

Groton Daily Independent

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The Boys Soccer Game with Dakota Valley scheduled on Saturday, September 30th has been rescheduled to Monday, September 25th at 4pm.

Saturday, Sept. 23

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Junior High Volleyball Tournament at Hamlin, 9 a.m.

Girls Soccer at Tea Area, 11 a.m. (No JV)

Cancelled: Youth Football at Clark Jamboree

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



Sunday, Sept. 24

St. John's Lutheran/Zion worship: St. John's at 9 a.m., Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

put cities in "disarray."

Vice President Kamala Harris will lead the first White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, intended to seek ways around Congressional inaction for stronger gun control legislation and curb rising violence.

Amazon will introduce ads to its Prime Video platform in early 2024, announcing an ad-free tier of \$17.98 per month. The move has angered some viewers.

The CDC's advisory committee voted 11-1 to recommend a maternal vaccine to protect newborns from respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV— the first of its kind. The vaccine, made by Pfizer, still needs recommendation from the CDC.

A Guantanamo Bay judge has ruled 9/11 defendant Ramzi bin al-Shibh incompetent to stand trial, determining abuse while held in CIA custody rendered him psychotic.

Nearly 50 people have been arrested in an attempt to storm seats of government in Accra, Ghana amid ongoing protests over a looming economic crisis.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia said Ukrainian missiles targeted the Russian Black Sea Fleet's headquarters in Sevastopol in occupied Crimea, in another day of attacks on Russian naval command centers as Kyiv looks to force Moscow's forces from the peninsula..

TALKING POINTS

"Putin's chief trait is probably his outstanding hypocrisy. All people have some difference between what they have in store for themselves and what they have for others. But for a few of them, these two things have nothing in common at all. Putin is this kind of person. He is absolutely lenient towards himself. He believes that anything goes when he considers it necessary—there should be no rules, no limitations. He is quite archaic in this respect." Former speechwriter to Vladimir Putin Abbas Gallyamov detailed his experience working with the Russian president in a Newsweek essay.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

The 19th edition of Asian Games kick start on Saturday at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center Stadium in China. The opening ceremony will begin at 8 a.m. ET. President Xi Jinping is set to attend alongside leaders of other nations that include Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni.

Pope Francis will be in the southern French port city of Marseille, where he is expected to meet with French President Emmanuel Macron. Francis will attend the concluding session of the Mediterranean Meetings, a gathering of about 70 bishops, activists and representatives of various religions from the region.

Summer is reaching its end, and as fall begins there can be confusion over when clocks will "fall back" with the season change. Saturday marks the first day of fall, known as the autumnal equinox. That means September 23 will be the one day this year when day and night are approximately the same length across the world.

Las Vegas Raiders quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo hopes to bounce back from a rough outing in last week's beatdown by the Buffalo Bills when his squad hosts the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sunday Night Football. Both teams are 1-1 and oddsmakers believe it'll be a tight contest.

United Auto Workers will expand strikes to 38 General Motors and Stellanti locations in 20 states until the companies "come to the table with a serious offer," President Shawn Fain announced Friday.

Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey and his wife Nadine have been indicted by federal prosecutors on bribery charges stemming from their relationship with three businessmen

Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson is leaving the Democratic Party to become a Republican, saying while his city was able to thrive, Democratic policies elsewhere in the nation have

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Football: Groton Area 35, Sisseton 12

Groton Area Tigers

Rushing: 38 carries for 163 yard, 2 TDs

Korbin Kucker 20-83, 2 TDs

Christian Ehresmann, 10-57

Keegen Tracy, 1-11

Taylor Diegel, 3-10

Lane Tietz, 4-2

Passing:

Lane Tietz completed

13 of 22 for 160 yards, 3 TDs

Korbin Kucker: 0-1

Receivers:

Taylor Diegel, 5-70

Keegen Tracy, 5-64, 2 TD

Colby Dunker, 3-26, 1TD

Fumbles: Had 1, lost 1

Penalties: 1 for 10 yards

Defensive Leaders

Logan Ringgenberg, 6 tackles, 1 sack

Brevin Flihs, 6 tackles

Korbin Kucker, 5 tackles, 1 sack, 1 interception

Taylor Diegel, 1 fumble recovery

Keegen Tracy, 3 interceptions

Christian Ehresmann, 4 tackles, 1 sack

Karsten Jeschke, 1 sack

Record: 3-2

Next Game: Friday at Webster

Scoring:

First Quarter

8:24: Groton Area: Korbin Kucker, 3 yard run. (Kucker kick) 7-0

3:52: Groton Area: Korbin Kucker 2 yard run. (Kucker kick) 14-0

Third Quarter

9:17: Groton Area: Lane Tietz pass to Colby Dunker, 5 yards (Kucker kick) 21-0

8:06: Groton Area: Lane Tietz pass to Keegen Tracy, 27 yards (Kucker kick) 28-0

5:39: Sisseton: Ethan DeSpiegler pass to Mason Hertzog, 26 yards. (PAT kick no good) 28-6

Fourth Quarter

10:48: Groton: Lane Tietz pass to Keegen Tracy, 12 yards (Kucker kick) 35-6

3:46: Sisseton: Ethan DeSpiegler 1 yard run. (PAT pass failed) 35-12

35-12

Sisseton Redmen

Rushing: 24 carries for 38 yards, 1 TD

LaVonte Carter, 9-17

Ethan DeSpiegler, 11-11, 1 TD

Passing:

Ethan DeSpiegler completed

10 of 23 for 130 yards, 1 TD, 4 Interception

Receivers:

Nate Tchida, 4-41

Christian Shepard, 3-36

Mason Hertzog, 2-20

Hayden Hellwig, 1-23

Fumbles: Had 2, lost 1

Penalties: 4 for 47 yards

Defensive Leaders

Landyn Steichen, 8 tackles

Hughin Current, 7 tackles

Vincent Donnel, 7 tackles

Record: 1-5

Next Game: Bye week

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Above: Colby Dunker. Bottom: Keegen Tracy. Right top: Korbin Kucker. Right Bottom: Teylor Diegel. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Tigers take advantage of turnovers in win over Sisseton

Groton Area took advantage of five turnovers and turned three of them into points as the Tiger gridiron team defeated Sisseton Friday at Sisseton, 35-6.

Korbin Kucker had 83 yards rushing with two touchdowns, had five tackles, one sack and one interception. Teylor Diegel had 70 yards receiving and had a fumble recovery. Christian Ehresmann had 57 yards rushing, four tackles and one sack. Keegen Tracy had 64 yards receiving, 11 yards rushing and had three interceptions. Logan Ringgenberg had six tackles and a sack while Brevin Fliehs also had six tackles.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored 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, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R & M Farms. Mike Nehls provided the commentary, Jeslyn Kosel ran the camera and the halftime interview was with the one and only Tom Woods.



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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

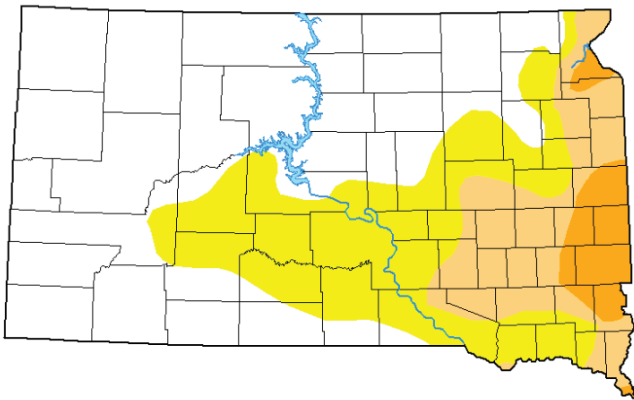
Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker

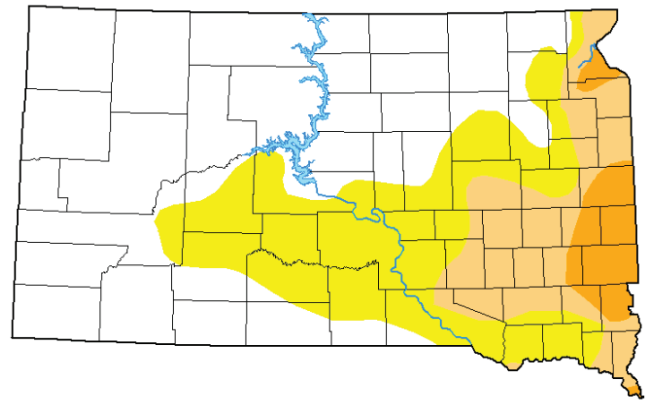
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



September 19



September 12

Half an inch to locally 2 inches of rain fell over western and southern parts of the High Plains region, mostly in Colorado, southern Kansas, and parts of Nebraska. But most of Wyoming, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas were dry this week. The rain trimmed D0 in southern Colorado and contracted D0-D1 in southwestern Kansas. D0 and D3 expanded in eastern Kansas. D0 expanded in parts of southwest Nebraska, but the compounded effects of excessive summer heat and overall dryness over the last 1 to 2 years resulted in expansion of D3 and D4 in parts of southeast Nebraska. Sporadic summer showers have not had much of an impact on the multi-year drought, with low soil moisture continuing and stressed vegetation as seen on satellite-based indicators. A farmer/rancher in Nuckolls County, Nebraska reported stock ponds had never gone dry in his 65 years living in the county until this summer and his crops were all burned up. Reports like this are typical across the region. According to USDA statistics, 50% or more of the topsoil moisture was short or very short in Kansas (68%), Nebraska (60%), North Dakota (51%), and South Dakota (50%), and 50% or more of the subsoil moisture was dry or very dry in Kansas (75%), Nebraska (65%), and North and South Dakota (52% each). Half (50%) of the pasture and rangeland in Kansas was in poor to very poor condition.

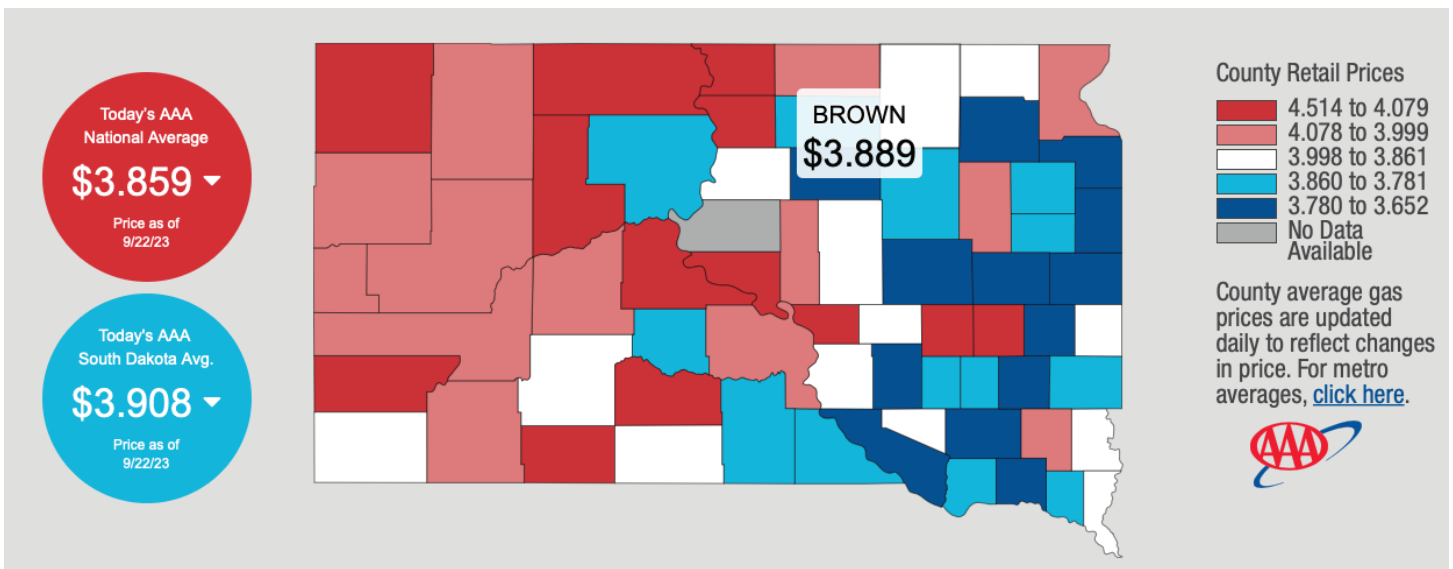
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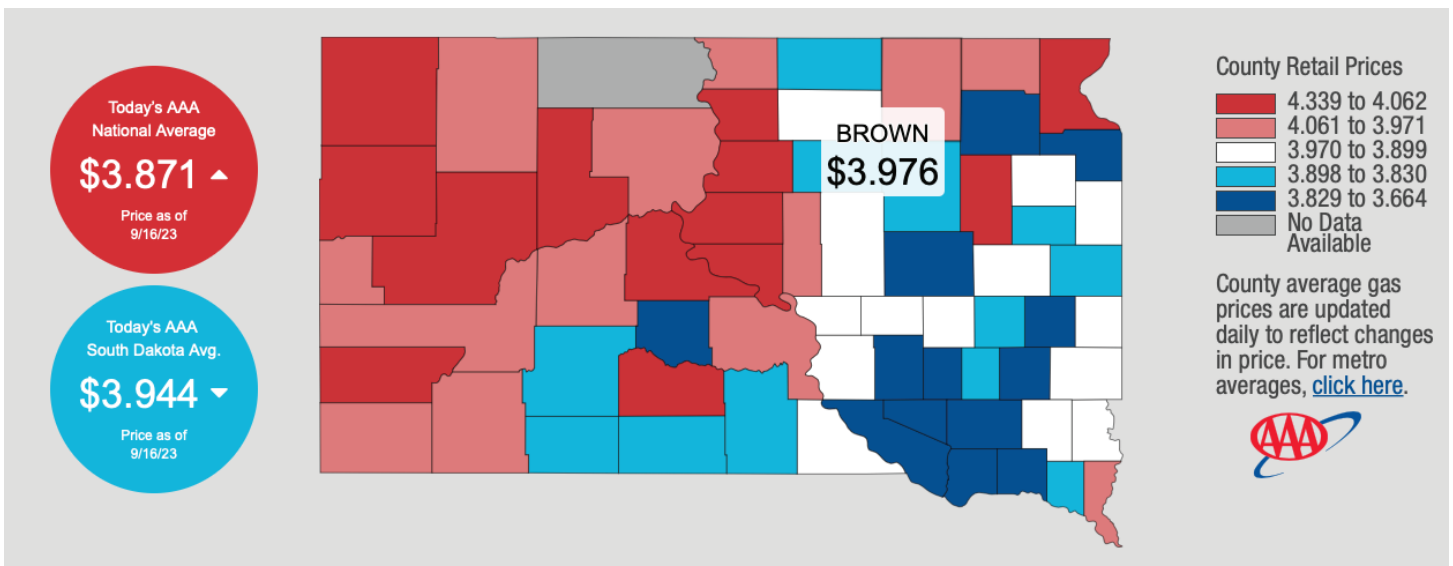
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.908	\$4.075	\$4.557	\$4.392
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.918	\$4.082	\$4.563	\$4.391
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.957	\$4.116	\$4.578	\$4.332
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.772	\$3.946	\$4.398	\$4.135
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.693	\$3.852	\$4.299	\$4.734

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



Jackson County Fatal Crash

What: Single-motorcycle fatal crash
Where: S.D. Highway 44, mile marker 122, 1 mile east of Interior, S.D.
When: 6:28 p.m., Thursday, September 21, 2023

Driver: Male, 62, Fatal injuries
Vehicle: 2006 Suzuki motorcycle

Jackson County, S.D.- One person died Thursday evening in a single motorcycle crash 1 mile east of Interior, S.D.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2006 Suzuki motorcycle was traveling eastbound on S.D. Highway 44 near mile marker 122. The Suzuki failed to navigate a curve and left the roadway and struck a fence. The driver was separated from the motorcycle and sustained fatal injuries.

The 62-year-old male driver was pronounced deceased on the scene.
He was wearing a helmet.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

Name Released in Kingsbury County Fatal Crash

What: Single-motorcycle fatal crash
Where: 441st Avenue and 209th Street, .5 miles south of Lake Preston
When: 11:48 a.m., Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Driver: Phillip Howe, 67, Lake Preston, S.D., Fatal injuries
Vehicle: 2005 Harley Davidson FLSTNI

Kingsbury County, S.D.- A Lake Preston, S.D. man has been identified as the person who died Tuesday in a single motorcycle crash a half mile south of Lake Preston, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2005 Harley Davidson FLSTNI was traveling northbound on 441st Avenue in Kingsbury County. For an unknown reason, the motorcycle and driver entered the east ditch before vaulting over an embankment separating the driver from the motorcycle.

The driver, Phillip Howe, age 67, sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased on the scene.
He was not wearing a helmet.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

South Dakota Department of Health Announces Development of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Prevention Program

PIERRE, SD – The Department of Health (DOH) will be developing and implementing a new prevention program to help South Dakotans reduce their risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias (ADRD). The department will use best practices and optimize evidence-based strategies to create a bold and sustainable public health approach in addressing this ever-growing issue in South Dakota.

"Because of Governor Noem's support and encouragement and assistance from the Department of Human Services, we were able to accomplish a huge win for South Dakota," said Department of Health Secretary, Melissa Magstadt. "Alzheimer's Disease is the fifth leading cause of death in South Dakota and this funding will allow the department to provide education and resources to our citizens that can help with this devastating disease."

The DOH will collaborate with the Alzheimer's Association South Dakota Chapter; SDSU Extension; the Better Choices, Better Health SD program; other state agencies; and healthcare industry partners to establish a coalition to reduce the burden of ADRD through a prevention-focused public health approach aligned with the Center for Disease Control's Healthy Brain Initiative. The coalition will assist the department with improving public health infrastructure and increasing capacity in the field, as well as increasing awareness of the disease and improving access to resources for individuals and caregivers affected by ADRD.

The DOH received a five-year federal Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure (BOLD) grant for \$1.25 million to aid in the department's development and implementation of a prevention program centered around ADRD. This is the first time South Dakota has received a grant of this kind.

"We are excited that the South Dakota DOH has received this BOLD grant to further enable the state to improve the public health approach to brain health and dementia risk reduction," said Leslie Morrow, State Executive Director, Alzheimer's Association South Dakota. "The Alzheimer's Association is looking forward to collaborating closely with the DOH and other coalition members to implement robust public health strategies aligned with the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map to improve the state's response to dementia."

Age is the main risk factor for Alzheimer's Disease, with adults 65 years and older being at the most risk for developing the disease (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). As the older population in SD continues to grow, the risk and outcome of them developing Alzheimer's Disease increases. There were an estimated 18,000 residents 65 years and older who were living with Alzheimer's Disease in 2020 (Alzheimer's Association, 2022).

At the heart of the Department of Health's mission is a simple yet profound goal: to protect and improve the health of all South Dakotans. The department is entrusted with the vital task of promoting wellness, preventing disease and ensuring access to quality healthcare for all South Dakotans across our great state.

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GFP's Rapid Response Team Inspecting South Dakota's Lakes

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) employees have been out surveying and sampling lakes across the state to monitor fish populations and for the presence of zebra mussels.

"We have also implemented a Zebra Mussel Rapid Response Team of employees to better respond to zebra mussels and to keep on top of lake situations," said Fisheries Program Manager, Jake Davis. "We are working with the public and GFP staff to quickly notify anglers, boaters, and other recreational users of a zebra mussel presence in a waterbody and to help educate water users."

The team recently responded to a property owner on Roy Lake, in Marshall County, who had found mussels when removing their dock.

"We were contacted by a cabin owner about the possible presence of mussels on Wednesday. We traveled to Roy Lake and confirmed those were zebra mussels," Davis said. "We then conducted a follow-up survey and found additional mussels. Going forward we will consider Roy Lake to have zebra mussels."

The response team will place high-profile signs on access areas, actively engage boaters using the infested water, reiterate information on decontamination requirements, and identify groups of people and entities that will be potentially affected by the infestation.

"We have updated the AIS signs at Roy Lake access points and have notified DOT so they can place the larger signs as well," Davis said.

"Boaters and anglers in this area can expect to see additional reminders to 'clean, drain, dry' on physical signs, in their email inboxes, and on social media," said GFP Communications Manager, Nick Harrington.

GFP has significantly enhanced efforts to slow the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in recent years, both educating anglers and boaters to clean, drain, dry every time they are on the water as well as physically inspecting boats prior to and/or after loading.

"GFP also conducted watercraft inspection stations throughout the summer months, even with fall upon us, boaters and anglers are reminded to always remember to clean, drain, and dry every time," concluded Harrington.

You can learn more about AIS by visiting SDLeastWanted.sd.gov!

GDILIVE.COM

GT Groton Area
Tigers



**Tea Area
Lady Titans**

**Girls Soccer
at Tea Area
Sat., Sept. 23
11 a.m.**



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Wolves Rally Back to Upset No. 7 Bulldogs in Volleyball

Duluth, Minn. – Down went the No. 7 Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs on Friday evening as the Northern State University Wolves tallied a come from behind, 5-set victory. Northern trailed 2-0 and rallied back with three extra point victories to secure the match and just their seventh program victory over UMD.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, UMD 2

Records: NSU 10-1 (3-0 NSIC), UMD 9-2 (2-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 608

HOW IT HAPPENED

The two team's played just one set to regular points with Duluth notching a 25-19 victory in the second. The Bulldogs opened the match with a 26-24 set win, however Northern stormed back to sweep the final three sets with scores of 27-25, 26-24, and 16-14.

The Wolves out-hit the Bulldogs .205 to .176, recording 61 kills and 58 assists.

The difference in the game was the 33 forced hitting errors and 98 digs for the Northern defense.

Each team recorded eight blocks and UMD topped NSU in aces ten to six.

Abby Brooke and Natalia Szybinska led the offense with 17 kills each, while Brooks hit a career high .560 with a career high in kills as well.

Abby Meister led five Wolves in double figure digs with 40 on the evening, averaging 8.00 per set.

Keri Walker was a force on all fronts racking up 53 assists, 15 digs, three blocks, two aces, and two kills.

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Abby Brooks: 17 kills, .560 attack%, 4 blocks

Natalia Szybinska: 17 kills, 4 digs

Morissen Samuels: 11 digs, 3 blocks, 9 kills

Keri Walker: 53 assists, 15 digs, 3 blocks, 2 aces, 2 kills

Abby Meister: 40 digs

Reese Johnson: 13 digs, 3 assists, 2 aces

Sara Moberg: 12 digs, 1 ace

BEYOND THE BOX SCORE

The win marked the first top-25 victory for the Wolves since October 28 of 2022 where Northern tallied a 3-0 victory over then-No. 4 Minnesota Duluth.

UP NEXT

The Wolves continue their top-25 road trip today taking on No. 6 St. Cloud State. First serve is set for 2 p.m. from Halenbeck Hall in St. Cloud.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota-led poll finds alignment of rural, urban opinions on electric vehicles

Many would consider EV purchase, but worry about power costs, grid reliability

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 22, 2023 5:30 PM

SIoux FALLS — Around half of the rural Americans served by electric cooperatives expect less reliable service and higher bills because of electric vehicles.

Even so, about half would consider buying an EV the next time they need a new vehicle.

Those opinions came from Paulsen Marketing in Sioux Falls, which conducted a nationwide poll of rural cooperative member-owners.

Paulsen commissioned the study without the financial backing of a client as part of "Rural97," an initiative meant to showcase the outfit's abilities as a marketing firm with research capabilities, particularly in areas important to rural electric co-ops. The firm represents several such nonprofit co-ops in the Midwest. The "97" is a reference to the percentage of U.S. land area that is rural.

Paulsen's polling represents an attempt to understand the attitudes of a rural population whose opinions on EVs aren't often collected or considered, according to Mark Smither of Paulsen.

"Most of that research focuses on larger populations," Smither said during a recent webinar on the results.

A recent presentation to co-op members led with a handful of facts tied to the emergence of the technology:

In just two years, EVs are expected to make up 23% of global vehicle sales.

The Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act put \$7.5 billion toward the installation of half a million EV charging stations by 2030.

Major car manufacturers have pledged to phase out internal combustion engine vehicles by 2040.

In spite of the ubiquitous nature of the topic in mass media – the last two Super Bowls featured multiple EV ads – a lack of basic knowledge about the vehicles and about the electric grid in general help fuel half-informed or misinformed spats on social media, Smither said.

A national poll from the Pew Research Center released in July suggested that Americans as a whole are concerned about the electric grid and electric bills. Just under half would consider buying an EV.

Smither said that the Paulsen poll of co-op members, conducted by a company called Toluna, aligns fairly well with those national results – something he said suggests a perhaps-surprising alignment of rural and urban opinion.

What the Paulsen results show for rural Americans is a clear dividing line between the attitudes of young and old co-op members, alongside predictable political divides. Those older than 54 are far less likely to consider purchasing an EV, the poll showed. They're also far more likely to be among the fifth of respondents who said that nothing could convince them to do so.

Younger co-op members are more likely to consider buying an EV, the poll found. More than half of respondents opposed a phase-out of the production of gas-powered vehicles.

The polling from Paulsen and Pew both showed a significant segment of people who know a little about EVs, but not much. In Paulsen's poll, 15% of people said they knew almost nothing; 17% said they knew a lot.

Co-ops, Smither said, ought to be ready to answer member questions in the coming years to help inform the remaining 68%, she said.

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"That's exactly the reason why thought leaders and the people who understand how this works need to communicate to customers how this is really going to affect them," Smither said.

Co-ops aim to fill knowledge gaps

Most people with questions about EVs are more likely to learn about them from the internet or someone who owns one than from a co-op or utility provider, the poll found. Electric co-ops fell behind carmakers, local dealerships and friends and neighbors on the list of where people might turn for information.

Chris Studer of East River Electric Cooperative, based in Madison, would rather see co-ops closer to the top of that list. The electric grid, its mix of power sources, peak usage times and the like are complicated matters, Studer said, and it's incredibly easy to misinterpret or overstate the impact of electric vehicles.

The grid can be strained now, with or without a mass of electric vehicles being charged at home, for example.

"On the hottest day in July, when everyone is using their air conditioners and everything else is running, you plug in a bunch of cars and you're going to have an issue," Studer said. "On a mild day in April, you could add a ton of cars and it's not going to be an issue."

EV driver behavior is a factor in future reliability. Most EV owners charge at home and at night, not during peak times. Many don't even charge every day, Studer said.

"The worry sometimes among some consumers, and even some utility folks, is 'Oh, everyone's gonna come right home after work at 5:15. Everyone's gonna plug in at the same time and there's gonna be a problem,'" Studer said. "Well, the numbers don't really bear out."

The growth in electric vehicles is expected to force co-ops to build out generation and transmission infrastructure, he said, but those projects should be based on the speed with which rural consumers adopt them.

Co-ops have had to manage technology-related spikes in electricity usage in the past, he said, such as when farmhouses began to install refrigerators and electric stoves.

At this point, Studer said, it's unclear how fast the rural Midwest might need more power for EVs.

"It's kind of a chicken-or-the-egg situation," Studer said. "How fast are consumers going to adapt to an EV lifestyle?"

It's not a given that the adoption of EVs will lead to higher electric bills, he said. There are myriad factors that influence the cost of building out the grid for the future.

"It's more of a case where, as everything in the economy changes, if inflation continues to rise and costs go up, we'll have to respond to that," Studer said.

Education now part of co-op missions

East River sees electric vehicles as a net positive for consumers, as they cost considerably less to fuel.

Studer's employer is among those working to educate consumers in hopes of encouraging them to manage their at-home charging behavior responsibly. Co-ops and investor-owned utilities alike are leaning in on incentives to encourage drivers to charge in off-peak hours.

Which is why Sheila Gross of Sioux Valley Electric Co-Op gets accused of "pushing EVs" on a fairly regular basis. Sioux Valley EV owners can get a \$500 rebate for the purchase of a fully electric vehicle if they sign up for the co-op's off-peak incentives. The "time of use rate" program, which is also available to non-EV owners, charges members 43% less than the standard rate for power consumed between from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., and higher-than-standard rates during peak times.

At a Sept. 19 EV Expo at the W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds in Sioux Falls, Gross said the perceived push for EVs is really about education for consumers and cost control for the co-op, rather than an evangelical drive for an electrified future.

It's true that co-ops could earn more if consumers use more power – potentially boosting payouts to its members – but poorly timed power use is a drain on the grid and a drag on any power provider's bottom line.

The co-op is charged more for power during peak periods, and the overnight hours often coincide with a greater availability of cheaper wind power.

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"We actually lose money pretty quickly" when members don't take advantage of the off-peak incentive, Gross said.

"For the people who have them, we want to make sure they're charging in those off-peak hours," she said. Sioux Valley aims to be as transparent as possible on the benefits and drawbacks, she said. The co-op brings an all-electric Nissan Leaf along for public events, and Gross is up-front with the information Sioux Valley collected about its use. That particular vehicle loses a significant amount of range in the winter, for example.

Early adopters see payback

Despite the seemingly endless stream of advertisements and news stories about them, electric vehicle sales comprise a tiny fraction of overall vehicle sales nationwide, and an even smaller fraction in South Dakota.

That doesn't mean sales aren't growing, even in the Midwest. In 2019, the U.S. Department of Energy tallied 300 all-electric vehicles in South Dakota – among the lowest totals in the nation. As of 2022, the department counts 1,200 fully electric vehicles in the state. The South Dakota Department of Transportation currently says there are more than 1,400 registered.

The year-over-year growth is significant in percentage terms, but electric vehicles represent just 0.1% of the state's vehicle market.

Darin Breit became one of the early adopters in 2020 with the purchase of a 2016 Tesla Model X. The Brandon man had the vehicle on display during the EV Expo, its gullwing doors and front-end truck wide open to allow visitors to take a look inside.

The father of four jokes that he paid for the \$70,000 used EV by washing dishes, citing a former job at Perkins. The high sticker price was worth it for a few reasons, he said, the first being his status as a self-described fanboy of "all things electric," the second being the vehicle's status as one with free supercharging for life.

The lifetime supercharging feature was a sales pitch for early adopters. For Breit, it's erased his transportation fuel bills entirely.

"I've never paid to charge," he said.

Shelly Stutson had a similar incentive for her purchase of a 2023 Subaru Soltera, though she was also motivated by concerns for the environment. Stutson works at Citibank in Sioux Falls, which allows its employees to charge at work.

She had to wait more than a year for the car to arrive in Sioux Falls, but she was on cloud nine when she was finally able to drive it off the lot at Schulte Subaru.

"Mike Schulte (the dealership's owner) got the first one," she said. "I got the second one."

At the EV Expo, she told anyone who'd listen about how happy she's been since then. The vehicle is roomy enough for her 6-foot-7-inch tall husband and has high enough clearance to handle South Dakota winters, she said, and it gets 220 miles to a charge, even with the heater or air conditioner running.

A recent trip to the Twin Cities solidified her feelings about her fuel source. When they left, she said, she saw a sign advertising gas at \$3.49 a gallon.

"It was \$4.09 when we got back," she said.

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

COMMENTARY

State is content to be a benchwarmer in aquatic invasive species battle

BRAD JOHNSON

Pathetic best describes South Dakota's response as zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species transform the state's lakes and rivers.

While Minnesota invests heavily in education and research to counter the impacts of zebra mussels, our state gives lip service.

Leadership flows down from Gov. Kristi Noem and, since protecting our water is not important to her, it is not a top priority for the Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

"It is an inevitable thing," GF&P Secretary Kevin Robling said of the spread of zebra mussels on Aug. 4 at the annual South Dakota Wildlife Federation conference in Brookings. "All we can do is slow it down."

He added, "Minnesota has not figured it out and they spend \$11 million a year."

The glaring embarrassment of our state's complacency was evident on Aug. 10, when experts from the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center taught a day-long seminar at South Dakota State University in Brookings.

The class taught about 18 leaders of lakes associations and local government how to identify the many aquatic invasive species, which include plants, fish, crayfish, mollusks and invertebrates like spiny fleas. It was sponsored by the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association.

Minnesota experts were brought in largely because there are none at the university level in South Dakota. No state funding exists to enable our universities to partner in research or education.

The lack of commitment is evident in GF&P's weak strategy eight years after zebra mussels were first detected in McCook Lake. Now more than a dozen waterbodies and the James and Missouri River systems are infested. Here is GF&P's strategy: It will continue boat inspections, work to understand invasive carp movement, build relations with partners, expand outreach efforts to new audiences and create more education materials. The department also announced Friday that it had found zebra mussels in another waterbody — Roy Lake — and has created a Zebra Mussel Rapid Response Team "to better respond to zebra mussels and to keep on top of lake situations," according to a news release.

Its major focus has been the watercraft inspection program. This year GF&P expects to inspect about 19,000 boats while pushing the theme of Clean, Drain and Dry. But there is no science-based strategy to that effort.

Nearly 65% of those inspections will occur West River, while the vast majority of lakes are East River. The reason: Federal funding, such as that for Bureau of Land Management sites, steers the state's efforts to the west where most of the federally owned land and reservoirs in the state are located. Little state funding is involved to take GF&P to where the problem really exists.

Glaringly lacking is collaboration with knowledgeable partners.

There is plenty of opportunity. In 2019, Minnesota researchers successfully mapped the genome sequence of zebra mussels, opening the door to controlling the pests.

"We don't know yet quite where to attack. But now there's a whole spectrum of strategies that can be considered," said Nick Phelps, director of the U of M Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center, in a July 11, 2019, Minneapolis Star Tribune story.

The impact on walleyes and perch is concerning. "It's not a great picture of what's happening to walleye lakes," said Dr. Gretchen Hansen, an assistant professor of fisheries ecology in the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology Department at the University of Minnesota, in a May 29, 2023, story in Outdoornews.com. "Zebra mussels reduce habitat, reduce the growth (of walleyes), and reduce recruitment, so there's a lot of other avenues to pursue to understand what to potentially do about that."

Unfortunately, many people, including some in GF&P's fisheries department, see zebra mussels as beneficial. The snail-like mollusk with razor-sharp shells filters water. This summer, Lake Kampeska at Watertown resembled an aquarium. Since zebra mussels invaded in 2020, Kampeska's water largely is absent the normal late-summer algae blooms. The mussels also eat the zooplankton and phytoplankton relied on by

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small fish and other native species. They also are killing the natural freshwater mussels.

Since sunlight now penetrates deeper, lakes rich in phosphorous from agricultural pollution are experiencing enormous weed growth.

On Lake Kampeska, windrows of weeds have washed up on beaches and boat ramps. Jet ski intakes were snarled and dock fishing became nearly impossible, as did deeper-water fishing because of floating weeds.

It quickly became apparent at the Aug. 10 seminar that lake associations will be forced to deal with weed management. A seminar on that topic, again taught by University of Minnesota experts, will be held online early next year.

Limited options for weed management include mechanical harvesting and herbicide application. One is expensive, the other is dangerous. In South Dakota any property owner can get a permit from GF&P to throw herbicides in the water.

Lacking other leadership, the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association plans to become an educational resource for lake associations and property owners seeking information on controlling weeds.

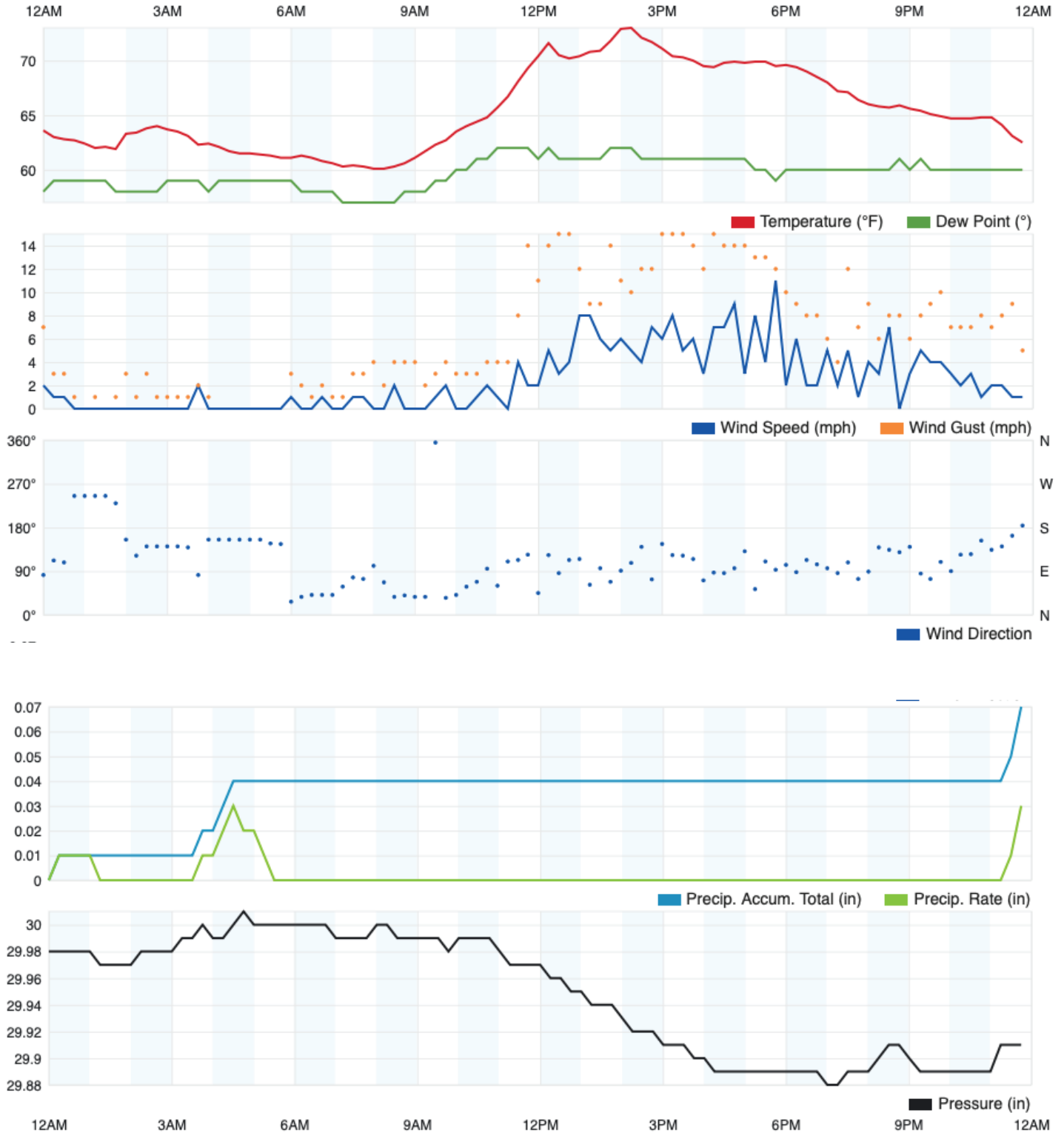
Because Gov. Noem's style stifles innovation at the department level, lake associations are not expecting GF&P to show leadership. But it sure would be welcomed.

Brad Johnson is a Watertown real estate appraiser, former newspaper reporter and editor, and longtime opinion columnist. He is president of the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, vice president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources.

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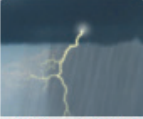

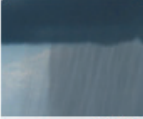
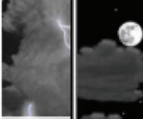



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
50% → 90%	70%	60%	10%			
Chance T-storms then T-storms	T-storms Likely	Showers Likely and Breezy	Slight Chance T-storms then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 67 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 67 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 71 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 74 °F

Severe Weather Threat Overview September 23, 2023 4:14 AM

Timing/Location
Early morning west through mid afternoon east. Focus area highlighted in Yellow

Primary Threats for the **Yellow** areas

Tornado Potential

Very Low	Low	Medium	High
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Max Hail Size

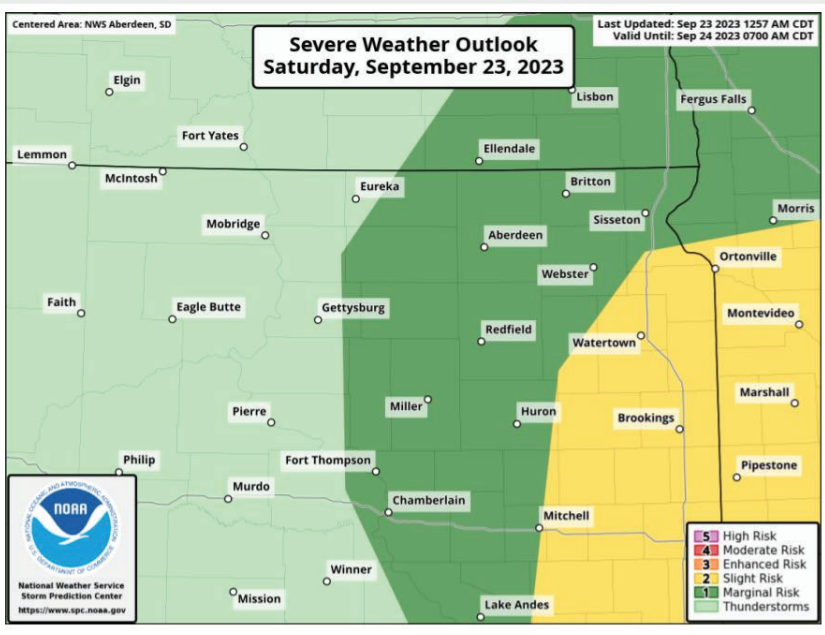
Dimes	Quarters	Golfball	Baseball
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I

< 60 mph	60-70 mph	70-80 mph	> 80mph
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Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low	Low	Medium	High
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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration U.S. Department of Commerce National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

We could see severe weather anywhere east of the Missouri valley this morning but the main threat area for organized severe weather later this afternoon will be for the interstate 29 corridor and points east.

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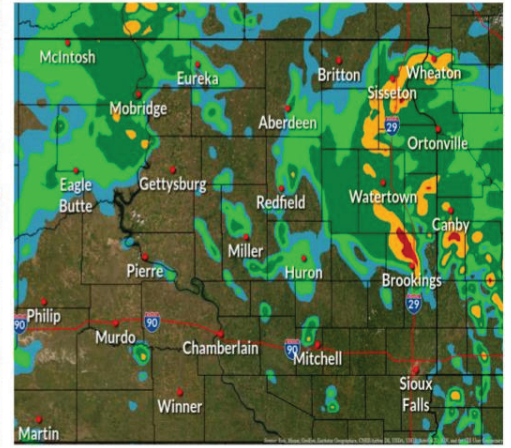
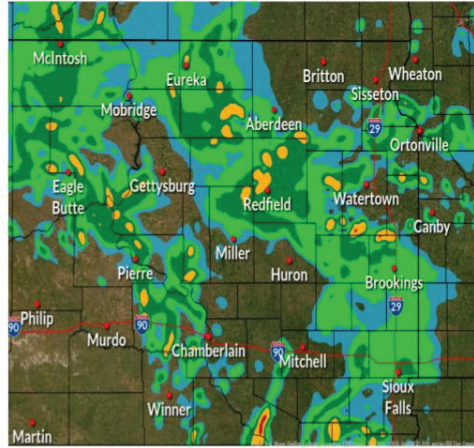
Radar Evolution - Timing Storms

September 23, 2023
4:31 AM

7 AM

~Noon

4 PM



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Here is just one models depiction of the storm coverage today. Timing won't be exact as the system could easily slow or speed up by a few hours.



Severe Weather Threat Summary

September 23, 2023

4:17 AM

Share the message!

Hazards

Hail, damaging winds and an isolated tornado threat exists for portions of the forecast area later today...



What You Can Do Now...

When storms near your location, make sure you have a plan in place!

- How will you receive hazardous weather alerts?
- Is there a safe shelter nearby?
- Are there alternate routes to take if a storm blocks your path?



Have multiple ways to get warnings
[weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov)



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Take the threat for severe weather seriously. Make sure you have a way to get thunderstorm warning information, and have a plan in place when severe weather threatens.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 73 °F at 1:58 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 8:04 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 5:16 PM

Precip: : 0.05

Day length: 21 hours, 10 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 1935

Record Low: 22 in 2012

Average High: 72

Average Low: 44

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.53

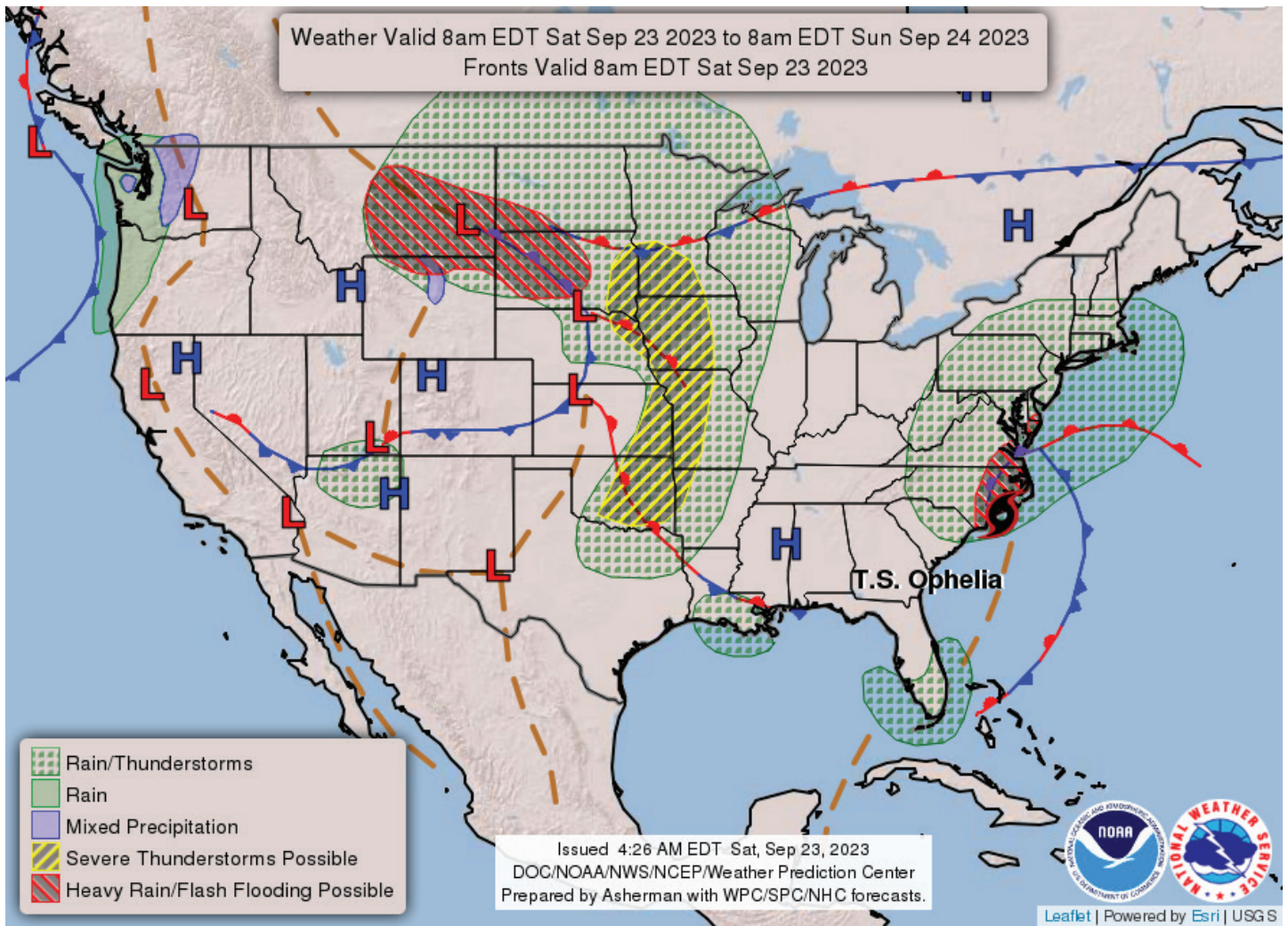
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.72

Average Precip to date: 17.87

Precip Year to Date: 19.31

Sunset Tonight: 7:30:14 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:20:29 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 23, 1984: Snow fell from the early morning to the late evening hours across northwest South Dakota bringing more than a foot of snow to some locations. Camp Crook in Harding County reported 14 inches. Amounts between six and twelve inches were common across Harding and Perkins Counties as well as parts of Meade and Butte Counties. Roads in these areas were slushy with icy bridges. The snow covered much of the western third of South Dakota with depths an inch or less.

September 23, 2004: A tornado touched down northeast of Browns Valley, MN during the late afternoon. This tornado traveled through a cornfield and a farmstead before dissipating. The tornado damaged several sheds and a trailer along with toppling a large grain bin. Another tornado touched down south and southwest of Rosholt in Roberts County in the late afternoon. This F2 tornado destroyed a house, a mobile home, and a travel trailer. The tornado also killed three cattle.

1551: The Grand Harbour at Valetta, Malta, was hit by a waterspout which then moved inland. This waterspout sunk four ships, killing at least 600 people. It should be noted, the year of the event could also be 1555, or 1556 as sources conflict.

1722: La Nouvelle-Orléans (New Orleans) was founded May 7, 1718, by the French Mississippi Company, under the direction of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, on land inhabited by the Chitimacha. Four years later, a hurricane destroys nearly every building in the village, including the only church and hospital.

1815 - One of the greatest hurricanes to strike New England made landfall at Long Island and crossed Massachusetts and New Hampshire. It was the worst tempest in nearly two hundred years, equal to the hurricane which struck in 1938, and one of a series of severe summer and autumn storms to affect shipping lanes that year. (David Ludlum)

1904 - The temperature at Charlotteburg, NJ, dipped to 23 degrees, the coldest reading of record for so early in the autumn for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1975: On September 22, Hurricane Eloise intensified to attain Category 2 strength, and became a major hurricane of Category 3 status shortly after that as it turned towards the northeast. Several ships penetrated the storm's center during its passage through the Gulf. Hurricane Eloise continued to strengthen until it reached its peak winds of 125 mph and a minimum barometric pressure of about 955 mbar. It moved ashore along the Florida Panhandle near Panama City on September 23.

1983 - A thunderstorm downburst caused a timber blowdown in the Kaibab National Forest north of the Grand Canyon. Two hundred acres were completely destroyed, and scattered destruction occurred across another 3300 acres. Many trees were snapped off 15 to 30 feet above ground level. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Autumn began on a rather pleasant note for much of the nation. Showers and thunderstorms were confined to Florida and the southwestern deserts. Warm weather continued in the western U.S., and began to spread into the Great Plains Region, but even in the southwestern deserts readings remained below 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front in the south central U.S. produced severe weather in Oklahoma during the afternoon and early evening hours. Thunderstorms produced softball size hail near Noble and Enterprise, and baseball size hail at Lequire and Kinta. A tornado near Noble OK destroyed a mobile home injuring one person. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Seventeen cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Devils Lake ND with a reading of 22 degrees. Jackson KY reported a record low of 41 degrees during the late afternoon. Strong northwesterly winds ushering cold air into the central and northeastern U.S. gusted to 55 mph at Indianapolis IND. Winds along the cold front gusted to 65 mph at Norfolk VA, and thunderstorms along the cold front deluged Roseland NJ with 2.25 inches of rain in one hour. The temperature at Richmond VA plunged from 84 degrees to 54 degrees in two hours. Snow and sleet was reported at Binghamton NY. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2009: A massive dust storm swept 725 miles across the outback to engulf Sydney, New South Wales producing a red hue across the region from the 22nd through the 24th. Wind gusts topped 60 mph as the storm transported an estimated 5,000 metric tons of dust, spreading it into the southern region of Queensland.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ASK AND ASK AND ASK AGAIN!

As she tucked little Lynn into bed, her Mom asked, "Have you said your prayers yet?"

"Well, not really," she answered. "I started to say them. I got down on my knees and when I started saying them I remembered that they were the same ones that I said last night. Since I didn't want to bore God, I told Him the story of the Three Bears. I hope He liked it."

Our prayers never bore God. Jesus said just the opposite. On one occasion when He was teaching people to pray, He advised them to "Continue to ask until you get what you want; continue to search until you find what you are looking for, and continue to knock on the door that is closed until it is opened." There is a most important lesson for us to accept and believe.

God will always answer our prayers, but He will answer them in His time and in the way that reveals His perfect wisdom and unconditional love for us. If He were to answer our requests without applying His wisdom and love, it might be the worst possible thing for us. Often we ask for things that, if our prayers were granted without His insight and love, it could be our ruin and bring about our destruction!

Jesus assures us that God will answer our prayers if we insist and persist. Not only will He answer them at the right time but that we will eventually and ultimately understand His wisdom, love and plan He has for us. It's often hard to believe that He knows what is best for us.

Prayer: Lord, we ask for determination to keep on asking, seeking and knocking. Give us patience to wait, believing that Your answer will be what we need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7-11



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.22.23

10 13 14 57 66 3

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$230,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.20.23

2 16 27 32 46 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,250,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 46 Mins
29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.22.23

8 30 31 40 46 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 1 Mins 28
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.20.23

6 12 22 29 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 1 Mins 28
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.20.23

6 20 29 46 68 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins
29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.20.23

16 27 59 62 63 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$750,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins
29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Central 30, Huron 6
Alcester-Hudson 52, Gayville-Volin High School 22
Avon 30, Corsica/Stickney 14
Britton-Hecla 44, Arlington 8
Brookings 37, Douglas 0
Chester 35, Viborg-Hurley 26
Clark/Willow Lake 7, Mobridge-Pollock 6
Dakota Valley 12, Madison 7
Dell Rapids 63, Milbank 8
Dell Rapids St. Mary 36, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 6
Deubrook 50, Florence/Henry 0
Deuel 48, Dakota Hills 7
Elk Point-Jefferson 55, Flandreau 6
Elkton-Lake Benton 55, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 0
Estelline/Hendricks 34, Centerville 22
Freeman/ Marion/ Freeman Academy Co-op 64, Colome 12
Gregory 29, Kimball/White Lake 18
Groton Area 35, Sisseton 12
Hamlin 59, Castlewood 6
Hanson 38, Canistota 28
Harrisburg 48, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 13
Herreid/Selby Area 28, Sully Buttes 0
Hill City 44, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 12
Hitchcock-Tulare 52, Sunshine Bible Academy 0
Hot Springs 50, Lead-Deadwood 0
Howard 53, Irene-Wakonda 0
Kadoka Area 46, Jones County 14
Lemmon/McIntosh 54, Newell 0
Lennox 42, Beresford 14
Parker 35, Baltic 6
Parkston 52, Garretson 0
Philip 56, New Underwood 16
Pierre T F Riggs High School 49, Watertown 20
Pine Ridge 44, Standing Rock, N.D. 0
Platte-Geddes 26, Bon Homme 22
Sioux Falls Christian 35, Chamberlain 7
Sioux Falls Jefferson 63, Mitchell 0
Sioux Falls Lincoln 58, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 35
Sioux Falls Washington 37, Rapid City Central 20
Sioux Valley 34, McCook Central/Montrose 14
Spearfish 40, Belle Fourche 7
Stanley County 36, White River 0
Sturgis Brown 23, St. Thomas More 13

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Timber Lake 32, Faith 0
Tiospa Zina Tribal 57, Marty Indian 0
Tri-Valley 17, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 0
Vermillion 14, Custer 0
Wagner 50, Scotland/Menno 0
Wall 38, Lyman 0
Warner 27, Faulkton 20
Waverly-South Shore 48, Northwestern 0
Webster 47, Redfield 6
West Central 32, Canton 28
Wolsey-Wessington 41, Colman-Egan 14
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 35, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 12
Yankton 37, Tea Area 26
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Crazy Horse vs. Crow Creek Tribal School, ppd. to Sep 23rd.
Lakota Tech vs. Rapid City Christian, ppd. to Sep 23rd.

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

Tropical Storm Ophelia close to landfall on the North Carolina coast, weather agency says

By SARAH BRUMFIELD and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Tropical Storm Ophelia was nearing landfall on the North Carolina coast early Saturday with the potential for damaging winds and dangerous surges of water, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.

Ophelia was about 25 miles (45 kilometers) southwest of Cape Lookout and about 70 miles (110 kilometers) east-northeast of Cape Fear. The system was moving at 9 mph (15 kph) with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph), the hurricane center said in an update at 5 a.m. Saturday.

Life-threatening flooding caused by the weather system was forecast for parts of eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia, but the system was forecast to weaken after landfall, the hurricane center reported.

Ophelia was expected to turn north Saturday and then shift northeast on Sunday. The storm promised a weekend of windy conditions and heavy rain up to 7 inches (18 centimeters) in parts of North Carolina and Virginia and 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimeters) in the rest of the mid-Atlantic region through Sunday.

A storm surge warning, indicating danger from rising water moving inland, was in effect from Bogue Inlet, North Carolina, to Chincoteague, Virginia. Surges between 4 and 6 feet (1.2 and 1.8 meters) were forecast in some areas, the hurricane center said.

A tropical storm warning was issued from Cape Fear, North Carolina, to Fenwick Island, Delaware. A hurricane watch was in effect in North Carolina for the area north of Surf City to Ocracoke Inlet, the center reported.

The governors of North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland declared a state of emergency Friday as some schools closed early and several weekend events were canceled.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper issued his state's emergency declaration, aiming to expedite preparations and help provide a swift response.

"The storm's path has been difficult to predict and we want to ensure that farmers, first responders and utility crews have the tools necessary to prepare for severe weather," Cooper said.

The North Carolina Ferry System on Friday suspended service on all routes until conditions improve, officials said.

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Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's executive order sought to ease response and recovery efforts.

"We want to ensure that all communities, particularly those with the greatest anticipated impact, have the resources they need to respond and recover from the effects of this storm," Youngkin said, encouraging residents to prepare emergency kits and follow weather forecasts closely.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said in a statement Friday evening that the state expected an extended period of strong winds, heavy rainfall and elevated tides.

In Annapolis, Maryland's capital, water taxi driver Scott Bierman said service would be closed Saturday.

"We don't operate when it's going to endanger passengers and or damage vessels," Bierman said.

In Washington, the Nationals baseball team postponed its Saturday game until Sunday.

It is not uncommon for one or two tropical storms, or even hurricanes, to form off the East Coast each year, National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said.

"We're right at the peak of hurricane season, we can basically have storms form anywhere across much of the Atlantic basin," Brennan said.

Scientists say climate change could result in hurricanes expanding their reach into mid-latitude regions more often, making storms like this month's Hurricane Lee more common.

One study simulated tropical cyclone tracks from pre-industrial times, modern times and a future with higher emissions. It found that hurricanes would track closer to the coasts including around Boston, New York and Virginia and be more likely to form along the Southeast coast.

Nancy Shoemaker and her husband Bob stopped by a waterside park in downtown Annapolis to pick up sandbags. A water surge in a storm last October washed away sandbags they had in their yard.

"We're hoping it won't be that way this time," Nancy Shoemaker said. "If we have a lot of wind and a lot of surge, it can look like the ocean out there, so that's a problem."

Brumfield reported from Silver Spring, Maryland. AP Radio reporter Jackie Quinn in Washington and AP reporter Lisa Baumann in Washington state contributed.

Follow AP's climate coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

India-Canada tensions shine light on complexities of Sikh activism in the diaspora

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

The shocking accusation this week by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that India may have been behind the assassination of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia has raised several complex questions about the nature of Sikh activism in the North American diaspora.

Canada is home to the largest Sikh population outside India. There are about 800,000 Sikhs in Canada — roughly 2% of the population. The United States is home to about 500,000 Sikhs. While some Sikhs argue there is widespread support in the diaspora for an independent Sikh state in the subcontinent called Khalistan, others say there is no such consensus.

The debate over support for Khalistan and what activism looks like in the Sikh diaspora has intensified after Trudeau's accusation that India may have had a hand in the assassination of 45-year-old Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen shot dead outside the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey on June 18.

That information is based on Canadian intelligence as well intelligence from a major ally, according to a Canadian official who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly. The information is based in part on surveillance of Indian diplomats in Canada.

Nijjar, a prominent Sikh leader in British Columbia, was designated a terrorist by India in 2020 for his alleged links to the Khalistan Tiger Force, a group campaigning for independent Khalistan in the Punjab region of India. The active insurgency ended decades ago, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government recently warned that Sikh separatists were trying to stage a comeback and pressed countries like Canada to do more to stop them.

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The question of Khalistan or Sikh sovereignty "is not a fringe concept or idea in the community," said Jaskaran Sandhu, a board member with the World Sikh Organization of Canada, the largest Sikh advocacy organization in that country.

"When you look at Sikh history, it has always been about sovereignty and self-determination," he said. "Sikh voices calling for an independent state where they can practice their faith freely are getting louder. There is strong support for Khalistan in the diaspora because we have the right to free speech and the right to organize here, while you don't have that in India."

India has outlawed the Khalistan movement. Groups associated with it are listed as terrorist organizations under India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and are considered a serious security threat by the government. In the U.S. and Canada, Khalistani activism is not illegal and is protected under free speech laws.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, general counsel with Sikhs for Justice, has also been listed as a terrorist by the Indian government. The organization was banned by India in 2019.

Pannun has been a leading organizer of the Khalistan Referendum, inviting Sikhs worldwide to vote on whether Punjab should become an independent nation based on religion. Organizers of the nonbinding referendum hope to present the results to the U.N. General Assembly in about two years.

"Sikh sovereignty means having your independent, autonomous state where you have total control of the state's resources," Pannun said, adding that Sikhs in India are still forced to live under Hindu laws governing marriage, inheritance and adoption. Pannun faces sedition and a slew of other charges in India and has faced criticism for saying "Indo-Hindus who work against the interests of Canada" should return to India.

Pannun says he worked closely with Nijjar for many years and calls him "one of the dedicated campaigners for Khalistan."

"He knew his life was in danger," he said. "We spoke 18 hours before his assassination. But he never took a step back."

Not all agree that Khalistani activism is on the rise in the diaspora. Amandeep Sandhu, India-based journalist and author of "Panjab: Journeys Through Fault Lines," believes it remains a fringe movement. Even if 200,000 people may have shown up to vote at referendums held so far, that number is small compared to the 30 million Sikhs who live in India and around the world, he said.

While Sikhs who migrated to North America, Australia and the United Kingdom may carry inter-generational trauma and memories of a "brutal Indian state," they have not become engaged in the fight for Khalistan because they are busy building lives for themselves, Sandhu said.

"Life is hard for migrants," he said. "How much money and resources do you have for Khalistan, a state that remains undefined?"

Neither the Sikh community in India nor the diaspora is monolithic, he said. In India, Sikhs are also among the most patriotic. They are about 2% of India's population, but form 8% of the nation's army, and Sikh soldiers are among the nation's most decorated, Sandhu said.

Rajvinder Singh, a New Delhi store owner, said he believes "Khalistan's ideology has no place in the minds of the Sikhs."

"I don't support Khalistan," he said. "If some foreigners believe in it, what can we do about it? This is a matter for diplomatic discussions. Both countries should work towards becoming better trade partners and not fight over these issues."

In the diaspora, it is hard to tell how many actually support state separatism, said Anneeth Kaur Hundle, associate professor of anthropology and a specialist in Sikh studies at the University of California, Irvine.

Hundle said that in addition to the Khalistan issue, a lot of recent activism in the diaspora has focused on gaining more recognition for Sikh suffering linked to events of 1984, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sent the Indian army to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest of Sikh shrines, to flush out several key figures in the growing militant Khalistani movement. Months later, following Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards, thousands of Sikhs were killed across north India as the violence spread beyond Amritsar.

"While community members are not in agreement when it comes to what autonomy is or looks like, all Sikhs do want to engage in whatever activism they want without being attacked or killed for it," she said.

"Trudeau, with this statement, has stood up for all activists in the diaspora."

Since Monday, ties between India and Canada have plunged to their lowest point in years as India stopped issuing visas to Canadian citizens and told Canada to reduce its diplomatic staff.

Some say these events are having an impact on the rest of the Indian diaspora and straining relationship with Hindus, who slightly outnumber Sikhs in Canada.

Samir Kalra, managing director of the Hindu American Foundation, said the "resurgence of Khalistani extremism in the diaspora has significantly impacted Indian Americans of all backgrounds and has led to a great deal of fear and insecurity within the community." He cited "a disturbing trend" of incidents including vandalism at Hindu temples and Mahatma Gandhi statues in Canada and the United States.

"Indian men, women and children have endured intimidation and harassment at India Day festivals in both countries, as well as at a Diwali festival in Canada last year," said Kalra. He said Indian Americans also have been harassed outside the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, where "Khalistani extremists have frequently shown up and attempted to break into and set on fire the consulate building."

Cynthia Mahmood, professor of anthropology at Central College in Iowa and an expert on the Khalistani movement, has talked to militants and written about the concept of violence and nonviolence in Sikhism. She holds that it is different from Western ideas.

"In Sikhism, the question is about the fight for justice," she said. "Sometimes you have to use violence, and sometimes, nonviolence, for self-defense and to pursue justice. The Western polarity of war and peace doesn't quite apply in the Sikh context."

AP journalists Piyush Nagpal in New Delhi and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

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Bribery case against Sen. Menendez shines light on powerful NJ developer accused of corruption

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In late 2020, Sen. Bob Menendez met with Philip Sellinger, a private practice lawyer and former fundraiser for the senator, to assess his potential fit as the next U.S. Attorney for the state of New Jersey — and to discuss one case in particular.

If appointed, Sellinger would assume control of one of the largest prosecutor's offices in the country, a post that comes with the power to bust mob bosses and go after corrupt public officials.

But Menendez, federal prosecutors say, was fixated on a less consequential matter: ensuring the future prosecutor would act sympathetically toward a friend of his facing bank fraud charges, real estate developer Fred Daibes.

Daibes is now a key figure in a sweeping bribery case brought against Menendez, his wife and multiple other associates. It accuses Menendez and his wife of accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of cash, gold bars and a luxury car in exchange for a range of favors, including secretly aiding the government of Egypt on U.S. policy matters and interfering in three criminal investigations, including the one involving Daibes.

The indictment unsealed Friday by the U.S. attorney in Manhattan said Daibes paid bribes, including envelopes stuffed with thousands of dollars in cash and gold bars worth more than \$120,000.

Menendez has denied wrongdoing, blaming the prosecution on "forces behind the scenes" who "cannot accept that a first-generation Latino American from humble beginnings could rise to be a U.S. Senator." An attorney for Daibes, Tim Donohue, said he was confident his client would be "completely exonerated of all charges."

Daibes and Menendez both rose to prominence as power players in the same stretch of urban com-

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munities across the Hudson River from Manhattan, where local politics and real estate have long involved favor-trading.

In his home base of Edgewater, New Jersey, just up the river from Union City, where Menendez was once mayor, Daibes is widely credited with building out a "gold coast" of luxury high rises along the formerly industrial waterfront.

That achievement may have been helped by Daibes' cozy relationship with a number of Edgewater officials, who turned away rival developers from the community and approved his lucrative deals, according to lawsuits and a recent report by the New Jersey State Commission of Investigation.

That report found Daibes rented a discounted apartment to Edgewater's mayor and provided several million dollars in revenue to a local councilman's business, while accruing development rights and renegeing on promises to build affordable housing.

It said people who opposed Daibes faced reprisals. Edgewater's previous mayor, James Delaney, testified that his political support evaporated when he complained about what he believed was a corrupt agreement between local officials and Daibes. He ultimately didn't run for reelection.

"This report is a cautionary tale concerning the inherent dangers of enabling an influential, politically-connected and unelected private citizen to hold outsized power in government concerns," the commission wrote.

Delaney's former wife, Bridget Delaney, who had spent 15 years working for Daibes at his restaurant, said the couple were effectively run out of Edgewater, ruining their lives.

"There's fraud all over that town," she told The Associated Press on Friday. "When he's in jail, maybe that will provide some relief."

In 2018, Daibes was charged by federal prosecutors in Newark with obtaining loans under false pretenses from a bank that he owned. The charges were serious, carrying the potential for years in prison.

Daibes was still awaiting trial in 2021 when Menendez, as New Jersey's senior senator, played a key role in advising the new administration of President Joe Biden on potential candidates to be the top federal prosecutor in the state.

According to the indictment, Menendez initially rejected Sellinger as a candidate after their December 2020 job interview because the lawyer told him he would likely have to recuse himself from any case involving Daibes due to a previous matter in which he represented the developer.

But after another candidate fell through, Menendez ultimately recommended him for the job.

After Sellinger was sworn in, the Department of Justice had him step aside from the Daibes prosecution and hand responsibility for it to another senior prosecutor. Menendez, according to the indictment, then badgered both Sellinger and the prosecutor who had been put in charge of Daibes case, calling them several times.

Menendez also asked one of his political advisors to let Sellinger know he was upset with the way the Daibes case was being handled, according to the indictment.

During the months in 2022 when Menendez was trying to influence the handling of the case, Daibes arranged for Menendez's wife, Nadine, to be given two gold bars, each worth around \$60,000, along with an envelope containing thousands of dollars in cash, the indictment said.

At one point, Menendez performed a web search for "how much is one kilo of gold worth?"

David Schertler, a lawyer for Nadine Menendez said she "denies any criminal conduct and will vigorously contest these charges in court."

Sellinger and his senior prosecutor told investigators they kept Menendez's attempts to influence the case from the team of lawyers handling the prosecution and took no steps to intervene, the indictment said.

In an emailed statement, a spokesperson for the New Jersey U.S. Attorney's Office noted the recusal by Sellinger, adding that all activity related to that matter was handled appropriately according to the principles of federal prosecution.

Last year, following a delayed trial, Daibes pleaded guilty in his bank fraud case. Under the agreement, he would receive only probation, according to his attorney. But his sentencing has been repeatedly delayed and is now scheduled to take place next month.

With temporary status for Venezuelans, the Biden administration turns to a familiar tool

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — From a White House podium in May, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas outlined new legal pathways to the United States for Venezuelans and others, along with a “very clear” message for those come illegally.

“Our borders are not open. People who cross our border unlawfully and without a legal basis to remain will be promptly processed and removed,” he said.

On Wednesday, Mayorkas announced temporary legal status for an estimated 472,000 Venezuelans who had arrived in the country as of July 31 — including some who ignored his stern warnings and came illegally. Circumstances change, but the Biden administration’s sharp expansion of Temporary Protected Status may complicate its messaging.

Many Venezuelans will migrate to the United States with or without prospects for TPS, a 1990 law that empowers the Homeland Security secretary to grant eligibility for work permits in renewable increments of up to 18 months to people whose home countries are deemed unsafe due to natural disasters or civil strife.

But administration critics say the vast sweep of Mayorkas’s announcement will encourage other Venezuelans to try to enter the U.S., figuring that warnings of swift deportations ring hollow and another expansion will follow.

Smugglers will seize on the news, said Chad Wolf, acting Homeland Security secretary under President Donald Trump, whose administration sought to severely limit and reduce use of TPS.

“It’s just going to incentivize more and more, because you’re giving them a benefit that they want,” he said.

Others disagree. Outside a Mexico City bus station Friday, U.S.-bound Venezuelans, none of whom had heard the TPS news, said conditions at home drove them. Danny Romero, 45, flashed a family photo to explain his motivations.

“The one who is 18 years old wants to study medicine, but how can I pay for his school if I don’t have the money? I can’t ruin that dream,” said Romero, who left the northern city of Valencia on Sept. 2.

He came with a nephew and just a few belongings in a backpack, with his children and their mother remaining behind in Venezuela. The son who hopes to become a doctor is currently working as a barber, and another, 14, sells drawings for a dollar each.

A political, social and economic crisis over the last decade has pushed millions of Venezuelans into poverty, with teachers, professors and public employees relying on side jobs or remittances from relatives abroad to make ends meet. At least 7.3 million have left the country, with many risking an often-harrowing route to the United States.

This week’s announcement of status for 472,000 Venezuelans came on top of more than 242,000 who were previously covered under TPS grants in 2021 and 2022.

Returning home to Venezuela is unsafe “due to the enduring humanitarian, security, political, and environmental conditions,” Mayorkas said.

“However, it is critical that Venezuelans understand that those who have arrived here after July 31, 2023, are not eligible for such protection, and instead will be removed when they are found to not have a legal basis to stay,” he said.

Under Mayorkas’ watch, TPS grew to cover more than 600,000 people from 16 countries as of the end of March, according to the Congressional Research Service. On Thursday the secretary extended protections to an estimated 14,600 Afghans, on top of the 3,100 who already had them.

Democratic mayors and governors have increasingly pressured the White House to help more with the migratory influx. The city of New York says 40% of the roughly 60,000 asylum-seekers it houses came from Venezuela, and 15,000 of them will now qualify for TPS.

More Venezuelans were encountered at the border this month than nationals of any other country except

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Mexico, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection figures released by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Venezuelans were stopped 25,777 times the first 17 days of September, up 63% from the same period a month earlier. Those included some people admitted officially for scheduled asylum appointments, but the vast majority were illegal entries.

Jeremy MacGillivray, deputy representative of the United Nations' International Organization for Migration in Mexico, declined to predict the impact of the TPS expansion but said, based on past experience, that "it is likely that measures of this kind, even when positive, encourage people to set out."

Smugglers sell their services by saying, "Look, President Biden announced the expansion of this measure for Venezuelans, now is the time to come to the border," MacGillivray said.

Pedro Luis Guerra, a Venezuelan who lived in a Chicago police station lobby after reaching the city in April with his wife and young child, said TPS will be "a great help" to his family. "This is what we've wanted for so long, because we came here to succeed and to work, to provide for ourselves and not to be relying on others," he said.

Guerra said Venezuelans closely follow U.S. immigration policy news but this week's developments won't encourage more to come because "those who arrive after July, this law won't apply to them, so for them the situation remains the same."

But Jenny Martínez, a 39-year-old nurse who saw her salary eaten up by inflation back home, said conditions there are "too terrible" and Venezuelans are so desperate that many will try to reach the U.S. regardless of what awaits them in terms of legal status.

Speaking in Mexico City across the street from the bus station where she hoped to board a bus north along with her teenage daughter and toddler son, Martínez said the family has been living off remittances from her husband in Utah for the last 18 months and now they're hoping to join him there.

"The (Venezuelan) government gives you that minimum wage, and what does one do with that? Nothing," she said. "Venezuelans are going to try to enter no matter what, with or without papers. This is about crossing to be able to work, to be able to send money to grandparents."

Spagat reported from San Diego. Associated Press writers Rebecca Santana in Washington, Christopher Sherman in Mexico City and Melissa Winder in Chicago contributed.

Minnesota Twins clinch AL Central title with 8-6 win over Angels

By BRIAN HALL Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — After celebrating on the field and before any bottles were popped in the clubhouse, Minnesota Twins manager Rocco Baldelli had a message for his team: congratulations, enjoy it — but there's more to be done.

The Twins clinched the AL Central title Friday night with an 8-6 victory over the Los Angeles Angels.

Alex Kirilloff homered and drove in three runs, and Minnesota held on late to win the division crown for the third time in five seasons under Baldelli.

"We've got a lot of work to do," Baldelli said. "But tonight, we have fun. Tomorrow, we work again."

Pablo López (11-8) pitched six innings for the Twins, allowing three runs and five hits with seven strikeouts. Jhoan Duran gave up a run in the ninth but retired Brandon Drury on a grounder with the bases loaded to secure his 27th save.

"We came into today controlling our own destiny," López said. "We knew we didn't need to watch the scoreboard for anyone to lose. We knew that we needed to win the ballgame. That's exactly what we did. Even when I wasn't at my best, the offense picked me right up."

After the Twins squandered an early 3-0 lead, Kirilloff's 10th homer snapped a 3-all tie in the sixth and Minnesota won for the sixth time in eight games. Kirilloff became the 12th Twins player with double-digit home runs this season, setting a club record.

With lines from a recent college football game played at Target Field still visible, the crowd was eager to celebrate another extended fall for the Twins. It's their 15th trip to the postseason since the Washington

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Senators moved to Minnesota in 1961 and became the Twins.

"It means a lot," said injured shortstop Carlos Correa, who's expected to be ready for the postseason. "The first one here in Minnesota, it's really special. When you come to a new team, these are the goals that you set out to accomplish and this is just one of them."

Of course, the playoffs haven't been kind to Minnesota. The Twins have lost 18 straight postseason games — 13 of them to the New York Yankees.

Minnesota hasn't won a playoff game since 2004, taking the first game of the Division Series 2-0 in New York with Johan Santana on the mound. Under Baldelli, the Twins were swept in two games by the Houston Astros in a 2020 first-round series and swept in three games by the Yankees in the 2019 Division Series.

The drought isn't lost on these Twins. Kyle Farmer promised a playoff win when talking postgame in an interview played over the stadium loudspeakers.

"Yeah, sure, why not?" Farmer said. "If you don't believe it, don't play."

But this team believes it's different, in part because of the pitching and the depth it's developed.

Minnesota added on with a four-run seventh, highlighted by RBI doubles from Farmer and Jorge Polanco.

"We did a lot of different things to build this club and the team really is gelling," Baldelli said, soaked in beer and bubbly and watching his team celebrate. "If you just look behind you, you can see some gelling going on. That's what you want to see."

Davis Daniel (0-1) took the loss as the bulk pitcher behind opener José Suarez. Daniel was recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake earlier in the day and gave up three runs in 4 1/3 innings in his second career major league appearance.

Los Angeles has lost eight of nine, limping to the finish of another disappointing season with Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani on the injured list. Logan O'Hoppe hit a two-run shot in the eighth for his 12th home run of the season.

"I want my guys to see that," Angels manager Phil Nevin said about seeing the Twins celebrate their division title. "I really do. That is where we want to be. Absolutely. We've got a good young core. And I noticed, yeah, I noticed O'Hoppe and (Zach) Neto and those guys out there looking at that."

LEADING LOPEZ

It's fitting that López, the spring trade acquisition from Miami for Luis Arraez, was on the mound for the Twins' clinching effort. He's been a part of a starting rotation that has led the way for Minnesota this season.

López, who could potentially be the Game 1 starter in the playoffs, bounced back from giving up five runs in a loss to the Chicago White Sox in his last start. His career-high 228 strikeouts are second in the AL behind Toronto's Kevin Gausman (232) and his 3.61 ERA is 10th in the league.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: Trout took swings off a tee before the game as he tries to return from a left hamate fracture before the end of the season. ... LHP Aaron Loup was placed on the 15-day injured list with a left shoulder strain, ending his season with a 2-3 record and 6.10 ERA in 55 games.

Twins: INF Royce Lewis was placed on the 10-day injured list with a left hamstring strain. The team is hopeful Lewis, who leads the team with a .309 batting average and has 15 homers, is ready to return for the playoffs.

UP NEXT

RHP Sonny Gray (8-7, 2.84 ERA) starts Saturday afternoon for Minnesota. Gray is second in the AL in ERA to New York's Gerrit Cole (2.75). The Angels had not announced a starter. The team will likely use an opener, with LHP Kenny Rosenberg (1-2, 5.48) as the bulk pitcher.

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

Nikki Haley's approach to abortion is rooted in her earliest days in South Carolina politics

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — As a state representative running a longshot campaign for South Carolina governor, Nikki Haley would often explain her opposition to abortion with a story about her family.

"I'm strongly pro-life, very pro-life, and not because my party tells me to be, but my husband was adopted, and so every day I know the blessings of having him there," she said in 2010.

She won that race and was reelected as governor before serving as former President Donald Trump's United Nations ambassador. She's now competing against Trump as the only woman seeking the Republican presidential nomination. And in a primary race animated by questions over the future of abortion access in the U.S., Haley is reviving the personal anecdote she would give in South Carolina — almost verbatim.

"I am unapologetically pro-life, not because the Republican Party tells me, but because my husband was adopted, and I live with that blessing every day," she told a New Hampshire audience in May.

Haley is gaining attention in the GOP race with her calls for "consensus" around abortion, an unusual tone in a campaign where Republican White House hopefuls often prefer to highlight their eagerness to fight President Joe Biden and other Democrats. Her supporters say she has staked out a consistent approach from her earliest days in politics, challenging fellow Republicans to be pragmatic in their pursuit of a deeply conservative agenda.

As a lawmaker and then governor, Haley supported some of the most restrictive abortion measures South Carolina's legislature could pass.

"Nikki's doing what she's always done," said Nathan Ballentine, a South Carolina lawmaker who served with Haley in the Legislature and has endorsed her presidential bid. "She's being honest with the people and will just let it go from there."

Haley has urged Republicans to not push for a national abortion ban with next to no chance of passing Congress, a view she articulated to millions of viewers during the first presidential debate last month and is likely to reinforce when Republican candidates other than Trump gather for another debate on Wednesday.

"Leadership is about bringing out the best in people — that's what Nikki's always done," Haley campaign spokesperson Olivia Perez-Cubas said. "Her approach will save more babies and support more moms than demonizing the issue."

Some of her competitors — including Sen. Tim Scott, her fellow South Carolinian and erstwhile ally — have criticized her for not standing more firmly for what they say are conservative principles.

"What she ultimately might want, versus what she knows she can get done as an effective leader, are two different things," said Ballentine, who co-sponsored anti-abortion legislation with Haley when she served in the state legislature. "And she's not going to mislead the public and make them think that they're going to get something ... when she knows the reality is, the votes aren't there in the Senate, and that it's a process you have to work through."

While Trump remains dominant in the primary, many Republican voters say they're open to a new nominee. Haley has tried to distinguish herself with her defense of a muscular U.S. foreign policy, citing her experience as U.N. ambassador, and by dismissing her competitors as men fighting with each other.

During one squabble in the first GOP debate, Haley cut in with a reference to a famous line from Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first female prime minister: "If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman."

In 2010, Haley identified with the then-nascent tea party, a state legislator who advocated for spending cuts. Running against three men, Haley attacked what she called the "good ol' boys" dominating the state's politics.

As a state legislator and governor, Haley supported several anti-abortion measures and often clashed with members of her party because she labeled them insufficiently conservative. She issued "report cards" to the Republican- and male-dominated legislature, grading them on how they voted on her priorities.

While serving in the state House, Haley co-sponsored legislation in 2009 mandating a 24-hour waiting

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period between a woman's abortion consultation and the procedure itself. The bill, signed into law the following year, also required that women receive information about calculating a fetus' gestational age and a list of free ultrasound providers.

The following year, she voted to end abortion coverage for victims of rape and incest in the state health plan for employees; the Senate defeated that proposal.

As governor, she signed the most conservative abortion bill South Carolina Republicans were able to pass through both chambers at the time. Supporters of the legislation, referred to colloquially as the "pain capable" bill, cited the disputed claim that a fetus can feel pain at 20 weeks. It allowed exceptions only if the mother's life was in jeopardy or a doctor determined the fetus can't survive outside the womb, but not for rape or incest.

Then, as she does now, Haley drew on her experience as a mother.

"I connected with my kids moving inside of me," she said, recalling the 20-week point of her pregnancies. "And all that I felt in those five months was something that I think is very important that we think about."

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* achieved a conservative goal of half a century, but also threw the politics of abortion into flux. Voters have supported abortion rights in several ballot measures in GOP-leaning states. Democrats in last year's midterms kept control of the Senate and did better than expected in the House, though Republicans won a narrow majority.

Evangelicals and other social conservatives, meanwhile, are split on a path forward and concerned about polling suggesting a majority of Americans support abortion access and oppose the most restrictive GOP-enacted bans.

Nationally, six in ten Republican men (61%) and women (63%) say that abortion should be illegal in a majority of instances, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in June.

Majorities of Republican men (57%) and women (54%) support their state allowing legal abortions up to 6 weeks into the pregnancy. Republican men are slightly more likely than GOP women to say abortion should be legalized at 15 weeks (34% vs. 21%).

Haley gave a closely watched speech in April at the headquarters of a leading anti-abortion group, arguing that an overall "consensus" was needed before seeking a federal-level ban.

She warned Republicans not to be caught in "a kind of gotcha bidding war" whose questions "miss the point if the goal is saving as many lives as possible."

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of that group, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, has long credited Haley for her messaging and said in an interview that Haley was "uniquely gifted at communicating from a pro-life woman's perspective."

Haley's home state, meanwhile, has gone further on abortion under her successor. Earlier this year, Gov. Henry McMaster signed into a law a bill banning most abortions at six weeks. The state Supreme Court upheld the law last month, although opponents have filed a new legal challenge seeking to expand the timeframe from six weeks to nine.

Asked about that law in last month's debate, Haley issued a call "to stop demonizing this issue," reiterating her focus on consensus.

"I agree with her in some ways when it comes to being pragmatic — I just would draw the line in a different place," state Rep. John McCravy, who sponsored South Carolina's new law, said of Haley. McCravy has endorsed Tim Scott. "And I would say, you try and do the best you can first and then you give in. You have to have a vote to know how people are going to vote."

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The federal government is headed into a shutdown. What does it mean, who's hit and what's next?

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government is heading toward a shutdown that will disrupt many services, squeeze workers and roil politics as Republicans in the House, fueled by hard-right demands for deep cuts, force a confrontation over federal spending.

While some government entities will be exempt — Social Security checks, for example, will still go out — other functions will be severely curtailed. Federal agencies will stop all actions deemed non-essential, and millions of federal employees, including members of the military, won't receive paychecks.

Here's a look at what's ahead if the government shuts down on Oct. 1.

WHAT IS A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN?

A shutdown happens when Congress fails to pass some type of funding legislation that is signed into law by the president. Lawmakers are supposed to pass 12 different spending bills to fund agencies across the government, but the process is time-consuming. They often resort to passing a temporary extension, called a continuing resolution or CR, to allow the government to keep operating.

When no funding legislation is enacted, federal agencies have to stop all non-essential work and will not send paychecks as long as the shutdown lasts.

Although employees deemed essential such as air traffic controllers and law enforcement officers still have to report to work, other federal employees are furloughed. Under a 2019 law, those same workers are slated to receive backpay once the funding impasse is resolved.

WHEN WOULD A SHUTDOWN BEGIN AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

Government funding expires Oct. 1, the start of the federal fiscal year. A shutdown will effectively begin at 12:01 a.m. if Congress is not able to pass a funding plan that the president signs into law.

It is impossible to predict how long a shutdown would last. With Congress divided between a Democratic-controlled Senate and Republican-led House, and Speaker Kevin McCarthy's hard-right conservatives looking to use the shutdown as leverage for spending cuts, many are bracing for a stoppage that could last weeks.

WHO DOES A SHUTDOWN AFFECT?

Millions of federal workers face delayed paychecks when the government shuts down, including many of the roughly 2 million military personnel and more than 2 million civilian workers across the nation.

Nearly 60% of federal workers are stationed in the Defense, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security departments.

Federal workers are stationed in all 50 states and have direct interaction with taxpayers -- from Transportation Security Administration agents who operate security at airports to Postal Service workers who deliver mail.

Some federal offices will also have to close or face shortened hours during a shutdown.

Beyond federal workers, a shutdown could have far-reaching effects on government services. People applying for government services like clinical trials, firearm permits and passports could see delays.

Businesses closely connected to the federal government, such as federal contractors or tourist services around national parks, could see disruptions and downturns. The travel sector could lose \$140 million daily in a shutdown, according to the U.S. Travel Industry Association.

Lawmakers also warn that a shutdown could rattle financial markets. Goldman Sachs has estimated that a shutdown would reduce economic growth by 0.2% every week it lasted, but growth would then bounce back after the government reopens.

Others say the disruption in government services has far-reaching impacts because it shakes confidence in the government to fulfill its basic duties. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce warned, "A well-functioning economy requires a functioning government."

WHAT ABOUT COURT CASES, THE WORK OF CONGRESS AND PRESIDENTIAL PAY?

The president and members of Congress will continue to work and get paid. However, any members of their staff who are not deemed essential will be furloughed.

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The judiciary will be able to continue to operate for a limited time using funds derived from court filings and other fees, as well as other approved funding.

Notably, funding for the three special counsels appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland would not be affected by a government shutdown because they are paid for through a permanent, indefinite appropriation, an area that's been exempted from shutdowns in the past.

That means the two federal cases against Donald Trump, the former president, as well as the case against Hunter Biden, the son of President Joe Biden, would not be interrupted. Trump has demanded that Republicans defund the prosecutions against him as a condition of funding the government, declaring it their "last chance" to act.

HAS THIS HAPPENED BEFORE?

Prior to the 1980s, lapses in government funding did not result in government operations significantly shuttering. But then-U.S. Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, in a series of legal opinions in 1980 and 1981, argued that government agencies cannot legally operate during a funding gap.

Federal officials have since operated under an understanding they can make exemptions for functions that are "essential" for public safety and constitutional duties.

Since 1976, there have been 22 funding gaps, with 10 of them leading to workers being furloughed. But most of the significant shutdowns have taken place since Bill Clinton's presidency, when then-Speaker Newt Gingrich and his conservative House majority demanded budget cuts.

The longest government shutdown happened between 2018 and 2019 when then-President Trump and congressional Democrats entered a standoff over his demand for funding for a border wall. The disruption lasted 35 days, through the holiday season, but was also only a partial government shutdown because Congress had passed some appropriations bills to fund parts of the government.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO END A SHUTDOWN?

It's the responsibility of Congress to fund the government. The House and Senate have to agree to fund the government in some way, and the president has to sign the legislation into law.

Congress often relies on a so-called continuing resolution, or CR, to provide stopgap money to open government offices at current levels as budget talks are underway. Money for pressing national priorities, such as emergency assistance for victims of natural disasters, is often attached to a short-term bill.

But hardline Republicans say any temporary bill is a non-starter for them. They are pushing to keep the government shut down until Congress negotiates all 12 bills that fund the government, which is historically a laborious undertaking that isn't resolved until December, at the earliest.

Trump, who is Biden's top rival heading into the 2024 election, is urging on the Republican hardliners. If they are successful, the shutdown could last weeks, perhaps even longer.

As the world's problems grow more challenging, the head of the United Nations gets bleaker

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — At the annual meeting of world leaders last year, the U.N. chief sounded a global alarm about the survival of humanity and the planet. This year, the alarm rang louder and more ominously, and the message was even more pressing: Wake up and take action — right now.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' assessment, delivered in his no-nonsense style, aimed to shock. We are becoming "unhinged," he said. We are inching closer to "a great fracture." Conflicts, coups and chaos are surging. The climate crisis is growing. Divides are deepening between military and economic powers, the richer North and poorer South, East and West. "A new Rubicon" has been crossed in artificial intelligence.

Guterres has spoken often on all these issues. But this year, which he called "a time of chaotic transition," his address to leaders was tougher and even more urgent. And looking at his previous state-of-the-world speeches, it seems clear he has been headed in this direction for quite some time.

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In his first address to world leaders in 2017 after taking the helm of the 193-member United Nations, Guterres cited "nuclear peril" as the leading global threat. Two years later, he was warning of the world splitting in two, with the United States and China creating rival internets, currency, trade, financial rules "and their own zero-sum geopolitical and military strategies." He urged vigorous action "to avert the great fracture."

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. The global response Guterres called for never happened; richer countries got vaccines and poorer ones were left waiting. At last year's leaders' gathering, his message was almost as dire as this week's: "Our world is in peril and paralyzed," Guterres said. "We are gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction."

This year, his message to the presidents and prime ministers, monarchs and ministers gathered in the vast General Assembly hall was unambiguous and stark.

"We seem incapable," Guterres said, "of coming together to respond."

THE WORLD'S FUTURE, AND THE UN'S

At the heart of Guterres' many speeches this week is the very future of the United Nations, an institution formed immediately after World War II to bring nations together and save future generations from war. But in a 21st-century world that is far more interconnected and also more bitterly divided, can it remain relevant?

For Guterres, the answer is clear: It must.

The Cold War featured two superpowers — the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union. When it ended, there was a brief period of U.S.-dominated unipolarity after the breakup of the Soviet Union and its dissolution into a dominant Russia and smaller former republics. Now it is moving to a more chaotic "multipolar world" — and creating, Guterres says, new opportunities for different countries to lead.

But Guterres' key argument is rooted in history. He says it teaches that a world with many power centers and small groups of nations can't solve the challenges that affect all countries. That's why strong global institutions are needed, he told leaders on Thursday, and "the United Nations is the only forum where this can happen."

The big question, upon which Guterres is now laser-focused, is whether an institution born in 1945 — a time when the tools to address chaos and fragmentation were more rudimentary — can be retooled and updated to tackle today's challenges.

"I have no illusions," he said. "Reforms are a question of power. I know there are many competing interests and agendas. But the alternative to reform is not the status quo. The alternative to reform is further fragmentation. It's reform or rupture."

That is the conundrum sitting in the U.N. chief's lap: Can 193 nations with competing agendas undertake major reforms?

To meet the challenge, Guterres has called on world leaders to attend a "Summit of the Future" at next September's U.N. global gathering, and in the coming year to negotiate a "Pact for the Future." At a meeting Thursday to prepare, he told ministers that the pact "represents your pledge to use all the tools at your disposal at the global level to solve problems — before those problems overwhelm us."

The secretary-general said he knows reaching agreement will be difficult. "But," he said, "it is possible."

A SENSE THAT THINGS ARE 'FUNDAMENTALLY BROKEN'

Time, Guterres says, is against the United Nations and countries that support the return of united global action. Perhaps that is why his words grow more dire each year.

He points to new conflicts like Ukraine, more intense geopolitical tensions, signs of "climate breakdown," a cost-of-living crisis and the debt distress and default that is bedeviling more countries than ever.

"We cannot inch towards agreement while the world races towards a precipice," Guterres said. "We must bring a new urgency to our efforts, and a shared sense of common purpose."

That's easier said than done, as this week's high-level meetings — and the priorities and problems they raise — make clear.

Can all the U.N.'s far-flung nations unite behind a common purpose? Whether that happens in the next

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12 months remains to be seen. Certainly there is support. Consider Bahamas Foreign Minister Frederick Audley Mitchell, addressing the global gathering Friday night. "Now, more than ever, we need the United Nations," he said.

Richard Gowan, the U.N. director for the International Crisis Group, said Guterres' state-of-the-world speech spoke "truth to power" and was an especially blunt and bleak assessment.

"He really seems to think that the multilateral system is fundamentally broken," Gowan said. The secretary-general seems frustrated after years of difficult dealings with the divided U.N. Security Council, Gowan said, alluding to the United States and its Western allies increasingly clashing with Russia and China.

"Sometimes it feels like Guterres no longer believes in the institution he leads," Gowan said.

For Guterres, then, the Summit of the Future presents an opportunity but also a possible demarcation point — between a brighter future and a more desolate one, between a chance at progress and the prospect of a closing door. To Gowan, it will be "a last chance for U.N. members to get their act together and rethink how the multilateral system could work."

And that could present a potentially insurmountable peak for the world's most senior diplomat to scale. Mark Malloch-Brown, president of the Open Society Foundations and a former U.N. deputy secretary-general, pronounced Guterres' keynote speech to world leaders "a brave and frank admission that the U.N. is broken — no longer fit for purpose."

"The problem is that precisely because of that, nobody may hear him," Malloch-Brown said. "He may be speaking to an empty room."

A month after Prigozhin's suspicious death, the Kremlin is silent on his plane crash and legacy

By The Associated Press undefined

Why Yevgeny Prigozhin's private jet plummeted into a field northwest of Moscow is still a mystery. The Russian military leaders he tried to oust with his armed rebellion remain in power. His mercenary army is under new management.

And President Vladimir Putin, whose authority was badly dented by the short-lived mutiny, seems as strong as ever, with Prigozhin's fiery death sending a chilling message to anyone challenging him.

A month after Prigozhin was killed in a suspicious plane crash, the Kremlin seems to be succeeding in keeping the demise of the profane and outspoken Wagner chief as low-key as possible — a strategy underlined by Putin's absence at his funeral and troops keeping the media from entering Porokhovskoye Cemetery in St. Petersburg for his Aug. 29 burial.

Prigozhin's funeral was "the culmination of a covert operation aimed at his elimination," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center. It was conducted under the strict oversight of security agencies, "shrouded in secrecy and involved deceptive tactics," she noted.

Makeshift street memorials sprouted in several cities honoring the 62-year-old Prigozhin, but they have been quietly removed by authorities. Recruitment billboards for the Wagner Group had vanished shortly after the rebellion fizzled.

In a further indignity, someone stole a violin that was left on his grave, a nod to the mercenary group's namesake, German composer Richard Wagner. Another man tried but failed to steal a sledgehammer placed there — another Wagner symbol after the group boasted of using such a tool to beat traitors to death.

Now, a surveillance camera is mounted on a nearby tree and a 24-hour guard monitors Prigozhin's well-tended grave, which on Friday was covered in flowers and written tributes. Cemetery workers say there is a steady trickle of visitors.

FROM BAKHMUT SUCCESS TO MUTINY'S FAILURE

Prigozhin's greatest wartime accomplishment — the Wagner-spearheaded capture of the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut in May after months of bloody combat — is under threat. Kyiv's troops are seeking to reclaim it in their counteroffensive in order to deal a psychological blow to Russia.

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Still, the private army that once counted tens of thousands of troops is a precious asset the Kremlin wants to exploit, and Russian officials are pondering the possibility of sending some Wagner fighters back to Ukraine.

Prigozhin launched the June 23-24 rebellion, bent on ousting the Russian Defense Ministry's leadership that he blamed for mistakes in pressing the war in Ukraine. His mercenaries took over Russia's southern military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don and then rolled toward Moscow before abruptly halting the mutiny.

Putin denounced them as "traitors," but the Kremlin quickly negotiated a deal ending the uprising in exchange for amnesty from prosecution. The mercenaries were offered a choice to retire from the service, move to Belarus or sign new contracts with the Defense Ministry.

Exactly two months after the rebellion's start, a plane carrying Prigozhin and his top lieutenants crashed on Aug. 23 while flying from Moscow to St. Petersburg, killing all 10 people aboard.

An investigation was launched but no findings have been released. Moscow rejected an offer from Brazil, where the Embraer business jet was built, to join the inquiry.

A preliminary U.S. intelligence assessment concluded an intentional explosion caused the crash, and Western officials have pointed to a long list of Putin foes who have been assassinated. The Kremlin called allegations he was behind the crash as an "absolute lie."

The day after the crash, Putin gave a dry eulogy for Prigozhin in brief televised remarks, saying he had known him since the early 1990s. Prigozhin was "a man of difficult fate" who had "made serious mistakes in life," he said, without displaying any emotion.

Asked last week why the official investigation hasn't yielded any results, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded tersely that it's a "difficult probe."

AFTER THE CRASH, A RECKONING

Despite any damage done to Putin by the rebellion, Prigozhin's death was a powerful signal to Russian elites about challenging his authority.

Russian officials, meanwhile, moved quickly to take control of the company's personnel and assets.

Deputy Defense Minister Col. Gen. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov led a delegation to Syria, Libya, Central African Republic and other countries where Wagner has operated to tell their leaders that the Defense Ministry will take over the job.

"The death of Wagner's leaders allows the Kremlin to establish control over the mercenaries in Africa," said Africa expert Alexandra Fokina in a recent analysis. "Africa's strategic importance for Russia is rising, and Moscow will likely try to 'nationalize' those assets without the loss of efficiency."

That doesn't necessarily mean Wagner mercenaries in Africa will be placed under the control of the Defense Ministry. Instead, Fokina said the Kremlin could allow some of them to operate autonomously as a private entity under new, government-appointed leadership.

"By maintaining such hybrid model, Moscow would be able to continue using the mercenaries in the 'gray zone,' officially keeping a distance from Wagner's activities in the region," Fokina said.

Wagner's African operations hinged heavily on personal contacts developed by Prigozhin and his lieutenants, links that could be broken if the Defense Ministry tries to take full control, she noted.

"Choosing an appointee from the ranks of 'Russia instructors' working in Africa would allow the Kremlin to rely on the existing channels of communication with the local leadership," she said.

Whether all Wagner mercenaries come under the government's command or some are allowed to operate privately, Moscow is likely to retain its clout in Africa.

"Russia's appeal as a security guarantor and military partner remains intact, irrespective of the fate of the Wagner Group," Mathieu Droin and Tina Dolbaia wrote in an analysis published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

In Belarus, the field camps that housed several thousand Wagner troops after the mutiny have shrunk following Prigozhin's death. Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko said they could be offered contracts with his military.

Other Wagner forces could return to Ukraine under the auspices of Russia's National Guard, according to messaging app channels linked to the mercenary group, although there is no official confirmation of

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such a plan.

PRIGOZHIN FOES STILL IN POWER — FOR NOW

The military leaders Prigozhin cursed and castigated in profane videos last spring — Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov — remain in power and have effectively secured their positions despite his calls for their ouster.

“Shoigu and Gerasimov seem very much to have won,” said Mark Galeotti, a London-based Russia expert who heads the consulting firm Mayak Intelligence. “Their position was saved precisely by Prigozhin’s mutiny.”

He noted that while Shoigu and Gerasimov were “phenomenally unpopular figures within the military” and widely blamed for mishandling the war, they also are very useful to the Kremlin as a “lightning rod, attracting all the criticism, rather than Putin himself.”

Shoigu attended Putin’s talks this month with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and accompanied Kim as he inspected Russia’s nuclear-capable strategic bombers and a warship on a visit that fueled Western concerns of a possible deal for Moscow to tap Pyongyang’s huge munitions arsenals for use in Ukraine.

Gen. Sergei Surovikin, whom Prigozhin had mentioned as a possible replacement for Gerasimov, vanished from public view after the mutiny and eventually was dismissed as air force chief after a two-month investigation into his possible connection to the mutiny — a sign authorities worked methodically to uproot any dissent in the ranks.

Shoigu and Gerasimov also removed other senior officers who appeared too ambitious or defiant, including Maj. Gen. Ivan Popov, commander of the 58th army in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region who was dismissed after speaking out about challenges faced by his troops amid Kyiv’s counteroffensive.

Surovikin was appointed air defense coordinator for the Commonwealth of Independent States, an alliance of former Soviet nations. While it’s a token job with no power or influence and clearly a humiliating demotion, the fact he wasn’t booted from the military altogether signaled the investigation hadn’t implicated him in any serious wrongdoing.

Earlier this month, Surovikin was seen in Algeria as part of a Russian military delegation.

Galeotti emphasized that despite the demotion, Surovikin has kept his rank. If Putin reshuffles the military leadership, he might return with a senior job.

“Surovikin is now in a position in which he has no power and no prestige but also no responsibilities. He can’t screw things up,” Galeotti said in a recent podcast.

A successor to Shoigu could make Surovikin a new chief of the General Staff, he said, adding: “They don’t have many truly able figures.”

Cracks in Western wall of support for Ukraine emerge as Eastern Europe and US head toward elections

By JAMEY KEATEN, MATTHEW LEE and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Once rock-solid, the support that Ukraine has gotten from its biggest backers for its fight against Russia is showing cracks.

Political posturing in places like Poland and Slovakia, where a trade dispute with Ukraine has stirred tensions, and Republican reticence in the United States about Washington’s big spending to prop up Ukraine’s military have raised new uncertainties about the West’s commitment to its efforts to expel Russian invaders more than 18 months into the war.

And Russian President Vladimir Putin, who hopes to outlast allied backing for Kyiv, will be ready to capitalize if he sees Ukraine is running low on air defense or other weapons.

The West has long been shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukraine against Russia. But between Ukraine’s impassioned, unending pleas for help, and huge handouts from its backers, signs of discord have emerged.

In July, Britain’s defense minister at the time said Ukraine should show “gratitude” to the West, after Kyiv renewed its vocal — but unsuccessful — push to join NATO.

This week, a new bout surfaced after Ukraine filed a complaint at the World Trade Organization against three neighbors and European Union members — Hungary, Poland and Slovakia — for banning imports

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of Ukrainian farm products, a key export for the war-weary country's battered economy.

The three bristled at the move, with Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki shooting back that his country is "no longer transferring any weapons to Ukraine because we are now arming ourselves with the most modern weapons."

Some EU officials have warned that Putin is reveling at the new show of Western discord at a time when Ukrainian troops are making slow gains in their counteroffensive against Russian forces, who still control a vast swath of eastern and southern Ukraine.

Still, from Washington to Warsaw, where the military cost and capabilities of helping Ukraine are at issue, officials are playing down any talk of a rift.

"I don't believe that one political dispute will lead to a breakdown," Polish President Andrzej Duda said, adding that his prime minister was only referring to newly ordered weapons that wouldn't ever go to Ukraine anyway.

Jake Sullivan, the Biden administration's national security adviser, said Thursday he believed that "Poland will continue to be a supporter of Ukraine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in a brief visit to Washington this week, sought to shore up U.S. support for his country, which has factored into the political campaign ahead of next year's presidential election. Former President Donald Trump and leading GOP rival Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida say they want the U.S. to stop sending weapons to Ukraine.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-West Virginia, after meeting with Zelenskyy on Thursday, acknowledged that "people are talking about how much money" is being spent. But, he added, "We're investing in democracy."

Other GOP presidential hopefuls like former Vice President Mike Pence, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie support Ukraine.

Politics over the issue is also playing out in Eastern Europe. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, a big backer of Ukraine's fight against Russia, appealed on the X platform, formerly known as Twitter, for his counterparts in Ukraine and Poland "to resolve current differences," and said his country was ready to "facilitate" dialogue between them.

Piotr Buras, a Warsaw-based senior fellow at the European Council of Foreign Relations, said, "Polish-Ukrainian relations have become hostage to the Polish electoral campaign," referring to the country's parliamentary elections next month.

Nonetheless, the harm from Morawiecki's comments lingers, he warned.

"It does a great deal of damage to the Ukrainian cause, as this narrative resembles and legitimizes those voices in Europe (mainly on the far-right) that question the need to supply weapons to Ukraine," Buras said in an email.

Robert Fico, a two-time prime minister in Slovakia, has returned as a front-runner in that country's parliamentary elections. His populist, left-wing party has staked out a pro-Russia stance and vowed to reverse Slovakia's military and political support for Ukraine if elected in the Sept. 30 vote.

Niklas Masuhr, a military analyst at the Center for Security Studies at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, said it's conceivable that some political parties might "put their eggs in a nationalist basket to ... curry favor with the electorate" and avoid the impression of giving "undue solidarity to Ukraine" at the expense of domestic interests.

"It would be naive to assume that there are no trade-offs between individual NATO countries' interests and Ukrainian interests," said Masuhr, who called Poland a "strident supporter" of Ukraine when it came to delivery of military equipment.

"There is broad strategic overlap, but that doesn't mean that in every case these interests are aligned," he said. Issues like energy or food supplies are "critical, or if you will, neuralgic, points in the relationship between these countries."

Daniel Fried, a former U.S. ambassador to Poland and now a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, said the recent standoff in Eastern Europe was "not the end of the Polish-Ukrainian alliance" and pointed to Duda's effort to walk back the comments by his prime minister.

"This mini-crisis may have peaked," Fried said by phone from Berlin. "This is going to happen ... in a war

kind of situation where people's nerves are fried, and there are real issues at stake."

"I'm reasonably confident this will be patched up and is in the process of being patched up — at least I hope so," he said.

Meet Lachlan Murdoch, soon to be the new power behind Fox News and the Murdoch empire

By DAVID HAMILTON AP Business and Technology Writer

For Lachlan Murdoch, this moment has been a long time coming. Assuming, of course, that his moment has actually arrived.

On Thursday, his father Rupert Murdoch announced that in November he'll step down as the head of his two media companies: News Corp. and Fox Corp. Lachlan will become the chair of News Corp. while remaining chief executive and chair at Fox Corp., the parent of Fox News Channel.

The changes make Rupert's eldest son the undisputed leader of the media empire his father built over decades. There's no real sign that his siblings and former rivals James and Elisabeth contested him for the top job; James in particular has distanced himself from the company and his father's politics for several years. But Rupert, now 92, has long had a penchant for building up his oldest children only to later undermine them — and sometimes to set them against one another — often flipping the table without notice.

Given Rupert Murdoch's advanced age, this might be his last power move. But there's a reason the HBO drama "Succession" was often interpreted as a thinly disguised and dark satire of his family business. In Murdoch World, as in the fictional world of the Roy family, seemingly sure things can go sideways in an instant, particularly when unexpected opportunities arise.

Lachlan Murdoch has lived that first hand. Born in London, he grew up in New York City and attended Princeton, where he focused not on business, but philosophy. His bachelor's thesis, titled "A Study of Freedom and Morality in Kant's Practical Philosophy," addressed those weighty topics alongside passages of Hindu scripture. The thesis closed on a line from the Bhagavad Gita referencing "the infinite spirit" and "the pure calm of infinity," according to a 2019 article in The Intercept.

Béatrice Longuenesse, Lachlan's thesis advisor at Princeton, confirmed the accuracy of that report via email.

After graduation, though, Lachlan plunged headlong into his father's business, moving to Australia to work for the Murdoch newspapers that were once the core of News Corp.'s business. Many assumed he was being groomed for higher things at News Corp., and they were not wrong. Within just a few years, Lachlan was deputy CEO of the News Corp. holding company for its Australian properties; shortly thereafter, he took an executive position at News Corp. itself and was soon running the company's television stations and print publishing operations.

Lachlan's ascent came to an abrupt halt in 2005, when he resigned from News Corp. with no public explanation. According to Paddy Manning, an Australian journalist who last year published a biography of Lachlan Murdoch, the core problem involved two relatively minor issues on which Lachlan disagreed with Roger Ailes, who then ran Fox News.

"The real point was that Lachlan felt Rupert had backed his executives over his son," Manning said in an interview. "So Lachlan felt, 'If I'm not going to be supported, then what's the point?'" Manning did not have direct access to Lachlan for his book "The Successor," but said he spoke in depth with the people closest to his subject.

Lachlan returned to Australia, where he has often described feeling most at home, and founded an investment group that purchased a string of local radio stations among other properties.

While he was away, News Corp. entered choppy waters. The U.K. phone-hacking scandal, in which tabloid journalists at the News of the World and other Murdoch-owned publications had found a way to listen to voicemails of the British royal family, journalistic competitors and even a missing schoolgirl, had seriously damaged the company. The fracas led to resignations of several News Corp. officials, criminal charges against some, and the closure of News of the World as its finances went south.

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Manning said that the damage the scandal inflicted on News Corp. — and on both Lachlan Murdoch's father and his brother James, chief executive of News' British newspaper group at the time — helped pull Lachlan back to the company.

"He was watching the family tear itself apart over the phone-hacking scandal," Manning said. Lachlan was "instrumental in trying to circle the wagons and turn the guns outwards, and stop Rupert from sacking James."

While it took more convincing, Lachlan eventually returned to the company in 2014 as co-chairman of News Corp. alongside James.

Not long afterward, Ailes was forced out of his job at Fox News following numerous credible allegations of sexual harassment.

Lachlan Murdoch has drawn criticism from media watchdogs for what many called Fox News' increasingly conspiratorial and misinformation-promoting broadcasts. The network hit a nadir following the 2020 election when voting machine company Dominion Voting Systems sued Fox News for \$1.6 billion, alleging that Fox knowingly promoted false conspiracy theories about the security of its voting machines.

Fox settled that suit for \$787.5 million in March of this year. A similar lawsuit filed by Smartmatic, another voting-machine maker, may go to trial in 2025, Fox has suggested.

In certain respects, though, Lachlan Murdoch's behavior suggests some ambivalence about his role at News Corp. In 2021 he moved back to Sidney and has been mixing commuting and remote work from Australia ever since. "I think there's a legitimate question about whether you can continue to do that and for how long" while running companies based in the U.S., Manning said.

As migrants overwhelm a Texas border city, others wait in Mexico for appointments to enter the US

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — Waiting three weeks and counting to cross into Texas, Lila sat in a shelter on the Mexico border Friday feeling trapped: The cartels make it too dangerous to turn around and the U.S. government offers no guarantees if she keeps going.

"They don't ask for papers. They ask you for money," said Lila, a 39-year-old from Honduras, describing officers who pulled her off buses as she made her journey north. She insisted only her first name be used because she fears retaliation from the cartels.

Her lack of good options reflected feelings of wide frustration — among both migrants and officials in U.S. cities — as the arrival of large groups of migrants this week overwhelmed Border Patrol agents. More than 8,000 migrants turned up this week at the Texas border city of Eagle Pass, across from Piedras Negras, where Lila and her Cuban partner waited for an appointment to seek asylum in the U.S.

Many others are not waiting and crossed through the Rio Grande, including a 3-year-old boy who authorities say drowned. An international bridge remained closed Friday as agents are reassigned to handle the large numbers in Eagle Pass, which for two years has been the epicenter of Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's border mission known as Operation Lone Star. That has included a floating barrier in the Rio Grande.

Residents of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras said that though their communities have been part of the immigration route for years, the size of the groups now is unusual. Migrants who arrived this week said they formed organically along the way.

"Reynosa is really tough. Juarez is dangerous right now, too," said Eric Flores, a 39-year-old from Honduras.

Migrants were stopped at the border 142,037 times during the first 17 days of September, up 15% from 123,777 the same period last month, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection figures released Thursday by Mexican President Andres Manuel López Obrador. Those figures include up to 1,450 people admitted daily with a mobile app for asylum appointments, called CBP One, but the vast majority are illegal entries.

Flores said he arrived on a train from Mexico City in a group of about 3,000 people. The group dispersed

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to different border cities, Flores said, and he ended up at a Catholic shelter in Piedras Negras where he heard he could find safety. He was among just under 200 migrants who roamed the grounds of the Casa de Migrante Frontera Digna on Friday.

Some migrants who arrive at the border stop only for a quick meal before crossing the Rio Grande. Others, like Flores, wait for an appointment.

"We're waiting for God to give us a sign and that we get an appointment approved so we can cross legally," he said. "What we want is the American dream, to work and provide for our families, not to hurt the country."

After rolling out CBP One this year, the Department of Homeland Security touted the app as a key tool in creating a more efficient and orderly system at the border.

Mexico's top diplomat, Alicia Bárcena, said at a news conference in New York that migrant shelters in Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas, are 95% full. She said the Mexican government is "very worried" about the border closures and the increase in migrants. She said more should be done to limit migration through the Darien Gap.

The unfolding response in Eagle Pass, where the mayor declared an emergency, illustrates how Border Patrol agents have become overwhelmed in recent days by asylum-seekers on parts of the U.S. border with Mexico. In San Diego and El Paso, officials this week also closed border crossings so agents could help with the influx.

The large crowds of migrants wading through the river and crossing into Eagle Pass were no longer visible by Friday. Yet, residents in Eagle Pass were still dealing with the impact.

It all started Wednesday when Eagle Pass announced one of two international bridges would close at 6 p.m.

Claudia Gutierrez, a manager at a store in downtown Eagle Pass, rushed to Mexico to make a delivery and was on the bridge heading back to the U.S. by 4 p.m. She spent two hours in line before everyone was told they would need to reroute to the other international bridge where there was a four-hour queue. Gutierrez, who has dual citizenship, spent the night in Mexico.

"A lot of people were upset because they were going to work ... but they ended up losing that day of work," Gutierrez said.

Students who cross from Mexico into the U.S. every day were also affected.

Laura Salazar, 22, typically drives her younger brother, Victor, and cousin, America, to school, as she did on Thursday when it took them an hour and 15 minutes to cross from Piedras Negras. The long wait time convinced them to try the pedestrian bridge. It only took them about 15 minutes to cross into Eagle Pass in the morning, but the 25-minute walk to school was harder to get done in time.

"We had to use other modes of transportation to get to school once we were on this side because otherwise, we wouldn't have made it," Victor said.

The closures this week extended to an international railway in Eagle Pass. Union Pacific Railroad Co. said the track would reopen at midnight Saturday as roughly 2,400 rail cars remained unable to move on both sides of the border.

After a dip in illegal crossings that followed new asylum restrictions in May, President Joe Biden's administration is again on its heels. Democratic mayors and governors are seeking more relief for hosting asylum-seekers. Republicans are seizing on the issue ahead of 2024 elections.

In August, the Border Patrol made 181,509 arrests on the Mexican border, up 37% from July but little changed from August 2022 and well below the high of more than 220,000 in December, according to figures released Friday. People in families with children fueled the increase, with 93,999 arrests — the highest on record — up from 60,454 in July and 31,487 in June.

"Our operational tempo along the border has increased in response to increased encounters, and we remain squarely focused on our broader security mission and enforcing U.S. immigration laws," said Troy Miller, acting CBP commissioner.

Alicia, a 36-year-old Honduran, and her family were lucky enough to get a hard-fought slot to present

themselves at the port of entry in Eagle Pass on Sunday. She withheld her name for fear of retaliation from the Mexican government.

At the start of the week, Alicia took off from Monterrey with her husband, teenage daughter, son, and granddaughter heading to Piedras Negras. Despite proof of the CBP One appointment that is supposed to allow them to travel through Mexico, she said the family immediately encountered corrupt officers.

The first checkpoint had a toll of about 1,000 pesos — about \$58 — to cross. At the second checkpoint, Alicia said her family and other migrants were corralled by a soldier who said only those who “collaborated” would be allowed to move forward. A kind of bidding war erupted, she said, with the soldier asking the group who wanted to make a first offer.

When the soldier saw her stash of money, Alicia said, he grabbed the pesos that were supposed to feed her family on the journey.

Tropical Storm Ophelia off the mid-Atlantic coast producing winds just below hurricane force

By SARAH BRUMFIELD and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Tropical Storm Ophelia gained strength as it churned toward the North Carolina coast on Friday, promising a weekend of heavy rain and windy conditions throughout the mid-Atlantic.

Forecasters issued a hurricane watch for parts of eastern North Carolina. The storm was expected to make landfall in North Carolina on Saturday morning and dump as much as 7 inches (17.7 centimeters) of rain across portions of the state and into southeast Virginia.

The intensifying weather system spun into a tropical storm in the afternoon and by nighttime was producing maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (113 kph), with higher gusts, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

The storm was not expected to gain further strength before landfall and was forecast to weaken afterward, according to the hurricane center.

Just before 11 p.m., forecasters said Ophelia was about 70 miles (115 kilometers) south of Cape Lookout, North Carolina, and heading north-northwest at 12 mph (19 kph).

Water levels were rising along portions of the North Carolina coast, and a storm surge warning was in effect for some areas. Surges between 3 and 5 feet (0.9 and 1.5 meters) were forecast for parts of the state, the hurricane center said.

The governors of North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland declared a state of emergency. Some schools closed early as communities prepared for the storm’s arrival, and several weekend events were canceled.

“We are expecting an extended period of strong winds, heavy rainfall, and elevated tides,” Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said in an evening statement.

Nancy Shoemaker and her husband Bob stopped by a waterside park in downtown Annapolis, Maryland’s capital, to pick up sandbags to help protect their waterfront home.

Last October, they experienced a big surge of water that came into their yard and even washed some sandbags away.

“We’re hoping it won’t be that way this time,” Nancy Shoemaker said. “If we have a lot of wind and a lot of surge, it can look like the ocean out there, so that’s a problem.”

A storm surge warning was in effect from Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina, to Chincoteague, Virginia, and a tropical storm warning was issued from Cape Fear, North Carolina, to Fenwick Island, Delaware.

Ophelia affected water taxis Friday in Annapolis, where driver Scott Bierman said service would end at 6 p.m. and close Saturday.

“We don’t operate when it’s going to endanger passengers and or damage vessels,” Bierman said.

In Washington, the Nationals baseball team postponed its Saturday game until Sunday.

It’s not uncommon for one or two tropical storms — or even hurricanes — to form right off the East Coast each year, said Michael Brennan, director of the National Hurricane Center.

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"We're right at the peak of hurricane season, we can basically have storms form anywhere across much of the Atlantic basin," Brennan said.

Scientists say climate change could result in hurricanes expanding their reach into mid-latitude regions more often, making storms like this month's Hurricane Lee more common. One study simulated tropical cyclone tracks from pre-industrial times, modern times and a future with higher emissions. It found that hurricanes would track closer to the coasts including around Boston, New York and Virginia and be more likely to form along the Southeast coast.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper issued his state's emergency declaration aiming to expedite preparations and help provide a swift response.

"The storm's path has been difficult to predict and we want to ensure that farmers, first responders and utility crews have the tools necessary to prepare for severe weather," Cooper said.

The North Carolina Ferry System suspended service on all routes on Friday until conditions improve, officials said.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's executive order also sought to ease response and recovery efforts.

"We want to ensure that all communities, particularly those with the greatest anticipated impact, have the resources they need to respond and recover from the effects of this storm," Youngkin said.

The governor encouraged residents to prepare an emergency kit and follow the weather forecast closely.

Meanwhile, Hurricane Nigel was downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone centered about 640 miles (1,030 kilometers) northwest of the Azores, with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph). There were no associated coastal watches or warnings as the storm moved northeast at 37 mph (59 kph), the hurricane center said in its final update on the system Friday morning.

White House preparing for government shutdown as House Republicans lack a viable endgame for funding

By JOSH BOAK, STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Friday directed federal agencies to get ready for a shutdown after House Republicans left town for the weekend with no viable plan to keep the government funded and avert politically and economically costly disruption of federal services.

A federal shutdown after Sept. 30 seems all but certain unless Speaker Kevin McCarthy can persuade his rebellious hard-right flank of Republicans to allow Congress to approve a temporary funding measure to prevent closures as talks continue. Instead, he's launched a much more ambitious plan to try to start passing multiple funding bills once the House returns Tuesday, with just five days to resolve the standoff.

"We got members working, and hopefully we'll be able to move forward on Tuesday to pass these bills," McCarthy, R-Calif., told reporters at the Capitol.

McCarthy signaled his preference for avoiding a closure, but a hard-right flank of his House majority has effectively seized control. "I still believe if you shut down you're in a weaker position," he said.

The standoff with House Republicans over government funding puts at risk a range of activities — including pay for the military and law enforcement personnel, food safety and food aid programs, air travel and passport processing — and could wreck havoc with the U.S. economy.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday that if federal workers go unpaid it would be Republicans' fault. "Our message is: This doesn't have to happen," she said. "They can do their job and keep these vital programs continuing, keeping the government open."

With the Oct. 1 start of a new fiscal year and no funding in place, the Biden administration's Office of Management and Budget began to advise federal agencies to review and update their shutdown plans, according to an OMB official. The start of this process suggests that federal employees could be informed next week if they're to be furloughed.

President Joe Biden has been quick to blame the likely shutdown on House Republicans, who are intent on spending cuts beyond those laid out in a June deal that also suspended the legal cap on the govern-

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ment borrowing's authority until early 2025.

"They're back at it again, breaking their commitment, threatening more cuts and threatening to shut down government again," Biden during a recent speech in suburban Maryland.

McCarthy faces immense pressure for severe spending cuts from a handful of hard-right conservatives in his caucus, essentially halting his ability to lead the chamber. Many on the right flank are aligned with Donald Trump — the Republican front-runner to challenge Biden in the 2024 election. They opposed the budget deal the speaker reached with Biden earlier this year and are trying to dismantle it.

Trump has urged the House Republicans on, pushing them to hold the line against federal spending.

Led by Trump ally Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., the right flank has all but commandeered control of the House debate in a public rebuke to the speaker.

Late Thursday, the hard-right faction pushed McCarthy to consider their idea to shelve plans for a stop-gap funding measure, called a continuing resolution, or CR, and instead start bringing up the 12 individual bills needed to fund the government.

The House GOP leadership then announced just that — it would begin processing a package of four bills to fund Defense, Homeland Security, State and Foreign Operations and Agricultural departments, setting up voting for Tuesday when lawmakers return. Work on some bills had been held up by the same conservatives demanding passage now.

"Any progress we are making is in spite of, not due to McCarthy," Gaetz posted on social media, deriding the speaker for having sent lawmakers home for the weekend. "Pathetic."

Gaetz and his allies say they want to see the House engage in the hard work of legislating — even if it pushes the country into a shutdown — as they pursue sizable reductions and cuts.

The House Rules Committee was holding a Friday afternoon session to begin preparing those bills, which historically require weeks of floor debate, with hundreds of amendments, but now are slated to be rushed to the floor for next week's votes. The panel was expected to wrap up its work Saturday.

It's a capstone to a difficult week for McCarthy who tried, unsuccessfully, to advance a typically popular defense spending bill that was twice defeated in embarrassing floor votes. The speaker seemed to blame the defeat of the bill on fellow lawmakers "who just want to burn the whole place down."

McCarthy's top allies, including Rep. Garrett Graves, R-La., insisted Friday they were still working toward both ends — passing annual spending bills and pushing for the most conservative stopgap CR with border security provisions — in time to prevent a shutdown.

Shutdowns happen when Congress and the president fail to complete a set of 12 spending bills, or fail to approve a temporary measure to keep the government operating. As a result, federal agencies are required to stop all actions deemed non-essential. Since 1976, there have been 22 funding gaps, with 10 of them leading to workers being furloughed.

The last and longest shutdown on record was for 35 days during Trump's administration, between 2018 and 2019, as he insisted on funding to build a wall along the U.S. southern border that Democrats and some Republicans refused.

Because some agencies already had approved funding, it was a partial closure. The Congressional Budget Office estimated it came at a cost of \$3 billion to the U.S. economy. While \$3 billion is a lot of money, it was equal to just 0.02% of U.S. economic activity in 2019.

There could be costs to parts of the economy and difficulties for individuals.

Military and law enforcement officials would go unpaid during the shutdown. The disaster relief fund of the Federal Emergency Management Agency could be depleted, hurting the victims of wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes and flooding.

Clinical trials on new prescription drugs could be delayed. Ten thousand children could lose access to care through Head Start, while environmental and food safety inspections would get backlogged.

Food aid for Americans through the Women, Infants and Children program could be cut off for nearly 7 million pregnant women, mothers, infants and children.

Brian Gardner, chief Washington strategist at the investment bank Stifel, said that air traffic controllers

largely continued to work without pay during the previous shutdown. He noted that visa and passport applications would not be processed if the government is closed.

The U.S. Travel Industry Association estimates that the travel sector could lose \$140 million daily in a shutdown.

But in a sign of how little damage that 35-day shutdown did to the overall economy, the S&P 500 stock index climbed 11.6% during the last government closure.

Video of Elijah McClain's stop by police shown as officers on trial in Black man's death

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BRIGHTON, Colo. (AP) — Elijah McClain's mother left a Colorado courtroom in tears Friday after prosecutors showed video footage of the 23-year-old Black man pinned down by police officers during a fatal 2019 confrontation, which rose to prominence during nationwide protests over racial discrimination and excessive force in policing.

Two officers from the Denver suburb of Aurora are on trial for manslaughter and other felony charges. The episode was captured by police body cameras, and prosecutors are leaning heavily on that footage to convince jurors that excessive force contributed to McClain's death.

On the night he was stopped, McClain was walking home from a convenience store wearing a runner's mask, covering his face below his eyes. The officers were responding to a report of a "sketchy" person in the neighborhood. McClain wore the mask because anemia made him cold, relatives later said.

The encounter quickly escalated and officers took him to the ground. McClain lost consciousness at least once after an officer put him in a neck hold pressing against his carotid artery.

McClain, a massage therapist who relatives described as a gentle introvert, threw up repeatedly after the neck hold. He was kept on the ground for 15 minutes before paramedics gave him 500 milligrams of ketamine. He suffered cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and was taken off life support three days later.

Dr. David Beuther, a pulmonary critical care physician, testified Friday that he heard McClain panting during the encounter and that his breathing became more labored later. He said he believes McClain inhaled his vomit into his lungs, making it difficult for him to breathe, and was not able to expel it as he lay on his side, held down by police. His health continued to deteriorate to such an extent that he belonged in a hospital intensive care unit in the seconds before the ketamine was injected into his arm, he said.

The racial reckoning in the United States that followed George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police brought renewed interest in McClain's death. Charges in the case were brought in 2021 after Colorado's attorney general convened a state grand jury to investigate.

A revised coroner's report determined a powerful sedative called ketamine given by paramedics to McClain played a key role in his death.

Sheneen McClain, Elijah's mother, sat in the front row of the courtroom for a third day and seemed to be breathing deeply as the video clips were shown for about an hour.

She turned down an offer of tissues as she sat near lawyers from the state toward the beginning of the footage but left the courtroom in tears when it ended. She sobbed as she was escorted into an office down the hallway and returned to watch testimony about an hour later.

At the end of the day outside court, McClain said she planned to be at the trial each day despite the pain of having to relive what happened to her son because she wanted people to know he was a real person.

"Knowing everything that Elijah went through gets me here everyday," she said.

The video shown Friday was enhanced by the prosecution to remove distracting sounds and brighten images from the confrontation on Aug. 24, 2019. Some jurors took notes and one appeared to doze off as the footage was played in the courtroom after the lights were lowered.

As the struggle starts, McClain can be heard saying "I intend to take my power back," and one of the officers radios for more help saying, "Give us more units. We're fighting him."

Soon, muffled cries and groans can be heard from McClain. He apologizes and then appears to try to explain himself, but the officers do not respond.

When an officer tells him to stop moving McClain replies, "I wasn't trying to do that. I can't breathe correctly." McClain can be heard vomiting, and an officer directs McClain to throw up away from him.

The city of Aurora agreed in 2021 to pay \$15 million to settle a lawsuit brought by McClain's parents. The lawsuit alleged the force used by officers against McClain, and his struggle to survive it, dramatically increased the amount of lactic acid in his system, leading to his death, possibly along with the large dose of ketamine he was given.

Lawyers for the officers have argued their actions were in line with department policies and not responsible for McClain's death. They've sought to shift blame to the paramedics who injected the ketamine. Trials against a third officer and two paramedics are scheduled in the coming months.

FBI is investigating alleged abuse in Baton Rouge police warehouse known as the 'Brave Cave'

By JIM MUSTIAN and LEA SKENE Associated Press

The FBI said Friday it has opened a civil rights investigation into allegations in recent lawsuits that police in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, assaulted drug suspects they detained in an obscure warehouse known as the "Brave Cave."

In one case, a man says he was taken to the warehouse and beaten so severely he needed hospital care before being booked into jail. In another, a woman claims she was strip-searched, with an officer using a flashlight to scan her body.

Since the first complaint was filed last month, the city's mayor has ordered the facility closed, the police department has disbanded its street crimes unit and an officer at the center of the allegations — the son of a current deputy chief — resigned and was arrested on a simple battery charge.

FBI officials confirmed Friday that the agency has opened an investigation based on "allegations that members of the department may have abused their authority."

This latest scandal adds to a long list of corruption and misconduct allegations plaguing the Baton Rouge Police Department, which came under significant scrutiny following the 2016 fatal police shooting of Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old Black man. In 2021, a corruption probe into the department's narcotics division led to criminal charges and internal discipline against officers accused of stealing drugs from evidence and lying on police reports.

Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul, who was hired to lead the agency in the wake of Sterling's killing, said he was so concerned over the recent warehouse claims that he drove to the FBI's New Orleans field division and asked them to review the allegations.

"There were some mistakes made," Paul told The Associated Press, acknowledging that his internal affairs division initially failed to investigate. "I promise you we will get to the bottom of this."

The most recent lawsuit, which attorneys filed earlier this week on behalf of Ternell Brown, alleges officers pulled her over in June, took her to the same "black site" and strip-searched her for "contraband." She was released without charges when officers concluded the prescription drugs in her possession were legal.

Her attorneys wrote in the lawsuit that they are still learning "the full horror of what the street crimes unit did there. ... Even those who were not beaten at the torture warehouse, we now know, were still sexually humiliated."

The officer who resigned, Troy Lawrence Jr., has been the subject of several civil rights lawsuits and excessive force complaints in recent years. His father, Troy Lawrence Sr., was promoted to deputy chief in 2020 after commanding the street crimes unit, which went by the acronym BRAVE, for Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination.

It was not clear late Friday whether Lawrence Jr. had an attorney who could comment on his behalf. An email sent to the police union seeking comment late Friday wasn't immediately answered.

According to a lawsuit filed last month, he repeatedly turned off and muted his body camera during his interactions with Jeremy Lee, the suspect who ended up hospitalized with broken bones and other injuries. Inside the warehouse, officers punched and kicked him while he screamed for help, the lawsuit alleges. After he was violently interrogated and arrested, the only criminal charge prosecutors pursued against Lee was resisting arrest.

Shortly after Lee's lawsuit, Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Weston Broome ordered the warehouse closed, saying she was previously unaware of the facility's existence.

"The severity of these allegations deeply concerns me, especially given the potential impact on the trust our community places in us," Broome said.

Thomas Frampton, an attorney representing both Lee and Brown, said his team has heard from dozens more people alleging abuse inside the warehouse and they plan to file additional lawsuits.

"This kind of misconduct is so entrenched that people had little reason to expect any kind of positive change," he said, praising the FBI's decision to launch an investigation.

Gold bars, cash-stuffed envelopes: New indictment of Sen. Menendez alleges vast corruption

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Powerful Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey was charged Friday with secretly aiding the authoritarian government of Egypt and trying to thwart the criminal prosecution of a friend in exchange for gold bars and cash under a corruption indictment that accuses him of using his foreign affairs influence for personal gain.

Menendez was forced to relinquish his chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but said he would not resign from Congress, though New Jersey's governor, a fellow Democrat, and other Democrats in the state's congressional delegation said he should.

The indictment, the second in eight years against the 69-year-old senator, alleges an illegal commingling of Menendez's obligations to advance U.S. priorities and his private interest in cultivating relationships with wealthy businessmen. It also includes charges against his wife and three New Jersey businessmen who authorities say showered the couple with money, gold and a luxury car in exchange for official favors.

A previous indictment of Menendez stemming from different allegations ended in 2017 with a deadlocked jury.

Hours after the latest case was unsealed, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy demanded Menendez's immediate resignation, saying the allegations were "so serious that they compromise" the senator's ability to serve. Additional calls for him to resign came from New Jersey Reps. Bill Pascrell, Andy Kim and Mikie Sherrill, among others.

Menendez sounded defiant in response to calls for him to leave office, saying in a statement late Friday, "I am not going anywhere."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Menendez would step down as chairman of the Foreign Relations panel "until the matter has been resolved," as per the rules of the Senate Democratic caucus, but Schumer stopped short of calling for him to resign.

Menendez accused prosecutors of misrepresenting "the normal work of a congressional office" and said he would not allow his work in the Senate to be distracted by "baseless allegations."

Authorities who searched Menendez's home last year found more than \$100,000 worth of gold bars, as well as over \$480,000 in cash — much of it hidden in closets, clothing and a safe, prosecutors say. Photos in the indictment show cash that was stuffed in envelopes in jackets bearing Menendez's name. Investigators also say they discovered a Google search by Menendez for the value of a "kilo of gold," and DNA of one man prosecutors say bribed him on an envelope filled with thousands of dollars.

One set of allegations is that Menendez directly interfered in criminal investigations, including by pushing to install a federal prosecutor in New Jersey he believed could be influenced in a criminal case against a

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businessman and associate of the senator. Prosecutors say he also tried to use his position of power to try to meddle in a separate criminal investigation by the New Jersey Attorney General's office.

Other accusations include repeated actions by Menendez to benefit Egypt despite U.S. government misgivings over the country's human rights record that in recent years have prompted Congress to attach restrictions on aid. His efforts include ghostwriting a letter to fellow senators encouraging them to lift a hold on \$300 million in aid to Egypt, one of the top recipients of U.S. government support, as well as transmitting nonpublic information to Egyptian officials about military issues, the indictment says.

Menendez, in an emailed statement, said: "For years, forces behind the scenes have repeatedly attempted to silence my voice and dig my political grave. Since this investigation was leaked nearly a year ago, there has been an active smear campaign of anonymous sources and innuendos to create an air of impropriety where none exists."

David Schertler, a lawyer for Menendez's wife, Nadine, said she "denies any criminal conduct and will vigorously contest these charges in court."

Menendez appears to be the first sitting senator in U.S. history to have been indicted on two unrelated criminal matters, according to the Senate Historical Office. His trial on charges that he pressured government officials to resolve a matter involving a Florida eye doctor -- who had lavished him with gifts and campaign contributions — ended with a deadlocked jury.

He faces reelection next year in a bid to extend his three-decade career in Washington as Democrats hold a narrow majority in the Senate.

"Bob Menendez has been a dedicated public servant and is always fighting hard for the people of New Jersey. He has a right to due process and a fair trial," Democratic leader Schumer said in an emailed statement.

Prosecutors allege Menendez and his wife accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes from three business associates, Wael Hana, Jose Uribe and Fred Daibes. He used his influence to push to nominate Philip Sellinger as U.S. attorney because he believed he could influence Sellinger to protect Daibes, a longtime friend and prominent New Jersey developer who faced criminal prosecution, they said. Sellinger, who currently serves in the position, is not accused of any wrongdoing.

Daibes pleaded guilty last year to bank fraud and is scheduled to be sentenced in October. His plea deal calls for him to serve only probation in that case.

The White House declined to comment on the indictment, including on Biden's nomination of Sellinger.

Requests for comment from lawyers for Daibes and Uribe were not immediately returned. A spokesperson for Hana, Steven Goldberg, said the indictment was still being reviewed but that the charges appear to have "absolutely no merit."

In April 2020, shortly after meeting with an Egyptian official, authorities allege, Menendez lobbied then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to increase American engagement in stalled negotiations involving Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to build a dam over the Nile River, a key foreign policy issue for Egypt.

Separately, after Menendez called a government official about an investigation of a Uribe associate, Uribe and Hana worked to provide the senator's wife with a Mercedes-Benz convertible. The indictment says that after the transaction was complete, Nadine Menendez texted her husband to say, "Congratulations mon amour de la vie, we are the proud owners of a 2019 Mercedes," with a heart emoji.

The first time Menendez was indicted, he had been accused of using his political influence to pressure government officials to resolve a Medicare billing dispute in favor of a friend — Dr. Salomon Melgen — securing visas for the doctor's girlfriends and helping protect a contract the doctor had to provide port-screening equipment to the Dominican Republic.

Menendez has always maintained his innocence, and prosecutors dropped the case after a jury deadlocked in November 2017 on charges including bribery, fraud and conspiracy, and a judge dismissed some counts.

The son of Cuban immigrants, Menendez has held public office continuously since 1986, when he was elected mayor of Union City, New Jersey. He was a state legislator and spent 14 years in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 2006, Gov. Jon Corzine appointed Menendez to the Senate seat he vacated when he became governor.

The new charges follow a yearslong investigation that examined, among other things, how Hana's company — IS EG Halal — was able to secure sole authorization from the Egyptian government to certify that meat imported into that country meets Islamic dietary requirements.

The designation surprised U.S. agriculture officials. Previously, several other companies had been doing that certification, but they were dismissed by Egyptian agriculture officials in favor of IS EG Halal, which had no previous experience in the field.

Prosecutors say Menendez then pressured a U.S. Department of Agriculture official to stop opposing Hana's company as the sole halal certifier. Hana's company was used to send bribes payments to a business set up by Menendez's wife called Strategic International Business Consultants, LLC, prosecutors allege.

Senate disclosure forms amended by Menendez in March 2022 show Nadine Menendez's assets included gold bars valued between \$100,000 to \$250,000. Between April and June of 2022, the couple cashed out at least part of their precious metal holdings, forms show, selling between \$200,000 and \$400,000 worth of gold bars, while keeping at least \$250,000 worth.

At the edge of the UN security perimeter, those with causes (and signs) try to be heard

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Daniel Pedro came to the U.S. from Angola five months ago. He works construction in the New York City borough of Queens. Kadija Tyler made the journey from Senegal to Harlem. She works in sales in a department store.

Neither is a full-time activist. But they and many others this week spent the first days of the U.N. General Assembly holding homemade signs decrying what they call abuses in their homelands.

Outside the enormous perimeter of police and barricades that surrounds the United Nations this time of year, there is a park dedicated to U.N.-centered protests. And a variety of dedicated groups show up in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza throughout the year to draw attention to their causes.

The General Assembly, the most inherently international event, is also the most American — a place where people raised unfree come to speak out because they can.

In official protest locations and just plain street corners, the heavily secured streets outside the United Nations complex were filled this week with people who said they were there protesting injustice because, after years of repression, they are finally in a place where they can.

They acknowledged that their action might not make a direct, immediate difference at home. But in many cases, that seemed secondary. Simply to be there — and to represent — seemed their most important priority.

Here are some glimpses of those outside the formidable security perimeter at the U.N. General Assembly — their causes, their thoughts, their motivations, their hopes of getting noticed.

CAUSE: ANGOLA'S MAIN OPPOSITION PARTY

WHO: Daniel Pedro, 22, from Luanda, Angola and living in the New York City borough of Queens.

WHAT: Holding a sign protesting Angola's ruling MPLA party and supporting the main opposition party — the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, known as UNITA. The MPLA won elections last year with 51% of the votes cast, extending its 47-year rule of the country, according to the electoral commission's results.

Pedro and three friends said on a street near the U.N. that they saw that as a move toward dictatorship. That government's heavy hand stands in contrast to the liberty that Angolans experience in the United States, Pedro said.

"We don't get freedom there," he said of his home country. When people speak out, he said, "the police stop them. They cannot say nothing."

"In Angola we don't have freedom of expression. We are always tired of that," he said. "It feels good to be here to express myself."

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Simply speaking out on behalf of fellow citizens made him feel like he was fulfilling his duty, he said. "I can do something for my country," he said. "Even if it does nothing, what about my family?"

CAUSE: A SENEGALESE OPPOSITION LEADER

WHO: Christiane Diagne, 52, a social worker from Montreal.

WHAT: Protesting in Manhattan on behalf of jailed Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, who was put in intensive care last month after nearly three weeks of a hunger strike to protest criminal charges brought against him by Senegal's government, his party said. Sonko was put in detention July 31 in advance of a trial in which he faces charges of calling for insurrection, conspiracy against the state and other alleged crimes.

Diagne and other Sonko supporters chanted in his favor in the designated General Assembly protest space. They said the direct effect of the protest mattered less than the fact that they were doing something.

"For us, we have to do that," Diagne said. "We want to be able to choose who's going to be our president."

"Who do you want? Ousmane Sonko! When do you want him? Now!" the group chanted. Police and local media watched, but paid little attention.

CAUSE: NAGORNO-KARABAKH

WHO: Tiran Antaplian, 42, of Queens, and Michael Nazaryan, 30, of California.

WHAT: The fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous, ethnic Armenian region inside the borders of Azerbaijan that has been a flashpoint since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The announcement of a cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh, just a day after Azerbaijan launched heavy artillery fire against Armenian forces, toned down fears of a third full-scale war over the region in the southern Caucasus Mountains, but not before people such as Antaplian and Nazaryan came out to speak out on behalf of the Armenian side.

The region and sizable surrounding territories came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by the Armenian military at the end of a separatist war in 1994. But Azerbaijan regained the territories and parts of Nagorno-Karabakh itself after six weeks of fighting in 2020.

"All of our friends and families are basically hiding in a basement," Antaplian said before the ceasefire was announced. "I barely sleep two hours a day ... But I know they are struggling much more in a dire situation than myself."

Given that, Nazaryan said, being out on the streets was a way to do even the smallest thing to feel better about.

"It's a meeting of all the people who are making the decisions about the future and the safety of the world," he said. "It's my right to raise my voice. We're here to raise our voice."

CAUSE: AMPLIFYING NGO GOALS

WHO: Carmen Correa, CEO of Pro Mujer, a group that works for the financial and health empowerment of women in Latin America.

WHAT: Getting attention and funding for their causes.

The General Assembly didn't draw just informal protesters who came to speak out on behalf of their causes on the streets outside. Many social organizations came to formally advocate for their causes at the U.N. or at one of the related meetings occurring along the General Assembly.

One was the 2023 meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative, where leaders of a wide variety of groups came together to take advantage of a critical mass that they hoped would help them get attention and funding for their causes.

"For NGOs, it's a great space," Correa said. "It's a unique opportunity."

After two years of meetings that were at first entirely remote due to the pandemic, and then partially hybrid, the 2023 General Assembly was providing an opportunity for organizations like Correa's to meet and greet in a way that she and other NGO executive hope will benefit their clients.

"Simply being able to see each other again is really transformative," she said. "They're all here."

Michael Weissenstein, an editor for The Associated Press in New York, is a veteran international correspondent who has been stationed in Cuba, Britain and Mexico.

A 9/11 defendant is ruled unfit for trial after a medical panel finds torture left him psychotic

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A military judge at Guantanamo Bay has ruled one of the 9/11 defendants unfit for trial after a military medical panel found that the man's sustained abuse in CIA custody years earlier has rendered him lastingly psychotic.

The judge, Col. Matthew McCall, said the incompetency finding for Ramzi bin al-Shibh meant the prosecution of his four co-defendants would continue without him. Al-Shibh remains in custody.

McCall issued his ruling late Thursday. Pre-trial hearings for the remaining defendants resumed Friday in the military courtroom at the U.S. naval base on Cuba. No trial date has been set for the case, which has been slowed by logistical problems, high turnover and legal challenges.

A Yemeni, al-Shibh is accused of organizing one cell of the 19 hijackers who commandeered four commercial airplanes to carry out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, which killed nearly 3,000 people outright in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The attacks were the deadliest of their kind on U.S. soil.

Brett Eagleson, whose father, Bruce Eagleson, was killed when one of the hijacked planes destroyed the south tower of the World Trade Center, called the events that forced the sidelining of al-Shibh's prosecution "another example of the lack of justice that the 9/11 community has received at the hands of our own government."

"They wrongfully tortured these individuals. We don't stand for torture. Because of that we're denied a trial. We're denied true justice," said Eagleson, who leads a group of victims' families pushing the U.S. to release more of the documents of its investigations into the attacks.

The attacks, and the American response to them, altered the course of history and the lives of countless people around the world. They led the George W. Bush administration to take extraordinary steps in what it called a war on terror: invading Afghanistan and Iraq, setting up an extraordinary program of CIA interrogation and detention, and creating the special prison and military commission for suspected violent extremists at Guantanamo.

A military medical panel last month diagnosed al-Shibh as having post-traumatic stress disorder with secondary psychosis, and linked it to his torture and solitary confinement during his four years in CIA custody immediately after his 2002 arrest.

Al-Shibh has complained for years since his transfer to the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay that his guards were attacking him, including by invisible rays, so as to deprive him of sleep and cause him pain. McCall's ruling noted that psychological reports dating back at least to 2004 had documented al-Shibh's mental issues.

Defense attorney David Bruck told McCall in a hearing Tuesday that al-Shibh's overwhelming focus on trying to stop the invisible attacks, and his insistence that his defense lawyers do the same, rendered him incapable of meaningfully taking part in his defense.

Bruck pointed to what he said was al-Shibh's solitary confinement over four years in detention at CIA black sites, and torture that included his being forced to stand sleepless for as long as three days at a time, naked except for a diaper and doused with cold water in air-conditioned rooms, for the man's lasting belief that his American guards were still conspiring to deprive him of sleep.

Bruck indicated in Tuesday's hearing that al-Shibh would be expected to remain in custody while court officials waited for him to become mentally competent again, if that ever happens.

Defense attorneys and a U.N.-appointed investigator have argued that the five 9/11 co-defendants should be given physical and psychological care for the lasting effects of the torture they underwent while in CIA custody under the Bush administration.

Bruck told McCall in Tuesday's hearing PTSD treatment would offer the best hope of al-Shibh ever regaining competency to stand trial. He said the forced sidelining of the U.S. case against the man would be "an opportunity for the country to come to account on the harm" done by what he called the CIA's "program of human experimentation."

Reached by phone Friday, Bruck said the judge's ruling was the first time the U.S. government had ac-

knowledged that "the CIA torture program did profound and prolonged psychological harm to one of the people subjected to it."

The five 9/11 defendants were variously subjected to repeated waterboarding, beatings, violent repeated searches of their rectal cavities, sleep deprivation and other abuse while at so-called CIA black sites.

The CIA says it stopped its detention and interrogation program in 2009. A Senate investigation concluded the abuse had been ineffective in obtaining useful information.

President Joe Biden this month declined to approve post-trauma care when defense lawyers presented it as a condition in plea negotiations. The administration said the president was unsettled by the thought of providing care and ruling out solitary confinement for the 9/11 defendants, given the historic scale of the attacks.

"Of course it's not popular" among Americans, Bruck said Friday. "Enforcing human rights, the most fundamental human rights, is often not popular. But we should do it."

Netanyahu tells UN that Israel is 'at the cusp' of a historic agreement with Saudi Arabia

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the U.N. General Assembly on Friday that Israel is "at the cusp" of a historic breakthrough leading to a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia, without outlining a clear path over the significant obstacles facing such an accord.

He struck an optimistic tone throughout his roughly 25-minute address — and, once again, used a visual aid. He displayed contrasting maps showing Israel's isolation at the time of its creation in 1948 and the six countries that have normalized relations with it, including four that did so in 2020 in the so-called Abraham Accords.

"There's no question the Abraham Accords heralded the dawn of a new age of peace. But I believe that we are at the cusp of an even more dramatic breakthrough, an historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia," Netanyahu said. "Peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia will truly create a new Middle East."

There are several hurdles in the way of such an agreement, including the Saudis' demand for progress in the creation of a Palestinian state — a hard sell for Netanyahu's government, the most religious and nationalist in Israel's history.

The Saudis are also seeking a defense pact with the United States and want help in building their own civilian nuclear program, which has fueled fears of an arms race with Iran.

Netanyahu told Fox News on Friday evening that the "window of opportunity" for a deal with the Saudis was "the next few months."

"If we don't achieve it in the next few months, we might delay it by quite a few years," Netanyahu said.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in an interview with Fox News this week that the two sides are getting closer to an agreement, without providing much detail about the U.S.-led negotiations. He declined to specify what exactly the Saudis are seeking for the Palestinians.

Netanyahu said the Palestinians "could greatly benefit from a broader peace," saying: "They should be part of that process, but they should not have a veto over the process."

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down more than a decade ago, and violence has soared over the past year and a half, with Israel carrying out frequent military raids in the occupied West Bank and Palestinians attacking Israelis. Netanyahu's government has approved thousands of new settlement homes in the West Bank, which Israel captured in the 1967 war and which the Palestinians want for the main part of their future state.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who addressed the General Assembly on Thursday, made no direct reference to efforts to reach a normalization agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia. But he reiterated the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has only worsened since the Abraham Accords were signed.

"Those who think that peace can prevail in the Middle East without the Palestinian people enjoying their

full and legitimate national rights are mistaken," Abbas said.

Netanyahu has often seemed to revel in using the podium of the General Assembly to lambast Israel's enemies.

He famously held up a picture of a cartoon bomb in 2012 to illustrate Iran's advancing uranium enrichment. In 2020, he claimed Hezbollah was stockpiling explosives near Beirut's airport, prompting the Iran-allied militant group to organize an immediate visit by journalists, who saw heavy machinery but no weapons.

The map he held up this year made no reference to the West Bank, Gaza or east Jerusalem, territories Israel captured in 1967 that the Palestinians want for their future state. The map appeared to show Israel encompassing all three.

The chamber was largely empty during his address, though there was a group of Netanyahu supporters who clapped several times during his speech. Protesters and supporters of Netanyahu demonstrated across the street from the U.N. headquarters.

Netanyahu referred to the cartoon bomb when he held up the maps, pulling out a red marker and drawing a line showing a planned trade corridor stretching from India through the Middle East to Europe. The ambitious project, unveiled at this month's Group of 20 summit, would link Saudi Arabia to Israel.

He also reprised his longstanding criticism of Iran, which Israel views as its greatest threat. Netanyahu referred to Iran's crackdown on protests, its supplying of attack drones to Russia for use in Ukraine, and its military activities across the Middle East.

Netanyahu called for stepped-up sanctions over Iran's nuclear program, which has steadily advanced since the United States withdrew from a landmark agreement with Iran and world powers to which Israel had been staunchly opposed.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, who also attended the General Assembly, urged the U.S. to lift sanctions in order to return to the nuclear deal. Iran has always insisted its nuclear program is entirely peaceful, but the U.S. and others believe it had a secret weapons program until 2003.

Raisi also denied Iran had sent drones to Russia following its invasion of Ukraine. U.S. and European officials say the sheer number of Iranian drones being used by Russia shows that the flow of such weapons intensified after hostilities began.

In an ambiguous turn of phrase during his address, Netanyahu said that "above all, Iran must face a credible nuclear threat." The prime minister's office later issued a clarification, saying he meant to say "credible military threat."

Israel, which is widely believed to have nuclear weapons but has never publicly acknowledged them, has repeatedly said all options are on the table to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons.

Capitol rioter who attacked AP photographer and police officers is sentenced to 5 years in prison

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man who attacked an Associated Press photographer and threw a flagpole and smoke grenade at police officers guarding the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, was sentenced on Friday to five years in prison.

Rodney Milstreed, 56, of Finksburg, Maryland, "prepared himself for battle" on Jan. 6 by injecting steroids and arming himself with a four-foot wooden club disguised as a flagpole, prosecutors said.

"He began taking steroids in the weeks leading up to January 6, so that he would be 'jacked' and ready because, he said, someone needed to 'hang for treason' and the battle might come down to hand-to-hand combat," prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

A prosecutor showed U.S. District Judge James Boasberg videos of Milstreed's attacks outside the Capitol. Milstreed told the judge that it was painful to watch his violent acts and hear his combative language that day.

"I know what I did that day was very wrong," he said.

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The judge said he believes Milstreed is remorseful.

"On the other side of the ledger, it's very serious conduct," Boasberg added.

Capitol Police Officer Devan Gowdy suffered a concussion when Milstreed hurled his wooden club at a line of officers.

"January 6th is a day that will be burned into my brain and my nightmares for the rest of my life," Gowdy told the judge. "The effects of this domestic terrorist attack will never leave me."

Gowdy told Milstreed that he "will always be looked at as a domestic terrorist and traitor" for his actions on Jan. 6.

"That brings me some peace," added Gowdy, who has since left the police department.

Prosecutors recommended a prison sentence of six years and six months for Milstreed, a machinist who has worked at oil and gas facilities.

In a letter addressed to the judge before sentencing, Milstreed said he understands the "wrongfulness" of his actions on Jan. 6 and has learned from his "mistakes."

"I realize if one has concerns or grievances with the government, there are peaceful and appropriate ways to express them," he wrote.

Milstreed was arrested in May 2022 in Colorado, where he had been working. He pleaded guilty in April to assault charges and possessing an unregistered firearm.

A cache of weapons and ammunition found at Milstreed's Maryland home included an unregistered AR-15 rifle. In his Colorado hotel room, investigators found 94 vials of what appeared to be illegal steroids.

Angry about the 2020 presidential election results, Milstreed spewed violent, threatening rhetoric on social media in the weeks leading up to the Jan. 6 attack. In late December, he emailed a Maryland chapter of the Proud Boys to inquire about joining the far-right extremist group.

On the morning of Jan. 6, he took a train into Washington, then attended then-President Donald Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally near the White House and then followed the crowd of Trump supporters to the Capitol.

Milstreed was "front and center" as rioters and police fought for control of the Capitol's West Plaza, prosecutors said. He tossed his wooden club at a police line and struck the helmet of an officer who later was treated for a concussion.

A video captured Milstreed retrieving a smoke grenade from the crowd of rioters and throwing it back at police across a barricade.

Milstreed then joined other rioters in attacking an AP photographer on the Upper West Plaza. He grabbed the photographer's backpack and yanked him down some steps.

"After the photographer stumbled to the bottom of the stairs, Milstreed shoved him and advanced toward him in a threatening fashion," prosecutors wrote.

Milstreed used Facebook to update his friends on the riot in real time.

"Man I've never seen anything like this. I feel so alive." he wrote to one friend, sharing photos of blood on a floor outside the Capitol.

He told another Facebook friend that it "felt good" to punch the photographer, whose assault was captured on video by another AP photographer.

Other rioters have been charged with attacking the same photographer. One of them — Alan Byerly, 55, of Pennsylvania — was sentenced last October to two years and 10 months in prison.

More than 1,100 people have been charged with Jan. 6-related federal crimes. Over 650 of them have been sentenced, with roughly two-thirds of them getting a term of imprisonment ranging from three days to 22 years.

More than 100 police officers were injured during the riot.

Judge peppers lawyers in prelude to trial of New York's business fraud lawsuit against Trump

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York judge peppered Donald Trump's lawyers with questions Friday — sometimes admonishing them — as they tried to persuade the court to throw out a civil lawsuit brought by New York's attorney general accusing the former president and his company of deceiving banks, insurers and others by exaggerating his wealth.

At times, Judge Arthur Engoron argued with Trump attorney Christopher Kise. In one case the judge ended a back-and-forth by simply saying, "Disagree."

Later, the judge pounded his fist on the top of his bench in disagreement with Kise's interpretation of one law, opining the intent of that law is, "You cannot make false statements."

The hearing ended without any rulings, and arguments will resume Wednesday. Regardless, Friday's court proceedings served as prelude to a trial that could begin as soon as Oct. 2.

A lawyer for New York Attorney General Letitia James also tried to persuade Engoron to hand down a summary judgment on the lawsuit's most significant claim — that Trump committed fraud by inflating property values and exaggerating his net worth by as much as \$3.6 billion on annual financial statements used by him and his company to secure financing.

The judge also questioned the state's lawyer, Assistant New York Attorney General Andrew Amer, but his tone was less combative.

At one point, Engoron reminded those in the packed courtroom that he was trying to be fair to both sides, suggesting that the tenor of his questioning shouldn't be seen as an indication of how he will ultimately rule.

Last week, Trump's attorneys filed a lawsuit accusing Engoron of abusing his authority, one of several lawsuits Trump has filed against the judges overseeing his various trials.

A state appellate court is weighing whether the suit against Engoron will proceed. If so, it could push back a trial date.

Trump's lawyers had previously sought a delay, but Engoron turned them down, and the judge Friday rebuffed some of their arguments — including one that asserted that the attorney general has no legal standing to bring the former president to court.

If the trial proceeds, the attorney general's office could call to the witness stand Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, and his former chief financial officer, Allen Weisselberg. Trump is also on the government's witness list, as are his two sons, Eric and Don Jr., but it remains to be seen if the former president will appear in court.

James, a Democrat, sued Trump and the Trump Organization a year ago, accusing him of inflating the value of assets like skyscrapers, golf courses and his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

But Trump's attorney, Kise, hailed Trump's "investment genius" during the Friday hearing at a court in Manhattan.

"This is why billionaires are billionaires," Kise said.

He said the property valuations the former president used in financial documents were not meant to be formal appraisals, but Trump's predictions of what the properties could be worth in the future.

Among the allegations made by James were that Trump claimed his Trump Tower apartment in Manhattan — a three-story penthouse replete with gold-plated fixtures — was nearly three times its actual size and valued the property at \$327 million. No apartment in New York City has ever sold for close to that amount, James said.

Trump valued Mar-a-Lago as high as \$739 million — more than 10 times a more reasonable estimate of its worth. Trump's figure for the private club and residence was based on the idea that the property could be developed for residential use, but deed terms prohibit that, James said.

"Defendants have clearly stepped through the looking glass," said Amer, the lawyer representing the attorney general. He said there was "a complete disconnect" between the real-world market value of Trump's properties and "the grossly inflated" valuation asserted by the former president in his financial paperwork.

Trump has denied wrongdoing, arguing in sworn testimony that it didn't matter what he put on his financial statements because they have a disclaimer that says they shouldn't be trusted.

James' lawsuit is one of several legal headaches for Trump as he campaigns for a return to the White House in 2024. He has been indicted four times — accused in Georgia and Washington, D.C., of plotting to overturn his 2020 election loss, in Florida of hoarding classified documents, and in Manhattan of falsifying business records related to hush money paid on his behalf.

James' lawsuit is a civil, not criminal matter, so it does not carry the potential of prison time. She has asked the court to ban Trump and his three eldest children from ever again running a company based New York. She also wants \$250 million in penalties, and a five-year ban on Trump and the Trump Organization engaging in commercial real estate acquisitions.

Hawaii economists say Lahaina locals could be priced out of rebuilt town without zoning changes

By ANDREW SELSKY and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Residents who survived the wildfire that leveled the Hawaii town of Lahaina might not be able to afford to live there after it is rebuilt unless officials alter the zoning laws and make other changes, economists warned Friday.

"The risk is very real," Carl Bonham, executive director of the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization, told a virtual news conference ahead of the group's release Friday of its quarterly state economic forecast.

Soaring housing prices have already forced many Native Hawaiians and other longtime Hawaii residents to leave the islands and move to the U.S. mainland. The wildfire that claimed at least 97 lives and destroyed 2,200 buildings in the West Maui community of Lahaina — 86% of which were residential — amplifies that problem for the survivors. Nearly 8,000 of them have been placed at 40 hotels or other accommodations around the island of Maui.

"Market prices for this new housing are likely to far exceed the already high prices that existed in Lahaina before the fire. For renters, the old housing stock that was destroyed provided opportunities for reasonable rents," the economic report said.

A spike in housing costs would be a further burden for people — including retirees and those who worked in restaurants, hotels and shops — who lost their homes and jobs when their places of employment burned to the ground on Aug. 8, or when West Maui temporarily closed to tourism after the disaster.

West Maui, where the verdant coastline is studded with resort hotels, will reopen on Oct. 8.

"You'll see that that will speed our recovery for those who have suffered so much," Gov. Josh Green said.

At a news conference on Thursday at the state Capitol, Green stressed that the displaced survivors won't be forced out of hotels to make room for tourists, with October typically being a slow month for tourism.

But it is much less clear when people displaced by the fire will be able to move back to Lahaina and whether they'll be able to afford to do so. Bonham said he doubts that rebuilding will start before 2025.

The warning about locals being priced out of a rebuilt Lahaina, which was once the capital of the former Hawaiian kingdom in the 1800s, comes despite Green's assurances that he won't let it get too expensive for locals. Green previously indicated that he was considering having the state acquire land for workforce housing, but he later said that wouldn't happen unless the community requested it.

On Aug. 19, Green banned unsolicited offers for property in Lahaina to prevent land from being snapped up by deep-pocketed outsiders. He said his administration has opened several investigations into alleged violations of that emergency proclamation.

Some Lahaina residents have said that Green should have imposed an outright ban on purchasing property.

"Outsiders should not have the opportunity to grab land or properties because emotions are running high, so everyone is vulnerable," Melody Lukela-Singh, whose home on Lahaina's renowned Front Street burned, said recently.

Bonham said policy changes and a concerted effort are needed to prevent a rebuilt Lahaina from be-

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coming a haven exclusively for the wealthy, for example by changing zoning to allow smaller and more affordable housing units like duplexes and apartments.

"We need to be seriously focusing on multifamily housing," he said. "That's the way you get housing that isn't million dollar-plus homes: You've got to have more density."

Currently, only about 1% of the land in Lahaina's burn area is zoned for multifamily housing, Bonham said.

The new economic report said the post-disaster plunge in tourism to Maui has hit the island's economy and people hard.

Officials initially told prospective tourists to stay away from Maui. Visitor arrivals dropped by nearly three-quarters, the report said. In the weeks after the fire, Maui lost more than \$13 million per day in visitor spending.

With businesses lacking customers, layoffs resulted.

In July, the unemployment rate on Maui was only 2.6%. But it will soar above 11% in the next three months, the economists predicted. It's not expected to dip below 4% until late 2026. There have been about 12,000 new unemployment insurance claims filed since the disaster — about 11,300 more than before the fire.

The U.S. Department of Labor extended the application filing deadline for Disaster Unemployment Assistance by one month, through Oct. 16, Hawaii's Department of Labor and Industrial Relations announced on Friday.

"Individuals that do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance may be eligible for DUA benefits," Green said.

Officials are now beckoning tourists to come to Maui.

The report said the planned Oct. 8 reopening of West Maui resort areas will restart tourism in the region, with a gradual recovery. By the end of this year, Maui visitor arrivals are expected to be roughly half of the 2022 level, rising to 80% by the end of 2024.

Auto workers expand their strike to 38 locations in 20 states. Biden plans visit to show support

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

The United Auto Workers union expanded its strike against major carmakers Friday, walking out of all 38 parts-distribution centers operated by General Motors and Jeep and Ram owner Stellantis in 20 states but sparing Ford from further shutdowns.

President Joe Biden said on X, formerly known as Twitter, that he will visit Michigan on Tuesday "to join the picket line and stand in solidarity with the men and women of UAW as they fight for a fair share of the value they helped create."

Ford avoided additional strikes because the company has met some of the union's demands during negotiations over the past week, UAW President Shawn Fain said during an online presentation to union members.

"We've made some real progress at Ford," Fain said. "We still have serious issues to work through, but we do want to recognize that Ford is showing that they are serious about reaching a deal. At GM and Stellantis, it's a different story."

Fain said GM and Stellantis, the successor to Fiat Chrysler, have rejected the union's proposals for cost-of-living increases, profit sharing and job security, and "are going to need some serious pushing."

GM said it has presented five "historic" offers covering wages and job security.

"Today's strike escalation by the UAW's top leadership is unnecessary," the company said in a statement. "The UAW leadership is manipulating the bargaining process for their own personal agendas."

Stellantis said it made "a very competitive offer" Thursday that would pay all current full-time hourly employees between \$80,000 and \$96,000 within four years and seven months, and allow "workforce stability" during that time. The company said the UAW has not responded.

Instead of targeting more production plants Friday, the UAW went after centers that distribute parts to

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car dealer service departments. That could quickly drag consumers into the middle of the fight, if dealers run short of parts.

The UAW said the new walkouts will affect 5,600 workers on top of the nearly 13,000 who began strikes last week at three Ford, GM and Stellantis assembly plants. Those original strikes will continue, the union said.

The UAW is continuing to avoid targeting plants that make Detroit's bestsellers, such as the Ford F-150 and Stellantis' Ram pickups, which represent outsized shares of the companies' revenue and profit. That represents a union strategy to gradually increase the pain of a strike on the automakers.

Deutsche Bank analysts estimated Friday that GM, Ford and Stellantis have lost production of more than 16,000 vehicles since the strike started last week at a Ford assembly plant near Detroit, a GM factory in Wentzville, Missouri, and a Jeep plant run by Stellantis in Toledo, Ohio.

Anderson Economic Group, a consulting firm in Michigan that tracks the industry, estimated Friday that the strike has caused about \$1.6 billion in economic damage including more than \$500 million for the companies and more than \$100 million in wages lost to strikers and layoffs.

The carmakers and some of their suppliers have laid off about 6,000 workers in moves they say are related to the strike. GM shut down a factory in Kansas that relies on parts stamped at the Wentzville plant.

Still, the impact is not yet being felt on car lots around the country — it will probably take a few weeks before the strike causes a significant shortage of new vehicles, according to analysts. Prices could rise sooner, however, if the prospect of a prolonged strike triggers panic buying.

In bargaining, the union is pointing to the carmakers' huge recent profits and high CEO pay as it seeks wage increases of about 36% over four years. The companies have offered a little over half that amount.

"We aren't getting paid what we are supposed to. I feel like our CEO is getting all our money," said Antione Turner, who walked off his job Friday at a GM customer-care center in Belleville, Michigan.

Turner said after working there 10 years, he makes \$31 an hour. On the same picket line, Shelton Matthews, who started at GM three years ago, makes \$20 an hour because the company's tiered wage structure means lower pay for new workers.

"Pay disparity is the key issue" in the strike, Matthews said. "You're doing, if not harder work, the same work as the person next to you with significantly less pay."

The companies say they can't afford to meet the union's demands because they need to invest profits in a costly transition from gas-powered cars to electric vehicles. They have dismissed out of hand some of the demands, including 40 hours' pay for a 32-hour work week.

Fain said that Ford has agreed to some union proposals, including the restoration of cost-of-living wage increases that were dropped several years ago, better profit-sharing and improved job security.

A Ford spokesman, Daniel Barbossa, said the company "is working diligently with the UAW to reach a deal that rewards our workforce and enables Ford to invest in a vibrant and growing future."

"Although we are making progress in some areas, we still have significant gaps to close on the key economic issues," he said.

Arthur Wheaton, a labor expert at Cornell University, said GM and Stellantis seemed to feel less urgency to settle, partly because they have more lower-tier and temporary workers than Ford "and have no big interest in trying to increase those costs."

Rather than bargain with one company and set a pattern for contracts at the other two, the UAW has been negotiating simultaneously with all three Detroit giants. By favoring Ford after a week of talks, the UAW moved closer to its traditional bargaining pattern: getting the best deal it can from one company, then expecting the others to match it.

Fain had promised all week to escalate the strike if there wasn't significant progress in negotiations. Targeting the parts-distributions centers could inflict quick pain on GM and Stellantis, said Daniel Ives, an analyst with Wedbush Securities.

"The UAW is going for the gut punch as this strike gets a lot nastier," Ives said. He called it "a very strategic and risky poker move by the UAW."

Other industry observers said that dragging current owners of GM and Stellantis vehicles into the fray

will backfire on the union.

"People who have a car that they need to repair will not be sympathetic to the UAW when they can't get the car fixed and can't get to work," said Eric Gordon, a business professor at the University of Michigan.

Even with Friday's expansion, the strikes involve only a little over 10% of the UAW's 146,000 members. That will make the union's \$825 million strike fund last longer, as most members will keep working under the expired contract and pay into the fund. However, the longer the strike lasts, the greater the risk of dissension between workers who will keep collecting full paychecks and those getting \$500 a week from the union.

Fain believes that most of the public is on the union's side. He invited anyone who supports the union — "all the way up to the president of the United States" — to join strikers on the picket lines.

Fain had previously seemed lukewarm at best about a Biden visit, saying that the strike was the union's fight, not the president's.

Biden will land in Michigan one day before a visit by the leading contender for the Republican nomination, former President Donald Trump, who plans to skip a GOP debate to instead speak to union members. Michigan figures to be a key battleground in next November's election. Trump carried the state in 2016; Biden won it in 2020. The UAW has not endorsed a candidate for 2024.

Surgeons perform second pig heart transplant, trying to save a dying man

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Surgeons have transplanted a pig's heart into a dying man in a bid to prolong his life — only the second patient to ever undergo such an experimental feat. Two days later, the man was cracking jokes and able to sit in a chair, Maryland doctors said Friday.

The 58-year-old Navy veteran was facing near-certain death from heart failure but other health problems meant he wasn't eligible for a traditional heart transplant, according to doctors at University of Maryland Medicine.

"Nobody knows from this point forward. At least now I have hope and I have a chance," Lawrence Faucette, from Frederick, Maryland, said in a video recorded by the hospital before Wednesday's operation. "I will fight tooth and nail for every breath I can take."

While the next few weeks will be critical, doctors were thrilled at Faucette's early response to the pig organ.

"You know, I just keep shaking my head — how am I talking to someone who has a pig heart?" Dr. Bartley Griffith, who performed the transplant, told The Associated Press. He said doctors are feeling "a great privilege but, you know, a lot of pressure."

The same Maryland team last year performed the world's first transplant of a genetically modified pig heart into another dying man, David Bennett, who survived just two months.

There's a huge shortage of human organs donated for transplant. Last year, there were just over 4,100 heart transplants in the U.S., a record number but the supply is so tight that only patients with the best chance of long-term survival get offered one.

Attempts at animal-to-human organ transplants have failed for decades, as people's immune systems immediately destroyed the foreign tissue. Now scientists are trying again using pigs genetically modified to make their organs more humanlike.

Recently, scientists at other hospitals have tested pig kidneys and hearts in donated human bodies, hoping to learn enough to begin formal studies of what are called xenotransplants.

To make this new attempt in a living patient outside of a rigorous trial, the Maryland researchers required special permission from the Food and Drug Administration, under a process reserved for certain emergency cases with no other options.

It took over 300 pages of documents filed with FDA, but the Maryland researchers made their case that they'd learned enough from their first attempt last year — even though that patient died for reasons that

aren't fully understood – that it made sense to try again.

And Faucette, who retired as a lab technician at the National Institutes of Health, had to agree that he understood the procedure's risks.

In a statement his wife, Ann Faucette, said: "We have no expectations other than hoping for more time together. That could be as simple as sitting on the front porch and having coffee together."

What's different this time: Only after last year's transplant did scientists discover signs of a pig virus lurking inside the heart – and they now have better tests to look for hidden viruses. They also made some medication changes.

Possibly more important, while Faucette has end-stage heart failure and was out of other options, he wasn't as near death as the prior patient.

By Friday, his new heart was functioning well without any supportive machinery, the hospital said.

"It's just an amazing feeling to see this pig heart work in a human," said Dr. Muhammad Mohiuddin, the Maryland team's xenotransplantation expert. But, he cautioned, "we don't want to predict anything. We will take every day as a victory and move forward."

This kind of single-patient "compassionate use" can provide some information about how the pig organ works but not nearly as much as more formal testing, said Karen Maschke, a research scholar at the Hastings Center who is helping develop ethics and policy recommendations for xenotransplant clinical trials. That FDA allowed this second case "suggests that the agency is not ready to permit a pig heart clinical trial to start," Mashke added.

The pig heart, provided by Blacksburg, Virginia-based Revivicor, has 10 genetic modifications – knocking out some pig genes and adding some human ones to make it more acceptable to the human immune system.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

A Ukrainian missile strikes the headquarters of Russia's navy in Crimea

By SAMYA KULLAB and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine struck the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in a missile attack Friday that left a serviceman missing and the main building smoldering, according to military officials on both sides of the war and images from the scene in Crimea.

The Russian Defense Ministry initially said one servicemember was killed but then issued a statement saying he was missing following the attack in the port city of Sevastopol.

The Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has been a frequent target since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine almost 19 months ago.

Crimea has served as the key hub supporting Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Sevastopol, the main base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet since the 19th century, has had a particular importance for navy operations since the start of the invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine has increasingly targeted naval facilities in Crimea in recent weeks while the brunt of its summer counteroffensive makes slow gains in the east and south of Ukraine, the Institute for the Study of War said Thursday. Military experts say it is essential for Ukraine to keep up its attacks on targets in Crimea to degrade Russian morale and weaken its military.

The attack came a day after Russia pounded cities across Ukraine with missiles and artillery strikes, killing at least five people as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with U.S. President Joe Biden and congressional leaders in Washington while a \$24 billion aid package is under consideration. Zelenskyy was in Canada on Friday to address its Parliament in his ongoing effort to bolster support from Western allies.

Previous attacks in Crimea resulted in several civilian deaths, but Russian officials haven't yet reported any military personnel killed. Six people were reported wounded following a July 2022 attack on the fleet's

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headquarters, but it wasn't clear whether they were civilians or servicemembers.

The Russian-installed governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said no one was injured Friday outside of the burning headquarters building.

The Ukrainian military claimed responsibility for the attack.

"We promised that 'there will be more,'" Lt. Gen. Mykola Oleschuk, the air force commander, said in a social media post that thanked pilots and showed video of air sirens blazing and smoke rising from the building.

The Russian Defense Ministry said five missiles were shot down by Russian air defense systems responding to the attack on Sevastopol. It was not immediately clear if the headquarters was hit in a direct strike or by debris from an intercepted missile.

Sevastopol residents said they heard explosions and saw smoke, Russian news outlets reported, and images showed gray plumes over the seafront. The Associated Press could not immediately verify the videos.

A stream of ambulances arrived at the fleet's headquarters, and shrapnel was scattered hundreds of meters (yards) around, Russian state news agency Tass reported.

Oleg Kryuchkov, an official with the Crimean administration, said one cruise missile downed near Bakhchysarai, about 30 kilometers (18.5 miles) inland, sparked a grass fire.

Razvozhayev said civilian infrastructure wasn't damaged but did not mention the impact on the fleet headquarters.

He urged Sevastopol residents not to go to the central part of the city, saying roads were closed and unspecified "special efforts" were underway. Police asked residents to leave the central part of the city, Tass said.

The attack Friday is one of several recently launched by Ukraine in the Crimea area.

The Institute for the Study of War said satellite imagery this week showed that Ukrainian strikes had significantly damaged a communications command center in Verkhnosadove, just outside Sevastopol.

Russian-installed authorities in Sevastopol accused Ukraine on Sept. 13 of carrying out the biggest attack in Crimea in weeks, one on a strategic shipyard that damaged two ships undergoing repairs and caused a fire at the facility.

Two days earlier, Ukraine claimed it had recaptured strategic gas and oil drilling platforms in the Black Sea that Russia seized in 2015. Russia had used the platforms for electronic warfare equipment and to launch helicopters, and Ukraine said getting control of them would help it regain Crimea.

In other war developments, ongoing shelling in southern Ukraine's Kherson region killed one man and injured another, according to regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin.

In the northeast, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said over 14 settlements came under attack in Kharkiv. There were no casualties, the governor said.

Russian forces also struck Kremenchuk in the central Poltava region, killing one person and injuring 31 others including three children, regional Governor Dmytro Lunin said.

This story has been corrected after Russia's Defense Ministry said a serviceman was missing after the attack, not killed.

Litvinova reported from Tallinn, Estonia. Associated Press journalist Brian Melley in London contributed to this report.

For more coverage of the war in Ukraine, visit: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Pope decries indifference toward migrants, as he prays for the dead in the French port of Marseille

By NICOLE WINFIELD and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France (AP) — Pope Francis blasted the "fanaticism of indifference" that greets migrants

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seeking a better life in Europe, as he arrived Friday in the Mediterranean port of Marseille amid a new influx of would-be refugees from Africa that has sparked a backlash from some of Europe's increasingly anti-migrant leaders.

Opening a brief, overnight visit to the French port, Francis presided over a silent moment of prayer at a memorial dedicated to sailors and migrants lost at sea. He was surrounded by leaders of Marseille's varied faith groups and representatives of migrant rescue organizations that have increasingly come under fire from Europe's populist politicians.

The visit, scheduled months ago, came as Europe's migrant dilemma is again in headlines. Last week, the Italian island of Lampedusa was overwhelmed by nearly 7,000 migrants who arrived in a day after paying smugglers in Tunisia for passage, more than the island's resident population.

"Cruelty, a lack of humanity. A terrible lack of humanity," Francis said of the Lampedusa drama as he flew to Marseille.

History's first Latin American pope has made the plight of migrants a priority of his 10-year pontificate, travelling to Lampedusa in his first trip as pope to honor migrants who drowned. In the years since, he has celebrated Mass on the U.S.-Mexico border, met with Myanmar's Rohingya refugees and most spectacularly, brought home 12 Syrian Muslims on his plane after visiting a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece.

Citing the Gospel mandate to welcome the stranger, Francis has developed a mantra, exhorting governments to welcome, promote, protect and integrate desperate people fleeing wars, poverty and climate crises.

On Friday, Francis gathered with Marseille priests at the Notre Dame de la Garde basilica and then led an interfaith prayer at its nearby memorial, which stands on a rocky outcropping overlooking Marseille and the Mediterranean. There, Francis said far too many people had never made it to shore.

"And so this beautiful sea has become a huge cemetery, where many brothers and sisters are deprived even of the right to a grave," he said.

Adding to his prepared remarks, he extended a special thank-you to the humanitarian groups that rescue migrants, blasting efforts to block their rescues as "gestures of hatred" — an apparent reference to Italy's frequent impounding of rescue boats on technical violations.

Francis is in Marseille to preside over the closing session Saturday of a gathering of Mediterranean-area Catholic bishops, at which the migrant drama is taking center stage. About 350,000 Catholic faithful were expected in the city over the weekend, including 100,000 to line Marseille's major avenue ahead of a Saturday Mass at the Velodrome stadium that President Emmanuel Macron is expected to attend.

Francis' visit comes 10 years after his papacy-opening pilgrimage to Lampedusa, which is the migrant smugglers' destination of choice because it's closer to Africa than the Italian mainland. There, Francis celebrated Mass on an altar made of shipwrecked wood, tossed flowers in the sea in tribute to migrants who had drowned and decried the "globalization of indifference" that the world shows desperate migrants.

On Friday, he issued a more emphatic variation on that theme, blasting the "fanaticism of indifference" that greets migrants, a recognition that in the 10 years he has been pope, Europe has only hardened its line on migration with some countries emphasizing border fences, repatriations and the possibility of a naval blockade to keep migrants out.

In that same decade, according to the International Organization of Migration, an estimated 28,000 migrants have died in the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe, while others have been subject to horrendous conditions in Libyan detention centers where abuse is rife, after being turned back at sea.

"We cannot be resigned to seeing human beings treated as bargaining chips, imprisoned and tortured in atrocious ways," Francis said in clear reference to the Libyan camps. "We can no longer watch the drama of shipwrecks caused by the cruel trafficking and the fanaticism of indifference."

He insisted that people who are at risk of drowning "when abandoned to the waves" must be rescued. "It's a duty of humanity; it's a duty of civilization!" he said.

He spoke in front of a monument made up of cross of Camargue, a symbol composed of a Christian cross, an anchor and a heart embodying faith, hope and charity. The words "to those who perished and disappeared at sea, victims of illegal immigration" were added to the memorial in 2010, after some migrants

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were saved from a shipwreck by a French ship.

The Rev. José-Maria Cantal-Rivas, a priest in Algiers, Algeria, said it was a "very moving" moment to hear Francis' strong words at the monument, especially since he hears about young Algerians who leave their families behind.

"Families come to tell me: 'Our children have left for Spain. Is there any way of knowing if they arrived alive, if they're in prison or if they're in the morgue? Here are their names, the dates when they left,'" he said.

After the new arrivals at Lampedusa last week, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni resurrected calls for a naval blockade of Tunisia and announced new centers in Italy to hold those who don't qualify for asylum until they can be sent home.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited Lampedusa and backed Meloni's call for beefed up naval missions to prevent departures from Tunisia, insisting that the European Union would decide who can enter the bloc, not human traffickers.

France, for its part, increased patrols at its southern border with Italy, a few hours' drive from Marseille, and mounted drone surveillance of the Alps to keep newcomers from crossing over. With a European Parliament election set for next year and France's far right challenging the centrist government's policies, French government officials refused to take any Lampedusa arrivals in.

Marseille's archbishop, Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, who was born in Algeria and moved to France as a child, noted that death at sea is a risk sailors take as part of their job. But he said migrants fleeing war and misery shouldn't be forced to face such risks.

Speaking at the monument, he said it was "criminal" that migrant traffickers take advantage of their desperation, but also criminal for Europe to refuse them aid.

"And when political institutions forbid non-governmental organizations and also commercial ships that cross these waters from rescuing shipwreck victims, its an even more serious crime and violation of the most elementary international maritime law," Aveline said.

It was an apparent reference to regulations Meloni's right-wing government has introduced, requiring humanitarian rescue ships to return to port after each rescue, often far from the search and rescue zone, taking them out of active rescue operations for days at a time.

Junior Dano, a 21-year-old from Ivory Coast, delivered a Scripture reading at the memorial and said he was glad to have the opportunity to participate — just like he has had opportunities since arriving in France years ago.

"Every day there are opportunities. You seize them or you don't," he said.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Follow AP's coverage of global migration: <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

Hero or villain? Rupert Murdoch's exit stirs strong feelings in Britain, where he upended the media

By JILL LAWLESS and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Before he hit America, Rupert Murdoch ripped through Britain's media like a tornado. His newspapers changed the political and cultural weather and swung elections. His satellite television channels upended the staid broadcasting scene.

Journalists and politicians in the U.K. both hailed and reviled the 92-year-old mogul after he announced Thursday that he was stepping down as leader of his companies Fox and News Corp., handing control to his son Lachlan.

For The Times of London, which he owns, Murdoch was "a trailblazer who changed the media." Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the tycoon "did more than any press baron in the last 100 years to

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promote the cause of the global free media that is indispensable for democracy and progress.”

But to his critics, Murdoch was an unaccountable, malevolent presence in British life. Nathan Sparkes of Hacked Off, a press reform group that aims to curb tabloid wrongdoing, said Murdoch “presided over a company where widespread illegality occurred and was subsequently covered up.” Ex-Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn argued that Murdoch’s outlets had “poisoned global democracy and spread disinformation on a mass scale.”

U.K. Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt told LBC radio: “He is someone who, love him or loathe him, had a defining influence on all of our lives over the last half-century.”

The Australian upstart was all but unknown in Britain when he bought flagging Sunday newspaper the News of the World in 1969, acquiring daily paper The Sun soon after. A hands-on owner, he reinvigorated Britain’s stodgy, class-ridden newspaper scene with papers that embraced sports, celebrity, prize giveaways and sex — most infamously with The Sun’s topless “Page 3 girls.”

In a 1989 BBC interview, Murdoch put his success down to his antipodean roots, saying Australians came to the U.K. with “greater determination and greater energy,” unfettered by respect for “the rules of the ‘old world.’”

“We did things that people said couldn’t be done,” he said.

Populist, pomposity-puncturing and patriotic, Murdoch’s tabloids undeniably had flair. Critics deplored headlines like “Up yours, Delors,” directed at then-European Commission President Jacques Delors, and “Gotcha!” — the Sun’s reaction when a British submarine sank the Argentine cruiser Belgrano, killing more than 300 sailors, during the 1982 Falklands War.

The Sun’s coverage of the 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster, in which 96 Liverpool soccer fans were killed, sparked outrage by making false allegations against the victims. More than three decades later, many Liverpoolians still refuse to read The Sun.

But politicians from both right and left courted and feared Murdoch, who added The Times and Sunday Times to his stable in 1981.

An arch-conservative who also hates the establishment, he was an enthusiastic supporter through the 1980s of Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, who shared Murdoch’s enmity toward powerful trade unions. After Thatcher’s Conservative successor John Major unexpectedly triumphed in the 1992 election, the tabloid boasted: “It’s the Sun wot won it.”

Tony Blair’s success in securing Murdoch’s backing helped Blair’s Labour Party win a landslide victory in 1997. Like other politicians, Blair denied giving Murdoch anything in return for his support — though plenty of skeptics doubted that.

“There was no deal on issues to do with the media with Rupert Murdoch, or indeed with anybody else, either express or implied,” Blair told a 2012 inquiry into media ethics, sparked by revelations that rocked Murdoch’s U.K. empire.

In 2011 it emerged that employees of the News of the World had eavesdropped on the phones of celebrities, politicians, royals and even a teenage murder victim. Murdoch was forced to shut the newspaper, several executives were put on trial and former editor Andy Coulson went to prison.

Since then, Murdoch’s News Corp. has paid tens of millions in compensation to alleged victims, including many who say they were targeted by The Sun. Prince Harry is among celebrities currently suing The Sun over alleged hacking, which the paper has never admitted.

Murdoch has condemned the phone hacking and other media misdeeds but claims he was unaware of its scope and blamed a small number of rogue staff.

A newspaperman at heart, Murdoch sensed by the 1980s that the media was changing and that pay television would be a central plank of the future. He launched satellite broadcaster Sky Television from a London industrial estate in 1989 on what he admitted was a “wing and a prayer.”

Sky nearly collapsed early on but was salvaged when Murdoch secured the rights to show live Premier League soccer matches in 1992. Sports helped the company, later known as BSkyB, become a British broadcasting behemoth.

But the phone-hacking scandal forced Murdoch to drop a bid to take full control of Sky, in which he held

a roughly 40% share. He sold his stake in the broadcaster to Comcast in 2018.

Murdoch still owns the Times, Sunday Times and Sun newspapers and struggling news channel Talk TV, but many industry-watchers suspect Lachlan Murdoch, who has much less interest in newspapers than his father, will eventually jettison the British papers.

For now, Rupert Murdoch remains a magnet for the powerful, and those who seek power, in Britain. The guest list for his summer party in June included Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, many members of his Cabinet and opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer.

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives funding from the Quadrivium foundation, founded by James and Kathryn Murdoch. More information about AP climate initiative can be found [here](#). The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Lahaina residents brace for what they'll find as they return to devastated properties in burn zone

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Soon after one of Maui's Japanese Buddhist temples, the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, burned in the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century, its resident minister was desperate to go back and see what remained.

Six weeks later, he's more hesitant.

"Now I feel like I have to have mental preparation to go there," the Rev. Ai Hironaka said. "I'm kind of afraid."

Hironaka and other Lahaina residents are grappling with a range of emotions as Maui authorities plan next week to begin allowing some on supervised visits back into the areas devastated by the Aug. 8 fire, which killed at least 97 people and demolished thousands of buildings.

Lana Vierra is bracing to see the ruins of the home where she raised five children, a house that started with three bedrooms in 1991 and was expanded to six to accommodate her extended family as the cost of living in Hawaii soared.

She's been telling her family to be ready when it's their turn, so that they can all visit together.

"We're preparing our minds for that," she said. "I don't know know if our hearts are prepared for that."

Authorities have divided the burned area into 17 zones and dozens of sub-zones. Residents or property owners of the first to be cleared for reentry — known as Zone 1C, along Kaniau Road in the north part of Lahaina — will be allowed to return Monday and Tuesday on supervised visits.

Government agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Maui County's highways division are involved in clearing the zones for reentry by, among other things, removing any hazardous materials, checking buildings for structural safety and ensuring safe road access.

Those returning will be provided water, shade, washing stations, portable toilets, medical and mental health care, and transportation assistance if needed, said Darryl Oliveira, Maui Emergency Management Agency interim administrator.

Authorities are also offering personal protective equipment, including respirator masks and coveralls. Officials have warned that ash could contain asbestos, lead, arsenic or other toxins. There are other hazards, too, Oliveira said, such as burned out cars along roads and chunks of metal or concrete in the ruins.

"We really want to help guide them, provide them the support, but also provide them the privacy, that space and quiet, so they can get the closure they're looking for," Oliveira said in a video message Thursday.

Some people might want to sift through the ashes for any belongings or mementos that survived, but officials are urging them not to, for fear of stirring up toxic dust that could endanger them or their neighbors downwind. Other residents said they didn't immediately have plans to return to the properties because jobs or the hassle of obtaining a pass to reenter the burn zone would keep them away.

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Melody Lukela-Singh plans to take a hazardous materials course before visiting the Front Street property where the house she lived in with about a dozen relatives once stood.

"I'm hoping to learn what we're going to encounter as far as exposure to things we know nothing about," she said. "The winds pick up and it's going to be all in the air. It's going to be a while before all of that is gone."

Hironaka reflected on how his feelings toward reentry have changed as the weeks have passed — and as the magnitude of losing the temple, along with his home on the temple grounds, has set in.

"After a week, I feel like I still have energy, like a car with full tank of gas," Hironaka said. "After I use all the gasoline, I don't know where to fill it up, what to fill it up. No gas. I feel like I'm pushing the empty-gas car only by myself. Pushing from the back."

He, his wife, their four children and their French bulldog piled into his Honda Civic to escape the flames. As they drove off, he said, he imagined the temple as protecting their home.

In a phone interview, he said he initially intended not to cry until he could return to thank the temple and apologize to the Buddha statue that had been at its main altar. But he became emotional and sobbed as he spoke, saying, "The temple building, I was supposed to protect as resident minister."

He has found solace, he said, in Buddhism's teachings of wisdom and compassion, that Buddha has no judgment and allows him to feel whatever he feels in the moment.

Hironaka said he often sees a photo taken by The Maui News and distributed worldwide by The Associated Press that shows the temple burning alongside Waiola Church next door. He considered the temple, built in 1933, to be like a family member, he said.

"That's the end-of-life picture to me," he said.

Lahaina's two other Japanese Buddhist temples also burned down.

Jarom Ayoso is eager to get back to the property where he and his wife rented a house for nearly 15 years. His son was able to get in the day after the fire and took video of the destruction.

"I want closure for my end. The only way I going get that is if I go and see it," he said in Hawaii Pidgin.

Ayoso wants to see what's left of the vehicles he lovingly rebuilt, including his 1986 GMC Sierra pickup truck. There were also motors he built on the property, including one that cost more than \$13,000. He was just about to install it, he said, and "poof — gone."

From an old-style Afghan camera, a new view of life under the Taliban emerges

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The odd device draws curious onlookers everywhere. From the outside, it resembles little more than a large black box on a tripod. Inside lies its magic: a hand-made wooden camera and darkroom in one.

As a small crowd gathers around the box camera, images of beauty and of hardship ripple to life from its dark interior: a family enjoying an outing in a swan boat on a lake; child laborers toiling in brick factories; women erased by all-covering veils; armed young men with fire in their eyes.

Sitting for a portrait in a war-scarred Afghan village, a Taliban fighter remarks: "Life is much more joyful now." For a young woman in the Afghan capital, forced out of education because of her gender, the opposite is true: "My life is like a prisoner, like a bird in a cage."

The instrument used to record these moments is a kamra-e-faoree, or instant camera. They were a common sight on Afghan city streets in the last century — a fast and easy way to make portraits, especially for identity documents. Simple, cheap and portable, they endured amid half a century of dramatic changes in this country — from a monarchy to a communist takeover, from foreign invasions to insurgencies — until 21st-century digital technology rendered them obsolete.

Using this nearly disappeared homegrown art form to document life in post-war Afghanistan, from Herat in the west and Kandahar in the south to Kabul in the east and Bamiyan in the center, produced hundreds of black-and-white prints that reveal a complex, sometimes contradictory narrative.

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Made over the course of a month, the images underscore how in the two years since U.S. troops pulled out and the Taliban returned to power, life has changed dramatically for many Afghans — whereas for others, little has changed over the decades, regardless of who was in power.

A tool of a bygone era, the box camera imparts a vintage, timeless quality to the images, as if the country's past is superimposed over its present, which in some respects, it is.

At first glance the faded black-and-white, sometimes slightly out-of-focus images convey an Afghanistan frozen in time. But that aesthetic is deceiving. These are reflections of the country very much as it is now.

AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CAMERA

During their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban banned photography of humans and animals as contrary to the teachings of Islam. Many box cameras were smashed, though some were quietly tolerated, Afghan photographers say. But it was the advent of the digital age that sounded the device's death knell.

"These things are gone," said Lutfullah Habibzadeh, 72, a former kamra-e-faoree photographer in Kabul. "Digital cameras are on the market, and (the old ones) are out of use." Habibzadeh still has his old box camera, a relic of the last century passed down to him by his photographer father. It no longer works, but he has lovingly preserved its red leather coating, decorated with sample photos.

On Afghan city streets today, billboard advertisements have faces spray-painted out, and clothing store windows display mannequins with their heads wrapped in black plastic bags, to adhere to the renewed ban on the depictions of faces.

But the advent of the internet age and of smartphones have made a ban on photography impossible to impose. The novel sight of an old box camera elicits excitement and curiosity — even among those who police the new rules. From foot soldiers to high-ranking officials, many Taliban were happy to pose for box camera portraits.

Outside a warehouse in Kabul, a group of men watch intently as the camera is set up. At first, they seem shy. But as the first portraits emerge, curiosity overtakes their reservations. Soon, they're smiling and joking as they wait to have their photos taken, pitching in to help when a black cloth backdrop slips off the wall. As each man steps forward for his portrait, set jaws replace tentative smiles. Adjusting their grip on their assault rifles, they look straight into the camera's tiny lens and hold their poses.

Most of these men joined the Taliban as teenagers or in their early 20s and have known nothing but war. They were drawn to the fundamentalist movement because of their fervent Muslim faith — and their determination to expel U.S. and NATO troops who invaded their country and propped up two decades of Afghan governments that failed to crack down on rampant corruption and crime.

Bahadur Rahaani, a 52-year-old Taliban member with piercing light blue eyes beneath his black turban, says he's happy to see the Taliban back in power. With them in government, "Afghanistan will be rebuilt," he says. "Without them, it is not possible."

PEACE, AT A PRICE

Two years after Taliban militias swept across the country to seize power again, there are strong echoes of life as it was before U.S.-led NATO forces toppled them from government in 2001.

Once more, the country is ruled by a fundamentalist movement that has restored many of the strict rules it imposed in the 1990s. The first Taliban regime was notorious for destroying art and cultural patrimony it deemed un-Islamic, such as the giant ancient buddhas carved into cliffs in Bamiyan. They imposed brutal punishments, chopping off hands of thieves, hanging supposed blasphemers in public squares and stoning women accused of adultery.

Once again, executions and lashings are back. Music, movies, dancing and performances are banned, and women are again excluded from nearly all public life, including education and all but a few professions.

The return to fundamentalist policies has chased away Western donors, aid workers and trade partners. Poverty has spiraled to crisis levels, fueled by the ban on women working, deep cuts in foreign aid and international sanctions. But there is nearly universal relief that the relentless bloodshed of the past four decades of invasions, multiple insurgencies and civil war has largely ceased.

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There are still sporadic bombings, most attributed to enemies of the Taliban, the extremist group Islamic State-Khorasan Province, or IS-K. But Afghans interviewed say their country is more peaceful than they've known for decades.

The United Nations recorded 1,095 civilians killed in deliberate attacks between Aug. 15, 2021, when the Taliban reclaimed power, through May 30, 2023. That's a fraction of the annual civilian death toll over two decades of war between U.S.-led NATO forces and insurgents.

Even those who dislike the current regime say banditry, kidnapping and corruption, which were rampant under the previous governments, have been largely reined in.

But less crime and violence does not necessarily translate to prosperity and happiness.

WOMEN, ERASED

In a three-story building tucked in a Kabul alleyway, a group of women work silently at a loom. Zamarod's hands move swiftly, nimble fingers flitting between strands of yarn as she knots colored wool around them, making a carpet. Her movements are rapid, almost brusque, but her voice is soft and sad. "My life is like a prisoner," she says. "Like a bird in a cage."

The 20-year-old had been studying computer science, but the Taliban banned women from universities before she could graduate. Now she and her 23-year-old sister work in a carpet factory, falling back on a skill their mother taught them as children. They are among very few women who can earn money outside the home and, like others, asked that only their first names be used for fear of retribution for speaking out.

Women have experienced the starkest changes since the Taliban's return. They must adhere to a strict dress code, are banned from most jobs and denied simple pleasures such as visiting a park or going to a restaurant. Girls can no longer attend school beyond sixth grade, and women must be escorted by a male relative to travel.

For all intents and purposes, women have been being erased from public life.

Even in this environment, Zamarod hasn't given up on her dream of graduating. "We have to have hope. We hope that one day we will be free, that freedom is possible," she says. "That's why we live and breathe."

In another room, 50-year-old Hakima is introducing her teenage daughter Freshta to weaving. It is their only way of eking out a living, though she still dreams her 16-year-old daughter will someday become a doctor. "Afghanistan has gone backwards," she says, donning an all-encompassing burka to pose for a portrait. "People go door to door for a piece of bread and our children are dying."

While the clock has turned back for women who've lost financial independence and a voice in public life and government, in conservative, tribal parts of the country, expectations for women have always been different and have changed little over the years — even during U.S. and NATO military presence.

Even so, education is a priority for many Afghans. In dozens of interviews across the country, nearly everyone — including some members of the Taliban — said they wanted girls and women to be educated. Most said they believed the education ban was temporary, and that older girls would eventually be allowed back into schools. They say keeping girls and women confined at home doesn't help the country, or its economy.

"We need doctors, teachers," says Haji Muhibullah Aloko, a 34-year-old teacher in the village of Tabin, west of Kandahar. Women must be educated "so that Afghanistan improves in every sector."

The international community has withheld recognition of the Taliban and pressed its leadership to roll back their restrictions on women — to no avail.

"That is up to Afghans and not foreigners, they shouldn't get involved," Taliban government spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid says during an interview in Kandahar, the birthplace of the movement in southern Afghanistan and a stronghold of conservative values.

"We are waiting for the right moment regarding the schools. And while the schools are closed now, they won't be forever," he says. He won't give a timeline but insists "the world shouldn't use this as an excuse" not to recognize the Taliban government.

VICTORIOUS INSURGENTS

The village of Tabin lies deep in the Arghandab River valley, a fertile swath of fruit orchards and irrigation

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canals cutting through Kandahar Province's dusty desert.

But around it, the remnants of war are everywhere. The derelict remains of American combat outposts have faded warnings of mines and grenades spraypainted on their wind-blown blast walls. Tangles of abandoned razor wire litter the ground. Bombed-out houses lie in ruins. And there's the ubiquitous presence of armed young men adjusting from a life of fighting to one of living in peace.

The new jobs — policing streets, guarding buildings, collecting garbage — are the mundane, necessary tasks of governing. It's less dramatic than waging war, but there is palpable relief to be free of the violence.

Without fear of airstrikes or bullets, children shriek in delight as they splash about in an irrigation canal, leaping into the murky water from a bridge.

"Life is much more joyful now. Before there used to be lots of brutality and aggression," 28-year-old Abdul Halim Hilal says, sheltering from the blazing sun under a mulberry tree before posing for a portrait. "Innocent people would die. Villages were bombed. We couldn't bear it."

He joined the Taliban as a teenager, believing it was his moral duty to fight foreign troops. He lost as many as 20 friends to the war, and more were wounded. He's stung by the memory of his dead brothers-in-arms when he sees their fatherless children, but he's comforted by an unshakeable belief that their sacrifice was worth it.

"The ones that were killed were fighting to sacrifice themselves for the country," he says. "It's because of the blood they gave that we're now here, giving interviews freely, and the Muslims here are living in peace."

A villager walks by, glancing at the gaggle of curious children and adults gathered around the box camera. "It's so strange," he mutters. "We used to fight against these foreigners, and now they're here taking pictures."

Mujeeburahman Faqer, a 26-year-old Taliban fighter, now mans an uneventful security checkpoint in Kabul. Like many others, he's struggling to adapt to a peacetime mentality, because all he's ever known was war. "I had prepared my head for sacrifice," he says, "and I am still ready."

A FOUNDERING ECONOMY — AND A STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Security has improved since the end of the insurgency against U.S. forces. But with peace came an economy in freefall.

When the Taliban seized power again in 2021, international donors withdrew funding, froze Afghan assets abroad, isolated its financial sector and imposed sanctions.

That squeeze, combined with the near-total ban on women working, has crippled the economy. Per capita income shrank by an estimated 30 percent last year compared to 2020, according to the United Nations Development Program.

Nearly half of Afghanistan's 40 million people now face acute food insecurity, the U.N.'s World Food Program says. Malnutrition is above emergency thresholds in 25 of 34 provinces.

Struggling to survive is something Kasnia already knows at age 4. In a brick factory outside Kabul, she scoops out a chunk of mud with her tiny hands, kneading it until it is pliable enough for a brick mold. After countless repetitions, her movements are automatic. She works six days a week from sunrise until sunset, with brief breaks for breakfast and lunch, toiling next to her siblings and her father — one family among many in a sprawling factory where children become laborers at age 3.

"Everyone wishes that their children study and become teachers, doctors, engineers, and benefit the future of the country," says her father, Wahidullah, 35, who goes by one name, as do his children.

Even with the entire family working, there's often not enough money for food and they live hand to mouth on credit from shopkeepers. Of his three sons and three daughters, all except the youngest one are brickmakers.

"When I was young, my dream was to have a comfortable life, to have a nice office, to have a nice car, to go to parks, to travel around my country and abroad, to go to Europe," he recalls. Instead, "I make bricks." There is no bitterness in his voice, just acceptance of an inevitable fate.

Many Afghans have resorted to selling their belongings — everything from furniture to clothing and shoes — to survive.

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When the Taliban banned movies, Nabi Attai had nothing to fall back on. In his 70s, the actor appeared in a dozen television series and 76 films, including the Golden Globe-winning 2003 movie "Osama." Now he is destitute.

His home, tucked in a warren of steep alleys, is now nearly devoid of furniture, which he sold in the bazaar to feed his extended family. Sold, too, is his beloved TV.

After 42 years of acting, Attai has no work. Neither do his two sons, who were also in the movie and music business. Attai is glad the streets are now safe, but he has 13 family members to feed and no way to feed them.

He asked local authorities for any job, even collecting garbage. There was nothing. So he started selling his belongings. "I have no hope right now," he says. Even begging is now punished by imprisonment under the Taliban.

Over the past year, he has become frail. His cheeks are sunken, his frame thinner. There's a sadness in his eyes that rarely leaves, even when he recounts his glory days.

"We made good movies before," he says. "May God have mercy that music and cinema will be allowed again, and the people will rebuild the country hand in hand, and the government will come closer to the people and embrace each other as friends and brothers."

PINPRICKS OF GLITZ

The shimmering lights of wedding halls cut through the gloom as night encroaches on Kabul, pinpricks of glitz in the darkness.

Despite the economic slump, wedding halls are doing a brisk trade, buoyed in part by wealthier Afghan emigres returning home for traditional marriage ceremonies now that the security situation has improved.

Weddings are a big part of Afghan culture, and families sometimes bankrupt themselves to ensure a lavish party for hundreds or even thousands of guests.

Construction of the Imperial Continental wedding hall began four years ago but was disrupted by the COVID pandemic and the Taliban takeover. The opulent venue finally opened its doors last year.

Manager Mohammad Wesal Quaoni, 30, cuts a dapper figure in a sharp suit as he sweeps through the glamorous, cavernous halls, juggling four weddings in one night. The former Kabul University lecturer in economics and politics is trying to ensure the business thrives amid the country's economic woes. It's not easy.

"Business is weak," he says, and onerous government rules and regulations don't help. The Taliban are raising taxes, but he says there isn't enough commerce to support a healthy tax base.

The ban on music and dancing doesn't help. Gone are the live musicians and even the DJs who would bring in extra revenue, Quaoni says. Weddings are segregated by gender but, for once, there's sometimes a bit more fun for the women.

Occasionally women and girls enjoy taped music in the ladies' section. "If they want, they do it," restrictions or not, he said. "Women will be women."

Five hundred miles west of the capital, on the outskirts of the city of Herat, businessman Abdul Khaleq Khodadadi, 39, has an entirely different set of challenges.

Rayan Saffron Company, where he is vice president, exports the prized spice to customers, mainly in Europe and the U.S. But the Taliban takeover and ensuing sanctions left many foreign clients reluctant to do business with an Afghan company – even though it's one of the few still allowed to employ women, whose hands are deemed more suitable than men's to extracting and handling the delicate crocus flowers.

The isolation of the banking sector has also left many Afghan companies with no way to trade except through a third country, usually Pakistan, which significantly increases costs. Then there's drought that has decimated crops, including saffron.

His company had aimed to increase their production this year. Instead, their production fell to half of what it was three years ago, he says.

Khodadadi says he is determined to persevere. For him, successful businesses are the best way to heal Afghanistan's wounds.

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In the chaotic early days of the Taliban takeover, Khodadadi felt intense pressure to join the tens of thousands of people who fled, he says. He had a visa and family and friends urged him to leave, but he refused to go.

"It was very, very hard," he recalls. "But ... if I leave, if all the talented people, educated people leave, who will make this country? When will this country solve the problems?"

This story was supported by funding from the Pulitzer Center. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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The fall equinox is here. What does that mean?

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fall is in the air — officially.

The equinox arrives on Saturday, marking the start of the fall season for the Northern Hemisphere.

But what does that actually mean? Here's what to know about how we split up the year using the Earth's orbit.

WHAT IS THE EQUINOX?

As the Earth travels around the sun, it does so at an angle.

For most of the year, the Earth's axis is tilted either toward or away from the sun. That means the sun's warmth and light fall unequally on the northern and southern halves of the planet.

During the equinox, the Earth's axis and its orbit line up so that both hemispheres get an equal amount of sunlight.

The word equinox comes from two Latin words meaning equal and night. That's because on the equinox, day and night last almost the same amount of time — though one may get a few extra minutes, depending on where you are on the planet.

The Northern Hemisphere's spring — or vernal — equinox can land between March 19 and 21, depending on the year. Its fall — or autumnal — equinox can land between Sept. 21 and 24.

WHAT IS THE SOLSTICE?

The solstices mark the times during the year when the Earth is seeing its strongest tilt toward or away from the sun. This means the hemispheres are getting very different amounts of sunlight — and days and nights are at their most unequal.

During the Northern Hemisphere's summer solstice, the upper half of the earth is tilted in toward the sun, creating the longest day and shortest night of the year. This solstice falls between June 20 and 22.

Meanwhile, at the winter solstice, the Northern Hemisphere is leaning away from the sun — leading to the shortest day and longest night of the year. The winter solstice falls between December 20 and 23.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN METEOROLOGICAL AND ASTRONOMICAL SEASONS?

These are just two different ways to carve up the year.

Meteorological seasons are defined by the weather. They break down the year into three-month seasons based on annual temperature cycles. By that calendar, spring starts on March 1, summer on June 1, fall on Sept. 1 and winter on Dec. 1.

Astronomical seasons depend on how the Earth moves around the sun.

Equinoxes, when the sun lands equally on both hemispheres, mark the start of spring and autumn. Solstices, when the Earth sees its strongest tilt toward or away from the sun, kick off summer and winter.

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A flamethrower and comments about book burning ignite a political firestorm in Missouri

By SUMMER BALLENTINE and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A longshot candidate for Missouri governor and his supporters describe his use of a flamethrower at a recent “Freedom Fest” event outside St. Louis as no big deal. They said it was a fun moment for fellow Republicans who attended, and that no one talked about burning books as he torched a pile of cardboard boxes.

But after the video gained attention on social media, State Sen. Bill Eigel said he would burn books he found objectionable, and that he’d do it on the lawn outside the governor’s mansion. He later said it was all a metaphor for how he would attack the “woke liberal agenda.”

“From a dramatic sense, if the only thing in between the children in the state of Missouri and vulgar pornographic material like that getting in their hands is me burning, bulldozing or launching (books) into outer space, I’m going to do that,” Eigel said in an interview with The Associated Press. “However, I would make the point that I don’t believe it’s going to come to that.”

Experts say Eigel’s use of the flamethrower is a sign that rhetoric and imagery previously considered extreme are now being treated as normal in American politics. While Eigel didn’t actually destroy books, his later statement about burning ones he deemed offensive ratcheted up fears that the video’s circulation and his words on social media could help take the U.S. to a darker place.

“The slippery slope is that everything is a joke — everything can be kind of waved away,” said Kurt Brad-dock, an assistant professor of public communications at American University in Washington. “Everything can be seen as just rhetoric until it can’t anymore and people start using it as an excuse to actually hurt people.”

The 30-second video that put Eigel at the center of a social media storm is from a Sept. 15 event for Republicans at a winery near tiny Defiance, Missouri, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) west of St. Louis. He and another state senator shot long streams of flame onto a pile of cardboard in front of an appreciative crowd.

The video posted on the X platform, formerly known as Twitter, caught the attention of Jonathan Riley, a liberal activist in Durham, North Carolina, who posted Sunday that it showed “Missouri Republicans at a literal book burning,” though he’d later walk that statement back to a “metaphorical” book burning.

“It fit a narrative that they wanted to put out there,” Freedom Fest organizer Debbie McFarland said about claims that Eigel burned books. “It just didn’t happen to be the truth.”

Some of Republicans’ skepticism over the online outrage stems from Eigel’s status as a dark horse candidate to replace term-limited GOP Gov. Mike Parson. The best known candidates for the August 2024 GOP primary are Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft and Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe.

The Ashcroft campaign declined to respond to the video, the uproar it caused or Eigel’s follow-up statement. Kehoe’s campaign had no official comment, but Gregg Keller, a GOP consultant working on Kehoe’s campaign, said Eigel’s promise to burn objectionable books is “typical electioneering hyperbole.”

He added, “I would challenge you to find me any non-psychotic Republican who has actually burned” a book deemed objectionable by conservatives.

Eigel posted on the X platform that his flamethrower stunt was meant to show what he would do to the “swamp” in the state capital of Jefferson City, but “let’s be clear, you bring those woke pornographic books to Missouri schools to try to brainwash our kids, and I’ll burn those too -- on the front lawn of the governor’s mansion.”

Republicans across the U.S. are backing conservative efforts to purge schools and libraries of materials with LGBTQ+ themes or books with LGBTQ+ characters. The issue resonates with Republicans in Missouri. An AP VoteCast survey of Missouri voters in the 2022 midterm elections showed that more than 75% of those voting for GOP candidates thought the K-8 schools in their community were teaching too much about gender identity or sexual orientation.

The outcry also comes after Missouri’s GOP-supermajority Legislature banned gender-affirming health

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care for transgender minors and required K-12 and college students to play on sports teams that match their sex assigned at birth. Eigel has sponsored measures to ban schools from teaching about gender identity or gender-affirming care and to make it a crime to perform in drag in public.

Aggressive and even violent imagery have long been a part of American politics. It can sometimes backfire.

Large guns have been a popular prop for some Republicans. Last year, a Black candidate seeking the GOP nomination in an Arizona congressional district aired an ad in which he held an AR-15 rifle as people wearing Ku Klux Klan robes and hoods tried to storm a home. He finished last.

In Missouri in 2016, GOP candidate and ex-Navy Seal Eric Greitens ran an ad featuring him firing 100 rounds from a machine gun on his way to winning the governor's race. After a sex and invasion-of-privacy scandal in 2018 forced him to resign, he attempted a political comeback in the state's 2022 U.S. Senate race, running an ad featuring him with a shotgun declaring he was going hunting for RINOs, or Republicans in Name Only. He finished third in the primary.

Flamethrowers also have popped up previously. In 2020, a GOP congressional candidate in Alabama showed her support for then-President Donald Trump by torching a mockup of the first articles of impeachment against him. She finished third in the primary. And in South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem's staff gave her a flamethrower last year as a Christmas gift.

Experts who study political extremism said images involving fire or bonfires have long been associated with extremist groups. Eigel's critics quickly posted online images involving the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi book burnings before World War II.

Evan Perkoski, an associate political science professor at the University of Connecticut, said it's been "traditional" for extremist groups to use images of fire to "simultaneously intimidate people and signal their intentions to destroy what exists and to rebuild or start over."

"We've seen this time and time again from groups across countries where groups will burn effigies, crosses and other items, or even just film themselves around large conflagrations," he said in a email to AP. "A large part of their motivation is the symbolic, frightening nature of fire."

Experts continue to worry about how social media can spread extreme or violent images or words to potentially millions of people, increasing the chances of a single person seeing the material as a call to violence.

Javed Ali, a former senior FBI counterterrorism official who's now an associate professor at the University of Michigan, said law enforcement agencies struggle with thwarting homegrown political violence. He said the sheer volume of social media postings means, "Sometimes, you almost have to get lucky in order to stop it."

Braddock, the American University professor, said that after portraying a flamethrower as a weapon against "the woke agenda," Eigel's supporters don't need "that big a leap of logic" to see it as a tool for settling actual political grievances. Talking about book burning enough can plant the idea in people's minds so that "people think it's actually a righteous thing to do."

Ali added: "That's a pretty dangerous game to play."

Eigel said he's not worried the video will inspire violence in "reasonable, everyday Missourians," which he said is the majority of people. But he said he's concerned about the number of threats he, his family and his staff have received as a result.

Hanna reported from Topeka, Kansas.

Follow John Hanna on the X platform: <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna>

United States and China launch economic and financial working groups with aim of easing tensions

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Treasury Department and China's Ministry of Finance launched a pair of

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economic working groups on Friday in an effort to ease tensions and deepen ties between the nations. Led by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Vice Premier He Lifeng, the working groups will be divided into economic and financial segments.

The working groups will "establish a durable channel of communication between the world's two largest economies," Yellen said in a series of tweets detailing the announcement. She said the groups will "serve as important forums to communicate America's interests and concerns, promote a healthy economic competition between our two countries with a level playing field for American workers and businesses."

The announcement follows a string of high-ranking administration officials' visits to China this year, which sets the stage for a possible meeting between President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in November at an Asia-Pacific economic conference in San Francisco.

China is one of the United States' biggest trading partners, and economic competition between the two nations has increased in recent years. The two finance ministers have agreed to meet at a "regular cadence," the Treasury Department said in a news release.

Yellen, along with other Biden administration officials, traveled to China this year after the Democratic president directed key senior officials to "maintain communication and deepen constructive efforts after he met with Xi in Bali last year.

The groups' launch also comes after Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with China's vice president on Monday on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

Working groups between the U.S. and China are not a new creation.

Reps. Rick Larsen, D-Wash., and Darin LaHood, R-Ill., set up a working group in 2005 between lawmakers in the two nations. And as recently as August, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said she and Commerce Minister Wang Wentao promised to set up a working group of officials and private sector representatives to "seek solutions on trade and investment issues."

Areas of disagreement between the nations have included tariffs, technology and China's claims to self-governing Taiwan and large parts of the South and East China Seas.

Tensions between the countries reached a fever pitch earlier this year when a Chinese surveillance balloon was spotted traveling over sensitive U.S. airspace. The U.S. military shot the balloon down off the Carolina coast after it traversed sensitive military sites across North America. China insisted the flyover was an accident involving a civilian aircraft and threatened repercussions.

In April, Yellen called out China's business and human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet while striking a conciliatory tone about how there is "a future in which both countries share in and drive global economic progress."

Relations between the two countries have become further strained as the Communist nation has grown its ties with Russia despite its continued invasion into Ukraine.

The U.S. last year moved to block exports of advanced computer chips to China, an action meant to quell China's ability to create advanced military systems including weapons of mass destruction, Commerce Department officials said last October.

Today in History: September 23, Nixon's "Checkers" speech

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Sept. 23, the 266th day of 2023. There are 99 days left in the year. Autumn arrives at 2:50 a.m. EDT.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 23, 1952, Sen. Richard M. Nixon, R-Calif., salvaged his vice-presidential nomination by appearing on television from Los Angeles to refute allegations of improper campaign fundraising in what became known as the "Checkers" speech for its reference to his family's cocker spaniel.

On this date:

In 1780, British spy John Andre was captured along with papers revealing Benedict Arnold's plot to sur-

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render West Point to the British.

In 1806, the Lewis and Clark expedition returned to St. Louis more than two years after setting out for the Pacific Northwest.

In 1955, a jury in Sumner, Mississippi, acquitted two white men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, of murdering Black teenager Emmett Till. (The two men later admitted to the crime in an interview with Look magazine.)

In 1957, nine Black students who'd entered Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas were forced to withdraw because of a white mob outside.

In 1962, "The Jetsons," an animated cartoon series about a Space Age family, premiered as the ABC television network's first series in color.

In 1987, Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., withdrew from the Democratic presidential race following questions about his use of borrowed quotations and the portrayal of his academic record.

In 1999, the Mars Climate Orbiter apparently burned up as it attempted to go into orbit around the Red Planet.

In 2001, President George W. Bush returned the American flag to full staff at Camp David, symbolically ending a period of national mourning following the 9/11 attacks.

In 2002, Gov. Gray Davis signed a law making California the first state to offer workers paid family leave.

In 2011, after 41 years, the soap opera "All My Children" broadcast its final episode on ABC.

In 2016, President Barack Obama vetoed a bill to allow the families of 9/11 victims to sue the government of Saudi Arabia, arguing it undermined national security. (Both the House and Senate voted to override the veto.)

In 2018, capping a comeback from four back surgeries, Tiger Woods won the Tour Championship in Atlanta, the 80th victory of his PGA Tour career and his first in more than five years.

In 2020, President Donald Trump refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he were to lose the election, telling reporters, "We're going to have to see what happens."

In 2021, opening a major new phase in the U.S. vaccination drive against COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention endorsed booster shots for millions of older or otherwise vulnerable Americans.

In 2022, Roger Federer played his final professional match after an illustrious career that included 20 Grand Slam titles.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Julio Iglesias is 80. Actor Paul Petersen (TV: "The Donna Reed Show") is 78. Actor/singer Mary Kay Place is 76. Rock star Bruce Springsteen is 74. Director/playwright George C. Wolfe is 69. Rock musician Leon Taylor (The Ventures) is 68. Actor Rosalind Chao is 66. Golfer Larry Mize is 65. Actor Jason Alexander is 64. Actor Chi McBride is 62. Actor Erik Todd Dellums is 59. Actor LisaRaye is 57. Singer Ani (AH'-nee) DiFranco is 53. Rock singer Sam Bettens (K's Choice) is 51. Recording executive Jermaine Dupri is 51. Actor Kip Pardue is 47. Actor Anthony Mackie is 45. Pop singer Erik-Michael Estrada (TV: "Making the Band") is 44. Actor Aubrey Dollar is 43. Actor Brandon Victor Dixon is 42. Actor David Lim is 40. Actor Cush Jumbo is 38. Actor Skylar Astin is 36. Former tennis player Melanie Oudin (oo-DAN') is 32.