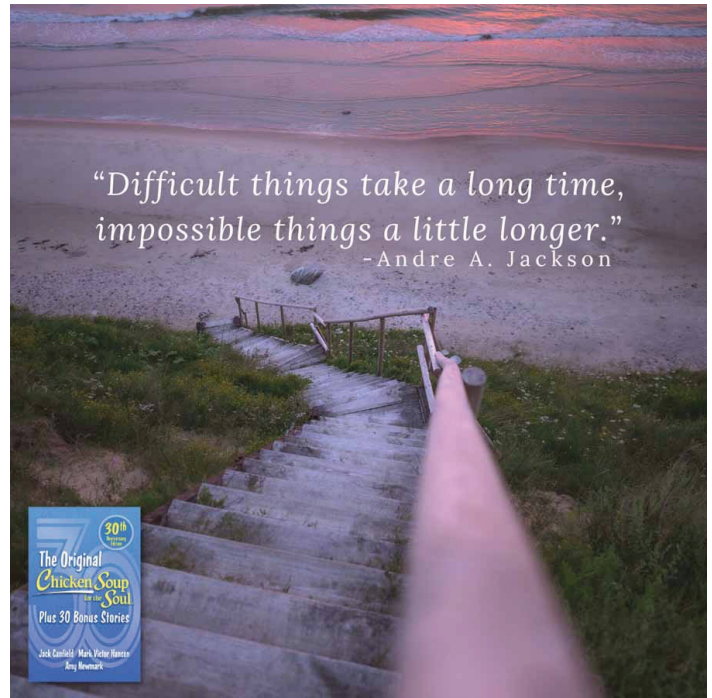


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Friday, Sept. 8

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

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.

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

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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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

attempting to obstruct her investigation into alleged efforts to overturn Georgia's 2020 presidential election results.

Super Bowl champions Kansas City Chiefs began their defense of the title with a 21-20 loss to the Detroit Lions at Arrowhead Stadium in the 2023 NFL season opener.

That '70s Show actor Danny Masterson has been sentenced to 30 years to life in prison after he was found guilty earlier this year of raping two women 20 years ago.

Hong Kong recorded the highest hourly rainfall since records began 140 years ago, causing widespread flooding, disrupting metros, and trapping vehicles. Authorities suspended schools and urged people to stay indoors.

The U.S. Open women's semifinal between Coco Gauff and Karolína Muchová was delayed after climate protesters disrupted the match, including one who glued his feet to the concrete floor of Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York City. Gauff beat Muchová 6-4, 7-5.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, there is a "realistic possibility" Kyiv could break through the rest of Russia's defensive lines in southern Ukraine by the end of the year, the head of the U.S. military intelligence agency assessed.

TALKING POINTS

"I said from the beginning, I am willing to go to prison to settle this issue. I'm willing to do that. But I also know that the likelihood of me going to prison is relatively small because we are right on this issue," said Peter Navarro, the ex-adviser to former President Donald Trump, after he was convicted on contempt of Congress charges.

"My duty is to uphold the Constitution. My duty is to bring justice to the citizens of the 9th Judicial Circuit. And in accordance with the American Bar Association, as a prosecutor, my duty is to seek justice—not merely to convict," suspended Florida state attorney Monique Worrell said after asking Florida's Supreme Court to reverse Governor Ron DeSantis' decision to suspend her.

"The Kremlin hopes these pre-determined, fabricated results will strengthen Russia's illegitimate claims to the parts of Ukraine it occupies, but this is nothing more than a propaganda exercise," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said of the "sham elections" Russia is conducting in occupied parts of Ukraine..

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Today marks one year since the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

March for Our Lives will be hosting a gun violence prevention town hall at 4 p.m. PT in California. Four candidates running to represent California in the U.S. Senate will be participating in the event at East Los Angeles College in Monterey Park.

Donald Trump is expected to attend the Monumental Leaders Rally tonight at The Monument in Rapid City, South Dakota. Governor Kristi Noem is also scheduled to attend.

Russia is set to hold local elections in Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, starting today, in a move condemned by Ukraine and the West. The Ukrainian territories were illegally annexed by Moscow a year ago, but it still does not fully control them. Elections conclude on Sunday.



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.

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Brooks and Walker Team Up in Thursday NSU Sweep

Spearfish, S.D. – The Northern State University volleyball team continued their win streak Thursday evening, defeating the tournament host Yellow Jackets in three sets. The Wolves tallied just nine attack errors in the win and out-blocked BH 11-2.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, BHSU 0

Record: NSU 4-1, BHSU 3-2

Attendance: 576

HOW IT HAPPENED

The first set was a back-and-forth battle between the two squads with Northern ultimately grabbing a 26-24 victory

The Wolves settled into their rhythm in sets two and three, taking each by scores of 25-16 and 25-12

In total, NSU hit .302 racking up 38 kills, 36 assists, 58 digs, 11 blocks, and three aces

The Wolves defense held the Yellow Jackets to a .105 attack percentage, forcing 21 hitting errors

Two Wolves recorded double figure kills, led by Abby Brooks with 11

Brooks also led the net defense with six blocks, while Abby Meister continued her solid back line play with 24 digs

Keri Walker paced the offense with 35 total assists, averaging 11.67 per set

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Abby Brooks: 11 kills, .526 attack%, 6 blocks

Morissen Samuels: 10 kills, 5 digs, 1 block, 1 ace

Keri Walker: 35 assists, 5 digs, 4 blocks, 1 ace

Abby Meister: 24 digs

UP NEXT

Northern returns to the court tomorrow for a doubleheader against Montana State – Billings and Texas A&M – Kingsville. Match start times are set for 11 a.m. (CT) against the Yellowjackets and 5 p.m. (CT) versus the Javelinas.

The Life of Jennifer Furman

Memorial services for Jennifer Furman, 45, of Groton will be at 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 Lee was born on October 25, 1977 in Waconia, Minnesota to Dennis and Marilee (Severance) Furman. She moved with her family to Groton before beginning school and graduated from Groton High School in 1996. Jennifer continued her education at SDSU in Brookings and then attended the Art Institute in Minnesota. After earning her degree in interior design, she spent the following 14 years working in the Twin Cities.

Jen will forever be remembered for her great sense of humor, her kind gentle spirit, her love for her pets, her loving relationship with all her family members and friends, and above all, being a devoted mom who cherished each one of her beautiful children.

Celebrating her life are her parents, Dennis and Marilee Furman of Groton, her children, Shealee, Saylor and Sophia, brothers, Jamie (Heidi) Furman of Aberdeen and Nathan Furman and girlfriend Kayla Fordham of Groton. Jennifer is also survived by many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.



Preceding her in death were her grandparents, an infant sister, Jessica and several uncles.

Service Notice: Charles Robinson

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Charles Lee Robinson, 78, who passed away at home in Groton, SD, on September 6, 2023.

Memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m., Monday, September 11th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel. Rev. Jeremy Yeadon will officiate. Military honors will be provided by Groton American Legion Post #39.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his honor to the American Legion Auxiliary, PO Box 125, Groton, S.D. 57445, which was very close to his heart.

Dale and Joyce Grenz are Homecoming Parade Marshals

by Dorene Nelson

Dale and Joyce Grenz have been chosen to be the homecoming parade marshals for 2023. They have owned and operated the local Dairy Queen in Groton since 1994, employing many students and adults from the local area and supporting the local school system and economic development along the way!

"I spent my growing up years in Aberdeen," Dale said, "while Joyce grew up on a farm near Leola. After getting married in 1977, we lived in Aberdeen for a short time, Fargo for 4 years, Jamestown for 6, and back to Aberdeen for 7 years prior to moving to Groton in 1995."

"I began my sixteen year career working for Mac's Hardware in Fargo, and then I became the manager of the Mac's Stores in both Jamestown and Aberdeen," he listed.

"Along the way, I worked as a secretary at North Dakota State University, the State Farmer's Union Office in Jamestown, a law office in Aberdeen, and the post office here in Groton," Joyce explained.

"On April Fool's Day, 1994, we purchased the Groton DQ," Dale said. That first year, I drove from Aberdeen to Groton every day until we found a house to purchase which has turned out to be a great location," Dale admitted.

"We've been blessed to have wonderful customers from Groton and the surrounding towns, for which we are truly grateful," Dale said. "We also have great employees and are so thankful for each one of them."

The Grenzses have three children and twelve grandchildren. Their oldest daughter Jessica, a clinical psychologist, lives with her husband and two children in Kansas City, MO. Their son Daniel, a missionary based out of Kansas City, MO, and his wife have five children. Their youngest daughter Julia along with her husband, also missionaries, and five children currently live in Bangkok.



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Seeking Artist's Entries for SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks

Senior Art Show – Accepting Entries October 2 - 6

(SIOUX FALLS, SD – September 7, 2023) The South Dakota Health Care Association (SDHCA), First Interstate Bank, Legacy Healthcare and KELOLAND Media Group announce that Entry Forms are available for the 26th Annual SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks Art Show. The SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks Art Show is open to all South Dakota citizens age 60 and older.

Entries will be accepted at the South Dakota Health Care Association Office located at 804 N Western Avenue, Sioux Falls, October 2 – October 6 between the hours of 9 AM – 3 PM only. Entry Forms are available at www.sdhca.org by following the SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks link (<https://www.sdhca.org/dakota-masterworks>) or call 1-800-952-3052. The Exhibit Show will be held November 2 – 3 at the Jerstad Center at the Good Samaritan Society National Campus in Sioux Falls. Free public admission to the Exhibit Show.

SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks was created to showcase the talent and creativity of South Dakotans 60 and older. "The second half of life is full of creative growth and fulfillment, and SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks demonstrates that reality," said SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks Coordinator LuAnn Severson. The competition is open to every citizen of South Dakota age 60 and older. The winning entries will be exhibited at various sites throughout South Dakota following the Sioux Falls Show.

Categories include watercolor painting, oil painting, acrylic painting, drawing/pastels, photography, mixed media and wood carving. (The Mixed Media category is limited to a mixture of 2 or more of the following – oil paint, acrylic paint, watercolor paint, pencils, scratchboard or photography. Other items outside of these listed are not accepted within the artwork. No shadow boxes. 2-dimensional only. Size limited to no larger than 30" x 36" total including the frame.)

A first (\$75), second (\$50), and third (\$25) place award will be given in each of the categories. In addition, professional judges will select a Best of Show (\$100). A People's Choice (\$100) will also be awarded. Two entries are allowed from each entrant completed within the past 3 years.

Corporate sponsors include EmpRes, Accura, Good Samaritan Society, Tieszen Memorial Home, Dow Rummel Village, Grand Living at Lake Lorraine, The Inn on Westport, Bethany, Clarkson Health Care, Westhills Village Retirement Community, Fischer Rounds & Associates, Jenkins Living Center, Imagery Photography, and Sisson Printing.

This year's artwork for the promotional poster was created by People's Choice winner, Judy DeBoer of Sioux Falls, SD for her watercolor painting titled, "First Tailgate Party." To receive an entry form contact: SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks, 804 N Western Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57104 or call LuAnn Severson, SDHCA, 605-339-2071 or 1-800-952-3052. Entry Forms and entry information may also be found by visiting www.sdhca.org and follow the SDHCA Dakota MasterWorks link.

South Dakota Farmers Union Applauds PUC's action, Calls for Additional Protections

HURON, S. D. - September 5 the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) rejected Navigator CO2's application for a permit to construct the Heartland Greenway carbon capture pipeline.

The company's request sought to disregard county pipeline setback ordinances. The PUC's unanimous decision pointed to the company's lack of transparency in disclosing carbon dioxide plume modeling and untimely notices to landowners. The project's intended stretch of 110 miles would have traversed eastern South Dakota including the counties of Brookings, Moody, Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner. Similar actions have been issued in North Dakota against the foreign backed private company Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline. The PUC will make a decision regarding Summit Pipelines permit at a hearing scheduled for Monday, September 11.



SDFU

Doug Sombke, President of South Dakota Farmers Union

During the 2023 Legislative Session, South Dakota Farmers Union joined with others to support HB1133. The House Bill would have protected landowners by excluding carbon dioxide as a common carrier commodity. Unlike electricity, water or natural gas transported via pipelines, transporting highly pressured CO2 only benefits two private investor groups in pursuit of federal tax incentives. The majority of state legislators did not support landowners and the bill failed. If the bill had passed the Senate, CO2 would not qualify for "eminent domain," which is a legal process to gain access to land from unwilling landowners.

The South Dakota Farmers Union, once again, calls on state legislators and our Congressional leaders to clarify and strengthen protections for family farmers and their land rights:

Doug Sombke, president, South Dakota Farmers Union:

"The decision by the Public Utilities Commission is a win for local control and serves as a clear reminder that more must be done to secure property rights for landowners. As it is, South Dakota's communities have limited control over the project's planning. We need legislative champions to step forward and lead the charge in putting South Dakotans first. Legislation that includes definitions under Chapter 49 in South Dakota Codified law dealing with Public Utilities Commissions jurisdiction would be a firm step in that direction. No one denies ethanol's benefits. Just do the right thing. Treat landowners with respect and their rights to their land."

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

September 11, 2023 – 6:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of August 14, 2023 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of August 2023 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approve Open Enrollment #24-20.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Program Overview Presentations
 - a. 2nd Grade...A. Zoellner and E. Dinger
 - b. 3rd Grade...M. Smith and H. Rowen
3. Continued discussion concerning Langford School District's request for athletics cooperative.
4. Required review of District COVID-19 Learn On Plan.
5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Timeline for general fund opt-out discussion.
2. Approve lane change for Chantel Duerre from BS to BS+15 (+\$900)
3. Approve hiring Robin Bitz, MS/HS SPED Paraprofessional, \$14.74/hour.
4. Appoint delegate to 2023 ASBSD Delegate Assembly – Friday, November 17.
5. Adopt motion to deposit revenue from sale of Oak Gulch School land to District fund pursuant SDCL 6-13-8.

ADJOURN

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

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GDILIVE.COM

GT Groton Area
Tigers

Cyclones

**Clark/Willow
Lake Cyclones**

Football Action
7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 8, 2023
at Doney Field
Groton



GDILIVE Sponsors:

Bary Keith at Harr Motors,
BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm
Service, Blocker Construction,
Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag
Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford,
John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers,
Locke Electric

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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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Cavaliers set back Tigers in three sets

It was a tough night for the Groton Area volleyball teams as Aberdeen Roncalli won three of the five matches played Thursday night at Aberdeen Roncalli.

The varsity team lost in three sets, 25-23, 25-22 and 25-17. Sydney Leicht led the Tigers with six kills and two ace serves - all in the second set. Anna Fjeldheim had five kills and two blocks, Faith Traphagen had three kills and one block, Lydia Meier had three kills and one ace serve, Elizabeth Fliehs had three kills, Rylee Dunker had two blocks and one kill, Emma Kutter had two blocks, Carly Guthmiller had one kill and one ace serve and Jaedyn Penning had one kill.

Ava Hanson led the Cavaliers with 10 kills and five blocks while Jaidyn Feickert had nine kills and one ace and Maddie Huber had six kills and one ace serve.

Groton Area is now 3-2 and Roncalli goes to 4-1.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Dan Richardt at Groton Ford, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric.

The junior varsity team won its match in two sets, 25-14 and 26-24. Jaedyn Penning had seven kills and five ace serves, Chesney Weber had five kills and two ace serves, Talli Wright three kills and two ace serves, Emma Kutter three kills and one block, Taryn Traphagen two kills and one block, Kella Tracy two kills, Jerica Locke one ace serve and one kill and Sydney Locke had two ace serves.

The junior varsity match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright.

The C team also won its match in two sets, 25-19 and 25-21. Emerlee Jones had nine kills, Taryn Traphagen five kills, Liby Althoff four kills, McKenna Tietz three kills, Leah Jones and Teagan Hanten each had two kills, Hannah Sandness, Avery Crank and Ashlynn Warrington each had two ace serves and Brenna Imrie had one ace serve.

The C match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Seth and Evan Erickson at the Erickson Insurance Agency.

Roncalli won the eighth grade match, 25-20 and 25-19, and the Cavaliers won the seventh grade match, 25-13 and 25-14.

- Paul Kosel



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Commission denies expanded hound hunting for mountain lions after hundreds of comments

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 8:01 PM

WATERTOWN — After receiving hundreds of written public comments, the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission denied a proposal Thursday that would have allowed the use of dogs to hunt mountain lions in a broader area of the Black Hills.

However, the commission directed the Department of Game, Fish and Parks to reassess its mountain lion management plan and bring recommendations next fall for the 2024 hunting season.

Commissioner Travis Bies — who made the motion to deny the proposal — said he supports hound hunting for mountain lions in the Black Hills, but agrees with GF&P Wildlife Director Tom Kirschenmann, who testified that the move would be premature without more research.

“I certainly understand the request from the houndsmen for more opportunity,” Kirschenmann added.

Hounds are utilized in mountain lion hunts for their scent-tracking abilities. Once the hounds detect the mountain lion’s trail, they pursue and often force the lion to ascend a tree. This “treeing” makes the lion more visible for hunters.

Research presented at a 2021 commission meeting indicated the mountain lion population was projected to decline.

As of December 2022, the estimate stood at 275 mountain lions in the Black Hills, but it’s projected to drop to just under 250 by the end of 2023. If the recent average of 26 females killed by hunters per season continues, the number could plummet to just above 200 by the end of 2024, according to the department.

Wildlife Program Administrator Andrew Norton said the implementation of the hound hunting proposal would “exacerbate that decline in population.”

And until the department brings hunters and wildlife advocates together to decide if that’s something the public wants to do, the commission agreed that the move would be premature.

“I’m not looking for this to happen overnight,” Bies said. But as with some of his fellow commissioners, he made it known that “I’m 100% for bringing dogs into the Black Hills.”

The proposal would allow for the annual harvesting of up to 12 mountain lions per year — six female and six male — in the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District, which encompasses the entirety of the Black Hills in South Dakota. In addition, 15 permits already allow the use of dogs in Custer State Park.

Comments from the public

Commissioner Robert Whitmyre said he had never seen so many public comments filed on a petition in his two years on the commission.

“We had over 500 folks one way and 300 folks on the other way,” added Commissioner Stephanie Rissler — with the majority of comments in favor of the proposal. “I think this is a bigger topic than just using hounds in the Black Hills.”

Advocates believe that using hounds would increase the success rate of hunts and help manage the mountain lion population more effectively.

“I really like the way this proposal is written,” testified Finn Sacrison, a Rapid City houndsman. “The fact is that the petitions we brought forward are about opportunity.”

That view was echoed by James Thompson of Madison, who wrote, “Using dogs is the most ethical way of hunting cats. If you tree a female you can walk away and continue hunting.”

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The proposal was also supported by South Dakota Bowhunters Incorporated, which said the move would minimize the predation of elk, mule deer, and other sought-after animals.

"I fully support allowing the houndsmen of South Dakota to be able to have an opportunity to help take more lions and give our big game populations a better chance of survival," wrote group secretary Dana Rogers of Hill City.

Critics argue that hounding mountain lions makes the sport too easy for the hunter and commercializes the activity.

"As an avid spot and stalk hunter, I am against the use of hounds in the Black Hills," wrote Hunter Schofield of Rapid City. "It will take away from the foot hunters that hunt mountain lions. The use of dogs will pressure the wildlife which are pressured enough as it is."

Michael Buckingham of Rapid City added that the move would limit "access to hunting cats to those who can afford to pay a tracker;" meaning a guide with hounds.

While hunting mountain lions with hounds throughout the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District is currently barred, it is allowed in some parts of Custer State Park between Dec. 26 and April 30.

A long history of debate

Mountain lion management in South Dakota has long been subjected to debates centered on conservation, hunting and human-lion interactions.

Historically, mountain lions were found throughout South Dakota.

By the early 1900s, they had been extirpated due to habitat loss and unregulated hunting. It wasn't until the late 1980s that mountain lions began reestablishing a presence, mainly in the Black Hills region, according to former Game, Fish and Parks Secretary John Cooper.

When he became secretary under former Gov. Bill Janklow, Cooper recalled, "Mountain lion management was the first thing that came to my desk."

As the mountain lion population grew in the Black Hills during the early 1990s, ranchers, who were losing livestock to lions, and hunters pushed for a hunting season.

The department began developing a management plan to consider moving mountain lions off the protected list, "and move into a game management list," Cooper said.

"We knew that in order to manage the animal as a game animal, we'd have to go to the Legislature," he said. "We knew that would be controversial."

Cooper said South Dakota State University helped with analysis and shared the view that managing the population with hunters was "the right thing to do if we're in fact going to have mountain lions in South Dakota, because we need to manage these animals."

Cooper said the alternative is having state agents kill the animals to keep the population in check, which can be costly, especially when "we can have hunters fund the department and do that work."

Cooper said that while human-lion interactions were and continue to be a concern, "I could not say we have a single example of a person being attacked or killed" by a mountain lion.

Finally, in 2005, South Dakota implemented its first-ever mountain lion hunting season.

"They came a long way since then," testified former state legislator Tim Goodwin of Rapid City, referring to houndsmen. He said hound hunters were "plum happy" with the gains they have made in previous years, and now they want more.

"It's just going to open the floodgates," he testified before the commission.

Game, Fish and Parks conducts regular research and monitoring to understand mountain lion population dynamics, distribution and health. This research informs management decisions, and will be central to any recommendations brought forth next year, said Kirschenmann.

The commission also denied a proposal to allow spearfishing trout during the Thursday meeting, which also drew a considerable number of comments from the public.

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.

Rapid City prosecutors inch toward decision in year-old homicide of transgender woman

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 3:17 PM

Prosecutors in Rapid City have connected with the family of Acey Morrison, a transgender Native American woman shot to death more than a year ago by a man who says he shot her in self-defense.

Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel met with Morrison's family to discuss the case this week, spokeswoman Katy Urban told South Dakota Searchlight, and a final decision on how to proceed with the case will come at a later date. Roetzel's office will soon begin a multi-week murder trial in a separate case.

Urban said she could not offer any additional details on the Morrison case.

Morrison's mother, Edelyn Catches, said she and her family were heartened during the meeting this week to hear prosecutors say they'd push through with the investigation, even though she knows that South Dakota's strong self-defense laws could complicate matters in court.

The explanation of the self-defense statutes "wasn't very reassuring," Catches said, but she pledged her family's cooperation in any court proceedings.

"They asked me if I wanted to follow through, and I said 'of course we do,'" Catches said.

There's never been a question as to who killed Morrison. The man who shot her told investigators he was defending himself. The two of them connected on a dating app and met on a Saturday night at the man's north Rapid City home. He shot her the following morning.

Catches said she's not certain how the situation will proceed, but that the meeting left her with hope that the justice system hasn't forgotten about Morrison.

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

Sioux Falls aims to boost efficiency at state's busiest regional 911 call center

Employees currently in gray area of joint city-county management

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 3:05 PM

For more than a fifth of South Dakota's population, a call to 911 puts them in touch with someone from Metro Communications in downtown Sioux Falls.

Despite its size and its role in public safety, Metro Communications doesn't have its own legal team or human resources staff.

That's led to a host of headaches for the four directors the agency has burned through in the past decade. It's also made it difficult to recruit and retain employees, who live in a gray area of public employment somewhere between the city of Sioux Falls and Minnehaha County, which jointly fund and oversee the agency.

On Thursday, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken announced a plan to bring all 54 employees of the call center under city management.

The service will be unchanged for those who call, he said. The \$6 million budget split between the county and city will be unchanged. The plan also doesn't affect the schedule on which Metro Communications will move into its new, modern home on the city's northeast edge. That's meant to happen next year.

What it does do, according to TenHaken and Minnehaha County Commissioner and Metro Management Council Member Gerald Beninga, is offer stability and efficiency for one of the most critical public safety assets in South Dakota's most populated region.

The inefficiencies of Metro Communications as an independent agency need to be addressed, Beninga said. The county is home to nearly 100,000 more people than it was when the current county-city setup emerged in 2007.

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Currently, legal questions from the call center go to the county and the city, but tend to be lower priority than questions involving employees of either governing body. Wage negotiations can be similarly messy, and negotiations for employee benefits on things like health insurance are complicated by the large center's relatively small number of employees.

"As our population grows with Minnehaha County, we must continue to evaluate what's best for our communities, and collaborate on those decisions like this," Beninga said.

Efficiencies and ease of management will be a major help to Director Mike Gramlick, TenHaken said, but it will also be a boon for employees. Cumulatively since 2004, the center's retention rate is 24%.

Current employees will be able to lean on city resources as city employees. With recruiting, the move will allow the city to offer information about 911 dispatcher work at job fairs, and to advertise alongside other city jobs.

"It's much easier to recruit someone if they know they have a support system," TenHaken said.

Metro Communications handles police, sheriff's office, fire rescue and other emergency calls across Minnehaha County, which has nearly 200,000 residents and includes Sioux Falls, Brandon, Renner, Crooks, Garretson, Dell Rapids, Hartford and other small cities.

The move under the city umbrella for Metro Communications will come alongside an updated leadership structure. Currently, the Metro Management Council that oversees Metro Communications and has final say on its directorship is composed of the mayor, two city council members and two county commissioners. The new scheme will add the police and fire chiefs and sheriff to the board and remove the mayor. Police and fire representatives are now part of a non-governing User Committee that acts as a liaison between the call center and the management council.

There are 32 total call centers serving as "Public Safety Answering Points" in South Dakota, most of which cover more land area than Metro Communications.

Sioux Falls dispatchers are busier than most. They field about 400,000 calls a year, with 200,000 calls for service. In Rapid City, the calls for service figure is closer to 70,000.

Calls to Rapid City non-emergency lines account for 230,000 of that city's 911 center call volume. The Sioux Falls facility, by contrast, doesn't answer non-911 calls placed to the Sioux Falls Police Department or Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office.

Pennington County's Emergency Services Communications Center covers its own county and neighboring Jackson County, according to its director, Kevin Karley. Its dispatchers are county employees, and its governing board already includes representatives from public safety agencies.

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

South Dakota's Navigator pipeline decision might jeopardize Summit proposal

BY: JARED STRONG - SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 9:05 PM

Utility regulators in South Dakota declined this week to overrule county ordinances that restrict carbon dioxide pipelines when they denied Navigator CO2 a permit for its project.

Summit Carbon Solutions has also asked that state's Public Utilities Commission to give it a permit despite local restrictions, including in Minnehaha County, where the restrictions were upheld.

A final evidentiary hearing for Summit's permit in South Dakota is poised to start Monday.

Its pipeline system would transport captured carbon dioxide from ethanol plants in five states to North Dakota for underground sequestration.

James Powell, the company's chief operating officer, testified this week that the pipeline would not be built in Iowa without permits in the Dakotas.

"Given they declined to strike down the Minnehaha ordinance, I see no reason why they would change that decision," said Brian Jorde, an attorney who represents more than 100 landowners affected by the

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pipeline projects in multiple states. "It would be wise for Summit to either pull its application or state they are suspending their request for application — which they can do at any time — until they come up with a route that can comply with all applicable laws and ordinances."

A Summit spokesperson declined to comment on the potential effects of the Navigator decision on the Summit proposal.

"Summit Carbon Solutions looks forward to our hearing with the South Dakota PUC starting on September 11," said Sabrina Zenor, the company's director of community relations.

County powers vary by state

Some Iowa counties enacted restrictions that would force carbon dioxide pipelines to be placed certain distances from cities, livestock facilities, electric transmission lines, homes and others. But a federal judge decided in July that state law does not grant counties the authority over the siting of the pipelines, which is the jurisdiction of the Iowa Utilities Board.

That ruling was the result of a Summit lawsuit against Shelby County.

"Common sense suggests these restrictions would eliminate all or almost all land in Shelby County on which an (Iowa Utilities Board) approved pipeline could be built," Chief Judge Stephanie Rose wrote. "This creates a serious possibility the IUB would approve the construction of the pipeline but Summit would be unable to build because it could not comply with the requirements of the ordinance."

The situation is different in South Dakota. Counties are allowed to adopt their own restrictions, but state regulators can overrule them if they are "unreasonably restrictive."

In August, Summit asked commissioners to use their authority to "preempt" ordinances in four South Dakota counties: Brown, McPherson, Minnehaha and Spink.

All of them lie in the path of the primary pipe that would take carbon dioxide from Iowa to North Dakota. The company's project would span about 475 miles in South Dakota, compared with more than 680 in Iowa.

"These are no ordinary county ordinances," wrote Brett Koenecke, a Summit attorney. "Each one was enacted as a reaction and to expressly target (and likely stop) carbon dioxide pipelines."

The ordinances are typically borne of safety concerns about the pipelines. Under certain circumstances, a major breach can form a plume of carbon dioxide gas that can travel long distances and suffocate people and animals. Summit says its pipeline would be one of the safest ever built.

Ordinances might block Summit

Navigator was unsuccessful in arguing to override ordinances in two counties, in part, because the company acknowledged it could build its pipeline in at least one of the counties despite the restrictions, the South Dakota Searchlight reported.

Summit argues that the restrictions are so severe its project would be blocked, including in Minnehaha.

"These counties have established setback requirements and permitting schemes that make the counties, not this commission, the primary siting authority for the State of South Dakota," Koenecke wrote. "And they've done that by effectively banning hazardous liquid pipelines. That is unreasonably restrictive. And it goes against the policy set by the legislature."

Erik Schovanec, Summit's director of pipeline and facilities, testified in Iowa this week that the company has sought to assuage residents' concerns when possible by adjusting its route. He noted that landowner feedback has resulted in more than 200 adjustments.

Navigator has not publicly indicated how it might proceed in South Dakota. Its roughly 1,300-mile system would transport carbon dioxide from ethanol and fertilizer plants in five states to Illinois.

The route in South Dakota is not physically necessary for the routes in other states, including Iowa. A Navigator spokesperson declined to say whether the project would proceed in the other states without South Dakota.

Status in Iowa

Summit is in the third week of its final evidentiary hearing with the Iowa Utilities Board.

The company began presenting its witnesses this week for cross examination. An initial schedule showed that its 15 witnesses would be called this week from Tuesday to Friday, but there have been delays. Just

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one of the four planned witnesses for Tuesday testified that day. On Thursday, the hearing stopped early because another witness wasn't available. The company's witness testimony is expected to continue into next week.

Much of the testimony on Wednesday and Thursday focused on financial aspects of the project, and some of the most important details — the contracts between Summit and ethanol plants — were discussed in private on Wednesday because they are subject to a protective order.

The first two weeks of the hearing featured some of the landowners who are subject to eminent domain requests because they declined to sign easement agreements with the company.

Those easements allow Summit to build its pipeline on property it doesn't own.

Zenor recently noted that the number of land parcels for which it seeks eminent domain has declined to about 900. That is down from about 950 at the start of the hearing. Zenor said that decline is the result of landowners signing voluntary easements.

Most of the eminent domain requests are scheduled for consideration later in the hearing, which has the potential to extend for weeks or months.

An evidentiary hearing for Navigator has not been set. The IUB plans to hold a scheduling conference Oct. 9 to help determine a start date.

Iowa Capital Dispatch is part of States Newsroom, a network of news bureaus supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity. Iowa Capital Dispatch maintains editorial independence. Contact Editor Kathie Obradovich for questions: info@iowacapitaldispatch.com. Follow Iowa Capital Dispatch on Facebook and Twitter.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

Millions more workers would receive overtime pay under proposed Biden administration rule

BY: CASEY QUINLAN - SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 3:00 PM

Salaried workers who have been ineligible for overtime pay would benefit from a proposed Biden administration regulation.

The Department of Labor's new rule would require employers compensate full-time workers in management, administrative, or other professional roles for any overtime worked if they make less than \$55,068 annually. Currently, the salary threshold is \$35,568. The change is expected to affect 3.6 million workers.

The rule would also provide automatic changes every three years to the salary level to keep up with changes in earnings. U.S. territories that are subject to the federal minimum wage would have these same overtime protections, which rolls back a Trump administration change made in 2019.

"I've heard from workers again and again about working long hours, for no extra pay, all while earning low salaries that don't come anywhere close to compensating them for their sacrifice," said Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su in a statement.

The new standard salary level proposed by the agency would be tied to the 35th percentile of weekly earnings of salaried workers in the lowest-wage region of the country. There is voter support for a change in the current regulations. According to a 2022 Data for Progress survey of likely voters, 65% said they either strongly supported or somewhat supported raising the salary threshold for overtime pay.

The rule will go through a public comment period as part of the rulemaking process to give supporters and opponents time to offer feedback. The process can take months, which could mean it won't be finalized until next year. Labor rights advocates and economists say that people working in retail, restaurants and healthcare would be among the workers most affected by the regulation.

Judy Conti, director of government affairs at the National Employment Law Project, a worker advocacy

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nonprofit, said many workers who do overtime eligible work are paid just over the current threshold so their companies can avoid paying time-and-a-half. The proposed rule would help address this, she said.

"A lot of these dollar stores call people managers and supervisors and pay them \$36,000 a year. Then they claim that they're overtime exempt and they may do a little managing and they may do a little supervising, but mostly they're working the cash register or they're stocking shelves or they're unloading in the back. They're not doing work that is considered truly bona fide executive, professional or administrative work," she said.

Conti added that this rule would provide incentive to employers to manage employee time wisely or hire more workers to handle the workload.

"... There's [currently] no incentive to really manage that time wisely and see if it should instead be spread to other people," Conti said.

Erica Groshen, senior economics adviser at the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations, said the regulation should be fair on employers.

"I think the important thing to realize is that this will affect all of those employers equally," she said. "It's not putting some at a disadvantage compared to others. It's going to change the playing field for everybody. You could argue that it's going to change the playing field more for employers who were actively trying to take advantage of the erosion of the applicability of the law."

In terms of the potential effects on the economy, Groshen said there could be some pass through to prices for consumers depending on how competitive the industry.

"To the extent that these companies are quite profitable, then the employers might try to hold on to market share by not increasing prices as much. Their profits might be a bit lower. Right now, nationally profit rates are actually quite high. They've been high for a while and rising. This would tend to reduce inequality if it comes out of profits. Otherwise, then the money is going to come from somewhere," Groshen said.

That may mean that some employers will automate more services such as electronic ordering at restaurants or buying equipment for food preparation, she added.

The Trump administration last changed the salary threshold in 2019 from \$23,660, set in 2004, to its current \$35,568 salary level, which was significantly lower than the \$47,476 level the Obama administration tried to implement in 2016. A federal judge blocked the Obama administration's effort saying that the threshold was too high and that the administration did not have the authority to make that particular change. Twenty-one states, including Nevada, Arizona, Kentucky and Wisconsin, brought the lawsuit. The states argued that the rule "could deliberately exhaust state budgets" and was unconstitutional. In 2017, the same judge, an Obama appointee, ruled against the regulation again.

Conti said she's optimistic that the rule is less likely to be blocked this time. She argues that the judge's reasoning for stopping implementation of the rule lacked "legal or economic support." Attorneys for law firms specializing in employment and labor law, however, are still anticipating legal action against the rule. Some attorneys suggest that the lack of a Senate-confirmed labor secretary makes the regulation more vulnerable to legal action. Biden nominated Su for labor secretary six months ago.

Many of the same groups that opposed or were critical of the overhaul of overtime regulations during the Obama administration have taken similar positions on the Biden administration's effort. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has called on the Department of Labor to "adjust" the rule. It did not release any specifics for what it wants the agency to do, but criticized the department's proposal to automatically change the salary threshold every few years.

"The Department of Labor's proposed overtime regulation is the wrong rulemaking at the wrong time," Marc Freedman, vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Workplace Policy, said in a statement. "It represents a more than 50% spike in the salary threshold and will increase costs for small businesses, nonprofits, and other employers at a time when businesses already face persistent workforce shortages that are hindering the economy."

Industry groups such as the National Restaurant Association and National Association of Manufacturers have been critical of the rule for similar reasons.

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Conti said she sees the proposed rule as stimulating for the economy and good for employees as well as employers.

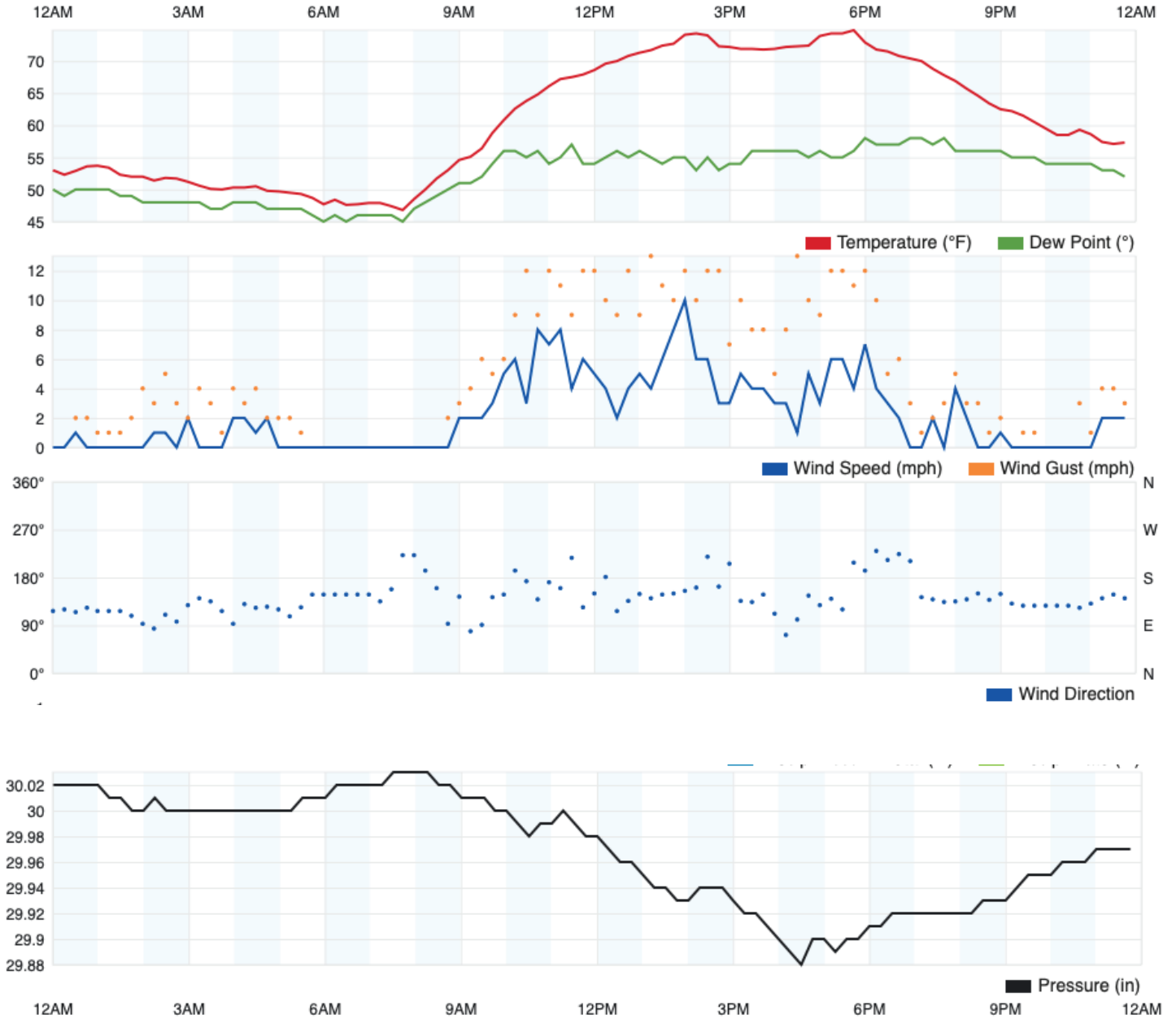
"Adding jobs and getting more money into more people's hands is good for the economy," Conti said. "We've seen a lot of workers over the past couple of years walking away from jobs when they're over-worked, when they don't have time for themselves and when they don't have time for their families. Making sure that workers have moderate work weeks that are 40 hours is good for employers. They're not going to burn out their employees."

Casey Quinlan is an economy reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. For the past decade, they have reported on national politics and state politics, LGBTQ rights, abortion access, labor issues, education, Supreme Court news and more for publications including The American Independent, ThinkProgress, New Republic, Rewire News, SCOTUSblog, In These Times and Vox.

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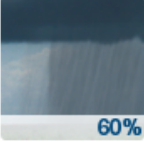




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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	Showers Likely	Slight Chance Showers then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 83 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 69 °F	Low: 48 °F	High: 71 °F	Low: 44 °F	High: 70 °F




Warmer Today - System Tonight

September 8, 2023
3:57 AM

Highs In The Low 80s

Cooler Saturday & Sunday

	Probability of Precipitation Forecast															
	9/8 Fri				9/9 Sat				9/10 Sun							
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm				
Aberdeen	0	0	0	5	15	30	45	60	55	25	25	10	10	5	5	5
Britton	0	0	0	5	5	25	35	55	60	35	30	10	10	5	5	5
Brookings	0	0	0	0	0	15	15	50	60	60	50	40	40	25	25	10
Chamberlain	0	0	0	0	10	20	30	50	45	30	25	20	20	15	15	15
Clark	0	0	0	5	5	20	25	65	60	45	35	25	25	10	10	5
Eagle Butte	0	0	10	25	30	45	50	25	15	10	5	5	5	10	10	10
Ellendale	0	0	0	5	20	35	50	60	50	25	20	5	5	0	0	5
Eureka	5	0	5	10	20	45	60	55	40	15	10	5	5	0	0	5
Gettysburg	0	0	0	10	20	40	55	50	35	15	10	5	5	5	5	5
Huron	0	0	0	0	5	20	25	75	65	55	30	25	25	10	10	10
Kennebec	0	0	0	5	15	35	50	40	30	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
McIntosh	5	5	30	35	35	60	60	35	20	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Milbank	0	0	0	5	5	10	20	50	60	65	45	30	30	15	15	5
Miller	0	0	0	5	10	25	40	65	40	25	25	20	20	10	10	10
Mobridge	0	0	5	15	20	45	60	45	25	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Murdo	0	0	0	20	20	40	45	25	15	10	10	10	10	20	20	20
Pierre	0	0	0	10	20	40	50	30	20	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Redfield	0	0	0	5	5	25	35	65	55	35	25	15	15	5	5	5
Sisseton	0	0	0	5	5	15	20	60	65	50	35	20	20	10	10	5
Watertown	0	0	0	5	5	15	20	55	60	55	40	30	30	15	15	5
Webster	0	0	0	5	5	20	25	60	65	45	35	20	20	10	10	5
Wheaton	0	0	0	5	5	10	20	55	60	65	45	20	20	10	10	5



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Milder air returns today with highs in the low 80s. A system this evening and overnight will provide the focus for showers and weak thunderstorms, which will linger well into Saturday. Cooler air moves in for the weekend.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75 °F at 5:47 PM

Low Temp: 46 °F at 7:40 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 11:21 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 58 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1933

Record Low: 32 in 1992

Average High: 78

Average Low: 50

Average Precip in Sept.: .54

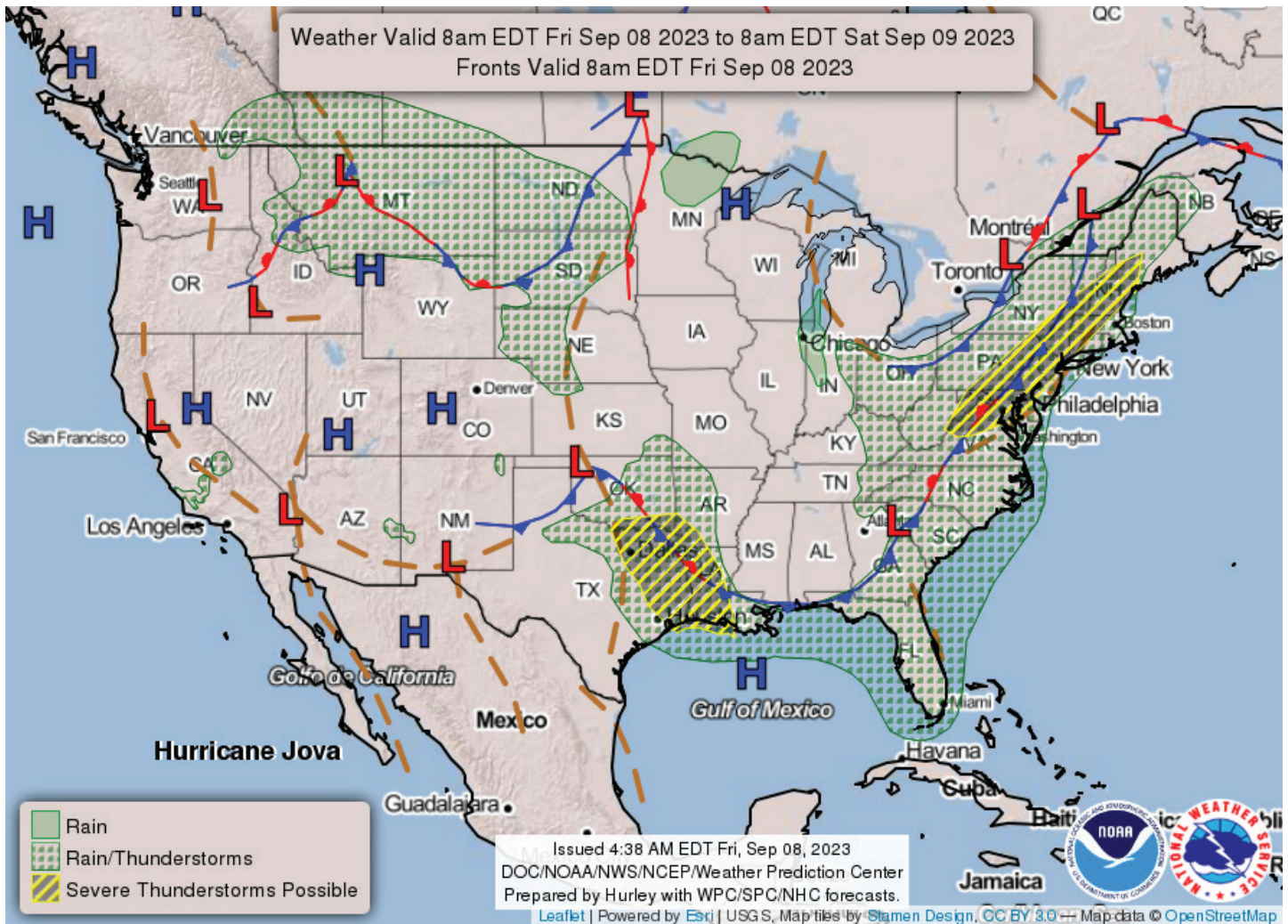
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.10

Average Precip to date: 16.88

Precip Year to Date: 18.69

Sunset Tonight: 7:59:09 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:02:11 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 8, 1959: High winds and areas of blowing dust occurred across parts of central South Dakota from Walworth to Mellette. During the evening, wind gusts of 40 to 50 mph affected the counties either side of the Missouri River. Low visibility in blowing dust was blamed for a four-car crash near Pierre, injuring five persons, another accident near Mobridge injured one person. Barn buildings were blown over or unroofed near Delmont in Douglas County. Lightning started grass fires and burned several thousand acres of rangeland in Mellette and Lyman counties. In the late afternoon, high winds associated with a cold front gusted to 70 mph and destroyed six buildings on a farm north and east of Reliance. At 500 pm, winds ripped a camper off a pickup truck 12 miles south of Pierre. Winds were measured at 68 mph at Pierre. At 6 pm CDT winds gusting to 70 mph damaged many trees in the Watertown area, power lines, and some buildings. A trailer and truck, twelve miles north of Watertown, were blown over while traveling on Interstate 29. A large oil tank was also destroyed.

1900: A Category 4 storm made landfall in Galveston, Texas on this day in 1900. This hurricane killed between 6,000 and 12,000 individuals, making it the deadliest US Atlantic hurricane on record. The highest point in the city of Galveston was less than nine feet above sea level. The hurricane brought a storm surge of over 15 feet, which overwhelmed the entire island.

1925: In September 1925, South Carolina was in the middle of one of the most widespread and disastrous droughts in the state's history. The NWS Co-op station in Calhoun Falls reported 11 days above 100°F with a maximum temperature of 111°F on this day.

1987 - A tropical depression off the coast of South Carolina brought another round of heavy rain to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region and the Upper Ohio Valley. Showers and thunderstorms produced extremely heavy rain in eastern Pennsylvania, where flooding caused more than 55 million dollars across a seven county area. The afternoon high of 97 degrees at Miami FL was a record for the month of September. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Eighteen cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Roanoke VA with a reading of 42 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced very heavy rain in the central U.S. Thunderstorms during the late morning and afternoon produced five to nine inches of rain around Lincoln NE, with an unofficial total of eleven inches near Holmes Park. Up to six and a half inches of rain soaked northern and western Iowa. Eighty to ninety percent of the homes in Shenandoah IA, where 5.89 inches of rain was received, reported basement flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: A severe thunderstorm developed over the southern end of the Las Vegas Valley in Nevada. The storm moved north bringing damaging winds and heavy rain mainly across the eastern half of the metro area. Henderson Executive Airport recorded wind gusts of 80 mph. Air traffic control personnel temporarily evacuated the airport tower. Approximately 15 homes and trailers in Moapa were severely damaged by thunderstorm winds estimated at 80 to 90 mph.

2012: Severe storms impacted the New York City area, forcing a delay of the United States Open. A tornado hit a beach club in Queens, and another brought damage to Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

AM I DOING MY BEST?

John Baker was an unlikely candidate to become a respected track star. He was not very well built, much shorter than other members of the track team and appeared to be uncoordinated. But something happened.

During his junior year in high school, the coaches wanted his best friend to join the track team. He refused. When John learned of this he said, "Let me join and maybe he'll come with me." They agreed to John's suggestion and both boys began running track together.

At the first cross country track event, most eyes were focused on the state champion, Lloyd Goff. When the race began, he quickly took the lead. But as the racers approached the finish line, one runner was far in front of the others. The coach turned to his assistant and said, "Here comes Goff." Taking his binoculars he looked and said, "Wow! It's not Goff - it's Baker."

After the race, the coach asked Baker how he was able to win the race. "I focused on the runner in front of me and said, 'Am I doing my best?' And when I passed him, I said that about the next one in front of me until I passed every one of them and won the race!"

All of us who profess to be Christians need to ask ourselves the same question: "Am I doing my best?" and then add, "for Christ?"

Prayer: You have given us so much, Father, that we do not realize all that we can do to serve You or ask what more can I do for You. May we ask: Can I do more Lord? 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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.05.23

3 43 50 51 65 13

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$122,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 5 Mins 8
DRAW: 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 1 Days 16 Hrs 20
DRAW: Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.07.23

12 34 38 46 48 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 35 Mins 9
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.06.23

8 10 17 24 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$35,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 35
DRAW: Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.06.23

1 12 30 50 55 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 8 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 1 Days 17 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Groton Area, 25-23, 25-22, 25-17
Alcester-Hudson def. Avon, 25-17, 17-25, 25-17, 20-25, 16-14
Baltic def. Beresford, 25-11, 25-11, 25-14
Bridgewater-Emery def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-20, 25-19, 25-22
Canistota def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 20-25, 22-25, 25-21, 25-12, 15-13
Canton def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-18, 21-25, 24-26, 27-25, 15-8
Castlewood def. Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op, 24-26, 25-9, 25-22, 25-19
Colman-Egan def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 12-25, 25-16, 25-17, 25-11
Dell Rapids def. Tea Area, 25-19, 25-15, 25-22
Estelline/Hendricks def. Arlington, 27-25, 25-17, 25-19
Ethan def. Menno, 25-21, 25-16, 25-12
Faulkton def. Potter County, 25-1, 25-16, 25-13
Flandreau def. Garretson, 25-18, 21-25, 25-15, 19-25, 15-10
Gayville-Volin High School def. Freeman, 25-23, 25-22, 15-25, 25-21
Great Plains Lutheran def. Wilmot, 25-14, 25-14, 21-25, 25-13
Hamlin def. Milbank, 25-20, 25-18, 25-11
Harding County def. Edgemont, 22-25, 30-28, 25-23, 16-25, 15-12
Herreid/Selby Area def. Timber Lake, 25-17, 25-10, 25-10
Hot Springs def. Custer, 17-25, 25-20, 26-24, 16-25, 15-10
Ipswich def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-21, 25-15, 25-19
James Valley Christian def. Corsica/Stickney, 26-28, 25-20, 25-9, 25-13
Kimball/White Lake def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-19, 25-22, 25-15
Lakota Tech def. Bennett County, 23-25, 23-25, 25-18, 25-23, 16-14
Lyman def. New Underwood, 25-17, 25-18, 25-12
Madison def. Lennox, 25-19, 25-16, 25-17
Mobridge-Pollock def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-17, 25-14, 25-13
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Hanson, 25-21, 23-25, 25-16, 25-15
Parkston def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-20, 20-25, 25-8, 25-21
Philip def. Stanley County, 25-22, 25-0, 25-18
Pine Ridge def. Todd County, 25-10, 25-14, 25-22
Platte-Geddes def. Bon Homme, 25-16, 25-18, 25-18
Scotland def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-0, 25-20, 25-22
Sioux Falls Christian def. West Central, 25-12, 25-10, 25-11
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-17, 25-11, 21-25, 25-20
Sisseton def. Redfield, 25-17, 18-25, 33-31, 28-26
St. Mary's, Neb. def. Burke, 25-20, 25-16, 25-19
Tri-Valley def. Vermillion, 23-25, 25-19, 25-21, 25-22
Wagner def. Gregory, 25-13, 25-18, 25-15
Wakpala def. Takini
Wall def. Kadoka Area, 25-16, 20-25, 25-21, 22-25, 15-13
Warner def. Northwestern, 25-13, 25-11, 25-15
Waverly-South Shore def. Waubay/Summit, 25-15, 25-12, 25-22
Webster def. Clark/Willow Lake, 21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 20-25, 19-17

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Wessington Springs def. Howard, 26-21, 21-25, 25-15, 25-15
Wolsey-Wessington def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-14, 25-19, 25-20

PREP FOOTBALL=

Little Wound 34, St. Francis Indian 22
Lower Brule def. Crazy Horse, forfeit
Todd County 40, Pine Ridge 18

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Trump visits South Dakota for rally that Gov. Kristi Noem's allies hope is vice presidential tryout

By JILL COLVIN and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As his rivals hold town halls and meet-and-greets in early voting states, Donald Trump will head to South Dakota Friday for a party fundraiser that will double as an opportunity for the state's governor, Kristi Noem, to showcase herself as a potential vice presidential pick.

Trump will join the South Dakota Republican Party for a "Monumental Leaders Rally" in Rapid City. Noem will appear alongside the former president and is expected to endorse him, creating an image of the pair that Noem's allies hope looks like a presidential ticket, according to two senior Republicans familiar with her thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity because she had not yet made her endorsement public.

Trump's decision to headline the event underscores his dominance of the Republican race even as he faces four separate indictments and 91 felony counts. South Dakota holds a late primary and isn't competitive in a general election. But with a huge lead, Trump is skipping much of the traditional primary campaign. Instead of large-scale rallies, he is relying on state party events that offer large, friendly audiences at no cost to his campaign, while his political organization pays millions of dollars in legal expenses.

Friday's event is something of an audition for Noem. She planned the event as a way to both offer her endorsement and maximize face time with Trump as he eyes potential 2024 running mates and cabinet members, according to one of the Republicans who spoke on anonymously. A spokesman for the governor declined to comment.

Noem will be term-limited in 2026 and, after declining to run for president this year, is eyeing her next move to maintain prominence in the GOP.

"I think Donald Trump has a 50-50 shot of getting elected at this point, so why not hitch your wagon to him if you can?" said Michael Card, a longtime observer of South Dakota politics who suggested Noem might also make a future National Rifle Association president or conservative commentator.

Voting won't begin for several months and Trump's indictments and upcoming criminal trials create an unprecedented situation that many strategists argue could influence the race in unexpected ways. That hasn't stopped those who are keen to be considered as Trump's running mate from openly jockeying for the position and trying to curry favor with him and his aides.

Aides caution it is far too early for serious discussions. But Trump has indicated in conversations that he is interested in selecting a woman this time around. Among the other names that have been floated: New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, failed Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake and Tennessee Sen. Marsha Blackburn. Florida Rep. Byron Donalds and Sen. Tim Scott have also been mentioned.

Trump will be in Iowa, the first state on the GOP nomination calendar, on Saturday to attend the college football game between Iowa and Iowa State.

"What we're focused on is just locking up this primary and pivoting towards the general election," said campaign spokesman Steven Cheung.

Noem was long considered a potential White House contender in her own right and had told The New York Times in November that she didn't believe Trump offered "the best chance" for the party in 2024.

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She has since said she saw no point in joining the crowded field running for the nomination given Trump's dominant position.

"I will tell you that of course I would consider it," she told Fox News host Sean Hannity when asked recently about whether she would join a potential Trump ticket if asked. "If President Trump is going to be back in the White House, I'd do all I can to help him be successful."

It will be Trump's first visit to South Dakota since the summer of 2020, when he headlined a Fourth of July fireworks celebration at Mount Rushmore on the eve of Independence Day. The then-president had been looking for a venue to turn the page after a summer of pandemic lockdowns and racial justice protests. Noem's event at Mount Rushmore was notably devoid of pandemic restrictions.

She also gifted him a miniature replica of Mount Rushmore with his likeness carved alongside George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt.

"I don't know exactly," Trump said Thursday when asked if Noem will endorse him. "But I am going. I like her a lot. I think she's great. Kristi's done a great job." He has often praised her handling of the pandemic, saying again Thursday she had done "a fantastic job."

A former member of Congress, Noem in 2018 squeezed out a surprisingly close win over a Democratic challenger to become South Dakota's first female governor. She rose to national prominence with a mostly hands-off approach to the pandemic and tacked closely to the urgings of Trump to return to life as normal.

She handily won reelection last year, even as she performed worse than other Republicans on the ballot.

Despite not running for president, Noem has continued to position herself nationally. She has been an outspoken champion for the National Rifle Association, even bragging at a spring convention for the gun-rights group that her 1-year-old granddaughter "already has" firearms. She has also defended South Dakota's abortion ban and will appear at a Michigan fundraiser later this month to support Republican Senate candidate Mike Rogers.

During the first GOP presidential debate, she appeared in an ad to encourage businesses and families to move to what she calls "the freest state in America."

Friday's event is expected to draw protesters targeting both Trump and Noem, said Annie Bachand, CEO of the South Dakota-based group Liberty & Justice for All.

"The reason that we show up is to demonstrate to other people that we're not alone," Bachand said. "Kristi Noem has spent more time out campaigning for I don't know what than she has in South Dakota. She has more interest in her own self-interest than she does in taking care of the people of South Dakota."

South Dakota GOP chair John Wiik said he expects about 7,000 people to attend the sold-out fundraiser. The event was first planned as a Lincoln Day-style fundraising dinner commonly held by local Republican groups, Wiik said, but it later ballooned into a rally with proceeds going to the state party.

"I did get a lot of questions at first," Wiik said about Trump's decision to travel to his state just as the primary season kicks into its traditional post-Labor Day overdrive.

"But the more you look at it, Trump is a media event wherever he lands," Wiik said. "He could do a rally on the moon and he'd spread his word and get just as many people, so I'm just glad he chose South Dakota."

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem expected to endorse Trump

By STEPHEN GROVES and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is expected to endorse Donald Trump's presidential campaign when he travels to her state for a Republican fundraiser on Friday.

Trump will appear in Rapid City for an event hosted by the state's GOP, and Noem is expected to introduce and endorse Trump, according to a senior Republican who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the plans.

Noem's spokesman Ian Fury said only that the event should be watched for such a development.

The Republican governor has been coy about her endorsement plans, telling Fox News only that "you'll hear something from me, too."

CNN first reported news of the endorsement.

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When Trump was asked Thursday whether Noem will endorse him, he said, "I don't know exactly." "But I am going," he said. "I like her a lot. I think she's great. Kristi's done a great job."

He praised her for taking a hands-off approach to pandemic restrictions and at times encouraging people to resume mass gatherings. In July 2020, Noem hosted Trump for a fireworks celebration at Mount Rushmore.

Noem was long considered a potential candidate in her own right and had told The New York Times in November 2022 that she didn't believe Trump offered "the best chance" for the party in 2024. But she removed herself from presidential consideration this summer, saying there was no point in joining the crowded field running for the nomination, given Trump's dominant position.

Noem, however, has looked for ways to stay in the national conversation. During the first GOP presidential debate, she ran an ad to encourage people to move to South Dakota. In the TV spot, she appeared wearing plumber's overalls and touted the state as "the freest state in America."

The state's senators, John Thune and Mike Rounds, have endorsed one of Trump's rivals, their colleague South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott.

Russia holds elections in occupied Ukrainian regions in an effort to tighten its grip there

By YURAS KARMANAU and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russian authorities are holding local elections this weekend in occupied parts of Ukraine in an effort to tighten their grip on territories Moscow illegally annexed a year ago and still does not fully control.

The voting for Russian-installed legislatures in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions has already begun and concludes Sunday. It has been denounced by Kyiv and the West.

"It constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, which Russia continues to disregard," the Council of Europe, the continent's foremost human rights body, said this week.

Kyiv echoed that sentiment, with the parliament saying in a statement that the balloting in areas where Russia "conducts active hostilities" poses a threat to Ukrainian lives. Lawmakers urged other countries not to recognize the results of the vote.

For Russia — which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine 18 months ago — it is important to go on with the voting to maintain the illusion of normalcy, despite the fact that the Kremlin does not have full control over the annexed regions, political analyst Abbas Gallyamov said.

"The Russian authorities are trying hard to pretend that everything is going according to plan, everything is fine. And if everything is going according to plan, then the political process should go according to plan," said Gallyamov, who worked as a speechwriter for Russian President Vladimir Putin when Putin served as prime minister.

Voters are supposed to elect regional legislatures, which in turn will appoint regional governors. In the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, thousands of candidates are also competing for seats on dozens of local councils.

The balloting is scheduled for the same weekend as other local elections in Russia. In the occupied regions, early voting kicked off last week as election officials went door to door or set up makeshift polling stations in public places to attract passersby.

The main contender in the election is United Russia, the Putin-loyal party that dominates Russian politics, although other parties, such as the Communist Party and the nationalist Liberal Democratic party, are also on the ballots.

For some residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, large swaths of which have been held by Russian-backed separatists since 2014, there is nothing unusual about the vote.

"For the last nine years, we've been striving to get closer with Russia, and Russian politicians are well-known to us," Sergei, a 47-year-old resident of the occupied city of Luhansk, told The Associated Press, asking that his last name be withheld for security reasons. "We're speaking Russian and have felt like part

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of Russia for a long time, and these elections only confirm that.”

Some voters in Donetsk shared Sergei’s sentiment, expressing love for Russia and saying they want to be part of it.

The picture appears bleaker in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Local residents and Ukrainian activists say poll workers make house calls accompanied by armed soldiers, and most voters know little about the candidates, up to half of whom reportedly arrived from Russia — including remote regions in Siberia and the far east.

“In most cases, we don’t know these Russian candidates, and we’re not even trying to figure it out,” said Konstantin, who currently lives in the Russian-held part of the Kherson region on the eastern bank of the Dnieper River.

Using only his first name for safety reasons, Konstantin said in a phone interview that billboards advertising Russian political parties have sprung up along the highways, and campaign workers have been bused in ahead of the vote.

But “locals understand that these elections don’t influence anything” and “are held for Russian propaganda purposes,” Kostantin said, comparing this year’s vote to the referendums Moscow staged last year in the four partially occupied regions.

Those referendums were designed to put a veneer of democracy on the annexation. Ukraine and the West denounced them as a sham and decried the annexation as illegal.

Weeks after the referendums, Russian troops withdrew from the city of Kherson, the capital of the region of the same name, and areas around it, ceding them back to Ukraine. As a result, Moscow has maintained control of about 70% of the region.

Three other regions are also only partially occupied, and Kyiv’s forces have managed to regain more land — albeit slowly and in small chunks — during their summer counteroffensive.

In the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region, where the counteroffensive efforts are focused, Moscow-installed authorities declared a holiday on Friday for the voting.

The Russian-appointed governor of the annexed region, Yevgeny Balitsky, noted in a recent statement that 13 front-line cities and villages in the region come under regular shelling, but he expressed hope that despite the difficulties, the United Russia party “will get the result it deserves.”

Ivan Fyodorov, Ukrainian mayor of Melitopol, a Russian-held city in the Zaporizhzhia region, told The Associated Press that local residents are effectively being forced to vote.

“When there’s an armed person standing in front of you, it’s hard to say no,” he said.

Early in the war, Fyodorov was kidnapped by Russian troops and held in captivity. He moved to Ukrainian-controlled territory upon release.

There are four different parties on the ballot, the mayor said, but billboards advertise only one — United Russia. “It looks like the Russian authorities know the result (of the election) already,” Fyodorov said.

The city’s population of 60,000 — down from 149,000 before the war — has been subject to enhanced security in the days leading up to the election, according to Fyodorov. Authorities stop people in the streets to check their identification documents and detain anyone who looks suspicious, he said.

“People are intimidated and scared, because everyone understands that an election in an occupied city is like voting in prison,” Fyodorov said.

Russian authorities aim to have up to 80% of the population take part in the early voting, according to the Eastern Human Rights Group, a Ukrainian rights group that monitors the vote in the occupied territories.

Poll workers go door to door — to markets, grocery stores and other public places — to get people to cast ballots. Both those who have gotten Russian citizenship and those still holding Ukrainian passports are allowed to vote.

Those who refuse to vote are being detained for three or four hours, the group’s coordinator, Pavlo Lysianskyi, said. The authorities make them “write an explanatory statement, which later becomes grounds for a criminal case against the person.”

Lysianskyi’s group has counted at least 104 cases of Ukrainians being detained in occupied regions for refusing to take part in the vote.

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In the end, Gallyamov, the Russian analyst, said Russian authorities will not get “anything good in terms of boosting their legitimacy” in the occupied regions.

Inside the renovated White House Situation Room: Cutting-edge tech, mahogany and that new car smell

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House Situation Room — a space of great mystique and even greater secrecy — just got a \$50 million facelift.

Actually, “room” is a misnomer. It’s a 5,500-square-foot (511-square-meter), highly secure complex of conference rooms and offices on the ground floor of the West Wing.

These are the rooms where history happens, where the president meets with national security officials to discuss secret operations and sensitive government matters, speaks with foreign leaders and works through major national security crises.

Where President Barack Obama and his team watched the raid that took down al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in 2011. Where President Donald Trump monitored the 2019 operation that killed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Where President Lyndon Johnson went over Vietnam War plans.

This was no small update: The total gut renovation took a year to complete.

The White House opened the classified space to a group of reporters this week for a rare visit to check out the new look. President Joe Biden got a tour on Tuesday and then received an intelligence briefing in the space, said Marc Gustafson, the Situation Room director.

“He loved it, he thought the update was fantastic,” Gustafson said.

The renovated space has a modern-but-vintage vibe. Old floors, furniture, computers and other tech were stripped out and replaced with pristine mahogany paneling from Maryland, stonework from a Virginia quarry, LED lights that can change colors and flat-screen panels. See-through glass offices fade to opaque with the press of a button. The whole space has that new car smell.

But there are still plenty of landline phones: No cellphones are allowed in the secure space for security reasons. (There are cubbies to stow phones near a door leading outside, where a baggie with some cocaine was found earlier this year.)

Access is tightly controlled and generally restricted to the president’s national security and military advisers. Anyone listening in on classified briefings needs clearance. Even the contractors working on the renovation had to get temporary security clearances. Illuminated signs flash green for declassified and red for classified.

The hush-hush complex was created in 1961 by the Kennedy administration after the Bay of Pigs invasion. President John F. Kennedy believed there should be a dedicated crisis management center where officials could coordinate intelligence faster and better.

It was an upgrade, to be sure. But it wasn’t exactly comfortable: Nixon administration official Henry Kissinger described the space as “uncomfortable, unaesthetic and essentially oppressive.”

After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the White House did a significant Situation Room update, along with a broader upgrade to presidential communications on Air Force One and the presidential helicopter. Presidents used the complex for secure video conferences before such tech became more portable. The last renovation was in 2007.

The complex is staffed around the clock by military and civilian personnel who monitor breaking developments worldwide.

It has a reception area with a U.S. seal in stonework. Behind that is the main conference room, known as the “JFK room.” To the right are a smaller conference room and two soundproof “breakout rooms.” To the left is the “watch floor,” a 24-7 operations center.

“It’s a marriage of the traditional and the modern,” Gustafson said of the new space.

Workers dug five feet underground to make more room and install cutting-edge technology allowing White House officials to bring together intelligence from different agencies with the push of a few buttons.

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"Now we have all the capabilities," Gustafson said.

For those in the know, referring to the "sit room" is out. It's the "whizzer," stemming from the complex's acronym: WHSR. (Washington does love a good acronym.)

Gustafson said the goal is to never need a complete gut renovation again. The new space was designed so panels can be removed and updated and new technology swapped in, usually with less space needs. A room once taken up by computer servers has become a smaller conference room.

The JFK room has a long wooden table with six leather chairs on each side and one at the head for the president. Leather armchairs line the walls. A giant, high-tech screen runs the length of the back wall. A 2-foot (0.6-meter) seal is positioned at the president's end of the room, larger than the old seal.

There aren't many photos of the Situation Room, but one of the most famous is the image of Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Vice President Biden and others watching the bin Laden operation.

That took place around the corner from the JFK room in a smaller conference room that no longer exists. It's been cut out entirely from the space and sent off to Obama's presidential library, Gustafson said. In its place are two smaller rooms.

Another item preserved for history is an old phone booth that stood in the complex. It was sent to storage for Biden's eventual presidential library. Gustafson didn't know if anything had been sent to Trump.

Gustafson said staff members have to be ready to prepare rooms for classified briefings on a moment's notice, and Biden has been known to pop in to meetings unexpectedly, particularly as Russia was invading Ukraine.

While the area was closed for renovation, White House officials used other secure spots on the campus. Gustafson said the renovated Situation Room is having a soft opening of sorts: About 60% of the staff are back in the space with more coming every day.

One of the upgrades Gustafson highlighted is the ability to swap out the different 2-foot-diameter seals that hang on the JFK room wall, depending on who is in the meeting. Seals for the president, vice president and executive staff are kept in a nearby closet and can be quickly subbed.

Gustafson said visitors previously remarked that the room didn't reflect Hollywood's grand imagining of the space.

He said they now declare: "This looks like the movies."

India seeks a greater voice for the developing world at G20, but Ukraine war may overshadow talks

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — It's never been easy for the leaders of the world's largest economies to find common ground, but Russia's war on Ukraine has made it even harder for the Group of 20 meeting to reach meaningful agreements this year.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this year's host, has pledged Ukraine won't overshadow his focus on the needs developing nations in the so-called Global South, but the war has proved hard to ignore.

"New Delhi will not want to distract from the main agenda, which is to address issues of concern for the Global South," said Nazia Hussain, an associate research fellow at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

"So while there will be discussions on the emerging issues as a fallout of the war — supply chain security and decoupling, energy security, and food supply — the focus must remain on how to mitigate the fallout rather than debate the geopolitical/security aspects of the war."

As leaders began arriving Friday, Indian diplomats were still trying to find compromise language for a joint communique.

Russia and China, which has been Moscow's most important supporter in the war against Ukraine, have rejected drafts over a reference to Ukraine that said "most members strongly condemned the war," the same language they signed off a year ago at the G20 summit in Bali

The European Union, meanwhile, has said compromise language suggested by India is not strong enough

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for them to agree to, while the U.K. said that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak planned to press G20 members to take a tougher line against Russia's invasion.

Ending the summit without a communique would underscore how strained relations are among the world's major powers.

European Council President Charles Michel told reporters Friday that it was important to give India space as it worked "actively, maybe sometimes discreetly, to maximize the chance for a communique."

He said Russia had isolated itself from the world with the invasion of Ukraine, and that the EU and others were working to "encourage China to play a positive role at the global level and to defend the UN charter and to defend the sovereignty of Ukraine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Bali summit by video last year, but Modi has made a point of not inviting Ukraine to participate in this year's event.

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has promised Zelenskyy to keep Ukraine in the discussions, telling him in a video call that the leaders posted on Instagram: "I'm disappointed that you won't be included but as you know, we will be speaking up strongly for you."

Founded in 1999, the G20 was initially a response to global economic challenges, but since then, geopolitical tensions have introduced more politics into the discussions, complicating its ability to work effectively, said Ian Lesser, vice president of the German Marshall Fund and director of its Brussels office.

The G20 encompasses the world's wealthiest countries in the Group of Seven, including the U.S., Canada, Britain, Japan, Germany and the European Union as a bloc, along with Russia, China and others.

Russia's attack on Ukraine and China's growing assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region have added friction, pitting some of the most powerful G20 countries directly against each other diplomatically, Lesser said.

"Having China and Russia in the room now is a very different question than it would have been a decade ago," he said. "It is very difficult now for any of these large-scale summits to avoid the major issues of the issues of the day, and these major issues are very polarizing — the war in Ukraine, tensions in the Indo-Pacific, even climate policy — the things that are both at the top of the global agenda but also very difficult to address."

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping will not be attending the G20 themselves, instead sending lower-level officials.

Russia and China did not indicate why their leaders were not attending, but neither have traveled much recently and both seem to be putting a greater emphasis on the more like-minded BRICS group of nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. That group agreed at its summit last month to expand to include Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Egypt and Ethiopia.

China's relations with India continue to be strained over ongoing border disputes, but despite the decision to send Premier Li Qiang instead of Xi, Modi and Xi did discuss the issue face-to-face at the BRICS summit and China's Foreign Ministry said Beijing considers India-China relations "generally stable."

India also has historic ties with Moscow, but is on good terms with the U.S. too. Modi is hoping to use his country's influence to bridge gaps between the wealthy nations that have been standing together to sanction Russia over the Ukraine war and the Global South.

About half of the G20 countries are found in the Global South — depending on how one defines it — and Modi hopes to add the African Union as a bloc member.

In preparation, he held a virtual "Voice of the Global South" summit in January and has emphasized issues critical to developing nations, including alternative fuels like hydrogen, resource efficiency, developing a common framework for digital public infrastructure and food security.

"For the Global South, India's presidency is seen as an opportunity with immense potential to address developmental needs, particularly as Brazil and South Africa are set to take over the presidency of the G20 from India in 2024 in 2025 respectively," Hussain said.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters before Biden's departure that the president supported adding the African Union as a permanent member and that the president hoped this summit "will show that the world's major economies can work together even in challenging times."

The U.S. will also focus on many of Modi's priorities, including reforming multilateral development banks,

especially the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to help developing countries, Sullivan said. Biden will also call for “meaningful debt relief” for low- and middle-income countries, and seek to make progress on other priorities including climate and health issues.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Friday dismissed suggestions that the proposals are designed to counter China’s global lending and investment through its so-called Belt and Road Initiative.

Michel, the EU council president, said he had hope the summit would be productive.

“I do not think the G20 will resolve in two days all the problems of the world,” he said. “But I think it can be a bold step in the right direction and we should work to make it happen and support the Indian presidency.”

2 dead in Hong Kong amid extreme rain and flash floods that also struck southern China

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Heavy rain in Hong Kong and southern China overnight flooded city streets and some subway stations, with hundreds evacuated and two deaths reported in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong authorities said during a joint news conference Friday that the extreme weather was expected to last until at least midnight, with widespread flooding and heavy disruptions to public transport in multiple districts.

An official from the Hong Kong observatory said the city had recorded over 600mm of rain so far — a quarter of the city’s average annual rainfall. The Hong Kong Observatory said it recorded 158.1 millimeters (6.2 inches) of rain in the hour between 11 p.m. Thursday and midnight, the highest recording for a single hour since records began in 1884.

Hong Kong police said that two bodies were found floating in waters in different parts of the city. The city’s fire services department said it had evacuated 110 people and assisted 20 injured people.

The city’s response to the rain and floods has drawn criticism from residents online, who questioned the authorities’ preparedness for such an emergency.

Hong Kong’s No. 2 official, Eric Chan, said that the predictability of rainfall “cannot be compared with that of a typhoon.” He said that various departments in Hong Kong had been working overnight to tackle the situation.

Videos circulating on social media show flooded streets in Hong Kong and nearby Guangdong province, with vehicles driving through the water and rescue teams using rafts to navigate the streets.

Water rushed down the stairs and escalators of a flooded subway station in Hong Kong, and cars were caught in muddy water on flooded streets, including in the cross-harbor tunnel that connects Hong Kong Island with Kowloon.

The heavy downpours led Hong Kong and the mainland city of Shenzhen to close schools, and non-essential workers in Hong Kong were urged to stay home Friday. Most bus services in Hong Kong were halted.

The Hong Kong stock exchange also did not open Friday.

On the mainland, more than 11,000 people were evacuated from water-logged areas in Meizhou, a city in Guangdong province, according to state broadcaster CCTV. Trains and flights were suspended in Guangdong and several landslides blocked roads the report said.

Shenzhen’s total rainfall was 469 millimeters (18.4 inches) — the heaviest rainfall since Shenzhen started meteorological records in 1952, CCTV said.

Beijing issued a flood disaster warning for several districts of the Chinese capital, forecasting heavy rainfall through Saturday night.

The city observatory attributed Friday’s rain to a trough of low pressure associated with the remnants of a recent typhoon.

Proximity of Russian attacks on Ukraine's Danube ports stirs fear in NATO member Romania

By STEPHEN MCGRATH and VADIM GHIRDA Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — The discovery of drone debris on Romanian territory this week has left some local residents fearing that the war in neighboring Ukraine could spread into their country, as Russian forces bombard Ukrainian ports just across the Danube River from NATO-member Romania.

Moscow aims to disrupt Ukraine's ability to export grain to world markets with a sustained campaign of attacks targeting Ukrainian Danube ports, and has attacked the port of Izmil four times this week, Ukrainian officials say.

Across from Izmil, pieces apparently from a drone were found near the Romanian village of Plauru, Romanian Defense Minister Angel Tilvar said Wednesday. It was unclear if Romanian authorities had determined when or from where the drone was launched, and Tilvar said the debris didn't pose a threat, but the development has left citizens in the European Union nation feeling uneasy.

Daniela Tanase, 46, who lives in Plauru with her husband and son, told The Associated Press that the drone strikes on Izmil this week have woken her up, and that villagers "are scared" of the persistent Russian attacks.

"In the first phase (of the war) things were calmer, but now it has come to our territory," she said. But added: "For now, we haven't thought of leaving the area — we hope it will pass."

Tilvar visited Plauru and nearby areas Wednesday after confirming the drone findings to a local news channel, and Romania's Defense Ministry said he told local authorities there would be additional measures to secure "the airspace at Romania's borders."

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis demanded an "urgent investigation." If the debris were confirmed to have been from a Russian drone it would be an "inadmissible" violation of Romania's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Iohannis said at the Three Seas Initiative summit in Bucharest this week.

Mircea Franc, the owner of a guesthouse in the area of Chilia Veche near Ukraine's Kiliia port in the Danube Delta region, said he's seen "fireballs" in the sky this week on the other side of the Danube River and that it has left villagers shaken.

"Last night ... there were drones cruising on the other side of the river and the day before yesterday there were many, they are the first in our area since the war started," he said on Thursday. "The atmosphere in the village is indeed one of panic ... and the fear is worst at night."

Speaking at the EU parliament on Thursday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that the 31-nation alliance has been informed by Romania about the finding of drone pieces and that the episode "demonstrates the risks of incidents and accidents."

"We don't have any information indicating any intentional attack by Russia and we are awaiting the outcome of the ongoing investigation," Stoltenberg said.

For Franc, the guesthouse owner, the close proximity of the war is already having a negative impact on his business since tourists are now "very reluctant to come here," he said, adding that some local families have moved away from the area out of fear.

"We are worried because nobody can guarantee that (a drone) won't fall on our side of the river," he said. "For the last two nights, three-quarters of the village hasn't been sleeping. Beyond trying to calm us down, the authorities can't do much about it."

Body cam shows prolific federal drug prosecutor offering cops business card in DUI crash arrest

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — When police arrived at his house to investigate a hit-and-run, Joseph Ruddy, one of the nation's most prolific federal narcotics prosecutors, looked so drunk he could barely stand up straight, leaning on the tailgate of his pickup to keep his balance.

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But he apparently was under control enough to be waiting with his U.S. Justice Department business card in hand.

"What are you trying to hand me?" an officer asked. "You realize when they pull my body-worn camera footage and they see this, this is going to go really bad."

That footage obtained by The Associated Press showed Ruddy apparently attempting to leverage his position to blunt the fallout from a Fourth of July crash in which he is accused of drunkenly striking another vehicle and leaving the scene.

But despite being charged, the 59-year-old Ruddy remained on the job for two months, representing the United States in court as recently as last week to notch another win for the sprawling task force he helped create two decades ago targeting cocaine smuggling at sea.

On Wednesday, a day after the AP asked the Justice Department about Ruddy's status, the veteran prosecutor was pulled off three pending criminal cases. A Justice Department spokesman would not say whether he had been suspended but said that Ruddy, while still employed, had been removed from his supervisory role at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Tampa. The case also has been referred to the Office of Inspector General.

Such an inspector general's probe would likely focus on whether Ruddy was trying to use his public office for private gain, said Kathleen Clark, a legal ethics professor at Washington University in St. Louis who reviewed the footage.

"It's hard to see what this could be other than an attempt to improperly influence the police officer to go easy on him," Clark said. "What could possibly be his purpose in handing over his U.S. Attorney's Office business card?"

Ruddy, whose blood-alcohol level tested at 0.17%, twice the legal limit, was charged with driving under the influence with property damage — a first-degree misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in prison. Despite his own admissions and witness testimony, he was not charged with leaving the scene of an accident.

Neither Ruddy nor his attorney returned messages seeking comment.

Ruddy is known in law enforcement circles as one of the architects of Operation Panama Express, or PANEX — a task force launched in 2000 to target cocaine smuggling at sea, combining resources from the U.S. Coast Guard, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Historically, PANEX-generated intelligence contributes to more than 90% of U.S. Coast Guard drug interdictions at sea. Between 2018 and 2022, the Coast Guard removed or destroyed 888 metric tons of cocaine worth an estimated \$26 billion and detained 2,776 suspected smugglers, a senior Coast Guard official said in congressional testimony in March. The bulk of those cases were handled by Ruddy and his colleagues in Tampa, where PANEX is headquartered.

A former Ironman triathlete, Ruddy enjoys a reputation among attorneys for hard work and toughness in the courtroom. Among his biggest cases were some of the early extraditions from Colombia of top smugglers for the feared Cali cartel.

But the majority of cases handled out of his office involve mostly poor fishermen from Central and South America who make up the drug trade's lowest rungs. Often, the drugs aren't even bound for American shores and the constitutional guarantees of due process that normally apply in criminal cases inside the U.S. are only loosely observed.

"Ruddy is at the heart of a costly and aggressive prosecutor-led dragnet that every year pulls hundreds of low-level cocaine traffickers off the oceans and incarcerates them in the U.S.," said Kendra McSweeney, an Ohio State University geographer who is part of a team studying maritime interdiction policies.

Research by Ohio State's Interdiction Lab found that between 2014 and 2020, the median sentence for smugglers picked up at sea and prosecuted in Tampa was 10 years — longer than any other court in the country and compared to seven years, six months in Miami, which handles the second-largest amount of such cases.

Last Friday, nearly two months after his arrest, Ruddy was in court to ratify a plea deal in the case of a

amendment in 2012 that would have undone those decisions.

Last year's U.S. Supreme Court decision known as Dobbs, which overturned the Roe vs. Wade ruling and allows states to determine their own abortion rights policies, does not undermine the Florida privacy protections, the plaintiffs contend.

"To the contrary, the Dobbs opinion expressly recognized that states remain free to protect abortion under state law," they say in court papers.

Florida's position is backed by a variety of anti-abortion groups and at least 19 Republican-led states that have filed "friend of the court" briefs claiming, in part, that state legislatures should decide the issue rather than courts.

"It imposes on the people a regime that they never embraced, puts courts at the center of a political and moral issue that they can never resolve, and undermines our democratic tradition," the states say in the brief.

The challengers also have a number of groups filing briefs on their behalf, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association and Floridians for Reproductive Freedom.

The text of Florida's privacy clause reads: "Every natural person has the right to be let alone and free from governmental intrusion into the person's private life except as otherwise provided herein. This section shall not be construed to limit the public's right of access to public records and meetings as provided by law."

The 15-week ban before the court Friday includes exceptions allowing an abortion to save a woman's life or prevent serious physical harm and in cases in which a fetus has a terminal medical condition "incompatible with life outside the womb."

The six-week ban measure was sponsored in the state Legislature by GOP Rep. Jennifer Canady, wife of Supreme Court Justice Charles Canady. He has made no move to recuse himself because of the relationship and no motions have been filed requesting recusal.

As a congressman in the 1990s, Charles Canady sponsored bills to ban so-called "partial-birth abortion."

A Leon County judge earlier this year agreed the 15-week ban violates the Florida Constitution and blocked its enforcement with a temporary injunction. An appeals court overturned the injunction, bringing the case before the state Supreme Court.

Several groups also are gathering petition signatures in an effort to place a proposed constitutional amendment on the 2024 ballot to guarantee abortion rights in Florida up to about 24 weeks of pregnancy, generally when a fetus is considered viable.

Lions spoil Chiefs' celebration of Super Bowl title by rallying for a 21-20 win in the NFL's opener

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Lions walked into roaring Arrowhead Stadium on Thursday night, where the Kansas City Chiefs are nearly unbeatable and were trying to open their latest Super Bowl title defense with a win, and proved what Detroit coach Dan Campbell has come to know in turning around the long downtrodden franchise.

"This is a resilient team," Campbell said. "We're built to handle some stuff."

Now, everyone else knows it too.

Under the bright spotlight of the NFL's season opener, Jared Goff threw for 253 yards and a touchdown, new Lions running back David Montgomery ran for the go-ahead score late in the game and Detroit held on for a 21-20 victory over the Chiefs.

"We expected to win this game," said Campbell, who won just three games his first season but led the Lions to eight wins over their final 10 games a year ago, when they went 9-8 and narrowly missed the playoffs. "We came in here, knew what we needed to do, knew it wasn't going to be easy, and we did that. We won."

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Amon-Ra St. Brown had six catches for 71 yards and a score, and Lions rookie Brian Branch returned Patrick Mahomes' first pick in an opener 50 yards for another touchdown, helping Detroit snap the Chiefs' eight-game Week 1 winning streak.

The Lions also snapped their own five-game skid in season openers.

"A lot of work has been put in this offseason," Goff said, "and you want to start off winning the first one, and we did that today. We didn't play the best on offense, I thought the defense kept us in the game, but we found a way."

The Lions were trying to run out the clock when Goff's fourth-down pass near midfield was batted down with 2:30 left, giving the Chiefs a chance. But they made a mess of it: Kadarius Toney dropped a potential 20-yard gain, a deep completion was called back for holding, Skyy Moore dropped a pass and a false start left Mahomes heaving a fourth-and-25 throw downfield.

When it fell incomplete and Detroit took over, Montgomery ran for a first down and the Lions ran out the clock.

Mahomes finished with 226 yards passing and two touchdowns, despite his receivers dropping a slew of passes. He also was the leading rusher for the Chiefs, whose self-inflicted wounds proved too much to overcome.

"Got to be better," Mahomes said.

There had been equal parts anticipation and anxiety leading up to the game in Kansas City, where the Chiefs had celebrated their previous Lombardi Trophy in the midst of a pandemic, and only about 18,000 fans were able to join in the revelry.

Hundreds began tailgating outside the Arrowhead Stadium parking lots 14 hours before kickoff Thursday, and NFL commissioner Roger Goodell along with about 80,000 more people joined them to see the Chiefs raise their latest championship banner.

That was the anticipation. The anxiety came from the absence of Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce and fellow All-Pro Chris Jones, who is in the midst of a contract holdout. The defensive tackle was expected to miss the opener, but Kelce had only been questionable since Tuesday, when he hyperextended his knee in the final full practice before game day.

"It wasn't feeling right," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "I wasn't going to put him out there with that, and he was honest with me."

Detroit scored first in a showdown of two of the league's top offenses a year ago. Goff took advantage of a clean pocket, thanks in part to Jones sitting in a stadium suite, to march down field and find St. Brown with a 9-yard touchdown pass.

The Chiefs answered with Mahomes finding five different wide receivers on a long drive, the last of them rookie Rashee Rice, who atoned for an earlier drop by snaring a short touchdown pass to knot the game at 7-apiece.

It remained that way until Campbell made a questionable decision late in the half.

The Chiefs were facing fourth-and-2 near midfield but had been called for holding, and rather than decline it, Campbell chose to push them back. Mahomes responded to third-and-17 by hitting Marquez Valdes-Scantling with a 24-yard strike. He added a 26-yard pass to Justin Watson, then hit Blake Bell with a short TD throw to give the Chiefs a 14-7 halftime lead.

With the Lions' offense still going nowhere in the second half, the defense stepped up. Branch caught a pass that bounced off Toney's hands and found nothing but 50 yards of grass separating him from the end zone and a 14-all tie.

Up to that point, Mahomes had thrown 20 touchdown passes without an interception in five-plus season openers.

The Chiefs tacked on two field goals, but the missed chances to get into the end zone proved costly. The Lions followed up Harrison Butker's second kick by driving 75 yards, twice converting on third down, with Montgomery capping the march with a 9-yard touchdown run that gave Detroit the lead for good.

"The Lions did a heck of a job. They capitalized on a couple of things and we've got to fix it," Reid said. "I liked the aggressiveness on the defensive side. There were some good things on offense. We just have

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to be more consistent.”

STREAK ENDS

The Lions' Marvin Jones fumbled away a good scoring chance in the second quarter, when Trent McDuffie knocked the ball out deep in Kansas City territory. It was the veteran wide receiver's first fumble in his 12-year career and came on his 563rd touch, the longest active streak in the NFL.

LATEST ON KELCE

Kelce had a bone bruise and some swelling in his knee, though tests taken after the injury in practice showed no ligament damage. He went through a workout early Thursday to see whether he could move well enough to play, but Reid and Chiefs trainer Rick Burkholder decided to give Kelce time to recover with their next game 10 days away.

INJURIES

Lions: Branch, the first player with a pick-6 in his Lions debut since 1967, departed with cramps on the final play of the third quarter. ... DT Levi Onwuzurike limped off with trainers with about 12 minutes left in the game.

UP NEXT

Lions: Play their home opener on Sept. 17 against Seattle.

Chiefs: Visit Jacksonville on Sept. 17 for a divisional playoff rematch.

Hurricane Lee charges over Atlantic waters as a Category 5 storm, approaching the Caribbean

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Hurricane Lee whirled through open waters toward the northeast Caribbean late Thursday becoming the first Category 5 storm of the Atlantic season.

Lee was not expected to make landfall although forecasters said tropical storm conditions are possible on some islands. Meteorologists said it was too early to provide details on potential rainfall and wind gusts.

The Category 5 hurricane was located about 705 miles (1,135 kilometers) east of the northern Leeward Islands. It had winds of up to 160 miles per hour (260 kilometers per hour) and was moving west-northwest at 14 mph (22 kph).

The storm was expected to remain a major hurricane into next week.

“Lee continues to strengthen at an exceptional rate,” the National Hurricane Center said.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday was given the hurricane's latest trajectory and details of preparations underway by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, which deployed unidentified assets to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to the White House.

Life-threatening surf was expected to hit the Lesser Antilles on Friday and reach the British and U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, the Bahamas and Bermuda this weekend, the center said.

“We will see waves between 10 and 15 feet (3 and 5 meters), so we don't want anyone on the beaches,” said Ernesto Morales with the National Weather Service in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The National Hurricane Center said dangerous surf and rip currents were forecast for most of the U.S. East Coast starting Sunday.

Lee is the 12th named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30 and peaks in September.

Tropical Storm Margot became the 13th named storm after forming on Thursday evening. It was located some 290 miles (465 kilometers) west-northwest of the Cabo Verde Islands. It had winds of up to 40 mph (65 kph) and was forecast to strengthen into a hurricane over the weekend. It was moving west-northwest at 17 mph (28 kph) and is expected to remain over open water.

The National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration in August forecasted between 14 to 21 named storms this season, with six to 11 of them expected to become hurricanes, and of those, two to five possibly developing into major hurricanes.

In the Pacific, Hurricane Jova churned through open waters far from Mexico's southwest coast as a

Category 4 storm. It posed no threat to land.

It was located about 600 miles (965 kilometers) southwest of the southern tip of Baja, California, and was moving west-northwest at 17 mph (28 kph) with winds up to 145 mph (230 kph). The storm is expected to weaken starting late Thursday.

America's retired North Korea intelligence officer offers a parting message on the nuclear threat

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The founder of North Korea's ruling dynasty, an isolationist totalitarian leader named Kim Il Sung, was still building some of the country's first nuclear facilities when Syd Seiler arrived on the Korean Peninsula as a young U.S. military intelligence officer.

Over the four decades since, Seiler has watched closely as Kim, his son and now his grandson have clung to their nuclear program and developed the potential to lob nuclear warheads at the U.S. and its allies if they choose.

Now Seiler is freshly retired after decades of advising presidents, military commanders and diplomats, making reported secret trips to North Korea and serving as a lead negotiator on talks to contain its nuclear program. And he has a parting message to American leaders: Don't be discouraged.

North Korea's fiery rounds of missile test launches are no reason to give up on the international sanctions and pressure, or to simply accept that the ruling Kim family is now a nuclear-armed power, Seiler told The Associated Press this week.

"That's a failure of deterrence?" he asked, rhetorically. "That's nonsense. We're deterring an attack."

Seiler helped shape the U.S. policy of deterrence, diplomacy and international pressure to deal with the nuclear threat. Following are some of his conclusions, drawing on his decades of experience before retiring this summer as the U.S. national intelligence officer for North Korea:

NORTH KOREAN LOGIC

Seiler sees a strategy and a rhythm to the single-minded nuclear and missile expansion, the rounds of U.S. and South Korean military exercises and North Korean test launches, and the blustery threats, as when the government of Kim Jong Un — grandson of the founding ruler — threatens a "deluge of fire" on neighboring South Korea.

But the Kim family's worry is not so much about an attack from outside, Seiler argues. He said in sticking to the nuclear program even at the expense of North Korea's economy, Kim Jong Un has taken a lesson from deposed Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. A firing squad abruptly ended the communist leader's rule in 1989 when his people rose up against him.

Having cut North Koreans off from most contact with the outside world, Kim Jong Un, his father and his grandfather before him have seen their regime's survival as lying in convincing their people the country is a worker's paradise under threat from the outside world, and only the Kim family and its nuclear weapons can protect them, the former intelligence officer said.

Actions prioritizing the nuclear program over the feeding of your people seem irrational, Seiler said. "But in terms of the logic of North Korea, they make sense."

RUSSIA TIES

U.S. officials have said Kim Jong Un may travel to Russia this month for a meeting with President Vladimir Putin, who they say is looking to North Korea to supply ammunition for Russia's war in Ukraine.

Kim "probably sees in this meeting an opportunity to join hands with a like-minded fellow anti-U.S. leader," Seiler said.

Worrisome possible outcomes include Russia helping North Korea beef up "its pretty antiquated ... museum-ready" conventional forces or its weapons of mass destruction, Seiler said.

"And of course, the worst-case scenario is that Kim Jong Un is watching a leader seeking to ... achieve strategic objectives through the use of force," Seiler said, referring to Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

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"And suddenly whether Kim, either directly signaled or indirectly signaled by the new relationship with Vladimir Putin, sees a flashing yellow light or green light to engage in similar military actions against" enemy South Korea, he said.

"That would be the worst-of-all fears scenarios," he said.

But that's much less likely, he said. "I don't think what Russia wants to do is to seek a relationship with North Korea in any way that significantly leads to instability in the region."

THREAT TO SOUTH KOREA

Even this year, one U.S. intelligence assessment has been that Kim Jong Un would continue to be a bellicose neighbor for South Korea and an unpleasant member of the global community — but was unlikely to actually wage nuclear war at least through 2030.

But Seiler and others see growing reasons to worry now about what Kim may have planned for South Korea, its democratically governed and U.S.-allied neighbor.

As Kim expands and improves his nuclear arsenal beyond what he would need for deterrence, he has sharpened his threats toward the south in the past 1 1/2 years while honing ballistic missiles capable of reaching the U.S., South Korea's protector, Seiler noted.

"North Korea was clearly developing capabilities that would enhance its position vis-à-vis South Korea. And so going forward, this is where the room for concern is," Seiler said.

Coupled with growing domestic debate in South Korea about how much the country should rely on the United States' protection, there's "kind of an awakening of a North Korea threat that, frankly, we should have caught on to a couple of decades ago," he said.

Denial or wishful thinking may have led some in the West to overlook the implications of the growing threat for a time, he said, although the intelligence community was well aware.

Meanwhile, Putin is battling in Ukraine to reclaim what he maintains is Russia's historical territory, and the U.S. and its allies are paying growing attention to China's stated openness to reclaiming Taiwan by force if need be.

It's all "helped create an environment where this issue of what Kim Jong Un might choose to do in the use of force domain, backed by his nuclear weapons, is a greater subject of debate than it was even a year ago," Seiler noted.

How strong is that risk right now?

"Well, I think right now Kim is deterred," Seiler said.

'I WAS BROUGHT TO TEARS'

Among his experiences in North Korea that stood out, Seiler pointed to watching a landmark 1983 Korean television show. Unscripted, the show turned into an emotional, marathon, 453-hour live broadcast that reunited Korean families divided under Japanese colonization or during World War II and the Korean War.

For Koreans, the broadcast laid bare the heartache of separated families in the Cold War. It led to what would be sporadic and brief North-South reunions across the rigidly divided Korean Peninsula.

"I grew up here. I lost my sister there. My little sister had a birthmark there," Seiler said, recounting those who called in to the show. "And someone would call in and say, 'Hey, are you so-and-so?'"

"I was brought to tears by it," Seiler said. For an outsider, it made clear the lasting human costs of the barriers that the North had erected against the South.

"But it's also a reminder," Seiler said. "We can never let the humanitarian dimensions of this issue fall off the table."

As more children die from fentanyl, some prosecutors are charging their parents with murder

OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ undefined

SANTA ROSA, Calif. (AP) — Madison Bernard climbed into bed before dawn with her toddler, Charlotte, who was asleep next to a nightstand strewn with straws, burned tinfoil and a white powder.

Hours later, the mother woke and found her daughter struggling to breathe, according to investigators

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Brazilian man, Flavio Fontes Pereira, who in February was found by the U.S. Coast Guard with more than 3.3 tons of cocaine aboard a sailboat off Guinea, in West Africa.

After two weeks aboard the U.S. Coast Guard vessel, Pereira made his initial court appearance in Tampa in March, charged under the Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act, which gives the U.S. unique arrest powers anywhere on the high seas whenever it determines a vessel is "without nationality."

Ruddy is next due to appear in court in his own case Sept. 27. He's accused of sideswiping an SUV whose driver had been waiting to turn at a red light, clipping a side mirror and tearing off another piece of the vehicle that lodged in the fender of Ruddy's pickup.

"He never even hit brakes," a witness told police. "He just kept going and he was swerving all the way up the road. I'm like, 'No, he's going to hurt somebody.' So I just followed him until I got the tag number and just called and reported it."

When officers arrived at Ruddy's home in the suburb of Temple Terrace, they found him hunched over his pickup, holding his keys and using the vehicle for support, the report said. Officers noted that he had urinated on himself, was unable to walk without help and failed a field sobriety test.

"I understand we might be having a better night," Tampa police patrolman Taylor Grant said before looking at the business card.

"Why didn't you stop?" the officer asked.

"I didn't realize it was that serious," Ruddy said in a slurred response.

"You hit a vehicle and you ran," the officer said. "You ran because you're drunk. You probably didn't realize you hit the vehicle."

Florida abortion rights at stake as state Supreme Court takes up challenge to GOP-led restrictions

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

The fate of abortion rights in Florida will be at stake Friday morning when the state Supreme Court is expected to take up a challenge to a law banning the procedure in most cases after 15 weeks of pregnancy, which will determine whether an even stricter six-week ban signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis can take effect.

The seven justices — including five conservatives appointed by DeSantis, a GOP candidate for president — are set to hear oral arguments in Tallahassee in the lawsuit brought by Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union and others.

They claim the Florida Constitution's privacy clause for more than 40 years has explicitly protected a right to abortion in the state.

"Plain text and historical context place beyond doubt that Florida's Privacy Clause protects against governmental interference in all aspects of a person's private life, including decisions about pregnancy," the plaintiffs say in court papers.

Florida officials contend the Supreme Court has in the past erroneously concluded the privacy clause covers abortion rights when it was actually intended more as a guard for "informational privacy, like the disclosure of private facts."

The privacy clause does not extend "beyond informational privacy and personal decisions that do not harm others to a right to destroy unborn life," the officials claim.

The lawsuit seeks an injunction blocking enforcement of the 15-week abortion ban known as HB5, which includes potential jail time of up to five years and \$5,000 in fines for violations and remains in effect as the court case plays out.

The six-week ban DeSantis signed into law earlier this year would take effect 30 days after a Supreme Court decision to affirm the current ban.

The privacy clause was put into the Florida Constitution by a voter referendum in 1980 and later affirmed as including abortion rights by the state Supreme Court. Voters rejected a proposed constitutional

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who described the scene in court documents.

After being rushed in an ambulance to a hospital, the 15-month-old girl died from a fentanyl overdose. Her mother and father, whom authorities said brought the drugs into their California home, were charged with murder and are awaiting trial.

The couple has pleaded not guilty but are part of a growing number of parents across the U.S. being charged amid an escalating opioid crisis that has claimed an increasing number of children as collateral victims.

Some 20 states have so-called "drug-induced homicide" laws, which allow prosecutors to press murder or manslaughter charges against anyone who supplies or exposes a person to drugs causing a fatal overdose. The laws are intended to target drug dealers.

In California, where the Legislature has failed to pass such laws, prosecutors in at least three counties are turning to drunk driving laws to charge parents whose children die from fentanyl overdose. It's a unique approach that will soon be tested in court as the cases head to trial.

Supporters of the ramped-up enforcement say that by now those who use the synthetic opioid know the lethality of the drug and, like drunk drivers, they should know the consequences of exposing their children to their actions.

Critics say the parents didn't intend to kill their children but instead made poor choices because of their addictions and are being further punished instead of being offered help.

The debate comes as the country battles with how to effectively diminish the use of the highly accessible and extremely deadly drug.

Authorities believe some of the children died after touching something with the powdery substance and then touching their eyes or mouth. In one case, the drug may have been on the hands of a parent who prepared the baby's bottle. The drug is not absorbed into the skin but experts say it can be lethal if as little as 2 milligrams, about the weight of a mosquito, enters the body.

"These are tragic cases because drug addiction has destroyed a precious life and the parents face the consequences of their reckless actions," said Charlie Smith, the top prosecutor in Frederick County, Maryland, and president of the National District Attorneys Association.

Parents also can face charges if young children become seriously ill or die from crack, heroin and cocaine, but such cases are rare because a sizeable amount must be ingested, Smith said.

"This is really a first in the history of our country because we have a drug on the streets that can potentially kill you instantly with a minor amount of product," Smith said.

Prosecutors have a difficult decision to make when determining whether to charge parents, but Smith said the goal is to deter others from doing the same.

He prosecuted a case in which parents in Maryland were convicted of involuntary manslaughter in the 2020 death of their 2-month-old son. The Mount Airy couple had mixed fentanyl in the same bathroom where they prepared bottles for their infant.

Jeremy Whitney Frazier and Heather Marie Frazier were each sentenced in December to five years in prison and five years of supervised probation.

The National District Attorneys Association doesn't track how many parents have been charged for exposing their children to fentanyl, but news reports and interviews with prosecutors show such cases have been on the rise since the onset of the pandemic.

Last month, a Maine woman pleaded guilty to manslaughter after her 14-month-old son's fentanyl overdose. Investigators found fentanyl on a blanket and sheet where Ashley Malloy's son Karson had been sleeping.

States such as Maryland that don't have "drug-induced homicide" laws often charge parents with manslaughter, Smith said.

In California, prosecutors have turned to a drunk driving law.

Prosecutors in Riverside, Sonoma and Stanislaus counties have charged parents with murder based on the "Watson advisement," a formal statement signed by anyone convicted of a DUI charge who says they understand driving under the influence can injure or kill people. The statement can be used against them

if they cause another fatal, DUI-related crash.

"I've been a prosecutor 25 years now and I can't recall any other drug that has led to this much destruction and death," Riverside County Deputy District Attorney Daima Calhoun said.

Prosecutors say the parents, like drunk drivers, knew fentanyl can injure or kill people.

Among those awaiting a trial that will test the approach are Tehra Alexandra Waite and Collin Pascal Kittrell, both of Riverside. The boyfriend and girlfriend were charged with murder after their toddler died of a fentanyl overdose in June 2020. They pleaded not guilty.

Investigators said their 14-month-old daughter, Allison, likely touched her mouth or eyes after coming in contact with the drug, which was found on several things in their apartment, including the couch.

Detectives testified that when Waite found her daughter unresponsive she rushed to a pharmacy to buy naloxone, a drug used to reverse an opioid overdose. The couple did not call 911 until hours later when Allison started having trouble breathing.

The girl's paternal grandmother also said in court documents that Waite used drugs while she was pregnant.

The Associated Press sought comment from multiple attorneys who have represented Waite and none responded. Her father declined to comment.

Kittrell's attorney, Graham Donath, said Allison's father did not intend for his child to die and the charge should be one of child neglect, not murder. But prosecutors don't like to go that route because the maximum sentence for the offense is 12 years.

In Sonoma County, where Charlotte slept with her mom in a messy apartment in Santa Rosa, first responders testified at a preliminary hearing that they found fentanyl in powder form on a nightstand next to the bed.

Ryan Hughes, a Santa Rosa Police Department narcotics detective, told the court they also found text messages showing the couple was concerned about losing their daughter because of their drug use, the Santa Rosa Press Democrat reported.

A judge is expected to set a trial date at a Sept. 11 hearing for Charlotte's mother, Bernard, who woke up to find her daughter struggling to breathe, and her father, Evan Frostick.

Defense attorneys for Bernard and Frostick and Frostick's parents all declined to comment when contacted by the AP. Bernard's stepmother did not respond to phone messages seeking comment.

"They need to be held accountable under the law because they allowed harm to come to their children and they let their drug use and addiction outweigh taking care of their children and keeping their children safe," Sonoma County District Attorney Carla Rodriguez said.

Special grand jury report that aided Georgia probe leading to Trump's indictment is set for release

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A judge on Friday is expected to release the full report compiled by a special grand jury that helped an investigation by the Georgia prosecutor who ultimately indicted former President Donald Trump and 18 others.

The special grand jury spent seven months hearing from some 75 witnesses before completing a report in December with recommendations for Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis on charges related to attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election. Willis had said she needed the panel's subpoena power to compel the testimony of witnesses who might otherwise not have been willing to appear.

While most of the intrigue in the inner workings of the case has diminished with the filing of charges, the special grand jury report will still provide the public with insight into how closely the indictment tracks with the panel's recommendations on who should be indicted. It should reveal whether the panel envisioned the wide-ranging conspiracy that prosecutors ultimately alleged.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney ordered the partial release of the report in Feb-

bruary but declined to immediately release the panel's recommendations on who should or should not be prosecuted. The judge said at the time that he wanted to protect people's due process rights.

McBurney said in a new order filed Aug. 28 that the due process concerns were moot since a regular grand jury has indicted Trump and 18 other people under the state's anti-racketeering law. All have pleaded not guilty.

McBurney had set a deadline of 5 p.m. on Sept. 6 for anyone who might believe that any part of the report shouldn't be published to object to its release. It didn't appear from the online court docket that anyone had objected, so McBurney is expected to make the full report public at 10 a.m. Friday.

Many of those indicted — including former New York mayor and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani and Trump White House chief of staff Mark Meadows — are known to have testified before the special grand jury. Trump himself was never called and did not appear before the panel.

The parts of the report previously released in February included its introduction and conclusion, as well as a section in which the grand jurors expressed concerns that one or more witnesses may have lied under oath and urged prosecutors to seek charges for perjury. The panel's foreperson had said in news interviews that the special grand jurors had recommended that numerous people be indicted.

Latin America women's rights groups say their abortion win in Mexico may hold the key to US struggle

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Women's rights activists in Latin America have long looked to the United States as a model in their decades-long struggle to chip away at abortion restrictions in their highly religious countries.

But after a historic Mexican Supreme Court ruling decriminalizing abortion on the federal level, some think U.S. activists should now turn to their counterparts south of the border as they navigate a post-Roe v. Wade reality.

"In Mexico we have a lot of experience," said Rebeca Ramos, a lawyer and director of GIRE, the organization behind the Mexican court case. "And given the current situation in the United States, it's something we can share with them."

LATIN AMERICA'S GREEN WAVE

Latin America is in the midst of what's come to be known as a "green wave," as countries like Mexico, Colombia and Argentina have knocked down major abortion restrictions in recent years.

For decades, green has been emblematic of Latin America's abortion-rights movement, which took hold in the 1980s in Argentina, a country that until recently had some of the region's strictest prohibitions. Argentine women's activist Susana Chiarotti said she originally proposed adopting the color for the cause in 2003 as a way of changing the narrative around the issue.

"It's the color that represents life, nature. It was to try to show that we are the ones defending life," the 76-year-old activist said.

Chiarotti said she and others often took inspiration from the United States, such as using language from Roe, the landmark 1973 decision which was overturned in 2022, and borrowing the tactics of both the country's feminist movement and the anti-abortion camp as well.

Just as U.S. conservatives worked for decades to incrementally roll back abortion access and stack courts with conservative justices, abortion-rights groups in Latin America took a similar long-term, bit-by-bit approach.

While grassroots organizations rallied protesters to take to the streets, leaders sought support from international human rights groups and began to take the battle to the courts. Meanwhile they shared strategies with organizers engaged in their own fights in other countries.

"We have gone little-by-little because of the massive obstacles we have had to overcome," Chiarotti said.

MEXICO'S ABORTION FIGHT

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Some Latin American countries, like Colombia and Ecuador, have since expanded abortion access and eased restrictions. Others, like Chile, have considered such measures but have yet to take action. Still others, like El Salvador and Guatemala, have total or near-total abortion bans on the books with little prospect for change anytime soon, underscoring the long road still ahead in the region.

Abortion-rights groups in Mexico won their first big victory 16 years ago when Mexico City became the first jurisdiction in the country to decriminalize the procedure.

Then, two years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that abortion could not be treated as a crime in the northern border state of Coahuila. A gradual, state-by-state process of pushing for decriminalization culminated last week when the central state of Aguascalientes became the 12th to do so.

This week's ruling by the high court involved a case brought forward by GIRE, one of the Mexican groups that collaborated with Chiarotti in the early days.

The Mexico ruling is not as sweeping and immediate as Roe was: It does not automatically decriminalize the procedure in the 20 states that still have abortion written into the criminal code. It does, however, mandate that federal health care providers, which cover 70% of the population, provide abortion services.

It also marks a dramatic change in this predominantly Catholic society that could lend momentum to activists across the country.

Despite Mexico's proximity to Texas, which has heavily restricted abortion access, few expect this week's ruling to result in an influx of American women traveling to the country for abortions.

Cathy Torres, a leader at Frontera Fund, a reproductive health organization near the U.S.-Mexico border in McAllen, Texas, said the closest access to the procedure that women in her community have is in New Mexico, a 14 hour drive away.

Still, "abortions have always happened," Torres said. "People have always found a way of living in a border area. People aren't just going to all of a sudden begin going to Mexico."

But some, like Veronica Cruz of the central Mexican group Las Libres — Spanish for "free women" — say the cumulative actions of Mexican activists have offered women in the U.S. more alternatives to care either in Mexico or remotely, which are likely only to grow with time.

"The Court's decision ... represents more opportunities for women in restrictive areas of the United States," she said.

FROM GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM TO LONG-TERM CHANGE

For 23 years, Cruz's organization has formed networks to provide tele-abortion services, which involve women having medical abortions under the guidance of activists over a call. It was a form of resistance against Mexican laws, she said.

Some calls for that assistance have also come from the United States — largely Texas — and since the repeal of Roe, that number has jumped from 10 a day to around 100. Cruz said such networks and on-the-ground outreach will be crucial for U.S. activists.

"We can't stop going out on the streets, and we have to keep working woman by woman, home by home, family by family, community by community," she said. "With institutions, there's always a risk that (our work) gets demolished."

Ramos, of GIRE, also sees the Mexican experience as offering lessons for U.S. activists who are now fighting the abortion fight on a state-by-state level. Slowly building support with an eye to effecting long-term policy change is crucial, she said.

"What I think we can share is precisely the need in the United States to think of strategies on a local level," Ramos said.

Religious and conservative Mexicans still stand staunchly in opposition to expanded abortion access. In some cases, U.S. groups have also been expanding anti-abortion activism into Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.

"The legalization of abortion erodes the foundations of the rule of law, and distorts the concept and practice of human rights," the Mexican Catholic Church leadership said Thursday in a statement.

So abortion-rights groups are not the only ones with a keen interest in events in the United States. Activists at the Civil Association for the Rights of the Conceived, for example, are taking a long-term view

of this week's court decision.

"We're not going to stop," said the group's director, Irma Barrientos. "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 guarantees the right to life from the moment of conception."

An influx of migrant children tests the preparedness of NYC schools

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN, ROBERT BUMSTED and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — Damien, age 5, was giddy with excitement as he left a Manhattan homeless shelter, sometimes running and skipping along the sidewalk accompanied by his wistful mother, a migrant from Ecuador.

"What I want for him is a future," Kimberly Carchipulla said in Spanish of her son, one of nearly 800,000 New York City public school students who headed off to class Thursday for their first day of the new school year.

That is what school officials want, too, as the city's classrooms work to accommodate nearly 20,000 migrant children newly arrived in the U.S. — a number that could swell as record numbers of families cross the border from Mexico in hopes of gaining asylum.

Several major U.S. cities have struggled with an influx of many thousands of asylum seekers who have filled up homeless shelters after entering the U.S.

New York City's shelter system has been especially overwhelmed, but Mayor Eric Adams has sought to reassure parents and community groups that the city's nearly 1,900 schools — which have a long track record of welcoming immigrants with limited English skills — are well prepared to welcome migrant children into classrooms.

The huge public schools system has around 3,400 teachers licensed to teach English as a second language and more than 1,700 certified bilingual teachers fluent in Spanish, the language spoken by the majority of migrant families, according to Education Chancellor David C. Banks. Some schools expected to get a higher share of students living in shelters are getting more funding, with \$110 million allocated for immediate needs.

"We are welcoming all these new migrant students into our schools with open arms," Banks said Thursday during a first-day-of-school ceremony at a Bronx public school. "We know it's a larger political issue and the mayor and others have to deal with. But when they show up in our schools, they're going to get the best that we have."

That's encouraging news for Carchipulla and her son.

In his calmer moments as he headed off to school, Damien worried whether he'd be able to understand his teacher or easily make friends.

For the past two months, his family has been living in a room at Manhattan's historic Roosevelt Hotel, which after years of being closed was converted into a city-run shelter this year for newly arrived migrants hoping to find work and a better life for their children.

Carchipulla's immediate worry was getting Damien to class early, traveling by city bus and foot to reach his school 75 blocks away in East Harlem. Scores of other families gathered at the school's gates waiting to be let in.

In recent weeks, his mother, 22, has vacillated between elation and worry, especially fretting over her son's ability to keep pace with his classmates. And she hopes there are good teachers at her son's new school, teachers who would be kind and patient.

It's been a hard few months for the family after leaving relatives behind in their small Ecuadorian city about 100 miles (161 kilometers) south of the country's largest city, Guayaquil. In recent months, Ecuador has struggled with growing violence and political instability.

"We came to a place where we don't have family. It was hard. There were days where I cried because they were hard and difficult days because I knew that I wasn't going to go back to my family," Carchipulla

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said. Nonprofits such as New Immigrant Community Empowerment, more commonly known as NICE, have helped families work toward stability.

Illegal border crossings fell sharply after the Biden administration introduced new restrictions in May. But the numbers are again rising — pushed higher this time by families with children. According to preliminary data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August was the busiest month ever for apprehensions for migrant families crossing the border with children from Mexico.

Families with children now account for about half of arrests of people crossing the border illegally from Mexico, with more than 91,000 arrests in August, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to discuss numbers and spoke on condition of anonymity.

That's dramatically up from the 60,161 arrests in July and 39,305 in June. The August tally surpassed the previous high of 84,486 in May 2019. Overall, arrests from illegal crossings from Mexico topped 177,000 in August, the official said, up from 132,652 in July and 99,539 in June.

New York City has welcomed 112,000 since spring 2022, nearly 60,000 temporarily living in government shelters.

Advocacy groups are closely watching how the city's schools respond to the migrant influx, but sympathize with city officials who continue to plead for more money from Albany and the White House.

"Any city would struggle to receive the large number of children that are coming at one time, who are also learning English, as well as living in temporary housing or in temporary shelters," said Natasha Quiroga, the director of education policy at the New School's Center for New York City Affairs.

"The city has attempted to create some sort of plan, but there is still just not enough there, just not enough resources to go around," she said.

There were isolated problems on opening day, Quiroga said, most having to do with enrollment paperwork. There were some reports of long lines at some campuses, but that is often part of the normal chaos during the first day of school, she said.

When she recently held a workshop at the Roosevelt, more than 100 people showed up.

"The U.S. American education system and the New York City educational system are incredibly complicated and very different from other countries," Quiroga said.

When Carchipulla's husband broached the idea of heading north, he suggested he go alone. But she insisted that they remain together.

Her husband has been only able to find occasional work, such as jobs at construction sites. They are hoping he can get working papers as soon as possible. Kimberly wants to work, too, but she has two young children who cannot be left alone.

Carchipulla dreams of her son developing a profession, maybe someday joining the masses of hurried people wearing suits, ties and shiny shoes.

His mother beamed as Damien spoke, then laughed when the boy recited a few words in English.

"It will be easier for him to learn English," she said. When Damien does, she is depending on him to "help me with things I don't understand."

For his first day of school, Damien had much simpler plans: "I want to meet new friends," he said. "And I want to learn English." ____ This story has been corrected to show that Guayaquil is Ecuador's largest city, not the capital city.

Al-Qaida-linked insurgents in Mali kill 49 civilians and 15 soldiers in attacks, military says

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) — Two attacks by al-Qaida linked insurgents in the restive north of Mali on Thursday killed 49 civilians and 15 government soldiers, the country's military junta said.

A passenger boat near the city of Timbuktu on the Niger River and a Malian military position in Bamba further downstream in the Gao region were targeted, according to a statement from the military junta read on state television. It said the attacks have been claimed by JNIM, an umbrella coalition of armed groups aligned with al-Qaida.

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The Malian government killed about 50 assailants while responding to the attacks, the announcement said. It said also declared three days of national mourning from Friday to honor the civilians and soldiers killed in the attacks.

Al-Qaida affiliated and Islamic State-linked groups have almost doubled the territory they control in Mali in less than a year, the United Nations said in a report last month, as they take advantage of a weak government and of armed groups that signed a 2015 peace agreement.

The stalled implementation of the peace deal and sustained attacks on communities have offered the IS group and al-Qaida affiliates a chance "to re-enact the 2012 scenario," they said.

That's the year when a military coup took place in the West African country and rebels in the north formed an Islamic state two months later. The extremist rebels were forced from power in the north with the help of a French-led military operation, but they moved from the arid north to more populated central Mali in 2015 and remain active.

In August 2020, Mali's president was overthrown in a coup that included an army colonel who carried out a second coup and was sworn in as president in June 2021. He developed ties to Russia's military and Russia's Wagner mercenary group whose head, Yevgeny Prigozhin, was killed in a plane crash in Russia on Aug. 23.

Timbuktu has been blockaded by armed groups since late August, when the Malian army deployed re-inforcements to the region. The insurgents are preventing the desert city from being supplied with basic goods.

Over 30,000 residents have fled the city and a nearby region, according to an August report by the United Nations' humanitarian agency.

The deadly attacks come as the U.N. prepares to withdraw its 17,000-strong peacekeeping mission MINUSMA from Mali at the government's request. The pullout is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

The U.N. deployed peacekeepers in 2013 and MINUSMA has become the most dangerous U.N. mission in the world, with more than 300 personnel killed.

The growing insecurity in Mali has increased instability in West Africa's volatile Sahel region. Mali has had two coups since 2020 in which the military vowed to stop the jihadi violence.

Maui beckons tourists, and their dollars, to stave off economic disaster after wildfires

By AUDREY McAVOY and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

KAHULUI, Hawaii (AP) — Richie Olsten has been in Maui's helicopter tour business for a half century, so long he's developed a barometer for the tourism-dependent economy: rental cars parked at the island's airport.

There are so many since wildfires killed at least 115 people in the historic town of Lahaina that Olsten is worried about a full-blown economic catastrophe. Restaurants and tour companies are laying off workers, and unemployment is surging.

State tourism officials, after initially urging travelers to stay away, are now asking them to come back, avoid the burn zone and help Maui recover by spending their money. Airlines have started offering steep discounts, while some resorts have slashed room rates by 20% or are offering a fifth night free.

"I know what a terrible disaster that was. But now we're in crisis mode," Olsten said. "If we can't keep the people that have jobs employed, how are they going to help family members and friends that lost everything?"

The number of visitors arriving on Maui sank about 70% after the Aug. 8 fire, down to 2,000 a day.

Olsten's Air Maui Helicopters now operates one or two flights a day, compared with 25 to 30 before the fires.

As Air Maui's director of operations, Olsten said his company has laid off seven of its 12 dispatchers. Pilots have been spared because they only get paid when they work. Typically, they fly eight times a day,

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four to five days a week. That has fallen to one day a week, and only one or two flights.

Many Maui hotels are housing federal aid workers and Lahaina residents who lost their homes. Even so, only half of available hotel rooms are occupied, said Mufi Hannemann, president of the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association.

Even those in South Maui, 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Lahaina, are half empty. Hannemann called the situation "pretty grim."

One of Maui's most venerable restaurants, Hali'imaile General Store, laid off about 30 workers and temporarily closed after business shrank to one-tenth of pre-fire levels.

"It just fell off a cliff," said Graeme Swain, who owns the place with his wife, Mara.

They cut staff to preserve cash and spare Hali'imaile the fate of the San Diego software company Swain was running in 2008. When the housing bubble burst and the U.S. plunged into recession, he kept all employees "to the bitter end," crushing the business.

Swain wants Hali'imaile — which was founded as a general store for pineapple plantation workers a century ago and became a restaurant in 1987 — to last decades more.

"It takes a lot of soul-searching of what's the right thing to do to protect that place," said Swain, who plans to hire everyone back. He aims to reopen next month.

Mass layoffs are showing up in government data. Nearly 8,000 people filed for unemployment on Maui during the last three weeks of August compared with 295 during the same period in 2022.

University of Hawaii economists expect Maui's jobless rate to climb as high as 10%. It peaked at 35% during the COVID-19 pandemic, but in July was just 2.5%. And this time, there are no pandemic-era Paycheck Protection Program loans for businesses, nor any enhanced unemployment checks for the jobless.

Clothing designer Gemma Alviar estimates that locals make up almost all the clientele at her Kahului store, Pulelehua Boutique. But that may not shield her in a place where the tourism industry accounts for 75% of private sector jobs.

"If they don't have a job, they're getting laid off, how are they going to buy stuff?" she said. "What do they need to buy clothes for if they're not working?"

One reason visitor traffic plunged is that Hawaii's leaders, joined by Hollywood celebrities, told travelers to vacate the island.

The day after the fire, the Hawaii Tourism Authority, a quasi-state agency, said visitors on "non-essential travel are being asked to leave Maui" and that "non-essential travel to Maui is strongly discouraged."

The agency said the community needed to focus on recovery and helping those who had to evacuate. Around the world, people saw video and photos of travelers jamming the Kahului airport to board flights out.

That message has since changed.

"Maui's not closed," Mayor Richard Bissen said in a recent interview.

People shouldn't go to Lahaina or the surrounding West Maui area — "It's not a place to stare," Bissen said — but the rest of Maui needs tourists. "Respect the West, visit the rest," is the motto some have adopted.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority drafted and publicized a map showing Lahaina and West Maui in relation to the rest of the island, highlighting just how much was still open. The authority is also launching a \$2.6 million marketing plan to lure tourists back.

Two days after the fire, Jason Momoa, a Hollywood actor and Native Hawaiian, told his 17 million Instagram followers, "Do not travel to Maui." More recently, he advised: "Maui is open. Lahaina is closed."

Travel to areas outside West Maui should return to pre-fire levels by Thanksgiving, predicted Carl Bonham, an economics professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Discounted fares and marketing appeals should help, he said.

Gov. Josh Green told a meeting of the state Council on Revenues that he expects authorities to reopen most of West Maui to travelers on Oct. 8, with the exception of fire-damaged neighborhoods. The area, which includes beach resorts in Kaanapali, north of historic Lahaina, has 11,000 hotel rooms. That's half Maui's total.

The disaster prompted state officials on Wednesday to lower their 2023 economic growth prediction for the entire state to 1.1%, down from 1.8%. Next year, they expect 1.5% growth instead of 2%.

Bonham estimated the fires would depress state tax revenues by \$250 million this fiscal year but said he was "encouraged" by the plan to reopen West Maui in one month.

The council, which produces tax revenue forecasts, predicted Thursday that state tax revenue would rise 1.3% during the current fiscal year compared with last year. The governor and lawmakers are required to use the panel's forecasts to draft their budgets.

Biden to use G20 summit and Vietnam visit to highlight US as trustworthy alternative to China

By AAMER MADHANI and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden wants to show the world at the Group of 20 summit in India and during a stop in Vietnam that the United States and its like-minded allies are better economic and security partners than China.

White House officials said Biden, who departed Thursday evening for New Delhi, will use the annual G20 gathering as an opportunity for the U.S. to highlight a proposition for developing and middle-income countries that would increase the lending power of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund by some \$200 billion.

That is an attempt to offer a significant, albeit smaller, alternative to China's massive Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which the U.S. views as a Trojan horse for China-led regional development and military expansion. Chinese President Xi Jinping plans to skip the summit, where Premier Li Qiang will represent the country.

After the summit, Biden and Vietnamese General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong will meet in Hanoi and are expected to announce plans to tighten economic cooperation.

Vietnam and China have robust trade relations, but also deep differences. Vietnam, like Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Brunei, has been in a tense territorial standoff for decades with China, which has claimed authority over waters in the South China Sea that are hundreds of miles from the Chinese coastline.

"I think Xi's absence at this particular summit, if that comes to pass, really is a big missed opportunity for the Chinese," said Colleen Cottle, deputy director at the Washington think tank Atlantic Council's Global China Hub. "And I think it affords the Biden administration even more of a chance to go on the offensive in terms of stepping up and showing ... what their value proposition is to the Global South."

Leaders of the U.S., India, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were working to finalize a joint infrastructure deal that could be announced in New Delhi, according to an official familiar with the matter.

If it comes together, the arrangement would involve ship transit between India and Saudi Arabia, then trains through Saudi Arabia and the UAE, likely to Jordan, then ship transit to Turkey and onward from there by train, according to a diplomat familiar with the negotiations.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said he could not confirm the deal. He said the initiative is something "that we've invested effort into with our partners."

"We believe that connectivity from India across the Middle East to Europe is incredibly important and would bring a significant number of economic benefits, as well as strategic benefits, to all of the countries involved," he told reporters accompanying Biden aboard Air Force one.

Heading into the summit, the U.S. has criticized China for reducing the transparency of its reporting on basic economic data in recent months and for cracking down on companies in China that had been providing such data.

At the same time, the White House has tried to improve ties. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who recently returned from China, was the latest administration officials to engage Beijing amid disputes over technology, security, Taiwan and other issues.

Raimondo told The Associated Press that "the world is looking for the U.S. and China to responsibly

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manage our relationship." She said the administration's goal is to have a stable economic relationship in which there is consistent engagement. But Xi's decision to not attend the G20 shows that "we have work to do" regarding communication between the countries, she said.

"Communication is of course, a two-way street," Raimondo said. "Communication does need to lead to action."

Biden said he was disappointed that Xi will not be in New Delhi, where the summit is expected to focus on climate, development and the future of the grouping of leading economies.

The U.S. has criticized China's lending practices under Belt and Road as "coercive," saying the \$1 trillion infrastructure effort that provides Chinese loan assistance to poor countries often comes with strings attached that restrict the restructuring of debt with other major creditor nations. China also frequently retains the right to demand repayment at any time, giving Beijing leverage over other countries.

A recent Associated Press analysis of a dozen countries most indebted to China, including Pakistan, Kenya, Zambia, Laos and Mongolia, found paying back that debt is consuming an ever-greater amount of tax revenue. Countries in AP's analysis had as much as 50% of their foreign loans from China and most were devoting more than one-third of government revenue to paying off foreign debt.

Sullivan said the effort to bolster the lending capacity of the World Bank and the IMF would provide a "credible alternative" to China.

Biden included \$3.3 billion for both institutions in the supplemental budget request he has sent to Congress. The administration said the money would help leverage nearly \$50 billion from the U.S. alone in lending for middle-income and poor countries and up to \$200 billion around the world.

"We believe that there should be high-standard, noncoercive lending options available to low- and middle-income countries," Sullivan said

Xi is trying to navigate through one of the most turbulent moments for China's economy in decades.

The Chinese economy is weighed down by a property bubble, local government debt, high youth unemployment and a broader inability to rebound as expected from pandemic lockdowns. Added to that is the longer-term challenge of China's population starting to decline due to aging and lower birth rates.

Most conventional economic analyses assume the U.S. economy and its allies are largely insulated from a Chinese slowdown. There are supply chain risks if factories close in China and global growth struggles. But so far this year, the U.S. economy has outperformed expectations as the Chinese economy has underperformed.

Xi countered in a speech published last month that the U.S. and its allies "cannot curb the greedy nature of capital and cannot solve chronic diseases such as materialism and spiritual poverty." He suggested his model of a government with centralized power will do more to serve the interests of "the vast majority of people."

How China navigates through its economic headwinds is a big question for the White House. The administration has tried to have a stable trade relationship, even as it has frustrated China by restricting imports of advanced technology for national security purposes. U.S. officials have emphasized the importance of an ongoing dialogue between the governments of the world's two largest economies.

G20 leaders will also discuss the global impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and joint efforts at combating climate change. Any summit agreements on the climate front are expected to be incremental at best. G20 climate and environment ministers, at their July meeting, were unable to agree on a goal of peaking emissions by 2025, moving to clean energy and a tax on carbon as a way to reduce emissions.

Biden is scheduled to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Modi's residence after he arrives in India on Friday evening.

Biden has put much effort into bolstering his relations with Modi, a conservative Hindu nationalist leading the world's most populous country. The U.S.-India relationship will be vital in coming decades as both sides deal with an ascendant China and the enormity of climate change, artificial intelligence, supply chain resilience and other issues.

Biden hosted Modi in June for a pomp-filled state visit.

Trump White House official Navarro convicted of contempt after defying House Jan. 6 subpoena

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trump White House official Peter Navarro was found guilty Thursday of contempt of Congress charges for refusing to cooperate with a congressional investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The verdict came after a short trial for Navarro, who served as a White House trade adviser under President Donald Trump and later promoted the Republican's baseless claims of mass voter fraud in the 2020 election he lost.

Navarro was the second Trump aide to face contempt of Congress charges after former White House adviser Steve Bannon. Bannon was convicted of two counts and was sentenced to four months behind bars, though he has been free pending appeal.

Navarro vowed to appeal the verdict, saying the "die was cast" after a judge ruled that he couldn't fight the charges by arguing he couldn't cooperate with the committee because Trump had invoked executive privilege.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta found that Navarro didn't have enough evidence to show Trump had invoked it.

"This is a landmark case that's bound for the Supreme Court," Navarro said. Defense attorney John Rowley echoed that, saying "this case is not over by a long shot."

Mehta scheduled Navarro's sentencing for Jan. 12. Navarro was convicted in Washington's federal courthouse of two misdemeanor counts of contempt of Congress, both punishable by up to a year behind bars.

The verdict came after a four-hour jury deliberation. After it was read, defense attorney Stanley Woodward moved for a mistrial, saying that the jurors had taken an outdoor break near where protesters and media regularly gather outside the courthouse and came back with a verdict shortly after. Mehta did not immediately rule, but said he would consider written arguments on the issue.

Prosecutors argued at trial that Navarro acted as if he were "above the law" when he defied a subpoena for documents and a deposition from the House Jan. 6 committee.

A defense attorney countered that Navarro didn't purposely ignore the House Jan. 6 Committee. Navarro instead told staffers to contact Trump about what might be protected by executive privilege, something that didn't happen, Woodward said.

Prosecutors, though, argued that even if Trump had invoked executive privilege, Navarro should have handed over what material he could and flagged any questions or documents believed to be protected. They said much of the material the committee sought was already publicly available.

"Peter Navarro made a choice. He chose not abide by the congressional subpoena," prosecutor Elizabeth Aloï said. "The defendant chose allegiance to former President Donald Trump over compliance to the subpoena."

Barred from relying on the executive privilege argument at trial, the defense argued that Navarro had not acted "willfully" or only out of loyalty to Trump.

"Do we know that his failure to comply beyond reasonable doubt wasn't the result of accident, inadvertence or mistake?" Woodward said.

The House Jan. 6 committee finished its work in January, after a final report that said Trump criminally engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 election and failed to act to stop a mob of his supporters from attacking the Capitol.

Trump, meanwhile, faces a federal indictment in Washington, D.C., and a state indictment in Georgia over his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden, a Democrat. He has denied wrongdoing and has said he was acting within the law.

Some US airports strive to make flying more inclusive for those with dementia

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Andrea Nissen is trying to prepare her 65-year-old husband, who has Alzheimer's disease, for a solo flight from Arizona to Oklahoma to visit family. She worries about travelers and airport officials misinterpreting his forgetfulness or habit of getting in people's personal space, and feels guilty about not being able to accompany him.

"People say, 'He has dementia. You can't let him go by himself,'" Nissen said.

But attending a dementia-friendly travel workshop in July helped ease some of those fears. She learned about the resources available at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and what assistance airlines can offer when asked.

It was the first time the city of Phoenix hosted such a workshop, making it the latest U.S. city pledging to make flying friendlier for people with dementia.

Over 14 million people are expected to check into airports nationwide for Labor Day weekend and, inevitably, some will be travelers with dementia or another cognitive impairment. Nearly a dozen airports — from Phoenix to Kansas City, Missouri — in the last few years have modified their facilities and operations to be more dementia-friendly, advocates say. They've added amenities like quiet rooms and a simulation center where travelers with dementia can learn about flying or get a refresher.

Looking for a gate, trying to remember flight times or following terse commands from Transportation Security Administration agents while in line with others can overwhelm someone with dementia. Symptoms like forgetting words can be mistaken for being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

But most large U.S. airports are behind the curve on serving travelers with dementia when compared with some airports in Australia and Europe.

While dementia is not specifically mentioned in the Americans with Disabilities Act, the law defines disability as an individual with a physical or mental "impairment that substantially limits" major life activities. The Air Carrier Access Act, which Congress passed in 1986, specifically addresses airlines' treatment of people with disabilities. Among the provisions is making it illegal to discriminate against travelers because of a disability and providing assistance with boarding, deplaning and making connecting flights.

Still, no airport is compelled by law to make changes, said Sara Barsel, a former special education teacher and founder of the Dementia-Friendly Airports Working Group, which lobbies for airports and airlines to enact dementia-inclusive policies.

Part of the reason she suspects there aren't more quiet rooms or family restrooms with adult changing tables is because that doesn't generate revenue, she said.

"I don't know what their constraints are in terms of economics. I know what the impact is and the impact is that there's less for people who need quiet spaces," said Barsel, who is based in Roseville, Minnesota.

The group, which was founded in 2018 by experts in dementia and Alzheimer's, helped add lanyard and other programs to airports. London's Gatwick Airport created the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard program in 2016, which is now in over 200 airports globally. Light green lanyards with a sunflower pattern are issued to anyone who wants to subtly indicate they or a travel companion has dementia or a not-as-visible disability. The lanyards let airport and airline personnel know the traveler may need more attention and information repeated.

One of the first airports the group reached out to was the Missoula Montana Airport, which became certified as a "sensory inclusive" facility in March. The group went over issues that can arise with lighting, floor design and noise. It also incorporated the sunflower lanyards.

"It's already a high-stress, anxiety-driven environment for anyone not suffering from a hidden disability," said airport Deputy Director Tim Damrow. "One reason people come here to Montana is for friendly people and obviously for the amazing scenery. We wanted to make sure that everyone is welcomed and treated with the dignity and respect they deserve."

Candice Kirkwood, of Indianapolis, experienced what she said was her worst nightmare in 2001 when

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her parents were flying through the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Her mother, Marjorie "Marge" Dabney was wearing a badge to signal she needed extra help because she had Alzheimer's, and the couple was being helped by an airline attendant.

The attendant helped Kirkwood's father, who used a wheelchair, to the restroom, and when they returned, Dabney was gone.

"It played every day in my mind," Kirkwood said. "What could I have done differently? I didn't get to say goodbye to her."

Human remains that were found six years later and 15 miles (24 kilometers) away in a remote area were identified as Dabney through the use of DNA. Local police said she died of blunt force trauma, which could have been caused by a fall or an object striking her. The case remains unsolved.

Dabney's now late husband, Joe, settled a lawsuit with American Airlines for an undisclosed sum in 2003. Kirkwood said she still harbors distrust of airlines.

"I don't want anybody to ever have to go through what I went through," she said. "It's like once my mother faded away, nobody seemed like they ever cared to talk about it."

Representatives for the airline did not immediately respond to requests for comment on any changes to accommodate travelers with cognitive impairment.

Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, however, is launching the sunflower lanyard program in mid-September. All frontline employees who interact with customers and volunteer ambassadors will receive formal training on how to engage with travelers donning the lanyards. Its inception has been a long time coming, according to airport spokesperson Heath Montgomery.

"We're continuing to evolve the way we interact with customers from all walks of life," Montgomery said.

Jan Dougherty, a registered nurse who has written a book on traveling with dementia and led the Phoenix workshop, said it's unfortunate that people with dementia have gone missing. With the right support, she said they can travel safely.

"So many people early on (after diagnosis) are capable of travel with some accommodation," she said. "We're still an ageist society."

The need for accommodations will become more prevalent as more Americans move into retirement age. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicts nearly 10 million adults among those 65 years or older will have dementia by 2060. Experts, however, say dementia often is underdiagnosed.

Similarly, more than 6 million people nationwide have Alzheimer's disease, which is expected to hit 13 million by 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association. Overall, 55 million worldwide are currently living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

Carol Giuliani, who is part of the airports working group, can testify to the growing need. For the past eight years, she has worked as a travel companion for senior citizens with dementia. She has accompanied seniors on flights, vacations or relocations in 42 states and 12 foreign countries. Giuliani wears a company jacket and has a sunflower lanyard for her client. She also has explanation cards for security agents to "put a little TLC in the TSA."

"Ninety percent of the time it's a family member that hires me," said Giuliani, while seated at Phoenix Sky Harbor after escorting an elderly man on a flight. "The one I did today, (the wife) was like 'thank you, thank you, thank you!...' I know how to pace it so that he gets safely and comfortably back home."

Congressional watchdog describes border wall harm, says agencies should work together to ease damage

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border under former President Donald Trump toppled untold numbers of saguaro cactuses in Arizona, put endangered ocelots at risk in Texas and disturbed Native American burial grounds, the official congressional watchdog said Thursday.

A report released by the Government Accountability Office offers the first independent assessment of damage caused by the building of more than 450 miles (724 km) of wall while in-depth environmental

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reviews were waived and the concerns of Native American tribes went largely ignored in the rush to finish the barrier.

Now, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Interior Department should work together to ease the damage, the GAO said. It recommended that the agencies coordinate to decide how much repair work will cost, how to fund it, and how long it will take.

A Customs and Border Protection spokesman said Wednesday that the agency is working on a response to the report. An Interior Department spokeswoman said the agency would have no comment.

"What makes Trump's border wall so egregious is that his administration waived dozens of environmental, public health, cultural preservation and even contract procurement laws to build it," said U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva, a southern Arizona Democrat who requested the GAO review. "Before construction even started, communities, tribes and other stakeholders were raising the alarm about the colossal damage that bypassing such fundamental protections would have."

Grijalva said he is urging fellow lawmakers to transfer at least \$225 million from Homeland Security to the Interior Department and Forest Service in the upcoming budget for restoration efforts.

Trump and his supporters have argued that a strong physical barrier along the border is necessary to keep out drugs and people trying to enter the U.S. illegally.

"We applied a commonsense, balanced approach in an effort to address environmental concerns while prioritizing our main goal of securing the nation's border to reduce a vast set of complex threats from entering the U.S.," said Mark Morgan, who was Customs and Border Protection's acting commissioner during the Trump administration.

"Speaking personally, if we disrupt a butterfly habitat or a few cacti die in exchange for disrupting the cartel's operational capacity to threaten our nation's safety and national security, I'm OK with that tradeoff," said Morgan, now a visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington. "The wall saved lives and disrupted the cartel's ability to improve their operational control of our country's borders."

Environmental groups said the GAO report confirmed their earlier complaints. They said future repair work could benefit from more involvement by the Interior Department, a lead manager of the federal land where much of the damage occurred.

"We hope this report will help people understand the degree of destruction the wall truly inflicted," said Laiken Jordahl, Southwest conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, among the groups consulted.

A key aspect of the report was "identifying the fact that the Department of the Interior needs to play a larger role in repairing the damage," said Michael Dax, Western program director for the Wildlands Network, which also gave the GAO input.

Emily Burns, program director for the ecological group Sky Island Alliance, called it "refreshing to see the accountability from the federal government."

The border stretches across nearly 2,000 miles (3,200 km) along California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Sections of what Trump called his "big, beautiful wall" were installed between January 2017 and January 2021 by contractors for U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Defense.

President Joe Biden paused construction after he took office in January 2021.

For the report, the GAO consulted with the federal agencies, as well as the nongovernmental environmental groups. It also sought input from the Tohono O'odham tribe, which has a sprawling reservation that includes parts of Arizona and Sonora, Mexico; and the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians in California.

Those consulted told the GAO that construction in parts of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas fragmented the endangered ocelot's habitat by blocking its cross-border access and putting it at risk of extinction.

The GAO was told lighting along the border harms bird migration and the foraging habits of some species. Larger animals like big cats and pronghorns that previously crossed the border through vehicle barriers with wider openings are now blocked by tall steel bollards erected inches apart.

Many saguaro cactuses in Arizona's Sonora Desert were toppled during construction, and in some areas

at least half of those transplanted elsewhere later died.

Damage was also reported at Quitobaquito Springs, an oasis several hundred yards (meters) from the border inside the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. The area includes sacred burial grounds of the Tohono O'odham people.

The GAO said that Customs and Border Protection later addressed construction-caused safety hazards, such as building concrete floodwalls to fix earthen levees in Texas' Rio Grande Valley.

But the watchdog said more action is needed.

Fugitive killer eludes Pennsylvania police for eighth day as wary residents keep a watchful eye

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

WEST CHESTER, Pa. (AP) — An escaped murderer on the run in southeast Pennsylvania has so far eluded hundreds of law officers — including tactical teams in full combat gear, tracking dogs, cops on horseback and aircraft — as the search entered its second week Thursday and nervous residents stayed alert for any sign of the fugitive.

Danelo Souza Cavalcante, a 34-year-old from Brazil, escaped from the Chester County Prison on Aug. 31 by scaling a wall, climbing over razor wire and jumping from a roof. The breakout mirrored an earlier escape there in May and wasn't detected by guards for a full hour, authorities say.

"This is an outrage. It never should have happened," said Chester County District Attorney Deb Ryan at a news conference.

Since the escape, there have been eight sightings that police believe could be Cavalcante, the latest around noon Thursday, said state police Lt. Col. George Bivens.

A civilian saw someone who looked like Cavalcante running through an area near Longwood Gardens, one of the country's top botanical gardens. A surveillance camera on a trail had captured Cavalcante walking through the garden grounds Monday night.

Residents were on edge but comforted by the police presence.

"I've never felt more scared and more safe at the same time. It's a really strange feeling," said Jennie Brown, whose neighborhood is about 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from the jail.

"Many neighbors had a police officer on their deck with a machine gun while they slept," said Brown, 53, who is coordinating donations of water and other supplies for the searchers.

Authorities have told them Cavalcante is getting more desperate, Brown said. "I'm sure he is. I'm sure he's hot and tired and emaciated."

Bivens said the fugitive has managed to get ahold of clothing and unknown supplies, and there's now a \$20,000 reward for information leading to his capture.

Wendy Hughes, who lives about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from Longwood Gardens, has resumed her morning walks but now carries pepper spray.

"I don't feel scared, but it's unsettling," she said. "You don't want to have to think about it anymore."

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

Authorities believe he was trying to return to Brazil after the ex-girlfriend's murder. He was captured in Virginia.

The slain woman's family is under police protection, said Ryan. "And they are terrified. They are barricaded inside their home."

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

The latest annual reports show Chester County reported only one escape from its facility from 2015 through 2022. That doesn't include the May escape, when an inmate similarly crab-walked up the walls of the entrance to the exercise yard, climbed to the roof, jumped down and ran for it. He was captured

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minutes later, officials said.

Howard Holland, the acting warden of the Chester County Prison, said the jail brought in a consultant after that escape and added razor wire.

"Obviously it was inadequate. Hindsight is 20/20," Hughes said.

In a harrowing encounter last Friday, someone — likely Cavalcante — broke into nearby resident Ryan Drummond's home.

Waking up to a noise in the kitchen at around 11:40 p.m., he grabbed a framed family photo as a shield then flickered the hall lights from upstairs several times.

He felt a jolt of fear when the intruder flicked them back.

"That was kind of the terrifying moment, where I like, looked at (my wife) quickly and said, 'He is in the house, call 911 right now,'" Drummond said Wednesday.

"I saw him methodically, not panicked, walk out of the kitchen, in the living room toward that French door and walk out," he said.

Police came within a minute but not before Cavalcante, if it was him, was on the run again with a few pieces of fruit in hand.

Presidential centers from Hoover to Bush and Obama unite to warn of fragile state of US democracy

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Concern for U.S. democracy amid deep national polarization has prompted the entities supporting 13 presidential libraries dating back to Herbert Hoover to call for a recommitment to the country's bedrock principles, including the rule of law and respecting a diversity of beliefs.

The statement released Thursday, the first time the libraries have joined to make such a public declaration, said Americans have a strong interest in supporting democratic movements and human rights around the world because "free societies elsewhere contribute to our own security and prosperity here at home."

"But that interest," it said, "is undermined when others see our own house in disarray."

The joint message from presidential centers, foundations and institutes emphasized the need for compassion, tolerance and pluralism while urging Americans to respect democratic institutions and uphold secure and accessible elections.

The statement noted that "debate and disagreement" are central to democracy but also alluded to the coarsening of dialogue in the public arena during an era when officials and their families are receiving death threats.

"Civility and respect in political discourse, whether in an election year or otherwise, are essential," it said.

Most of the living former presidents have been sparing in giving their public opinions about the state of the nation as polls show that large swaths of Republicans still believe the lies perpetuated by former President Donald Trump and his allies that the 2020 presidential election was stolen. Trump, a Republican, also has lashed out at the justice system as he faces indictments in four criminal cases, including two related to his efforts to overturn the results of his reelection loss to Joe Biden, a Democrat.

Thursday's statement stopped short of calling out individuals, but it still marked one of the most substantive acknowledgments that people associated with the nation's former presidents are worried about the country's trajectory.

"I think there's great concern about the state of our democracy at this time," said Mark Updegrove, president and CEO of the LBJ Foundation, which supports the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas. "We don't have to go much farther than January 6 to realize that we are in a perilous state."

Efforts to suppress or weaken voter turnout are of special interest to the LBJ Foundation, Updegrove said, given that President Lyndon Johnson considered his signing of the Voting Rights Act his "proudest legislative accomplishment."

The bipartisan statement was signed by the Hoover Presidential Foundation, the Roosevelt Institute, the Truman Library Institute, the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, the LBJ Foundation, the Richard Nixon

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Foundation, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, the Carter Center, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, the George & Barbara Bush Foundation, the Clinton Foundation, the George W. Bush Presidential Center and the Obama Foundation. Those organizations all support presidential libraries created under the Presidential Library Act of 1955, along with the Eisenhower Foundation.

The Eisenhower Foundation chose not to sign, and it said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press: "The Eisenhower Foundation has respectfully declined to sign this statement. It would be the first common statement that the presidential centers and foundations have ever issued as a group, but we have had no collective discussion about it, only an invitation to sign."

The foundation said each presidential entity had its own programs related to democracy.

The push for the joint statement was spearheaded by David Kramer, executive director of the George W. Bush Institute. Kramer said the former president "did see and signed off on this statement."

He said the effort was intended to send "a positive message reminding us of who we are and also reminding us that when we are in disarray, when we're at loggerheads, people overseas are also looking at us and wondering what's going on." He also said it was necessary to remind Americans that their democracy cannot be taken for granted.

He said the Bush Institute has hosted several events on elections, including one as part of a joint initiative with the other groups called More Perfect that featured Bill Gates, a member of the board of supervisors in Arizona's Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix. The county, its supervisors and its elections staff have been targeted repeatedly by election conspiracy theorists in recent years.

Gates and his family have been threatened by people who believe false allegations of election fraud.

"We wanted to remind people that those who oversee our elections are our fellow citizens," Kramer said. "Some of them told stories that are almost heartbreaking about the threats they faced."

He said he hoped the joint statement would generate wide support, but he added: "It's hard to say whether it will or not in these polarized times."

Melissa Giller, chief marketing officer at the Ronald Reagan Foundation and Institute, said the decision to sign on was a quick one. The foundation was approached shortly after it launched a new effort, its Center on Public Civility in Washington, D.C. She said the statement represents "everything our center will stand for."

"We need to help put an end to the serious discord and division in our society," Giller said in an emailed response. "America is experiencing a decline in trust, social cohesion, and personal interaction."

Valerie Jarrett, a senior adviser to former President Barack Obama who is now CEO of the Obama Foundation, said the former president supported the statement.

"This is a moment where we could all come together and show that democracy is not about partisan politics," she said. "It's about making our country strong, making our country more decent, more kind, more humane."

Jarrett said one of the foundation's priorities is trying to restore faith in the institutions that are the pillars of society. To do that has meant taking on disinformation and creating opportunity where "people believe that our democracy is on the up-and-up."

She said Obama has led a democracy forum and is planning another later this year in Chicago.

"I think part of it is recognizing that we are very fragile right now," Jarrett said, citing the fact that "we didn't have a smooth orderly transition of power in the last election" along with people's mistrust of the court system and elected officials.

"The wheels on our democracy bus," she said, "feel a little wobbly right now."

Ta'Kiya Young, killed by police in an Ohio parking lot, is mourned along with her unborn child

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM and SAMANTHA HENDRICKSON Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ta'Kiya Young treated her two little boys like kings, dressing them sharply, letting them have too many sweets, cooking them big gourmet meals of T-bone steak with broccoli, cheese

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and rice.

The royal life also awaited her unborn daughter.

When Young found out she was pregnant with her third child — a girl — she was thrilled. The 21-year-old Ohio mom and aspiring social worker bought a stack of adorable onesies in anticipation of the baby's arrival. She scheduled a photo shoot to show off her baby bump. She applied for public housing and looked forward to the day when she and her growing brood would have a place to call their own.

Instead, Young's grieving family held her funeral on Thursday, exactly two weeks after a police officer in the Columbus suburbs fatally shot her in her car in a supermarket parking lot.

About 100 people showed up at the Church of Christ in Columbus for Young's service, many of them dressed in various shades of vibrant pink — her favorite color.

Family and friends, tearful and clutching tissues, entered the church's sanctuary to view Young's body, dressed in bright fuchsia under a clear casket cover that was illuminated in pink light. The body of her unborn daughter, wearing white, lay in her mother's embrace. The powerful voices of a gospel soloist and backing choir filled the sanctuary.

Danielle Rivers, Young's maternal grandmother, who buried Young's mother just a year ago, said it still hasn't hit her that she's lost both a daughter and granddaughter. She can't eat or sleep.

"It shouldn't have happened," Rivers, tears streaming down her cheeks, said in an interview with The Associated Press. Young was a "smart girl" who was "beautiful inside and out."

The fatal Aug. 24 encounter between Young and police, captured on bodycam video released last week, was the latest in a troubling series of fatal shootings of Black adults and children by Ohio officers, and followed various episodes of police brutality against Black people across the nation over the past several years. The confrontations have prompted widespread protests and demands for police reform.

Young's family wants the officer who shot her to be immediately fired and charged in her death and the death of her unborn child. The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation is leading the investigation. The police union has said that calls to charge the officer before an investigation is complete are premature.

Ahead of Young's funeral, her paternal grandmother, Nadine Young, who helped raise her, recalled Ta'Kiya (tah-KEYE'-ah) as a high-spirited prankster and a popular, "fun-loving, feisty young lady" who nevertheless struggled with the sudden death of her mother last year, and who was just beginning to find her way in life.

Now the family is focusing on Ta'Kiya's sons, ages 6 and 3. The oldest, Ja'Kobie, talks about his mother. The youngest, Ja'Kenlie, doesn't quite understand she's gone.

"We just show them a whole lot of love and let them know they've got a little village surrounding them and loving on them," Nadine Young told the AP.

Young said the video of Ta'Kiya's violent death was heart-wrenching to watch, the shooting "void of any humanity or decency at all."

In the video, an officer at the driver's side window tells Ta'Kiya she's been accused of shoplifting and orders her out of the car, while a second officer stands in front of the car. Young protests, both officers curse at her and yell at her to get out, and Young can be heard asking them, "Are you going to shoot me?"

Seconds later, she turns the steering wheel to the right, the car rolls slowly toward the officer standing in front of it, and the officer fires his gun through the windshield.

Nadine Young said she believes her granddaughter feared for her safety.

"I believe he was a bully," she said at a news conference on Wednesday, referring to the officer who shot Ta'Kiya. "He came at her like a bully, and that scared her with that baby in her stomach."

Sean Walton, the family's lawyer, said the officer had no reason to even point his gun at Ta'Kiya, let alone fire it.

The officer, whose name has not been released by authorities, "could've clearly just eased out of the way of that slow-moving vehicle but instead chose to shoot Ta'Kiya directly in her chest and kill her," he said.

Before her death, Ta'Kiya Young had bounced around a bit, staying with her father in Sandusky and working as a ticket taker at Cedar Point amusement park. More recently, she'd been staying with her grandmother in the Columbus area, a few hours from Sandusky, to celebrate the family's summer birthdays

and participate in a remembrance of her mother, Dan'neka Hope.

Ta'Kiya's mother's death had "kind of messed with her," Nadine Young said, and she urged her to get counseling. Ta'Kiya and her grandmother — both of them strong-willed — clashed at times. But their bond remained unshakable, and they spoke every day.

Ta'Kiya also struggled with housing insecurity but had not been in much serious trouble in her short life.

In 2021, she was arrested following a traffic stop in Whitehall, Ohio, in which police said she refused to get out of her car when ordered. Court records indicate Ta'Kiya was jailed briefly before pleading guilty to disorderly conduct. But she moved past that incident relatively quickly, according to her grandmother and the family lawyer. Court records also said she had open charges for petty theft in which her address was listed as "homeless."

Malissa Thomas-St. Clair, a local teacher and founder of Mothers of Murdered Columbus Children, taught Ta'Kiya in a seventh grade math class. She remembers meeting, and later mentoring an adolescent who was navigating adversity early on in her life.

"She was enduring trauma up until death," Thomas-St. Clair said through tears. "That experience she experienced, in those last moments of her life, was exactly what she had been experiencing her entire life. Trauma. All she was looking for was a roadmap to a way of being present in life."

Thomas-St. Clair said they bonded over the fact that both became mothers as teenagers.

"She was looking for somebody to fill those voids, to complete what was missing in her heart," she said. "And what she found was her children, who she loved unconditionally."

Despite Ta'Kiya's struggles, a bright future seemed on the horizon for her. She intended to go back to school after the birth of the baby this fall. She had her sights set on a house.

"The struggle was going to be over once she got into the house," Nadine Young said. "Her and the kids having this nice place, knowing it was theirs, and not having to stay with other people. That was the biggest thing in the world for her. She would've been set."

This week, a notification from the public housing authority came in the mail.

She'd been approved.

"That hurt me to my core," said Nadine Young, "because she was waiting for that letter."

An ailing American explorer trapped 3,000 feet deep in Turkish cave awaits difficult rescue

By ROBERT BADENDIECK Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Rescuers from across Europe rushed to a cave in Turkey on Thursday, launching an operation to save an American researcher who became trapped almost 1,000 meters (3,000 feet) below the cave's entrance after suffering stomach bleeding.

Experienced caver Mark Dickey, 40, suddenly became ill during an expedition with a handful of others, including three other Americans, in the Morca cave in southern Turkey's Taurus Mountains, the European Association of Cave Rescuers said.

While rescuers, including a Hungarian doctor, have reached and treated Dickey, it could be days and possibly weeks before they are able to get him out of the cave, which is too narrow in places for a stretcher to pass through.

In a video message from inside the cave and made available Thursday by Turkey's communications directorate, Dickey thanked the caving community and the Turkish government for their efforts.

"The caving world is a really tight-knit group and it's amazing to see how many people have responded on the surface," said Dickey. "... I do know that the quick response of the Turkish government to get the medical supplies that I need, in my opinion, saved my life. I was very close to the edge."

Dickey, who is seen standing and moving around in the video, said that while he is alert and talking, he is not "healed on the inside" and will need a lot of help to get out of the cave. Doctors will decide whether he will need to leave the cave on a stretcher or if he can leave under his own power.

Dickey, who had been bleeding and losing fluid from his stomach, has stopped vomiting and has eaten

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for the first time in days, according to a New Jersey-based cave rescue group he's affiliated with. It's unclear what caused his medical issue.

The New Jersey Initial Response Team said the rescue will require many teams and constant medical care. The group says the cave is also quite cold — about 4-6 C (39-42 F).

Communication with Dickey takes about five to seven hours and is carried out by runners, who go from Dickey to the camp below the surface where a telephone line to speak with the surface has been set up.

Experts said it will be a challenge to successfully rescue Dickey.

Yusuf Ogrenecek of the Speleological Federation of Turkey said that one of the most difficult tasks of cave rescue operations is widening the narrow cave passages to allow stretcher lines to pass through at low depths.

Stretcher lines are labor intensive and require experienced cave rescuers working long hours, Ogrenecek said. He added that other difficult factors range from navigating through mud and water at low temperatures to the psychological toll of staying inside a cave for long periods of time.

Marton Kovacs of the Hungarian Cave Rescue Service said that the cave is being prepared for Dickey's safe extraction. Passages are being widened and the danger of falling rocks is also being addressed.

Turkish disaster relief agency AFAD and rescue team UMKE are working with Turkish and international cavers on the plan to hoist Dickey out of the cave system, the European Cave Rescue Association said.

The rescue effort currently involves more than 170 people, including doctors, paramedics who are tending to Dickey and experienced cavers, Ogrenecek said, adding that the rescue operation could take up to two to three weeks.

The operation includes rescue teams from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Turkey.

Dickey was described by the association as "a highly trained caver and a cave rescuer himself" who is well known as a cave researcher, or speleologist, from his participation in many international expeditions. He is secretary of the association's medical committee.

Dickey was on an expedition mapping the 1,276-meter (4,186-feet) deep Morca cave system for the Anatolian Speleology Group Association (ASPEG) when he ran into trouble about 1,000 meters down, according to Ogrenecek. He initially became ill on Sept. 2, but it took until the morning of Sept. 3 to notify others who were above ground.

Justin Hanley, a 28-year-old firefighter from near Dallas, Texas, said he met Dickey a few months ago when he took a cave rescue course Dickey taught in Hungary and Croatia. He described Dickey as upbeat and as someone who sees the good in everyone.

"Mark is the guy that should be on that rescue mission that's leading and consulting and for him to be the one that needs to be rescued is kind of a tragedy in and of itself," he said.

A team of rescuers from Italy's National Alpine and Speleological Rescue Team will be flying to Turkey on Thursday night. A total of around 50 rescuers will be at the entrance of the cave early Friday ready to participate in the operation directed by Turkish authorities.

The rescue teams hope that the extraction can begin on Saturday or Sunday. Kovacs said that lifting Dickey will likely take several days, and that several bivouac points are being prepared along the way so that Dickey and rescue teams can rest.

The cave has been divided into several sections, with each country's rescue team being responsible for one section.

The Hungarian Cave Rescue Service, made up of volunteer rescuers, was the first to arrive at Dickey's location and provided emergency blood transfusions to stabilize his condition.

Fani Willis accuses Rep. Jim Jordan of 'partisan misrepresentations' over inquiry of election case

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The district attorney who brought charges against former President Donald Trump and others over their efforts to overturn the results of Georgia's 2020 election sent a scathing letter to U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan on Thursday, accusing him of interfering in a state case and pushing "outrageous

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partisan misrepresentations.”

The letter from Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis to Jordan, the Republican chair of the House Judiciary Committee and a close ally of Trump’s, came in response to one he sent last month expressing concerns about the motivations behind her investigation and demanding that she provide certain documents by Thursday. Instead, Willis sent him a nine-page retort detailing the “inaccurate information and misleading statements” in his letter.

“Its obvious purpose is to obstruct a Georgia criminal proceeding and to advance outrageous partisan misrepresentations,” Willis wrote. “As I make clear below, there is no justification in the Constitution for Congress to interfere with a state criminal matter, as you attempt to do.”

A Fulton County grand jury last month returned a 41-count indictment against Trump and 18 others charging them with state crimes under Georgia law, including violations of the state’s anti-racketeering law. It accuses them of participating in an illegal scheme to keep the incumbent Republican president in power after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump allies in Georgia and Washington have relentlessly attacked Willis, accusing her of baselessly persecuting the early front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination and demanding she be punished.

State Sen. Colton Moore, a Republican from Georgia’s northwest corner, on Thursday doubled down on his calls for a special session to take money away from Willis’ office and consider her impeachment.

“Fani Willis is spending millions of our taxpayer dollars to take on political prisoners. It’s the most un-American thing that we’ve ever seen in our lifetime,” Moore told the crowd at a rally near the state Capitol, where nearly 100 people vocally expressed their disapproval of Willis, shouting “Tyranny!” and “Treason!” and “Impeach!”

Republican Gov. Brian Kemp dismissed those calls last week in a news conference in which he angrily criticized Moore for running a “grifter scam” to raise money from Trump supporters. Without Kemp’s support, a special session is impossible unless Moore can get 60% of all legislators in each house of Georgia’s General Assembly — that’s all Republicans and some Democrats — to sign a petition. So far, he’s got the support of just one of the 180 state House members and two, including himself, of the 56 state senators.

Jordan’s Aug. 24 letter demands documents about federal funds Willis’ office has received. It also asks for communications between her office and the Department of Justice, including the office of special counsel Jack Smith, who is pursuing two federal prosecutions against Trump. And it asks for any communications between Willis’ office and any federal executive branch officials having to do with her investigation.

He cites the “federal interests at stake” and says his committee is trying “to determine whether any legislative reforms are appropriate or necessary.”

Willis accuses Jordan of violating the U.S. Constitution by trying to interfere with and obstruct her office’s prosecution and says his inquiry violates state sovereignty. over matters of state law.

“Your public statements and your letter itself make clear that you lack any legitimate legislative purpose for that inquiry: your job description as a legislator does not include criminal law enforcement, nor does it include supervising a specific criminal trial because you believe that doing so will promote your partisan political objectives,” Willis wrote.

Addressing Jordan’s stated concerns about her office’s use of federal funds, Willis attached a summary of programs funded by federal grants, including an initiative to process sexual assault kits and prosecute sexual offenders, a hate crimes prosecution program and programs for at-risk children.

Willis, a Black woman, also suggested that Jordan consider directing the Justice Department to investigate the racist threats she and her staff have received because of the investigation into Trump and others, attaching a batch of communications filled with heinous and violent racist insults.

She cited those kinds of messages in a motion filed Wednesday asking the judge in the case to take steps to protect future jurors at any trial involving Trump and the others. It is not yet clear whether all 19 defendants will be tried together or if there will be multiple trials.

Her request came weeks after the information of grand jurors who returned the indictment was posted

online “with the intent to harass and intimidate them,” she wrote. Additionally, the motion said, the personal information of Willis and that of her family and staff have been posted online “intertwined with derogatory and racist remarks.”

Willis is asking Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee to prohibit defendants, the news media or anyone else from creating or publishing images — including video, photos and drawings — of jurors or prospective jurors. She is also asking that the judge prohibit the publication of any information that would help identify them.

It’s standard for indictments in Georgia to include the names of the grand jurors, in part because it provides defendants the opportunity to challenge the composition of the grand jury. Jurors in a trial, however, aren’t generally publicly identified.

AI that alters voice and imagery in political ads will require disclosure on Google and YouTube

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Google will soon require that political ads using artificial intelligence be accompanied by a prominent disclosure if imagery or sounds have been synthetically altered.

AI-generated election ads on YouTube and other Google platforms that alter people or events must include a clear disclaimer located somewhere that users are likely to notice, the company said in an update this week to its political content policy.

The new rule starts in mid-November, just under a year before the U.S. presidential election. It will also affect campaign ads ahead of next year’s elections in India, South Africa, the European Union and other regions where Google already has a verification process for election advertisers.

Though fake images, videos or audio clips are not new to political advertising, generative AI tools are making it easier to do, and more realistic. Some presidential campaigns in the 2024 race — including that of Florida GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis — already are using the technology.

The Republican National Committee in April released an entirely AI-generated ad meant to show the future of the United States if President Joe Biden is reelected. It employed fake but realistic photos showing boarded-up storefronts, armored military patrols in the streets, and waves of immigrants creating panic.

In June, DeSantis’ campaign shared an attack ad against his GOP primary opponent Donald Trump that used AI-generated images of the former president hugging infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Last month the Federal Election Commission began a process to potentially regulate AI-generated deepfakes in political ads ahead of the 2024 election. Such deepfakes can include synthetic voice of political figures saying something they never said.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, co-sponsor of pending legislation that would require disclaimers on deceptive AI-generated political ads, said in a statement that Google’s announcement was a step in the right direction but “we can’t solely rely on voluntary commitments.”

Several states also have discussed or passed legislation related to deepfake technology.

Google is not banning AI outright in political advertising. Exceptions to the ban include synthetic content altered or generated in a way that’s inconsequential to the claims made in the ad. AI can also be used in editing techniques like image resizing, cropping, color, defect correction, or background edits.

The ban will apply to election ads on Google’s own platforms, particularly YouTube, as well as third-party websites that are part of Google’s ad display network.

Google’s action could put some pressure on other platforms to follow its lead. Facebook and Instagram parent Meta doesn’t have a rule specific to AI-generated political ads but already restricts “faked, manipulated or transformed” audio and imagery used for misinformation. TikTok doesn’t allow any political ads. X, formerly Twitter, didn’t immediately reply to an emailed request for comment.

Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh predicts 'concrete steps soon' to address ethics concerns

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh told a judicial conference on Thursday he hopes there will be “concrete steps soon” to address recent ethics concerns surrounding the court, but he stopped short of addressing calls for justices to institute an official code of conduct.

“We can increase confidence. We’re working on that,” Kavanaugh told the conference attended by judges, attorneys and other court personnel in Ohio. He said all nine justices recognize that public confidence in the court is important, particularly now.

Public trust in the court is at a 50-year low following a series of divisive rulings, including the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* federal abortion protections last year, and published reports about the justices’ undisclosed paid trips and other ethical concerns.

“There’s a storm around us in the political world and the world at large in America,” Kavanaugh said. “We, as judges and the legal system, need to try to be a little more, I think, of the calm in the storm.”

Justice Clarence Thomas acknowledged recently that he took three trips last year aboard a private plane owned by Republican megadonor Harlan Crow even as he rejected criticism over his failure to report trips in previous years.

Reporting by the investigative news site ProPublica also revealed that Justice Samuel Alito failed to disclose a private trip to Alaska he took in 2008 that was paid for by two wealthy Republican donors, one of whom repeatedly had interests before the court.

The Associated Press also reported in July that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, aided by her staff, has advanced sales of her books through college visits over the past decade. The AP obtained thousands of pages of documents that showed how justices spanning the court’s ideological divide lent the prestige of their positions to partisan activity — by headlining speaking events with prominent politicians — or to advance their own personal interests.

“My perspective is we’re nine public servants who are hard-working and care a lot about the court and care a lot about the judiciary as a whole,” Kavanaugh said. He added that he believes justices “respect the institution and want that respect for the institution to be shared by the American people, recognizing that people are going to disagree with our decisions.”

Besides *Roe v. Wade*, Kavanaugh pointed to a series of lesser noticed rulings that featured unusual line-ups that “didn’t follow some pattern” based on the political leanings of the justices’ appointing presidents.

Kavanaugh, 58, is one of three justices nominated by former President Donald Trump who have reshaped the court in recent years. He has sided with conservative majorities in affirmative action and student loan rulings, as well as in the *Dobbs* case that overturned *Roe*. He joined liberal justices this term in backing Black voters in a case out of Alabama and preserving a federal law aimed at keeping Native American children with Native families.

Kavanaugh took questions from Jeffrey Sutton and Stephanie Dawkins Davis, chief judge and judge, respectively, of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court, at the conference.

At one point brandishing a dog-eared copy of the Constitution plucked from his jacket, Kavanaugh urged the gathering to act with constitutional consistency, civility and respect — including taking special care that losing parties in lawsuits understand their rulings.

“I think this is important for all judges,” he said. “Respect for our system, which we all believe in, depends on the losing party still respecting the process. That’s hard to do. They’re not going to be happy, and so, to write an opinion the losing party understands and respects, they’re going to take the decision to heart.”

Russian man with Kremlin ties gets 9 years in US prison for hacking and insider trading scheme

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A wealthy Russian businessman with ties to the Kremlin was sentenced Thursday to nine years in prison for his role in a nearly \$100 million stock market cheating scheme that relied on secret earnings information stolen through the hacking of U.S. computer networks.

Vladislav Klyushin, who ran a Moscow-based information technology company that did work for the highest levels of the Russian government, was convicted in February of charges including wire fraud and securities fraud after a two-week trial in federal court in Boston.

His sentencing comes as American officials have been working to free Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, a U.S. citizen who has been detained in Russia since March. The Kremlin has suggested that it's open to a possible prisoner exchange, and President Joe Biden has said he's serious about pursuing a swap, though it's unclear whether Klyushin would be involved.

Authorities say he personally pocketed more than \$33 million in the scheme, which involved breaking into computer systems to steal earnings-related filings for hundreds of companies — including Microsoft and Tesla — and then using that insider information to make lucrative trades.

Klyushin, 42, has been jailed in the U.S. since his extradition in 2021, and the more than two years he's been detained will be credited to his prison term. He was arrested in Switzerland after arriving on a private jet and just before he and his party were about to board a helicopter to whisk them to a nearby ski resort. After he completes his sentence, he's expected to be deported to Russia.

"He thought he could get away with his crimes by perpetrating them from a foreign base, hidden behind layers of fake domain names, virtual private networks, and computer servers rented under pseudonyms and paid for with cryptocurrency," acting Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Josh Levy said in an emailed statement. "He found out otherwise, and will now spend nearly a decade of his life in a U.S. prison."

Klyushin, who walked into the courtroom in handcuffs, sat at a table with his attorneys and listened to an interpreter through headphones as lawyers argued over the sentence. At the advice of his attorney, he declined to address U.S. District Judge Patti Saris before she sentenced him. He didn't appear to show emotion when the punishment was handed down.

Defense attorney Maksim Nemtsev told reporters after the hearing that they plan to appeal.

Four alleged co-conspirators — including a Russian military intelligence officer who's also been charged with meddling in the 2016 presidential election — remain at large, and even though prosecutors allege in a court filing that they're still "likely sitting at their keyboards," they acknowledge that they four will likely never be extradited to the U.S. to face charges.

Prosecutors had sought 14 years in prison, saying a stiff punishment was crucial to send a message to overseas cybercriminals. Assistant U.S. Attorney Seth Kosto told the judge that Klyushin has accepted no responsibility for his crimes and that once he serves his sentence, he'll return to Russia, where he is a "powerful person" with "powerful friends in the highest echelons of Russian society."

"Hackers will be watching this sentence to decide whether it's worth engaging in this kind of conduct," Kosto said.

The judge said she believed nine years was sufficient punishment, noting that he's being held far away from his family in Russia and in a country where he doesn't speak the language.

Prosecutors say the hackers stole employees' usernames and passwords for two U.S.-based vendors that publicly traded companies use to make filings through the Securities and Exchange Commission. They then broke into the vendors' computer systems to get filings before they became public, prosecutors said.

Armed with insider information, they were able to cheat the stock market, buying shares of a company that was about to release positive financial results, and selling shares of a company that was about to post poor financial results, according to prosecutors. Many of the earnings reports were downloaded via a computer server in Boston, prosecutors said.

Klyushin has denied involvement in the scheme. His attorney told jurors that he was financially successful

long before he began trading stocks and that he continued trading in many of the same companies even after access to the alleged insider information was shut off because the hacks were discovered.

Nemtsev called prosecutors' prison request "draconian," adding that there is "no reason to think that he would risk the well-being of his family again by committing crimes."

Klyushin owned a Moscow-based information technology company that purported to provide services to detect vulnerabilities in computer systems. It counted among its clients the administration of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Ministry of Defense, according to prosecutors.

Klyushin's close friend and an alleged co-conspirator in the case is military officer Ivan Ermakov, who was among 12 Russians charged in 2018 with hacking into key Democratic Party email accounts, including those belonging to Hilary Clinton's presidential campaign chairman, John Podesta, the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Ermakov, who worked for Klyushin's company, remains at large.

Prosecutors have not alleged that Klyushin was involved in the election interference.

Police comb the UK and put ports on alert for an escaped prison inmate awaiting terrorism trial

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A former British soldier awaiting trial on terror charges who appears to have escaped from a London prison by strapping himself to the underside of a food delivery truck remained at large Thursday as police stepped up security checks across the United Kingdom amid concerns he may try to flee the country.

Opposition parties linked the escape to years of financial austerity, while Britain's Conservative government said an independent investigation will take place "in due course" into how Daniel Abed Khalife managed to slip out of the medium-security Wandsworth Prison, which opened in 1851 during the reign of Queen Victoria.

His escape has prompted extra security checks at major transport hubs, particularly in and around the Port of Dover, the main boat crossing from England to France.

Britain's justice secretary told lawmakers that "no stone must be left unturned in getting to the bottom of what happened" as he confirmed an "independent investigation into this incident." Alex Chalk also said "urgent" reviews into prison categorization would be carried out as questions remained over how Khalife wasn't being held at a maximum-security facility such as Belmarsh Prison in east London.

Khalife, 21, is accused of planting fake bombs at a military base and of violating Britain's Official Secrets Act by gathering information "that could be useful to an enemy." He was discharged from the British army after his arrest earlier this year and had denied the allegations. His trial is set for November.

Chalk said Khalife, who had been working in a kitchen at the prison, escaped at around 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning, when a vehicle that had made a delivery left.

Shortly afterward, he said, contingency plans for an unaccounted prisoner were activated and police were informed. The vehicle, he added, was subsequently stopped and searched by police after the alert was raised.

"Strapping was found underneath the vehicle which appeared to indicate that Daniel Khalife may have held onto the underside of it in order to escape," Chalk said.

More than 150 investigators and police staff are on the case, according to Metropolitan Police Commander Dominic Murphy, who is the lead investigator.

"We have issued a nationwide alert that has resulted in increased security at our ports and borders, however currently there have not been any confirmed sightings," he said.

Opposition politicians have sought to pin the blame on the Conservative government, which has been in power since 2010. Many U.K. prisons, including Wandsworth, are over capacity and short of staff. The escape could hardly have come at a worse time for a government that is already scrambling to get all schools to reopen for the new academic year amid concerns over crumbling concrete.

"It simply beggars belief that a man being held on suspected terror charges was able to escape a prison by clinging to the bottom of a food delivery van," said Shabana Mahmood, the justice spokesperson for the main opposition Labour Party. "How is such an escape even possible?"

Charlie Taylor, who scrutinizes detention facilities in England in his role as the chief inspector of prisons, said staff shortages are "the source of many problems" at Wandsworth.

Taylor said it "should be standard practice" for vehicles entering and leaving the prison to be checked and a prisoner has to earn a "certain level of trust" in order to be allowed to work in a kitchen.

"But the issue that we are particularly concerned about is there are too many prisoners in Wandsworth for the amount of staff who are there," he said. "And that ultimately is the source of many of the problems in the jail."

In an annual review, published in July, Wandsworth Prison was deemed to be a "serious concern." The prison, which is in the middle of a residential area, holds around 1,600 defendants appearing at London courts and offenders due to be released in five wings.

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

By KEVIN FREKING and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top defense officials are accusing Republican 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 servicemember 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 United States' military edge, they wrote.

In a CNN interview, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro accused Tuberville of "playing Russian 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 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," said Tuberville, a former college football coach.

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 sena-

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tor 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 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, 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.

But Steven Stafford, a spokesman for Tuberville, said there has been no contact with the Biden administration about the holds at the principal or staff level since July 18, and no further communications are planned.

The Pentagon to date has not provided data on the number of servicemembers 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.

Funeral held for victims of Russian market attack amid more strikes, as Blinken visits Ukraine

By SAMYA KULLAB and MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

KOSTIANTYNIVKA, Ukraine (AP) — Victims of a deadly Russian missile attack that struck a busy market in eastern Ukraine were buried Thursday, as Moscow kept up its assault on Ukraine's grain export infrastructure, hitting a Ukrainian port for the fourth time in five days.

Wednesday's attack on the market in Kostiantynivka, in Ukraine's Donestsk region, killed 16 people and wounded 33 — another grim reminder of the war's civilian toll. Authorities initially put the death toll at 17, but the Interior Ministry revised that number on Thursday after examining the bodies.

Among the victims were Mykola and Natalia Shyrai, whose bodies were laid to rest in a village outside Kostiantynivka on Thursday. The married couple, in their 50s, had been selling flowers in the market when they were killed in the blast. Dozens of people from the small settlement arrived to say their final farewells as caskets covered white cloth were shut and lowered.

The attack the previous day had turned an outdoor market into a fiery, blackened ruin, and overshadowed a two-day visit by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken aimed at assessing Ukraine's 3-month-old counteroffensive and signaling continued U.S. support for the fight.

While touring northern Ukraine on Thursday, Blinken said the death and destruction in Kostiantynivka was "what Ukrainians are living with every day."

Hours earlier, Russia attacked the Ukrainian port city of Izmail for the fourth time in five days, Ukrainian officials said Thursday, in what has become a sustained campaign to target Ukraine's ability to export grain.

The Danube River port area was attacked with Shahed drones aiming at civilian and port infrastructure, Odesa region Gov. Oleh Kiper said. A truck driver was wounded and grain silos were damaged, he said.

Ukrainian war crimes prosecutors inspected the wreckage at the scene close to port infrastructure on Thursday, according to a statement from the Ukrainian Prosecutor's Office.

The Ukrainian military said it shot down 25 out of 33 drones launched by Russia overnight, most of them at the Odesa region, Ukraine's agriculture export hub, as well as the northern Sumy region.

Russia has escalated attacks on Ukraine's grain export infrastructure since mid-July, when it exited a U.N.-backed deal that had allowed for the safe shipping of Ukrainian grain during the war.

The attack in Izmail came one day after the attack in Kostiantynivka. The area, just 15-20 kilometers (about 10-to-12 miles) from the front line, has been shelled by Russia several times, and the sounds of the not-so-distant war boom throughout the day. The tail of a rocket from a cluster munition was lodged in the middle of the road that leads to the cemetery where the funerals were held.

Blinken visited a school in the village of Yahidne where hundreds of residents were imprisoned when Russian forces occupied the village at the start of the full-scale invasion. Blinken said Russian atrocities continue. "Just yesterday, we saw the bombing of a market, 17 people or more killed," he said. "For what?"

Earlier, Blinken visited a Kyiv region facility of the State Border Guards of Ukraine and went to see a demining team working to clear unexploded ordnance from a 45,000-square-meter (10-acre) site that included a farm.

Blinken announced \$90.5 million in demining assistance as part of a package of U.S. military and humanitarian aid totaling over \$1 billion on Wednesday.

While Ukraine's ports have come under attack, drone attacks on Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2013, and in Russia itself also have become increasingly common in recent months. In recent weeks, drones have repeatedly targeted Moscow, with some hitting buildings in the city center, while others have been shot down on the outskirts of the city.

Early Thursday, five drones were shot down from over three regions overnight, including one attempting to strike Moscow, officials said. There were no reports of casualties.

Russia's Defense Ministry blamed the overnight attacks in Russia on Ukraine, which does not take credit for strikes inside Russia. One drone targeted Moscow, but was shot down southeast of the city without causing any damage or injuries, Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said.

Two more drones were shot down over the southern region of Rostov, which borders Ukraine, said regional Gov. Vasily Golubev. The debris fell in the center of Rostov-on-Don, the region's capital, damaging several cars and shattering windows in three buildings, Golubev said. One person sought medical assistance.

Two other drones were shot down over the Bryansk region, which also borders Ukraine, Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said. Drone debris damaged a railway station and several cars, he said.

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 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 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

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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.

King Charles III shows his reign will be more about evolution than revolution after year on the job

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press
LONDON (AP) — Don't rock the boat.

A year after the death of Queen Elizabeth II triggered questions about the future of the British monarchy, King Charles III's reign has been marked more by continuity than transformation, by changes in style rather than substance.

Charles, who waited more than 70 years to ascend the throne, moved seamlessly into his new role, avoiding controversy and sidestepping major reforms despite questions about whether an unelected king can still represent the people of modern Britain.

Most people seem to have shrugged off Charles' occasional faux pas — most publicly when he threw a hissy fit over an aide's failure to move an ornate pen case during a signing ceremony — focusing instead on successes like his state visit to Germany, where the king wowed his audience by switching effortlessly between English and German during a speech to lawmakers.

The message delivered by the new king's first year on the throne is clear, said Sally Bedell Smith, author of "Charles: The Passions and Paradoxes of an Improbable Life." Change will be subtle, more evolution than revolution.

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"The queen was known for incremental change and his incremental change may be a little more obvious in various moments," she said. "But back in the '90s, there was a lot of talk about how he just wanted to really shake up the deck and do things in a more radical way and be more outspoken. And I think he has recognized that this is not his role."

So while Charles has made it clear that he wants to streamline the monarchy, cut costs and reform a system of patronage seen as bloated and anachronistic, there has been no obvious overhaul of Buckingham Palace — at least not yet.

Instead, Charles has focused on building bridges at home and abroad as he embraces the role of diplomat-in-chief. After traveling to each of the four nations that comprise the United Kingdom, the king visited faith communities around the country, greeted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in London and staged a successful state visit to Germany.

Charles became sovereign on Sept. 8, 2022, the day Elizabeth died after more than 70 years on the throne.

The following day, the new king telegraphed much of what has happened since in a speech that paid homage to the way his mother honored the history of a 1,000-year-old monarchy while embracing the changes that transformed Britain after World War II.

"In her life of service, we saw that abiding love of tradition, together with that fearless embrace of progress, which makes us great as a nation," Charles said as he pledged to serve all his people, no matter where they live or what they believe.

Known for speaking his mind during his decades as heir to the throne, Charles also acknowledged that he would have to tone down his support for causes such as conservation and environmental protection.

But he immediately handed that mantle to Prince William, encouraging him to "lead our national conversation" and help "bring the marginal to the center ground, where vital help can be given."

William accepted that challenge, continuing his fight against climate change and announcing a campaign to end homelessness in Britain.

Charles joined the nation in mourning the late queen at a state funeral that celebrated the life of the only monarch most people had ever known. After the queen's piper played one final lament, the Westminster Abbey congregation offered a thunderous rendition of the national anthem — though for the first time in seven decades the first line was, "God save our gracious king."

With that, the queen seemed to slide into the background of history and Charles took center stage in a multi-cultural nation where schoolchildren now speak more than 300 languages.

During his first Christmas Day broadcast, Charles gave a nod to the changing face of Britain, splicing in video of his travels around the kingdom, including scenes of the king meeting with food kitchen volunteers at a Sikh house of worship in Luton, a diverse community 30 miles north of London.

During the coronation ceremony in May, Charles again balanced the traditions of monarchy against the pressure for change.

As Charles sat in the 700-year-old coronation chair at Westminster Abbey, the Archbishop of Canterbury placed a jewel-encrusted crown on his head. Then he was enclosed behind a screen where he was anointed with holy oil.

But the monarch also made sure there was a role for other religions, with non-Christian faith leaders taking part in the ceremony for the first time.

And while the TV cameras focused on presidents and prime ministers, lords, ladies and royals as they trooped into the abbey, the audience also included dozens of people invited in honor of the work they do for charities, schools and youth programs around the country.

More challenges are to come.

The perception of the monarchy itself has changed since Elizabeth took the throne, making it harder for the palace to stick to its mantra of "never explain, never complain" as the media demand more information about royal spending and accountability.

Charles is also facing demands to make the palace staff more representative of modern Britain and to acknowledge the monarchy's role in slavery and imperialism.

Some of those calls come from within the royal family after Prince Harry, and his wife, Meghan, criticized

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the palace in a book and TV series released earlier this year. But there is also pressure from republican groups that want to get rid of the hereditary monarchy and some of the 14 Commonwealth realms that bridle at the idea of having an English king as their head of state.

"It seems likely that his reign will end with less realms than it started," said Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty Magazine. "But, you know, that was also the case with Queen Elizabeth II. It's just a natural progression, I think. But ultimately, it's down to the people of the countries who have him as sovereign."

Today in History:

September 8, President Gerald Ford pardons ex-President Richard Nixon

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Sept. 8, the 251st day of 2023. There are 114 days left in the year.

On Sept. 8, 1974, President Gerald R. Ford granted a "full, free, and absolute pardon" to former President Richard Nixon covering his entire term in office.

In 1504, Michelangelo's towering marble statue of David was unveiled to the public in Florence, Italy.

In 1565, a Spanish expedition established the first permanent European settlement in North America at present-day St. Augustine, Florida.

In 1664, the Dutch surrendered New Amsterdam to the British, who renamed it New York.

In 1900, Galveston, Texas, was struck by a hurricane that killed an estimated 8,000 people.

In 1941, the 900-day Siege of Leningrad by German forces began during World War II.

In 1943, during World War II, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower announced Italy's surrender; Nazi Germany denounced Italy's decision as a cowardly act.

In 1951, a peace treaty with Japan was signed by 49 nations in San Francisco.

In 1964, public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, reopened after being closed for five years by officials attempting to prevent court-ordered racial desegregation.

In 1985, Pete Rose of the Cincinnati Reds tied Ty Cobb's career record for hits, singling for hit number 4,191 during a game against the Cubs in Chicago.

In 1986, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" began the first of 25 seasons in national syndication.

In 2012, Serena Williams came back to beat Victoria Azarenka and earn her fourth U.S. Open championship and 15 Grand Slam title overall.

In 2013, Top-seeded Serena Williams won her fifth U.S. Open championship and 17th Grand Slam title overall by beating Victoria Azarenka.

In 2016, California and federal regulators fined Wells Fargo a combined \$185 million, alleging the bank's employees illegally opened millions of unauthorized accounts for their customers in order to meet aggressive sales goals.

In 2017, Category 5 Hurricane Irma regained battered Cuba with 160-mph winds.

In 2019, Rafael Nadal held off a strong comeback bid to win his 19th Grand Slam title in a five-set U.S. Open final against Daniil Medvedev.

In 2022, Queen Elizabeth II, who spent more than seven decades on the British throne, died at age 96; her 73-year-old son became King Charles III.

Today's Birthdays: Ventriloquist Willie Tyler is 83. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., is 82. Actor Alan Feinstein is 82. Pop singer Sal Valentino (The Beau Brummels) is 81. Author Ann Beattie is 76. Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis is 73. Cajun singer Zachary Richard (ree-SHARD') is 73. Musician Will Lee is 71. Actor Heather Thomas is 66. Singer Aimee Mann is 63. Pop musician David Steele (Fine Young Cannibals) is 63. Actor Thomas Kretschmann is 61. Gospel singer Darlene Zschech (chehk) is 58. Alternative country singer Neko (NEE'-koh) Case is 53. TV personality Brooke Burke is 52. Actor Martin Freeman is 52. Actor David Arquette is 52. TV-radio personality Kennedy is 51. Rock musician Richard Hughes (Keane) is 48. Actor Larenz Tate is 48. Actor Nathan Corrdry is 46. R&B singer Pink is 44. Singer-songwriter Eric Hutchinson is 43. Actor Jonathan Taylor Thomas is 42. Rapper Wiz Khalifa is 36. Actor Gaten Matarazzo (TV: "Stranger Things") is 21.