

# Groton Daily Independent

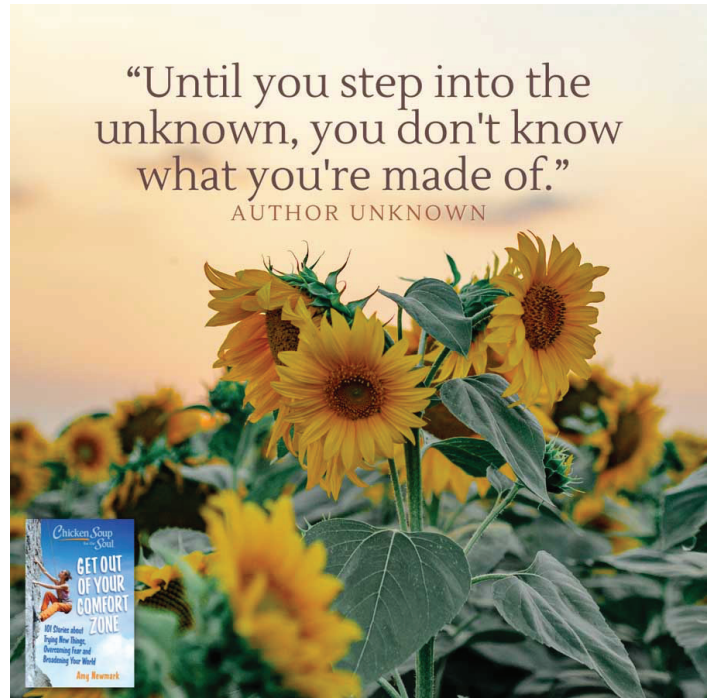
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## Tuesday, Sept. 19

Senior Menu: New England ham dinner, dinner roll, fruit cocktail.  
St. John's Lutheran Quilting, 9 a.m.  
The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.  
Junior High Football hosts Sisseton, 4 p.m.  
Volleyball at Warner: C/7th at 5:15, 8th/JV at 6:30, with varsity to follow.  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.; Conde Ad Council

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



## Wednesday, Sept. 20

Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, acini depepi fruit salad.  
St. John's Lutheran Bible Study, 2:45 pm.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.  
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm  
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

## Thursday, Sept. 21

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, California blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.  
Boys Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.  
Boys Soccer hosts James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.  
Volleyball at Tiospa Zina with C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

## **OPEN:** 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

search after a "mishap" prompted the pilot to eject.

Taiwan has asked China to cease its "harassment" after Beijing sent a record 103 warplanes toward the island over a 24-hour period, in an escalation of China's military grandstanding in the Taiwan Strait.

The New Orleans Saints beat the Carolina Panthers 20-17 on Monday night, while in Pittsburgh, the Steelers beat the Cleveland Browns 26-22 in a game marred by a serious injury to running back Nick Chubb, who will miss the remainder of the season.

YouTube says it has "suspended monetization" on U.K. comedian Russell Brand's channel for "violating" its "creator responsibility policy" after a series of sexual misconduct allegations were made against him.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia lost more than 3,000 troops in Ukraine in the past week, the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces reported. A video by the Ukrainian military shows Klishchiivka, a key village southwest of Bakhmut, in complete ruins after it was recaptured by Kyiv's forces this week.

### TALKING POINTS

"We always remained confident. It was getting back to simple execution: trusting it, seeing it and ripping it," New York Giants quarterback Daniel Jones on his team rallying 21 points to come back and beat the Arizona Cardinals 31-28. The comeback was the biggest in franchise history.

No matter what they say, they (the United States) control this war. They supply weapons, ammunition, intelligence data, data from satellites. They are waging a war against us," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on state television as the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine nears its 19th month.

"I have listened to everyone, and I am making the decision to pause the show's premiere until the strike is over. I have no words to express my deepest apologies to anyone I have hurt and, of course, to our incredible team who works on the show and has made it what it is today." Drew Barrymore going back on continuing the production of her talk show during the Hollywood strikes after being branded a 'scab' for doing so.

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

The 78th session of the U.N. General Assembly starts today, with tomorrow marking the first day of the general debate. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will address a security council meeting on the war in Ukraine on Wednesday, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov scheduled to be in attendance.

Canada expelled a top Indian diplomat as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed that the Indian government may have "credible" links to the assassination of Canadian Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu kicked off a U.S. trip in California by asking Elon Musk to "roll back" antisemitism on X following weeks of controversy over rising hate speech on the platform.

Debris of a missing Lockheed Martin F-35 jet has been located in a South Carolina field, Joint Base Charleston (JBC) officials confirmed. The aircraft prompted a day-long



**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.**



## Harry, Tewksbury medal at the Groton JV/JH Golf Meet

Groton Area hosted its junior varsity/junior high golf tournament on Monday at the Olive Grove Golf Course. Pictured are Keegan Harry with a fourth place medal, Treyton Smith, and Jacob Tewksbury with his sixth place medal. (Photo courtesy Joel Guthmiller)

## Holmes placed third at Deuel JV Race

Sydney Holmes took third place in the girls junior varsity cross country meet held Clear Lake on Monday. She ranked the 3K race in 13:41.53. Emily Clark finished 28th with a time of 17:54.06. In the boys junior varsity race, Kason Oswald was 29th with a time of 16:10.51 and Logan Clocksene was 31st with a time of 20:09.04.

Jayden Schwan finished 38th in the boys varsity 5K race with a time of 21:40.43. Gavin Kroll was 44th with a time of 22:28.80. Nathan Unzen was 47th with a time of 23:03.90.

Ryelle Gilbert finished eighth in the girls 5K race with a time of 21:36.62.

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## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

September 19, 2023 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

- Approval of Agenda
- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
- Open Sealed Bids for Groton Municipal Airport Land Lease
- Resolution 20232 to Lease City Property at Airport
- Hoop Barn Door Replacement for Bucket Truck
- Airport Discussion – Darrell Hillestad
- Park Saferoom Update
- Baseball Discussion
- Concessions Project
- Grandstand Update
- General Discussion
- First Reading of Ordinance No. 770 Certifying 2024 City of Groton Property Tax Levy to Brown County
- August Finance Report
- Minutes
- Bills
- WEB Water Increasing Rates Effective in October of 2023 - \$0.33 per 1000 contracted gallons usage increase, along with \$0.68 per 1000 over-the-contract rate increase
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Adjournment

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## Local Gold Currency Now Circulating

Tuesday will mark the first time in nearly 100 years that gold will circulate in the State! The Goldback is a new local currency that has set up shop. The South Dakota Goldback comes out September 19th.

A Goldback is a distinctive currency backed by real gold, offering a tangible representation of the precious metal. It combines the convenience of paper money with the intrinsic value of gold, providing a reliable form of exchange. With denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25, and 50, Goldbacks are both fungible and divisible, allowing for versatile use in various transactions. Each one is meticulously designed to represent a specific weight of gold, ensuring its authenticity and value.

Already a success in four states, we're thrilled to announce its arrival in South Dakota on September 19th, marking a significant milestone for South Dakotans! Now, residents and businesses alike in the state can experience the benefits of owning tangible gold in this convenient and accessible form.

South Dakota is one of the friendliest States towards precious metals. The launch of each series is influenced by a combination of community engagement, state laws, and the shared vision of promoting sound money.

The company is giving away free samples of the new South Dakota Goldback to all South Dakota residents. To learn more go to [FreeGoldback.com](https://FreeGoldback.com).



## Economic groups asked to help fund Noem's TV commercials for workforce recruitment: 'We want to know who these people are'

By Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

Gov. Kristi Noem's administration reached out to economic development groups and major employers across South Dakota last month, asking them to help extend a run of national TV commercials touting her "Freedom Works Here" workforce recruitment campaign.

By contributing \$10,000, they were told, they would receive perks such as call-outs on the "Freedom Works Here" website and social media channels, detailed market research data and two invitations to the Governor's Pheasant Hunt.

The biggest incentive, though, was the promise of names and contact information for thousands of prospective employees that Noem and the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) said have registered through the workforce campaign's website.

As of Sept. 14, the "Freedom Works Here" website claimed that 6,501 people have applied to move to South Dakota through the program and that 1,402 were in the final stages of moving to the state, which has an unemployment rate of 1.9% and about 20,000 open jobs.

Economic development groups from the state's two largest cities, Sioux Falls and Rapid City, pledged the \$10,000, which will be matched by GOED. But they are still waiting to receive the names and contact information.

"We desperately want to know who these people are," said Tom Johnson, president and CEO of Elevate Rapid City. "If there are that many people who want to move to South Dakota, we're convinced that a good chunk of them would enjoy the quality of life in the Black Hills. We definitely have jobs to fill, so we want to access those names right now, like ASAP."

Noem commercials centerpiece of campaign

Bob Mundt, president and CEO of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation, confirmed that his group



**South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem unveils a "Freedom Works Here" branded NASCAR car on July 27 at Falls Park in Sioux Falls. The partnership is estimated to cost \$130,000.** (Photo: Governor Kristi Noem's Facebook page)

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is contributing \$10,000 and that he expects to see the contact information soon.

"The indication was that these were names, email addresses and those types of things," he said. "Once we get that list, we'll have to cull that down a little and target who we want to reach."

The "Freedom Works Here" commercials are the centerpiece of a \$6.5 million marketing effort putting the governor and state in the spotlight.

The TV spots show Noem playing roles such as plumber, electrician, welder and dentist to illustrate the need for more workers in South Dakota. GOED also teamed with Live Fast Motorsports to use the governor's likeness in sponsoring a NASCAR stock car.

The advertising push, which included a commercial during the Republi-

can presidential debate Aug. 23 on Fox News, was originally scheduled to run through Labor Day. GOED used Future Fund dollars to enlist the marketing and distribution services of Ohio-based Strategic Media Services and Tennessee-based Designsensory Inc.

In mid-August, GOED commissioner Chris Schilken sent a proposal to development groups and major employers seeking donations to continue the nationwide ad placement through November for the "most effective workforce campaign we've ever conducted."

The goal, he said, was to raise \$250,000 and match with another \$250,000 from GOED. Schilken added that "we are prepared to raise significantly more than that and will match accordingly," according to the document, which was obtained by News Watch.

## First Premier CEO: 'We've gone in a different direction'

Noem appointed Schilken to replace Steve Westra, who resigned as GOED commissioner in May. His appointment still needs to be confirmed by the South Dakota Senate during the 2024 legislative session. Schilken did not respond to multiple interview requests from News Watch.

Dana Dykhouse, CEO of Sioux Falls-based First Premier Bank, which serves as the bank for the state of South Dakota, said his company is unlikely to contribute to the "Freedom Works Here" campaign.

"It's kind of unprecedented for a governor to ask for money from businesses to run this type of campaign," said Dykhouse. "I've never heard of it before. If someone wants to do it, more power to them. We've kind of gone in a different direction in training our workforce."

First Premier Bank has been a major investor in Freedom Scholarships and the Build Dakota Scholarship, both of which carry a three-year work requirement in South Dakota for college graduates who receive the grants. The state has also helped fund those scholarships.

Aberdeen meatpacking plant relies on own hiring strategies

In public statements this month, Noem credited the "Freedom Works Here" effort with helping to ease workforce shortages throughout the state, highlighting several South Dakota businesses that have been "able to thrive" because of the program.

But one company heralded as a success story by Noem's office said that recent out-of-state hires were



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largely the result of the company's own recruitment strategies, not the governor's campaign.

Demkota Ranch Beef, a meatpacking plant in Aberdeen with about 900 employees, was featured in a Sept. 1 press release from the governor's office as having "hired 82 workers from out of state in the last six weeks," followed by a list of states those employees came from.

Mark Stammer, Demkota's vice president of human resources, was asked by News Watch how many of those new hires came from people filling out applications and submitting contact information through the governor's recruitment program.

"None of them did," he said.

Demkota CEO Adam Bode, who is quoted in a Sept. 8 column by Noem talking about his company's hiring practices, told News Watch via email that "we have not participated in the governor's program."

Stammer said he was contacted by representatives from Noem's office and the GOED in late August, and they asked him to send information about his company's influx of new employees.

He told them that Demkota had hired 82 workers from out of state in the previous six weeks and listed some of the states they came from, as well as a quote from Bode. That information ended up in the press release and column from Noem's office touting businesses that are "loving the results" of the workforce recruitment effort.

Stammer said that it's possible some of the new employees saw Noem's commercials, but the hires didn't come from online applications tied to the campaign. They came from intensive recruitment efforts in major U.S. cities and "word of mouth" among immigrant/refugee workers.

The company sends representatives to recruit and hand out fliers at sites such as grocery stores and Laundromats, with an occasional hiring event if a region shows promise.

"We have a lot of (workforce) needs, so we get out on the road and work to find these people," said Stammer, a retired major general in the U.S. Army. "Nobody really wants to move to South Dakota. But there are attractive things such as no state income tax and being a healthy state, and I think the governor is highlighting those things very well."

## **Key to success is getting past 'fluff and stuff' to hard data**

Although Noem's campaign stresses recruiting workers from across the U.S., Stammer said that Demkota has drawn much of its workforce from Mexico and Central America as well as Somali and Karen refugee communities.

"I don't know that we're in a position to delegate our recruiting responsibilities to the governor's office," said Stammer. "We have a lot of personnel needs and we're going to get after them ourselves. If there are other entities that want to join forces, that's great."

Chris Clifton, named executive director of Watertown Development Company in June, said his organization was contacted by GOED and plans to participate in the program. But not for the \$10,000 that larger organizations were asked to contribute.

"We agreed that we would participate on a per capita basis, but we never got an exact number or anything like that," he said. "The question is whether it's an investment that Watertown can see some results with, and I think the answer is yes."

Clifton, who has been involved in economic development campaigns at previous jobs in Georgia, Tennessee and Arkansas, said the key to success will be translating hopeful messages into tangible data and opportunities. He has not yet seen names of prospective employees or other hard data from the "Freedom Works Here" campaign.

"The disconnect in my view when it comes to economic development is that after you get past the fluff and stuff, how do you measure results?" he said. "You need to not only measure (social media) impressions but also measure contacts. If some of those contacts result in a move to South Dakota and new employment, that's even better."

## **Future Fund dollars previously used for marketing efforts**

Most of the resources for the "Freedom Works Here" campaign have come from the Future Fund, created by the late Gov. George Mickelson in 1987 and paid into with unemployment taxes from businesses. The fund provides grant money to support economic development and research, with funds made available at

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the governor's discretion through the GOED office.

It's not unprecedented to use Future Fund money for a national advertising campaign.

Under Gov. Dennis Daugaard, South Dakota launched a workforce recruitment effort in 2015 that referenced the colonization of Mars and asked, "Why die on Mars when you can live in South Dakota?" The state spent about \$3 million over three years in Future Fund dollars on that campaign.

The "Freedom Works Here" campaign has more than doubled that price tag, with five commercials connected to the campaign being viewed "almost 700 million times," according to the governor's office.

Now Noem's office is looking to extend the effort with more national ad placements, with economic development groups being asked to contribute.

It's not the first time her administration has reached out to communities for help with workforce recruitment.

GOED planned a \$1 million marketing initiative in 2022, asking development groups to co-op in funding it. In addition to using digital and social media to market South Dakota, a workforce incentive program offered signing bonuses and relocation packages to prospective employees from out of state.

The workforce program "assisted in successfully recruiting and relocating 66 people to South Dakota from a total of 27 states and two foreign countries," according to a GOED report to the South Dakota Legislature.

The Sioux Falls Development Foundation was one of seven community groups that contributed to both the marketing and workforce incentive phases of that 2022 program. Mundt, the foundation's president, said contributing again to the "Freedom Works Here" ad campaign in 2023 could pay dividends if contact information for those seeking jobs is detailed and available.

"We're all looking for workers," he said. "And we're willing to try a lot of different things to try and get those workers."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org).



**South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is featured in a "Freedom Works Here" ad promoting the state.** (Photo: Screenshot)

**GDILIVE.COM** Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2023  
Groton Area at Warner  
Tigers C at 5:15: White House Inn  
JV: Gordon & Dorene Nelson

**GT**

**LADY TIGER VOLLEYBALL**

Varsity 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 Dairy Queen, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency and 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

## South Dakota Democratic Party Elects New Officers at Democratic Roundup

Rapid City, SD – The South Dakota Democratic Party (SDDP) held officer elections during its quarterly SCC meeting at their annual Democratic Roundup event in Rapid City. Shane Merrill will serve as the state party's Chair and Jessica Meyers the Vice Chair.

Jessica Meyers, from Sioux Falls, is the CEO of Porchlight a Midwest talent recruitment firm. Meyers is excited to get to work for the state party. "I'm really looking forward to the future of the Democratic Party in South Dakota. It is an honor to be the newly elected vice chair. Roundup was a huge success this weekend. The banquet hall was filled with Democrats looking forward to the future. We are all ready to move forward." - Jessica Meyers, Vice Chair, SDDP

Shane is a farmer, school bus driver and baseball coach from Parker, SD. He had been serving as interim chair since August. "We are united and looking to a brighter future. I think having a young, rural voice in leadership will be beneficial to the Party. Our leadership team is a reflection of the people of South Dakota. I appreciate the support and look forward to leading our efforts." - Shane Merrill, Chair, SDDP



**Shane Merrill**  
State party's Chair



**Jessica Meyers**  
Vice Chair

## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

### Justice Holmes Influences Business of Judging

The emergence of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes as a dominant influence in the work of the Supreme Court began in 1905, just three years after his appointment to the High Bench, in a dissenting opinion in *Lochner v. New York* that many scholars hail as the most famous dissent ever written.

The majority opinion in *Lochner* has been widely rebuked for the past century as an exercise in judicial activism, a notorious example of the imposition by judges of their own preferences and biases, in this case, the heavy-handed infliction of a laissez-faire economic theory, neither grounded nor articulated in the Constitution.

In *Lochner*, the Court struck down a New York state law that imposed a ceiling on the number of hours per week that an employee could work in a bakery. The law was vigorously championed by the medical community, which warned of a variety of illnesses, including lung disease, if employees worked more than 60 hours per week. The state legislature viewed the measure as a legitimate exercise of the state's police power, enacted in the name of securing the general welfare.

Justice Rufus Peckham, writing for a 5-4 majority, struck down the law as a violation of the 14th Amendment's Due Process Clause, on the grounds of the judiciary's newly invented Liberty of Contract Doctrine, according to which, employers and employees should be guided only by their interests in determining the length of a workweek. Justice Peckham argued that the law violated the doctrine of laissez-faire capitalism.

In his dissenting opinion, Justice Holmes allowed that if the question before the Court were one of policy or philosophy, he might be persuaded to disagree with the legislature's rationale for passing the law. However, he did not believe that deciding the question based on economic theory was consistent with his conception of the judicial function. In this dissent, Holmes set forth two fundamental conceptions that would influence judges in their approach to interpretation: the reliance on economic theories and the scope of judicial review.

In a passage that would influence courts for decades to come, Holmes declared that it is irrelevant whether judges share the "convictions or prejudices" embodied in the law. He wrote:

"A constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory, whether of paternalism and the organic relation of the citizen to the State or of laissez faire. It is made for people of fundamentally differing views, and the accident of finding certain opinions natural and familiar and novel or even shocking ought not to conclude our judgment upon the question whether statutes embodying them conflict with the Constitution."

Justice Holmes's dissent emphasized a fundamental lesson of judging: courts should not substitute their economic judgments for those of the legislature. There is no constitutional justification, he wrote, for judges to believe that their economic beliefs are embodied in the supreme law of the land. If it were so, cases would turn on the economic wishes of the judge.

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Justice Holmes's second great lesson for the business of judging was his advocacy of the principle of judicial restraint, a view that would enjoy tremendous influence to this very day. Thus, with respect to the *Lochner* case, Holmes wrote that judges should defer to the economic choices of legislators, even if they think the choices are "mistaken," so long as they have a rational basis.

Holmes's emphasis on judicial restraint marked a degree of judicial humility, leaving public policy choices to the judgments of elected representatives. In a democracy, the people have a right to choose their representatives who, in turn, will shape policies and laws that they believe serve the public welfare. The judgments of legislators, when they are enacted into laws, should stand when tested in the courts unless they lack a rational basis.

In this context, Holmes believed that statutes should be upheld so long as judges can believe that a "reasonable man" would find the statute reasonable. As he wrote in *Lochner*, a reasonable man might think the maximum working hour law served the public welfare, particularly after medical experts testified before the legislature on the "reasonableness" of the measure in promoting public health.

Employment of this approach to judicial review would guard against the arbitrary tendencies of judges to impose their own economic, as well as political, cultural and religious beliefs. Holmes recognized the capacity of legislators to make poor judgments but did not believe that the judicial function empowered him to "save my country from going to Hell."

Judicial restraint has enjoyed a long line of advocates. In Holmes's early years, that approach to the exercise of judicial review did not dominate the Court's jurisprudence, since the controlling majority continued to cling to the doctrine of unbridled *laissez faire* capitalism. Holmes's view, however, would win out.

Justice Holmes served on the Court until he was 90. He was slowing down when he informed President Franklin D. Roosevelt, cousin of Theodore Roosevelt, who appointed him to the Court thirty years before, in 1902, of his decision to retire.

Holmes remained youthful to his last days on the Court. Near his retirement, while taking his daily stroll with a law clerk around the capital, Holmes spied an attractive woman across the street and remarked to his clerk: "Oh, to be 75 again."

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Photos taken by Leah Ronning.

Special thanks to Alexa Schuring, Shaun Wanner, Mike Imrie, Principal Brett Schwan, and all of the high school football players for making the night special for the flag football players Friday night!

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**Some of the future football players get in line to run through the varsity lineup at the Deuel game on Friday.** (Photo by Leah Ronning)



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**A group of 8th grade marching band members pose before the Homecoming parade starts. L-R TC (Thomas) Schuster, Layne Johnson, Kason Oswald, Rowin Jansen van Rensburg, Trinity Dallaire. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)**

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**The Clauses from the North Pole came to be in Groton Area's homecoming parade for the Wage Memorial Library.** (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### State launches efforts to fight duck-hunting decline and protect habitat

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 18, 2023 4:49 PM

State officials are embarking on a comprehensive plan to boost duck-hunter numbers that have been declining for two decades, and to preserve waterfowl habitat in the process.

The plan focuses on providing better access for hunters. It's a joint venture between the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, the South Dakota Waterfowl Association, and the state's Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Duck season participation dropped 29% from 33,950 in 2005 to 24,166 in 2022, according to the department. Meanwhile, the number of nonresident hunters, which is subject to license caps, has fluctuated between 3,800 and 4,700 since 2012.

A survey from 2009 revealed that two-thirds of the state's duck hunters had difficulty finding places to hunt, with 85% pointing to overcrowding as their primary concern. Access to private lands – often granted in decades past after a talk with a landowner – has been reduced. Some hunters blame the rise in paid hunting guides.

"They can offer landowners a lot more money than, well, your average South Dakotan would be comfortable paying," said Zach Hunke, with the South Dakota Wildlife Federation. The group lobbies on behalf of in-state hunters and anglers who are concerned about the commercialization of hunting and fishing.

The decline isn't just a matter of fewer people enjoying a pastime; it has implications for wetland conservation in the state. Duck hunter groups serve as some of the most vocal advocates for wildlife habitat conservation, and hunting licenses and fees provide funds for wildlife management and conservation projects. For example, all duck hunters are required to buy a Federal Duck Stamp (\$25) in addition to their migratory bird certificate (\$5) and small game license (\$33). Stamp revenue funds the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's bird habitat conservation efforts.

To address the declining hunter numbers, GF&P has a multifaceted strategy.

One focus is investing department resources into state and federal James River and Big Sioux River watershed conservation initiatives. The department will work to acquire leases in those watersheds from private landowners who agree to create public hunting spaces. Another goal is to create new routes to prime public hunting spots that are currently inaccessible to those unable or unwilling to trek through mud and waist-high water.

The second part focuses on enhancing the hunting infrastructure on public lands, with 20 sites already targeted. This includes boat ramps, parking lots and equipment drop-off points. All of the new and improved infrastructure is included on GF&P's online, interactive hunting atlas.

"For those people who are new to hunting but don't know where to go, or for those from outside the state, this may be an opportunity to help with that," said Ryan Wendinger, regional habitat program manager with GF&P, during a recent Game, Fish and Parks Commission meeting.

Department spokesperson Nick Harrington added during the meeting that GF&P's mapping service is used by "thousands to tens of thousands."

Funding for the expansion will come from hunting license revenues, federal grants, and the recently introduced Habitat Stamp (\$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents) that everyone 18 and older is required to purchase before obtaining a hunting, fishing or trapping license in South Dakota. The funds are used to enroll private acres into public conservation and improve the habitat quality of acres already enrolled.

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## State park access for hunting

Another effort that was announced during the recent meeting includes 3,221 newly designated hunting acres in state parks, starting during the fall and spring of 2024.

"Our department was able to put some signs out there to designate what areas hunters can access," said Deputy Parks Director Al Nedved.

He said the department aims to maintain a "safe buffer" from campers and hikers, and different kinds of firearms and hunting are allowed depending on the site.

"We have some parks that are archery only, for example," he said. "Hopefully next year we can come up with a plan to expand acres."

*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.*

## COMMENTARY

### New approach needed as Forest Service fumbles on Black Hills leadership

#### National forest is on its fifth supervisor this year

SETH TUPPER

When I reported back in May that the Black Hills National Forest was on its eighth supervisor in seven years, I made it sound like that was a lot of turnover.

Since then, there have been two more supervisors.

That brings the tally to 10 in the past seven years, and five this year alone.

The current year's turnover began in the spring with the departure of Jeff Tomac, who was the last person to hold the job without an "acting" tag. He's been followed in rapid succession by Acting Supervisors Bryan Karchut, Carl Petrick, Toni Strauss and Ivan Green.

Individual circumstances have caused some of the turnover, but overall, the Black Hills is tough on supervisors. The forest is used, loved and sometimes abused by dozens of interest groups, and it's checkerboarded with privately owned land and other agencies' public land. Throw in disputes over logging, mining, wildfires, tree-killing beetles, competing recreational uses and Native American land rights, and it's easy to see why supervisors get chewed up and spit out like a tree branch in a wood chipper.

Since 2016, when the runaway turnover began, the Forest Service has shipped in permanent and acting supervisors whose prior postings were in states including Colorado, Texas, Wyoming, Nebraska, North Dakota, Colorado, Idaho and Florida.

In other words, the agency has looked mostly outside the Black Hills for permanent and temporary leaders, only twice promoting from within and applying the "acting" tag both times.

That's partly because of the traditions and culture of the agency, said Dave Mertz, a retired Black Hills National Forest employee.

"There's this idea within the Forest Service that you need to bring in somebody new with a different perspective," Mertz said.

There's some wisdom in that approach. It may be easier for supervisors to maintain independence when they have no history or connections with the local interest groups that compete for primacy in forest management.

But that advantage is wasted when a supervisor only sticks around a few weeks, a few months, or even a year. In a national forest with four districts, hundreds of employees and about a million acres, that's barely enough time to learn names and get familiarized with the geography, let alone make a lasting impact.

That's why it may be time for the Forest Service to change its culture and focus more on cultivating leaders from within a particular forest. The Black Hills National Forest has some capable and respected district rangers, and in any other walk of life, the best of those sub-managers could eventually end up with the top job. Instead, a stream of imported supervisors has faced the challenge of becoming an instant

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expert on a place that's layered with unique problems.

And right now, there doesn't appear to be much public engagement on those problems. Past supervisors have been highly involved with the Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board, a group of 16 appointed members representing virtually all of the local industries and groups that are interested in the use and conservation of the forest. Over the years, the board has helped supervisors make decisions and craft policies on logging levels, off-road vehicle travel, recreational trail development and other crucial matters.

I've attended many of the advisory board meetings for the past nine years, and the most recent one was among the least productive I've witnessed. In a directionless slump without a supervisor who's been around long enough to help craft an agenda, board members simply gave informational presentations about their particular areas of interest.

Meanwhile, the staff of the Black Hills National Forest is in the midst of a once-every-15-years process to revise the forest plan, a document with hundreds of pages guiding every aspect of forest management. The Forest Service is not currently getting valuable input and debate on that process at public advisory board meetings, and while the forest's leadership vacuum persists, Forest Service officials may be subjected to behind-the-scenes influence from those with enough power and influence to exert it.

It all adds up to a conclusion that the forest is in dire need of a leader, and whether or not promoting from within is the answer, the Forest Service clearly needs a new approach for choosing and retaining that leader.

This forest, after all, consistently ranks among the nation's most productive sources of timber. It's been home to one of the world's most productive gold mines. It holds spiritual significance for multiple Native American tribes. Its beauty attracts millions of tourists every year. Its creeks, reservoirs and aquifers provide water for thousands of people in the region. And its natural wonders provide recreational opportunities for rock climbers, hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders and others.

The lynchpin of all that activity is the Forest Service, which controls more land in the Black Hills than any other landowner. Leading the agency's efforts in such an expansive, dynamic and beloved national forest is a tough task. But it's also an opportunity for the right person to leave a lasting legacy.

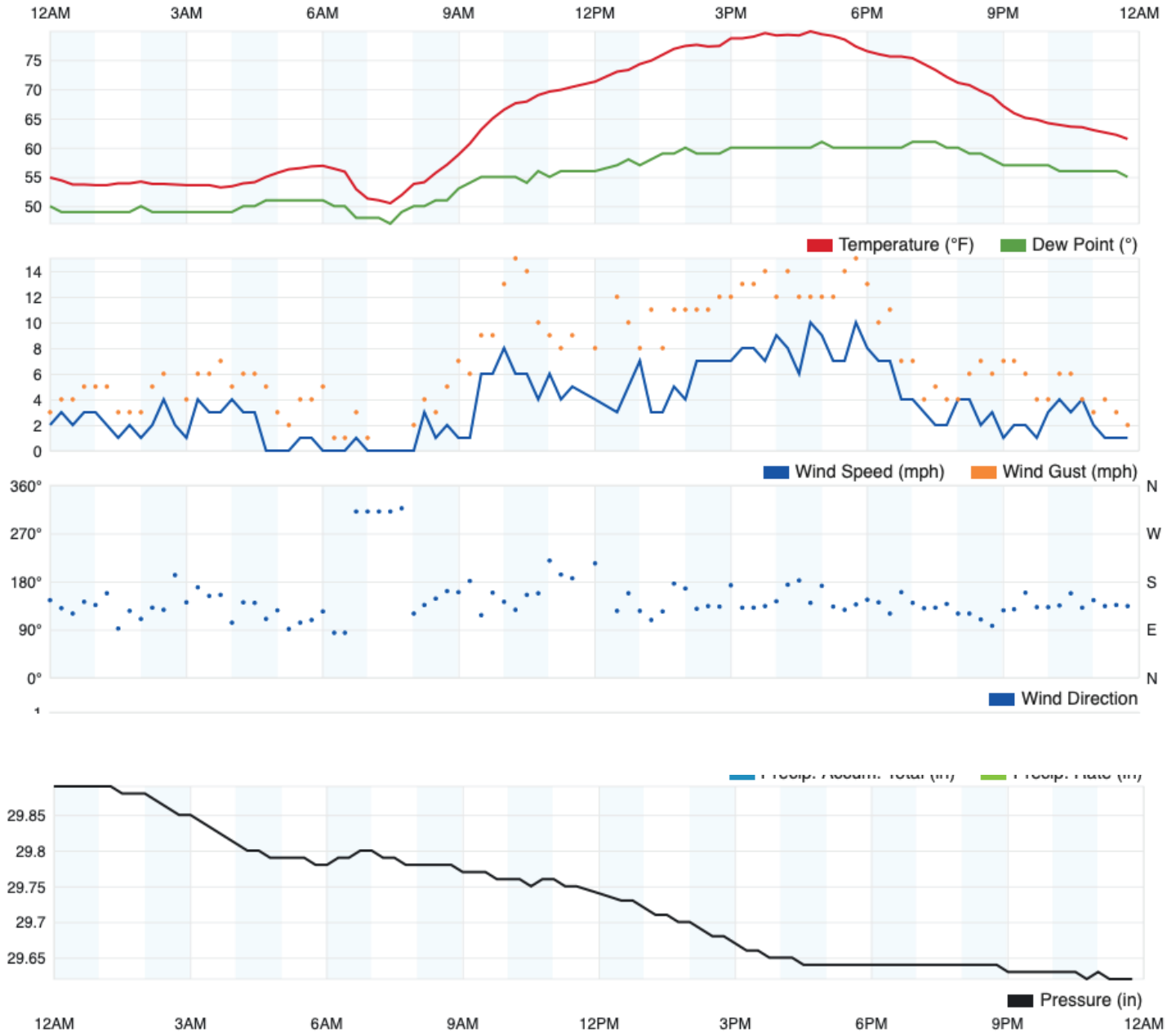
And it's far too important a job to be passed endlessly from one temporary seat-filler to another.

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

# Groton Daily Independent






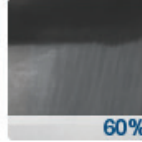

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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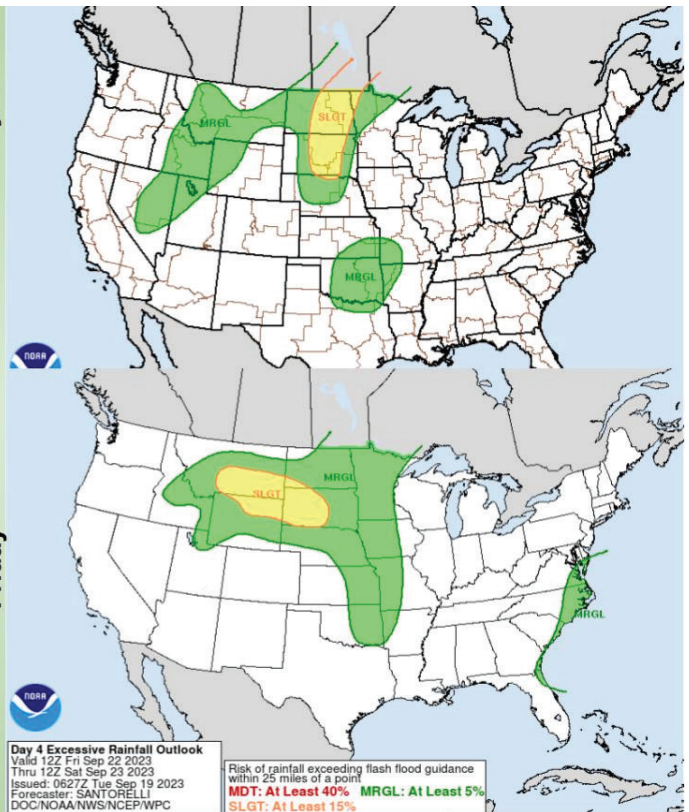
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Patchy Smoke	Chance T-storms	Chance Showers then Chance T-storms	Showers Likely	Showers Likely
High: 87 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 79 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 72 °F

## Rain Chances Return End of the Week Through the Weekend

- Increasing confidence on moisture returning to the area Thursday through Sunday
  - Rain showers and possible thunderstorms
    - rain could be heavy at times
  - Rain may linger into Monday
- Excessive Rainfall Outlook (risk of rainfall exceeding flash flood guidance within 25 miles of a point)
  - Slight risk (15%) from northern to south central SD on Thursday & central to western SD on Friday.
  - Marginal Risk (5%) eastern/northeastern SD Thursday. Eastern half of SD on Friday into MN
- Lower confidence on:
  - Storm track
  - Precipitation timing
  - Rainfall amounts

Thursday

Friday



 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Dry conditions continue today with above average temperatures. More smoke returns to the area overnight into Wednesday. Confidence is increasing on a system moving in at the end of the week/weekend that will bring rain showers/storms to most of the Northern Plains. Confidence remains on the lower end on the exact track/timing of the low and rainfall amounts. Confidence is increasing on a system moving in will bring occasional rain showers and possibly some rumbles of thunder to most of the Northern Plains for the end of the week and continuing through the weekend. Confidence remains on the lower end on the exact track/timing of the low and rainfall amounts.

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Maximum Temperature Forecast								Probability of Precipitation Forecast																						
	9/19	9/20	9/21	9/22	9/23	9/24	Maximum		9/20	9/21				9/22				9/23				9/24				9/25				Maximum
	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun		Aberdeen	Wed	Thu				Fri				Sat				Sun				Mon				
									6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	
Aberdeen	88	83	79	72	69	69	88	Aberdeen	30	35	35	35	55	60	60	65	80	80	75	75	75	55	45	50	50	25	25	25	25	79
Britton	85	81	78	71	67	66	85	Britton	35	35	35	35	50	55	55	60	75	75	75	70	70	60	50	50	50	30	25	25	25	77
Brookings	88	85	80	75	69	66	88	Brookings	20	20	10	15	20	35	35	55	75	75	75	65	65	55	50	45	45	30	25	25	25	74
Chamberlain	92	89	83	77	67	69	92	Chamberlain	15	15	15	25	45	55	55	50	70	70	60	60	60	45	40	30	25	20	20	15	15	71
Clark	88	85	78	73	66	63	88	Clark	25	25	20	25	45	50	50	60	80	80	70	70	70	55	40	45	45	25	20	25	25	79
Eagle Butte	85	79	78	70	63	68	85	Eagle Butte	25	30	30	50	65	65	50	70	80	80	65	65	65	45	35	35	25	15	15	15	10	82
Ellendale	86	80	77	69	66	66	86	Ellendale	30	40	40	35	55	65	65	65	75	75	75	70	70	55	50	50	45	25	25	20	20	76
Eureka	85	79	74	67	63	65	85	Eureka	40	40	40	45	75	75	70	65	80	80	70	70	70	55	45	45	40	25	20	20	20	80
Gettysburg	87	81	78	70	64	67	87	Gettysburg	25	25	25	40	70	70	65	60	80	80	65	70	70	45	40	40	30	20	15	15	15	80
Huron	91	89	82	77	69	68	91	Huron	20	20	15	25	35	45	45	55	75	75	65	65	65	50	45	40	35	20	20	20	20	73
Kennebec	91	86	80	74	66	69	91	Kennebec	20	20	15	35	60	60	60	55	75	75	55	60	60	40	35	30	25	15	15	10	10	76
McIntosh	82	73	74	66	61	65	82	McIntosh	25	40	40	50	70	70	60	60	80	80	70	65	65	50	45	35	30	20	15	15	15	82
Milbank	90	85	80	76	69	65	90	Milbank	20	20	20	25	25	35	35	55	70	75	75	70	70	55	45	50	50	30	25	25	25	73
Miller	89	84	77	72	67	67	89	Miller	25	25	20	35	60	60	60	60	80	80	60	70	70	50	40	40	40	20	15	20	20	80
Mobridge	86	80	77	70	66	69	86	Mobridge	25	30	30	45	70	70	60	60	80	80	65	65	65	45	40	35	30	20	15	15	15	78
Murdo	90	85	75	73	64	69	90	Murdo	25	25	20	45	65	65	50	60	75	75	60	60	55	40	30	25	25	15	15	10	10	76
Pierre	92	88	77	76	68	73	92	Pierre	25	25	15	45	65	65	50	60	80	80	60	65	65	45	30	30	30	20	10	15	15	78
Redfield	89	85	79	73	69	69	89	Redfield	25	25	25	30	45	60	60	60	80	80	75	70	70	50	45	45	45	20	20	20	20	78
Sisseton	88	82	79	73	67	63	88	Sisseton	30	30	30	40	45	45	60	75	75	75	70	70	70	60	50	50	50	30	25	25	25	76
Watertown	90	85	79	76	68	69	90	Watertown	20	20	15	25	35	40	45	55	75	75	75	70	70	55	50	50	50	25	20	25	25	76
Webster	85	81	76	71	65	65	85	Webster	30	30	30	25	40	50	50	60	75	75	75	70	70	55	45	50	50	30	25	25	25	77
Wheaton	88	85	79	74	69	64	88	Wheaton	30	30	30	30	40	40	35	55	70	70	70	70	60	50	55	55	30	20	25	25	72	

Warmer than average with temps cooling down Friday into weekend.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 4:40 PM

Low Temp: 50 °F at 7:25 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 10:10 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 21 hours, 23 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1895

Record Low: 26 in 1938

Average High: 74

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.26

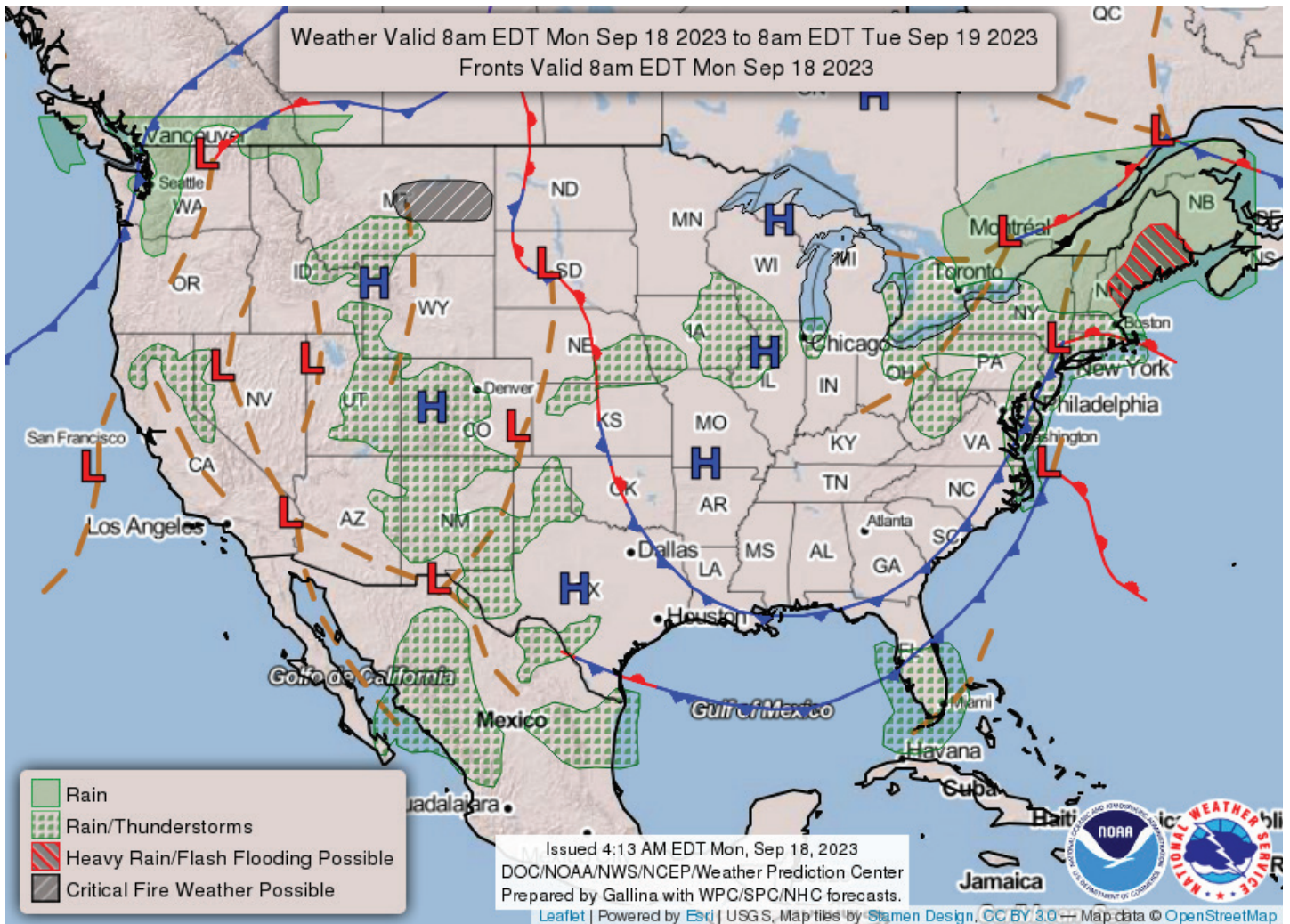
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.57

Average Precip to date: 17.60

Precip Year to Date: 19.16

Sunset Tonight: 77:37:58 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:15:35 AM



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## Today in Weather History

September 19, 1991: Record to near record cold hit central and northeast South Dakota on this day. Temperatures fell into the 20s during the morning bringing a hard freeze to much of the area. Pierre and Mobridge had record lows of 24 degrees while Timber Lake set a record low of 21 degrees. Near record lows of 28 degrees and 22 degrees occurred at Aberdeen and Kennebec, respectively.

1947: A hurricane made landfall near the Chandeleur Islands, LA on this day. Wind gusts of 112 mph and a central pressure of 967 mb were measured at Moisant International Airport. A storm surge of 9.8 feet reached Shell Beach, Lake Borgne. Moisant Airport field was flooded by two ft. of water while Jefferson Parish was flooded to depths of 3.28 ft. New Orleans suffered \$100 million in damages. Total loss of life was 51 people. As a result of this storm, hurricane protection levees were built along the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain to protect Orleans and Jefferson Parishes from future storm surges.

1967 - Hurricane Beulah deluged Brownsville, TX, with 12.19 inches of rain in 24 hours, to establish a record for that location. Hurricane Beulah made landfall on the 20th near the mouth of the Rio Grande River, where a wind gust to 135 mph was reported by a ship in the port. (19th-20th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Cool autumn-like weather invaded the Central Rockies. Temperatures dipped into the 30s and 40s, with readings in the teens and 20s reported in the higher elevations. Gunnison CO was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 15 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a fast moving cold front produced severe weather in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. Eight tornadoes were reported, including five in Indiana. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 74 mph at Wabash IND. Winds associated with the cold front itself gusted to 69 mph at Kenosha WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast Region. Cape Hatteras NC was deluged with nearly 3.50 inches of rain in three hours. Syracuse NY reported 1.77 inches of rain, a record for the date, and Chatham NJ reported an all-time record of 3.45 inches in one day. Hurricane Hugo headed for the Bahamas, and Tropical Storm Iris, following close on its heels, strengthened to near hurricane force. (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

When Harlan Sanders turned forty, he realized that he could not point to anything in his life that could be considered a success. No matter what he attempted to accomplish, he never succeeded. One day someone said to him, "Harlan, life begins at forty!" It jolted him so strongly that it awakened his faltering faith, and he determined, with God's help, to begin again.

After a time of prayer, he decided to open a service station. Shortly after its opening, he added a luncheonette. One meal his customers enjoyed the most was his fried chicken. To make it tastier and more appealing, he came up with a "special" batter and called it the Harlan Sanders' Kentucky Fried Chicken. People enjoyed it so much that they soon recommended it to their friends. It brought him so much fame and fortune that the Governor of Kentucky made him a "Kentucky Colonel." Soon people everywhere were buying the "Colonel's" Kentucky Fried Chicken.

By God's grace and the Colonel's faith, what had been a life of failure and frustration became a life with a future and personal fulfillment. His new life, however, did not begin at forty. It began when God became the major ingredient in his life's "recipe."

When God becomes the main "ingredient" of our life, everything will change and become new. With God as the centerpiece and His Word as our guide, we can overcome any obstacle or difficulty that stands in the way of our success.

Prayer: Let us realize, Lord, that greater things are possible when we trust in You and use the gifts You have given us to honor You. Take us and bless us for Your sake. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13



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:  
09.15.23

5 13 29 50 53 25

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$183,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 36 Mins 42  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.23

4 24 25 32 51 7

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,200,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 51  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.23

2 22 28 31 38 6

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

NEXT 17 Hrs 6 Mins 41  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.16.23

5 12 19 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$46,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 6  
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.23

3 7 41 48 67 14

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

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 35  
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.23

2 21 26 40 42 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$672,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 35  
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Aberdeen Christian, 25-13, 25-17, 25-18

Bridgewater-Emery def. Howard, 25-17, 25-23, 21-25, 25-7

Ethan def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-16, 25-20, 25-12

Langford def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-17, 25-17, 25-14

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-22, 18-25, 25-14, 25-20

Watertown def. Tea Area, 25-11, 25-8, 25-13

Wessington Springs def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-11, 25-19, 25-18

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

### **Hermoso criticizes Spanish soccer federation and accuses it of threatening World Cup-winning players**

By TALES AZZONI AP Sports Writer

MADRID (AP) — The player in the middle of the controversy that engulfed Spanish soccer after she was kissed on the lips by an official has accused the country's soccer federation of trying to intimidate the World Cup-winning players by picking them for the national team even though they asked not to be called up.

Jenni Hermoso, who said she did not consent to the kiss by former federation president Luis Rubiales during the World Cup awards ceremony last month, said in a statement early Tuesday that the federation's decision to call up nearly half of the 39 players who said they would not play for the national team as a protest was "irrefutable proof" that "nothing has changed."

The players had said they wouldn't come back until their demands for deep reforms and new leadership in the federation were met, but new coach Montse Tomé on Tuesday picked 15 of the players who helped Spain win its first Women's World Cup last month.

Tomé left Hermoso off the list "as a way to protect her," she said.

"Protect me from what?" Hermoso said. "A claim was made stating that the environment within the federation would be safe for my colleagues to rejoin, yet at the same press conference it was announced that they were not calling me as a means to protect me."

Tomé said she talked to Hermoso and to the other players, and said she was confident that they would all report to training camp on Tuesday.

The players said Monday that they were caught by surprise by the call-up and did not plan to end their boycott.

The squad announcement had been originally planned for Friday but was postponed because no agreement had been reached with the players.

On Monday, the federation released a statement in which it publicly reiterated to the players its commitment to structural changes.

"The people who now ask us to trust them are the same ones who disclosed the list of players who have asked NOT to be called up," Hermoso said. "The players are certain that this is yet another strategy of division and manipulation to intimidate and threaten us with legal repercussions and economic sanctions."

According to Spanish sports law, athletes are required to answer the call of its national teams unless there are circumstances that impede them from playing, such as an injury. The players said Monday they would study the possible legal consequences of not reporting to the training camp, but said they believed the federation could not force them to join the team. They argued that the call-up was not made in ac-

cordance with current FIFA regulations, and some of the players, especially those abroad, would not be able to show up in time.

"I want to once again show my full support to my colleagues who have been caught by surprise and forced to react to another unfortunate situation caused by the people who continue to make decisions within (the federation)," Hermoso said. "This is why we are fighting and why we are doing it in this way."

Among the players' demands was for interim president Pedro Rocha also to resign, and for the women's team staff to be overhauled.

Last year, 15 players rebelled against former coach Jorge Vilda asking for a more professional environment. Tomé, an assistant to Vilda at the World Cup, included in her first list some of the players who rebelled.

Spain will play Nations League games against Sweden on Friday and Switzerland on Sept. 26.

AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/hub/soccer>

## At UN, Biden looks to send message to world leaders - and voters - about leadership under his watch

By AAMER MADHANI and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Joe Biden will use his annual address before the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday to make the case to world leaders — and the 2024 U.S. electorate — that he's reestablished U.S. leadership on the world stage that he says was diminished under former President Donald Trump.

White House officials said Biden would make a robust case to members of the world body to continue to back Ukraine's effort to repel a nearly 19-month old Russian invasion that has no end in sight.

Biden previewed his thinking in a pair of fundraisers on Monday evening, telling supporters that he stood up to Vladimir Putin's invasion, and questioning whether Trump, the 2024 GOP presidential frontrunner, would have even attempted to help Ukraine stop the Russian land grab if he were in power.

"I will not side with dictators like Putin. Maybe Trump and his MAGA friends can bow down but I won't," Biden told supporters at a Broadway fundraiser.

There will be notable absences as the president makes his case before the General Assembly: British Prime Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin are all skipping the gathering.

For Biden, the more important audience for Tuesday's speech could be closer to home as he looks to make the case to voters that he's skillfully handled a complicated foreign policy agenda and that the experience that comes with age has proved to be an asset. It's an argument that the 80-year-old president is likely to continue to make to try to counter skepticism — even in his own Democratic Party — among voters who are concerned about his age.

"We rallied the world to support Ukraine and united NATO because I was convinced from the beginning that Putin's counting on NATO not being able to stick together," Biden said at another Monday fundraiser. "He's still trying. And our allies know once again, the United States can be counted on."

Biden's message of unwavering support for Ukraine will play out as Congress is increasingly divided over providing additional funding for Kyiv.

Biden has sought a package of \$13.1 billion in additional military aid for Ukraine and \$8.5 billion for humanitarian support. But conservative Republican lawmakers have been pushing for broad federal spending cuts and some of those allied with Trump are specifically looking to stop money to Ukraine.

In addition to underscoring continued U.S. support for Ukraine, Biden is expected to touch on mobilizing global resources to combat climate change and bolstering multilateral organizations to help poor and middle-income countries, according to senior administration officials.

Biden aims to send a message that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is in violation of the U.N. charter and to emphasize that every country has a stake in defending a nation's sovereignty, especially when it is under attack, said the officials, who previewed Biden's activities in New York this week on condition of anonymity.

After his speech, Biden will meet with António Guterres, the U.N. secretary-general, as well as leaders



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from the so-called C5 group of Central Asian nations, which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The meeting is expected to focus on regional security, trade, climate change, ongoing reforms to improve governance and other issues.

Xi has stepped up his own courting of those countries. During his own summit in May with the Central Asian leaders, Xi promised to build more railway and other trade links with the region and proposed jointly developing oil and gas sources.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters last week that Biden's meeting with those leaders should not be seen as an effort to counterbalance Chinese influence in the region.

"Look, this summit is not against any country," Sullivan said in previewing the meeting. "It is for a positive agenda that we want to work through with these countries."

The officials played down the fact that the leaders of the other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — the UK, France, Russia and China — won't be in New York this week and instead emphasized the importance that Biden attaches to showing up at the annual diplomatic forum.

However, Biden does not plan to attend a special summit on climate that Guterres will host on Wednesday, where countries are encouraged to bring new ideas and proposals on how to further cut emissions and combat climate change. Officials played down Biden's absence at the climate summit, saying the issue will be interspersed through the president's remarks and events throughout the week. John Kerry, the U.S. climate envoy, is to attend in Biden's place.

Biden plans to meet with Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Wednesday, as well as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Senior administration officials said the two leaders will discuss issues including Iran but declined to elaborate further.

Biden is scheduled to host talks Thursday at the White House with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Kim reported from Washington.

## India expels senior Canadian diplomat in growing row over alleged Indian role in Sikh's killing

By KRUTIKA PATHI and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India expelled a senior Canadian diplomat Tuesday and accused Canada of interfering in its internal affairs, escalating a breach with Ottawa over its allegations of Indian involvement in the killing of a Sikh activist in Canada.

It came a day after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said there were credible allegations that India was connected to the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh independence advocate who was gunned down on June 18 outside a Sikh cultural center in Surrey, British Columbia, and Canada expelled a top Indian diplomat. India rejected the allegations as "absurd."

India has fought against a movement to establish an independent Sikh homeland known as Khalistan since the 1980s, when a raid on separatists in a major temple led to the assassination of a prime minister and a wave of anti-Sikh violence.

Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities, who accused the activist of involvement in an alleged attack on a Hindu priest in India and had offered a cash reward for information leading to his arrest. Nijjar was organizing an unofficial referendum on Sikh independence from India at the time of this death.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a lawyer and spokesperson for the Sikhs For Justice organization, has said Nijjar had been warned by Canadian intelligence officials about being targeted for assassination by "mercenaries" before he was gunned down.

Trudeau told Parliament Monday that Canadian security agencies were investigating "credible allegations of a potential link between agents of the government of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen."

"Any involvement of a foreign government in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty," he said.

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India's foreign ministry dismissed the allegation as "absurd and motivated," and accused Canada of harboring "terrorists and extremists."

"Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," it wrote in a statement issued earlier Tuesday.

India has long demanded that Canada take action against the Sikh independence movement, which is banned in India but has support in countries like Canada and the U.K. with sizable Sikh diaspora populations. Canada has a Sikh population of more than 770,000, about 2% of its total population.

In March, the Modi government summoned the Canadian High Commissioner in New Delhi to complain about Sikh independence protests in Canada. In 2020, India's foreign ministry also summoned the top diplomat over comments made by Trudeau about an agricultural protest movement associated with the state of Punjab, where many Sikhs live.

Critics accuse Modi's Hindu nationalist government of seeking to suppress dissenters and activists using sedition laws and other legal weapons. Some critics of his administration, including intellectuals, activists, filmmakers, students and journalists have been arrested, creating what Modi's opponents say is a culture of intimidation.

The dueling expulsions come amid tense relations between Canada and India. Trade talks have been derailed and Canada just canceled a trade mission to India that was planned for the fall.

Trudeau told Parliament that he brought up Nijjar's slaying with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the G20 meeting in New Delhi last week. He said he told Modi that any Indian government involvement would be unacceptable and that he asked for cooperation in the investigation.

At the G20 meeting, Modi expressed "strong concerns" over Canada's handling of the Sikh independence movement during a meeting with Trudeau at the G20, India's statement said.

The statement called on Canada to work with India on what New Delhi said is a threat to the Canadian Indian diaspora, and described the Sikh movement as "promoting secessionism and inciting violence" against Indian diplomats. Earlier this year, supporters of the Khalistan movement vandalized Indian consulates in London and San Francisco.

On Monday Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly said the expelled Indian diplomat was the head of Indian intelligence in Canada.

Joly said Trudeau also raised the matter with U.S. President Joe Biden and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

"We are deeply concerned about the allegations referenced by Prime Minister Trudeau," White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson. "We remain in regular contact with our Canadian partners. It is critical that Canada's investigation proceed and the perpetrators be brought to justice."

Canadian opposition New Democrat leader Jagmeet Singh, who is himself Sikh, called it outrageous and shocking. Singh said he grew up hearing stories that challenging India's record on human rights might prevent you from getting a visa to travel there.

"But to hear the prime minister of Canada corroborate a potential link between a murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil by a foreign government is something I could never have imagined," Singh said.

The World Sikh Organization of Canada called Nijjar an outspoken supporter of Khalistan who "often led peaceful protests against the violation of human rights actively taking place in India and in support of Khalistan."

"Nijjar had publicly spoken of the threat to his life for months and said that he was targeted by Indian intelligence agencies," the statement said.

India's main opposition party issued a statement backing Modi's position. The Congress Party wrote that "the country's interests and concerns must be kept paramount at all times" and that the fight against terrorism has to be uncompromising, especially when it threatens the nation's sovereignty.

In 1984, Indian forces stormed the Golden Temple in the state's Amritsar city to flush out Sikh separatists, who had taken refuge there. The controversial operation killed around 400, according to official figures, although Sikh groups estimate the toll to be higher.

The prime minister who ordered the raid, Indira Gandhi, was killed afterwards by two of her bodyguards, who were Sikh. Her death triggered a series of anti-Sikh riots, in which Hindu mobs went from house to house across northern India, pulling Sikhs from their homes, hacking many to death and burning others alive.

Gillies reported from Toronto. Associated Press journalists Amer Madhani in New York, and Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi, contributed to this report.

## **The Versailles Palace celebrates its 400th anniversary and hosts King Charles III for state dinner**

By SYLVIE CORBET and JEFFREY SCHAEFFER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France is rolling out the red carpet for King Charles III's state visit at one of its most magnificent and emblematic monuments: the Palace of Versailles, which celebrates its 400th anniversary.

Charles and Queen Camilla's three-day trip to Paris and Bordeaux, starting Wednesday, includes a grand dinner at Versailles in the presence of over 150 guests in the Hall of Mirrors.

It comes as the Palace of Versailles just opened to the public the gallery that retraces its history, from its creation as a modest hunting lodge in 1623 to last century's key diplomatic events — including the visits of Charles' predecessors.

French President Emmanuel Macron's office said Wednesday's dinner echoes the state visit of Queen Elizabeth II in 1972, when she was greeted at the Palace by President Georges Pompidou. King Charles liked the idea of following in his mother's footsteps, according to Macron's office.

Elizabeth II also visited the palace in 1958 and 10 years before, when she was not yet a Queen.

Catherine Pégard, president of the Palace of Versailles, praised the "never-ending story" of the palace that "includes visits from French children who come to Versailles with their classes, as well as visits from His Majesty the King of England or tourists who arrive from Asia and are less familiar with the history."

"And we have a story to tell each one of them," she told the Associated Press.

Usually filled with a chaotic crowd of photo-snapping tourists from across the world, the Hall of Mirrors will be closed to visitors Wednesday to get prepared for the royal banquet. No details have been provided about the menu yet, but the French presidency said it will be an opportunity to showcase France's cultural and gastronomical excellence.

Charles' visit will make one more date in the Palace's long history starting from King Louis XIII, to the French revolution and all the way to modern times that is being presented on its ground floor into the newly opened Gallery of the History of the Palace.

The gallery has 11 rooms, each thematic and largely chronological, presenting over 120 works aimed at providing visitors from across the world an immediate understanding of the complex history of the palace.

It brings together recently acquired works alongside paintings and art pieces that for many years had gone unseen as they'd been in reserve and others that are now repositioned and better enhanced.

Laurent Salomé, director of the National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and Trianon, said the exhibit features a number of masterpieces.

"Our intention was to create a first great moment of pleasure for visitors. First of all, because they've traveled a lot. For a long time, they've dreamed of Versailles. We didn't want to give them a boring lesson to start their visit," he said.

Some pieces of work come from the original version of the palace and its gardens under its great builder Louis XIV, who decided to expand his father's hunting lodge.

It's "a history made by not just one monarch, it's also an enormous team of artists — and the greatest artists. A good thing about absolute monarchy is to be able to gather all the best people at the same place," Salomé stressed.

Today the Palace contains 2,300 rooms spread over 63,154 square meters (679,784 square feet).

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The gallery of history also provides an occasion to discover anecdotes about the Palace's life — like some panels of the "Chinese chamber" of Queen Marie Leszczyńska, Louis XV's wife, that she in part painted herself.

In the last rooms, visitors can see the famous desk where the 1919 Treaty of Versailles was signed that formally ended World War I, as well as photos and video archives of heads of states and royalties honored at the Palace during the 20th century.

"The idea is also to show that there is a gradual transformation of the Chateau de Versailles, which has always remained alive through the centuries, from its creation to the present day," Salomé said.

## **Making a mark: London's historic blue plaques seek more diversity as 1,000th marker is unveiled**

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A resounding thump breaks the silence as Julia Land drops a lump of grey-brown clay onto the slab roller before Ned Heywood cranks it through the machine once, twice, three times, creating a rectangle about an inch thick.

Laying a pattern on top of the slab, Heywood slices through the clay to create a disc the size of an extra-large pizza that will become one of the blue plaques that dot the walls of buildings throughout London, marking the places where scientists, artists, politicians and activists have made history.

As English Heritage prepares to unveil its 1,000th blue plaque on Tuesday, the charity is working to broaden the program to include more women, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and community groups so that it better reflects the diversity of the capital.

The latest installation marks the offices where the Women's Freedom League "campaigned for women's equality" in the early 20th century, satisfying at least two of those goals.

"The names are no longer just English names, which is significant because, you know, the people who've come to this country from all over the world have made a disproportionately large contribution," Heywood says at his workshop, a converted 18th century pub in the Welsh town of Chepstow, 110 miles (180 kilometers) west of London. "It's changing now, which is very much for the good."

The blue plaque program, which began in 1866 and is believed to be the first of its kind, provides an informal historical walking tour of London that commemorates notable people and their accomplishments by highlighting the places where they lived and worked.

The honorees include famous figures from wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill to communist pioneer Karl Marx, as well as lesser known figures like theatrical wigmaker Willy Clarkson and civil engineer William Lindley, who built water and sewage systems around the world. There are also plaques honoring foreigners like India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and American rock star Jimi Hendrix, who lived in London only briefly.

But English Heritage, which has sponsored the program since 1986, is concerned that past honorees were overwhelmingly white and male. Just 15% of the plaques honor women and less than 5% celebrate people from Black and Asian backgrounds.

The charity, which manages some 400 monuments, medieval castles, Roman forts and country houses around England, is trying to encourage more nominations of women and people from minority ethnic groups, while retaining high standards for entry into the exclusive club, said Anna Eavis, the curatorial director.

Plaques unveiled recently include Princess Sophia Duleep Singh, a suffragette and critic of British rule in India; Ottobah Cugoana, a native of present day Ghana who was enslaved in Grenada and campaigned against slavery after gaining his freedom; and Ada Salter, the first woman to be elected mayor of a London borough.

"London is hugely diverse and it has always been, hasn't it?" Eavis said. "And so it is important to ensure that we're reflecting that diversity, that richness of contribution on London streets."

Diana Yeh, a senior lecturer in sociology at City University of London, said broadening the reach of programs like the blue plaques is "an essential part of remembering invisible histories." But heritage

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organizations must do more to discuss the “troubling aspects” of English history, including slavery and colonialism, she added.

“In a way it’s very easy to celebrate well-known figures who are marginalized, but it’s much harder to do that difficult work of acknowledging Britain’s difficult past,” said Yeh, whose work focuses on race, racism and cultural politics. “But this needs to be done for the benefit of future generations.”

English Heritage installs a dozen blue plaques each year, selected from about 100 nominations. A committee reviews the nominees to decide which ones warrant commemoration and to ensure there is a real connection between each honoree and the site where the plaque is to be installed.

Once a decision is made, the order goes out to Heywood’s studio, which has been making plaques for English Heritage since 2016.

Over a period of six weeks, Heywood and Land roll and cut the clay, inscribe the disc with the honoree’s name and accomplishments, then apply the characteristic blue glaze and fire it in a kiln. It’s a process that creates an almost indestructible monument that should last as long as the building to which it’s attached — as long as the plaques don’t crack when they’re baked at 1,300 degrees Celsius (2,370 Fahrenheit).

“We pray to gods of the kiln,” Heywood says.

While the first plaque, honoring the poet Lord Byron, was destroyed when the building it adorned was demolished, the second, installed in 1867, still marks the house where Napoleon III, the last French emperor, lived in exile.

Plaque number 1,000 honors the Women’s Freedom League, a suffragist organization that used 1 Robert Street in central London as its base of operations during its most active period.

The league was formed in 1907 by campaigners who broke away from the more famous Women’s Social and Political Union because of disagreements with its leader, Emmeline Pankhurst.

The group, which had the motto “Dare to be free,” aimed for total emancipation for women. It advocated non-payment of taxes and backed a boycott of the 1911 census as ways to pressure the government to allow women to vote. In 1909, when women’s suffrage was omitted from the King’s Speech outlining the government’s legislative program, the league hired an airship to drop pamphlets over the capital.

Heywood and Land feel the responsibility of the blue plaques intensely. To get in the right mindset, they sometimes try to channel the honorees.

Land listened to recordings of violinist Yehudi Menuhin as she did the lettering on his plaque.

Heywood researched electrical engineer Tommy Flowers before working on the marker that commemorates his work on Colossus, the pioneering computer used to decipher German codes during World War II.

“He was a very significant person in the whole of the World War II effort,” Heywood said. “And he’s at last being recognized for the astonishing job that he did.”

Heywood has a soft spot for scientists, who he says are the real heroes in improving people’s lives. Politicians? Not so much. They come and go.

But being the plaque maker, he gets to put his stamp on things, one disc at a time.

“I’m very aware of the history of this town, the country, and aware of the changes that individuals have brought within society,” Heywood said, surrounded by his tools, clay and dust.

“Blue plaques are carefully considered, the people are thoroughly researched, and the plaques are there for a reason,” he added. “And will be there forever.”

## Officials find debris from F-35 fighter jet that crashed in South Carolina after pilot ejected

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — The crash site for a stealth fighter jet that went missing during the weekend after its pilot ejected was located Monday in rural South Carolina after the military asked the public for help finding an aircraft built to elude detection.

The debris field was discovered in Williamsburg County, about two hours northeast of Joint Base Charleston. Residents were being asked to avoid the area while a recovery team worked to secure it.

“We are transferring incident command to the USMC this evening, as they begin the recovery process,”

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the base posted Monday on the X social media platform.

Authorities had been searching for the jet since the pilot, whose name hasn't been released, parachuted to safety into a North Charleston neighborhood about 2 p.m. Sunday. He was taken to a hospital, where he was in stable condition, Marines Maj. Melanie Salinas said.

"The mishap is currently under investigation, and we are unable to provide additional details to preserve the integrity of the investigative process," the Marine Corps said in a news release on Monday evening.

The Marine Corps announced earlier Monday it was pausing aviation operations for two days after the fighter jet's crash — the third costly accident in recent weeks.

Gen. Eric Smith, the acting commandant of the Marine Corps, ordered the stand-down while authorities searched near two South Carolina lakes for the missing FB-35B Lightning II aircraft.

It's the third event documented as a "Class-A mishap" over the past six weeks, according to a Marine Corps announcement. Such incidents occur when damages reach \$2.5 million or more, a Department of Defense aircraft is destroyed, or someone dies or is permanently disabled.

Commanders will spend the stand-down reinforcing safe flying policies, practices and procedures with their Marines, according to the Monday release.

The announcement gave no details on the two previous incidents. But in August, three U.S. Marines were killed in the crash of a V-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft during a training exercise in Australia, and a Marine Corps pilot was killed when his combat jet crashed near a San Diego base during a training flight.

Cpl. Christian Cortez, a Marine with the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, said the details of what prompted the pilot to eject from the aircraft Sunday were under investigation.

Based on the missing plane's location and trajectory, the search was initially focused on Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion, said Senior Master Sgt. Heather Stanton at Joint Base Charleston. Both lakes are north of North Charleston.

A South Carolina Law Enforcement Division helicopter joined the search after some bad weather cleared in the area, Stanton said. Military officials appealed in online posts Sunday for any help from the public in locating the aircraft.

The pilot of a second F-35 returned safely to Joint Base Charleston, Salinas said.

The planes and pilots were with the Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501 with the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing based in Beaufort, near the South Carolina coast.

## **North Korea says Kim Jong Un is back home from Russia, where he deepened 'comradely' ties with Putin**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Tuesday that leader Kim Jong Un has returned home from a trip to Russia where he deepened "comradely fellowship and friendly ties" with President Vladimir Putin.

During Kim's six-day trip to Russia, his longest foreign travel as a leader, the two countries said they discussed boosting their defense ties but didn't disclose any specific steps. Foreign experts speculate the two countries, both locked in confrontations with the West, were pushing to reach arms transfer deals in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Kim's train crossed a border river on Monday morning, but didn't say whether he headed to the capital, Pyongyang, or elsewhere inside the country. Before traveling to Russia, Kim made several visits to his munitions factories, triggering speculation that he intended to check on productions of arms to be shipped to Russia.

While traveling through Russia's far eastern region, Kim met Putin at Russia's most important space launch center before visiting military sites to see some of Russia's most advanced weapons systems such as nuclear-capable bombers, fighter jets and hypersonic missiles.

In live comments during their meeting last Wednesday, Kim offered "full and unconditional support" to Putin. KCNA later said Kim and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu also met and discussed expanding "strategic and tactical coordination" between the countries' armed forces.

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Many outside experts say Kim would supply ammunition to refill Russia's drained inventory in the second year of the war in Ukraine in return for receiving Russian technologies to modernize his nuclear weapons arsenals. U.S. and South Korean officials have warned that Russia and North Korea would face consequences if they go ahead with such weapons transfers deals in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Other experts say Kim would end up getting food and economic aid because Russia is reluctant to share its sensitive, high-tech weapons technologies with other countries.

Kim has been pushing hard to bolster his nuclear arsenal citing what he called intensifying U.S. military threats. Analysts say Kim would aim to use his enlarged arsenal to win greater concessions from the U.S. while boosting his military credentials at home in the face of economic hardships deepened over the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **UN chief says people are looking to leaders for action and a way out of the current global 'mess'**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Leaders of a world fractured by war, climate change and persisting inequality gather under one roof Tuesday to hear the U.N. chief summon them to take united action on humanity's huge challenges – and to start delivering their own assessments on the most global of stages.

"People are looking to their leaders for a way out of this mess," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said ahead of the annual gathering of presidents and premiers, ministers and monarchs at the General Assembly.

He said the world needs action now – not merely more words – to deal with the worsening climate emergency, escalating conflicts, "dramatic technological disruptions" and a global cost-of-living crisis that is increasing hunger and poverty.

"Yet in the face of all this and more," Guterres said, "geopolitical divisions are undermining our capacity to respond."

This year's week-long session, the first full-on meeting of world leaders since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted travel, has 145 leaders scheduled to speak. It's a large number that reflects the multitude of crises and conflicts.

But for the first time in years, U.S. President Joe Biden, who will speak soon after the U.N. chief, will be the only leader from the five powerful veto-wielding nations on the U.N. Security Council to address the 193-member assembly.

China's Xi Jinping, Russia's Vladimir Putin, France's Emmanuel Macron and Britain's Rishi Sunak are all skipping the U.N. this year. That should put the spotlight on Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who will be making his first appearance at the assembly's podium later Tuesday, and on Biden, who will be watched especially for his views on China, Russia and Ukraine.

The absence of leaders from the four Security Council powers has sparked grumbling from developing countries who want major global players to listen to their demands – including for money to start closing the growing gap between the world's haves and have-nots.

The G77, the major U.N. group of developing countries that now has 134 members including China, lobbied hard to make this year's global gathering focus on the 17 U.N. goals adopted by world leaders in 2015. Those are badly lagging at the halfway point to their 2030 due date.

At a two-day summit to kick-start action to achieve the goals, Guterres pointed to grim findings in a U.N. report in July. He said 15% of some 140 specific targets to achieve the 17 goals are on track. Many are going in the wrong direction, and not a single one is expected to be achieved in the next seven years.

The wide-ranging goals include end extreme poverty and hunger, ensure every child gets a quality secondary education, achieve gender equality and make significant inroads in tackling climate change — all by 2030.

At the current rate, the report said, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty and 84 million children won't even be going to elementary school in 2030 – and it will take 286 years to reach equality

between men and women.

Guterres told leaders at Monday's opening of the summit he called to rescue the 17 sustainable development goals, or SDGs, that they promised in 2015 to build "a world of health, progress and opportunity" for all people – and to pay for it.

Soon after he spoke, leaders from the 193 U.N. member nations adopted a 10-page political declaration by consensus which recognizes that the goals are "in peril." But it reaffirms more than a dozen times, in different ways, leaders' commitment to achieve the SDGs, reiterating their individual importance.

The declaration is short on specifics, but Guterres said he was "deeply encouraged" especially by its commitment to improving developing countries' access to "the fuel required for SDG progress: finance." He pointed to its support for an SDG stimulus of at least \$500 billion a year, aimed at offsetting challenging market conditions faced by developing countries.

At the summit, leaders were then supposed to make pledges to meet the SDGs.

As an example, Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who chairs the U.N. group of least developed countries, said they need "massive scaling up of affordable finance" including through the SDG stimulus. He said foreign investment to the least developed countries fell about 30% in 2022 compared to 2021, and he urged developed countries to be more generous in helping the world's poorest countries.

There are also hundreds of side events during high-level week.

The European Union's top diplomat Josep Borrell told reporters after a closed meeting to try to revive the decades-old peace process between Israel and the Palestinians that there was "a strong commitment to the two-state solution."

He said there were 60 participants at the meeting organized by the EU, the Arab League and several other countries, and called it "a good starting point."

There was "an injection of new political will," Borrell said, and three senior-level working groups were established to examine what Israeli-Palestinian peace would look like. He said they will start work in a month in Brussels.

## **Colombia's president has a plan for 'total peace.' But militias aren't putting down their guns yet**

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

BUENAVENTURA, Colombia (AP) — Officers waded through rows of abandoned wooden homes teetering above a mangrove-cloaked river – one of the key channels used by gangs to move drugs and weapons through this long-neglected swath of Colombia's Pacific coast.

Each step for them is a reminder: Control here remains not with the law, but with those whose names are spoken in whispers in their city. Los Shottas and Los Espartanos.

The two gangs are the latest to lay siege to Buenaventura, Colombia's busiest port and the crown jewel of narcotrafficking routes, the jump point from which drugs pour out to the rest of the world.

Now, they're among a growing set of armed groups lining up to negotiate peace deals with Colombia's new government.

Upon his historic election last year, Colombia's rebel-turned-president Gustavo Petro promised to cement "total peace" and end one of the world's longest-running conflicts. But as his government moves to fulfill that bold promise, Buenaventura has grown to exemplify the tangled mess the ex-rebel leader must unravel.

Petro aims to rewire how the South American nation addresses endemic violence, replacing military operations with social programs tackling the conflict's roots, including poverty in violence-torn areas like Buenaventura. He's also negotiating with the most powerful of Colombia's mutating armed groups – from leftist guerrillas to smaller trafficking mafias – in an effort to get them to demobilize simultaneously.

More than a year since Petro took office, his "total peace" plan has inched forward. More than 31,000 armed fighters make up the militias that have come forward to begin peace talks, according to government estimates. Programs for the young people that gangs recruit are planned in Buenaventura and other cities. But the country's most powerful armed groups have grown stronger, according to experts, and bloodshed



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between rival groups has skyrocketed.

Critics say the criminal groups are only taking advantage of ceasefires with the government. They describe strong criminal economies and law enforcement officials unable to pursue perpetrators. And many people, from victims to the armed groups seeking a deal, view Petro's plan with distrust begot by decades of violence and failed promises.

"The idea behind 'total peace' is right on the money. You know, let's look at the social issues behind these conflicts," said Jeremy McDermott, co-founder of InSight Crime, a Colombia-based think tank. "The great challenge Petro faces is: How do you talk peace without strengthening these groups?"

No group is yet close to signing a full peace agreement. In Buenaventura, Los Shottas refuses to demobilize until "every armed group in Colombia sets down arms, too," a delegate for the gang told The Associated Press.

"Do you know how many groups want to take control of Buenaventura? Tons," said the man, who declined to give his name and spoke on condition that he be identified by his nom de guerre, Jeronimo. "And if they hand over their power, what will happen? Those groups are going to come and exterminate us."

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Across Colombia, decades of war between leftist guerrillas, rightwing paramilitaries, trafficking groups and the government have left more than 9.5 million people – nearly 20% of the population – as victims of forced displacement, homicide, sexual violence and more.

In Buenaventura, turf wars have bred a particularly brutal conflict, making the city one of the world's most violent. Homicide, kidnapping, torture and sexual abuse are commonplace. So are mass graves and "chop houses," where gangs dismember enemies, letting their screams echo through neighborhoods.

The names and faces of victims are painted on city walls, and along the main thoroughway, a sign surrounded by white crosses reads: "Death can't be our only hope." Young men perch on motorcycles on street corners, watching the territories their gangs control. On Buenaventura's jungled fringes, rival groups wait to seize their part of the city - police say there's so many, they've lost count.

Residents are quick to say bloodshed has touched every soul in the city of 450,000 — most of all, young people.

Lupe, a 57-year-old lifelong Buenaventura resident, knows this all too well. She lost her son and granddaughter to the gangs first.

Cristian was 25, working as an inspector of coffee, bananas and avocados in the city's port when he refused to let one of Los Shottas' drug shipment through — he feared losing one of the legal jobs available to young people here, Lupe said.

She watched as threats to kill him and kidnap his daughter piled in. Over three years, they grew so grisly that Cristian knew they had to leave. He fled to the United States by night, carrying only small backpacks for him and his daughter, now 5.

Lupe, who tried for the better part of two decades to shield her son from the city's criminal underworld, hasn't seen them since last year, but takes solace in knowing they're safe.

"Here, young people have no peace, they have no harmony or calm," said Lupe, who spoke to AP on condition that only her first name be used, for fear of gang retribution. "This here, our territory, it's a time bomb."

The young people who lack opportunities and are forcibly recruited into gangs are equal parts victims and victimizers, many here say.

"They don't choose it, they're forced into it," said Rubén Darío Jaramillo Montoya, bishop of Buenaventura. "They're poor, they've never known another reality. Violence envelops them ... and then they can't leave."

As part of the "total peace" plan, programs geared toward recruitment will be rolled out in cities with the highest rates of violence and poverty, including Buenaventura, government adviser Carolina Hoyos told AP. She described them as fundamental to the overall picture.

Young People in Peace will give monthly stipend of a million pesos, around \$250, to 100,000 Colombians ages of 14 to 28 "linked or at the risk of being linked" to criminal groups, Hoyos said. They'll be required

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to seek education and carry out some form of social work.

In May, Petro said: "There will be thousands of young people we will pay not to kill, for not participating in violence, for studying."

But some question whether the program's timeline — lasting between six and 18 months — is enough to be effective.

The Colombian government has long worked to get criminal groups to set down arms, and in 2016 was hailed for signing a peace pact with the country's most powerful guerrilla force, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Much of the accords centered on similar social programs and reintegration opportunities for rebels.

It earned then-President Juan Manuel Santos a Nobel Peace Prize for "bringing the world's longest running civil war to an end."

But the calm that followed was short-lived.

As authorities failed to carry out the agreement and seize control of territories where FARC rebels once roamed, a slew of mutating mafias warred to take their place. Bloodshed roared back.

When Petro entered office last year, the government restarted peace talks with the country's final remaining guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), which has been in armed political resistance since 1964. Last month, ELN and Colombia began a six-month cease-fire as part of the process toward a longer peace deal.

The populist's past may be helping things along — Petro was once a member of the now-defunct urban M-19 guerrilla group, which demobilized and formed a leftist political party in the '90s, his entrance into politics. But some believe his role in the rebel group, charges of ties to drug traffickers and other scandals are hurdles in getting his historically conservative government onboard.

Still, his message has rippled out to armed groups that are less political and more interested solely in Colombia's drug and other illegal trades. For a year, Los Shottas and Los Espartanos have held dialogues brokered by the Catholic Church and the government, and have had on-and-off cease-fires.

The Los Shottas delegate who spoke to AP said its leaders are open to peace. Jeronimo would not say whether they would be willing to end all illegal activities, only that they'd reduce extortion, looting and clashes.

"Buenaventura is tired of so much violence, tired of so much bloodshed," he said.

Jeronimo would not detail what Los Shottas would get out of demobilizing other than "the tranquility of the people." But those brokering the talks told AP gang leaders want reduced prison sentences for their crimes.

He said they hope to generate trust "not with words, but through actions."

But in Buenaventura, trust is in short supply.

Three months ago, Lupe was still reeling from seeing her son and granddaughter fleeing when she said armed men from rival gang Los Espartanos tried to poach her 16-year-old nephews for their ranks.

She described them waiting outside the young men's home and beating them. Now, she's scrambling to get them out of the city.

"We can't sleep at night," she said. "When there are these truces, they don't kill with bullets, but they do disappear people."

Some, like Nora Castillo, worry the groups aren't negotiating in earnest, saying they see cease-fires and peace programs as a "convenience" to grow in strength.

"If we're just talking about logistics, about the reality, no group is going to stop extorting because they're earning a million pesos," Castillo said of the planned stipend for young people.

Castillo is a leader of Buenaventura's "humanitarian space," a former red zone transformed with the help of human rights groups as a place for community, safety and activism. But Castillo said she often receives death threats and leaves home with government bodyguards — the gangs' presence is still felt there.

Data show that's true not only in Buenaventura but across Colombia: In the past year, armed groups have expanded territorial control, sources of income and recruitment, according to a report by the think

tank Ideas for Peace Foundation. While fights with law enforcement have dipped, warring between rival groups has only risen. Kidnappings have risen by 77% and extortion by 15%.

"One of the great advantages of sitting down and talking with the government is that the security forces find themselves handcuffed in pursuing you," said McDermott, of InSight Crime.

Government adviser Hoyos would not respond to AP's questions about whether the administration trusts the armed groups in negotiations. She emphasized instead that officials trust the process.

For Lupe, the prospect for peace — however slim — is all she has left.

Every day, she walks past a clothesline where her son and granddaughters' shirts still hang without a wrinkle, one year after they fled. She hopes to see them again, in a different Buenaventura.

"Our dream is that one day things will change, this conflict we have will end," she said. "I try to survive, try to keep going for the next generation."

## Florida jury pool could give Trump an advantage in classified documents case

By ERIC TUCKER and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The classified documents indictment of Donald Trump would seem, on paper at least, to be the most straightforward of the four criminal cases the former president is facing.

Reams of classified files were stashed in Trump's office and storage room and he boastfully showed off to guests one such document he acknowledged was "secret," federal prosecutors have alleged. His own lawyer is quoted in the indictment as saying Trump encouraged him to mislead investigators who demanded the documents back, and prosecutors have since secured the cooperation of a Mar-a-Lago staffer who says the ex-president asked about deleting surveillance footage at the Palm Beach property.

But that doesn't make the path to conviction easy, particularly with the case set for trial in a Florida courthouse expected to draw its jury pool from a conservative-leaning region of the state that supported Trump in the 2020 election. Those built-in demographics may be a challenge for prosecutors despite the evidence at their disposal, underscoring the impossibility of untangling the law from politics in an election-year trial involving a former president who is seeking to return to the White House.

"The more conservative the counties, the highest chance he has to find jurors that would be sympathetic with him," said Richard Kibbey, a criminal defense attorney in Stuart, Florida, part of the Fort Pierce district where the jury pool is expected to be taken from.

When it comes to finding truly impartial jurors, he added, "It's going to be very difficult given the political climate across the country. Jurors will bring their own biases into the court room."

Unless the trial location is moved or its date pushed back, it will take place starting next May in Fort Pierce before U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee who drew scrutiny last year for granting a Trump team request to appoint an independent arbiter to review the classified documents seized from Mar-a-Lago. That decision was reversed by a unanimous three-judge appeals panel.

For months, a grand jury in Washington had been hearing testimony in the case, leading to expectations that any charges against Trump would be brought there. Instead, the indictment wound up being filed in the Southern District of Florida, enabling special counsel Jack Smith's team to avoid any protracted fights with Trump's lawyers over the appropriate venue for the case but creating the potential for a less desirable jury pool, at least politically.

The jury selection process is meant to weed out personal or partisan bias that could taint the case, with jurors instructed to make decisions solely on the basis of the evidence they hear. But in a federal court system where convictions overwhelmingly outnumber acquittals, defense lawyers — and prosecutors, for that matter — could nonetheless look to jury selection as a way to elicit an edge.

"Picking a jury is an art. It's not a science. And whether you're a prosecutor or a defense attorney, you use everything in your arsenal to seat the best jury you can get for your case," said Michael Sherwin, a former federal prosecutor in Miami who served during the Trump administration as acting U.S. Attorney

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in Washington.

"You want to ensure that you have the best people in that jury box that are going to be receptive to your message. So from that perspective, if I'm DOJ, I'd much rather have a Miami jury pool than a Fort Pierce jury pool," he added.

Given its sprawling geographic size, the district has five courthouses — in Key West, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Fort Pierce. The indictment itself was filed in West Palm, the city with the closest courthouse to Mar-a-Lago.

It was then randomly assigned to Cannon, who despite sitting in Fort Pierce also hears cases in West Palm, the clerk's office said in an email to The Associated Press.

But such a blockbuster trial, with a deluge of media, could test the resources of a courthouse and region far less accustomed to headline-generating events than is, for instance, Miami.

"The bigger issue is going to become, can the Fort Pierce courtroom handle this case? And if it can't, where are they going to send it?" said David Weinstein, a Florida lawyer and former federal prosecutor. "And if they send it to Miami, how are they going to get the jurors there because technically it's not a Miami case."

Jurors for Fort Pierce trials are drawn from five counties, according to the written jury plan for the Southern District of Florida: St. Lucie, Martin, Indian River, Okeechobee and Highlands.

Trump won each of those counties. His victory margin was particularly wide in Okeechobee, where he won with 71.8% of the votes. In St. Lucie, home to Fort Pierce, he won by only 50.4%, but Republicans have continued to gain ground there, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was reelected last year with more than 59% of the vote there.

That dynamic stands apart from the more heavily Democratic cities — New York, Washington and Atlanta — where Trump also faces charges. Trump lawyers tried unsuccessfully to force the recusal of the judge in the New York case and have turned to the same tactic in Washington, saying that judge, Tanya Chutkan, has made public comments that cast doubt on her ability to be fair. The request is pending.

Lawyers in the Washington case have attacked the indictment as novel and laden with complicated constitutional questions, suggesting they'll invoke arguments involving the First Amendment and presidential immunity. The Florida defense team, which was reorganized after the indictment, has not publicly detailed its defenses yet.

But despite the importance of jury selection and the fact that both sides will look to jury selection to pick the best possible panel for their respective cases, the outcome may still come down to which team has the best evidence and arguments.

"It's a high-profile defendant, but I suspect that when push comes to shove, most people don't make all of their important decisions based on politics," said Richard Serafini, a Florida defense lawyer and former Justice Department official.

Tucker reported from Washington.

## Political divide emerges on Ukraine aid package as Zelenskyy heads to Washington

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Washington this week comes at a critical juncture for his alliance with the United States as Republican leaders in Congress diverge on how to send more military and humanitarian aid to the country.

President Joe Biden is seeking an additional \$24 billion in security and humanitarian aid for Ukraine, in line with his promise to help the country for "as long as it takes" to oust Russia from its borders.

But ratification of Biden's request is deeply uncertain thanks to a growing partisan divide in Congress about how to proceed.

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Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has told reporters that he wants more Ukraine aid to be debated on its own merits as a standalone bill, rather than attaching it to other priorities like government funding.

But the Senate has other ideas. Leaders in the chamber would like to combine the Ukraine aid with other priorities, such as a short-term spending bill that will likely be needed to avoid a shutdown at the end of September.

The differing approaches threaten to become a stalemate that could easily delay future rounds of American assistance to Ukraine, raising the stakes for Zelenskyy as he makes his first visit to the United States since his surprise address to Congress at the end of 2022. In that speech, Zelenskyy thanked "every American" for support as then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Vice President Kamala Harris dramatically unfurled a Ukrainian flag behind him.

Nine months later, with Republicans now in control of the House majority, there is growing wariness among voters about continued support for Ukraine as Russia turns its invasion into a costly war of attrition. In Congress that skepticism is concentrated among House Republicans, where many share former President Donald Trump's "America First" approach and want to halt the aid entirely.

The U.S. has approved four rounds of aid to Ukraine in response to Russia's invasion so far, totaling about \$113 billion, with some of that money going toward replenishing U.S. military equipment sent to the frontlines. Most members of the House and Senate support the aid, viewing defense of Ukraine and its democracy as a global imperative.

McCarthy has stressed the need for oversight of Ukrainian assistance but has also been critical of Russia, criticizing the country's "killing of children" in a speech this summer. But he is juggling a desire to help Ukraine with the political realities at home, which include a demand from many in his party to slash government spending.

In some ways, attaching Ukraine aid to other pressing matters could improve the odds of passing it quickly. Some lawmakers will be more inclined to vote for Ukraine assistance if it gets included with say, disaster relief for their home state.

But the maneuver would also deeply divide House Republicans and is sure to inflame critics of McCarthy who are threatening to oust him from the speakership.

"I don't know why they would want to put that onto a CR," McCarthy said, using Washington parlance for a short-term continuing resolution that keeps agencies funded. "I think it should be discussed on its own."

Meanwhile, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell has put Ukraine aid at the top of his to-do list, and has been speaking from the Senate floor for weeks about the urgency he sees to act.

He brought in inspectors general last week to brief GOP senators on how U.S. aid is being tracked to address concerns about waste and fraud. And in one of his speeches on the Senate floor, McConnell responded to critics who say that the U.S. has borne too much of the burden on Ukraine by pointing to the assistance also flowing from European nations.

"In fact, when it comes to security assistance to Ukraine as a share of GDP, 14 of our European allies are actually giving more," McConnell said.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and McConnell have called for senators to meet with Zelenskyy on Thursday morning.

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., said he believes aid should be provided as soon as possible, and the legislative vehicle for that is unlikely to be a stand-alone bill.

"I for one think we ought to go ahead and get it done," Tillis said. "We have to get the Ukraine funding done in a time that doesn't produce a lapse, at least a perceived lapse, because I think that's a strategic win for Putin and I don't ever want Putin to have a strategic win."

But Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., warned against adding Ukraine aid to the short-term spending bill. He said the focus needs to be on first passing an overall defense spending bill as well as the other spending bills.

"We can't divert attention outside of that," Calvert said. "There's significant munitions within Ukraine right now I think to get through the end of the year."

Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Calif., said he's not necessarily opposed to more Ukrainian assistance, but he said

the average American doesn't know how the war is going, and the average member of Congress can't say, either.

"Tell us what you're doing with the money, and let's have a debate on the floor about this funding and not ramming it down our throats," Garcia said.

House Republicans hope to bring up for a vote this week a stopgap spending bill that doesn't include Biden's aid package for Ukraine.

"I cannot think of a worse welcome for President Zelenskyy who visits us this week than this House proposal, which ignores Ukraine entirely," Schumer said.

Still, Rep. Michael McCaul, the top Republican on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, voiced confidence that Ukraine aid will continue.

"It has to pass. What I hear from our NATO allies ... is that if the United States is not in, the whole thing falls apart," McCaul said.

## Most Americans view Israel as a partner, but fewer see it as sharing US values, AP-NORC poll shows

By MATTHEW LEE and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As President Joe Biden prepares to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week in New York, a new poll finds that while Americans generally view Israel as a partner or ally, many question whether his far-right government shares American values.

The poll results from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the meeting come during a new period of tension between the Biden administration and Israel. Those tensions are caused by Netanyahu's proposed judicial overhaul that has sparked mass protests in major Israeli cities, ongoing disagreements over how to deal with Iran and how to approach the Palestinians, and comments from Netanyahu political allies that have irked U.S. officials.

Despite the friction, Biden, who spoke out in barely disguised opposition to the judicial plan, and Netanyahu are expected to project a solid partnership in which the U.S. continues to support Israel's security.

Biden will also emphasize that the U.S. is continuing to work on expanding the Trump-era Abraham Accords, which normalized Israeli relations with several Arab countries, to include Saudi Arabia. However, there is little sign of an imminent breakthrough on that front.

Although the poll showed that Americans overwhelmingly view Israel as more of a friend than a foe, it also found that they are divided on whether Israel is a country with which the U.S. shares common interests and values.

About 4 in 10 Americans described Israel as a partner with which the U.S. should cooperate, but they also said the country does not share U.S. interests and values, the poll found. Only about 3 in 10 said Israel is an ally that shares U.S. interests. Republicans (44%) are more likely than Democrats (25%) to call Israel an ally with shared values. About 2 in 10 Americans described Israel as either a U.S. rival or an adversary.

The U.S. provides Israel with more than \$3 billion a year in military and other assistance and the close relationship has endured over the decades despite not infrequent spats over policy, most notably over Iran and treatment of the Palestinians.

Overall, 61% of Americans disapprove of how Biden is handling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with only 35% approving. That number was slightly lower than Biden's overall approval rating.

Many Americans don't see a need for the U.S. to change its position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. About 4 in 10 Americans, or 44%, said the U.S. gives about the right amount of support to Israel in the conflict, while 27% said it's too supportive of Israel and 23% not supportive enough.

About the same percentage, 42%, say the correct amount of support is given to the Palestinians, with 30% saying they want more support and 21% wanting less.

Among Republicans, 34% said they would like the U.S. to give more support to Israel, but slightly more (40%) say the current level is sufficient. Only 11% of Democrats said the U.S. needs to be giving more assistance to Israel. About half of Democrats said the current amount is "about right" while only about a

third said the U.S. is too supportive of Israel, the poll found.

In their meeting Wednesday, Biden is expected to reaffirm steadfast American commitment to Israel's security in the turbulent Middle East. At the same time, his administration is hoping to give Netanyahu one of his major asks — entry into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, which would allow Israelis to visit the United States on a temporary basis without a visa.

U.S. law requires that Americans, including Palestinian-Americans, be treated the same in order to qualify for the program. Israel has taken several steps to ensure equal treatment for all Americans entering Israel but it has only until the end of September to prove that the criteria have been met. Otherwise, Israel must requalify for the program during the next budget year, which begins Oct. 1.

In terms of the Palestinian conflict, about two-thirds of Americans profess neutrality, according to the AP-NORC poll — 37% said they sympathize with neither Israel nor the Palestinians, while 29% said they sympathized with both equally.

A similar percentage, 58%, said they neither favor nor oppose the creation of a Palestinian state, while 22% favor it and 15% oppose it.

The poll of 1,165 adults was conducted Aug. 10-14 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points.

## Families upended by school shootings share trauma in push for gun law changes, but get mixed results

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — For nearly a week, families whose lives were upended by a Nashville elementary school shooting took turns sharing dark details to Tennessee lawmakers.

Their children thought they were going to die. A teacher told students to race each other, knowing they needed to get some place safe quickly to avoid the spray of bullets. Children died after fire alarm evacuation protocols led one class to collide with the shooter in a hallway.

The parents who testified spilled their own stories, but also carried the weight of representing and speaking for the six people — including three children — who were killed by a shooter on March 27 inside The Covenant School. They hoped that doing so during a brief special session in August would compel lawmakers to pass meaningful legislation.

"To me, that was the most nerve-wracking piece," said Melissa Alexander, whose child attends Covenant. "Trying to tell someone else's story in the most perfect way, it's not easy."

But inside the Republican-led General Assembly, many lawmakers had already dismissed the gun control change as an option and resisted passing any significant changes this year, punting the issue to the next regular session starting in January. They argued that their constituents are protective of the Second Amendment and that taking away guns even temporarily is likely to infringe on people's rights.

It's an all-too-common scene across the United States. Throughout the corridors of many state Capitols, families are sharing emotionally gutting stories of tragedy caused by mass school shootings with the hope that revealing their trauma will convince lawmakers from either party to reconsider firearm policies.

States have differed widely for years in their responses to the spate of mass shootings that plague the country. Democratic-led states have largely tightened firearm restrictions, while Republican-led ones have loosened them. Meanwhile, families have waded into the legislative process, uncovering and reliving personally painful details before lawmakers — privately, publicly or both — with mixed results.

"Families will do whatever it takes to restore that sense of protection that wasn't there that day, even if that means having to talk with, raise their voices and share what they experienced as a family, and what their kids experienced, with people that they know may not even give them the respect of listening," said Melissa Brymer, director of the Terrorism & Disaster Program at the UCLA/Duke University National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

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The inaction this year in Tennessee was markedly different than how Florida reacted five years ago to a massive school shooting.

Lawmakers in Florida's Republican-controlled Legislature passed a series of gun control laws just three weeks after authorities say a mentally disturbed man killed 17 people in a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. The legislation raised the gun-buying age to 21, imposed a three-day waiting period for purchases and let police seek court orders seizing guns from individuals considered a danger to themselves or others — a stronger "red flag" change than a Tennessee proposal that couldn't even get a hearing.

These changes came after Parkland families gave impassioned pleas seeking school-safety measures.

"I've never been an outspoken person. I never wanted to be in this situation. But I'm pleading with you to put your differences aside," said Max Schachter, whose 14-year-old son Alex was among 17 people killed at the Parkland shooting, during an emotional 2018 committee hearing. "It's time to learn to compromise and help make our schools safe again... I'm willing to compromise, are you?"

Instead, the outcome in Tennessee bore more resemblance to the response from Texas lawmakers after 19 children and two teachers were killed at the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde last May.

In April, Kimberly Mata-Rubio waited for more than 12 hours at the Texas Capitol to testify that lawmakers should raise the purchase age for semiautomatic rifles like the one an 18-year-old gunman used to kill her daughter Lexi. The hearing adjourned after 3 a.m. without a vote.

"Did you look at images of children running for their lives, and think, 'What if we had enacted stricter gun laws?'" Mata-Rubio asked a Texas House committee, wiping away tears.

Parents offered similar pleas in Tennessee last month during a brief special legislative session called by Republican Gov. Bill Lee. But resistant Republican lawmakers largely dismissed Lee's push for legislation to keep guns away from people who are judged to pose a threat from themselves or others.

Rather than open a debate about the state's lax firearm regulations, the session was overshadowed by debates over new rules temporarily limiting public access around the Capitol and banning people from holding signs at hearings.

Republican legislative leaders argued their constituents didn't want changes to Tennessee's gun laws. For years the state's elections have increasingly favored conservatives, so the vast majority of legislative districts are usually decided during GOP primary elections, often rendering general elections a foregone conclusion.

"There's a huge amount of our caucus, their people who sent them asked us not to do anything," said House Republican Caucus Chairman Jeremy Faison.

Meanwhile, one lawmaker booted everyone in the audience — grieving parents and all — from one hearing because some in the audience held signs and clapped.

"I don't think people understand what it means to be up here," said Sarah Shoop Neumann, a parent where her children attends Covenant, told reporters through tears. "It's raw."

During one committee hearing, parents closely connected to the Covenant shooting audibly gasped, and some fled the room in tears, when Republican Rep. Chris Todd suggested that the shooter "probably would have driven over those kids" if they didn't have a gun, as a way to dismiss that fewer firearms — rather than more — would have prevented the tragedy. He was proposing a wide expansion of who could bring guns into schools.

Todd's comments came after a parent of two Covenant students, Becky Hansen, sobbed while telling lawmakers for the first time publicly that her son's teacher convinced students it was a race so they would move quickly and without panic from outside the school to a safe place.

Abby McLean, a mother of three Covenant students, described how her daughter's third-grade classroom was fired at through the door window. She held up a photo of her children on her phone as she addressed lawmakers.

"How can we look them in the eye and say, 'Our solution is going to be by bringing more guns, that you are afraid of, into the building?'" McLean said.

House Republicans wanted a wide range of bills to pass, the Senate pursued only a few, but neither



were open to gun restrictions. Four bills with minimal changes ultimately passed.

For many parents, it signaled they would likely retell and relive these dark moments for many more months, as they pledged to seek change next legislative session and in the 2024 statehouse elections.

"I really think the stories we shared are going to live on," Alexander said. "I think they're going to play an important role in changing our country and making a difference. That's why we shared them."

Associated Press writer Paul Weber contributed to this report from Austin, Texas.

## Canada expels an Indian diplomat as it investigates a Sikh's killing. India denies an alleged link

By KRUTIKA PATHI and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Canada expelled a top Indian diplomat as it investigates what Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called credible allegations its government may have had links to the assassination in Canada of a Sikh activist, an accusation that India rejected as "absurd."

Trudeau said in Parliament on Monday that Canadian intelligence agencies have been looking into the allegations after Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a strong supporter of an independent Sikh homeland known as Khalistan, was gunned down on June 18 outside a Sikh cultural center in Surrey, British Columbia.

Trudeau told Parliament that he brought up the slaying with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Group of 20 summit last week in New Delhi. He said he told Modi that any Indian government involvement would be unacceptable and that he asked for cooperation in the investigation.

Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly said the head of Indian intelligence in Canada has been expelled as a consequence.

"If proven true this would be a great violation of our sovereignty and of the most basic rule of how countries deal with each other," Joly said. "As a consequence we have expelled a top Indian diplomat."

India's foreign ministry dismissed the allegation of government involvement as "absurd and motivated." The ministry's statement Tuesday added that Trudeau made similar allegations to Modi at the G20 summit.

"Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the statement noted, referring to a separatist movement India regards as a security threat.

The expulsion comes as relations between Canada and India are tense. Trade talks have been derailed and Canada just canceled a trade mission to India that was planned for the fall.

During a meeting with Trudeau at the G20 summit, Modi expressed "strong concerns" over Canada's handling of the Punjabi independence movement among overseas Sikhs, according to India's Ministry of External Affairs.

The statement described the Sikh movement as "promoting secessionism and inciting violence" against Indian diplomats. It called on Canada to work with India on what New Delhi said is a threat to the Canadian Indian diaspora.

Canada has a Sikh population of more than 770,000, or about 2% of its total population.

"Over the past number of weeks Canadian security agencies have been actively pursuing credible allegations of a potential link between agents of the government of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar," Trudeau said.

Trudeau said Canada has declared its deep concerns to the Indian government. "Any involvement of a foreign government in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty."

Trudeau said his government has been working closely and coordinating with Canada's allies on the case.

"In the strongest possible terms I continue to urge the government of India to cooperate with Canada to get to the bottom of this matter," he said.

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc said Canada's national security adviser and the head of Canada's spy service have travelled to India to meet their counterparts and to confront the Indian intelligence

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agencies with the allegations.

He called it an active homicide investigation led by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Joly said Trudeau also raised the matter with U.S. President Joe Biden and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. "We are deeply concerned about the allegations referenced by Prime Minister Trudeau," White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson. "We remain in regular contact with our Canadian partners. It is critical that Canada's investigation proceed and the perpetrators be brought to justice."

Opposition New Democrat leader Jagmeet Singh, who is himself Sikh, called it outrageous and shocking. Singh said he grew up hearing stories that challenging India's record on human rights might prevent you from getting a visa to travel there.

"But to hear the prime minister of Canada corroborate a potential link between a murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil by a foreign government is something I could never have imagined," Singh said.

The Khalistan movement is banned in India, where officials see it and affiliated groups as a national security threat. But the movement still has some support in northern India, as well as beyond, in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom which are home to a sizable Sikh diaspora.

Nijjar was organizing an unofficial referendum in India for an independent Sikh state at the time of this death. Indian authorities announced a cash reward last year for information leading to Nijjar's arrest, accusing him of involvement in an alleged attack on a Hindu priest in India.

British Columbia Premier David Eby said he's received a briefing from Canada's spy agency about the "assassination" of Nijjar and he's "deeply disturbed" by what he was told.

He said he's calling on the Canadian government to share all information related to ongoing foreign interference and "transnational organized crime threats."

The World Sikh Organization of Canada called Nijjar an outspoken supporter of Khalistan who "often led peaceful protests against the violation of human rights actively taking place in India and in support of Khalistan."

"Nijjar had publicly spoken of the threat to his life for months and said that he was targeted by Indian intelligence agencies," the statement said.

Nijjar's New York-based lawyer, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, has said Nijjar was warned by Canadian intelligence officials about being targeted for assassination by "mercenaries" before he was gunned down.

Janice Stein, a political scientist and international relations expert at the University of Toronto, said to kill a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is astounding.

"It's tragic for Canada because we have issues of foreign interference with the two largest economies in Asia, China and India. And we have two very large diaspora from both countries. This is not what we want," Stein said.

Indian authorities have cracked down on Sikh separatism over the years, after an armed insurgency in the 1980s for an independent Sikh state called Khalistan took off in Punjab state. A subsequent military operation killed thousands of people, according to official estimates.

Gilles reported from Toronto. Associated Press journalist Amer Madhani contributed to this report from New York.

## Five Americans detained in Iran walk free, released in deal for frozen Iranian assets

By JON GAMBRELL, LUJAIN JO and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Five Americans detained for years in Iran walked off a plane and into freedom Monday, most arm-in-arm, as part of a politically risky deal that saw President Joe Biden agree to the release of nearly \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets owed by a third country, South Korea.

The successful negotiations for the Americans' freedom brought Biden profuse thanks from their families but heat from Republican presidential rivals and other opponents for the monetary arrangement with one

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of America's top adversaries.

"Today, five innocent Americans who were imprisoned in Iran are finally coming home," Biden said in a statement released as the plane carrying the group from Tehran landed in Doha, Qatar. A plane carrying the Americans home to the United States was due to land Monday night.

Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, on hand for the United Nations General Assembly in New York, suggested Monday's exchange could be "a step in the direction of a humanitarian action between us and America."

"It can definitely help in building trust," Raisi told journalists.

However, tensions are almost certain to remain high between the U.S. and Iran, which are locked in disputes over Tehran's nuclear program and other matters. Iran says the program is peaceful, but it now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

The prisoner release unfolded amid a major American military buildup in the Persian Gulf, with the possibility of U.S. troops boarding and guarding commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of all oil shipments pass.

After the plane slowed to a stop in Doha, three of the prisoners walked down the stairs. They hugged the U.S. ambassador to Qatar, Timmy Davis, and others.

The three — Siamak Namazi, Emad Sharghi and Morad Tahbaz — then threw their arms over one another's shoulders and walked off to a building in the airport.

In a statement issued on his behalf, Namazi said: "I would not be free today, if it wasn't for all of you who didn't allow the world to forget me."

"Thank you for being my voice when I could not speak for myself and for making sure I was heard when I mustered the strength to scream from behind the impenetrable walls of Evin Prison," he said.

The United States did not immediately identify the other two freed Americans, all of whom were released in exchange for five Iranians in U.S. custody and for the deal over the frozen Iranian assets. The Biden administration said the five freed Iranians pose no threat to U.S. national security.

Two of the imprisoned Americans' family members, Effie Namazi and Vida Tahbaz, who had been under travel bans in Iran, also were on the plane. The women, too, clasped arms and kissed on the tarmac in Qatar.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said two of the Iranian prisoners will stay in the U.S. Meanwhile, Nour News, a website believed to be close to Iran's security apparatus, said two of the Iranian prisoners were in Doha for the swap.

Nour News identified the two released Iranians in Doha as Mehrdad Ansari, an Iranian sentenced by the U.S. to 63 months in prison in 2021 for obtaining equipment that could be used in missiles, electronic warfare, nuclear weapons and other military gear, and Reza Sarhangpour Kafrani, an Iranian charged in 2021 over allegedly unlawfully exporting laboratory equipment to Iran.

The \$5.9 billion in cash released to Iran represents money South Korea owed Iran — but had not yet paid — for oil purchased before the U.S. imposed sanctions on such transactions in 2019.

The U.S. maintains that, once in Qatar, the money will be held in restricted accounts to be used only for humanitarian goods, such as medicine and food. Those transactions are currently allowed under American sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic over its advancing nuclear program.

Iranian government officials have largely concurred, though some hard-liners have insisted, without evidence, that there would be no restrictions on how Tehran spends the money.

The planned exchange comes ahead of the convening of world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly this week in New York, where Raisi will speak.

The deal has already opened Biden to fresh criticism from Republicans and others who say the administration is helping boost the Iranian economy at a time when Iran poses a growing threat to American troops and Mideast allies. That could have implications in his re-election campaign.

Former President Donald Trump, currently the lead Republican challenger in the polls against Biden's 2024 re-election bid, called it an "absolutely ridiculous" deal on the Truth Social social media site. Senate

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Minority Leader Mitch McConnell accused Biden of “rewarding and incentivizing Tehran’s bad behavior.” Biden held what the White House described as an emotional phone call with the families of the freed Americans after their release.

In his statement, Biden urged Americans not to travel to Iran and demanded more information on what happened to Bob Levinson, an American who went missing years ago. The Biden administration also announced fresh sanctions on former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence.

The U.S. government, the prisoners’ families and activists have denounced the charges against the five Americans as baseless.

The Americans included Namazi, who was detained in 2015 and later sentenced to 10 years in prison on spying charges; Emad Sharghi, a venture capitalist sentenced to 10 years; and Morad Tahbaz, a British-American conservationist of Iranian descent who was arrested in 2018 and also received a 10-year sentence.

In a statement, Sharghi’s sister, Neda, said she “can’t wait to hug my brother and never let him go.”

“This is my brother, not an abstract policy,” she added. “We are talking about human lives. There is nothing partisan about saving the lives of innocent Americans and today should be a moment of American unity as we welcome them home.”

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken thanked Qatar, Switzerland, South Korea and Oman for helping make the deal happen. Biden pledged in a statement to keep pressing for “accountability for Iran and other regimes for the cruel practice of wrongful detention.”

Iran and the U.S. have a history of prisoner swaps dating back to the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover and hostage crisis following the Islamic Revolution. Their most recent major exchange happened in 2016, when Iran came to a deal with world powers to restrict its nuclear program in return for easing sanctions.

The West accuses Iran of using foreign prisoners — including those with dual nationality — as bargaining chips, an allegation Tehran rejects.

Negotiations over a major prisoner swap faltered after then-president Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear deal in 2018. From the following year on, a series of attacks and ship seizures attributed to Iran have raised tensions.

Iran also supplies Russia with the bomb-carrying drones Moscow uses to target sites in Ukraine in its war on Kyiv, which remains another major dispute between Tehran and Washington.

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Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Lee from Washington. Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Paul Haven in New York; Ellen Knickmeyer, Eric Tucker and Farnoush Amiri in Washington, and Aamer Madhani and Michelle Phillips in New York contributed.

## Heading for UN, Ukraine’s president questions why Russia still has a place there

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Days before potentially crossing paths with Russia’s top diplomat at the United Nations, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suggested Monday that the world body needs to answer for allowing his country’s invader a seat at the tables of power.

“For us, it’s very important that all our words, all our messages, will be heard by our partners. And if in the United Nations still — it’s a pity, but still — there is a place for Russian terrorists, the question is not to me. I think it’s a question to all the members of the United Nations,” Zelenskyy said after visiting wounded Ukrainian military members at a New York hospital.

He had just arrived in the U.S. to make his country’s case to the world and to Washington for continued help in trying to repel Russia’s invasion, nearly 19 months into what has become a grinding war.

Ukraine’s Western allies have supplied weapons and other assistance, and the U.S. Congress is currently weighing President Joe Biden’s request to provide as much as \$24 billion more in military and humanitarian aid.

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U.S. lawmakers are increasingly divided over providing additional money to Ukraine. Zelenskyy is scheduled to spend some time Thursday on Capitol Hill and meet with Biden at the White House.

Before that, Zelenskyy is due to address world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday and speak Wednesday at a U.N. Security Council meeting about Ukraine. Russia is a permanent, veto-wielding member of the council, and Foreign Minister Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to make remarks.

Asked whether he'd stay in the room to listen, Zelenskyy said, "I don't know how it will be, really."

Zelenskyy has taken the United Nations to task before — even before the war launched by a neighbor that, as a Security Council member, is entrusted with maintaining international peace and security. In one memorable example, he lamented at the General Assembly in 2021 that the U.N. was "a retired superhero who's long forgotten how great they once were."

Traveling to the U.S. for the first time since December, he began his trip with a stop at Staten Island University Hospital. The medical facility has, to date, treated 18 Ukrainian military members who lost limbs in the war, said Michael J. Dowling, the CEO of hospital parent company Northwell Health.

With help from a New Jersey-based charity called Kind Deeds, the injured have gotten fitted for prostheses and are undergoing outpatient physical therapy.

Zelenskyy greeted several injured troops as they exercised in a rehab gym. He asked about their wounds, wished them a speedy recovery and thanked them for their service.

"How are you doing? Is it difficult?" Zelenskyy asked one military member, who paused and then said it was OK.

"Stay strong," Zelenskyy replied, later telling the group their country was grateful and proud of them.

Later, in a hospital conference room, he awarded medals to the injured, posed for photos, signed a large Ukrainian flag and thanked medical personnel and the injured troops.

"We all will be waiting for you back home," he said. "We absolutely need every one of you."

## **Carmakers and the United Auto Workers are talking. No signs of a breakthrough to end the strike**

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

The United Auto Workers and Detroit's Big Three carmakers resumed talks aimed at ending a strike now in its fourth day, and under the threat that the walkout could soon spread.

Stellantis said it resumed negotiations with the union Monday and described the talks as "constructive." A spokesman for General Motors said representatives of the company and the United Auto Workers also were continuing to negotiate.

However, UAW President Shawn Fain said on NPR, "We have a long way to go," and if the companies don't respond to the union's demands, "then we will escalate action."

In a video statement late Monday, Fain said more factories could be targeted if "serious progress" toward an agreement isn't reached by Friday at noon.

"We're not messing around," he said.

So far the strike is limited to about 13,000 workers at three factories — one each at GM, Ford and Stellantis, the successor to Fiat Chrysler.

However, the union's strategy hinges on its ability to escalate the strike quickly, and the carmakers are warning of potential layoffs as the limited strike reduces the amount of material needed at plants that remain open.

GM said Monday that 2,000 UAW-represented workers at an assembly plant in Kansas City are "expected to be idled as soon as early this week" because of a shortage of supplies from a GM plant near St. Louis, where workers walked off the job Friday.

Workers at the Kansas City plant build the Chevrolet Malibu and Cadillac XT4.

The strike could begin to affect suppliers and their employees too. CIE Newcor told Michigan officials that it expects a one-month closure of four plants in the state to start Oct. 2 and idle nearly 300 workers.

In a sign of concern of the strike's potential economic and political fallout, the Biden administration

stepped up its response.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she is hoping for a quick resolution, while adding that is too soon to gauge the strike's impact.

"It's premature to be making forecasts about what it means for the economy. It would depend on how long the strike lasts and who would be affected by it," she said on CNBC.

Yellen said labor activism this year — strikes by Hollywood writers and actors, by workers at about 150 Starbucks locations and walkouts that were narrowly averted at United Parcel Service and West Coast ports — has been driven by a strong labor market and high demand for workers.

President Joe Biden is sending two top administration officials to Detroit to meet with both sides. Biden has backed the UAW in brief public comments, saying that the automakers have not fairly shared their record profits with workers.

An administration official said Monday that acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and senior aide Gene Sperling will not serve as mediators — they won't be at the bargaining table — but are going to Detroit "to help support the negotiations in any way the parties feel is constructive." The official was not authorized to discuss private discussions and spoke anonymously.

Fain said the Biden administration won't broker a deal

"This is our battle. Our members are out there manning the picket lines," he said Monday on MSNBC. "This battle is not about the president, it's not about the former president" — a reference to reports that former President Donald Trump plans to skip a debate for Republican presidential candidates next week to meet with striking autoworkers in Detroit.

A key feature of the UAW strategy is the threat of escalating the strike if the union is unhappy with the pace of bargaining.

On Monday, Ford workers on a picket line outside a plant in the Detroit suburb of Wayne were joined by members of other unions and the occasional politician.

Tevita Uhatafe, an aircraft-maintenance worker from Arlington, Texas, showed his support and saw what it might look like if UAW members strike against a GM truck plant in his hometown.

"This is a fight that is most likely going to happen in our backyard," Uhatafe said.

U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens, D-Mich., said she walked the picket line because the strike "is showcasing a modern movement for worker justice and worker fairness."

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Associated Press writer Mike Householder in Wayne, Michigan, contributed to this report. Koenig reported from Dallas.

## **Trump calls DeSantis abortion ban 'a terrible mistake,' sparking anger from some key Republicans**

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

Donald Trump is facing new blowback from anti-abortion activists for refusing to commit to national abortion restrictions and for calling Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' signing of a six-week ban on the procedure a "terrible mistake."

Speaking Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," Trump repeatedly declined to say whether he would support a federal ban on abortion. He said he could "live with" the procedure being banned by individual states or nationwide through federal action, though he said "from a legal standpoint, I think it's probably better" to be handled at the state level.

Regarding the bill signed by DeSantis, which bans abortions before many women know they are pregnant, Trump said, "I think what he did is a terrible thing and a terrible mistake."

So far, the former president has dominated the 2024 field while at times spurning the anti-abortion groups that traditionally have huge influence in Republican primaries. But Trump's direct attack on DeSantis, whom he's long treated as his chief rival, could give the Florida governor new fodder as he tries to regain momentum in his campaign and solidify his second-place standing.

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Speaking to an Iowa radio station on Monday, DeSantis said he was proud to have signed the Florida legislation, which he called "noble and just."

"I don't know how you can even make the claim that you're somehow pro-life if you're criticizing states for enacting pro-life protections for babies," DeSantis told Radio Iowa.

He also criticized Trump's statement that he would work with both sides regarding abortion policy, warning, "I think all pro-lifers should know that he's preparing to sell you out."

At a campaign stop in Mason City, Iowa, on Monday, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina mentioned other candidates who oppose a national abortion ban but specifically accused Trump of retreating on the issue.

"Frankly, those pro-life folks that we really want to stand with us are not standing," he told more than 80 people in a church meeting room. "President Trump said he would negotiate with Democrats and walked back away from where I believe we need to be, which is a 15-week limit on the federal level."

Following Sunday's interview, the country's largest anti-abortion organization, which backs a national ban on abortions at 15 weeks of pregnancy, quickly released a statement saying anything less restrictive "makes no sense."

"We're at a moment where we need a human rights advocate, someone who is dedicated to saving the lives of children and serving mothers in need. Every single candidate should be clear on how they plan to do that," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America.

The Supreme Court ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* left the decision of whether and how to restrict abortion to the states, creating a patchwork of laws across the country, with most Republican-led states imposing new restrictions and states led by Democrats passing protections. Twenty-five million women of childbearing age now live in states where abortions are more difficult to get than before the ruling.

Trump has approached abortion from a political stance, saying that the Supreme Court's decision gave conservatives room to negotiate new restrictions. He has argued Republicans' push for abortion restrictions hurt the GOP in the 2022 midterm elections and that GOP candidates need to do a better job of explaining the issue.

Banning abortion at six weeks of pregnancy, as Florida enacted earlier this year, is unpopular with the U.S. public, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted in June. The poll found that 73% of all U.S. adults believe abortion should be allowed up to six weeks of pregnancy, which is when cardiac activity in a fetus may be detected and before women often know they're pregnant. About half of Americans say abortions should be permitted up to 15 weeks.

In that poll, 56% of Republicans said abortion should be allowed in their state up to 6 weeks and 29% supported making the procedure legal up to 15 weeks.

But in Iowa's first-in-the-nation Republican caucuses, evangelicals and other social conservatives who strongly oppose abortion make up the majority of those who participate and decide the winner. Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds this summer signed an abortion ban similar to Florida's. Reynolds has not endorsed a candidate.

Trump has called himself the "the most pro-life president in American history" and noted that three of his Supreme Court picks formed part of the conservative majority that overturned *Roe*.

He has so far declined to go along with some of his rivals, including his onetime vice president, Mike Pence, who is pushing for national bans that would take effect relatively early in a pregnancy.

Interviews with GOP voters and activists over the past several months suggest a split between people satisfied with Trump's record during his term and others who want Trump to endorse a national abortion ban.

Some Republicans in some key states, including those backing his rivals, expressed displeasure after the interview.

Among them was South Carolina state Rep. John McCravy, who sponsored the most recent, restrictive abortion measure, which bans the practice in his state after around six weeks of pregnancy. South Carolina will be among the early states to choose a nominee. McCravy described himself in an interview as "certainly disappointed."

"It sounded completely out of step with his staunch support for life while he was president," he said. Kristen Waggoner, CEO of the conservative legal organization Alliance Defending Freedom, also took issue. "Laws protecting the unborn are not a 'terrible mistake.' They are the hallmark of a just and moral society," she wrote on X. "Governors who protect life should be applauded, not attacked."

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life Action, called the interview "extremely disappointing" and sent a letter to Trump asking him to clarify his statements. The organization, one of the largest anti-abortion groups in the U.S., said it plans a \$5 million door-knocking campaign in 2024 but noted its members were discouraged by Trump's comments.

"The pro-life vote is up for grabs," Hawkins stated.

"We need clarity on your vision even as we celebrate your pro-life record."

Burnett reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Mason City, Iowa, Jonathan J. Cooper in Phoenix, Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina, and Michelle L. Price in New York contributed to this report.

## **Ex-DOJ official Jeffrey Clark acted within the scope of official duties in Georgia case, lawyer says**

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Former Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark was acting within the scope of his official duties when he wrote a letter expressing concern about alleged problems with the 2020 election in Georgia, his lawyer said Monday as he sought to move charges against Clark to federal court.

Clark is charged along with former President Donald Trump and 17 others, accused of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to overturn Democrat Joe Biden's presidential election victory and keep the Republican Trump in power. All 19 defendants have pleaded not guilty.

U.S. District Judge Steve Jones presided over the hearing on Clark's attempt to move his case to federal court from Fulton County Superior Court. Jones earlier this month rejected a similar effort from Trump White House chief of staff Mark Meadows. Unlike Meadows, who testified at his own hearing last month, Clark was not in court as his lawyer argued on his behalf.

Clark's attorneys last week submitted a declaration to the court in which he outlined his service in the Justice Department. Jones on Monday said he wouldn't consider that statement after prosecutors raised concerns about not being able to question Clark about any of his assertions.

The indictment says Clark wrote a letter after the November 2020 election that said the Department of Justice had "identified significant concerns that may have impacted the outcome of the election in multiple States, including the State of Georgia" and asked top department officials to sign it and send it to Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and state legislative leaders.

Clark had been told by top department officials that the central claim in his letter was false, that he didn't have the authority to make that claim and that it was outside the department's role, prosecutors argued.

Harry MacDougald, an attorney for Clark, characterized the situation as a disagreement among lawyers. It is not within the authority of a state prosecutor to peer into confidential deliberations at the Justice Department or the White House and "pick a winner and a loser and indict the loser," he told the judge.

Jones asked MacDougald if someone who was holding the two roles that Clark had at the time — assistant attorney general overseeing the environment and natural resources division and acting assistant attorney general over the civil division — had the authority to go straight to the president without going through his department superiors.

"If he's contacted by the president, yes," MacDougald responded.

MacDougald referenced a 2021 meeting at the White House during which Trump asked about the letter Clark had written but was ultimately convinced by others not to have it sent to Georgia officials, saying, "The theory of our case is that the president ratified this conduct in the Jan. 3 meeting."

MacDougald dismissed the notion that federal authorities have no role in state elections, pointing out



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that the Department of Justice was already looking into election fraud allegations before Clark got involved.

"The Rubicon had already been crossed," MacDougald said.

Prosecutors had subpoenaed Jody Hunt, who served as head of the Justice Department civil division before Clark. Under questioning by prosecutor Anna Cross, Hunt testified that the civil division had no role in investigating election interference or election fraud, saying that would fall to the civil rights division or the criminal division.

He also described a department memo that says communications between the agency and the White House must go through the attorney general, the deputy attorney general or the associate attorney general. That is meant to avoid people being asked to do things outside their responsibilities and to avoid conflicting requests, he said.

Another prosecutor, Donald Wakeford, argued that Clark had presented no evidence that his actions were authorized by Trump or even that Trump had the authority to weigh in on these matters. Clark also provided no explanation of what federal law he was trying to enforce or what authority or appropriate expertise he had to be looking into allegations of problems with the election, Wakeford said.

"This case does not involve federal authority," Wakeford said, arguing for the case to be returned to the state court. "There is no federal authority here to protect."

Clark is one of five defendants seeking to move his case to federal court, and Trump has signaled that he may join them. Although the ruling against Meadows could signal an uphill battle for Clark and the others, Jones made clear he would assess each case individually.

Three Georgia Republicans who signed a certificate falsely certifying that Trump had won the state and they were the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors are set to appear before Jones on Wednesday. All three have indicated in court filings that they will not be present in court.

Meadows, who is appealing Jones' ruling, took the stand and testified for nearly four hours last month, answering questions from his own lawyer, a prosecutor and the judge. He talked about his duties as Trump's last chief of staff and sometimes struggled to recall the details of the two months following the November 2020 election.

Jones said he would try to rule quickly. His decision in the Meadows case came a week and a half after the hearing.

The practical effects of moving to federal court would be a jury pool that includes a broader area than just overwhelmingly Democratic Fulton County and a trial that would not be photographed or televised, as cameras are not allowed inside federal courtrooms. But it would not open the door for Trump, if he's elected again in 2024, or another president to issue pardons because any conviction would still happen under state law.

Clark was identified as one of six unnamed co-conspirators in an indictment filed by special counsel Jack Smith charging Trump with seeking to illegally overturn the results of the 2020 election and block the peaceful transfer of power to Biden. He has not been charged in that case.

Federal agents searched Clark's Virginia home in the summer of 2022, and video emerged of him standing in his driveway, handcuffed and wearing no pants.

## Speaker McCarthy is running out of options to stop a shutdown as conservatives balk at a new plan

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Speaker Kevin McCarthy was running out of options Monday as he pushed ahead with a plan to keep the federal government from shutting down, but even including hardline border security provisions wasn't enough to appease the far-right flank in his Republican House majority.

The speaker is trying to convince his Republican conference that there will heavy political fallout from a shutdown as he plows toward a vote to pass a stopgap measure, called a continuing resolution, that would keep government offices open past the Sept. 30 deadline. GOP leadership is preparing for a vote by Thursday, but McCarthy is warning he'll keep House lawmakers in Washington into the weekend. Regard-

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less, many are already bracing for a weeks-long shutdown.

"I've told all of Congress you're not going to go home. We're going to continue to work through this," McCarthy said Monday at the Capitol. "Things that are tough sometimes are worth it."

He also suggested that time is still on his side and panned the idea of compromising with Democrats as he tries to pass the annual spending measures on his own, saying there were "a lot of good ideas" still coming from Republicans.

"This isn't the 30th — we've got a long ways to go," he said.

There is also no hope of passing all of the appropriations bills on Congress' agenda before then. Even a Defense appropriations bill — usually an easy lift with Republicans — has stalled in the House as they resist more money for Ukraine.

The speaker on a Sunday night call with House Republicans pitched the one-month funding bill that was negotiated between the hard-right House Freedom Caucus and a group of pragmatic-minded conservatives known as the Main Street Caucus, according to those with knowledge of the call.

McCarthy called the package a "bottom-up" approach. It was intended to win support from the conservative wing of the Republican Conference by cutting last year's overall spending levels by 1%, and including a slew of Republican proposals for border security and immigration. But in order to protect current spending levels for Republican priorities of defense, veterans and disaster relief, it slashes other spending by more than 8%.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in a floor speech said the proposal from the House "can be boiled down to two words: slapdash, reckless."

"Slapdash, because it's not a serious proposal for avoiding a shutdown, and reckless because if passed would cause immense harm to so many priorities that help the American people," he said.

With the Senate controlled by Democrats who, along with some Republicans, will not accept the conservative options, the best hope McCarthy has at this point is to simply pass a measure to kickstart debate with the other chamber. But even that route is doubtful with time dwindling and McCarthy struggling to push his conference to avert a shutdown.

"There's quite a few people that are against it right now," said Rep. Kevin Hern, R-Okla., leader of the Republican Study Committee, the largest conservative faction in the House, about the latest proposal, adding that he was still considering it. He said a lot of work was happening "behind the scenes" to get the votes to pass it.

Leadership, as well as members of some of the so-called "five families" — the various conservative factions that make up the House Republican majority — convened later Monday behind closed doors in the speaker's office.

McCarthy, staring down just eight working days in session before funding runs out, appeared ready to press towards votes this week on both a continuing resolution and the Defense appropriations bill, even if they can't pass.

"The best path forward — to get conservative solutions, to reduce spending, to hold this administration accountable, to get solutions on the border — is by moving forward with what these guys have put together," said Rep. Garrett Graves, a Louisiana Republican who is one of McCarthy's top lieutenants.

Though McCarthy still contends he has days to maneuver before the government's fiscal year ends, he has also tried to warn his party that a government shutdown is likely to backfire on Republicans politically.

"I've been through shutdowns and I've never seen somebody win a shutdown because when you shut down, you give all your power to the administration," McCarthy said in a Fox News interview on Sunday.

"How are you going to win your arguments to secure the border if the border agents don't get paid? How are you going to win the arguments to get wokeism out of the Department of Defense? If even our own troops aren't being paid? You have no strength there."

But McCarthy is facing a cadre of Republicans who are prepared to endure a prolonged shutdown. A handful of GOP lawmakers swiftly took to X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, shortly after the Sunday call to criticize the proposed package, even with spending cuts and border measures, as woefully insufficient.

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One of the Freedom Caucus lawmakers who helped craft the proposal, Rep. Byron Donalds, R-Fla., said he answered phone calls coming into his office Monday and he heard frustration from people critical of the package, pushing him to hold out for more conservative cuts.

He was also unbothered by the prospect of a shutdown.

"People can live without our government for a period of time," he said. "The sun comes up every day. People live their lives. Life goes on."

But the U.S. Chamber of Commerce issued a memo Monday to the business community warning that a prolonged shutdown could cause disruptions across the country.

"Individuals and businesses rely on the discretionary functions of government on a daily basis," the Chamber wrote. "From passports and permits to clinical trials and contractors, a well-functioning economy requires a functioning government."

The Biden administration is also highlighting the potential damage from a funding stoppage. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on CNBC Monday, "We've got a good, strong economy and creating a situation that could cause a loss of momentum is something we don't need."

McCarthy could potentially turn to House Democrats to pass a stopgap measure if he was willing to strip the conservative policy wins out of a funding bill.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries met with McCarthy on Monday, but several right-wing members are threatening to try to oust the speaker if they forge a partnership to pass a continuing resolution.

Jeffries said he would only support a "clean" funding bill without the Republican extras, and particularly slammed the GOP idea of funding an "ineffective, medieval border wall" as part of the funding stopgap.

He said, "It's all on Republicans at this moment."

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Associated Press writer Fatima Hussein in Washington contributed reporting.

## **Michigan State tells football coach Mel Tucker it will fire him for misconduct with rape survivor**

By LARRY LAGE AP Sports Writer

Michigan State informed suspended football coach Mel Tucker on Monday that he will be fired without compensation for misconduct involving activist and rape survivor Brenda Tracy in a sordid case that dates back more than a year.

"The notice provides Tucker with seven calendar days to respond and present reasons to me and the interim president as to why he should not be terminated for cause," athletic director Alan Haller said in a statement released by the school.

If Tucker does not present "sufficient reasons to dispute" multiple contract violations, the school will fire him Sept. 26, three days after the program's Big Ten opener in what was hoped to be a bounce-back year for the Spartans.

Tucker is in the third year of a \$95 million, 10-year contract and if he is fired for cause, the school would not have to pay him what's remaining on his deal. Tucker, his agent and his attorney did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Haller said the decision does not affect the ongoing investigation into Tracy's allegations of sexual harassment, which is being handled by the school's office for civil rights.

Tracy said Tucker sexually harassed her during a phone call in April 2022. Several months later, Tracy filed a complaint with the school's Title IX office and the investigation was completed in July. A hearing is scheduled for the week of Oct. 5 to determine if Tucker violated the school's sexual harassment and exploitation policy and a ruling could take up to 60 days.

Tracy's allegations were made public by USA Today earlier this month. The 51-year-old Tucker, who said he is estranged from his wife and has two children, said the allegations against him are "completely false." Tucker insisted that the intimate phone call he had with Tracy was consensual and outside the scope of both Title IX and school policy.

The school, however, said the actions Tucker acknowledged were unprofessional and unethical. It told Tucker he is being fired for "breaches" in his contract and for engaging "in any conduct which constitutes moral turpitude or which, in the university's sole judgement, would tend to bring public disrespect, contempt or ridicule upon the university."

Tracy is known for her work with college teams educating athletes about sexual violence. Michigan State paid her \$10,000 to share her story with the football team.

The Spartans (2-1) were routed 41-7 by No. 8 Washington on Saturday in Harlon Barnett's debut as interim coach. Michigan State hosts Maryland (3-0) on Saturday.

Tucker began his coaching career with Nick Saban as a graduate assistant for the Spartans in 1997. He returned to the school with one of the biggest contracts in college sports after leading Colorado for one season and serving as an assistant coach at Georgia, Alabama and Ohio State.

Tucker also worked in the NFL, leading the Jacksonville Jaguars as interim coach during the 2011 season.

AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-football-poll>

## Hunter Biden sues the IRS over tax disclosures after agent testimony before Congress

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hunter Biden sued the Internal Revenue Service on Monday, claiming that two agents publicly alleging tax-probe interference wrongly shared his personal information, a case that comes amid escalating legal and political struggles as the 2024 election looms.

The agents "targeted and sought to embarrass Mr. Biden" with the sharing of confidential tax information in press interviews and testimony before Congress, the suit said. His lawyers argue that whistleblower protections don't apply, but a lawyer for one agent said any confidential information released came under whistleblower authorization and called the suit a "frivolous smear."

The lawsuit marks the latest legal pushback from Biden as a long-running federal investigation into him unfolds against a sharply political backdrop. That includes an impeachment inquiry aimed at his father, President Joe Biden, seeking to tie him to his son's business dealings.

"Mr. Biden is the son of the President of the United States. He has all the same responsibilities as any other American citizen, and the IRS can and should make certain that he abides by those responsibilities," the suit states. "Similarly, Mr. Biden has no fewer or lesser rights than any other American citizen, and no government agency or government agent" has free rein to violate his rights simply because of who he is.

The suit says the IRS hasn't done enough to halt the airing of his personal information. It seeks to "force compliance with federal tax and privacy laws" and damages of \$1,000 for every unauthorized disclosure.

IRS supervisory special agent Greg Shapley, and a second agent, Joe Ziegler, have claimed there was a pattern of "slow-walking investigative steps" into Hunter Biden in testimony before Congress. They alleged that the prosecutor overseeing the investigation, Delaware U.S. Attorney David Weiss, didn't have full authority to bring charges in other jurisdictions. Weiss and the Justice Department have denied that.

Shapley's lawyer called the lawsuit a "frivolous smear" that sought to "intimidate any current and future whistleblowers." He didn't release confidential tax information except through legal whistleblower disclosures, his attorney said. "Once Congress released that testimony, like every American citizen, he has a right to discuss that public information."

Ziegler's lawyer said he will "continue to speak out" about what he considers "special treatment" for Hunter Biden in the handling of the case.

The GOP-controlled House Oversight Committee called the two men "good people who did everything right to obtain whistleblower protection with the best interest of our country in mind," in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. The agents testified before the committee in July, and said their "investigation will continue."

The IRS declined to comment, citing the pending litigation.

The White House, meanwhile, has said that Joe Biden was not involved in his son's business affairs, and months of investigations have so far not unearthed significant evidence of wrongdoing by the elder Biden, who spoke often to his son and as vice president did stop by a business dinner with his son's associates.

The investigation into Hunter Biden dates back years, and he had been expected to strike a plea deal with prosecutors over the summer that included guilty pleas to misdemeanor charges of failing to pay his taxes on time. But that deal imploded during a July court hearing, and he was indicted days ago on federal firearms charges. He's accused of lying about his drug use to buy and briefly keep a gun in October 2018.

Republicans investigating nearly every aspect of his business dealings had decried the plea agreement that spared him jail time as a "sweetheart deal."

Biden's defense attorneys have indicated they plan to fight the charges and the case could be on track toward a possible high-stakes trial.

The new civil lawsuit filed in Washington alleges the improper disclosures included the specific tax years under investigation, deductions and allegations about liability.

Weiss eventually sought and was granted special counsel status last month, giving him broad authority to investigate and report out his findings. His prosecutors have indicated they could file new tax charges in Washington or California.

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Associated Press writer Fatima Hussein contributed to this report.

## **A Black student was suspended for his hairstyle. The school says it wasn't discrimination**

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY and JUAN LOZANO Associated Press

MONT BELVIEU, Texas (AP) — A Black high school student in Texas has served more than two weeks of in-school suspensions for wearing twisted dreadlocks to school. When he arrived Monday with the same hairstyle, he was suspended again, his mother said.

Darryl George, a junior at Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, was initially suspended the same week his state outlawed racial discrimination based on hairstyles. School officials said his dreadlocks fell below his eyebrows and ear lobes and violated the district's dress code.

George, 17, has been suspended since Aug. 31 at the Houston-area school. He was in tears when he was suspended Monday despite his family's arguments that his hair does not violate the dress code, his mother Darresha George said.

"He has to sit on a stool for eight hours in a cubicle," she said. "That's very uncomfortable. Every day he'd come home, he'd say his back hurts because he has to sit on a stool."

The incident recalls debates over hair discrimination in schools and the workplace and is already testing the state's newly enacted CROWN Act, which took effect Sept. 1.

The law, an acronym for "Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair," is intended to prohibit race-based hair discrimination and bars employers and schools from penalizing people because of hair texture or protective hairstyles including Afros, braids, dreadlocks, twists or Bantu knots. Texas is one of 24 states that have enacted a version of the CROWN Act.

A federal version of the CROWN Act passed in the House of Representatives last year, but was not successful in the Senate.

For Black people, hairstyles are more than just a fashion statement. Hair has always played an important role across the Black diaspora, said Candice Matthews, national minister of politics for the New Black Panther Nation. (Her group is not affiliated with another New Black Panther organization widely considered antisemitic.)

"Dreadlocks are perceived as a connection to wisdom," Matthews said. "This is not a fad, and this is not about getting attention. Hair is our connection to our soul, our heritage and our connection to God."

In George's family, all the men have dreadlocks, going back generations. To them, the hairstyle has cultural and religious importance, his mother said.

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"Our hair is where our strength is, that's our roots," Darresha George said. "He has his ancestors locked into his hair, and he knows that."

Historians say braids and other hairstyles served as methods of communication across African societies, including to identify tribal affiliation or marriage status, and as clues to safety and freedom for those who were captured and enslaved.

After slavery was abolished, Black American hair became political. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex and national origin, Black people continued to face professional and social stigma for not adopting grooming habits that fit white, European beauty standards and norms.

The issue of race-based hair discrimination in the workplace has long existed alongside concerns in public and private schools. In 2018, a white referee in New Jersey told a Black high school wrestler to cut his dreadlocks or forfeit a match. Viral video of the wrestler having his hair cut with scissors as the crowd watched prompted the referee's suspension and spurred passage of the state's CROWN Act.

Darresha George said her son has been growing his dreadlocks for nearly 10 years and the family never received pushback or complaints until now. When let down, his dreadlocks hang above his shoulders but she said he has not worn his hair down since school started in mid-August. George said she couldn't understand how he violated the dress code when his hair was tied on top of his head.

"I even had a discussion about the CROWN Act with the principal and vice principal," she said. "They said the act does not cover the length of his hair."

Barbers Hill Independent School District prohibits male students from having hair extending below the eyebrows, ear lobes or top of a t-shirt collar, according to the student handbook. Additionally, hair on all students must be clean, well-groomed, geometrical and not an unnatural color or variation. The school does not require uniforms.

The school previously clashed with another Black male student over the dress code. Barbers Hill officials told a student he had to cut his dreadlocks to return to school or participate in graduation in 2020, which garnered national attention.

Greg Poole, who has been district superintendent since 2006, said the policy is legal and teaches students to conform as a sacrifice benefitting everyone.

"When you are asked to conform ... and give up something for the betterment of the whole, there is a psychological benefit," Poole said. "We need more teaching (of) sacrifice."

Nearby districts have less stringent policies in place. For example, Poole noted others allow students to wear jeans with holes in them, while Barbers Hill does not. He said parents come to the district because of its strict standards and high expectations, which he credits for the district's academic success.

Attorney Allie Booker, who represents the family, said the school's argument doesn't hold up because length is considered part of a hairstyle, which is protected under the law.

"We are going to continue to fight, because you can't tell someone that hairstyles are protected and then be restrictive. If style is protected, then style is protected," she said.

Darresha George said she and her son refuse to conform to a standard set by someone who is uncomfortable or ignorant.

"My son is well-groomed, and his hair is not distracting from anyone's education," Darresha George said. "This has everything to do with the administration being prejudiced toward Black hairstyles, toward Black culture."

The district defends its dress code, which says its policies are meant to "teach grooming and hygiene, instill discipline, prevent disruption, avoid safety hazards and teach respect for authority."

George's situation has drawn solidarity from young Black people around the nation, who say they have long dealt with discriminatory dress codes and comments from adults about their hair.

"When I was in fifth grade, I had a teacher tell me that my blue hair, my pink hair, was unnatural and too distracting for the other students in the class," said Victoria Bradley, 19, who lives in Detroit. Michigan passed the CROWN Act into law this year.

Bradley, whose hair is braided and currently dyed multiple colors, said she attributes a lot of her hair confidence to her mother, Bernita Bradley, a longtime hair stylist and director of parent voice for the National Parents Union.

Bernita Bradley said her first introduction to the CROWN Act was in 2021, when a biracial, 7-year-old girl in Michigan had her hair cut by a school worker without her parents' permission. The girl's father, Jimmy Hoffmeyer, filed a \$1 million lawsuit against the school district, alleging racial discrimination and ethnic intimidation. The lawsuit was settled earlier this year.

"That was modern-day scalping of this Black child," Bradley said.

This is Darryl George's first year at Barbers Hill High School. Last year, he went to a school in nearby Baytown, Texas, where he had no problems wearing the same hairstyle, his mother said. Darresha George said they recently moved to the Mont Belvieu area for personal reasons.

The family was told they need to schedule a meeting with the principal, Darresha George said.

After the suspension, "his grades are suffering, which also means he is not able to play football or participate in any extracurriculars," Darresha George said. "He was on track to graduate early, and now he is falling behind and will have to work double time just so he can still graduate."

Mumphrey reported from Phoenix.

The Associated Press education team receives support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## 'El Chapo' son Ovidio Guzmán López pleads not guilty to US drug and money laundering charges

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Ovidio Guzmán López, a son of former Sinaloa cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán, pleaded not guilty in Chicago on Monday to U.S. drug trafficking, money laundering and other charges during his first court appearance since being extradited to the U.S. from Mexico.

Guzmán López was extradited on Friday, five months after U.S. prosecutors unsealed sprawling indictments against him and his brothers, known collectively as the "Chapitos." The indictments allege that following their father's extradition and eventual life sentence in the U.S. in 2019, the brothers steered the cartel increasingly into synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine and the powerful opioid fentanyl.

During Monday's 15-minute arraignment with a larger-than-usual contingent of security inside the courtroom, Guzmán López pleaded not guilty through a translator. He stood before U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman in an orange jumpsuit and matching orange slippers, with his legs shackled at the ankles.

The short, slight 33-year-old, whose nickname is "the Mouse," hunched forward, answering questions from the judge softly and politely, presenting a picture that sharply contrasted with the reputation for extreme violence of the cartel he allegedly helps lead.

His arrest by Mexican security forces in January in Culiacan — the capital of Sinaloa state, the cartel's namesake — set off violence that left 30 people dead, including 10 military personnel. Mexico's army used Black Hawk helicopter gunships against the cartel's truck-mounted .50-caliber machine guns. Cartel gunmen hit two military aircraft, forcing them to land, and sent gunmen to the city's airport, where military and civilian aircraft were hit by gunfire.

Three years earlier, the government tried to capture him, but aborted the operation after similar violence.

The U.S. indictments against the brothers that were unsealed in April said their goal was to produce huge quantities of fentanyl and sell it at the lowest price. The brothers denied the allegations in a letter.

"We have never produced, manufactured or commercialized fentanyl nor any of its derivatives," the letter said. "We are victims of persecution and have been made into scapegoats."

When Coleman asked Guzmán López on Monday if he was on medication, he said he was — for depres-

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sion, anxiety and a stomach ailment — but that it didn't impede his ability to understand the proceedings. Some of the five charges against Guzmán López carry maximum life sentences, including conspiracy to import drugs and conspiracy to distribute them. A conviction on one of the counts, engaging in an illegal enterprise as a leader, carries a mandatory life sentence. Money laundering has a maximum 20-year sentence.

Coleman set Nov. 17 as the next court date for Guzmán López.

Homeland Security Adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall said in statement Friday that the extradition of Guzmán López "is testament to the significance of the ongoing cooperation between the American and Mexican governments on countering narcotics and other vital challenges." Sherwood-Randall made multiple visits to Mexico this year to meet with President Andrés Manuel López-Obrador, most recently last month.

López Obrador has described his country as a transit point for fentanyl precursors coming from China and bound for the U.S., despite assertions by the U.S. government and his own military about production in Mexico.

## The remaining dates on comedian Russell Brand's tour are postponed after sexual assault allegations

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police said Monday that they had received a sexual assault allegation after media outlets published claims by several women against Russell Brand. Promoters postponed the remaining dates in a string of live gigs by the comedian, who denies the allegations.

A talent agency and a publisher also parted company with Brand over the claims, which have left the U.K. entertainment industry facing questions about whether the comedian's bad behavior went unchallenged because of his fame.

Brand, 48, denies allegations of sexual assault made by four women in a Channel 4 television documentary and The Times and Sunday Times newspapers. The accusers, who have not been named, include one who said she was sexually assaulted during a relationship with him when she was 16. Another woman says Brand raped her in Los Angeles in 2012.

London's Metropolitan Police force said that since the allegations were made public it had received "a report of a sexual assault which was alleged to have taken place in Soho in central London in 2003." That is three years before the earliest of the alleged assaults reported by the media outlets.

The police force said "officers are in contact with the woman and will be providing her with support." It did not identify the alleged perpetrator as Brand, but referred to the newspaper and TV allegations in its statement. Police urged "anyone who believes they may have been a victim of a sexual offence, no matter how long ago it was, to contact us."

In a video statement released Friday in response to the media claims, Brand said that his relationships were "always consensual."

The Times said Monday that more women had contacted the newspaper with allegations against Brand and they would be "rigorously checked."

Max Blain, spokesman for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, said the claims were "very serious and concerning." Conservative legislator Caroline Nokes, who chairs the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, urged police in both Britain and the United States to investigate the "incredibly shocking" allegations.

"This merits and needs a criminal investigation, because for too long we have seen men -- and the perpetrators of these sorts of crimes are almost invariably men -- not being held to account for their behaviors and their actions," she told BBC radio.

The claims have renewed debate about the "lad culture" that flourished in Britain in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the misogyny that still percolates on the internet.

The allegations reported by the newspapers and Channel 4 cover the period between 2006 and 2013, when Brand was a major star in Britain with a growing U.S. profile.

Known for his unbridled and risqué standup routines, he hosted shows on radio and television, wrote



memoirs charting his battles with drugs and alcohol, appeared in several Hollywood movies and was briefly married to pop star Katy Perry between 2010 and 2012.

Brand was suspended by the BBC in 2008 for making lewd prank calls to "Fawlty Towers" actor Andrew Sachs in which he boasted about having sex with Sachs' granddaughter. He quit his radio show in the wake of the incident, which drew thousands of complaints to the publicly funded broadcaster.

The BBC, Channel 4 and the production company behind the "Big Brother" reality series – spinoffs of which were hosted by Brand -- all say they have launched investigations into Brand's behavior and how complaints were handled.

Brand also has been dropped by talent agency Tavistock Wood, which said it had been "horribly misled" by him. Publisher Bluebird, an imprint of Pan Macmillan, said it had decided to "pause" future publishing with Brand.

Supporters of Brand asked why the allegations were being made years after the alleged incidents. The women said that they only felt ready to tell their stories after being approached by reporters, with some citing Brand's newfound prominence as an online wellness influencer as a factor in their decision to speak.

Victims and the media also have to take account of Britain's claimant-friendly libel laws, which put the burden of proof on those making allegations.

In recent years Brand has largely disappeared from mainstream media but has built up a large following online with videos mixing wellness and conspiracy theories. His YouTube channel, which has more than 6 million subscribers, has featured COVID-19 conspiracy theories, vaccine misinformation and interviews with controversial broadcasters including Tucker Carlson and Joe Rogan.

He also has continued to tour as a comedian, performing to hundreds of people in a London venue on Saturday evening as the Channel 4 documentary was broadcast. He had been due to perform Tuesday in Windsor, west of London, but promoters said the rest of the tour was being postponed.

Ellie Tomsett, a senior lecturer in media and communications at Birmingham City University who studies Britain's standup circuit, said Brand was a product of a live comedy scene that was riddled with misogyny – and still is, despite progress made by women and others to diversify the comic landscape.

"When we've had a rise of popular feminism ... we've also had a rise in popular misogyny epitomized by the likes of (social media influencer) Andrew Tate, but evident in all aspects of society, and definitely reflected on the U.K. comedy circuit," Tomsett said

"More and more things are springing up to try and counter this, but the idea that it's something that happened in the past and doesn't happen anymore is, quite frankly, nonsense," she added.

## **9 teen boys escaped from a detention center in Pennsylvania. They made it a few miles**

MORGANTOWN, Pa. (AP) — Nine teenagers who escaped from a detention center in Pennsylvania after overpowering staff and crawling under a fence were captured less than 12 hours later, state police said Monday.

"It probably was planned, but poorly planned," said Pennsylvania State Police Trooper David Beohm.

Beohm said the first four were taken into custody shortly before 6 a.m. after they went to a home and knocked on the door. They turned themselves in because they were cold and tired, Beohm said.

Police caught up with the other five after a pickup truck and trailer were reported stolen. After a brief car chase, police found four of them in the vehicle. The last teen ran off and was caught in a field a short time later.

State and local police were called late Sunday to take control of the juvenile center in Morgantown, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia. Beohm said the escape happened after the boys, all between the ages of 15 and 17, wrested the keys away from two staff members.

They got out of the building and went to the recreation yard, where they found a spot to crawl under the fence, Beohm said. All were captured less than five miles from the detention center.

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The escape follows the capture of an escaped murderer who eluded Pennsylvania authorities for two weeks despite an extensive manhunt.

Beohm said the teenagers likely didn't have the desperation or motivation of someone like Danilo Souza Cavalcante, a murderer with a life sentence who escaped from a Pennsylvania jail and eluded law enforcement for two weeks before his capture on Sept. 13.

"I figured we'd catch these kids because they are not as resilient" as Cavalcante, Beohm said at a news conference.

Cavalcante escaped from the Chester County jail in southeastern Pennsylvania on Aug. 31 by crab-walking up between two walls that were topped with razor wire, and then jumping from the roof.

Abraxas Academy is an enclosed residential treatment program providing "specialized care for delinquent male youth between the ages of 14 to 18 in 9th grade or above," according to the facility's website.

The escaped teenagers were in detention for firearms possession, robbery, auto theft and other offenses, according to Beohm.

All will be charged with escape and some may face other charges.

This story has been updated to correct the spelling of the first name of the adult inmate captured in the unrelated escape. It's Danilo, not Danelo.

## Tens of thousands march to kick off climate summit, demanding end to warming-causing fossil fuels

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Yelling that the future and their lives depend on ending fossil fuels, tens of thousands of protesters on Sunday kicked off a week where leaders will try once again to curb climate change primarily caused by coal, oil and natural gas.

But protesters say it's not going to be enough. And they aimed their wrath directly at U.S. President Joe Biden, urging him to stop approving new oil and gas projects, phase out current ones and declare a climate emergency with larger executive powers.

"We hold the power of the people, the power you need to win this election," said 17-year-old Emma Buretta of Brooklyn of the youth protest group Fridays for Future. "If you want to win in 2024, if you do not want the blood of my generation to be on your hands, end fossil fuels."

The March to End Fossil Fuels featured such politicians as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and actors Susan Sarandon, Ethan Hawke, Edward Norton, Kyra Sedgwick and Kevin Bacon. But the real action on Broadway was where protesters crowded the street, pleading for a better but not-so-hot future. It was the opening salvo to New York's Climate Week, where world leaders in business, politics and the arts gather to try to save the planet, highlighted by a new special United Nations summit Wednesday.

Many of the leaders of countries that cause the most heat-trapping carbon pollution will not be in attendance. And they won't speak at the summit organized by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a way that only countries that promise new concrete action are invited to speak.

Organizers estimated 75,000 people marched Sunday.

"We have people all across the world in the streets, showing up, demanding a cessation of what is killing us," Ocasio-Cortez told a cheering crowd. "We have to send a message that some of us are going to be living on, on this planet 30, 40, 50 years from now. And we will not take no for an answer."

This protest was far more focused on fossil fuels and the industry than previous marches. Sunday's rally attracted a large chunk, 15%, of first-time protesters and was overwhelmingly female, said American University sociologist Dana Fisher, who studies environmental movements and was surveying march participants.

Of the people Fisher talked to, 86% had experienced extreme heat recently, 21% floods and 18% severe drought, she said. They mostly reported feeling sad and angry. Earth has just gone through the hottest summer on record.

Among the marchers was 8-year-old Athena Wilson from Boca Raton, Florida. She and her mother Ma-

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leah, flew from Florida for Sunday's protest.

"Because we care about our planet," Athena said. "I really want the Earth to feel better."

People in the South, especially where the oil industry is, and the global south, "have not felt heard," said 23-year-old Alexandria Gordon, originally from Houston. "It is frustrating."

Protest organizers emphasized how let down they felt that Biden, who many of them supported in 2020, has overseen increased drilling for oil and fossil fuels.

"President Biden, our lives depend on your actions today," said Louisiana environmental activist Sharon Lavigne. "If you don't stop fossil fuels our blood is on your hands."

Nearly one-third of the world's planned drilling for oil and gas between now and 2050 is by U.S. interests, environmental activists calculate. Over the past 100 years, the United States has put more heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than any other country, though China now emits more carbon pollution on an annual basis.

"You need to phase out fossil fuels to survive our planet," said Jean Su, a march organizer and energy justice director for the Center for Biological Diversity.

Marchers and speakers spoke of increasing urgency and fear of the future. The actress known as V, formerly Eve Ensler, premiered the anthem "Panic" from her new climate change oriented musical scheduled for next year. The chorus goes: "We want you to panic. We want you to act. You stole our future and we want it back."

Signs included "Even Santa Knows Coal is Bad" and "Fossil fuels are killing us" and "I want a fossil free future" and "keep it in the ground."

That's because leaders don't want to acknowledge "the elephant in the room," said Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate. "The elephant is that fossil fuels are responsible for the crisis. We can't eat coal. We can't drink oil, and we can't have any new fossil fuel investments."

But oil and gas industry officials said their products are vital to the economy.

"We share the urgency of confronting climate change together without delay; yet doing so by eliminating America's energy options is the wrong approach and would leave American families and businesses beholden to unstable foreign regions for higher cost and far less reliable energy," said American Petroleum Institute Senior Vice President Megan Bloomgren.

Activists weren't having any of that.

"The fossil fuel industry is choosing to rule and conquer and take and take and take without limit," Rabbi Stephanie Kolin of Congregation Beth Elohim of Brooklyn said. "And so waters are rising and the skies are turning orange (from wildfire smoke) and the heat is taking lives. But you Mr. President can choose the other path, to be a protector of this Earth."

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## Hawaii officials say DNA tests drop Maui fire death count to 97

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

WAILUKU, Hawaii (AP) — Authorities in Hawaii have adjusted the number of deaths from the deadly Maui wildfire down to at least 97 people.

Officials previously said they believed at least 115 people had died in the fire, but further testing showed they had multiple DNA samples from some of the victims. The number of those who are missing also fell from 41 to 31, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said.

John Byrd, laboratory director with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, said during a news con-

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ference Friday afternoon that the current number of dead should be considered a minimum, because it's possible that toll could rise.

Determining the death toll from the Aug. 8 wildfire in Lahaina has been especially complicated because of the damage caused by the fire and the chaos as people tried to escape, officials said. In some cases, animal remains were inadvertently collected along with human remains.

So far, 74 of the deceased have been positively identified, Pelletier said.

The Lahaina fire is the deadliest wildfire in the U.S. in more than a century. Caught in a hellscape, some residents died in their cars, while others jumped into the ocean or tried to run for safety. The blaze reduced much of the historic town to ash.

"When the fire broke out, people ran together, they huddled together," said Dr. Jeremy Stuelpnagel, Maui County physician's coroner. "They're holding each other in those moments. Some of them were even holding pets." Because of this, some remains arrived commingled.

Byrd said the initial death tally was too high for several reasons, adding that the lower tally now was the "normal and natural" progression of the long-term forensics investigation.

"We look at body bags that come in and we do an initial inventory and we assess how many people are represented there," he said. "When you do the first tally of all those that have come in, the number tends to be too high because as you begin to do more analysis and examination you realize that actually you've got two bags that were the same person or you have two bags that were the same two people but you didn't realize that."

"The numbers start a little too high on the morgue side and eventually settles until at some point it's going to be a final accurate number. I would say we're not quite there yet," Byrd said.

Only people who have had a missing person report filed for them with the Maui Police Department are on the verified missing list, Pelletier said. If a missing person report hasn't been filed for someone more than five weeks after the fire, then that person probably isn't actually missing, the chief said.

Stuelpnagel wasn't supposed to start in his new role until October. But he sped up his start date and arrived on Maui from New York City soon after the fire. Until he arrived, Maui's medical examiner duties were shared with other counties.

"When this happened it was time to drop everything and come here," he said.

Stuelpnagel said people working on the identification process are trying to "reunify people to have them as whole as they're able to be," before the remains are returned to their loved ones.

The work to reunite fire victims with families involves more than just DNA tests, officials said. Anthropologists are assisting, and officials are gathering clues from dental work and medical devices like pacemakers when possible.

Authorities expressed relief at having a better grasp on the number of dead and those still unaccounted for in the wildfire.

"For the very first time ... we legitimately have a chance to identify every single person we lost and to reunite them with their family," Pelletier said. "And so in the midst of all this tragedy, there's a little ray of hope right there and so that really is incredible."

Boone reported from Boise, Idaho.

## Planned Parenthood resumes offering abortions in Wisconsin after more than a year

By HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Planned Parenthood resumed offering abortion services in Wisconsin on Monday after halting them for more than a year since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Providers across the state stopped offering abortions following the June 2022 decision, fearing enforcement of an 1849 state law that appears to ban the procedure but had previously been nullified by the 1973 *Roe* ruling. A judge ruled last month that the 144-year-old law doesn't apply to medical abortions.

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In light of the ruling, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin began offering abortions at clinics in Madison and Milwaukee again on Monday. The group did not say how many abortions it expected to perform but said appointments at its Milwaukee clinic on Monday were completely filled within 24 hours of announcing that services would resume.

Without access to abortion care in Wisconsin for the past 15 months, many patients have sought assistance in neighboring Illinois, where abortions have remained widely available. According to Planned Parenthood of Illinois, its clinics have seen a seven-fold increase in patients from Wisconsin since the Supreme Court overturned Roe.

Women's Medical Fund of Wisconsin, which offers financial assistance for abortion procedures and related costs, helped 477 patients from Wisconsin obtain abortions outside the state in the first six months of 2023, according to board president Cynthia Lin. Most of those appointments were in Minnesota or Illinois, she said.

"There's a lot of work still to do, even within the return of legal abortion care in Wisconsin," Lin said on Monday, pointing to the long distances many patients still have to travel to reach clinics in Madison or Milwaukee. Lin also highlighted barriers created by state laws that require people seeking an abortion in Wisconsin to have an ultrasound and a counseling appointment before waiting 24 hours for the procedure.

The lawsuit challenging Wisconsin's 1849 law was brought by the state's Democratic attorney general and is expected to end up in front of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which flipped to liberal control last month.

Democrats, including Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, praised the resumption of abortion services. Meanwhile, anti-abortion rights groups in the state condemned the move and promised to continue fighting in court for the procedure to be outlawed.

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Harm Venhuizen is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

## **As leaders convene, the UN pushes toward its crucial global goals. But progress is lagging**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The commitments were far-reaching and ambitious. Among them: End extreme poverty and hunger. Ensure every child on Earth gets a quality secondary education. Achieve gender equality. Make significant inroads in tackling climate change. Create "universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all." And achieve all of this by 2030.

Halfway to that goal, progress is lagging badly — and in some cases going backward.

At a two-day summit that began Monday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tried to kick-start action to achieve the 17 goals adopted by world leaders in 2015, which developing countries in particular consider crucial to closing the widening inequality gap between the world's rich and poor countries.

He told leaders in the crowded General Assembly hall they made "a promise to build a world of health, progress and opportunity for all — a promise to leave no one behind, and a promise to pay for it."

General Assembly President Dennis Francis told the assembled leaders that the fact that "we are lagging in our promise cannot be the death knell for our blueprint" to "banish poverty from our societies, protect and preserve our planet, and to ensure prosperity for all." Instead, he said, "bold and transformative action must be prioritized."

Leaders from the 193 U.N. member nations then adopted a 10-page political declaration by consensus. It recognizes that the goals are "in peril" and expresses alarm that progress is either moving too slowly or regressing to pre-2015 levels. It reaffirms more than a dozen times, in different ways, leaders' commitment to achieve the SDGs, or sustainable development goals, reiterating their individual importance.

How can this be done in the next seven years?

A DECLARATION SHORT ON SPECIFICS

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The leaders have committed to accelerating action. But the declaration they're working with is short on specifics.

At Saturday's start of an "SDG Action Weekend," Guterres reviewed for activists the grim findings in a U.N. report in July. On Monday, he did it again, saying that only 15% of some 140 specific targets to achieve the 17 goals are on track. Many are going in the wrong direction.

At the current rate, the report said, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty and 84 million children won't even be going to elementary school in 2030 – and it will take 286 years to reach equality between men and women.

"The SDGs need a global rescue plan," the U.N. chief said. He called the summit "the moment for governments to come to the table with concrete plans and proposals to accelerate progress."

It isn't just governments that need to step up, Guterres said. He urged activists as well as the business community, scientists, academics, innovators, women and young people to join in working to achieve the goals.

U.S. First Lady Jill Biden echoed the secretary-general at a reception Sunday evening organized by the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, for global champions of education. She said progress on achieving the SDGs "looks steep." But she said the United States "will continue to be a partner with you every step of the way."

As an educator for 39 years, she urged every country's leader to invest in children, saying they will "help us build a more peaceful, stable world."

## A PLAN TO CLEAR OBSTACLES FROM THE PATH

Guterres said the most important initiative to rescue the overall plan is the proposal of an "SDG stimulus," which aims to offset challenging market conditions faced by developing countries.

It calls for immediate action in three areas:

- tackling the high cost of debt and rising risks of debt distress;
- massively scaling up affordable long-term financing for development, especially by public and multi-lateral banks;
- expanding contingency financing to countries in need.

Guterres told Monday's opening session he was "deeply encouraged" by the political declaration, "especially its commitment to improving developing countries' access to the fuel required for SDG progress: finance."

The U.N. chief said it also includes a call to reform the outdated and dysfunctional international financial system and to change the business model so multilateral; development banks, like the World Bank, "can massively leverage private finance at affordable rates to benefit developing countries."

A February U.N. report on the SDG Stimulus said debt is battering the economies of many developing countries. It said that as of last November, 37 of the world's 69 poorest countries were either at high risk or already in debt distress, while one in four middle-income countries, which contain the majority of the extreme poor, were at "high risk of fiscal crisis."

There are narrow rays of hope. Guterres said he was encouraged that at the recent meeting of the G20, the world's 20 leading economies welcomed the SDG Stimulus. And he said he's hopeful that the political declaration to be adopted by leaders on Monday will lead to major action.

The declaration says leaders will push forward the stimulus plan "to tackle the high cost of debt and rising risks of debt distress, to enhance support to developing countries and to massively scale up affordable long-term financing for development and expand contingency financing to countries in need."

Whether those administrative promises and the momentum of a big week at the United Nations will translate into actual progress, though, remains — as before — deeply uncertain.

Edith M. Lederer, chief U.N. correspondent for The Associated Press, has been covering international affairs for more than 50 years.

## Libya was mired in chaos and corruption. For years, warnings the Derna dams may burst went unheeded

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The warnings were clear but went unheeded.

Experts had long said that floods posed a significant danger to two dams meant to protect nearly 90,000 people in the northeast of Libya. They repeatedly called for immediate maintenance to the two structures, located just uphill from the coastal city of Derna. But successive governments in the chaos-stricken North African nation did not react.

"In the event of a big flood, the consequences will be disastrous for the residents of the valley and the city," Abdelwanees Ashoor, a professor of civil engineering, wrote in a study published last year in the Sabha University Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences.

The warnings came true in the early hours of Sept. 11, when residents of Derna woke up to loud explosions before floodwaters pounded the Mediterranean city. They found that two dams had broken, unleashing a wall of water two stories high that wreaked destruction and swept entire neighborhoods out to sea.

The deluge proved deadly for thousands in just seconds, uprooting apartment buildings and washing away roads and bridges.

The death toll has been varied, with different government officials and aid agencies giving different tallies. Libya's Red Crescent has said at least 11,300 people have been killed and an additional 10,000 are missing. After earlier reporting that same death toll, U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is now citing far lower numbers, with about 4,000 people killed and 9,000 missing,

East Libya's Health Minister Othman Abduljaleel said at least 3,283 bodies were buried as of Sunday night. He didn't say how many bodies had been retrieved in total.

Neglect and corruption are rife in Libya, a country of about 7 million people that lies on a wealth of proven oil and natural gas reserves. As of 2022, the country ranked 171 out of 180 on the transparency index compiled by Transparency International.

The North African nation has been in chaos since 2011, when an Arab Spring uprising, backed by NATO, ousted longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, who was later killed.

The country has since divided between rival administrations: one in the west backed by an array of lawless armed groups and militias, and the second in the east allied with the self-styled Libyan National Army, which is commanded by powerful Gen. Khalifa Hifter.

The dams, Abu Mansour and Derna, were built by a Yugoslav construction company in the 1970s above Wadi Derna, which divides the city. Abu Mansour, 14 kilometers (8.6 miles) from the city, was 74 meters (243 feet) high and could hold up to 22.5 million cubic meters of water. The Derna dam, also known as Belad, is much closer to the city and could hold 1.5 million cubic meters of water.

The dams, built from clay, rocks and earth, were meant to protect the city from flash floods, which are not uncommon in the area. Water collected behind the dams was used to irrigate crops downstream.

"Both dams had not been maintained for many years, despite repeated floods that struck the city in the past," said Saleh Emhanna, a geological researcher with the University of Ajdabia in Libya. "They were dilapidated."

The dams suffered major damage in a strong storm that hit the region in 1986, and more than a decade later a study commissioned by the Libyan government revealed cracks and fissures in their structures, Libya's general prosecutor, al-Sediq al-Sour, said late Friday.

At a news conference in the stricken city, al-Sour said prosecutors would investigate the collapse of the two dams, as well as the allocation of maintenance funds.

"I reassure citizens that whoever made mistakes or negligence, prosecutors will certainly take firm measures, file a criminal case against him and send him to trial," al-Sour said.

A report by a state-run audit agency in 2021 said the two dams hadn't been maintained despite the allocation of more than \$2 million for that purpose in 2012 and 2013. No work was done in the area, and the audit agency blamed the Ministry of Works and Natural Resources for failing to cancel the contract and give it to a company that would do the work.

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A Turkish firm was contracted in 2007 to carry out maintenance on the two dams and build another dam in between. The firm, Arsel Construction Company Ltd., says on its website that it completed its work in November 2012.

Arsel was one of dozens of Turkish companies that had projects worth more than \$15 billion in Libya before the 2011 uprising. Many of these companies fled the Libya chaos before returning in the past couple of years, especially when the Turkish government stepped in to help the Tripoli-based government fend off an attack by Hifter's forces in 2019.

Arsel didn't respond to an email seeking further comment on the two dams. No third dam appeared to have ever been built, recent satellite photos show.

Ahead of Mediterranean storm Daniel, authorities also gave contradicting messages. They imposed a curfew in Derna and other areas in the east. The municipality of Derna published statements on its website urging residents to evacuate the coastal areas for fear of a surge from the sea.

However, many residents said they received text messages on their phones urging them not to leave their homes.

The floods flattened Derna and officials have estimate that as much as a quarter of the city has been erased. Such devastation reflected the storm's intensity, but also Libya's vulnerability. The country's infrastructure has suffered widespread neglect despite Libya's oil wealth.

Al-Sour, the chief prosecutor, said prosecutors would probe local authorities in Derna as well as previous governments. He appointed investigators from different parts of the country to carry out the investigation.

East Libya's government suspended Derna's mayor, Abdel-Moneim al-Gaithi, pending an investigation into the disaster. The mayor didn't respond to phone calls seeking comment.

Since 2014, eastern Libya has been under the control of Hifter and his forces. The rival government based in the capital, Tripoli, controls most national funds and oversees infrastructure projects. Neither tolerates dissent.

Activists are calling for an international probe, fearing that a local investigation would be fruitless in a country largely ruled by armed groups and militias. The "predatory" behavior of these groups and militias has resulted in "the misappropriation of Libyan State funds and the deterioration of institutions and infrastructure," according to a report by the U.N. panel of experts.

Libya has suffered from weak public institutions, internal conflict and deep instability, which allowed corruption to become rife with few to no checks on public sector abuse, according to Transparency International.

An online petition signed in recent days by hundreds of people, including Libyan rights groups and NGOs, said an independent international committee is needed to "uncover the causes of this catastrophe" and hold those responsible accountable.

Jalel Harchaoui, an expert on Libya at the London-based Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, said an investigation into the disaster would face towering challenges since it could reach top officials in west and east Libya.

Such an inquiry "might potentially reach into the highest ranks of responsibility," he said. "This presents a unique challenge."

## Human rights in Russia have 'significantly' worsened since Ukraine war began, UN-backed expert says

GENEVA (AP) — The rights situation in Russia has "significantly deteriorated" since President Vladimir Putin launched his war against Ukraine in February last year, an expert commissioned by the U.N.'s top human rights body said in her first report on the country on Monday.

Mariana Katzarova, the special rapporteur on Russia's rights situation mandated by the Human Rights Council, chronicled the domestic crackdown that has largely targeted critics of Putin's war as well as other opposition voices in Russia.

Her report, made public on Monday, is separate from another probe by U.N.-backed investigators that has accused Russia of war crimes in Ukraine.



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Never before has the council authorized a rights expert to examine rights issues in one of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

The report cited figures last month from OVD-Info, which tracks human rights violations, indicating that more than 20,000 people were detained between February last year and June for participating in anti-war protests. More than 600 criminal lawsuits were initiated against "anti-war activity," it said.

The report said over half of all protesters who were arrested for what it called "peaceful anti-war activism" were women.

Katarova said she had received "credible reports" of a litany of rights violations including torture, allegations of rape and sexual violence, and threats of sexual abuse by law enforcement officers against both men and women. None of those cases had been officially investigated, she said.

The Russian Justice Ministry's registry of "foreign agents" contained 649 organizations and individuals by the end of July — an increase of more than 25% in six months, the report said. More than 100 organizations were declared as "undesirable" at the end of July, meaning they could be banned.

Last April, barely six weeks after Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine, the U.N. General Assembly suspended Russia's seat in the 47-member-country rights council in Geneva.

The mandate of Katarova, who is Bulgarian, was created a year ago, and she started work in May. Authorities in Russia have refused to cooperate, and said submissions from her team would be "automatically disregarded," the report said.

Rights in Russia have been on a "steady decline" over the last two decades, the report said, but Katarova found the situation has "significantly deteriorated since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022."

The report was built on consultations with over 60 Russian and international rights organizations and individuals, and nearly 100 written submissions, including from rights advocates and witnesses of rights violations. The rights council is set to discuss it Thursday.

Since the start of the war, the Kremlin has claimed that the vast majority of Russians support its "special military operation" in Ukraine, while also insisting that those who disagree are free to do so.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has noted, however, that those willing to criticize the government must do it in compliance with the existing laws.

Putin himself has said that he is "not judging" those "who behaved not like patriots." He also said last week that one "can disagree" with the Russian authorities "and live here, speak out about it -- no one is prohibiting it."

## Today in History: September 19,

### Unabomber manifesto published in New York Times, Washington Post

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Sept. 19, the 262nd day of 2023. There are 103 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 19, 1995, The New York Times and The Washington Post published the manifesto of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski (kah-ZIHN'-skee), which proved instrumental in identifying and capturing him.

On this date:

In 1796, President George Washington's farewell address was published. In it, America's first chief executive advised, "Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all."

In 1881, the 20th president of the United States, James A. Garfield, died 2 1/2 months after being shot by Charles Guiteau; Chester A. Arthur became president.

In 1955, President Juan Peron of Argentina was ousted after a revolt by the army and navy.

In 1957, the United States conducted its first contained underground nuclear test, code-named "Rainier," in the Nevada desert.

In 1970, the "Mary Tyler Moore" show debuted on CBS.

In 1985, the Mexico City area was struck by a devastating earthquake that killed at least 9,500 people.

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In 1986, federal health officials announced that the experimental drug AZT would be made available to thousands of AIDS patients.

In 1996, IBM announced it would extend health benefits to the partners of its gay employees.

In 2001, the Pentagon ordered dozens of advanced aircraft to the Persian Gulf region as the hour of military retaliation for deadly terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 drew closer.

In 2004, Hu Jintao (hoo jin-tow) became the undisputed leader of China with the departure of former President Jiang Zemin (jahng zuh-MEEN') from his top military post.

In 2008, struggling to stave off financial catastrophe, the Bush administration laid out a radical bailout plan calling for a takeover of a half-trillion dollars or more in worthless mortgages and other bad debt held by tottering institutions. Relieved investors sent stocks soaring on Wall Street and around the globe.

In 2013, Pope Francis said the Roman Catholic church had become obsessed by "small-minded rules" about how to be faithful and that pastors should instead emphasize compassion over condemnation when discussing divisive social issues such as abortion, gays and contraception.

In 2017, a magnitude-7.1 earthquake struck central Mexico, killing more than 360 people and causing more than three dozen buildings in Mexico City to collapse.

In 2020, President Donald Trump urged the Republican-run Senate to consider "without delay" his upcoming nomination to fill the Supreme Court vacancy created by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg just six weeks before the election.

In 2022, Great Britain and the world said a final goodbye to Queen Elizabeth II at a state funeral that drew presidents and kings, princes and prime ministers — and crowds who thronged the streets of London.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Rosemary Harris is 96. Actor David McCallum is 90. Singer-songwriter Paul Williams is 83. Singer Bill Medley is 83. Singer Sylvia Tyson (Ian and Sylvia) is 83. R&B singer Freda Payne is 81. Retired professional golfer Jane Blalock is 78. Singer David Bromberg is 78. Actor Randolph Mantooth is 78. Rock singer-musician Lol Creme (10cc) is 76. Former NFL running back Larry Brown is 76. Actor Jeremy Irons is 75. Actor Twiggy Lawson is 74. TV personality Joan Lunden is 73. Singer-producer Daniel Lanois (lan-WAH') is 72. Actor Scott Colomby is 71. Musician-producer Nile Rodgers is 71. Singer-actor Rex Smith is 68. Rock singer Lita Ford is 65. Actor Kevin Hooks is 65. Actor Carolyn McCormick is 64. Actor-comedian Cheri Oteri is 61. Country singer Jeff Bates is 60. Country singer Trisha Yearwood is 59. News anchor Soledad O'Brien is 57. Celebrity chef Michael Symon is 54. Actor Victor Williams is 53. Actor Sanaa Lathan (suh-NAH' LAY'-thun) is 52. Actor Stephanie J. Block is 51. Rock singer A. Jay Popoff (Lit) is 50. "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon is 49. TV personality Carter Oosterhouse is 47. Actor-TV host Alison Sweeney is 47. Folk-rock singers-musicians Sara and Tegan (TEE'-gan) Quin are 43. Actor Columbus Short is 41. Rapper Eamon is 40. Actor Kevin Zegers is 39. Actor Danielle Panabaker is 36. Actor Katrina Bowden is 35.