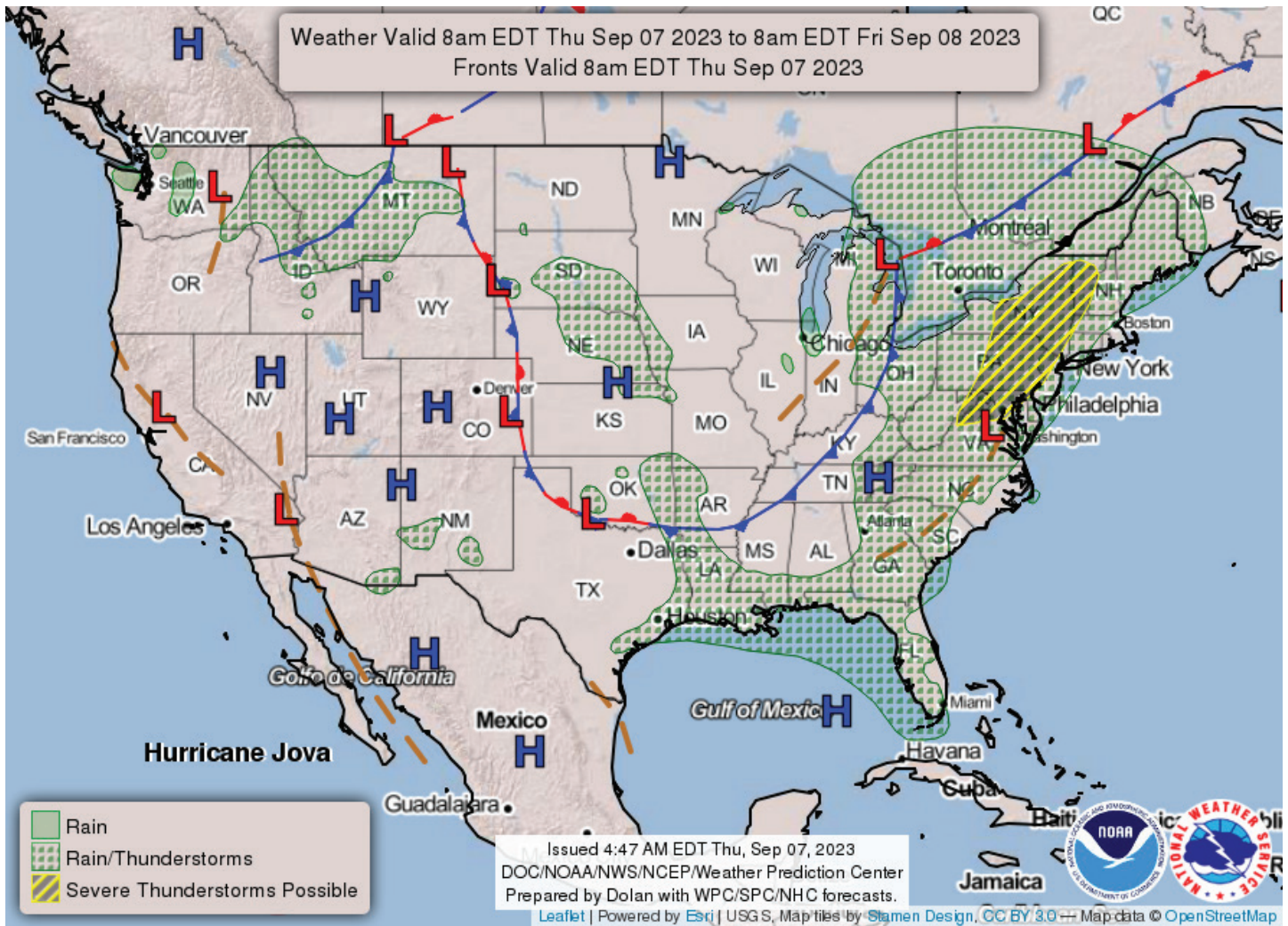
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 69.6°F at 5:30 PM**  
**Low Temp: 50.5 °F at 7:30 AM**  
**Wind: 15 mph at 2:00 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.01**

Day length: 13 hours, 1 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1897  
Record Low: 29 in 1895  
Average High: 78  
Average Low: 50  
Average Precip in Sept.: .47  
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.10  
Average Precip to date: 16.81  
Precip Year to Date: 18.69  
Sunset Tonight: 8:01:03 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:00:58 AM



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## Today in Weather History

September 7, 1961: A tornado struck a farm near the McPherson-Brown county line, or about 10 miles east and 2 miles north of Leola, at around 825 pm CDT. All farm buildings were destroyed, including two chicken coops, granary, machine shop, and two trailer homes. The house was pushed about a foot off its foundation and had windows broken, plaster cracked, and part of the roof ripped. A farm truck and tractor were both blown about 500 feet and demolished. Rain up to 2.5 inches and hail accompanied the storm and caused minor damage.

1769: Considered one of the worst storms of the Eighteenth century, this hurricane passed over Williamsburg, Virginia.

1881 - The temperature soared to 101 degrees at New York City, 102 degrees at Boston MA, and 104 degrees at Washington D.C. (David Ludlum)

1888 - Much of the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast Region experienced freezing temperatures. Killer frosts resulted in a million dollars damage to crops in Maine. (David Ludlum)

1909 - Topeka, KS, was drenched with 8.08 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for that location. (6th- 7th) (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A lightning bolt struck a group of football players at Gibbs High School in Saint Petersburg FL, killing two persons and injuring 22 others. All the thirty-eight players and four coaches were knocked off their feet. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced 4 to 8 inch rains in three to six hours in Virginia, with totals across the state for the Labor Day weekend ranging up to fourteen inches. The Staunton River crested at 34.44 feet at Altavista on the 8th, its highest level since 1940. Damage due to flooding was estimated at seven million dollars around Bedford, Henry, and Franklin. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Fifty cities across the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 56 degrees at Mobile AL was their coolest reading of record for so early in the season. The mercury dipped to 31 degrees at Athens OH, and to 30 degrees at Thomas WV. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced four inches of rain at Texamah overnight, and up to six inches of rain in southwestern Iowa. Evening thunderstorms in eastern Colorado produced golf ball size hail at Clear Creek and at Nederland. Late evening thunderstorms in Iowa drenched Harlan with more than four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1998: Two Derechos occurred on this day with one affecting most of Pennsylvania and New York City, the other impacting central New York.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### ALL TOGETHER - NOW - SMILE!

It was her first day at work, and the manager was carefully going over the responsibilities of being his secretary with her. After thoroughly explaining her tasks, he said, "Now I'd like to tell you a few things about myself so you will know what kind of person I am."

He then began telling her about his college career - how he excelled in academics and athletics. He then started to talk about his accomplishments with the company, how he received one promotion after another and was rewarded with raises and bonuses. He spent a great amount of time bragging about himself.

Finally, in her frustration, she asked, "Tell me, sir, have you ever had a group photo taken of yourself?"

Many worry about being properly recognized for their position and status. We want others to know what we can do and how well we can do it - whether they are interested in us or not. We want others to look to us and stand in awe of our accomplishments.

However, Peter warns us to remember that it is God's recognition that matters most. Human praise is one thing but God's approval is really all that counts. In His own time, God will bless our efforts and honor our work. We must also remember that His recognition may not come in this lifetime. But, if we are faithful to Him and give Him the glory, He will surely reward us in heaven. And, that's what matters most!

Prayer: Lord, whatever we do in life is because of Your gifts and grace. Our talents and skills, abilities and strength come to us to give back to You in serving others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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



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## 2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes, Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.05.23

3 43 50 51 65 13

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$122,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 9  
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.06.23

8 28 39 49 51 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$9,680,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 24  
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.06.23

6 8 9 31 48 4

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 39 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.06.23

8 10 17 24 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$35,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 39  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.06.23

1 12 30 50 55 10

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 8  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.06.23

9 14 20 23 63 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$500,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 8  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



## News from the Associated Press

### **CO2 pipeline project denied key permit in South Dakota; another seeks second chance in North Dakota**

By JACK DURA and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

South Dakota regulators on Wednesday denied a construction permit for a carbon dioxide pipeline project, one month after a North Dakota panel did the same to a similar project by another company.

Navigator CO2 Ventures wants to build a 1,300-mile (2,092 kilometers) pipeline network across Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota, to carry planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from more than 20 industrial plants to be buried over a mile underground in Illinois.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission voted unanimously to deny Navigator's application for its Heartland Greenway pipeline. Chair Kristie Fiegen cited myriad reasons in her motion to deny, including the company's lack of promptness and several objections to commission staff questions as well as struggles to notify landowners of routes and meetings. She detailed concerns related to safety, community growth, landowners and emergency responders, among other issues.

The proposed South Dakota route encompassed 112 miles (180 kilometers) and would serve three ethanol plants. The panel's decision came after evidentiary hearing sessions in July and August.

Navigator expressed disappointment that the permit was denied, and was weighing its options going forward.

"Our commitment to environmental stewardship and safety remains unwavering, and we will continue to pursue our permitting processes in the other regions we operate in," the company said in a statement.

The decision comes just days before the South Dakota panel is set to begin an evidentiary hearing Monday for a separate CO2 pipeline project, proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions, with a final decision expected by Nov. 15.

Brian Jorde, an attorney for South Dakota landowners opposed to the Navigator and Summit projects, expressed hope that Navigator might now drop the South Dakota leg of the project, given that most of the plants it would serve are in Iowa and other states.

Similar projects are proposed around the country as industries try to reduce their carbon footprints. Supporters say carbon capture will combat climate change. Governments and companies are making big investments in it. But opponents say the technology isn't proven at scale and could require huge investments at the expense of alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power.

Landowners across the Midwest have opposed such pipeline projects, fearing their land will be taken and that the pipelines could break, spewing hazardous carbon dioxide into the air.

Other states continue to weigh Summit's project, which would encompass a 2,000-mile network from 30-some ethanol plants throughout Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota to an underground storage site in North Dakota.

The Iowa Utilities Board began its evidentiary hearing for Summit last month. It's expected to last several weeks.

North Dakota's Public Service Commission last month denied Summit a siting permit. The company subsequently asked the panel to reconsider. The regulators have a work session set for Friday to discuss the request. A decision will come after the meeting.

Summit this week withdrew its applications to Oliver County for two permits related to construction of injection wells for its underground CO2 storage site in central North Dakota.

The company's move came after the county's planning and zoning board voted last week to forward a denial recommendation to the county commission. The board had cited a lack of information from Summit, safety concerns and no financial or economic benefit to the county or residents, Oliver County Auditor Jaden Schmidt said.

Summit spokesperson Sabrina Ahmed Zenor said the company would work to address Oliver County's

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questions and concerns and that it was confident of securing the necessary permits from the county.

## **A teenager is convicted of murder in a 2022 shooting at a Bismarck motel**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A jury on Wednesday convicted a 17-year-old of murder in connection with the shooting death of a South Dakota man last year at a motel in Bismarck.

Jesse Taylor Jr., of Mandan, North Dakota, was found guilty of murder for the September 2022 death of 28-year-old Maurice Thunder Shield, of McLaughlin, South Dakota, as well as aggravated assault for allegedly wounding a motel worker in the shooting, The Bismarck Tribune reported.

Taylor, who was tried as an adult, could be sent to prison for life without parole. A state district court judge called for a presentence investigation.

Taylor's attorney said his client was acting in self-defense after a verbal altercation with Thunder Shield.

The prosecutor said that claim had no legal basis, and said Taylor had the opportunity to escape from Thunder Shield, who appeared agitated. By firing five rounds from a handgun over several seconds, the teen intended to kill him, the prosecutor said.

Taylor, then 16, fled after the shooting. He was arrested soon afterward in Warren, Minnesota.

The trial began Aug. 28.

## **A lawsuit seeks to bar Trump from the primary in Colorado, citing Constitution's insurrection clause**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A liberal group on Wednesday filed a lawsuit to bar former President Donald Trump from the primary ballot in Colorado, arguing he is ineligible to run for the White House again under a rarely used clause in the U.S. Constitution aimed at candidates who have supported an "insurrection."

The lawsuit, citing the 14th Amendment, is likely the initial step in a legal challenge that seems destined for the U.S. Supreme Court. The complaint was filed on behalf of six Republican and unaffiliated Colorado voters by the group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

It will jolt an already unsettled 2024 primary campaign that features the leading Republican candidate facing four separate criminal cases.

Liberal groups have demanded that states' top election officials bar Trump under the clause that prohibits those who "engaged in an insurrection or rebellion" against the Constitution from holding higher office. None has taken that step, looking for guidance from the courts on how to interpret a clause that has only been used a handful of times since the 1860s.

While a few fringe figures have filed thinly written lawsuits in a few states citing the clause, the litigation Wednesday was the first by an organization with significant legal resources. It may lead to similar challenges in other states, holding out the potential for conflicting rulings that would require the Supreme Court to settle.

Colorado's secretary of state, Democrat Jena Griswold, said in a statement that she hoped "this case will provide guidance to election officials on Trump's eligibility as a candidate for office."

The lawsuit contends the case is clear, given the attempt by then-President Trump to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden and his support for the assault of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The Republican has said he did nothing wrong in his actions.

The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, helped ensure civil rights for freed slaves — and eventually for all people in the United States. But it also was used to prevent former Confederate officials from becoming members of Congress after the Civil War and taking over the government against which they had just rebelled.

The clause cited in the lawsuit allows Congress to lift the ban, which it did in 1872 as the political will to continue to bar former Confederates dwindled. The provision was almost never used after that.

CREW and law professors of both parties contend the amendment is clear and is a qualification for president, just as the Constitution's mandate that a candidate for the White House must be at least 35

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years old and a natural born citizen.

But others note there is much unsettled about the provision and that a case involving this issue has not reached the justices in Washington.

The clause cites a wide range of offices "under the United States" and states that the provision applies to, including "presidential electors" — but not the presidency itself. There is a debate among some experts about whether Trump's acts constitute an "insurrection" under the language of the amendment.

In its complaint, CREW asked the court to expedite the matter so it can be resolved before the state's primary ballot is set on Jan. 5, 2024. "We understand that there's great interest in states across this country about this question, and it needs to be resolved expeditiously so there's clarity," said Donald Sherman, CREW's chief counsel, told reporters in a teleconference.

A Trump spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the suit.

Georgia's secretary of state, writing in The Wall Street Journal, warned that using the 14th Amendment in this way could take the country down a dark path.

"For a secretary of state to remove a candidate would only reinforce the grievances of those who see the system as rigged and corrupt," said Republican Brad Raffensperger, who drew Trump's ire when he refused to declare Trump as the winner of Georgia in 2020. "Denying voters the opportunity to choose is fundamentally un-American."

The 14th Amendment was used last year to bar from office a New Mexico county commissioner who entered the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. That was the first time it was used in 100 years. In 1919, Congress refused to seat a socialist, contending he gave aid and comfort to the country's enemies during World War I.

Another liberal group, Free Speech For People, unsuccessfully tried to use the provision to prevent Republican Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina from running for reelection last year.

The judge overseeing Greene's case ruled in her favor. Cawthorn's case became moot after he was defeated in his primary.

CREW said it expects to file more cases in other states and anticipates that different groups may do so as well. It picked Colorado, its leaders said, because the state allows ballot challenges to go directly to court and it assembled a prominent roster of plaintiffs, including a former Republican leader of both houses of the legislature and a conservative columnist for the Denver Post.

There was another reason, Sherman noted: In 2015, a Guyana-born naturalized citizen lost his lawsuit to be included on the state's presidential primary ballot, failing to convince a federal magistrate that the Constitution's requirement that he be a natural-born citizen was unfair.

A federal appeals judge upheld that ruling barring him from the ballot. The judge was Neil Gorsuch, now on the U.S. Supreme Court.

## **Greek shipper pleads guilty to smuggling Iranian crude oil and will pay \$2.4 million fine**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A Greek shipping company has pleaded guilty to smuggling sanctioned Iranian crude oil and agreed to pay a \$2.4 million fine, newly unsealed U.S. court documents seen Thursday by The Associated Press show.

The now-public case against Empire Navigation, which faces three years of probation under the plea agreement, marks the first public acknowledgement by U.S. prosecutors that America seized some 1 million barrels of oil from the tanker Suez Rajan.

The saga surrounding the ship further escalated tensions between Washington and Iran, even as they work toward a trade of billions of dollars in frozen Iranian assets in South Korea for the release of five Iranian Americans held in Tehran. The court filings also shed light on the covert world of Iranian crude oil smuggling in the face of Western sanctions since the collapse of its 2015 nuclear deal — an operation that has only grown in scale over this year.



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The U.S. and its allies have been seizing Iranian oil cargoes since 2019. That's led to a series of attacks in the Mideast attributed to the Islamic Republic, as well as ship seizures by Iranian military and paramilitary forces that threaten global shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes.

Attention began focusing on the Suez Rajan in February 2022, when the group United Against Nuclear Iran said it suspected the tanker carried oil from Iran's Khargh Island, its main oil distribution terminal in the Persian Gulf. Satellite photos and shipping data analyzed at the time by the AP supported the allegation.

The newly unsealed court documents rely on satellite images, as well as documents, to show that the Suez Rajan sought to mask its loading of Iranian crude oil from one tanker by trying to instead claim the oil came from another.

For months, the ship sat in the South China Sea off the northeast coast of Singapore before suddenly sailing for the Texas coast without explanation. The vessel discharged its cargo to another tanker, which released its oil in Houston in recent days. The court documents seen Thursday confirm the U.S. government seized the oil.

A lawyer for Empire Navigation, Apostolos Tourkantonis, pleaded guilty in April to a single charge of violating the sanctions on Iran. Empire, based in Athens, Greece, did not respond to a request for comment early Thursday.

The U.S. Treasury has said Iran's oil smuggling revenue supports the Quds Force, the expeditionary unit of the Revolutionary Guard that operates across the Mideast. The court documents link the Guard to the trade, involving hundreds of vessels that try to mask their movements and can hide their ownership through foreign shell companies.

But the Suez Rajan case was unique at the time of the transfer because it was owned by the Los Angeles-based private equity firm Oaktree Capital Management. That likely gave American prosecutors an edge in pursuing this case. Oaktree, which has repeatedly declined to discuss the case, sold the vessel fully to Empire in late May.

Mark Wallace, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under President George W. Bush who heads United Against Nuclear Iran, praised Empire Navigation for agreeing to the plea. He described Iran's oil smuggling as a "mob-like" operation and urged others to abandon the trade.

"They faced down Iranian assassination threats in Greece," Wallace told the AP. "They took the off ramp to leave the mob."

Wallace declined to elaborate, and the U.S. court documents offered no detail on the alleged assassination threat — though prosecutors did cite "security risks to the defendants, the government, as well as the vessel and its crew members" in their application to seal the case from public view in March.

The delay in offloading the Suez Rajan's cargo had become a political issue as well for the Biden administration as the ship had sat for months in the Gulf of Mexico, possibly due to companies being worried about the threat from Iran.

Since the Suez Rajan headed for America, Iran has seized two tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, including one with cargo for major U.S. oil company Chevron Corp. In July, the top commander of the Revolutionary Guard's naval arm threatened further action against anyone offloading the Suez Rajan, with state media linking the recent seizures to the cargo's fate.

Iran has continued to make threats over the seizure and summoned a Swiss diplomat in Tehran to express its anger. Switzerland has looked after U.S. interests in Iran since the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover and hostage crisis.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. Navy has increased its presence steadily in recent weeks in the Mideast, sending the troop-and-aircraft-carrying USS Bataan through the Strait of Hormuz and considering putting armed personnel on commercial ships traveling through the strait to stop Iran from seizing additional ships.

Late Wednesday, the U.S. updated its warning to shippers traveling through the Mideast, saying: "Commercial vessels transiting through the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman continue to be

illegally boarded and detained or seized by Iranian forces.”

This year, Iranian oil exports have mostly been above 1 million barrels a day despite American sanctions, according to the commodity data firm Kpler. In May and June, it went above 1.5 million barrels a day, with figures in August sitting at 1.4 million barrels daily, Kpler’s data showed. China is believed to be a major buyer of Iranian oil, likely at a significant discount.

“Justice was served,” Wallace said. “At the same time, there needs to be a serious policy review on why it took so long and why there are 300 vessels out there doing the same thing.”

## **Biden administration cancels remaining oil and gas leases in Alaska’s Arctic Refuge**

By BECKY BOHRER and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — In an aggressive move that angered Republicans, the Biden administration canceled the seven remaining oil and gas leases in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on Wednesday, overturning sales held in the Trump administration’s waning days, and proposed stronger protections against development on vast swaths of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The Department of Interior’s scrapping of the leases comes after the Biden administration disappointed environmental groups earlier this year by approving the Willow oil project in the petroleum reserve, a massive project by ConocoPhillips Alaska that could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day on Alaska’s petroleum-rich North Slope. Protections are proposed for more than 20,000 square miles (51,800 square kilometers) of land in the reserve in the western Arctic.

Some critics who said the approval of Willow flew in the face of Biden’s pledges to address climate change lauded Wednesday’s announcement. But they said more could be done. Litigation over the approval of the Willow project is pending.

“Alaska is home to many of America’s most breathtaking natural wonders and culturally significant areas. As the climate crisis warms the Arctic more than twice as fast as the rest of the world, we have a responsibility to protect this treasured region for all ages,” Biden said in a statement.

His actions “meet the urgency of the climate crisis” and will “protect our lands and waters for generations to come,” Biden said.

Alaska’s Republican governor condemned Biden’s moves and threatened to sue. And at least one Democratic lawmaker said the decision could hurt Indigenous communities in an isolated region where oil development is an important economic driver.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, who drew criticism for her role in the approval of the Willow project, said Wednesday that “no one will have rights to drill for oil in one of the most sensitive landscapes on earth.” However, a 2017 law mandates another lease sale by late 2024. Administration officials said they intend to comply with the law.

The Biden administration also announced proposed rules aimed at providing stronger protections against new leasing and development in portions of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska that are designated as special areas for their wildlife, subsistence, scenic or other values. The proposal still must go through public comment. Willow lies within the reserve but was not expected to be affected by the proposed rules.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge’s 1.5-million-acre (600,000-hectare) coastal plain, which lies along the Beaufort Sea on Alaska’s northeastern edge, is seen as sacred by the Indigenous Gwich’in because it is where caribou they rely on migrate and come to give birth. The plain is marked by hills, rivers and small lakes and tundra. Migratory birds and caribou pass through the plain, which provides habitat for wildlife including polar bears and wolves.

Alaska political leaders — including some Democrats — have long pushed to allow oil and gas drilling in the refuge in part because of its economic impact on Indigenous communities in an area with few other jobs. Many of those same voices pressed Biden to approve the Willow project for the same reason.

“I am deeply frustrated by the reversal of these leases in ANWR,” said U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, a Demo-

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crat, using a common shorthand for the refuge. "This administration showed that it is capable of listening to Alaskans with the approval of the Willow Project, and it is some of those same Inupiat North Slope communities who are most impacted by this decision. I will continue to advocate for them and for Alaska's ability to explore and develop our natural resources."

Alaska's congressional delegation in 2017 succeeded in getting language added to a federal tax law that called for the U.S. government to hold two lease sales in the region by late 2024.

Drilling opponents on Wednesday urged Congress to repeal the leasing provision from the 2017 law and permanently make the coastal plain off limits to drilling.

"It is nearly impossible to overstate the importance of today's announcements for Arctic conservation," said Jamie Williams, president of the Wilderness Society. "Once again, the Arctic Refuge is free of oil leases. Our climate is a bit safer and there is renewed hope for permanently protecting one of the last great wild landscapes in America."

Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan denounced Biden's actions as the latest volley in what he called a "war on Alaska."

Two other leases that were issued as part of the first-of-its-kind sale for the refuge in January 2021 were previously given up by the small companies that held them amid legal wrangling and uncertainty over the drilling program.

After taking office, Biden issued an executive order calling for a temporary moratorium on activities related to the leasing program and for the Interior secretary to review the program. Haaland later in 2021 ordered a new environmental review after concluding there were "multiple legal deficiencies" underlying the Trump-era leasing program. Haaland halted activities related to the leasing program pending the new analysis.

A draft environmental review was released Wednesday.

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, a state corporation that won seven leases in the 2021 sale, sued over the moratorium. But a federal judge recently found the delay by Interior to conduct a new review was not unreasonable.

The corporation obtained the leases to preserve drilling rights in case oil companies did not come forward. Major oil companies sat out the sale, held after prominent banks had announced they would not finance Arctic oil and gas projects.

Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, thanked the administration for the lease cancellation — but issued a warning.

"We know that our sacred land is only temporarily safe from oil and gas development," she said. "We urge the administration and our leaders in Congress to repeal the oil and gas program and permanently protect the Arctic Refuge."

## India's rising geopolitical clout will be tested as it hosts the G20 summit

By KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Ahead of India's hosting of the G20 summit of leading economies, its prime minister invited 125 mostly developing countries to a virtual meeting in January to signal New Delhi's intention to be their champion on the world stage.

As the leaders logged onto Zoom, Prime Minister Narendra Modi listed major challenges he said could be better addressed if developing countries had a bigger share in the emerging global order: the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, terrorism, the war in Ukraine.

"The world is in a state of crisis," Modi said. "Most of the global challenges have not been created by the Global South. But they affect us more."

India has pledged to amplify the voice of the so-called Global South — a wide of expanse of mostly developing countries, many of them former colonies, in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Oceania and the Caribbean.

That pledge will be put to the test this week when world leaders arrive in New Delhi for this year's G20



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summit, which begins Saturday. But India has promoted itself not only as a bridge to the developing world, but as a rising global player and — importantly — a mediator between the West and Russia.

Steering through fractures among the world's various blocs over Russia's war in Ukraine will be a "diplomatic high-wire act" for India, said Milan Vaishnav, director of the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

None of the several G20 meetings this year have produced a communique, with Russia and China vetoing wording on the war that they once agreed to at last year's summit in Indonesia, when the summit statement noted that "most members strongly condemned" the invasion.

If leaders don't break this deadlock over the weekend, it could lead to the first time that the group's summit has ended without a communique, an unprecedented setback for the grouping, said John Kirton, director and founder of the G20 Research Group.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is not attending and neither is China's leader Xi Jinping. Both are sending representatives.

Given New Delhi's historic ties with Moscow, its surging relationship with the West, and its hostility with Beijing over a years-long boundary dispute, Modi is in a diplomatically complicated position.

India has relied on Russia, its Cold War era ally, for military hardware for decades — and more recently, for record amounts of cheap oil. Despite India's refusal to directly condemn Russia over the war, the West and allies have courted the country aggressively as they bank on it as a bulwark against China's growing ambitions.

U.S. President Joe Biden pulled out the red carpet for Modi recently as the two signed a slate of deals, the Indian prime minister was a guest of honor at France's Bastille Day parade, and he was invited to attend the G7 summit a few months ago.

"Is Prime Minister Modi as skilled and as committed as President Widodo of Indonesia was last year to find a way to produce a communique? That's more of an open question given the progress of Russia's war against Ukraine," Kirton said.

As the split over Ukraine casts a shadow over the G20, India has focused on issues affecting developing countries, like food and fuel insecurity, rising inflation, debt and reforms of multilateral development banks. And in a bid to make the G20 more inclusive, Modi has proposed the African Union become a permanent member.

Many G20 countries want to focus on calling out Russia, but for a number of developing nations dealing with local conflicts and extreme weather events, the Ukraine war is not as big a priority, said Happymon Jacob, founder of the New Delhi-based Council for Strategic and Defense Research.

"There's a feeling (in the Global South) that conflicts in other parts of the world, be it Afghanistan, Myanmar or Africa, are not taken as seriously by developed countries or in forums like the G20," Jacob said.

A report from the Economist Intelligence Unit in March suggested growing support for Moscow from the developing world, with the number of countries actively condemning Russia falling from 131 to 122.

"Some emerging economies have shifted to a neutral position," it noted.

The number of countries that lean toward Russia jumped from 29 a year ago to 35, it said. South Africa, Mali and Burkina Faso had moved into this group, highlighting Moscow's rising influence in Africa. China remained the most prominent of the countries leaning toward Russia.

As India progresses economically, it increasingly leans toward the West — which is welcomed by Western powers — but it also sees itself as a counterweight to China in vying for influence in the developing world with which it has historic ties, Jacob said.

India has identified with the Global South since its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, though Modi has renewed the emphasis on the phrase, using it frequently over the past year or two.

"India's trying to ensure that the Global South doesn't go into the Chinese camp," Jacob said.

Vaishnav said India is in "a geopolitical sweet spot." Its economy is among the fastest growing for major countries, it has a large working age population as the West ages, and its neutral stance on the Ukraine war has only boosted its diplomatic sway at the G20. The global spotlight could also help Modi's popularity

ahead of a crucial general election next year.

On the other hand, unemployment remains a big concern as hundreds of millions struggle for work in the country's large but still widely unequal economy. And even as Modi touts democratic principles abroad, critics accuse his Hindu nationalist government of stifling dissent, stoking religious violence and weakening independent institutions at home.

So far, Modi has promoted a feeling that, "given the geopolitical landscape, the world needs India as much - if not more - than India needs the world," Vaishnav said.

"But the risk is that if we see domestic instability such that corporations and governments start to hedge their bets, and if India is no longer seen as delivering on its ability to counter China ... there could be some diplomatic costs," he said.

## **In Southeast Asia, Harris says 'we have to see the future'**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — It took more than a day of flying, including two refueling stops, for Vice President Kamala Harris to reach this year's summit of Southeast Asian countries. And once she arrived, she had less than eight minutes of public speaking time during two meetings.

But in Jakarta's cavernous convention center, adorned with billowing flowers and tropical plants for the occasion, Harris saw an opportunity to shape the future of United States foreign policy.

In an interview with The Associated Press, the vice president said that Washington must "pay attention to 10, 20, 30 years down the line, and what we are developing now that will be to the benefit of our country then."

For her, that means working in Southeast Asia. Two-thirds of its population is under 35 years old. It's the fourth-largest market for U.S. exports. One-third of global shipping travels through the South China Sea.

"Think about it," Harris said.

This was her third trip to Southeast Asia since taking office — Harris heads back to Washington on Thursday — and she's visited more countries here than any other region. It's a sprawling constellation of nations, many of them eager for the personal touch of an American leader, and Harris has spent the past few years making the rounds.

Although addressing migration from Central America was the original task in Harris' foreign policy portfolio, her more recent travels have put her at the center of White House efforts to bolster ties in Asia as a counterbalance to China. It's an international parallel to her more prominent role in domestic politics, where she's been taking the lead on core Democratic issues such as abortion rights in the upcoming election.

At home and abroad, progress can be slow or hard to measure. Harris' approval ratings remain underwater, and her announcements in Southeast Asia tend to be counted in the millions of dollars rather than the billions. But she described her work in the region as something that will pay dividends over time as she gets to know its leaders.

"The strongest relationships will be based on consistency, on communication, on trust, and the ability to work together and to grow the sense of connection," she said.

Jake Sullivan, President Joe Biden's national security adviser, said "many of our best successes in the region were made possible thanks to her diplomacy," crediting Harris with helping to "move the ball forward on some of our top priorities."

"In our administration, she has been a strong advocate for stepping up our engagement in Southeast Asia — and she's put in the air miles to prove that — in recognition that our work there is critical to our own security and economic growth," Sullivan said.

Some analysts believe China maintains an edge in the region, and the Australia-based Lowy Institute issued a report earlier this year concluding that Beijing was still gaining ground in recent years.

However, Harris delivered a series of messages at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that were intended to demonstrate American commitment despite Biden's absence from the summit.

"The American people have a profound stake in the future of the Indo-Pacific," she said during one

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meeting. "We share a historic bond and common values with many of the people and nations here."

Harris also paid tribute to ASEAN as an organization, despite growing doubts about its effectiveness for regional diplomacy.

"The fact that so many leaders are convening in this one place at the same time to address some of the biggest challenges facing our world is a sign of strength of both the commitment that each nation has to the coalition and the potential for collaboration," she told the AP.

Others are less hopeful.

Dinna Prapto Raharja, a Jakarta-based analyst and professor on international relations, said ASEAN is being divided by competition between the U.S. and China, with some countries seeking to bolster their economies through closer relations with one or the other.

"I don't see solidarity at this moment, given the rivalry," she said. "Everybody works their own way."

Harris' travel to Southeast Asia began in her first year in office, when she visited Singapore and Vietnam, but the trip almost didn't happen.

Phil Gordon, a national security adviser to Harris, said there was talk of canceling because the administration was in the midst of a chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"She personally insisted that we can do more than one thing at a time," Gordon said. "She didn't want to pull the plug on our commitment to Southeast Asia."

During the trip, she repeatedly criticized China for trying to control access to the South China Sea, at one point describing the behavior as "bullying."

"She didn't knock it out of the park. It's clear she was new to the issues. But she's put in the work," said Gregory B. Poling, who directs the Southeast Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He described Harris as "an effective avatar for the administration," an important position when the president can only be in so many places at once.

David Rothkopf, a foreign policy writer who worked on trade issues under former President Bill Clinton and has met with Harris, said there's "always a period of adjustment" for an incoming administration.

"She was new to the team," he said. "And now she's seen as part of the team."

It's a role that she's played frequently. In addition to skipping this year's ASEAN summit, Biden didn't attend the 2022 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Thailand because it conflicted with his granddaughter's wedding.

Harris went in his place, and she also stopped in the Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally where she's fostered a close relationship with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

During the visit, Harris became the highest-ranking U.S. official to go to Palawan, an island adjacent to the South China Sea. She toured a Philippine coast guard boat and spoke with members of a local fishing community.

Republicans tried to turn it into an unflattering viral moment, clipping a video to portray her as awkwardly as possible as she greeted people with buckets of fish on their head.

But to her office, it's an example of how Harris is willing to show up places where others don't. She frequently participates in events outside the hermetic bubble of international summits or government events.

In Vietnam, she met with activists working on gay rights and climate change. In Thailand, she sat down with environmental advocates and clean energy entrepreneurs.

"We have to see the future and think about where it's going," Harris told the AP, "and then measure ourselves against that in terms of what we do today."

## Mexico is likely to get its first female president after top parties choose 2 women as candidates

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — With the selection of former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum as the candidate of the country's ruling party in next June's election, Mexico will for the first time have two women from its main political movements competing for the presidency.

Sheinbaum, as well as the opposition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez, have insisted that Mexico is ready to be led by a woman, but it will not be an easy path.

On Wednesday night, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party announced that Sheinbaum had defeated five internal party rivals – all men. López Obrador has put women in important positions in his Cabinet and been a mentor for Sheinbaum, even while being accused at times of male chauvinism.

Mexico still has famously intense "machismo" or male chauvinism, expressed in its most extreme form in a high rate of femicides, but also daily in hundreds of more subtle ways.

Mexico has a strong "macho vote," said Gloria Alcocer Olmos, director of the electoral magazine "Voice and Vote," adding that it is not exclusive to male voters.

Alcocer Olmos noted that in June's gubernatorial election in the state of Mexico – the country's most populous jurisdiction – the race was between two female candidates "and turnout was the lowest in history." The same thing occurred in the state election in Aguascalientes in 2021, she said.

"What does that tell us?" she asked. "That the people are voting for women? The reality is that no, and the saddest thing is that women themselves are not voting for women."

Such low turnout in the June 2 presidential election is less likely because so much is at stake, Alcocer Olmos said. There is also the possibility that the Citizen Movement party, which controls Nuevo Leon and Jalisco – two of the most economically important states – could nominate a male candidate who would attract that macho vote, she said.

Another question mark is what former Foreign Affairs Secretary Marcelo Ebrard will do. As Sheinbaum's closest rival in Morena he did not accept the results of the internal party selection process, claiming there were irregularities.

Morena controls 22 of Mexico's 32 states and López Obrador remains highly popular, giving Sheinbaum a strong advantage. But Gálvez emerged from virtual obscurity, helped largely by daily public criticism from López Obrador, to become the consensus candidate of the largely directionless opposition.

Aurora Pedroche, a Morena activist who supports Sheinbaum, suggested another problem should one of the female candidates win the presidency. Given the greatly increased power and responsibility that López Obrador has given the military during his administration "how are they going to accept a woman as commander in chief?"

"That scares me," Pedroche said.

While Mexican women have advanced to positions of political power in public life – in part because of required representation quotas for public office -- women suffer from high levels of gender violence. Femicides – cases of women killed because of their gender – have been a persistent problem for decades.

Sheinbaum represents continuation of López Obrador's social agenda, but without his charisma to take on an opponent in Gálvez who has an ease of connecting with people that is more reminiscent of the outgoing president.

The independent Gálvez is representing the Broad Front for Mexico, a coalition of the conservative National Action Party, the small progressive Democratic Revolution Party, and the old-guard Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, that held Mexico's presidency without interruption between 1929 and 2000.

Gálvez caucuses with the National Action Party in the Senate but is not a member.

Strategist Antonio Sola, who worked on the 2006 campaign of former President Felipe Calderón and later with one of the parties that helped López Obrador win, thinks Gálvez's outsider image could help her.

With much of the world experiencing the end of a political era dominated by traditional candidates, the emerging figures are those who are "kicking the system," he said.



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## Everyone's talking about the Global South. But what is it?

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi says his country is “becoming the voice of the Global South,” and that at the upcoming Group of 20 meetings being held in New Delhi, that voice will be heard.

At the August summit of the BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — current chair South Africa declared its goal was to “advance the agenda of the Global South.” And ahead of this May's summit of the Group of Seven wealthy democracies in Hiroshima, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stressed that the guest nations he had invited reflected the importance of the Global South.

The United Nations, the World Bank, U.S. President Joe Biden — everyone seems to be talking about the Global South these days. But what, exactly, is it?

What constitutes the Global South?

Despite how it sounds, it's not really a geographical term. Many countries included in the Global South are in the northern hemisphere, such as India, China and all of those in the northern half of Africa. Australia and New Zealand, both in the southern hemisphere, are not in the Global South.

Most cite the so-called Brandt Line as the border; a squiggle across the globe running from the north of Mexico, across the top of Africa and the Middle East, looping around India and China before dropping down to encompass most of East Asia while avoiding Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The line was proposed by former German Chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1980s as a visual depiction of the north-south divide based upon per-capita GDP.

“The Global South is a geographical, geopolitical, historical and developmental concept, all at the same time — with exceptions,” says Happymon Jacob, founder of the New Delhi-based Council for Strategic and Defense Research.

Which countries make up the Global South?

It's complicated, and often depends upon who is using the phrase.

Most commonly the term refers to the countries belonging to the Group of 77 at the United Nations, which, confusingly, is today actually a coalition of 134 countries. They're primarily considered developing countries, but also include China — about which there is some debate — and several wealthy Gulf states.

Though the G77 is a group at the U.N., the U.N. itself does not use that as its own definition, according to Rolf Traeger, who is with the U.N.'s trade and development office.

For the U.N., Global South is something of a shortcut to refer to developing countries in general, Traeger said. The U.N. currently lists 181 jurisdictions as developing countries or territories, and 67 jurisdictions as developed, he said.

In January, India's Modi hosted a virtual “Voice of the Global South Summit.” It only included 125 countries, however, with India's regional rivals China and Pakistan among the notable absentees.

Some use different criteria, such as whether a country was previously colonized or whether a nation's per-capita GDP is above \$15,000.

There is also a Global North, though the term is not regularly used. That is defined basically as not the Global South.

Should we use the term Global South?

The term Global South first appeared in the 1960s, but took time to gain traction.

Following the end of the Cold War, the terms First World, Second World and Third World started to fall out of favor, partly because with the fall of the Soviet Union the Second World ceased to exist, and also because the use of Third World came to be seen as derogatory.

No matter how you define it, the Global South accounts for such a vast majority of the world's population and broad swath of territory that some argue it's impossible and misleading to use the label.

How can countries like China and India, each with about 1.4 billion people and GDPs of about \$18 trillion and \$3.4 trillion respectively, be lumped together with the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, with a population a little over 300,000 and a GDP of \$984 million, or the southern African nation of Zambia with 19

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first "if you're gonna run your mouth in the paper."

"I have not heard from any of them," he said.

If they were truly worried about readiness at such a dangerous time for the world "you would think they would be calling, 'Coach, let's work this out.' Zero," Tuberville said.

However, there have been multiple attempts by both the department's top civilian leaders and its top uniformed personnel to try and show Tuberville how the holds are doing harm, a senior military official and defense official said.

A senior military official familiar with previous meetings with Tuberville said that despite telling the senator about the real-world and personal challenges that his hold has created on servicemembers, Tuberville has not seemed willing to change his position.

Tuberville said that during the August break, he visited six states, and "I didn't have one negative comment from anybody. I had questions, but I didn't have any negative comments."

He insisted that he would lift his hold on the military nominations only after the Pentagon rescinds the policy that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin put into place in October, after the Supreme Court ended the constitutional protections for abortion that had been in place nearly 50 years.

Once the Pentagon returns to pre-memo policies on travel reimbursement, Democratic leaders could bring up for a Senate vote whatever replacement policy they want to enact, he said.

"Move it back," Tuberville said of the current reimbursement policy. "And then have them write up what they want to vote on, and I will accept whichever way it goes. The holds are off. Let's go to work."

Tuberville's blockade is unique because it affects hundreds of military nominations and promotions. Democratic leaders would have to hold roll call votes on every single one to get around the hold, an unwieldy and time-consuming process in a chamber that already struggles to finish its basic business.

It's a decades-long tradition for the Senate to group military nominations and approve them by voice vote, avoiding lengthy roll calls and reserving valuable floor time for other important issues.

But, while unusual, Tuberville's office notes that lawmakers from both parties have threatened holds on military promotions over the years. What's truly unprecedented is the length of time it has gone on with Tuberville.

Austin has called Tuberville three times about the holds, the last time was on July 18, and the Pentagon's legislative affairs staff continues to engage with him, a defense official said on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the issue. Also, Defense Department staff met with Senate Armed Services Committee staff in July to go over the details of DOD's reproductive healthcare policy.

The Pentagon to date has not provided data on the number of service members who have relied on the new policy to get access to an abortion, citing privacy issues. It emphasizes that the new policy was in response to the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, which created a situation where federal troops serving in one state may not have access to the same type of reproductive services available in others.

As many as 650 nominations could be affected by the end of the year if the impasse continues. But if Republican leaders are pressuring Tuberville to end his holds, they are not doing so publicly.

"I'm hoping that the conversations that occur this week and the conversations that Senator Tuberville has had with the military leadership will lead to a breakthrough at some point," said Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate.

The Pentagon said the number of promotions on hold in the Senate has reached 98 in the Air Force, 91 in the Army, 86 in the Navy, 18 in the Marines and 8 in the Space Force.

Some Republicans have suggested that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., could hold votes on some of the most critical nominations. But Schumer rejected that approach.

"The bottom line is this is a problem created by Republicans and it's up to them to solve it," Schumer said.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said he would like for Schumer to schedule a vote on the Pentagon reimbursement policy, but if it fails, which it most assuredly would, "it's now time to get these people promoted."

"I'd like to vote to rescind the policy, but I'm not going to hold the military up in perpetuity," Graham said.

Sen. Roger Wicker, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services committee, was asked if he

had any recommendations or guidance for Tuberville that could resolve the impasse.

"I'm out of ideas," Wicker said.

## The Catholic Church defended human rights during Chile's dictatorship. An archive tells the story

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Lined up like soldiers guarding a nation's treasures, dozens of shelves preserve an archive that gives account of a painful episode in Chile's history: 47,000 instances of human rights violations during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

The documents were gathered between 1976 and 1992 by workers of the Vicariate of Solidarity, a human rights organization founded by Chilean Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez. Led by social workers, lawyers, archivists and physicians, it provided support to those harmed by the regime.

"The archive gives an account of how the repression occurred," said María Paz Vergara, executive secretary at the foundation created to preserve the documents after the Vicariate was closed.

The protection that Silva Henríquez provided for Pinochet's victims had no precedent in Latin America. In neighboring Argentina, where the military also took power in the 1970s, the Catholic Church distanced itself from the general public and remained close to the government and upper-class sectors.

"In Chile the response to help the victims was immediate," said Chilean historian María Soledad del Villar. "And not only from the Catholic Church, but from other churches as well."

Soon after a military coup deposed President Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973, Silva Henríquez led efforts to create the Committee of Cooperation for Peace. As part of the inter-religious group, Christians, Jews and other faith leaders provided spiritual, judicial and financial support for victims until it was dissolved due to government pressure in 1975.

Immediately after, Silva Henríquez established the Vicariate of Solidarity in the Archdiocese of Santiago.

"This was a great move because, as an institution of the Catholic Church, Pinochet did not have the power to close it down," Del Villar said.

During 16 years of service, the social workers and lawyers of the Vicariate comforted mothers whose children did not come home from a protest. They gathered files to back the claims of daughters whose parents disappeared after leaving work. They searched for economic resources to travel to prisons far from Santiago and asked for news about loved ones who were unfairly detained.

All of this while being cautious for their own safety. Many were harassed by telephone calls or followed in the middle of the day. A few were killed.

"This job gave meaning to my life," said María Luisa Sepúlveda, who was a Vicariate social worker. The organization closed in 1992, two years after Chile regained its democracy. Since then, Sepúlveda has extensively advocated for human rights and worked to solve cases of political imprisonment and torture under the former regime.

People first heard about the Vicariate through their local parishes. When victims approached a priest saying that a relative was taken away, he advised: Head to the archdiocese and they will help you.

Once there, the first contact was a social worker like Sepúlveda. She took notes and assessed the situation. If someone's life was threatened by the military, she would try to find a safe place or a visa to get the person out of the country. If the victim was in custody, she would pass information on to a lawyer who would prepare court proceedings.

On certain days, her job involved heading to the morgue. She saw corpses whose faces and fingertips were ripped off to avoid identification; pregnant women whose abdomens were severed.

The worst, Sepúlveda said, was the uncertainty among the families. "People were totally disoriented by the unprecedented situations," she said.

By being backed up by the cardinal, the Vicariate of Solidarity was able to support victims all over the territory. "The religious metaphor that fueled its work is the story of the Good Samaritan," said historian Del Villar.

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According to the biblical story, a man finds an injured person, and instead of passing by, he stops and heals his wounds. Under this principle, the Vicariate assisted all those in need – regardless of their faith – and organized activities, such as “ollas communes” (soup kitchens), labor exchanges and fasts to denounce disappearances.

Nowadays Chile has one of the largest number of religious disaffiliations on the continent and the Catholic Church never recovered from allegations of clergy sex abuse that erupted in 2010. During the dictatorship, though, it was a well-respected institution. Pinochet attended Mass every Sunday and said the Our Lady of Mount Carmel saved him from a murder attempt in 1986.

“The church was trying to help Chileans reconcile because the horrors we saw were tremendous,” said Guillermo Hormazábal, a journalist who served as communications director for the Vicariate and later managed a church-owned radio station.

Although the investigative police kidnapped him in 1980, he was released within 24 hours thanks to media pressure exerted by the radio station where he worked.

“The church was the only counterweight to the dictatorship,” he said. “It was a church that was not in the sacristy, but with the people.”

Until democracy returned to Chile in 1990, the church’s social work was a headache for the government. In 1989, a military prosecutor knocked on the door of the Vicariate and demanded that Bishop Sergio Valech hand over their files. The bishop refused.

“When the Vicariate closed, the fate of the disappeared was unknown,” said Vergara, the executive secretary of the archive. “Seeing the importance of historical memory and educating on human rights, the cardinal thought that all documentation would be essential for actions of justice and reparation.”

He was right. Thanks to the archives and the work of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, many cases were reopened. Survivors and relatives of victims still request documents allowing them to ask for reparations, such as pensions and priority medical care.

“There are also victims who come to remember what happened,” Vergara said. Others seek to share their story with their children.

She recalls a man whose father was arrested in 1973. The son had never met his father, but years later he got to see photos of him thanks to the archives. Looking at his father’s likeness for the first time, the son and his wife — now adults with a boy of their own — were struck by how much their son resembled his grandfather.

The archive has a legal fund compiling more than 85,000 documents, including judicial files and affidavits on deaths, kidnappings or torture, as well as photographs, press clippings and films on human rights.

“The government was saying, ‘This person has not been arrested.’ And even went so far as to say that some had no legal existence,” Vergara said. “The committee kept documents that made it impossible to deny the facts.”

According to Sepúlveda, almost 70% of the victims were registered during the first three months of the dictatorship. “That’s key to understanding why our society was hit so hard,” she said.

Pinochet died in 2006 without being convicted of any crimes. The foundation continues to seek justice by keeping the archive safe and promoting the legacy of the Vicariate.

“In addition, many have never wanted to recognize the seriousness of the coup or the violations of human rights,” Sepúlveda said. “They say, ‘Let’s forget.’”

For thousands like her, it’s impossible. “I would have liked these 50 years to have been different, that society would have understood the need to have a real commitment to human rights and democracy, that the coup would have been rejected by the majority of society.”



## **Biden refuses to grant some of the conditions that 9/11 defendants were seeking in plea negotiations**

By AAMER MADHANI and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has refused to approve some of the conditions that lawyers for the defendants in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks had sought in a possible plea bargain, ruling out a presidential guarantee that the five men would be spared solitary confinement and provided care for the trauma of their torture in CIA custody, a White House National Security Council official said Wednesday.

Biden's refusal on the plea-bargain guarantees leaves it to military prosecutors and defense lawyers to try to hash out an agreement on a plea bargain. The terms under discussion would have the five Guantanamo detainees plead guilty and serve life sentences in exchange for being spared the death penalty.

Lawyers for the two sides have been exploring a negotiated resolution to the case for about 1 1/2 years. They had been waiting for about a year of that time to see if Biden would express opposition or support for some of the conditions that defense lawyers had been seeking.

Biden agreed with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's recommendation not to accept the proposed terms as a basis for plea negotiations, according to the National Security Council official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Biden was unsettled about accepting terms for the plea from those responsible for the deadliest assault on the United States since Pearl Harbor, the official said.

The White House had been reluctant to weigh in on the matter. Biden believed that the decision was the responsibility of the senior military official overseeing the U.S. military proceedings at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, according to another person familiar with the matter who also was not authorized to comment and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The five defendants include Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused as the architect of the attacks, which were waged by commandeered commercial jetliners. The al-Qaida plot killed nearly 3,000 people outright in New York, the Washington, D.C.-area and Pennsylvania. The attack also changed the course of U.S. foreign policy and sparked deadly U.S. military invasions of Afghanistan, which had hosted al-Qaida, and Iraq, which had no role in the plot.

Pretrial hearings for the five have been under way at the U.S. military commission at Guantanamo Bay for more than a decade, with no trial date set. Legal questions, including the legal ramifications of the torture the men underwent after capture in the years immediately after the attack, have complicated the case. So have the logistical challenges of holding the proceedings outside the United States.

Announcement of Biden's decision not to accede to some of the conditions sought by defense lawyers comes after U.S. military officials formally notified a widened circle of family members of 9/11 victims of the terms of the plea negotiations that were underway. Several of the survivors then spoke out publicly against a deal that would spare the five accused a trial and the risk of a death penalty.

Brett Eagleson, whose father was killed in the 2001 attacks, welcomed the administration's decision. "We look forward to the day that we can praise our government for finally giving us justice and holding all parties involved in the attacks accountable," he said in a statement.

## **Flooding in southern Brazil leaves at least 31 dead and 2,300 homeless**

By WESLEY SANTOS and DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

MUCUM, Brazil (AP) — Flooding from a cyclone in southern Brazil washed away houses, trapped motorists in vehicles and swamped streets in several cities, killing at least 31 people and leaving 2,300 homeless, authorities said Wednesday.

More than 60 cities have been battered since Monday night by the storm, which has been Rio Grande do Sul state's deadliest, Gov. Eduardo Leite said.

"The fly-over we just did, shows the dimension of an absolutely out of the ordinary event," Leite said in

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a video posted on the state's social media accounts. "It wasn't just riverside communities that were hit, but entire cities that were completely compromised."

Videos shot by rescue teams Tuesday and published by the online news site G1 had shown some families on the top of their houses pleading for help as rivers overflowed their banks. Some areas were entirely cut off after wide avenues turned into fast-moving rivers.

Leite said Wednesday that the death toll had reached 31, and state emergency authorities said at least 2,300 people were made homeless. Another 3,000 had to temporarily evacuate their houses.

In Mucum, a city of about 50,000 residents, rescuers found 15 bodies in a single house. Once the storm had passed, residents discovered a trail of destruction along the river with most buildings swept away down to the ground level. Images showed a sheep hanging from an electrical line — an indication of how high the water had risen.

"The water arrived very fast, it was rising two meters (6½ feet) an hour," Mucum resident Marcos Antonio Gomes said, standing on top of a pile of debris. "We have nothing left. Not even clothes."

In an indication of how long people might be stranded, the Mucum city hall advised residents Tuesday to seek out supplies to meet their needs for the next 72 hours. Other towns called on their citizens with boats to help with rescue efforts.

Gomes, a 55-year-old businessman, said it was the fourth time in 15 years that his house was damaged by floods. He said this one was the worst so far, and he expects more flooding in the future.

"There's no way we can live here. This will come back. We have to abandon (this place)," Gomes said.

Many of the victims died from electrical shock, or were trapped in vehicles, online news site G1 reported. One woman died as she was swept away during a rescue attempt.

Search and rescue teams have focused on the Taquari Valley, about 150 kilometers (30 miles) northwest of the state capital, Porto Alegre, where most of the victims and damage were recorded. But those efforts expanded farther west on Wednesday morning, with helicopters sent to the Rio Pardo Valley.

More heavy rains were expected to hit the state's center-south region, while possibly sparing worst-hit areas. Authorities maintained three flooding alerts on Wednesday — for the Jacui, Cai and Taquari rivers.

Rio Grande do Sul was hit by another cyclone in June, which killed 16 people and caused destruction in 40 cities, many of those around Porto Alegre.

## Phoenix on track to set another heat record, this time for most daily highs at or above 110 degrees

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Phoenix, already the hottest large city in America, is poised to set yet another heat record this weekend while confirmed heat-associated deaths are on track for a record of their own.

The National Weather Service says after a brief respite from the heat over the Labor Day holiday, the city is expected to break its previous record of 53 days of 110-degree Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) weather in a single year, set in 2020. Afternoon weekend highs will range between 108 and 113 degrees Fahrenheit (42.2-45 Celsius) across Arizona's lower deserts.

"Remember to stay hydrated and avoid sun exposure from 10am to 6pm this weekend!" the weather service advised on social media.

Phoenix has now seen 52 days of temperatures at or above 110 degrees in 2023 and is expected to hit that mark again on both Saturday and Sunday, when an extreme heat watch will be in effect, local meteorologists said. The temperature could also hit 110 degrees on Monday.

The high on Wednesday was 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42.2 Celsius).

The desert city set a record in July with a 31-day streak of highs at or above 110 degrees. The previous record was 18 straight days, set in 1974.

It was part of a historic heat wave this summer that stretched from Texas across New Mexico and Arizona and into California's desert.

Phoenix has now seen 100 days with 100-degree Fahrenheit-plus (37.7 Celsius) temperatures this year

million people and a GDP of \$30 billion?

Some also fret that China, which is assertively seeking to expand its global influence, could misuse the grouping to push its own agenda while giving the impression that it speaks for the majority of the world.

It has been speculated that that was behind the decision in May of the G7 nations — all Global North countries — to refrain from using “Global South” in their final summit communique, even though Kishida himself favors it.

“There is every danger that the Global South will end up becoming a weapon in the hands of revisionist states, like China, who would want to use the voice of the Global South to promote their great power interests,” says Happymon Jacob.

For his part, Modi has stressed the commonality of many issues facing the Global South, such as emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, rising debt, and food and energy security.

Ian Lesser, vice president of the German Marshall Fund and director of its Brussels office, notes that most discomfort with the term comes from Global North countries, and that “Global South” is widely used by the countries that make it up.

Even though the Global South is not a group with a monolithic view or widespread uniformity, he says what’s important is that it reflects how the group sees itself.

“There is embedded in it a notion that not all strategies need to be made in the West,” Lesser said.

“For some this is simply a way to assert a degree of historic independence and distance on key issues ... and it is affecting the way Europe and the United States think about foreign policy, and the idea that we need to live in a world where not everyone will be on the same page with us on every issue.”

## **Hundreds of military promotions are on hold as Republican senator demands end to abortion policy**

By KEVIN FREKING and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top defense officials are accusing Alabama Sen. Tommy Tuberville of jeopardizing America’s national security with his hold on roughly 300 military promotions, raising the stakes in a clash over abortion policy that shows no signs of easing.

Tuberville brushed off the criticism, vowing he will not give in. “We’re going to be in a holding pattern for a long time,” he said, if the Pentagon refuses to end its policy of paying for travel when a service member goes out of state to get an abortion or other reproductive care.

It’s a classic Washington standoff with rippling effects across the country, placing the lives of servicemembers effectively on hold as they await what has traditionally been routine Senate approval for their promotions.

Frustration mounting, the secretaries of the Navy, Air Force and Army wrote an op-ed in the Washington Post this week saying Tuberville’s efforts were not only unfair to the military leaders and their families but also “putting our national security at risk.”

They noted that three military branches — the Army, Navy and Marine Corps — have no Senate-confirmed chiefs in place. Those jobs are being performed without the full range of legal authorities necessary to make decisions that will sustain the U.S.’s military edge, they wrote.

In a CNN interview, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro accused Tuberville of “playing Russia roulette with the very lives of our servicemembers by denying them the opportunity to actually have the most experienced combat leaders in those positions to lead them in times of peace and in times of combat.”

Looking ahead, the secretaries said in their op-ed that prolonged uncertainty and political battles over military nominations “will have a corrosive effect on the force.”

“The generals and admirals who will be leading our forces a decade from now are colonels and captains today,” they wrote. “They are watching this spectacle and might conclude that their service at the highest ranks of our military is no longer valued by members of Congress or, by extension, the American public.”

Tuberville took umbrage with the three defense secretaries. He said they should have spoken with him

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as of Wednesday. That's in line so far with the average of 111 days hitting triple digits every year between 1991 and 2020.

Maricopa County, home to Phoenix and the most populous county in Arizona, also appears headed toward an annual record for heat-associated deaths.

The suspected heat victims have included a hiker who collapsed in the blazing sun on a city trail, and a 9-year-old migrant boy who died in Mesa, Arizona after falling ill while crossing the Arizona-Mexico border with his family.

County public health officials said Wednesday there have been 194 heat-associated deaths confirmed for this year as of Sept. 2. Another 351 are under investigation.

There were 153 heat-associated deaths in the county confirmed by the same week last year, with another 238 deaths under investigation.

Maricopa County has confirmed 425 heat-related deaths in 2022.

"Given the number of confirmed heat-associated deaths and the number that are currently under investigation, it's possible we could have even more heat-associated deaths this year than in 2022," said Sonia Singh, supervisor for Maricopa County Public Health Department's office of communications. "These heat deaths are preventable, however, and with the temperatures we are still seeing, it's important that people don't let their guard down.

"Continue to take precautions like staying hydrated, do outdoor work or exercise in the cooler parts of the day, and stay in air-conditioned spaces during the hottest parts of the day," Singh added.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs in mid-August declared a state of emergency following more than a month of extreme heat statewide.

Hobbs said then that the declaration would allow the state to reimburse various government entities for funds spent on providing relief from high temperatures.

## **Russian missile strike on Ukrainian market kills 17 as Blinken announces new \$1B aid package**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile tore through an outdoor market in eastern Ukraine on Wednesday, killing 17 people and wounding dozens, as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned to the country with more than \$1 billion in new American funding for Ukraine, including military and humanitarian aid.

Blinken's fourth visit to the country was overshadowed by the strike in the city of Kostiantynivka, near the front line in the Donetsk region, that turned the marketplace into an inferno. It was one of the deadliest bombardments of civilians in the 18-month-old war. In addition to the dead, at least 32 people were wounded.

"Those who know this place are well aware that it is a civilian area," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at a news conference with the Danish prime minister in Kyiv. "There aren't any military units nearby. The strike was deliberate."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said such brutal Russian attacks underscore "the importance of continuing to support the people of Ukraine."

Blinken's visit was aimed at assessing Ukraine's 3-month-old counteroffensive and signaling continued U.S. support as some Western allies express worries about Kyiv's slow progress against invading Russian forces.

"We want to make sure that Ukraine has what it needs, not only to succeed in the counteroffensive but has what it needs for the long-term, to make sure that it has a strong deterrent," Blinken said. "We're also determined to continue to work with our partners as they build and rebuild a strong economy, strong democracy."

About \$175 million of the total is in the form of weaponry to be provided from Pentagon stockpiles and another \$100 million is in the form of grants to allow the Ukrainians to purchase additional arms and equipment, according to the State Department.

Noting progress in the counteroffensive, Blinken said the new aid "will help sustain it and build further



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momentum." He said the new military assistance would be bolstered by the arrival of U.S. Abrams tanks in the fall and the training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets to complement training in Europe.

In addition to the military assistance, Blinken announced nearly \$805 million in non-arms-related aid for Ukraine, including \$300 million for law enforcement, \$206 million in humanitarian aid, \$203 million to combat corruption and \$90.5 million for removing mines, the State Department said.

The package also includes a previously announced \$5.4 million transfer to Ukraine of frozen Russian oligarch assets.

The aid announced by Blinken comes from money previously approved by Congress. President Joe Biden has requested another \$21 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine for the final months of 2023, but it's not clear how much — if any — will be approved.

Many Republican lawmakers are wary of providing more aid, and the party's presidential front-runner, former President Donald Trump, has criticized U.S. financial support. Opinion polls also have shown a decline in support for the war by the American public.

Biden and the Pentagon have said repeatedly they will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. As of Aug. 29, there was approximately \$5.75 billion left in the already approved funding for weapons and equipment taken from existing Pentagon stocks.

Blinken was to discuss other issues, including support for Ukraine's economy, building on his June announcement of \$1.3 billion to help Kyiv rebuild, with a focus on modernizing its energy network, which was bombarded by Russia last winter.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said U.S. assistance to Ukraine "can't influence the course of the special military operation" — Moscow's euphemism for the war.

Blinken arrived in Kyiv for an overnight visit hours after Russia launched a missile attack on the city.

On the train to Kyiv, Blinken met with the Danish prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, who was also on an official visit, and thanked her for Denmark's leadership in training Ukrainian pilots on F-16s and for promising to donate the fighter jets to Ukraine, according to State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller.

Washington officials said there will be discussions of alternative export routes for Ukrainian grain following Russia's exit from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its frequent attacks on port facilities in the Odesa region.

Those alternatives may include new overland routes or ships hugging coastlines to keep out of international waters where they could be targeted by Russia's navy. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba also mentioned the potential to develop the Danube River corridor for grain exports.

After arriving in Kyiv, Blinken laid a wreath at the city's Berkovetske cemetery to commemorate Ukrainian troops killed defending the country.

In a meeting, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Ukraine is grateful the U.S. money is coming in the form of grants, not loans that would drive it into debt.

In other developments, Russia fired cruise missiles overnight at Kyiv in its first aerial attack on the capital since Aug. 30, according to Serhii Popko, the head of Kyiv's regional military administration. Debris from a downed missile caused a fire and damage but no casualties.

One person was killed in the Odesa region in a Russian missile and drone attack on the port of Izmail that damaged grain elevators, administrative buildings and agricultural enterprises, authorities said.

The trip was Blinken's fourth to Ukraine since the war began, including one brief excursion over the Polish-Ukrainian border in March 2022, just a month after the Russian invasion. But it will be the first time America's top diplomat spends the night in Kyiv since January 2022, before the invasion, in what U.S. officials called another sign of American support.

Blinken's visit comes after some of Ukraine's allies have privately expressed concern that Ukrainian troops may fail to reach their objectives.

While the U.S. has been concerned by some day-to-day battlefield setbacks, American officials said, they are still generally encouraged by Ukraine's handling of the military situation, particularly its air defense capabilities in knocking down Russian drones aimed at Kyiv.

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Western analysts and military officials caution that the counteroffensive's success is far from certain and that it could take years to rid Ukraine of entrenched, powerfully armed and skilled Russian troops.

Both sides will have to assess their supply shortages, with more battles of attrition likely over the winter. A long war could stretch deep into next year and beyond, according to experts.

## Russian missile turns Ukrainian market into fiery, blackened ruin strewn with bodies

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

KOSTIANTYNIVKA, Ukraine (AP) — The Russian missile that struck Wednesday in eastern Ukraine turned an outdoor market into a fiery, blackened ruin where weeping civilians looked for loved ones among the mangled, burned bodies scattered across the ground.

The blast in the town of Kostiantynivka killed 17 people and wounded at least 32 in one of Russia's deadliest strikes on civilians in months, Ukrainian officials said.

"There was no military target here. This is a peaceful neighborhood in the city center," Stefan Slovak, who lives in Kostiantynivka, said in a trembling voice.

Behind him were the remnants of the market, where charred bodies could be seen in the street, their clothes still burning, near cars engulfed in flames. Behind a market stall holding fresh parsley, rescuers found a woman in civilian clothes with her head covered in blood.

Video taken by The Associated Press showed a chaotic scene, with charred bodies lying on the ground, some of them still burning. As firefighters tried to douse the flames, first responders rushed to apply tourniquets and load the wounded into emergency vehicles using stretchers and blankets. Posters or tarps were used to cover some of the dead. Onlookers cried and consoled one another.

"They are shooting at peaceful civilians. Are we soldiers here? Are we shooting at them? No! So why? They are just trying to destroy Ukrainian nation," said resident Nadezhda Negoda.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the strike was deliberate. He has visited the town many times on trips to the front line.

"Those who know this place are well aware that it is a civilian area. There aren't any military units nearby," Zelenskyy said during a news conference in Kyiv with visiting Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

He said the strike reflects the situation on the battlefield.

"Whenever there are any positive advances by Ukrainian defense forces in that direction, Russians always target civilian people and civilian objects," he said.

Ukraine's minister of internal affairs, Ihor Klymenko reported that emergency workers extinguished the flames that burned an area of 300 square meters (3,200 square feet). Eight market installations and some cars were destroyed.

About 30 pavilions were damaged, along with 20 shops, an administrative building, an apartment building and some power lines, according to Ukraine's general prosecutor's office.

The attack came as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Kyiv, where he was expected to announce more than \$1 billion in new American funding for Ukraine in the 18-month-old war.

## Felony convictions vacated for 4 former Navy officers in sprawling 'Fat Leonard' bribery scandal

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The felony convictions of four former Navy officers in one of the worst bribery cases in the maritime branch's history were vacated Wednesday following allegations of prosecutorial misconduct, the latest setback to the government's yearslong efforts in going after dozens of military officials tied to a defense contractor nicknamed Fat Leonard.

U.S. District Judge Janis Sammartino called the misconduct "outrageous" and agreed to allow the four men to plead guilty to a misdemeanor and pay a \$100 fine each. Last year after the trial, Sammartino

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had ruled the lead federal prosecutor committed "flagrant misconduct" by withholding information from defense lawyers but said at the time that it was not enough to dismiss the case.

The surprising turn came at a sentencing hearing in federal court in San Diego.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Ko, who was brought on after the trial last year, admitted to "serious issues" and asked the judge to vacate the officers' felony convictions.

He said his office does not agree with all of the allegations but said errors were made.

"There were pretty obviously serious issues that affect our ability to go forward" defending the convictions or seeking a new trial, Ko told the judge, according to the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Andrew Haden, acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern California District, reiterated that in a statement after the hearing.

"As stated in court, we do not agree with all the allegations or characterizations in the motions or in court," Haden said. "We recognize and regret, however, that errors were made, and we have an obligation to ensure fairness and justice. The resolutions of these defendants' cases reflect that."

Haden added that it "is also significant that the four officers who stood before the court today admitted for the first time, under oath, that they broke the law and are guilty of crimes related to their official duties."

The officers — former Capts. David Newland, James Dolan and David Lausman and former Cmdr. Mario Herrera — were previously convicted by a federal jury on various counts of accepting bribes from foreign defense contractor Leonard Francis, and his company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, or GDMA.

On Wednesday three of them pleaded guilty to one count each of disclosing information to Francis, and Lausman pleaded guilty to a charge of destruction of government property, for smashing a hard drive with a hammer.

Defense attorney Todd Burns, who represented Dolan, said his client was relieved to have this behind him. He and defense attorneys for the three other men had filed hundreds of pages outlining how the monthslong trial was rife with misconduct from prosecutors hiding evidence, ignoring false testimony and concealing facts that questioned the credibility of key witnesses.

"The government has a massive amount of power to coerce things, and that power is still evident in this context," Burns said.

He said his client agreed to plead guilty to a misdemeanor after a decade of fighting the allegations against him, "bleeding legal fees" and enduring stress on his family.

"These four guys were facing what was going to be sentences by the original prosecutors that were going to be absolutely devastating financially and custody-wise," he said. "Then they were offered a deal to plead to a misdemeanor and a \$100 fine to walk away and end this brutal chapter."

The men spent more than a year asking for a retrial. Theirs was the only case to go to trial out of the more than two dozen defendants charged. The jury deadlocked and reached no verdict on charges against a fifth defendant, retired Rear Adm. Bruce Loveless, and prosecutors later dropped those charges.

Nearly two dozen Navy officials, defense contractors and others have been convicted and sentenced on various fraud and corruption charges.

Several others are awaiting sentencing next month. It's not clear if this could jeopardize those cases.

Francis admitted to buying off dozens of top-ranking officers with booze, sex, lavish parties and other gifts. Prosecutors say he bilked the Navy out of more than \$35 million.

Three weeks before the Malaysian defense contractor faced sentencing last year, Francis made a stunning escape, snipping off his ankle monitor and fleeing the San Diego residence where he had been under house arrest.

The escape was also seen by some as a misstep by the prosecution for allowing him to not be held behind bars. He was later captured in Venezuela, where he remains.

The four former officers had served in the Navy's 7th Fleet in the Eastern Pacific, where Francis' company supplied ships for decades.

Francis was arrested in a San Diego hotel in September 2013 as part of a federal sting. Investigators say he and his company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, bribed officers so he could overcharge for supplying ships or charge for fake services at ports he controlled in Southeast Asia.

The case, which delved into salacious details about service members cheating on their wives and seeking out prostitutes, was an embarrassment to the Pentagon. The U.S. attorney's office handled the prosecution, offering independence from the military justice system.

## Nia DaCosta makes her mark on Marvel history with 'The Marvels': Fall Movie Preview

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Nia DaCosta, director of the upcoming "The Marvels," has a diagnosis for the recent struggles of superhero movies. It basically comes down to, she says, "Mo' money, mo' problems."

Success inevitably breeds bigger budgets. Box-office expectations get inflated. Even superhero spandex can't sustain endless cycles of wash, rinse and repeat.

"Growth has to stop at some point," says DaCosta. "As you make more and more films, you want those films to be more interesting, more dynamic and to appeal to different audiences. But that requires risk. And there's a conundrum where you're so big that you can't take risks. I think that's what the audience is feeling. They're like: 'I've seen it before, and I liked it the first time.'"

When "The Marvels" opens in theaters Nov. 10, it will be debuting in uncommonly uncertain times for superhero films. There's talk of over-saturation. DC and Warner Bros. are in makeover mode. Box office-dominance this year has been ceded to Barbie and Mario.

While no one's doubting the supersized place of superheroes in Hollywood, mass success for Marvel no longer seems quite so automatic. For DaCosta, whose two previous films were the Jordan Peele-produced horror remake "Candyman" and the acclaimed 2018 indie crime drama "Little Woods," it's imperative that superhero movies aspire to be fresh and daring — like "Across the Spider-Verse."

"The more we can do that as an industry, the better," DaCosta said in a recent interview, praising the originality of that animated Marvel movie released earlier this year. "I also think you have to not set your sights on such a big box-office return so then you can comfortably take risks."

"The Marvels," which stars Bree Larson, Teyonah Parris, Iman Vellani and Samuel L. Jackson, isn't anyone's idea of going far out on a limb. It's loosely a sequel to 2019's "Captain Marvel," which surpassed \$1.1 billion worldwide. By any measure, "The Marvels" is one of the fall's most anticipated titles.

But it's also a big-budget attempt to try some new things. It's the first Marvel movie to feature not just all-female leads but a female villain (Zawe Ashton plays Dar-Benn), as well. DaCosta, 33, is the youngest filmmaker to helm an MCU release. She's also the first Black woman to do so.

"Day to day, I don't really think about it. But it is nice to finally have a Black woman directing one — it just happens to be me," DaCosta says, laughing. "What was cool about realizing that, I was sort of like: Wow, I'm the first Black woman. But I'm also the third woman and the fourth or fifth person of color. It was cool to see that I wasn't just stepping into an all-white, all-male world."

"The Marvels" brings together Carol Danvers/Captain Marvel (Larson), Monica Rambeau/Photon (Parris) and Kamala Khan/Ms. Marvel (Vellani). While originally conceived as a post-"Endgame" follow-up to "Captain Marvel," Marvel chief Kevin Feige was drawn to the chance to unite Captain Marvel with Rambeau from "WandaVision" and Ms. Marvel of her standalone Disney+ series.

In "The Marvels," the trio has become linked. Every time they use their powers, they swap places with each other, causing their worlds to collide in comic and surreal ways.

"When I was reading the outline that they sent me initially before I was pitching, I was like, 'This is insane,'" DaCosta says. "It felt so comic book-y. I was like, 'Wow, they're really going for it.'"

DaCosta was drawn to what she calls "a really crazy, sci-fi space opera" that was wacky and tonally different from most MCU films.

"I wanted to honor what they set out to do, which is make something very frankly strange," she says.

The heart of the film for DaCosta is about the dichotomy of Danvers and Ms. Marvel. While Danvers has been tirelessly doing the solitary work of Captain Marvel out in deep space, Ms. Marvel's foundation is her family.



DaCosta, a self-described workaholic, can relate.

"I mean, this my third film in six years and I'm onto my fourth," she says. "I'm from New York City and my family's mostly there and I've never shot there since I've been working. My mom once forgot to invite me to a family thing because she forgot I was in town. Stuff like that makes me go, 'I need to connect more.'"

That's hard, though, when you're one of Hollywood's fastest rising directors. DaCosta's ascent has been meteoric but steady, even though she's more comfortable with self-deprecation than self-promotion. Instead, her level-headed filmmaking talent — particularly for conjuring atmosphere and playing with perspective — has fueled her success.

DaCosta was speaking from London where she's preparing to make an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler," with "Little Woods" star Tessa Thompson. With the SAG-AFTRA strike holding up all studio productions, DaCosta was itching to get going — and only occasionally pacified by her half-Yorkie, half-Maltese dog named Maude.

After making "Candyman," a Marvel movie was, DaCosta says, "definitely not in my near future." But it also wasn't entirely off her radar. She's wanted to direct one since she started making films and traces her interest directly to Sam Raimi's "Spider-Man." She saw it when she was 12. "And I still love it," she says.

When DaCosta was tapped to helm "The Marvels," Feige encouraged her to reach out to other Marvel movie directors for advice. The bit that most stuck with her came from "Black Panther" director Ryan Coogler. He said simply: "Be yourself."

"I was like, 'Wait, what?' Then I kind of got it," says DaCosta. "He was like: Just bring yourself to it. It's a big thing. It's really a Kevin Feige movie, it's a Marvel film. But they chose you for a reason."

## **A judge orders Texas to move a floating barrier that's used to deter migrants between US and Mexico**

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas must move a large floating barrier that Gov. Greg Abbott placed on the river between the U.S. and Mexico this summer as part of the Republican's escalating attempts to stop migrants from crossing America's southern border, a federal judge ruled Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge David Ezra stopped short of ordering Texas to dismantle the wrecking-ball sized buoys on the Rio Grande but called them a threat to safety and relationships between the neighboring countries. His preliminary injunction instructs Texas, for now, to move the barrier out of the water and onto the riverbank by Sept. 15.

Ezra also cast doubt on Texas' rationale for the barrier, writing that the state produced no "credible evidence that the buoy barrier as installed has significantly curtailed illegal immigration."

The lawsuit was brought by the Justice Department in a rare instance of President Joe Biden's administration going to court to challenge Texas' border policies.

Texas officials said they would appeal.

"Today's court decision merely prolongs President Biden's willful refusal to acknowledge that Texas is rightfully stepping up to do the job that he should have been doing all along," Abbott said.

Abbott invoked "invasion" powers to deploy aggressive new tactics starting last year. Texas' use of dozens of bright orange buoys to create a barrier longer than a soccer field on a stretch of river where migrants often try crossing from Mexico is just one piece of his multibillion-dollar border mission known as Operation Lone Star. The state has also installed razor-wire fencing along the river and allowed troopers to arrest migrants on trespassing charges, among other things.

Ezra, an appointee of former President Ronald Reagan, rejected Abbott's justification for all of Texas' actions.

"Under this logic, once Texas decides, in its sole discretion, that it has been invaded, it is subject to no oversight of its 'chosen means of waging war,'" Ezra wrote. "Such a claim is breathtaking."

In challenging Texas' use of the buoys, the U.S. Justice Department accused the state of putting a barrier on the international boundary without permission. The Biden administration also said the water barrier

raised humanitarian and environmental concerns.

"We are pleased that the court ruled that the barrier was unlawful and irreparably harms diplomatic relations, public safety, navigation, and the operations of federal agency officials in and around the Rio Grande," Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta said in a statement.

Texas installed the barrier near the border town of Eagle Pass by putting anchors in the riverbed. Eagle Pass is part of a Border Patrol sector that has seen the second-highest number of migrant crossings this fiscal year with about 270,000 encounters — though that is lower than it was at this time last year.

The Biden administration has said illegal border crossings declined after new immigration rules took effect in May as pandemic-related asylum restrictions expired.

Like other pieces of Operation Lone Star, the buoys pick up where former President Donald Trump left off. Plans for the same water barrier were in the pipeline in 2020, according to Mark Morgan, who at the time was the acting commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Morgan said the plans were scrapped after Biden took office. He called the barrier a "water wall" and said it was intended to be used as a stopgap in sections of the border where fences were not yet built or were impractical.

## **Pennsylvania murderer escaped by scaling a wall topped with razor wire, prison official says**

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI Associated Press

WEST CHESTER, Pa. (AP) — A murderer made a brazen escape from a suburban Philadelphia jail yard by scaling a wall, climbing over razor wire and jumping from a roof in a breakout that wasn't detected by guards for a full hour, authorities said Wednesday as the killer eluded a widening manhunt for a seventh day.

The timeline and details of Danelo Cavalcante's escape — including that he got out using the same route another prisoner took in May — were released as police from various agencies flooded a search zone of increasingly worried residents. A tower guard on duty during the breakout was put on leave as part of the escape investigation.

The escape and search have attracted international attention and became big news in Cavalcante's native Brazil. The main newspaper in Rio de Janeiro ran a lengthy story Wednesday with the headline "Dangerous hide-and-seek."

Howard Holland, the acting warden of the Chester County Prison, played a security video at a news conference Wednesday. It shows the 34-year-old Cavalcante standing in a passageway next to the jail yard before bracing his hands on one wall and his feet on another then "crab-walking" up the walls out of the camera's view.

Holland said the prison had brought in a consultant after the first escape in May and added razor wire to that area.

"What was perhaps overlooked was the fact that addressing the single point of physical countermeasures should have been bolstered by additional means. We are addressing that," Holland said. He said the prison was fully staffed when Cavalcante broke out.

The prison is considering adding officers to the yard during recreation times, as well as caging in the top of those yards, Holland said. The Pennsylvania attorney general's office has taken over the escape investigation, he said.

Holland said the inmate who escaped in May was returned within minutes after a tower guard quickly sounded the alarm. He said Cavalcante was identified as missing after a headcount, more than an hour after the video was taken. A public siren was sounded about 10 a.m.

Holland declined to say why the guard, whose name has not been made public, had not noticed Cavalcante hopping from the roof and heading away from the prison's perimeter.

Cavalcante received a life sentence last month for killing his ex-girlfriend, Deborah Brandao, in front of her children in 2021, and escaped while awaiting transfer to state prison. Prosecutors say he killed her to stop her from telling police that he's wanted in a 2017 killing back in Brazil.

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He had been captured in Virginia after Brandao's killing and authorities believe he was trying to return to Brazil.

Two suburban Philadelphia school districts remained shuttered and one of the nation's premier botanical gardens was closed Wednesday as authorities kept up their search.

Cavalcante has been spotted six times since he escaped, most recently Tuesday night when he was seen in a residential area but soon disappeared into the woods. He had been spotted Monday night at Longwood Gardens, where trail surveillance video captured him walking through the garden's grounds.

That sighting led officials to move the search area farther south Tuesday after they determined Cavalcante had likely slipped through the original perimeter set by hundreds law enforcement officers, including heavily armed police.

Authorities have urged residents to keep their homes and vehicles locked, to check the properties of vacationing neighbors and to look out for missing cars, bicycles or other transportation Cavalcante might use.

"It's unnerving to know that I can't stand in my backyard with my dogs. My husband has to come outside with me and, you know, it's just an uneasy feeling," said Danielle Lawrence, of Pocopson, which is near the county's jail, roughly 25 miles (40 kilometers) west of Philadelphia.

Ryan Drummond, whose Pocopson home was broken into late Friday by a man believed to be Cavalcante, voiced similar views. He believes Cavalcante came in through French doors that had a broken lock — and perhaps was nearby when his family was talking about the problem as they locked up the house that night.

"We're still operating in this half-normal life right now, meaning the kids are off school. Parents are trying to do the COVID balance of working and managing their children," Drummond said Wednesday.

The intruder left with "a peach, an apple, maybe a few snap peas" that he found on the kitchen counter, Drummond said, along with a white hat that he soon lost as he fled past a neighbor's yard.

"Everybody wants this to be over," said Drummond, who said his frustration lies not with the search efforts but with the prison. "How can it be going on almost a week at this point?"

## Mexico decriminalizes abortion, extending Latin American trend of widening access to procedure

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ and MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's Supreme Court threw out all federal criminal penalties for abortion Wednesday, ruling that national laws prohibiting the procedure are unconstitutional and violate women's rights in a sweeping decision that extended Latin American's trend of widening abortion access.

The high court ordered that abortion be removed from the federal penal code. The ruling will require the federal public health service and all federal health institutions to offer abortion to anyone who requests it.

"No woman or pregnant person, nor any health worker, will be able to be punished for abortion," the Information Group for Chosen Reproduction, known by its Spanish initials GIRE, said in a statement.

Some 20 Mexican states, however, still criminalize abortion. While judges in those states will have to abide by the court's decision, further legal work will be required to remove all penalties.

Celebration of the ruling soon spilled out onto social media.

"Today is a day of victory and justice for Mexican women!" Mexico's National Institute for Women wrote in a message on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. The government organization called the decision a "big step" toward gender equality.

Sen. Olga Sánchez Cordero, a former Supreme Court justice, applauded the ruling, saying on X that it represented an advance toward "a more just society in which the rights of all are respected." She called on Mexico's Congress to pass legislation in response.

But others in the highly religious country decried the decision. Irma Barrientos, director of the Civil Association for the Rights of the Conceived, said opponents will continue the fight against expanded abortion access.

"We're not going to stop," Barrientos said. "Let's remember what happened in the United States. After 40 years, the Supreme Court reversed its abortion decision, and we're not going to stop until Mexico

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guarantees the right to life from the moment of conception.”

The court said on X that “the legal system that criminalized abortion” in Mexican federal law was unconstitutional because it “violates the human rights of women and people with the ability to gestate.”

The decision came two years after the court ruled that abortion was not a crime in one northern state. That ruling set off a slow state-by-state process of decriminalizing it.

Last week, the central state of Aguascalientes became the 12th state to drop criminal penalties.

Abortion-rights activists will have to continue seeking legalization state by state, though Wednesday’s decision should make that easier. State legislatures can also act on their own to erase abortion penalties.

For now, the ruling does not mean that every Mexican women will be able to access the procedure immediately, explained Fernanda Díaz de León, sub-director and legal expert for women’s rights group IPAS.

What it does do — in theory — is obligate federal agencies to provide the care to patients. That’s likely to have a cascade of effects.

Díaz de León said removing the federal ban takes away another excuse used by care providers to deny abortions in states where the procedure is no longer a crime.

It also allows women with formal employment who are part of the social security system and government employees to seek the procedure in federal institutions in states where the abortion is still criminalized, she said.

Díaz de León and officials at other feminist organizations worry that women, particularly in more conservative areas, may still be denied abortions.

“It’s a very important step,” Díaz de León said. But “we need to wait to see how this is going to be applied and how far it reaches.”

Across Latin America, countries have made moves to lift abortion restrictions in recent years, a trend often referred to as a “green wave,” in reference to the green bandanas carried by women protesting for abortion rights in the region.

The changes in Latin America stand in sharp contrast to increasing restrictions on abortion in parts of the United States. Some American women were already seeking help from Mexican abortion rights activists to obtain pills used to end pregnancies.

Mexico City was the first Mexican jurisdiction to decriminalize abortion 15 years ago.

After decades of work by activists across the region, the trend picked up speed in Argentina, which in 2020 legalized the procedure. In 2022, Colombia, a highly conservative country, did the same.

The U.S. Supreme Court last year overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 ruling that provided a right to abortion nationwide. Since then, most states led by conservative lawmakers and governors have adopted bans or tighter restrictions.

The fact that the U.S. government is politically divided makes a nationwide ban or legalization unlikely, at least in the short term.

Currently, abortion is banned throughout pregnancy — with limited exceptions — in 15 American states. Bans in two more states forbid abortion after cardiac activity can be detected, generally around six weeks into pregnancy and often before women know they are pregnant. Judges have put enforcement of restrictions on hold in at least four additional states.

Meanwhile, states with liberal governments have taken steps to try to protect abortion access.

Observers in Mexico agreed that it would take time to see how Wednesday’s ruling is applied.

In the southern state of Guerrero, Marina Reyna, director of the Guerrero Association Against Violence toward Women, cautioned that challenges would persist. Her state decriminalized abortion last year, but there are 22 open investigations against women accused of ending their pregnancies.

“There is still a lot of resistance,” she said.



## Prosecutors seeking new indictment for Hunter Biden before end of September

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors plan to seek a grand jury indictment of President Joe Biden's son Hunter before the end of the month, according to court documents filed Wednesday.

The filing came in a gun possession case in which Hunter Biden was accused of having a firearm while being a drug user, though prosecutors did not name exactly which charges they will seek. He has also been under investigation by federal prosecutors for his business dealings.

Prosecutors under U.S. Attorney for Delaware David Weiss, newly named a special counsel in the case, said they expect an indictment before Sept. 29.

Hunter Biden's lawyers, though, argued that prosecutors are barred from filing additional charges under an agreement the two sides previously reached in the gun case. It contains an immunity clause against federal prosecutions for some other potential crimes. Defense attorney Abbe Lowell said Hunter Biden has kept to the terms of the deal, including regular visits by the probation office.

"We expect a fair resolution of the sprawling, 5-year investigation into Mr. Biden that was based on the evidence and the law, not outside political pressure, and we'll do what is necessary on behalf of Mr. Biden to achieve that," he said in a statement.

Prosecutors have said that the gun agreement is dead along with the rest of the plea agreement that called for Hunter Biden to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax offenses. It fell apart after U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika raised questions about it during a court appearance in July.

The Justice Department did not have immediate comment.

News of a possible new indictment comes as House Republicans are preparing for a likely impeachment inquiry of President Biden over unsubstantiated claims that he played a role in his son's foreign business affairs during his time as vice president.

"If you look at all the information we have been able to gather so far, it is a natural step forward that you would have to go to an impeachment inquiry," House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., told Fox News recently.

The younger Biden has been the target of congressional investigations since Republicans gained control of the House in January, with lawmakers obtaining thousands of pages of financial records from various members of the Biden family through subpoenas to the Treasury Department and various financial institutions. Three powerful House committees are now pursuing several lines of inquiry related to the president and his son.

And while Republicans have sought to connect Hunter Biden's financial affairs directly to his father, they have failed to produce evidence that the president directly participated in his son's work, though he sometimes had dinner with Hunter Biden's clients or said hello to them on calls.

In recent months, Republicans have also shifted their focus to delving into the Justice Department's investigation of Hunter Biden after whistleblower testimony claimed he has received special treatment throughout the yearslong case.

Hunter Biden was charged in June with two misdemeanor crimes of failure to pay more than \$100,000 in taxes from over \$1.5 million in income in both 2017 and 2018. He had been expected to plead guilty in July, after he made an agreement with prosecutors, who were planning to recommend two years of probation. The case fell apart during the hearing after Noreika, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, raised multiple concerns about the specifics of the deal and her role in the proceedings.

If prosecutors file a new gun possession charge, it could run into court challenges. A federal appeals court in Louisiana ruled against the ban on gun possession by drug users last month, citing a 2022 gun ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court.

News of another indictment comes after U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland named Weiss a special counsel, giving him broad authority to investigate and report out his findings and intensifying the investigation into the president's son ahead of the 2024 election.

The White House Counsel's office referred questions to Hunter Biden's personal attorneys.

## **UAW chief: Union to strike any Detroit automaker that hasn't reached deal as contracts end next week**

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The head of the United Auto Workers warned Wednesday that the union plans to go on strike against any Detroit automaker that hasn't reached a new agreement by the time contracts expire next week.

"That's the plan," President Shawn Fain responded when asked if the union would strike any of the companies that haven't reached a tentative deal by the time their national contracts end.

A strike against all three major automakers — General Motors, Stellantis and Ford — could cause damage not only to the industry as a whole but also to the Midwest and even national economy, depending on how long it lasted. The auto industry accounts for about 3% of the nation's economic output. A prolonged strike could also lead eventually to higher vehicle prices.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Fain left open the possibility of avoiding a strike. He acknowledged, more explicitly than he has before, that the union will have to give up some of its demands to reach agreements. Contracts with the three companies will all expire at 11:59 p.m. Sept. 14.

"There's a lot of back and forth in bargaining," he said, "and naturally, when you go into bargaining, you don't always get everything you demand. Our workers have high expectations. We made a lot of sacrifices going back to the economic recession."

In the interview, Fain did report some progress in the negotiations, saying the union will meet Thursday with GM to hear the company's response to the UAW's economic demands. In addition, discussions are under way with Ford on wages and benefits. Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, has yet to make a counteroffer on wage and benefit demands, he said.

Stellantis said it will give the union a wage-and-benefit counteroffer by the end of the week, while Ford said it has a strong track record of creative solutions with the UAW. GM confirmed that it would meet Thursday with union representatives but wouldn't comment further.

Last week, the union filed charges of unfair labor practices against Stellantis and GM, and it said Ford's economic offer fell far short of its demands.

Marick Masters, a business professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, said he thought Fain's latest remarks suggest "that he is opening up to the realities of bargaining" as the strike deadline nears.

"As you get close to the deadline," Masters said, "you begin to realize the importance of trying to resolve a problem rather than make a point. Strikes are painful, especially for workers, and also for companies."

Fain's willingness to acknowledge publicly that he isn't going to achieve all the union's demands shows there is more flexibility in his approach than previously thought, Masters said.

Some signs of movement in the negotiations have emerged, raising the possibility, Masters said, that an agreement might be reached with one automaker that would set the pattern for the others.

"I think if they can avoid having to go out on strike and the pain that occurs and still get a very good bargain, I think they'll be better off," he said.

The union's demands include 46% across-the-board pay raises, a 32-hour week with 40 hours of pay, restoration of traditional pensions for new hires, union representation of workers at new battery plants and a restoration of traditional pensions. Top-scale UAW assembly plant workers make about \$32 an hour, plus annual profit sharing checks.

In his remarks to the AP, Fain argued that worker pay isn't what has driven up vehicle prices. The average price of a new car has leaped to more than \$48,000 on average, in part because of still-scarce supplies resulting from a global shortage of computer chips.

"In the last four years, the price of vehicles went up 30%," he said. "Our wages went up 6%. There were billions of dollars in shareholder dividends. So our wages aren't the problem."

While saying a strike by up to 146,000 members against all three major automakers is a real possibility,

Fain said the union doesn't want to strike and would prefer to reach new contracts with them.

## **A football coach who got job back after Supreme Court ruled he could pray on the field has resigned**

By ED KOMENDA Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A high school football coach in Washington state who won his job back after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled he could pray on the field resigned Wednesday after just one game back.

Assistant Bremerton High School coach Joe Kennedy made the announcement on his website, citing several reasons, including that he needed to care for an ailing family member out of state. He had been living full-time in Florida, and before the first game last Friday he said he didn't know if he'd continue coaching.

"I believe I can best continue to advocate for constitutional freedom and religious liberty by working from outside the school system so that is what I will do," Kennedy wrote. "I will continue to work to help people understand and embrace the historic ruling at the heart of our case."

Kennedy was not immediately available for comment Wednesday. His publicist, Jennifer Willingham, told The Associated Press he was on a plane back to Florida.

In a statement, the Bremerton School District confirmed Kennedy had submitted his resignation. School officials declined to comment on his exit, calling it a personnel matter.

Kennedy lost his job in 2015 and waged a seven-year legal battle to get it back.

School district officials had asked him to keep any on-field praying non-demonstrative or apart from students, saying they were concerned that tolerating his public post-game prayers would suggest government endorsement of religion, in violation of the separation of church and state.

He insisted on praying publicly at midfield after games, and the district placed him on leave and declined to renew his contract.

Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative majority sided with him, with Justice Neil Gorsuch writing that "the best of our traditions counsel mutual respect and tolerance, not censorship and suppression, for religious and nonreligious views alike."

Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a nonprofit organization that represented the school district in the case, argued that the Supreme Court should have dismissed the case as moot, as Kennedy no longer lived in Bremerton and had failed to notify the court of his 3,000-mile (4,800-kilometer) move to Florida.

"That Kennedy doesn't want to coach at Bremerton School District isn't a surprise," said Rachel Laser, the group's chief executive. "It's just one more example of why the Supreme Court should not have taken this case in the first place."

Kennedy was back on the sideline for the first time in nearly eight years last Friday night, but he said beforehand that he had mixed feelings about it and wasn't sure he'd keep coaching.

"Knowing that everybody's expecting me to go do this kind of gives me a lot of angst in my stomach," Kennedy told the AP. "People are going to freak out that I'm bringing God back into public schools."

After the game — a 27-12 win over visiting Mount Douglas Secondary School — Kennedy strode alone to midfield, then knelt and prayed for about 10 seconds.

Kennedy was not joined by any athletes or others on the nearly empty field. There was scattered applause from the modest crowd.

Kennedy's fight to get his job became a cultural touchstone, pitting the religious liberties of government employees against longstanding principles protecting students from religious coercion. He appeared at a 2016 rally for Donald Trump.

He and his wife recently had dinner with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a GOP presidential hopeful who asked for his help on the campaign trail. Kennedy declined, saying he's loyal to Trump.

## **This summer was a global record breaker for the highest heat ever measured, meteorologists say**

By JAMEY KEATEN and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Earth has sweltered through its hottest Northern Hemisphere summer ever measured, with a record warm August capping a season of brutal and deadly temperatures, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

Last month was not only the hottest August scientists ever recorded by far with modern equipment, it was also the second hottest month measured, behind only July 2023, WMO and the European climate service Copernicus announced Wednesday.

August was about 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial averages. That is the threshold that the world is trying not to pass, though scientists are more concerned about rises in temperatures over decades, not merely a blip over a month's time.

The world's oceans — more than 70% of the Earth's surface — were the hottest ever recorded, nearly 21 C (69.8 F), and have set high temperature marks for three consecutive months, the WMO and Copernicus said.

"The dog days of summer are not just barking, they are biting," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement. "Climate breakdown has begun."

So far, 2023 is the second hottest year on record, behind 2016, according to Copernicus.

Scientists blame ever warming human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas with an extra push from a natural El Nino, which is a temporary warming of parts of the Pacific Ocean that changes weather worldwide. Usually an El Nino, which started earlier this year, adds extra heat to global temperatures but more so in its second year.

Climatologist Andrew Weaver said the numbers announced by WMO and Copernicus come as no surprise, bemoaning how governments have not appeared to take the issue of global warming seriously enough. He expressed concern that the public will just forget the issue when temperatures fall again.

"It's time for global leaders to start telling the truth," said Weaver, a professor at the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences at the University of Victoria in Canada. "We will not limit warming to 1.5 C; we will not limit warming to 2.0 C. It's all hands on deck now to prevent 3.0 C global warming — a level of warming that will wreak havoc worldwide."

Copernicus, a division of the European Union's space program, has records going back to 1940, but in the United Kingdom and the United States, global records go back to the mid 1800s and those weather and science agencies are expected to soon report that the summer was a record-breaker.

"What we are observing, not only new extremes but the persistence of these record-breaking conditions, and the impacts these have on both people and planet, are a clear consequence of the warming of the climate system," Copernicus Climate Change Service Director Carlo Buontempo said.

Scientists have used tree rings, ice cores and other proxies to estimate that temperatures are now warmer than they have been in about 120,000 years. The world has been warmer before, but that was prior to human civilization, seas were much higher and the poles were not icy.

So far, daily September temperatures are higher than what has been recorded before for this time of year, according to the University of Maine's Climate Reanalyzer.

While the world's air and oceans were setting records for heat, Antarctica continued to set records for low amounts of sea ice, the WMO said.

"Antarctic sea ice extent was literally off the charts, and the global sea surface temperature was once again at a new record," WMO's secretary-general, Petteri Taalas, said in a statement released to the media. "It is worth noting that this is happening BEFORE we see the full warming impact of the El Nino event, which typically plays out in the second year after it develops."

A strong El Nino coincided with the all-time high temperatures in 2016. The U.N. weather agency earlier this year rolled out predictions that suggest Earth would within the next five years have a year that averages 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than in the mid 19th century. Each year at or near 1.5 matters.



It also predicted 98% chance of breaking the 2016 record between now and 2027.

The new readings on high global temperatures came as WMO released Wednesday its latest bulletin on air quality and climate, noting that extreme heat, compounded by wildfires and desert dust, has had a measurable impact on air quality, human health and the environment.

WMO scientific adviser Lorenzo Labrador lamented the deteriorating air quality around the globe and cited "record-breaking wildfire season" in many parts of the world, including western Canada and Europe.

"If heat waves increase as a result of El Nino, we may probably expect a further degradation in air quality as a whole," he said.

## **Schools dismiss early, teach online as blast of heat hits northeastern US**

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

A blast of late summer heat caused disruptions Wednesday for schools from Michigan to Virginia, with some districts dismissing students early and others holding classes online just days into the new academic year.

While temperatures weren't as high as last month's triple-digit deadly heat wave, schools in states including Michigan, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey cited inadequate air conditioning in cutting days short. One Massachusetts district canceled two days of classes because of hot classrooms. Temperatures in the mid-90s also led to online learning in Pittsburgh and Baltimore.

Only 20% of public schools in Detroit, where the temperature reached 89 degrees Tuesday but dropped Wednesday, have air conditioning. The district dismissed its roughly 54,000 students three hours early Wednesday for the second consecutive day.

"We never want to inconvenience our families with early releases, but we also do not want our staff and students to be so uncomfortable that teaching and learning becomes a distraction to the heat," Detroit Public Schools Community District spokeswoman Chrystal Wilson said in a statement.

The early dismissals caused headaches for families who had to scramble to make last-minute schedule changes.

Parent Natesha Myers, who works from home, opted to keep her 5-year-old daughter with her. Myers said she would not have been able to pick her daughter up from her Detroit school three hours early because of scheduled work meetings.

"It was very difficult and stressful," Myers said. "I had to give her the iPad. She kept trying to climb on my lap."

Late summer heat isn't unusual. But temperatures at the start of the school year have been getting warmer for years.

For instance, Philadelphia's expected high of 95 on Wednesday is 13 degrees higher than the normal high for the day, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data. The holiday weekend also followed the hottest August scientists have ever recorded with modern equipment; scientists blame human-caused climate change.

The first week of school in Philadelphia this week saw early dismissals for dozens of schools "without air conditioning or inadequate cooling." The district announced Wednesday that more than 80 schools would end classes early the rest of the week.

District spokeswoman Monique Braxton said many schools need upgraded electrical systems to support air conditioning.

"We're in an old city," she said. "Most of our buildings are old facilities. We're making adjustments as necessary."

In Baltimore, where temperatures climbed to the upper 90s, inadequate heating and air conditioning systems have also long been a problem.

Officials released a plan in 2017 to make all necessary improvements and repairs within roughly five years. While that deadline has been pushed back for issues including the expense, the number of city

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schools without air conditioning has decreased from 75 to 11, according to district officials.

Nationwide, an estimated 36,000 schools need to update or install HVAC systems, according to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report in 2020.

On Wednesday, Baltimore schools without air conditioning dismissed some students early and assigned others to virtual learning for the rest of the week.

In Pittsburgh, students and staff in nearly 40 schools also pivoted to remote learning.

Returning to online learning in times of extreme weather — from hurricanes to water crises — has become more common after the pandemic, though remote instruction has long-term shortcomings.

In Lowell, Massachusetts, a community of roughly 115,000 about 30 miles from Boston, district officials said schools would be closed Thursday and Friday, with many classrooms “expected to be too hot for teachers to teach effectively.” Buckingham County Public Schools, a rural Virginia county about 75 miles west of Richmond, dismissed students early two days in a row as “a precautionary measure.”

Health experts warn that exposure to excessive heat can cause dehydration or heat exhaustion, among other things, while teachers say sweltering classrooms make it difficult to do their jobs.

“Teachers are concerned about the environment being conducive to education. They were thankful to have the relief,” said Detroit Federation of Teachers President Lakia Wilson-Lumpkins said of the early dismissals.

## **Georgia judge rules that Sidney Powell and Kenneth Chesebro can be tried together starting Oct. 23**

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The judge overseeing the Georgia case that accuses former President Donald Trump and others of illegally trying to overturn the 2020 election in the state on Wednesday denied requests by two of the 19 defendants to be tried alone, instead saying the pair would be tried together starting next month.

Since lawyers Kenneth Chesebro and Sidney Powell have both filed speedy trial demands, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee said their trial would begin Oct. 23, but he seemed skeptical of prosecutors’ arguments that all 19 defendants could be tried together that soon.

“It just seems a bit unrealistic to think we can handle all 19 in 40 days. That’s my initial reaction,” he said.

The hearing provided insight into how the case could play out, with prosecutors estimating a trial would take four months and that they’d call more than 150 witnesses. It was also broadcast live on television and on the judge’s YouTube channel, a marked difference from the other three criminal cases against Trump, where cameras have not been allowed in the courtroom during proceedings.

Special prosecutor Nathan Wade, who provided the four-month estimate, said that didn’t include jury selection and added that whether or not defendants choose to testify could affect timing. But he said he expects a trial to take that long regardless of how many defendants it includes, arguing that the indictment was brought under Georgia’s anti-racketeering law and prosecutors would seek to prove the entire alleged conspiracy against each defendant.

In announcing the wide-ranging 41-count indictment last month, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis said she wants to try all 19 defendants together. But the legal maneuvering that has begun in the three weeks since the indictment was returned underscores the logistical complexity inherent in such a sprawling indictment with so many defendants.

Already some of those charged are seeking to speed up the process, some are trying to separate themselves from the others accused in the alleged conspiracy and some are trying to move the case from a state court to federal court. All have pleaded not guilty.

The judge said Chesebro and Powell would be tried together starting on the Oct. 23 trial date already set for Chesebro to comply with their demands for a speedy trial. He gave prosecutors until Tuesday to submit a brief on whether it should be a trial of two defendants or 19.

Lawyers for Chesebro and Powell argued separately that their clients don’t know each other and are not

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accused in the indictment of having participated in the same acts. They said it would be like conducting two distinct trials at the same time and that the evidence against one of them could taint the other.

Chesebro attorney Scott Grubman said he understands that the state brought the case under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, which has particular rules, but he argued "that should not override Mr. Chesebro's right to a fundamentally fair trial."

Chesebro is accused of working on the coordination and execution of a plan to have 16 Georgia Republicans sign a certificate declaring falsely that Trump won and declaring themselves the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors. Another Chesebro attorney, Manny Arora, called that the "intellectual" part of the case, which had nothing to do with any "shenanigans" on the ground in Georgia and said his defense would rely on paperwork and legal opinion.

Powell is accused of participating in a breach of election equipment in rural Coffee County. She's alleged to have hired and paid a computer forensics team that copied data and software from the election equipment without authorization.

Her attorney, Brian Rafferty, said the evidence will show she was "not the driving force" behind that effort. He said he's afraid the evidence he presents will get "washed away" by the technical evidence produced by Chesebro's defense team if they're tried together.

Fulton County Deputy District Attorney Will Wooten said he understands the defense arguments against having their clients tried together.

"The problem for them is that it doesn't matter because it's all part of the same overarching RICO conspiracy," he said, explaining that any evidence and law that can be used against one defendant can be used against all of them because they are all liable for all of the acts alleged in the indictment.

Several other defendants have also asked to be tried separately or in small groups, and Trump, the early front-runner in the 2024 Republican presidential primary, has asked to be tried apart from anyone who files a speedy trial demand.

Meanwhile, former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows was in federal court last week arguing that he was acting in his capacity as a federal official and his case should be heard by a federal judge. U.S. District Judge Steve Jones has yet to rule on that request. Four other defendants who are also seeking to move their cases to federal court have hearings set before Jones later this month.

McAfee raised concerns about what that fight by some defendants to have their cases moved to federal court could mean for the rest of the case, saying appeals and final decisions on that issue could take months.

Whenever and wherever any trial in the case ultimately takes place, jury selection is likely to be a challenge. Jury selection in a racketeering and gang case brought last year by Willis began in January and is still ongoing. In another big racketeering case that Willis tried nearly a decade ago against former Atlanta public schools educators, it took six weeks to seat a jury.

Willis' team on Tuesday asked McAfee to allow the use of a jury questionnaire that prospective jurors would have filled out before they show up for jury selection, writing in a court filing that it "will facilitate and streamline the jury selection process in many respects." Prospective jurors may be more comfortable answering personal questions on paper than in open court and lawyers for both sides could agree that certain jurors aren't qualified without additional questioning, prosecutors said.

## Mar-a-Lago worker struck cooperation deal with prosecutors in Trump documents case, ex-lawyer says

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An information technology director at Mar-a-Lago struck a cooperation agreement with federal prosecutors last summer in their investigation of Donald Trump's retention of classified documents at the former president's Florida property, according to the worker's ex-lawyer.

Stanley Woodward, a former attorney for the IT manager, made the revelation in a court filing responding to Justice Department arguments that he had a potential conflict-of-interest because of his representation of another key figure in the Mar-a-Lago probe, Trump valet Walt Nauta.

A cooperation agreement generally requires an individual to assist a criminal investigation in exchange for not being prosecuted. In this case, the worker testified before a federal grand jury that in July returned an updated indictment against Trump, Nauta and another Mar-a-Lago employee, Carlos De Oliveira, accusing the men of conspiring to delete surveillance footage from the property. All three have pleaded not guilty.

The indictment alleges that De Oliveira, Mar-a-Lago's property manager, told the IT director — identified in court papers as Trump Employee 4 — that "the boss" wanted surveillance footage deleted. The Justice Department does not allege that the footage was actually deleted, and in fact, security video alleged to show Nauta moving boxes in and out of a storage room forms a critical accusation in the indictment.

Special counsel Jack Smith's team said in a court filing last month that the IT director had retracted "prior false testimony" after being advised last summer of a potential conflict because of Woodward's representation of Nauta. He then switched lawyers and provided new and incriminating information in the run-up to the new, or superseding, indictment in July, prosecutors have said.

Woodward, in a court filing this week, rejected that version of events, saying he had welcomed the opportunity for his client to have a new lawyer from the federal defender's office and that the client had been offered a cooperation agreement immediately after saying that he wanted to switch attorneys.

He also said that his client had explicitly said that he had not been coached to testify in any way that was false.

## **Ex-teammates – but not always friends – Scherzer and Verlander to face each other for first time**

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Three-time Cy Young Award winners Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander had some healing time for their relationship in their second stint as teammates.

Now they are set to pitch against each other for the first time in their long careers in the finale of an important series between Texas and Houston after both were traded by the New York Mets.

Verlander says he saw the Wednesday night showdown coming when he returned to the Astros two days after Scherzer was sent to the Rangers with the disappointing Mets fading from contention in July.

Much older and wiser than those Detroit teammates from 2010-14, the right-handers will share the mound at the home the Rangers with a mutual admiration that maybe wasn't there before they reunited in New York.

"I think it was a bit blown out of proportion, but there was some tension there," Verlander said about the Detroit days. "I think we both decided to make an effort coming in to rekindle and to just move past that. Nobody needed to say anything. It was just, 'All right, we're better than that. Let's make an effort to be friends.' And we did. We really connected over a lot of things."

Scherzer was 25 when he was traded to the Tigers in 2009, by which time Verlander had established himself as a budding star after being the second overall pick in the draft by Detroit five years earlier.

Those were high — but disappointing times — for the Tigers, with four trips to the postseason in the five seasons Scherzer and Verlander were together. Detroit lost to the Rangers in the 2011 AL championship series and to San Francisco in the 2012 World Series.

"It's just two highly competitive guys that were trying to find their foothold in the game who were very competitive and had very strong opinions about the way they went about their business," Verlander said. "I think looking at each other now through a different lens, it's two guys who we do go about things differently, but there's more than one way to be successful."

Verlander won his first AL Cy Young and also was AL MVP when they were together in Detroit in 2011, two years before Scherzer matched his teammate. Verlander's other two Cy Youngs came with Houston (2019, 2022), while Scherzer won two NL Cy Young Awards in Washington (2016-17).

Now 40, Verlander takes the mound as a nine-time All-Star in his 18th season. The 39-year-old Scherzer is in his 16th season with eight trips to the All-Star game, including their year together with Detroit in 2013.

As disappointing as this season — and their endings — were with the Mets, both can see a silver lining.



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"It was good to get back with him," said Scherzer, who was openly critical of the Mets after the trade. "He's obviously one of the great competitors of our time. And really get a download of how he is as a pitcher, how he's evolved. Because the game has changed over the seven, eight years that we were apart."

The 14th meeting of pitchers with at least three Cy Youngs apiece also featured the two active leaders in strikeouts (Verlander has 3,361 to Scherzer's 3,311) and two of the top three on the active wins list. Verlander leads with 254, and Scherzer is third at 213.

"It's easy to become a spectator when there's big games and matchups like that," Astros manager Dusty Baker said. "I just got to do my thing, know when to take him out and when to make a change."

This is the third such meeting for Scherzer, who twice faced Los Angeles Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw after both had won three Cy Youngs.

Both are World Series winners — Verlander twice with Houston in 2017 and last season and Scherzer with the Nationals when they beat the Astros in 2019.

Both are trying to get their teams to the playoffs, with the Texas rivals holding two of the three AL wild-card berths going into Tuesday's games.

And both have made six starts since their respective trades. Scherzer is 3-1 with a 2.21 ERA, the second-lowest for the first six starts in franchise history behind Fergie Jenkins in 1974. Verlander is 4-2 with a 3.86 ERA.

"Not too often in baseball anymore do you get matchups between two guys that have had the careers that he and I have had," Verlander said. "I think it's exciting for baseball. It's exciting for us and I'm sure it's exciting for him. I hope."

## Christie says DeSantis put 'politics ahead of his job' by not seeing Biden during hurricane visit

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Republican presidential hopeful Chris Christie says Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had put "politics ahead of his job" by declining to meet with President Joe Biden during the Democrat's weekend visit to survey Hurricane Idalia's damage in DeSantis' state.

"Your job as governor is to be the tour guide for the president, is to make sure the president sees your people, sees the damage, sees the suffering, what's going on and what needs to be done to rebuild it," Christie said about his rival for the 2024 nomination in an interview Tuesday on Fox News Radio's "The Brian Kilmeade Show."

"You're doing your job. And unfortunately, he put politics ahead of his job," Christie said. "That was his choice."

No one knows better than Christie how such a sticky political situation can create an enduring image. Photos of then-New Jersey Gov. Christie giving a warm greeting to Democratic President Barack Obama during a visit after Superstorm Sandy in 2012 earned Christie scorn among national Republicans.

Obama placed his hand on Christie's shoulder. Some Republicans labeled it a "hug" and suggested it contributed to GOP nominee Mitt Romney's loss to Obama in that year's general election. Christie said he was simply doing his job by meeting with the president.

Idalia made landfall last week along Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 3 storm, causing widespread flooding and damage before moving north to drench Georgia and the Carolinas. Biden, who toured the state on Saturday, had initially said that he would meet with DeSantis during his trip, but the governor's office said DeSantis had "no plans" to see Biden, suggesting that doing so could hinder disaster response related to Idalia.

Biden and DeSantis have met other times when the president toured Florida after Hurricane Ian hit the state last year, and after the Surfside condo collapse in Miami Beach in the summer of 2021. But DeSantis is now running for president and hoping to take on Biden in the 2024 general election.

DeSantis' campaign did not comment about Christie's critique.

Christie has defended his own response to the presidential visit during Sandy, saying that although he

and Obama had fundamentally different views on governing, the two men did what needed to be done for a devastated region.

The “hug” moment, however, has trailed Christie ever since. It emerged last month during Republicans’ first 2024 debate, when Vivek Ramaswamy responded to a barb from Christie — who said the biotech entrepreneur’s opening line about being a skinny kid with a hard-to-pronounce name reminded him of Obama — by asking if the former governor wanted a “hug,” a reference to Obama’s post-Sandy visit.

## **The AP Interview: Harris says Trump shouldn’t be an exception for Jan. 6 accountability**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris said Wednesday that those responsible for the effort to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and the ensuing violence at the U.S. Capitol must be held accountable — even if that means Donald Trump.

“Let the evidence, the facts, take it where it may,” Harris said in an interview with The Associated Press in Jakarta, Indonesia, where she was attending a regional summit, noting: “Everyone has their right to their day in court.”

Federal prosecutors have indicted Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, for his efforts to cling to power in 2020. The former president also has been charged in Georgia in a scheme to subvert the will of voters who elected Democrat Joe Biden instead of giving Trump a second term.

“I spent the majority of my career as a prosecutor,” said Harris, who served as California’s attorney general before moving to Washington as a U.S. senator. “I believe that people should be held accountable under the law. And when they break the law, there should be accountability.”

The White House has been circumspect in addressing the issue of criminal charges against Trump, who has pleaded not guilty, to avoid any whiff of political meddling in the work of prosecutors, particularly as Biden seeks a second term in 2024. But both Biden and Harris have been outspoken about what they view as the very real danger to American democracy the aftermath of the 2020 election exposed.

“Democracies are very fragile,” the vice president said in the AP interview. “They will only be as strong as our willingness to fight for it.”

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said with her comments, the vice president was affirming her belief “in our system of laws,” a belief the president shares.

“This is something that of course the president shares and believes in ... but I’m going to let the Department of Justice do their job independently,” Jean-Pierre said.

Harris is representing the United States at a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in place of Biden.

The president’s absence disappointed some, but the White House emphasized that it remained committed to the region, which Harris reiterated in her interview.

“We as Americans, I believe, have a very significant interest, both in terms of our security but also our prosperity, today and in the future, in developing and strengthening these relationships,” she said.

Southeast Asia is a critical arena for the rivalry between the U.S. and China, particularly when it comes to the South China Sea. One-third of global shipping traverses its waters.

Beijing recently released a new government map that emphasizes its disputed territorial claims to the sea. “It’s a violation of the law. And that’s where I put that map,” Harris told the AP.

ASEAN has struggled to make progress on issues such as the military coup in Myanmar, but Harris said the organization “absolutely” remains a critical forum.

“The fact that so many leaders are convening in this one place at the same time to address some of the biggest challenges facing our world is a sign of strength of both the commitment that each nation has to the coalition and the potential for collaboration,” she said.

Harris sounded a strong warning about reports that Russia was talking with North Korea about obtaining

weapons for its invasion of Ukraine, calling the possible alliance "ill-advised."

"Russia has been levied a strategic failure," she said. "Their aggressive, unprovoked actions in Ukraine have resulted in a situation where the aura and myth of the Russian military has now been dispelled."

Harris dismissed concerns about Biden's age, 80, even though he's widely seen as too old for office. A recent AP/NORC poll showed that 77% of Americans and 69% of Democrats think he's too old for a second term.

Harris is next in line for the presidency, a position that increased scrutiny of her as she serves with a president who would be 86 at the end of a potential second term. Some Republican presidential hopefuls claim that a vote for Biden would really end up being a vote for Harris — and not in a good way.

"I see him every day. A substantial amount of time we spend together is in the Oval Office, where I see how his ability to understand issues and weave through complex issues in a way that no one else can, to make smart and important decisions on behalf of the American people have played out," she said. "And so I will say to you that I think the American people ultimately want to know that their president delivers. And Joe Biden delivers."

Harris described the idea of possibly stepping into the role of president as "hypothetical" but said she was ready.

"Joe Biden is going to be fine, so that is not going to come to fruition," she stated. "But let us also understand that every vice president — every vice president — understands that when they take the oath they must be very clear about the responsibility they may have to take over the job of being president."

Harris added, "I'm no different."

## **The writer who won a sex abuse and defamation lawsuit against Trump scores another victory**

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Four months after a civil trial jury found that Donald Trump sexually abused and defamed advice columnist E. Jean Carroll, a federal judge ruled on Wednesday that still more of the ex-president's comments about her were libelous. The decision means that an upcoming second trial will concern only how much more he has to pay her.

The ruling stands to streamline significantly the second trial, set for January. It concerns remarks that Trump made in 2019, after Carroll first publicly claimed that he sexually attacked her in a dressing room after a chance meeting at a luxury department store in 1996. He denies that anything happened between them.

The first trial, this spring, concerned the sexual assault allegation and whether some 2022 Trump comments were defamatory. Jurors awarded Carroll \$5 million, finding that she was sexually abused but rejecting her allegation that she was raped.

"The jury considered and decided issues that are common to both cases — including whether Mr. Trump falsely accused Ms. Carroll of fabricating her sexual assault charge and, if that were so, that he did it with knowledge that this accusation was false" or acted with reckless disregard for the truth, U.S. District Judge Lewis Kaplan wrote in Wednesday's decision.

The judge wrote that the "substantive content" of the 2019 and 2022 statements was the same. And when the jury found that Trump indeed sexually abused Carroll, it effectively established that his 2019 statements also were false and defamatory, the judge said.

Carroll and her attorneys "look forward to trial limited to damages for the original defamatory statements Donald Trump made," said her lawyer Roberta Kaplan, who's not related to the judge.

Trump lawyer Alina Habba said Wednesday that his legal team is confident that the jury verdict will be overturned, mooting the judge's new decision. Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, also is seeking to put the second trial on hold while waiting for an appeals court to rule on whether he's legally shielded from the yet-to-be-tried case. He claims immunity because he was president when he made the 2019 comments.

At least for now, the trial is set to start Jan. 15, the day of the Iowa Republican caucuses.

The Carroll case is part of a lineup of legal woes that Trump is facing as he campaigns to return to the White House.

Four criminal indictments accuse Trump, variously, of trying to subvert the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden; mishandling top secret documents and trying to conceal what he'd done; and falsifying records in his business to cover up a hush money payment made during his 2016 campaign to porn actor Stormy Daniels. She asserts that they had a sexual encounter, which he denies.

Some of Trump's criminal trials are scheduled to overlap with the presidential primary season. So is a civil trial in New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit accusing Trump and his company of defrauding banks, insurers and others by inflating asset values and his net worth. Trump has denied the allegations, boasted that he has "the hottest brand in the world," and accused the Democratic attorney general of conducting a political vendetta.

A judge on Wednesday refused to delay that trial, set for October.

Carroll initially sued Trump in 2019, saying he smeared her by saying she'd made a false allegation while "trying to sell a new book" and suggesting she might be a Democratic operative.

"The world should know what's really going on. It is a disgrace, and people should pay dearly for such false accusations," Trump said. He maintained that he'd never met Carroll, brushing off a 1987 photo of the two and their then-spouses at a social event.

While that case was playing out, Carroll sued again last year under a New York state law that waived a legal time limit for filing sexual assault allegations. That lawsuit — the one that went to trial last year — came to include claims that Trump defamed Carroll in 2022 by calling the case "a complete con job" and a "scam." The suit over the 2019 statements remained separate.

Trump, meanwhile, countered with a defamation suit against Carroll for saying, after the verdict, that she was not only sexually abused but raped. The judge dismissed Trump's suit last month.

## **Spanish soccer player Jenni Hermoso accuses Luis Rubiales of sexual assault for World Cup kiss**

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spanish soccer player Jenni Hermoso has accused Luis Rubiales of sexual assault for kissing her on the lips without her consent after the Women's World Cup final, the country's prosecutors' office said Wednesday.

Rubiales, the now-suspended president of the Spanish soccer federation, kissed Hermoso on the lips during the awards ceremony after Spain beat England to win the title on Aug. 20 in Sydney, Australia.

Rubiales has insisted the kiss was consensual. Hermoso has denied that in statements issued by her and her players' union. She also said she and her family were pressured by the federation to show her support for Rubiales in the immediate aftermath of the scandal caused by the kiss that tarnished her team's victory.

The prosecutors' office in Madrid said that, according to a sexual consent law passed last year, Rubiales could face a fine or a prison sentence of one to four years if found guilty. The new law eliminated the difference between "sexual harassment" and "sexual assault," sanctioning any unconsented sexual act.

Spain's government, players' unions, players and many citizens have come out in support of Hermoso. Rubiales, meanwhile, has become a soccer outcast even while he refuses to resign.

Rubiales was suspended from his post by FIFA on Aug. 27, a day after he refused to step down when he delivered a defiant speech to the general assembly of his federation in which he said he was victim of a "witch hunt" by "false feminists." Rubiales was banned from his post for 90 days while the body's disciplinary judges consider his case. FIFA can impose sanctions on individuals ranging from warnings and fines to suspensions from the sport.

The 46-year-old Rubiales also faces action from the Spanish government. A government legal panel overseeing sports has opened a probe to determine if he abused his authority by kissing Hermoso or tainted the image of Spain with his conduct. He faces being deemed unfit to hold his post for up to two years.



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He could potentially face a no-confidence vote by the federation, a move that the institution has yet to make despite having asked him to resign.

But the decision by Hermoso represents the biggest challenge to Rubiales so far since it could lead to a criminal case.

The prosecutor's office said Hermoso made the accusation on Tuesday. Prosecutors had said last week that they were going to meet with Hermoso to give her the opportunity to present an accusation against Rubiales. Interim federation president Pedro Rocha is considered an ally of Rubiales.

In that Aug. 26 speech before the federation assembly, Rubiales said that the kiss was "mutual" and like one "I could give one of my daughters."

Hermoso responded by saying that was a lie.

"I felt vulnerable and a victim of an impulse-driven, sexist, out of place act without any consent on my part," Hermoso said in a statement posted on social media. "Simply put, I was not respected."

Hermoso, a 33-year-old forward, now plays for Mexican club Pachuca after a long career with top Spanish and European clubs, including Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and Atletico Madrid.

Rubiales' behavior at the final, which included a lewd crotch grab while next to dignitaries including Spain's queen and teenage princess, combined with his controversial speech have torn Spanish soccer apart.

On Tuesday, the federation fired the coach of Spain's Women's World Cup champion team, Jorge Vilda. Despite leading the team to the title, Vilda was still considered an unpopular figure among its players and close to Rubiales. One year ago, 15 players said they would not play for him until he created a more professional work environment.

After Rubiales refused to step down last week and accused Hermoso of lying, the entire team of World Cup winners plus dozens more players said they would not play again for Spain until the president was gone.

Spain's men's team has also been impacted. Coach Luis de la Fuente had to ask for forgiveness for having applauded Rubiales' sexist-tinged speech to the general assembly. His players also condemned Rubiales' behavior in a statement.

So far, there is no indication that the women players are set to return to the team even after the removal of Vilda.

Spain's left-wing government and its women players hope that the backlash against Rubiales can lead to a reckoning with sexism in soccer.

## **Kim Jong Un's possible trip to Russia could be like his 2019 journey: 20 hours on his armored train**

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Reports that Kim Jong Un may travel to Russia soon have drawn attention to the traditional method of travel for North Korean leaders: luxury, armored trains that have long been a part of the dynasty's lore and are symbols of its deep isolation.

In what would be his first foreign travel since the start of the pandemic, Kim may visit Russia this month for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a U.S. official has said, possibly to discuss North Korean arms sales to refill Russian reserves drained by its war on Ukraine.

According to U.S. reports, the two leaders could meet in the eastern city of Vladivostok, the site of their first get-together in April 2019, when Kim took his green-and-yellow train. Putin is expected in the city for the annual Eastern Economic Forum that runs from Sunday to Wednesday.

The reports come at a time when the leaders' interests are aligning in the face of their deepening, separate confrontations with the United States.

Whether Kim could again make the rattling 20-hour journey by rail is a focus of media attention, as is the reportedly luxurious train, which stands in sharp contrast to the grinding poverty of daily life for most North Koreans.

Kim's famously flight-averse father, Kim Jong Il, made about a dozen trips abroad during his 17-year

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rule, almost all to China and all by train. North Korea's state media said that the elder Kim died of a heart attack during a train trip in 2011.

According to an account published in 2002 by Konstantin Pulikovsky, a Russian official who accompanied Kim Jong Il on a three-week trip to Moscow, the train carried cases of expensive French wine and passengers could feast on fresh lobster and pork barbeque.

The train's most important feature, however, is security. According to South Korean media reports, North Korea has 90 special carriages in total and operates three trains in tandem when a leader is traveling — an advance train to check the rails, the train with the leader and his immediate entourage, and a third behind for everyone else. High-tech communication equipment and flat-screen TVs are installed so a leader can give orders and receive briefings.

In a sign of the trains' symbolic importance, a life-size mock-up of one of the carriages is on permanent display at a mausoleum on the outskirts of Pyongyang where the embalmed bodies of Kim Jong Il and his state-founding father, Kim Il Sung, lie in state.

Kim, who is 39, has used his family's armored train for previous meetings with Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and then-U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019.

But he does sometimes fly, unlike his father. Schooled for several years in Switzerland, Kim Jong Un is believed to have traveled by air often as a teenager.

When he jetted off to the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian in 2018 to meet with Xi, it was the first time a North Korean leader had publicly gone abroad by air since Kim Il Sung's flight to the Soviet Union in 1986.

Kim's official plane is a remodeled version of the Soviet-made IL-62. North Korea calls it "Chammae-1," named after the goshawk, North Korea's national bird. South Korean media say the plane can carry about 200 people and its maximum range is about 9,200 kilometers (5,700 miles) but it has reportedly never flown that far.

Putin, for his part, now prefers to avoid airplanes and also travels on a special armored train since his decision to invade Ukraine in early 2022, according to Gleb Karakulov, a defector from Putin's secretive elite security service.

Kim's earlier meeting with Putin required a daylong trip that began at the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and chugged over the country's aging railways along the eastern coast before crossing a river that serves as the border with Russia.

Some analysts are skeptical that another meeting would occur on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum because Kim and his predecessors have preferred stand-alone summits when making rare trips abroad.

In all, Kim went to China four times from 2018 to 2019 to meet Xi — two of them by train and two on his jet. In June 2018, he borrowed a Chinese plane to meet Trump in Singapore, reportedly because his jet was deemed unsafe. For another meeting with Trump in Hanoi, Vietnam, Kim took his train on the two-and-half day trip.

Since closing his country's borders in early 2020 to guard against the COVID-19 pandemic, Kim hasn't met any foreign leader.

Kim's possible second trip to Russia could signal a restart of a summit-driven diplomacy and may be followed by a trip to China for a meeting with Xi, said Yang Moo-jin, president of the University of North Korean Studies in South Korea.

## Environmental Protection Agency delays new ozone pollution standards until after the 2024 election

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency is delaying plans to tighten air quality standards for ground-level ozone — better known as smog — despite a recommendation by a scientific advisory panel to lower air pollution limits to protect public health.

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The decision by EPA Administrator Michael Regan means that one of the agency's most important air quality regulations will not be updated until well after the 2024 presidential election.

"I have decided that the best path forward is to initiate a new statutory review of the ozone (standard) and the underlying air quality criteria," Regan wrote in a letter to the EPA advisory panel last month. The letter cites "several issues" raised by the panel in a recent report that "warrant additional evaluation and review."

The review, which will last at least two years, will "ensure that air quality standards reflect the latest science in order to best protect people from pollution," Regan said.

Regan's decision avoids an election year battle with industry groups and Republicans who have complained about what they consider overly intrusive EPA rules on power plants, refineries, automobiles and other polluters.

The delay marks the second time in 12 years that a Democratic administration has put off a new ozone standard prior to an election year. President Barack Obama shut down plans to tighten ozone standards in 2011, leading to a four-year delay before the standards were updated in 2015.

Paul Billings, senior vice president of the American Lung Association, called the EPA's decision "profoundly disappointing" and a missed opportunity to protect public health and promote environmental justice. A recent report by the lung association showed that minority communities bear a disproportionate burden from ground-level ozone, which occurs when air pollution from cars, power plants and other sources mixes with sunlight. The problem is particularly acute in urban areas.

Billings called the ozone rule "the public health cornerstone of the Clean Air Act," adding that "millions of people will breathe dirty air for many more years" as a result of the delay. An increased number of asthma attacks, sick days and even premature death are likely to occur, he and other public health advocates said.

Raul Garcia, vice president of policy and legislation for Earthjustice, called the delay "shameful" and unjustified. "The science tells us we are long overdue," Garcia said.

Democratic lawmakers also were disappointed. "Inaction threatens public health and puts those with underlying conditions such as asthma or lung disease at an elevated risk," said Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse. He and 51 other Democrats had urged swift action on a new rule.

"Unfortunately we've seen the process for updating the ozone standards repeatedly swept up in political games that risk lives," the lawmakers said in an Aug. 7 letter to the EPA.

Conor Bernstein, a spokesman for the National Mining Association, applauded the EPA's decision "not to race ahead with an unnecessary revision of the ozone standards," which have not been changed since 2015. The current standard was reaffirmed in December 2020 under then-President Donald Trump, a Republican.

Bernstein, whose members produce coal and other fossil fuels, urged officials to reconsider other regulations that he said target coal-fired power plants and endanger reliability of the electric grid. "It's clear — and deeply alarming — that EPA (does not) understand the cumulative impact its rules will have on the grid and the nation's severely stressed power supply," he said.

A spokeswoman for the American Petroleum Institute, the top lobbying group for the oil and gas industry, said current ozone limits are among the most stringent in the world. "Any tightening of the standard could impact energy costs, threaten U.S. energy security and impact businesses and American consumers," spokeswoman Andrea Woods said in an email.

The EPA's decision comes after two advisory panels — the EPA's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council — urged the agency to lower the current ozone standard of 70 parts per billion.

"Based on the scientific evidence currently available, it is concluded that the level of the current standard is not protective with an adequate margin of safety," the EPA panel said in a June report. A limit of 55 to 60 parts per billion "is more likely to be protective and to provide an adequate margin of safety," the panel said.

Lianne Sheppard, a University of Washington biostatistics professor who chairs the scientific advisory panel, said Regan's decision was "his alone" to make.

"However, I am disappointed, given the robust scientific evidence that ozone is harmful to public health and welfare," she told E&E News last month.

The White House environmental justice council, meanwhile, cited the "horrible toll of air pollution" and its disproportionate effect on minority communities. In a letter to the White House, co-chairs Richard Moore and Peggy Shepard said the problem is "compounded by the inadequate monitoring and enforcement in many of our communities."

Moore is co-director of Los Jardines Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, while Sheppard is co-founder and executive director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice in New York City.

Tomas Carbonell, a top official in the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, said the report by the scientific panel left the EPA with little choice but to launch a comprehensive review even though all but one panel member supported a stricter ozone standard.

"When we're looking at our national air quality standards, there's really no way to cut corners around that process," Carbonell said in an interview.

The agency will convene workshops next spring to gather information and will release a review plan for action in late 2024, he said. A final decision could be years away.

## Tennis ball wasteland? Game grapples with a fuzzy yellow recycling problem

By JAMES MARTINEZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Tennis has a fuzzy yellow problem most players don't think about when they open a can after a can of fresh balls, or when umpires at U.S. Open matches make their frequent requests for "new balls please."

Because tennis balls are extremely hard to recycle and the industry has yet to develop a ball to make that easier, nearly all of the 330 million balls made worldwide each year eventually get chucked in the garbage, with most ending up in landfills, where they can take more than 400 years to decompose. It's a situation highlighted by Grand Slam events like Flushing Meadows, which will go through nearly 100,000 balls over the course of the tournament.

That harsh reality in an age of heightened environmental awareness has sent ball makers, recyclers and the game's worldwide governing body scrambling for solutions, and spurred sustainability activists to sound the alarm in online posts that pose the question: Are tennis balls a disaster for the planet?

"Tennis balls, like a lot of objects, are made to be indestructible, which means they're very resistant to mechanical processing," said Nickolas J. Themelis, director of Columbia University's Earth Engineering Center. "But do you take a useful object that lasts forever and say people shouldn't use it because it lasts forever? That's nonsense."

Themelis and other experts note that tennis balls make up a tiny fraction of the hundreds of millions of tons of garbage produced every year, and the keys with all difficult-to-recycle materials are finding ways to extend their useful life through other purposes and taking care in their ultimate disposal to keep them out of the environment.

"Anyone who would say you shouldn't play tennis because of the tennis balls is misinformed," said Jason Quinn, director of Colorado State University's Sustainability Research Laboratory. "In terms of the impact, it's a blip on the radar. ... And there are things you can do to reuse and repurpose tennis balls to lessen the impact."

Among them are efforts by nonprofits and others to go beyond just using old balls for dog toys and the bottom of chairs. That includes collecting balls in bulk and grinding them down into material that is used to make products including the footing for horse arenas and — in a bit of perfect symmetry — tennis courts.

But experts and environmentalists question whether those initiatives are viable enough to make a dent, and they say such efforts don't address the underlying problem of a lack of a fully recyclable tennis ball, or the factors that make balls particularly troublesome.

At the top of the list is the tennis ball design — substantially unchanged since the advent of pressurized



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balls in the 1920s — consisting of a felt covering glued to a hollow, air-filled rubber core.

The biggest barrier to recycling the rubber in the ball is the difficulty of removing the felt from the rubber core because of the tight glue designed to hold that cover on when it's thwacked by a racket. And the felt is also a problem: a blended combination of wool and nylon that cannot be recycled.

What's more, the core of most top-level tennis balls — such as the Wilson U.S. Open extra-duty model in play at Flushing Meadows — is only made from newly created, virgin rubber, which activists say leads to deforestation of rubber trees in the Amazon.

"It is true that virgin rubber is used because of the performance specifications required for the best in the world," said Jason Collins, general manager of global racquet sports for Wilson Sporting Goods. "Other tennis balls within our product line absolutely can and do include recycled rubber."

Another issue carbon-footprint-wise are the places most balls are made — Thailand and China — because those balls have to be shipped thousands of miles to reach North America and Europe, where most of the world's tennis is played.

Seeking to tackle these problems is the International Tennis Federation, which certifies tennis balls and sanctions competitions around the world. It launched a technical working group last year made up of manufacturers, officials from other tennis governing bodies and recyclers with an ambitious set of goals:

Is there a way to design a fully recyclable ball? What are the capabilities of balls on different levels of play? Can the ITF, using its rule-making muscle, keep balls in play longer in competitions, which would result in fewer balls used? Do Grand Slam events have to stick with replacing balls after the first seven games and every nine games thereafter? Could that be extended to 11 or 13 games? And could such changes to use fewer balls longer filter down to all players?

"We want to try and identify ways of making the consumption pattern more sustainable and the product more sustainable as well," said Jamie Capel-Davies, the ITF's technical head who works out of the federation's lab in London.

"The overall strategy is to use the waste hierarchy," Davies said. "First of all, to try and reduce the number of balls that are being used. Then reuse balls as best we can. Recycling is third. And then disposing of balls is right at the bottom, the least desirable."

Among the positive signs getting scrutiny: Efforts to repressurize "flat" balls in bulk to bring them back to life, a solution that doesn't address worn-down felt. A Dutch company's development of a ball made from 30% old tennis balls (any more would apparently cut into playability). And Wilson's introduction of its Trinité ball, a still-pressurized model that has a sturdier core that leaks less and a tougher felt designed to be used for at least four outings without losing bounce or fuzz.

"While there is not a fully recyclable tennis ball that meets the performance specifications of elite athletes yet, we are proactively innovating for the future," said Wilson's Collins.

A positive on the recycling front are nonprofits taking on the task of collecting and repurposing tennis balls, most notably Vermont-based RecycleBalls, which says it is on pace to collect 3 million tennis balls this year from across the U.S and Canada.

RecycleBalls distributes collection boxes at hundreds of tennis clubs, city parks, colleges and tournaments, where used balls can be shipped post-paid to the organization's warehouse to be sorted for a variety of uses.

Some are sold as dog toys or for the bottom of chairs, some are ground up whole with the felt to be sold as footing for horse arenas, and still others are sent to a highly specialized, patent-pending machine that pulls the felt off the rubber and grinds the rubber into different-sized granules that have been made into a cushioning layer by the tennis court surfacing company Laykold.

And other possible uses for the granules are being explored, such as using them in mulch, building materials such as stucco and siding, and even components in furniture.

"We believe in multiple lives for tennis balls," said RecycleBalls CEO Erin Cunningham, who acknowledged her organization could repurpose a lot more balls if there were more companies willing to incorporate the rubber into their products.

"We don't want to just collect tennis balls and have them sit in the warehouse," Cunningham said. "We

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need to make sure that there's actually demand for recycled product on the back end."

At the United States Tennis Association's offices under the stands of Louis Armstrong Stadium this week, a row of RecycleBalls bins lined a hallway, quickly filling with U.S. Open balls and immediately shipped off for repurposing. Other balls from the event will get a second use at USTA clinics and training centers across the country, and still others will be packed individually and sold at U.S. Open gift shops for \$10 each.

For the vast majority of balls that aren't so lucky, Columbia University's Themelis believes their final resting place should not be landfills but waste-to-energy plants that burn garbage to generate electricity. More widely used in Europe and China, Themelis says they handle only about 10% of the garbage in the U.S., where they have come under scrutiny because of concerns over emissions.

Opponents of such plants say that when it comes to finding solutions for hard-to-recycle items such as tennis balls, it's better to innovate than incinerate.

"A big part of that is summoning the will to change," said Claire Arkin, spokeswoman for Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. "And that really means that the companies behind these products need to take the entire life cycle into account."

"We've seen myriad examples of innovation in terms of redesign of products, and tennis balls are overdue for that kind of a makeover."

## Today in History:

### September 7, Nazi Germany begins air blitz on London

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 7, the 250th day of 2023. There are 115 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 7, 1940, Nazi Germany began its eight-month blitz of Britain during World War II with the first air attack on London.

On this date:

In 1901, the Peace of Beijing ended the Boxer Rebellion in China.

In 1943, a fire at the Gulf Hotel, a rooming house in Houston, claimed 55 lives.

In 1968, feminists protested outside the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, N.J.

In 1977, the Panama Canal treaties, calling for the U.S. to eventually turn over control of the waterway to Panama, were signed in Washington by President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos.

In 1986, Bishop Desmond Tutu was installed as the first Black clergyman to lead the Anglican Church in southern Africa.

In 1996, rapper Tupac Shakur was shot and mortally wounded on the Las Vegas Strip; he died six days later.

In 2005, police and soldiers went house to house in New Orleans to try to coax the last stubborn hold-outs into leaving the city shattered by Hurricane Katrina.

In 2007, Osama bin Laden appeared in a video for the first time in three years, telling Americans they should convert to Islam if they wanted the war in Iraq to end.

In 2008, troubled mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were placed in government conservatorship.

In 2013, Tokyo was awarded the 2020 Summer Olympics, defeating Istanbul in the final round of secret voting by the International Olympic Committee.

In 2015, Hillary Clinton, interviewed by The Associated Press during a campaign swing through Iowa, said she did not need to apologize for using a private email account and server while at the State Department because "what I did was allowed."

In 2019, President Donald Trump said he had canceled a secret weekend meeting at Camp David with Taliban and Afghan leaders, just days before the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, after a bombing in Kabul that killed 12 people, including an American soldier.

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In 2020, India's increasing coronavirus caseload made the Asian giant the world's second-worst-hit country behind the United States.

In 2022, Myles Sanderson, the 32-year-old suspect in stabbings that killed 11 people and injured 18 in Saskatchewan, Canada three days earlier, was arrested and died in a hospital after showing medical distress.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Sonny Rollins is 93. Singer Gloria Gaynor is 80. Singer Alfa Anderson (Chic) is 77. Actor Susan Blakely is 75. Rock musician Dennis Thompson (MC5) is 75. Actor Julie Kavner is 73. Rock singer Chrissie Hynde (The Pretenders) is 72. Rock musician Benmont Tench (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers) is 70. Actor Corbin Bernsen is 69. Actor Michael Emerson is 69. Pianist Michael Feinstein is 67. Singer/songwriter Diane Warren is 67. Singer Margot Chapman is 66. Actor J. Smith-Cameron is 66. Actor W. Earl Brown is 60. Actor Toby Jones is 57. Actor-comedian Leslie Jones (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 56. Model-actor Angie Everhart is 54. Actor Diane Farr is 54. Actor Monique Gabriela Curnen is 53. Actor Tom Everett Scott is 53. Rock musician Chad Sexton (311) is 53. Actor Shannon Elizabeth is 50. Actor Oliver Hudson is 47. Actor Devon Sawa (SAH'-wuh) is 45. Actor JD Pardo is 44. Actor Benjamin Hollingsworth (TV: "Code Black") is 39. Actor Alyssa Diaz (TV: "Ray Donovan"; "Zoo") is 38. Singer-musician Wes Willis (Rush of Fools) is 37. Actor Evan Rachel Wood is 36. Actor Ian Chen (TV: "Fresh Off the Boat") is 17.