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October 2023 Calendar

Wednesday, Oct. 11

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, vegetable capri blend, chocolate pudding with bananas, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chef Salad

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Con-

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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firmation, 4:35 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 12

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots and broccoli, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pop Tarts

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.

Region 1 Cross Country at Webster, 1:30 p.m.

JH Football hosts Britton-Hecla, 5 p.m.

Volleyball hosts Deuel: (C/7th at 5 p.m., JV/8th at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow)

Friday, Oct. 13

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hot dish with peas, mixed vegetables, Swedish apple pie square, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps

School Lunch: Hamburger, fries.

Lake Region Marching Festival in Groton, 10 a.m.

Football hosts Mobridge-Pollock, 7 p.m.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

A second earthquake, measuring 6.3 magnitude, hit Afghanistan during the morning hours, days after an earthquake in the region killed more than 2,000 people and flattened villages.

The U.S. Coast Guard has recovered remaining debris, including "presumed human remains," from the Titan submersible, which imploded in June, killing five members on board during a descent to explore the wreck of the Titanic.

Former gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake announced her candidacy for the Senate, becoming a front-runner for the GOP nomination in what could shape up into a historic three-way race.

Australian journalist Cheng Lei returned home after being detained in China on national security charges for more than three years, Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said. Cheng has been reunited with her family.

Jedidiah Murphy, who was sentenced to death for the 2000 fatal shooting of Bertie Lee Cunningham, was executed at the state penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas. Murphy had challenged the safety of the state's lethal injection drugs.

Olympic gymnastics champion Mary Lou Retton has pneumonia and is "fighting for her life" in intensive care in a Texas hospital, her daughter, McKenna Kelley, said.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian forces reportedly bombarded the village of Avdiivka as Moscow attempted to push back the Ukrainian frontline near Donetsk City. Officials said that Avdiivka had come under heavy artillery over the past day, and Russian troops appeared to be attempting to encircle the village..

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

The Supreme Court will hear *Alexander v. South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP*, a challenge to racially gerrymandered congressional maps. The lower court determined that the Republican legislature excluded Black voters to shore up GOP control of the district.

An estimated \$1.73 billion Powerball jackpot — the second-largest prize in the game's history— is up for grabs in tonight's drawing.

On the economic radar, producer price index for September is due at 8:30 a.m. ET. The Federal Reserve will publish minutes of its latest monetary policy meeting at 2 p.m. ET, providing insights into its policy stance and long-term macro projections.

Donald Trump and Rep. Matt Gaetz will speak at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach, Florida. The event is presented by Club 47 USA, a group of Trump loyalists..

TALKING POINTS

"What will the aircraft carrier of the U.S. do near Israel? Why do they come? What will boats around and aircraft on it will do? They will hit Gaza and around, and take steps for serious massacres there," Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan criticizing the United States for moving the USS Gerald R. Ford closer to Israel.

"Sam directed me to commit these crimes. [He] directed us to take customer money to pay loans." Former head of Sam Bankman-Fried's crypto hedge fund and Bankman-Fried's ex-girlfriend Caroline Ellison said while taking the stand Tuesday in the case against the FTX founder.

The Life of Eugene Prunty



Mass of Christian Burial for Eugene Prunty, 94, of Andover will be 10:30 a.m., Saturday, October 14th at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. Father Gregory Tschakert will officiate. Burial with military honors will follow in All Saints Catholic Cemetery, Andover under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Services will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM and will also be broadcast on GDIRADIO at 89.3 FM, available within 1 mile of Groton.

Visitation will be held at the church from 5-7 p.m. on Friday with a wake service at 7:00 p.m.

Gene passed away Sunday, October 8, 2023 at Sun Dial Manor, Bristol.

Eugene "Gene" Patrick Prunty was born on July 15, 1929 to Francis Patrick (FP) and Victoria Josephine (Schmit) Prunty at their home outside Andover, South Dakota. He was delivered by his father and was the 7th of 16 children. He was baptized and confirmed at All Saints Catholic Church in Andover. He attended the country school and graduated from Andover High School in 1947. After the fall harvest he went to Tioga, North Dakota for the grain and potato harvest. He returned to the Andover area in 1949.

Gene was drafted into the Army in December 1951. During the Korean War, Gene worked as a construction engineer in the Combat Corps of Engineers building roads from July to October in 1953. One road was on the 38th parallel north of Seoul and another to an Air Force radar station on top of the highest mountain in South Korea. His unit also built the compound at Panmunjom, where North and South Korean officials met, and he was present for the prisoner exchange. While stationed in Manchuria, (now North Korea), Gene told a reporter, "We didn't have a warm meal for two and a half months." Gene served 22 months and was discharged at Camp Carson, Colorado in October 1953 at the rank Sergeant.

Following military service, Gene attended the Agricultural School (GI Farm School) in Andover, SD and then returned to the family dairy farm. Over the years he raised cattle, sheep, chickens, pigs, dairy cows and farmed 400 acres of crops (barley, oats, rye, corn, wheat, alfalfa, sorghum and hay).

He was united in marriage to Bernice Louise Nehls Larson on September 21, 1982 (the same day as his parents wedding). Bernice had two adult children Dennis and Ruth (George) Kimball. Bernice and Gene made their home on the Prunty Registered Holstein Farm for the next 20 years. They enjoyed traveling to visit relatives and friends in Seattle and Alaska. Gene visited Ireland, from where his namesake, Patrick Henry Prunty immigrated in 1845 to Shiocton, Wisconsin, the site of the original Patrick Prunty Family farm. For several years Gene was the Andover Santa Claus driving his team of miniature horses to town. Gene served as treasurer for the Threshing Association for 7 years. He also served on the Andover centennial committee. On November 10, 2017, Eugene Prunty received the Korean Ambassador for Peace Medal. He was also a continuous member of the American Legion Post 258, Department of South Dakota for over 70 years.

Gene was widowed in June 2002. In 2014 Gene moved to The Groton Manor and then in 2017 to Sun Dial Manor in Bristol, SD.

Gene is survived by one brother: Bill (Betty) Prunty, Salinas, CA; Three sisters: Sister Pat Prunty PBVM, Sioux Falls, SD; Dorothy (John) Meier, Normal, IL; Theresa (Darell) Evers, Mankato, MN; step-daughter, Ruth (George) Kimball, Anchorage, AK and many nieces and nephews.

Gene was preceded in death by his wife Bernice, his parents, four brothers: Robert, Edward, Tom and Clarence; seven sisters: Mary Prunty, Marge Wing, Evelyn Overas, Cecelia (Heinen) Jurgens, Betty (Grode) Gollnick, Ruth Prunty, and Marian Grode.

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SDFBCA Coaches Poll - Week 7 RESULTS

11AAA

SF Lincoln (26) 7-0 130

SF O'Gorman 6-1 104

Harrisburg 5-2 68

SF Jefferson 5-2 54

Brandon Valley 4-3 32

11AA

Pierre (24) 6-1 124

Yankton (1) 6-1 104

Tea Area 5-2 78

Watertown 5-2 53

Aberdeen Central 4-3 22

RV: Spearfish 3, Huron 1, Sturgis 1

11A

Dell Rapids (24) 7-0 119

West Central (1) 6-1 92

Canton 5-2 80

SF Christian 5-2 44

Lennox 5-2 20

RV: Dakota Valley 16

11B

Winner (17) 7-0 117

Sioux Valley (10) 7-0 113

Elk Point-Jefferson 6-1 55

Hot Springs 6-1 41

Deuel 7-0 39

RV: WWSSC 15, Tri-Valley 5, BEE 3

9AA

1. Parkston (33) 155 8-0

2. Howard 98 6-1

3. Hamlin 74 7-1

4. Wall 66 7-1

5. Hanson 36 5-2

RV: Platte-Geddes (1)33, Elkton-Lake Benton 30

9A

1. Warner (29) 153 7-0

2. Canistota (2) 108 6-1

3. Philip 81 7-0

4. Alcester-Hudson (1) 68 7-0

5. Harding Co/Bison 22 7-1

RV: Deubrook Area 19, Gregory 24, Wolsey-Wessington 9

9B

1. Faulkton Area (21) 145 6-1

2. De Smet (11) 138 6-1

3. Avon 80 5-2

4. Corsica-Stickney 45 5-2

5. Herreid-Selby Area 31 6-2

RV: Hitchcock-Tulare 23, Dell Rapids St. Mary 22

Conde National League

October 9 Team Standings: Cubs 16, Giants 13 ½, Braves 12, Tigers 7, Pirates 6, Mets 5 ½

Men's High Games: Ryan Bethke 202, Topper Tastad 196, Aaron Severson 190

Men's High Series: Aaron Severson 518, Ryan Bethke 514, Chad Furney 506

Women's High Games: Suzi Easthouse 196, Vickie Kramp 184, Nancy Radke 178

Women's High Series: Suzi Easthouse 556, Vickie Kramp 467, mNancy Radke 437

Groton school board discusses social study standard implementation, more at morning meeting

by Elizabeth Varin

Questions remain on what social studies will look like at Groton Area School District in the next few years. Social studies teacher Scott Thorson discussed issues facing educators with the new social studies standards during Tuesday morning's school district board meeting. One of the issues is there is currently no text book that would cover the standards. That may push back the implementation timeframe.

Other changes the district may see would be possibly a full year of government taught instead of the currently-offered one semester class, he said. With the new standards, it would be virtually impossible to condense it all within one semester. If it becomes a year-long class, that may cause issues with what electives students will have time for.

Teaching more about U.S. government, tribal governments and South Dakota history is a good thing, Thorson said. There just isn't currently a curriculum that covers all of that. And it will be hard to implement the new standards if there isn't a textbook available for students and educators.

There are also changes coming for Shaun Wanner, social studies teacher. Currently one class focuses on the timeframe of the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, he said. However, the new standards would expand that from 1492 to 2008. It's going to be a challenge to figure out where to add the new information.

It is important for the students to know these things, though, Wanner added. Many students will spend a lot of their lives in South Dakota, and it's important to know that history.

There currently have not been any changes to the graduation requirements as of yet, said Superintendent Joe Schwan. However, if government is expanded into a full year, it may require something going away to make that work.



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Tigers



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C hosts Deuel
C hosts Northwestern
C hosts Faulkton Area

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The district has been putting off purchasing new social studies material for the last few years as they didn't want to spend money on books that would be outdated soon, Schwan said. However, some of the books are falling apart at this point. And some larger school districts are also holding off on purchasing new supplies until base curriculum is set.

"They're not convinced the standards adopted aren't going to change," he told the board.

At a recent educators conference, there wasn't discussion about pushing back implementation of the new standards, Thorson said. However, he added, he wouldn't be surprised if it were pushed back pending a decision on curriculum requirements.

Doland wrestling requirements discussed

The district board want the Doland School District to pay for an assistant coach position in order to keep practicing with the Groton school team.

Doland wrestlers practiced at Groton through a practice cooperative last year, but they competed for their school, said Superintendent Schwan. The Groton coaches did work with the Doland wrestlers, but their attention was focused on Groton wrestlers, especially at competitions. The Groton coaches did have to register the Doland wrestlers, too.

"A lot of it falls on our coaches," he said. "And that's just not right."

The primary reason Doland sends wrestlers to Groton for practice is that the Doland district doesn't have a coach or training room for wrestling, Schwan said. The Doland district does cover transportation costs for their wrestlers, but there should be some financial component to training in Groton as well, he said.

School board members agreed, including board Vice President Marty Weismantel.

"I don't have a problem with them practicing, but they need to provide something for it," he said.

Board member Grant Rix proposed renewing the agreement for this year with the addition of having Doland fund the stipend of one assistant coach at the rate the Groton district pays them.

The board approved the conditions to continue the wrestling practice cooperative.

- District officials presented past financial information as the board continues to look at an opt-out vote. The PowerPoint Presentation shown to the board is available on the "documents" area of the Groton Area School District website. Discussion is set to continue at meetings in November and December.

- The district will receive another round of Supply Chain Assistance funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The money, which will go into the food service fund, totals \$15,867.72. The district is still having some issues getting food orders, with some items being delayed, Superintendent Schwan said. It has caused a few last-minute changes to the school menu.

- The district will allow James Valley Thunder to use the high school arena for the summer of 2024, though the fee for use will increase from \$2,400 to \$3,000. That would help offset costs of utilizing the new HVAC units that were installed this past summer.

- Middle school and high school math teachers went over the math program at the school district. Greg Kjellsen discussed class sizes in algebra, algebra II and pre-calculus. There are three algebra classes with 47 total students ranging from eighth grade to eleventh grade. It presents issues as the students' abilities really range for that class. There are two algebra II classes with 20 total students, and one pre-calculus class with 19 students. Eric Swenson discussed recent testing results for his classes, as well as utilizing those results to tailor what is being taught.

- New doors for the health science lab are still in the works. Contractors came to the school in September to install the new doors, but two of the three doors were incorrectly sized. New doors are in production.

- Nothing out of ordinary was reported in the school transportation report. The district hasn't been putting miles on its supplemental buses in September, Superintendent Schwan said. A significant number of miles have been put on activity buses, but that is to be expected during this time of year, he added.

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Brooks and Szybinska Rally Wolves Offense in Tuesday Win

Moorhead, Minn. – The Northern State University volleyball team opened their week on the road with a 4-set victory over MSU Moorhead. Despite falling in the first set, the wolves rallied back in their sixth league victory of the 2023 season.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, MSUM 1

Records: NSU 14-4 (6-3 NSIC), MSUM 5-12 (2-7 NSIC)

Attendance: 234

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Wolves swept the final three sets with scores of 25-22, 25-17, and 26-24

Northern hit .281 in the win, recording a match high ten blocks and seven aces

NSU added 59 kills, 51 assists, and 58 digs

The Wolves defense forced 26 Dragon hitting errors as MSUM hit .219 in the match

Abby Brooks and Natalia Szybinska led the team with 14 kills apiece, each hitting over .300

Keri Walker averaged 11.75 assists per set with 47 in the match and scored seven points on five kills and two aces

Abby Meister and Brooks led the defense with 20 digs and five blocks, while Eliza Bauers notched career highs in kills (6), digs (4), and blocks (3)

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Abby Brooks: 14 kills, .406 attack%, 5 blocks, 1 dig

Natalia Szybinska: 14 kills, .343 attack%, 3 blocks, 1 dig

Keri Walker: 47 assists, 7 digs, 5 kills, 2 aces

Abby Meister: 20 digs, 1 ace

UP NEXT

Northern returns home for a pair of matches on Friday and Saturday against UMary and Minot State. Match start times are set for 7 p.m. on Friday against the Marauders and 5 p.m. on Saturday versus the Beavers. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

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Flags at Half-Staff in Support of Israel



PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide effective immediately until sunset on Friday October 13th, 2023, in support of the State of Israel.

“South Dakota, America, and the world must stand firm in our resolve to support the Israeli people,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “We are praying for a swift resolution to this war. We support Prime Minister Netanyahu and his armed forces as they strike swiftly, truly, and with justice.”

In the wake of the devastating invasion of Israel by Hamas terrorists, Governor Noem issued a statement of support for the people of Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is printed below.

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, in the wake of the devastating invasion of Israel by Hamas terrorists, Governor Kristi Noem issued a statement of support for the people of Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu:

“Beloved people of Israel: your friends and allies in America stand with you. We support you in defending the homeland given to your people by God. These barbaric actions have shocked the conscience of the world. We share your anger at the viciousness of these attacks and the death, pain, and suffering it has caused, and we support your right to use all measures necessary to prevent future attacks.

“During my time on the House Armed Services Committee, I saw what regular violence perpetrated by Hamas terrorists against Israel looks like. This goes so far beyond that – this was an act of war, an invasion of your sacred home.

“We are praying for a swift resolution to this war; for safety and peace for the hostages taken by the Hamas terrorists; for comfort to the families who have lost loved ones or whose lives have otherwise been forever changed by this horrific day; for the first responders to act calmly and quickly in their work of healing and repair; for Prime Minister Netanyahu and his armed forces to strike swiftly, truly, and with justice; and for Hamas to be driven from the face of the Earth as a just consequence for their atrocities.

“In the coming days, all Americans – and the whole world – must stand firm in our resolve to support the Israeli people. As Prime Minister Netanyahu said, ‘This war will take time. She will be hard. Challenging days are ahead. But... with the help of God... we will win.’ Godspeed to you, my friend Prime Minister Netanyahu, and to your people. You will win, and you have our support every step of the way.”

While Governor Noem served in Congress, she was a member of the House Armed Services Committee, which oversees the Department of Defense and numerous other aspects of our nation’s national security. Governor Noem has visited Israel numerous times to display her support for America’s most important strategic ally.

Part 2

Race for regulatory role puts Johnson in GOP spotlight

Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch



Campaign materials, including "Dusty mints," from Johnson's successful 2010 re-election campaign for the Public Utilities Commission. "We got the ground game going," said one of his campaign staffers. (Photo: Submitted.)

This is the second in a four-part series by South Dakota News Watch about the political journey and Republican Party challenges faced by U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson:

When Republicans gathered in Dusty Johnson's adopted hometown of Mitchell for their state convention in the summer of 2004, the race for Public Utilities Commissioner was not a major concern.

Party leaders had other priorities.

Despite Republicans holding a sizable lead in registered voters in South Dakota, the state's congressional delegation consisted of three Democrats.

Tom Daschle was U.S. Senate minority leader. Tim Johnson had narrowly defeated Thune. And Herseth was in the U.S. House after winning a special election after Janklow was convicted for running a stop sign and killing a motorcyclist on a rural county road in August 2003.

Former state legislator Larry Diedrich geared up for a House rematch in the general election against Herseth, while Thune was mounting a Senate challenge to Daschle in what would become one of the most expensive and consequential races in state history.

Against this 2004 backdrop was the election for a seat on the three-person PUC, a constitutional office with staggered six-year terms that regulates electric, natural gas and telephone utilities.

The incumbent was 63-year-old Democrat Jim Burg, a former state legislator and National Guard officer seeking a fourth term after carrying 65% of the vote in 1998. Republican Carol Pitts had signaled a PUC run and then backed out, leaving the party without a candidate. With the support of GOP leader Joel Rosenthal, the 27-year-old Johnson put his hat in the ring and was unopposed at the convention, securing the nomination in a unanimous vote.

"If there had been anyone running against me at the convention, I probably would have lost," said Johnson. "I was just a kid."

Among those surprised at the nomination was Dennis Daugaard, a former state senator and Children's

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Congressman Dusty Johnson waves to supporters on Election Day in 2020. (Photo: Argus Leader)

Home Society chief executive who was serving as Rounds' lieutenant governor. He saw Johnson as an effective campaign staffer well-versed in public administration. But the idea of him challenging a seasoned incumbent like Burg seemed far-fetched.

"I thought he was a sacrificial lamb, in all honesty," Dugaard told News Watch. "I didn't think he would have a chance."

Democrats react to campaign: 'We have our hands full'

Johnson acknowledged being self-conscious about his age and appearance as he entered the race. Political campaigns don't always get beyond first impressions, and he worried about coming off

as an eager-to-please accountant rather than a robust public statesman.

"Not exactly made for TV" is how Johnson puts it. Like a reverse JFK. But Rounds pulled him aside and gave him straightforward advice that became part of his political creed.

"He said, 'Dusty, you have to be yourself,'" Johnson recalled. "And as I've gotten a little older, I understand that what voters appreciate almost more than anything is authenticity. I can tell when a politician is not being themselves, and I hold them with some disdain. I think they owe the voters a true look at who they are."

It was his sister-in-law who suggested using a cardboard cutout of Dusty on the campaign trail, with the added touch of Johnson showing up and standing next to it to tell voters, "That's me!"

It came off a bit corny, perhaps, but it felt right.

"I don't really like how most politicians run their campaigns," said Johnson. "I think things tend to be too slick, and I just was always looking for a way to try to connect with people in a way that seemed a bit different. I think a lot of officeholders are a little too cool for school. That's never been my problem."

The campaign revealed another of Johnson's political rules: Never get outworked.

He gave himself a grueling schedule to all corners of the state, necessitating an unpaid leave of absence from the Rounds administration to make it work. He also used political connections to outraise his more established opponent \$175,000 to \$60,000.

Hustle and money helped, but it wasn't the whole story. Though Burg noted that "it takes a while to learn the ins and outs of the job," Johnson impressed industry insiders with policy chops on issues such as rural telecommunications and commercial trucking.

"(Burg) probably didn't realize until September that he even had a race, and by then Dusty had already shaken about 40,000 hands," said Rosenthal.

The momentum was clear at an October candidate forum, where Johnson held court on key PUC issues, going toe-to-toe with his opponent while sharing whimsical insights about life on the road during his maiden campaign.



Dusty Johnson poses with wife Jacquelyn (second from right) and her family after being elected Public Utilities Commissioner at age 28 in 2004. He defeated Democratic incumbent Jim Burg. (Photo: Submitted)

Rosenthal recalls walking into an adjoining coffee shop after the forum and hearing a prominent Democrat talking to a companion about the race.

"We have our hands full," the man said.

Keystone Pipeline controversy part of PUC experience

Johnson's victory was 55% to 42%, a margin of 46,000 votes.

It was easily overshadowed at GOP headquarters by Thune's historic take-down of Daschle

and the re-election of George W. Bush to the White House. But among political insiders in South Dakota, Johnson's campaign had an air of competence that made him someone to watch.

He threw himself into PUC duties at a critical juncture, focusing on emerging cellphone technology, wind turbines as economic development and more transparency from the commission, including documentation of correspondence with constituents.

As Johnson neared the end of that first PUC term, another South Dakota political shift was afoot.

Barack Obama won the White House in 2008, giving Democrats control over all three branches of the federal government. Obama's landmark health care reform package in the face of a still-struggling economy energized Republicans for the midterms in 2010, especially in South Dakota, where Herseth's U.S. House seat, ultimately captured by Noem, was seen as vulnerable.

One of those who saw Johnson as part of a potential GOP wave was Will Mortenson, a fellow Pierre native who studied political science at USD and briefly met the PUC commissioner when he visited campus.

Mortenson later interned in the state Legislature in 2009 and observed how Johnson engaged consistently with those around him, regardless of political standing.

"He was kind of a singular presence back then," said Mortenson, who was elected to the Legislature in 2020 and became House Majority Leader in 2022.

"I had run into a lot of people who held elective office, all of whom seemed to take themselves very seriously. Dusty seemed to be a guy with his feet firmly planted on the ground, who talked to people he just met and to people who were his superiors with the same level of respect and excitement and humor."

Mortenson, just 22 at the time, was full of ideas about how South Dakota Republicans could extend their reach, much of which centered on the upcoming election.

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"I asked Dusty to go to lunch and pretty brazenly suggested he should run for Congress," said Mortenson. "He told me that he was not going to do that, he was going to run for PUC again, and within a few days he offered me a job running his 2010 campaign."

— *This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at sdnewswatch.org.*



ABOUT STU WHITNEY

Stu Whitney is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A resident of Sioux Falls, Whitney is an award-winning reporter, editor and novelist with more than 30 years of experience in journalism.



The smaller tower at James Valley Telecommunications was taken down in pieces on Monday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

#586 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I have accumulated enough information that I thought I'd drop in with an Update. I don't know how frequent these will be; a whole lot depends how the fall and winter shape up. I'll try to assure you have enough information to make good decisions, especially if things get dicey. I think it's important to recognize that, despite the general sense we're past this whole thing, Covid-19 is still a leading cause of death in the US. What with the continuing risk of serious disease and death, especially in elderly and compromised people, and continuing development of long-covid in some percentage of cases, this problem hasn't gone entirely away. I still hear from high-risk people who are dismayed at society's abandonment of precautions; they're feeling overlooked as though the rest of us just stopped caring (if we ever did) about their quality—or length—of life. With respect to long-Covid, that syndrome characterized by persistent symptoms long after the initial infection has resolved, Hannah Davis at the Patient-Led Research Collaborative recently told the Washington Post, "The newer people [just diagnosed] with long covid are really angry. Everyone's been told the pandemic is basically over." Considering we have basically nothing to offer these patients, their distress is easy to understand. We do, however, want to remember that no one's predicting a winter anything like the last three; our situation has, indeed, radically improved. It's still too early in this virus's career to make any sort of long-term predictions about where it might take us in the long term. New subvariants continue to emerge, and there's no telling whether an entirely new variant (on the Alpha, Delta, Omicron level of shift) might emerge. We'd be smart to keep an eye on it.

The current numbers look a bit better today than they did last time we talked early last month. Here's what I have. Hospitalizations have ticked down a bit over the past few weeks. You will recall we were up around 44,000 early this year, down to 14,412 in April, way down to 6314 in late June, and then spiking up to 20,538 in September. Last figures I have are for September 30 when we'd dropped slightly to 18,139. While this is good compared to where we've been, that's still a whole lot of people sick from a disease that didn't exist five years ago.

Wastewater surveillance is ongoing. This is reported as copies of the virus found per milliliter of wastewater; higher numbers would indicate (or predict) increases in cases. In April, this was at 269; in June it had dropped to 165; and in September we were at 608. This one's down a bit too since then. Last data is for September 27, and we were at 512.

Deaths data are more difficult to interpret because, as I mentioned last month, these numbers lag in reporting and are subject to modification as death certificates are evaluated and corrected; but what we have is what we have. Nowadays these come in a weekly numbers, and unfortunately, I can only access six months of data, so I can't go back as far with these as I can for hospitalizations and wastewater counts. That means these data will be more useful for purposes of comparison and trend-spotting as we go along because I've laid down some markers on the path so we'll be able to look back at those as we go along. For the week ending August 26, we were looking at 860 deaths per week. Most recent data available now is for the week ending September 16, and this one's a bit more alarming with a weekly total of 1213.

There are government-purchased Covid-19 tests available again as of September 25. Each household can order four free tests. I know four isn't a lot, but it's more than zero. I'm not sure how limited the supply is, but if you have health insurance, tests are likely still available at no cost to you, so you may choose in that case to leave the free ones for the un- and under-insured. The website also has links to the FDA website where you can check whether the expiration date on the tests you have now have been extended and learn how to receive tests at no cost for those who need the assist. Here's the link for ordering and the other information: https://www.covid.gov/tests?fbclid=IwAR1qVbCoPtFW_eWrIQfm6ix8ldOrXxn5RMR0UI0JIO9i-gAPOxGRUA12rAQ

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The updated XBB-directed Covid-19 vaccine is now readily available across the country. For the record, the folks who know things are encouraging us to stop thinking of these as “boosters,” but instead simply as vaccines. When annual reformulation occurs, the term booster no longer really applies: We’re not boosting our protection against the same old virus; we’re updating our immunity for new variants. (This, of course, is why you should receive the updated vaccine instead of basking in the false comfort of your “immunity” after you were infected last winter. The virus has changed, and so must we.)

There is also new guidance as to who should receive this vaccine and when. First, it is recommended for everyone six months of age and older. This is the vaccine you should receive irrespective of your prior vaccine history, so even if you’ve never been vaccinated for Covid-19, this is the one you will receive. For most folks older than 5 years, this will be a single dose; for children and the immunocompromised, the number of doses will depend on your vaccination history. It’s looking very much like most of us can treat this just as we do the annual influenza vaccine. You should wait at least two months since your last Covid-19 vaccine dose.

If you have recently had Covid-19, then the CDC says you can delay your new dose by up to three months after first symptoms or positive test. I’ve seen some evidence you could wait as long as six months; but because we all expect a late fall/winter spike in cases, I wouldn’t. I’d want to optimize my protection before the season peaks. Some people may not wish to wait even three months based on their own health situation; if you have factors that place you at particular risk for serious disease, then that’s a conversation to have with your health care provider.

While vaccination is going to be particularly important for the elderly, the compromised, and those with underlying health conditions which put them at risk for serious disease, recognize that there are risks of infection even for the young and healthy. Current data show, for examples, the risk for cardiac complications of Covid-19 in males 12-17 years was between 1.8 and 5.6 times higher than after vaccination. And Dr. Sanjoy Gupta told David Rinds recently on CNN’s podcast, One Thing, “And if you look at all the preexisting sort of factors, conditions that could put you at higher risk, obesity, asthma, diabetes, renal disease, all these things, that’s 70 to 80% of our population in the United States would be considered high risk.” Vaccination seems worth it to me. All health insurance programs in the US cover vaccines: private insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid. Uninsured(or underinsured) children have access through the Vaccines for Children Program (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/about/index.html>), and uninsured or underinsured adults have access through the Bridge Access Program (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/bridge/>). It looks like this vaccine is going to be accessible to everyone irrespective of your budget; ask about these programs wherever you go to receive your dose. If money is going to be an issue, go to a pharmacy; there will be no charge for an office visit, whereas the clinic will likely incur a charge.

The reformulated 2023 vaccine continues to look good against currently-circulating (XBB.1.5, EG.5.1, and FL.1.5.1) and emerging (BA.2.86) subvariants of the Omicron variant. Antibody responses after vaccination have been boosted by a factor of 17 (that is 17 times higher) against XB.1.5 and by 10-fold against BA.2.86. Looks like we have a good match between vaccine and variants at this time; barring the rapid emergence of something entirely new—not impossible, but probably not highly likely—we should be good for the winter.

There was a new paper published last month that dealt with long-Covid or post-acute sequelae of Covid (PASC). I was unable to access a copy of the work, so I’m relying on a summary here. Interestingly, the team found that people with PASC had much weaker antibody responses to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, but enhanced responses to another coronavirus, OC43. You may recall from way back

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when we first started talking that OC43 is one of the family of coronaviruses responsible for many cases of the common cold. The stronger the response to OC43, the weaker the response to SARS-CoV-2. This same pattern of response was seen in people with rheumatic autoimmune diseases; these are diseases caused by the person's immune system having a response to their own tissues (autoimmunity, auto = self) resulting in joint damage. The thinking is that this could indicate PASC may be an example of something called immune imprinting. Imprinting can occur because the immune system can preferentially use immune memory based on a previous exposure when a new, slightly different, version of the pathogen shows up. This can hamper the response to the second pathogen because the memory response inhibits a new response, but isn't a perfect match, sort of trapping the immune system into a less-effective response.

Now no one knows for sure whether imprinting is a thing here, but it looks possible. Further work should sort that out. If imprinting turns out to be a real phenomenon, this may help us to understand just what's going on in PASC, at least in some cases. Understanding this sort of relationship could help in developing a means to identify people at high risk for PASC and in developing treatments. There's been so little good news on the PASC front, it's nice to have something new. I'll let you know if I hear more.

I read an interesting piece on what's commonly called Covid fatigue. One of the hallmarks of Covid-19 has been feelings of intense fatigue. Now it's not unusual to feel really tired during a viral infection, even just a cold; but what we're seeing here is considerably worse, and it frequently has been persisting months after the infection has resolved, part of the PASC phenomenon. For some people, this fatigue is mostly a problem after exertion; but for others, it's a more constant thing. It seems to be becoming more common, but no one's sure whether it's just that we didn't notice small-potatoes stuff like fatigue when folks were dying on ventilators or maybe these more recent variants cause more fatigue.

A paper from a group at Yale School of Medicine published a couple of weeks ago in the journal Nature reports findings of lowered levels of what's called morning cortisol. Cortisol is a hormone that helps you respond to stress, regulate blood sugar, and fight infections. Its level in the body is highest in the morning, and that increased level is responsible for getting you up and going in the morning. General cortisol deficiency is associated with fatigue, and it seems reasonable to think morning cortisol deficiency is also associated with fatigue. We're not sure yet just what these findings mean, but identifying a potential cause may give us a starting place for addressing this fatigue in long-Covid patients. As always, there's work yet to be done, but this could have some potential.

I read another paper, this one published over the summer in the journal Genome Medicine. This one from a group at Harvard Medical School took a look at the gut microbiome in Covid-19 patients. Microbiome is a word that describes the microorganisms which naturally reside in a particular body location. I know we're used to thinking of "germs" as bad and harmful and their presence as a problem, but in fact we are inhabited at all times by trillions of microorganisms that aren't hurting anything, in fact that confer real benefits. Some body locations have more microorganisms than others, none more than the intestine which is a hotbed of microbial life. There's sort of an expected range of organisms that live in the gut; this varies with diet and other factors, but we can make some broad generalizations about what and how many we can expect to see in a person. In general, the more diverse your gut microbiome, that is, the more kinds of organisms you have, the better off you are. This study took a look at the organisms found in 48 patients with moderate and 79 with severe Covid-19. All of the patients were hospitalized; the two groups were differentiated by whether they require intensive care.

What these researchers found was that the diversity of the gut microbiome in people with Covid-19 was lower compared with healthy people. Those with more severe disease had even more reduced diversity, than those with moderate disease. This association was so strong that the team was able to develop a computer model which successfully predicted from the gut microbiome whether a patient had moderate

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or severe disease. Additionally, they also found there were two particular species of expected organisms which were almost absent in people with severe disease. Further, those same two species were also seriously reduced in people with long-Covid, and that may be a clue.

What this means is that perhaps we can use the gut microbiome as a predictor of who will develop long-Covid. Also, there are things we can do to restore a disrupted gut microbiome. (Don't ask; you really don't want to know what these things are.) This could offer some promise for the future.

Fair warning: There are lots of ways to part you from your money, and a new one is nasal sprays that purport to protect you from Covid-19. While there are a few such products in development, none has received FDA approval (not sure that any has even been submitted for approval yet), and none have reached the market. In other words, anything being offered for sale over the counter today for this purpose is a quack remedy which has zero evidence supporting a benefit. Some folks are trying to demonstrate such benefit, but the studies have been small and "the results not very compelling," according to what Dr. Eric Topol, executive vice president of Scripps Research, told the New York Times a couple of weeks ago. Because it is illegal to claim a medical benefit for a drug without FDA approval for use in the specific purpose, the FDA's been sending out warning letters to manufacturers. Don't fall for this; use the money you save on these to buy better food. We know being well-nourished supports your immune system.

Three years ago, I wrote in my Update #216 (posted September 26, 2020 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/pfbid02ZsbeNG9TQpxL8AVAb3SbDUtzXjVoe3DyB2ERLMqXnLi7wA4Piz-tWYJckW6R9HgDgl>) about Lane Unhjem, a North Dakota farmer who'd suffered a serious heart attack after a wheat-field fire on his property. The story was about how his neighbors came together to harvest his crops and support his family while he was ill. Back when I was writing these side stories, I often wondered how things turned out for the people I described for you; generally, I haven't been able to find any sort of follow-up information at all. I still don't know how Mr. Unhjem is today, but I did recently spot a newspaper reference which indicates he was alive in January 2022. I don't know how complete his recovery was, but I am pleased to report it does appear he survived that episode. I hope he's back to work on the farm. If you live near there and know something, please let us know.

This is the day for catching up with old stories, I guess, because I have another one for you. Remember Katalin Karikó? She's the mRNA researcher whose work was ignored and denigrated for decades, who lost her job and her funding and then finally found work at German biotechnology company BioNTech. That name might just ring a bell; they are the Pfizer partner in developing one of the two most successful Covid-19 vaccines, both of which are based solidly on Karikó's life work. I wrote about Karikó on a few occasions, and her story is worth revisiting today. It's a really good one. If you're interested, you can find it in my Update #410 posted April 8, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4602832576399779>. Dr. Karikó and her collaborator, Dr. Drew Weissman, have already been given both the 2022 Solvay Prize, an award given every other year for scientific discoveries in chemistry that have the potential to enhance human progress, and the Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award, among the most prestigious in medicine. I wrote about these awards when they were given. Well, now there's more: On October 2, Karikó and Weissman were awarded the 2023 Nobel Prize in Medicine, the pinnacle of scientific achievement. The way I felt reading about this richly-deserved recognition after a lifetime toiling away in obscurity, trying to get someone—anyone—to care about her precious mRNA, puts me in mind of the day I took my nephew for his driving test when he came out of the office, beaming, with the words, "I have perma-grin." And that's me with perma-grin, just delighted to know sometimes the world circles back and gets it right in the end.

I'll add a couple of further notes on the Karikó story. First is a point I've made repeatedly in our time together: This is why basic research, the kind you do even though there is no immediate application for

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it on the horizon, is so important. These vaccines, both developed within days of having the viral genome available, which is blinding, dizzying speed in drug development terms, would not have been possible but for the decades of basic mRNA and lipid nanoparticle research that turned vaccine development into sort of a plug-and-play technology. Had Karikó been one percent less persistent and dogged, there would have been, according to a New York Times article on this award, tens of millions more funerals around the world in 2021, 2022, and even 2023. We fund basic research a bit more generously, and the fate of the world would not rest solely on one woman's tenacity. Seems like a no-brainer to me.

The second is simply to mention that, apparently, hard work and determination are values Karikó and her husband, Belá Francia, instilled in their daughter. That daughter, Susan Francia, is a five-time World Champion and the proud owner of two Olympic gold medals in rowing (2008 and 2012). A CBS story on the Nobel opened with this: "Olympic gold medallist Susan Francia is coming to terms with the fact that she's no longer the most famous person in her family," and reported Francia saying, "Now I'm like, 'Shoot! All right, I've got to work harder.'" What a family!

And I'll leave this story tonight with this final note. I happened across a video of Dr. Karikó's acceptance speech for yet another honor, the Canada Gairdner International Award (also shared with her collaborator, Dr. Weissman, and Dr. Peter Cullis, recognized for his work on lipid nanoparticles which was also crucial to the success of the mRNA Covid-19 vaccines), and now I'm thinking this is a person we'd really like if we had the opportunity to meet her in person. In her short and exceedingly humble speech, she noted the "hundreds of thousands" of other scientists who laid the foundation for her work, she demonstrated a quirky sense of humor, and she expressed gratitude for "all those people who tried to make my life miserable," noting that being fired and demoted simply spurred her on to greater efforts and saying that, "without them, I wouldn't be here." Here's a link to that brief video:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IxiMbJBpCs>.

And that's it for today. I'm sure we'll talk again; I'm hoping it isn't too soon. Take care, and keep yourself safe.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Housing board awards \$48 million more in infrastructure grants

Twenty projects span state, from Deadwood to Elk Point

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 10, 2023 6:02 PM

Teachers in Pine Ridge, service members at Ellsworth Air Force Base and thousands of Sioux Falls residents are among the beneficiaries of about \$48 million in housing grants awarded Tuesday.

The South Dakota Housing Development Authority sent the money to 20 separate projects to help developers pay for infrastructure like streets, water and sewer lines.

The awards came from a \$200 million pool of funds lawmakers passed in 2023 after more than a year of delays. Its swift passage was followed by months of rulemaking. September saw the first awards, with \$10.3 million committed to seven separate projects in Box Elder, Pierre, Brookings, Aberdeen and Lake Preston.

The largest grant of the bunch on Tuesday went to the city of Sioux Falls, which asked for \$14 million to help pay for a sewer basin on 3,100 acres of land. Chas Olson, the Housing Development Authority's executive director, said the project is expected to open up the area to hundreds of homes, apartment complexes, duplexes or townhomes.

"The total land within the basin is projected to support development of approximately 2,600 single family units," Olson said.

Alex Jensen, a newly appointed board member and current Sioux Falls City Council member, recused himself from the vote.

The Sioux Falls grant earned unanimous support from the board, as did the 19 other projects under consideration Tuesday. Just two sparked questions from the board.

The Oglala Lakota County School District's application for teacher housing included a waiver request to make it eligible for about \$600,000 more than it would be otherwise. The board approved, but had questions.

The reason for the waiver is tied to program rules and its funding sources, as well as to tribes' status as sovereign entities, rather than political subdivisions of the state of South Dakota.

The \$200 million pool is split in two. The larger portion, \$150 million, is for any kind of infrastructure built by a developer and later handed off to a "political subdivision" of the state. Developer-built streets later maintained by a city, for example, are eligible.

The remaining \$50 million is tied to a pool of federal money tagged specifically for water-related infrastructure. That money can cover a third of the cost of the water-related portions of a new development, but not for things like streets.

Unlike the \$150 million funding source, however, tribes needn't partner with a city, county or other government entity to get the money.

The school district asked the board to consider allowing it to fund a full third of the infrastructure in its teacher housing project through the \$50 million pool of federal funding. Its \$2.5 million grant request is about \$600,000 higher than it would be eligible for without the waiver.

The district is building 15 homes and 32 duplexes for the teachers who now sometimes drive an hour both ways to work.

"... Without a new water source, Pine Ridge will be unable to meet their current and future housing needs, as well as the water needs of the high school, elementary school, and daycare facilities," the application said.

Watertown's Rick Hohn questioned the wisdom of a waiver so early on in the program's life.

"So if we don't approve the waiver, they don't have another source of funding?" Hohn said.

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Tobin Morris of Colliers Securities, speaking for the district, said debt is the only other source. The trouble is that reservation school districts don't have access to the same kinds of financing that non-reservation districts do, Morris said, which would force the school to take from other programs to service the debt.

Morris noted that the housing and water tower project together will improve the entire community's access to clean water. A new water source for Pine Ridge teachers will help relieve pressure on the Mni Wiconi Rural Water System, he said.

"It frees up that capacity to basically address water shortages that happen almost every summer from either the breakage or the lack of capacity," Morris said.

The only other questions came on a project in Box Elder, a growing community near Ellsworth. The city was awarded three grants in September, and another application appeared at Tuesday's meeting.

The impending arrival of the B-21 bomber to that site is expected to put pressure on the housing market, Olson told the board. A housing study for the Rapid City area pointed to a high need for housing for at least five years, "so at this time, we feel that we still have a need in that area."

Housing infrastructure program awards, October

Oglala Lakota County School District Teacher Housing: Pine Ridge, \$2.5 million

Apple Valley Subdivision: Rapid Valley, \$5.9 million

City Springs – Vanocker Canyon: Sturgis, \$2.1 million

Curtis Creek Subdivision: New Underwood, \$1.6 million

Sewer Basin 15 Expansion: Sioux Falls, \$14 million

The Summit at Deadwood Stage Run, LLC: \$3.3 million

Elk Point Community Infrastructure Project: Elk Point, \$1.2 million

Yankton Thrive Garden Estates: Yankton, \$1.6 million

Yankton Thrive Manitou North: Yankton, \$1.3 million

Kangas West Addition: Lake Norden, \$327,240

Stardust Subdivision: Mitchell, \$567,568

Kroetch Addition Development: Philip, \$400,000

Pine Haven Estates: Aberdeen, \$750,000

Red Feren Subdivision – Phase 3: Box Elder, \$940,039

Smokey Groves Subdivision: Chamberlain, \$1.5 million

South Lake Housing Development: Mitchell, \$925,000

Harvest Meadows and ValleyView Subdivision: Sturgis, \$2.4 million

The Highlands at Norman Ranch: Summerset, \$3.2 million

Trojan Village: Madison, \$1 million

Webster Development Shoemaker Addition: \$2.6 million

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.

Navigator pulls pipeline application in Illinois after rejection in South Dakota

BY: JARED STRONG - OCTOBER 10, 2023 1:24 PM

Navigator CO2 on Tuesday moved to withdraw its carbon dioxide pipeline permit application in Illinois, effectively halting its project.

The motion comes about a week before the Illinois Commerce Commission was set to hold an evidentiary hearing for the application.

The company's proposed 1,350-mile pipeline system suffered a setback in South Dakota in September when state regulators denied Navigator a construction permit.

Later that month, the company asked to suspend its permit process in Iowa. At the time, Navigator indi-

cated it would wait for a ruling on its permit in Illinois, which was expected by the end of February 2024.

But the company now says it is "taking time to reassess the route and application."

"Navigator will withdraw its current application with the intent to reinstate Illinois permitting, if appropriate, when Navigator's full evaluation is complete," the company said in a prepared statement.

A company spokesperson declined to comment further. Navigator had previously withdrawn its first application in Illinois and reapplied because of a route adjustment.

Navigator proposes to transport captured carbon dioxide from ethanol plants and other facilities in five states to Illinois for underground sequestration and other commercial uses. Most of those sites are in Iowa.

Opponents of the project say it poses a safety risk to residents and livestock, it would irreparably damage farmland, and that the use of eminent domain to build it is improper because it doesn't serve the public.

The proposal is one of two in South Dakota. Summit Carbon Solutions was also denied a permit recently but has said it will reapply. North Dakota utility regulators denied Summit a permit but have agreed to reconsider the application. Meanwhile, Summit is near the end of its permit process with the Iowa Utilities Board. An evidentiary hearing is pending and expected to resume in November. The company hopes to have a decision on its Iowa permit by the end of the year.

— *The staff of South Dakota Searchlight contributed to this report.*

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

'Trauma associated with not knowing': Uncovering the history of Rapid City Indian School

BY: AMELIA SCHAFFER - TUESDAY OCTOBER 10, 2023 11:57 AM

WARNING: This story contains disturbing details about residential and boarding schools. If you are in crisis, here is a resource list for trauma responses from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in the U.S. In Canada, the National Indian Residential School Crisis Hotline can be reached at 1-866-925-4419.

RAPID CITY — Ben Sherman, Oglala Lakota, comes from a family of boarding school attendees, including himself. Four generations of Shermans attended boarding school starting with his great-great-grandmother Lizzie Glode-Sherman, one of the first students at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. But it wasn't until he was an adult that he learned about his great-uncle who never came home.

Most of Sherman's ancestors attended Genoa Indian School in Nebraska. His great-great grandparents met and were married at Genoa. Only one member of the Sherman family, Mark Sherman, attended Rapid City Indian School, a government-operated school that aimed to teach middle school students, but ended up with an age range of 7-19.

Mark Sherman was also the only family member to never come home from school.

"Lizzie gave birth to Mark and lost him to boarding school, which is the sad irony, she lost her son to that system," Ben Sherman said.

Eighty-eight years after the school's closing, organizers are working to make sure survivors, victims and descendants aren't forgotten.

In early 2024, construction will begin on the Remembering the Children Memorial, to be built on the former boarding school grounds. On Sept. 30, the Remembering the Children exhibit opened at the Tusweca Gallery in downtown Rapid City, featuring historical photos and documents from the school.

Life at the Rapid City Indian School

At the Rapid City Indian School, "disobedient" children were locked in jail cells, chained together and made to march for hours, starved, beaten and neglected. Early attendees report meals consisting of boiled beef and bread day after day. Children's lives were dictated by the bell, they marched to and from class

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every day, and only spoke English.

Indian agents on reservations would withhold rations until families sent children to school. In some cases, children would be forcibly removed from families.

The school, which was located on the west side of Rapid City, was a 1,200-acre campus with dormitories, farming equipment, barns, root cellars, classrooms and more.

In the school's 35-year run from 1889 to 1935, approximately 2,089 students attended, according to records from the National Archives. A majority of students (88 percent) were from the Oceti Sakowin (Lakota, Nakota, Dakota), though some were as far as 700 miles from home.

While Ben Sherman's experience attending the Pine Ridge Boarding School in the 1950s was vastly different from his great-uncle's, children still struggled with boarding school life.

"One of the worst things about boarding school is that there's no parentage, there's no love. When I attended boarding school, that was something I saw," Ben Sherman said. "It really affected the little guys and the little girls."

The living conditions at the Rapid City Indian School prompted dozens of students to flee the school, including Mark Sherman.

On October 15, 1910, six Lakota students escaped the Rapid City Indian Boarding School on foot, heading toward Scenic. The boys followed the railroad toward Kadoka, keeping the Black Hills to their right as they headed south toward home, Pine Ridge.

Once the boys finally made it to Scenic, they stopped to rest, sticking by the railroad tracks. Four boys settled down by an embankment while two, James Means and Mark Sherman, lay on the tracks.

All of the boys, too physically and emotionally exhausted to wake up, didn't notice the oncoming train until it was too late. Sherman, 17, and Means, 15, were struck. Sherman died instantly. Means was taken back to the Rapid City hospital, where he died the next day. His direct family has never been identified by researchers.

Historical trauma in modern life

The impact that boarding schools have on future generations is difficult to quantify. Boarding school survivors often struggled to form healthy relationships, family dynamics and self-image. The traditional Indigenous extended family system was nearly eradicated.

"There have been effects on my family," Sherman said. "We lost our language and a good part of our culture because of that. We all were required to speak English in boarding schools and there was punishment for not doing so."

Historical events can impact the mental health of descendants, despite whether descendants know about the event, by causing genetic changes handed down through generations, according to a growing body of research studying epigenetics.

Today, descendants are working to reclaim what was taken during the boarding school era and memorialize the stories of those who didn't survive, such as the 50 recorded children who died while attending the Rapid City Indian School.

"One thing I've learned in this work is that there's trauma associated with not knowing," said Amy Sazue, Oglala/Sicangu Lakota and the Remembering the Children executive director, speaking at the Sept. 30 exhibit grand opening. "The idea that we may never know and that we have ancestors, relatives, grandmothers who lost children and never knew where they went."

Of the deceased, six children and one infant have never been named; however, each of the 50 dead children's blood quantum (percentage of Indian blood) is stated in detail, which is sometimes the only thing listed on their death record.

Another seven of the children's graves have never been located: Joseph Face Dakling (surname may be Face Darling or Dark Face), 14, Rosebud; Mary Galligo, 18, Pine Ridge; Josephine Spotted Bear, 17, Standing Rock; Ida Logan, 18, Rosebud; Spencer Ruff, 17, Pine Ridge; Sophia Fleury, 17, Crow Creek; and Abner Kirk, 12, Sisseton.

Most students died from diseases the school was ill-equipped to combat, but several died from unknown or unlisted causes.

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Researcher and Advisory Board member Kibbe Brown, Oglala Lakota, had been working at Sioux Sanatorium and preparing for the hospital's 75th anniversary when an elder asked her what was going to be done about the children's graves.

"It opened Pandora's box," Brown said. "We knew there had been some burials from the school and from the tuberculosis era, so we started asking around."

With the help of Lakota lawyer Heather Dawn Thompson, the group contacted tribal leaders and helped to compile historical information. Brown and other researchers spoke with relatives who had attended, dug through the archives, and gathered input from spiritual leaders. Brown even learned about her own family's history.

Brown's great-uncle, Adolf Russell, died in a boiler room accident at the Rapid City Indian School in 1909 while attending the school. Russell was only 10 years old.

Oral history tells that a starving Russell had taken a potato from the school's garden and attempted to cook it using the boiler, causing it to explode and kill him.

After Russell's death, family members were sent to Holy Rosary Mission (Red Cloud) in Pine Ridge, until another family member, Elsie McGaa, died of pneumonia while attending. After McGaa's death, the children were sent back to Rapid City, where they experienced a more reformed education experience than Russell had.

A majority of paper records pertaining to the school are located in the Kansas City National Archives, but many have been digitized and are now available on the Remembering The Children website, including a searchable list of attendees and known deaths.

But there is still more research to be done. Out of the deaths at the school, two are infants, whom researchers have no idea where they came from.

"There are so many anomalies and so many things we may never know," Sazue said.

Misspelled and mistranslated names also work against researchers hoping to identify victims. One victim, Joseph Face Darkling, had his name spelled or translated three different ways.

A legacy of boarding schools

At the peak of the boarding school era, 31 schools operated across South Dakota, 11 of which were government-run, including the Rapid City Indian Boarding School.

While the Rapid City Indian Boarding School was government-run, on Sunday students were required to attend church or Sunday school. The nondenominational alternative was run by local Catholic priests.

"The training of character is the most essential part of every student's education, and this school stresses in every proper way the religious and moral training of the students," as stated in the school's 1928 promotional pamphlet.

Students followed a strict military schedule, waking up at 5:30 a.m. and marching around campus. Students' days were spent alternating between working and schooling, half of the day spent doing each, and the days ended at 6 p.m., with five hours spent working and the other five spent learning.

"My aunt remembers her mother (who attended the school), saying they marched us. Their whole day was governed by the bell, it was part of their strategy of acculturation and it worked," Brown said.

Most work included general maintenance of the school, including tending to the boiler and steam laundry, but trades such as woodworking and auto repair were occasionally taught.

According to the 1928 promotional materials, "It is not impossible that he (the child) will write you that he is sick; or that the school is not giving him enough to eat; or that he is being abused and not cared for properly ... Please assist him by being kind but firm – he will thank you for it someday."

The material also states to report and return runaway students immediately.

In 1909, over 10 boys ran away in less than a year. During the 35 years the school was in operation, several students attempted to run away. Most were caught relatively quickly, and those caught were punished harshly. Students who ran away were subjected to unpaid labor for the entirety of the summer break, and some were recorded to have been kept in jail cells.

After the school closed in 1935, it was converted into Sioux Sanatorium, a segregated tuberculosis clinic

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that later became the area's primary Indian Health Service clinic.

In 2017 discussions began regarding granting two parcels of land back to the community for the construction of a future Indigenous community center, and a future memorial. The rest of the original 1,200 acres where the school sat now belongs to the South Dakota National Guard, West Middle School and several churches.

Advocacy

While Sherman and Russell are buried back home on the Pine Ridge Reservation, many of the graves of children who were buried at the school are unmarked and unclear.

Heavy and prolonged usage of the school's grounds has made it nearly impossible for ground-penetrating radar to be effective in unearthing hidden graves. Radar is only able to detect underground soil shifts, and the site where graves are suspected to be has been heavily used for over a century.

To honor the victims and survivors, a \$2 million memorial site is to be built over a 25-acre plot that used to belong to the school. This 25 acres includes the land where tribal historic preservation officers have identified unmarked grave sites.

The memorial will feature five burial scaffolds, the traditional burial method of the Lakota people, an honor the victims didn't receive. The memorial grounds will also feature a walking trail, several sweat lodges, and one boulder for each victim. More boulders will be added as more victims are identified.

The Remembering the Children exhibit at Tusweca Gallery will be open until Oct 15. Guests can stop by the gallery from noon to 6 p.m. to view historical information, future memorial plans, and old photographs.

"We're excited to have an in-person public space for people to look at the things we've learned in the last nearly 10 years, and show our plans for the memorial," Sazue said.

The exhibit also includes research gathered by the Pokagan Potawatomi company 7 Generations Architecture & Engineering, which is involved in the memorial planning process.

Every year since Oct. 2018, community members walk from Sioux Park to the future site of the memorial next to Canyon Lake Methodist Church. A sign with the name of each child who died is held by a walker, usually a member of the victim's family.

Oglala spiritual leader Gwen Hollow Horn inspired the walk. After walking the grounds, Hollow Horn told researchers some of the children's spirits were still on the grounds, and all they wanted was to be remembered.

"I feel really good about how far we've come," Brown said. "The memorial walk helps our community to build healing."

The physical memorial is currently undergoing an environmental impact survey and should be completed before the 2024 memorial walk.

In spring 2023, the Sioux Sanatorium and Lakota Lodge (the original boarding school boys' dormitory) were torn down.

All that remains of the Rapid City Indian Boarding School is the horse barn, the root cellar, unmarked graves and the memory of what once happened there.

"We've still had just enough power to reclaim what had been taken away from us," Brown said.

This story was originally co-published by the Rapid City Journal and ICT, through a news partnership that covers Indigenous communities in the South Dakota area.

Amelia Schafer covers Indigenous communities in the South Dakota area as part of a partnership between the Rapid City Journal and ICT, an independent, nonprofit news enterprise that covers Indigenous peoples.

Race for U.S. House speaker moves toward a vote as Scalise, Jordan make their pitches

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - OCTOBER 10, 2023 8:35 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republicans gathered behind closed doors for several hours Tuesday evening to debate who the party should elect as the next speaker amid divided views about the path forward.

The two-hour forum featured House Majority Leader Steve Scalise and Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan making their cases and answering questions from their colleagues. Former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who seemed open to running again earlier this week, left the meeting after a few minutes, saying he'd asked his supporters not to nominate him.

The GOP lawmaker who secures the gavel will need to walk a tightrope, working with a Democratic Senate and President Joe Biden on must-pass legislation, while vilifying them on the campaign trail to build the party's majority during the 2024 elections.

The next speaker will not only need to fundraise substantial sums of money and protect vulnerable centrist Republicans from taking votes that could lead to lost seats, but also ensure that far-right conservative lawmakers are on board with the agenda.

House GOP lawmakers are expected to convene Wednesday morning to begin privately voting for their nominee, though a floor vote to actually elect a speaker hasn't been scheduled.

House Republican rules say whoever gets a simple majority of the vote will be the party's candidate for speaker when a floor vote is held. Several members, however, are trying to change that to prevent a floor vote from being scheduled until one lawmaker secures the support needed to win.

With 221 House Republicans, about 111 GOP lawmakers are needed to become the speaker nominee in the conference vote behind closed doors, though that person would need about 217 votes on the floor.

Scalise told reporters after the meeting that he and his supporters have been building a "great coalition amongst my colleagues from every swath of the conference."

"What people have really liked about my approach is that I've been a unifier but somebody who's built coalitions throughout my entire career, and we've delivered big wins," Scalise said. "And people want to see us get back on track. We need a Congress that's working tomorrow."

Scalise said his first legislative item if elected speaker would be a resolution expressing "strong" support for Israel.

Uncertainty over who can get enough votes

Georgia GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene said following the meeting that she is undecided on whether she would vote for Jordan or Scalise.

She said she was glad that both men committed to continuing the impeachment inquiry into Biden and whether he benefited from his son's business dealings overseas. House Republicans have spent the past year investigating Hunter Biden, but those hearings have not shown a direct link that the president financially benefited.

Greene added that she's skeptical that Jordan or Scalise can get enough votes to be nominated for speaker.

"I think if it comes out that neither one of them can get there, then yes, we're going to have to produce another candidate that can get there," she said.

Florida Rep. Kat Cammack, who remained undecided, told reporters that she wasn't sure if Republicans would be able to elect a speaker before the end of the week.

"I just don't think that there is a candidate at this point in time who has the lion's share of support that they're going to need to get across the finish line," Cammack said.

The candidates for speaker, she said, need to detail "a clear-cut strategy of how we are going to accomplish the things that the American people sent us here to do."

That to-do list includes passing all 12 government funding bills and addressing the national debt by looking at mandatory programs, a category of government spending that includes Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, she said.

Cammack said she wasn't looking for the candidate that could work with the Democratic Senate amid

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divided government, but someone who would "jam the Senate."

"We need someone who is going to put forward a strategy to jam the Senate. That has been a number one complaint not just in this Congress, but in previous congresses," Cammack said. "Because at the end of the day, if Republicans are doing nothing more than chasing headlines, we're doing nothing at all."

Avoiding a reprise of last speaker election

Some GOP lawmakers have indicated they want to avoid a repeat of January when McCarthy was unable to secure the votes needed to become speaker until the 15th ballot. They've argued that Republicans shouldn't put a speaker nominee up for a floor vote until they're sure that person can get the votes needed amid the party's razor-thin majority.

The saga included four days of failed floor votes and several back-room, handshake deals with far-right conservative lawmakers that unfurled last week when eight Republicans and Democrats voted to remove him as speaker.

Until Tuesday, McCarthy had been coy about whether he'd actively campaign to hold the title of speaker once again, saying he would leave that up to the House Republican Conference.

Scalise, of Louisiana, and Jordan, of Ohio, had, however, officially launched campaigns for speaker.

If those two candidates are the only two nominated during Wednesday's closed-door vote among House Republicans, whoever gets a simple majority would become the party's nominee for speaker.

But, if three or more candidates are nominated, and none of those candidates get a majority during the first ballot, the candidate with the least votes would be removed from the ballot and another round of voting would begin.

McHenry's role

North Carolina's Patrick McHenry will likely remain as speaker pro tempore until House Republicans elect a new speaker on the floor. The role was one McCarthy handpicked him for under a procedure established in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to ensure continuity of government.

McCarthy seemed to endorse the idea that the speaker pro tem has broader authority than McHenry has used this far, speaking to reporters after briefly attending the meeting.

"You want the continuity of government. It should be no question," McCarthy said. "Patrick McHenry should be able to bang the gavel and move legislation while we (make) a decision of who's speaker. It was the whole concept after 9/11 for continuity of government if you didn't have a speaker. That's why we created that. That's why I named him and he should be able to do the job."

The vote for a new speaker comes ahead of a Nov. 17 deadline to fund the government, where until a speaker is selected, there are questions as to how the House can proceed with its legislative business.

Another sticking point, as House Republicans coalesce with their members to elect a new speaker, is the White House is planning to ask Congress for supplemental aid to help Ukraine and Israel, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said during a Tuesday White House briefing.

It's unclear if that request will be together or each as a separate package, but with the recent war in Israel, lawmakers have pushed for congressional action.

'Both like my brothers'

Republican Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana said after the meeting that Jordan and Scalise were "two good candidates" and that he mostly listened to their pitches and didn't have any questions for Scalise and Jordan.

"I know them both very, very well, so I know how they think and could predict most of their answers," Johnson said. "They're both like my brothers and I've decided that I'm gonna vote for a former chairman of the (Republican Study Committee)."

Both Scalise and Jordan have served as the chair for the RSC.

Kentucky GOP Rep. Thomas Massie told reporters that he plans to vote for Jordan because he is supportive of a long-term continuing resolution until late spring, which would kick-start a provision from the debt ceiling deal to automatically cut discretionary federal spending by 1%.

"I didn't hear Steve Scalise articulate a clear plan for avoiding a shutdown," Massie said. "Steve said, let's

do the 12 (appropriation bills) and fight the Senate.”

That provision won't go in effect if Congress can pass its appropriation bills by April 30.

Tennessee Rep. Chuck Fleischmann told reporters after the meeting that Scalise and Jordan both struck a positive tone and that each committed to supporting the other, if they didn't win.

“Both Mr. Scalise and Jim Jordan were perfect gentlemen. There was no contention,” Fleischmann said. “They agreed on most of the issues and where there were disagreements it was very respectful and positive.”

Both Scalise and Jordan, he said, expressed support for moving all dozen of the annual government spending bills to the House floor to avoid a massive, year-end omnibus funding package.

If Scalise were to win, Fleischmann said, current whip Tom Emmer of Minnesota would likely become majority leader, since he's the only announced candidate for that slot. Pennsylvania Rep. Guy Reschenthaler would then become whip.

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Biden denounces deadly Hamas attack on Israel: 'There's no justification for terrorism'

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JACOB FISCHLER - OCTOBER 10, 2023 4:51 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden wants a returning Congress to take “urgent action” on Israel's security needs after Hamas militants have injured and killed thousands beginning with Saturday's brutal attack, including the deaths of 14 Americans.

U.S. citizens are also among the hostages taken into Gaza by the armed group, though the administration could not confirm the exact number Tuesday. The location of at least 20 missing Americans is unknown.

Both the administration and bipartisan members of Congress pledged unified support for Israel, but many lawmakers believe they cannot introduce or pass legislation until the U.S. House reinstates a speaker. House Republicans were meeting behind closed doors Tuesday night to hear from the leading candidates, Ohio's Jim Jordan and Louisiana's Steve Scalise.

The administration is poised to send available security assistance to its key ally in the Middle East, Biden said Tuesday following a phone call with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that ended just after 1 p.m. Eastern.

Biden said he told the Israeli leader that the U.S. response “would be swift, decisive and overwhelming.”

“In this moment, we must be crystal clear: We stand with Israel. We stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself and respond to this attack,” Biden said from the State Dining Room as Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken stood behind him.

“There's no justification for terrorism. There's no excuse. Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination. Its stated purpose is the annihilation of Israel and the murder of Jewish people.”

Blinken will travel to Israel and Jordan beginning Thursday to meet with government officials, according to the State Department.

Despite dysfunction in the U.S. House, the majority of members have vowed that reaffirming commitment to Israel will be among their first actions once a speaker is elected.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, a Florida Republican, told reporters Monday evening that he supported a major aid package.

“It's going to be a substantial, substantial amount of money, because I think we're all appalled by what we're seeing taking place there,” Diaz-Balart said. “This is an attack on civilians, this is not an attack on

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military facilities.”

Air and ground attacks

Hamas militants based in the Palestinian territory of Gaza launched air and ground attacks on multiple Israeli cities and villages beginning Saturday.

The conflict erupted into a full-fledged war Sunday after Netanyahu formally declared Operation Swords of Iron, which included air strikes and cutting power to Gaza, in response to the surprise attacks.

The United Nations High Commissioner Volker Türk warned against an “indiscriminate or disproportionate” retaliation against the Gaza population by Israel and expressed concern over the blocking of food, water and fuel supplies.

The Israeli death toll rose to over 1,000 Tuesday, according to the White House. Israeli news outlet Haaretz has reported that 2,400 were injured. More than 605 were hospitalized as of Monday night, Israel’s Ministry of Health reported.

Just over 4,250 Palestinians have been injured and 830 killed in Gaza since the conflict began, according to an update Tuesday from the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Hamas has threatened to broadcast killings of hostages in response to Israel striking targets in the Gaza strip, according to Qatar-based news outlet Al Jazeera.

Hamas is holding between 100 and 150 people captive, Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan said Monday.

Israel’s government press office did not immediately respond Tuesday to a request for further information.

Resolution of support

Bipartisan leaders of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman Michael McCaul of Texas and ranking Democrat Gregory W. Meeks of New York, introduced a resolution Tuesday condemning the Hamas attacks and reaffirming the U.S. commitment to aid Israel.

In a written statement, McCaul said he expected it to be one of the first items the House would take up after electing a new speaker.

Meeks added that the bipartisan resolution would show that support for Israel is an area of consensus in the deeply divided chamber.

According to a list provided by McCaul’s office, 390 House members have signed on to cosponsor the resolution. The list includes Democrats who have voted against military funding for Israel.

It’s unclear if the House could even consider a resolution — let alone a bill with new aid spending for Israel — without an elected speaker.

All Democrats and eight Republicans voted to oust former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a Republican from California, from the position last week. Republicans are scheduled to vote as early as Wednesday behind closed doors, but there is no guarantee that any candidate will quickly reach a majority.

Asked if it was possible to bring an Israel aid bill to the floor without a speaker, Diaz-Balart, a senior appropriator, said no.

“Every day that we don’t have a speaker is a potential tragedy,” he said.

‘Hamas must be eradicated’

Most members of the House and Senate have expressed support for Israel in some way since the war began.

Several members of both parties have called for supporting strong retaliation by Israel.

“There can be no cease-fire, negotiated solution or peaceful coexistence with depraved barbarians who murder teen-aged girls, children & the elderly and then dump them in the streets of Gaza so bloodthirsty crowds can desecrate their bodies?” Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, posted on X, formerly Twitter.

“Hamas must be eradicated & Israel must respond DISPROPORTIONATELY to this & to any (future) attacks from any enemy,” he added.

“This is the largest attack in Israel in 50 years,” Florida Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz posted.

“The response will be the largest response in 50 years. Blame Hamas. They knew Israel would respond in kind. They didn’t care that this would get people in Gaza killed.”

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Some progressives hold out

Some members of House Democrats' progressive wing remained critical of Israeli policies and called for a cease-fire, rather than backing Israel's offensive into Gaza.

Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Minnesota Democrat, reposted a criticism of Moskowitz, saying the Floridian was advocating for collective punishment of Palestinian civilians rather than targeting Hamas.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Michigan Democrat and the only current member of Congress of Palestinian descent, said in a Sunday statement she grieved for lives lost on both sides of the conflict.

Tlaib said she would work "for a just future where everyone can live in peace," but blamed Israel's policies, which she called "the apartheid system that creates the suffocating, dehumanizing conditions that can lead to resistance."

"The failure to recognize the violent reality of living under siege, occupation, and apartheid makes no one safer," she said. "No person, no child anywhere should have to suffer or live in fear of violence. We cannot ignore the humanity in each other. As long as our country provides billions in unconditional funding to support the apartheid government, this heartbreaking cycle of violence will continue."

Tlaib, Omar — the first two Muslim women elected to Congress — and other members of the progressive "squad" in the House, including Cori Bush of Missouri, did not cosponsor the Israel resolution authored by McCaul and Meeks.

Asked Tuesday about views like those expressed by Tlaib and Omar, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre offered a strong rebuke without naming any individual members of Congress.

"We believe they're wrong, we believe they're repugnant and we believe they're disgraceful," she said from the White House briefing room. "There are not two sides here. President Biden has been clear on where he stood."

Schumer cuts Asia trip short

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who is the highest ranking Jewish U.S. official, spoke with Israeli President Isaac Herzog during a trip by a congressional delegation to East Asia, according to a statement from the New York Democrat's office.

Schumer told Herzog he "stands ready to do whatever it takes to ensure Israel has the resources it needs."

Republican Sens. Mike Crapo of Idaho and John Kennedy and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Democratic Sens. Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire and Jon Ossoff of Georgia are also on the trip and participated in the call, the release said. The delegation planned to return Thursday, earlier than originally scheduled, "in light of the tragic events unfolding in Israel," a Schumer spokeswoman said.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee also announced a confirmation hearing for Jacob Lew to be ambassador to Israel. Tom Nides, the previous Senate-confirmed ambassador to Israel stepped down in July.

Republicans, Tester call for withdrawing Iran funds

Meanwhile, Senate Republicans have called on the Biden administration to rescind the \$6 billion in unfrozen sanctioned funds sent to Iran in September after a prisoner swap between Iran and the U.S., fearing the money could be used to fund Hamas militants.

"To stand by and allow Iran access to these funds as Hamas infiltrates Israel and murders, rapes, and mutilates countless Israelis is unconscionable. Your administration claims these funds are only available for humanitarian use, but money is fungible, and there is a significant risk they could be used to further efforts by Iran or Hamas against Israel," read a letter led by Sens. Rick Scott of Florida and Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee and co-signed by 18 GOP colleagues.

Democratic Sen. Jon Tester of Montana said in a statement late Tuesday afternoon that he also supported re-freezing those assets.

"We should review our options to hold Iran accountable for any support they may have provided," he said. "At a minimum, we should immediately freeze the \$6 billion in Iranian assets and explore other financial tools we have at our disposal."

Iran denied any involvement in the Hamas attacks on Israel, though it praised them, major foreign and domestic news outlets reported.

White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Tuesday at the White House press briefing that

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the U.S. does not have intelligence confirming Iran's involvement.

White House officials have also said that the \$6 billion can be used only for humanitarian purposes. Sullivan said that none of it has been spent, further distancing that funding from any aid Iran has provided to Hamas.

Pentagon sends aid

American military planes will be landing in Israel in the coming days, and the U.S. is prepared to move additional security assets in the region, Sullivan said.

The Pentagon on Sunday announced U.S. ships would be moving closer to Israel.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin directed the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to the Eastern Mediterranean. The group includes the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford and the guided missile cruiser USS Normandy, as well as three guided missile destroyers.

Austin also said the Pentagon is augmenting U.S. Air Force F-35, F-15, F-16, and A-10 fighter aircraft squadrons in the region.

"The U.S. maintains ready forces globally to further reinforce this deterrence posture if required," Austin said in a statement Sunday.

"In addition, the United States government will be rapidly providing the Israel Defense Forces with additional equipment and resources, including munitions. The first security assistance will begin moving today and arriving in the coming days."

Israel is already the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid since the state was established following World War II.

As of March, cumulative funding to Israel totaled \$158 billion in current dollars not adjusted for inflation. The majority of the funding has been for military assistance.

Hamas, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, or Islamic Resistance Movement, is the "largest and most capable" militant organization in the Palestinian territories, according to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center.

The State Department designated the group as a terrorist organization in 1997.

—Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.

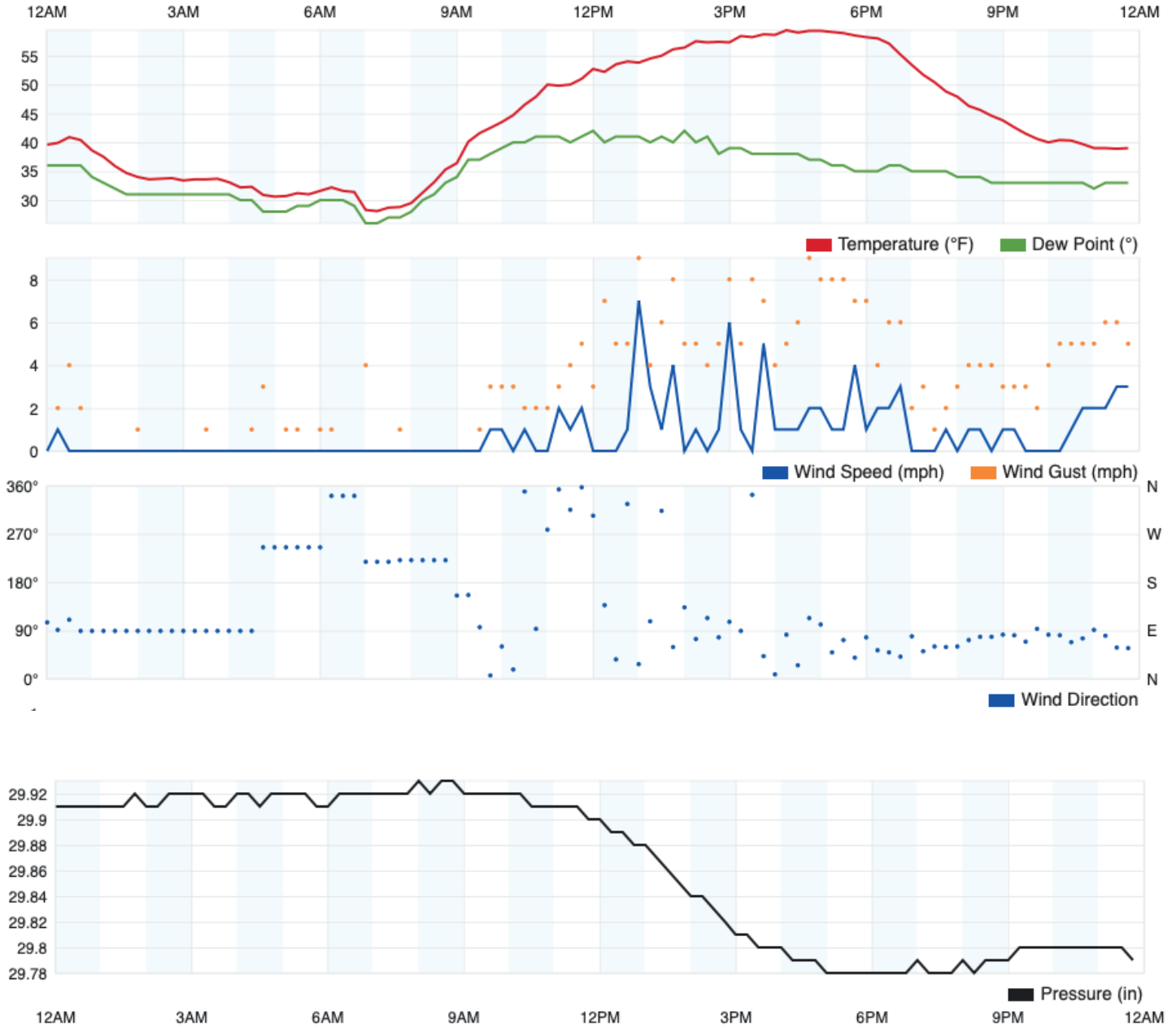
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Day	Weather	High	Low	Wind	Humidity
Wed Oct 11		62°F	41°F	E 15 MPH	
Thu Oct 12		54°F	40°F	ENE 27 MPH	50%
Fri Oct 13		46°F	38°F	NNE 28 MPH	80%
Sat Oct 14		50°F	37°F	NNE 11 MPH	
Sun Oct 15		50°F	32°F	NNE 6 MPH	
Mon Oct 16		54°F	34°F	NW 5 MPH	
Tue Oct 17		55°F	43°F	SSE 10 MPH	



Mild Again Today: Highs Upper 50s - Mid 60s

October 11, 2023

4:30 AM

Additionally Today: Steadily Increasing Winds & Clouds as Next System Approaches

Key Messages

- Strong system to bring high winds to the region. Gusts in excess of 45 to 50 mph probable
- Heavy rainfall for central and eastern South Dakota, some locations likely to see rainfall exceed 2-3 inches

	Wind Gust Forecast																								
	10/11 Wed				10/12 Thu				10/13 Fri				10/14 Sat												
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	12pm							
Aberdeen	21	22	26	22	24	25	28	37	39	43	43	45	45	45	44	47	44	39	35	33	28	24	22	21	20
Britton	21	23	25	22	25	26	25	35	38	40	43	43	44	43	44	44	43	40	36	31	28	23	22	20	21
Brookings	22	23	22	24	26	29	33	37	40	47	51	48	48	47	43	41	39	38	36	38	38	37	36	26	23
Chamberlain	25	25	24	26	31	31	39	44	44	46	49	48	46	41	43	44	41	39	35	32	33	29	22	18	17
Clark	26	26	28	30	33	36	37	44	45	48	49	51	51	49	47	46	43	39	37	32	30	29	26	22	20
Eagle Butte	30	35	33	32	36	35	36	45	44	45	47	48	45	44	44	41	38	37	32	25	18	16	15	14	15
Ellendale	21	23	26	22	23	24	26	35	38	40	40	38	40	43	43	45	44	40	35	29	25	22	20	18	17
Eureka	31	30	32	32	32	32	37	40	41	45	43	44	40	43	43	41	39	37	32	25	21	18	16	16	16
Gettysburg	31	33	35	36	38	36	39	44	47	51	49	51	46	45	45	44	41	38	32	28	24	18	16	17	16
Huron	23	24	24	28	30	30	36	40	41	47	49	47	45	45	41	41	40	39	36	35	31	31	26	21	20
Kennebec	28	32	33	33	37	37	37	43	46	51	51	47	48	48	48	47	45	43	37	30	26	22	20	17	17
McIntosh	33	36	36	33	33	35	36	39	41	45	44	39	37	40	39	38	37	36	31	22	15	14	12	12	14
Milbank	16	18	18	16	16	17	18	25	29	33	33	36	35	36	36	35	35	33	32	30	30	26	28	23	21
Miller	23	25	26	26	31	30	30	36	39	43	44	47	45	45	45	45	43	39	33	29	26	24	22	20	18
Mobridge	28	28	30	31	32	31	32	38	39	39	43	41	38	39	40	39	36	33	30	24	18	15	14	15	16
Murdo	28	32	33	32	33	33	38	43	48	47	48	54	51	48	49	48	45	40	37	30	24	20	17	16	15
Pierre	26	30	32	29	33	35	36	40	44	47	48	52	45	46	43	41	39	36	32	26	21	16	14	15	15
Redfield	22	23	28	25	25	28	26	36	38	44	44	45	45	45	44	45	43	39	37	31	26	25	23	21	18
Sisseton	17	18	18	16	16	15	17	25	30	33	35	36	36	35	36	36	35	35	32	29	26	23	23	22	21
Watertown	23	24	25	24	29	31	32	37	40	46	47	48	48	48	46	44	43	41	38	33	31	30	29	24	22
Webster	25	26	28	28	30	32	33	39	43	45	48	49	48	48	48	48	46	44	40	35	31	28	25	22	21
Wheaton	15	17	17	16	16	17	18	25	28	30	30	31	31	32	31	33	33	32	30	26	24	23	22	20	20



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

As the next system approaches we will see increasing clouds and winds will pick up a bit. Winds peak Thursday night and early Friday. See additional graphics for timing precipitation and amounts.

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Precipitation Timing (Rain W/ A Few Rumbles Of Thunder)

October 11, 2023
4:34 AM

	Probability of Precipitation Forecast																								
	10/11 Wed				10/12 Thu				10/13 Fri				10/14 Sat												
	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	0	0	0	5	5	10	15	15	15	50	50	65	65	75	75	70	70	60	60	35	35	15	15	5	5
Britton	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	10	10	30	30	55	55	70	70	70	70	60	60	40	40	20	20	5	5
Brookings	0	0	0	5	10	20	45	60	65	85	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	85	85	60	60	35	35	15	15
Chamberlain	0	0	5	5	35	60	75	85	80	95	95	95	95	95	95	80	80	60	60	40	40	25	25	5	5
Clark	0	0	0	10	10	20	25	45	45	75	75	90	90	90	90	90	90	75	75	55	55	25	25	10	10
Eagle Butte	5	10	15	20	20	30	50	55	55	65	65	65	65	60	60	55	55	45	45	20	20	10	10	5	5
Ellendale	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	5	25	25	45	45	60	60	60	60	50	50	30	30	15	15	5	5
Eureka	0	0	5	5	5	5	10	10	10	30	30	50	50	60	60	55	55	45	45	25	25	10	10	5	5
Gettysburg	0	5	5	15	15	20	25	40	40	65	65	75	75	75	75	70	70	60	60	30	30	15	15	5	5
Huron	0	0	5	5	10	30	50	65	65	85	85	95	95	95	95	90	90	75	75	45	45	25	25	10	10
Kennebec	0	5	10	15	35	60	80	90	90	95	95	95	95	90	90	80	80	60	60	40	40	15	15	5	5
McIntosh	0	5	10	20	20	15	10	10	10	25	25	35	35	35	35	35	35	30	30	15	15	5	5	0	0
Milbank	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	20	20	80	80	75	75	90	90	90	90	80	80	60	60	30	30	10	10
Miller	0	0	5	10	15	30	45	65	65	85	85	90	90	90	90	85	85	75	75	40	40	20	20	10	10
Mobridge	0	5	5	10	10	10	20	20	20	40	40	50	50	55	55	50	50	40	40	20	20	10	10	5	5
Murdo	5	10	15	15	40	75	85	95	95	95	95	90	90	85	85	75	75	45	45	30	30	10	10	5	5
Pierre	0	5	10	10	20	40	55	80	80	90	90	85	85	80	80	75	75	50	50	25	25	10	10	5	5
Redfield	0	0	5	10	15	20	30	45	45	70	70	85	85	90	90	80	80	65	65	40	40	20	20	5	5
Sisseton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	40	40	60	60	75	75	80	80	70	70	50	50	25	25	10	10
Watertown	0	0	0	5	5	10	20	40	40	80	80	90	90	90	90	90	90	80	80	60	60	30	30	15	15
Webster	0	0	0	5	5	10	15	20	20	55	55	75	75	85	85	85	85	70	70	55	55	25	25	10	10
Wheaton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	35	35	55	55	70	70	80	80	70	70	45	45	20	20	10	10

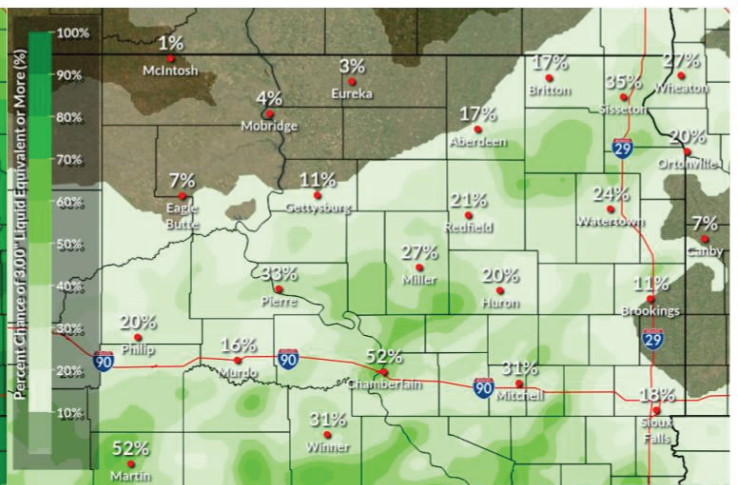
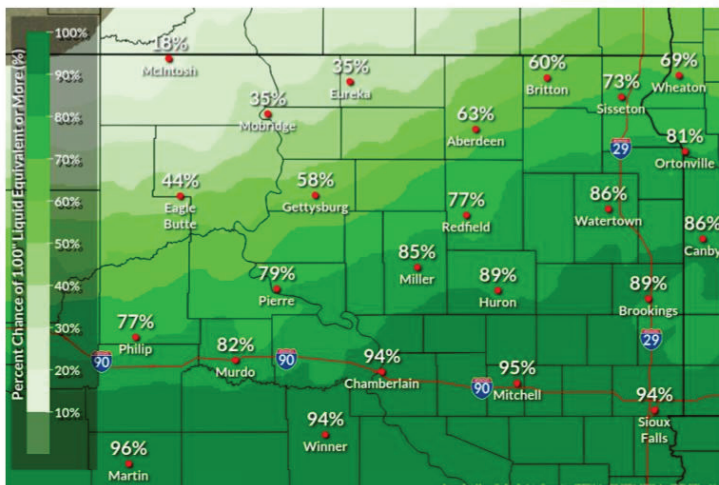


Probability of Exceeding 1" and 3" of Moisture

October 11, 2023
4:39 AM

% Chance for moisture in excess of 1"

% Chance for moisture in excess of 3"



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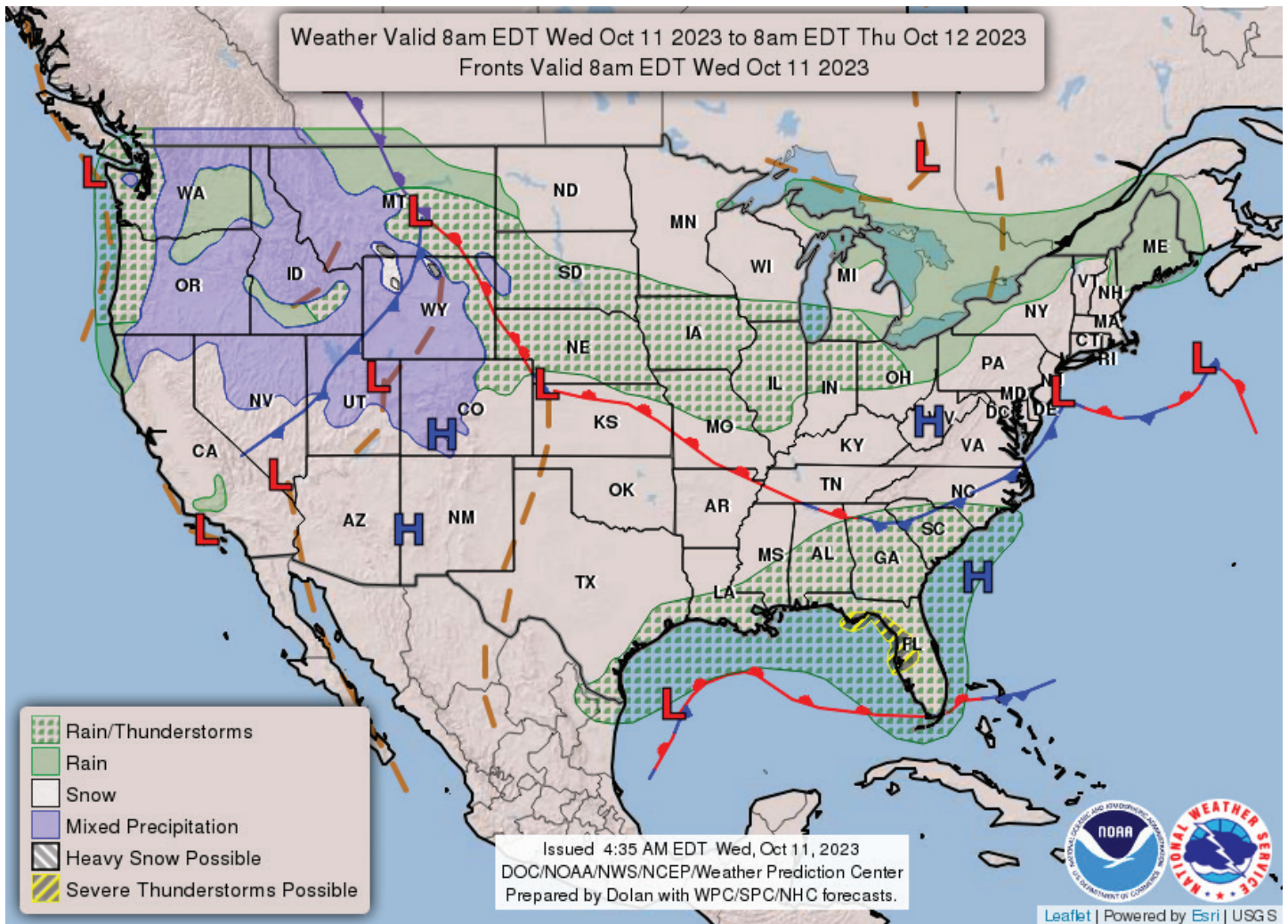
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 60 °F at 4:19 PM
Low Temp: 28 °F at 7:08 AM
Wind: 10 mph at 5:49 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 14 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 2015
Record Low: 16 in 1935
Average High: 62
Average Low: 36
Average Precip in Oct.: 0.83
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.06
Average Precip to date: 19.16
Precip Year to Date: 21.83
Sunset Tonight: 6:56:16 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43:16 AM



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Today in Weather History

October 11, 1997: High winds and hail caused nearly \$20,000 in damage to rural Meade County homes.

1846: A major hurricane, possibly a Category 5, moved through the Caribbean Sea. This Great Havana Hurricane struck western Cuba on 10 October. It hit the Florida Keys on 11 October, destroying the old Key West Lighthouse and Fort Zachary Taylor.

1906: Games 1 and 2 of all Chicago World Series were played amid snow flurries. Snow would not happen again in a World Series until 1997. The high temperature for game 3 played on this day was 43 degrees.

1925 - Widespread early season snows fell in the northeastern U.S., with as much as two feet in New Hampshire and Vermont. The heavy snow blocked roads and cancelled football games. (David Ludlum)

1954 - A deluge of 6.72 inches of rain in 48 hours flooded the Chicago River, causing ten million dollars damage in the Chicago area. (9th-11th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - More than thirty cities in the Upper Midwest reported record low temperatures for the date, including Waterloo IA and Scottsbluff NE where the mercury dipped to 16 degrees. Tropical Storm Floyd brought heavy rain to southern Florida, moisture from Hurricane Ramon produced heavy rain in southern California, and heavy snow blanketed the mountains of New York State and Vermont. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought gale force winds to the Great Lakes Region, with snow and sleet reported in some areas. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. The mercury hit 84 degrees at Cutbank MT and Worland WY. The temperature at Gunnison CO soared from a morning low of 12 degrees to a high of 66 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Much of the nation enjoyed "Indian Summer" type weather. Nine cities in the central U.S. reported record highs for the date as temperatures warmed into the 80s and 90s. Record highs included 90 degrees at Grand Island NE and 97 degrees at Waco TX. Strong winds along a cold front crossing the Northern High Plains Region gusted to 80 mph at Ames Monument WY during the early morning. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: A tropical depression, formerly Hurricane Vince, became the first tropical cyclone to make landfall in Spain since 1842.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHERE'S HAPPINESS?

An unhappy skeptic said to Benjamin Franklin, "The Constitution is a mockery! Where's the happiness that it guarantees?"

"My friend," said Franklin, "it only guarantees the pursuit of happiness."

Our word for happiness can be misleading. The "root" hap means chance. Human happiness is dependent on the chances and the changes of life, the "things" that we consider to be the daily events or circumstances of life that come and go without warning.

On the other hand, consider the beatitudes given to us by Jesus. They are not about some hope for a future or blissful state in heaven. They are for the now which belongs to the Christian at this moment in our lives. The way the beatitudes are written assures the Christian of the power of God to change us and others, the joyous thrill of His presence, and the hope of life with Him.

The word blessed that is used in each of the beatitudes is a very special word. It describes a joy that has its secret within itself - a joy that is peaceful and untouchable and self-contained. It is a joy that is above and beyond and independent of all the circumstances of life. It is a joy that comes from God Himself. "No one," said Jesus, "will take your joy from you!"

The world cannot take away the joy that comes from and through Christ. Walking daily with Him, and "doing" the beatitudes assures us of a joy that no one or nothing can disturb.

Prayer: Give us, our Heavenly Father, a peace that passes this world's understanding, a joy that comes from Your presence, and hope that assures us of our home with You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! Matthew 5:1-12



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
- 11/25/2023 Snow Queen Contest
- 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:
10.10.23

3 8 17 46 63 7

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$48,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 46
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.23

10 13 30 38 40 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,650,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 1 Mins 42
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.10.23

3 6 19 35 44 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins 42
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.07.23

4 8 11 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins 43
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.23

1 20 33 49 59 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 45 Mins
DRAW: 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.23

16 34 46 55 67 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,725,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 45 Mins
DRAW: 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-19, 26-24, 22-25, 25-22

Arlington def. Sioux Valley, 25-22, 25-23, 25-22

Bon Homme def. Scotland, 25-12, 25-17, 25-22

Burke def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-13, 25-11

Centerville def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-7, 25-21, 25-23

Chester def. West Central, 25-11, 25-6, 25-12

Colman-Egan def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-17, 25-17, 25-21

Custer def. Pine Ridge, 25-12, 25-20, 25-16

Custer def. Red Cloud, 25-12, 25-20, 25-16

Dakota Valley def. Lennox, 25-18, 25-17, 25-12

Dell Rapids def. Deubrook, 25-6, 25-22, 25-20

Douglas def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-22, 25-21, 25-23

Edgemont def. Newell, 25-17, 26-24, 25-16

Elk Point-Jefferson def. South Sioux City, Neb., 25-16, 23-25, 25-18, 25-11

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Deuel, 25-19, 25-14, 25-15

Estelline/Hendricks def. James Valley Christian, 25-18, 25-21, 25-14

Ethan def. Howard, 25-20, 25-17, 25-17

Faulkton def. Herreid/Selby Area, 25-17, 25-20, 25-17

Flandreau def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-8, 25-19, 23-25, 25-11

Garretson def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-14, 19-25, 25-18, 25-23

Gregory def. Colome, 25-12, 25-13, 25-11

Hamlin def. DeSmet, 25-17, 25-13, 25-13

Hanson def. Menno, 21-25, 25-22, 25-15, 7-25, 15-7

Harrisburg def. Pierre T F Riggs High School, 28-26, 25-20, 25-13

Hill City def. St. Thomas More, 25-15, 25-21, 25-11

Huron def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-20, 25-22, 25-18

Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-13, 18-25, 25-20, 25-21

Kadoka Area def. White River, 25-10, 25-17, 25-16

Lyman def. Jones County, 25-20, 20-25, 25-16, 25-16

Madison def. Milbank, 25-23, 25-13, 23-25, 25-14

McLaughlin def. Standing Rock, N.D.

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Kimball/White Lake, 23-25, 25-18, 26-24, 28-26

Parkston def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-14, 25-18, 25-17

Philip def. Wall, 25-21, 25-22, 25-23

Platte-Geddes def. Miller/Highmore-Harrold, 25-21, 25-15, 25-11

Ponca, Neb. def. Vermillion, 25-20, 25-19, 25-12

Potter County def. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, 25-15, 25-6, 25-18

Rapid City Christian def. Hot Springs, 25-12, 25-14, 25-18

Sioux Falls Christian def. Tri-Valley, 25-12, 25-9, 25-17

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Mitchell, 25-14, 25-15, 25-9

Sioux Falls Lutheran def. Gayville-Volin High School, 25-17, 25-23, 25-10

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brandon Valley, 25-16, 22-25, 25-22, 25-18

Sioux Falls Washington def. Brookings, 25-4, 25-13, 25-14

Sisseton def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-11, 25-17, 25-16
Spearfish def. Belle Fourche, 23-25, 25-20, 20-25, 25-16, 15-10
Stanley County def. Sully Buttes, 26-24, 25-16, 24-26, 25-19
Tiospa Zina Tribal def. Flandreau Indian, 25-10, 25-11, 25-12
Valentine, Neb. def. Todd County, 25-15, 25-13, 25-20
Viborg-Hurley def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-23, 25-13, 25-23
Warner def. Redfield, 25-10, 25-10, 25-15
Watertown def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-23, 25-21, 19-25, 25-21
Wessington Springs def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-12, 25-12, 25-6
Wilmot def. Waubay/Summit, 17-25, 28-26, 15-25, 25-19, 15-11
Wolsey-Wessington def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-13, 25-12, 25-4

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

Major Navigator CO2 pipeline project is on hold while the company reevaluates the route in 5 states

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Navigator CO2 Ventures announced Tuesday that it is putting on hold one of the two biggest proposed carbon dioxide pipeline projects in the Midwest so it can reassess the project.

The company withdrew its application for a key permit in Illinois and said it was putting all its permit applications on hold. The decision comes after South Dakota regulators last month denied a permit.

The proposed 1,300-mile (2,092-kilometer) project would carry planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from more than 20 industrial plants across South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois. The Illinois permit is crucial because that's where the company planned to store the carbon dioxide underground.

"As is consistent with our recent filings in neighboring jurisdictions, Navigator will be taking time to reassess the route and application," the company said in a statement.

Navigator said it is not abandoning the project. It plans to reapply for permits where appropriate after completing its evaluation.

Opponents cheered the news that the project is being put on hold, and promised to keep fighting when the company reapplies. Opponents had organized landowners who were concerned about the project.

"When you organize the families most at-risk of eminent domain, you can stop a pipeline," said Jane Kleeb with the Nebraska-based Bold Alliance that also fought against the ill-fated Keystone XL oil pipeline. "This is a core lesson we have learned over the years, as pipeline corporations try to bully hard-working Americans into giving up their land for corporate greed."

Proposed pipelines in the region would use carbon capture technology that supporters believe would combat climate change. Opponents question its effectiveness at scale and the need for potentially huge investments over cheaper renewable energy sources. New federal tax incentives and billions of dollars from Congress toward carbon capture efforts have made such projects lucrative.

Summit Carbon Solutions is behind the biggest proposed carbon dioxide pipeline in the area. It is pressing forward with its plans despite regulatory setbacks in the Dakotas. North Dakota agreed to reconsider its denial of a permit for the \$5.5 billion, 2,000-mile (3,220-kilometer) pipeline that would cross five states, and Summit is reapplying in South Dakota. A separate hearing on that project in Iowa started in August. And Minnesota regulators plan to conduct a detailed environmental review of the project.

The Summit pipeline would carry carbon dioxide emissions from more than 30 ethanol plants in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. The emissions would be buried in North Dakota.

Deadly bird flu reappears in US commercial poultry flocks in Utah and South Dakota

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Highly pathogenic bird flu has made its first appearances in U.S. commercial poultry flocks this season, affecting one turkey farm in South Dakota and one in Utah and raising concerns that more outbreaks could follow.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that avian influenza, which is deadly to commercial poultry, was confirmed in a flock of 47,300 turkeys in Jerauld County, South Dakota, on Oct. 4 and at a farm with 141,800 birds in Utah's Sanpete County last Friday.

The outbreaks are the first reported among commercial flocks in the U.S. since the disease struck two turkey farms in the Dakotas in April. Infected flocks are normally destroyed to prevent the flu's spread, and then the farms are decontaminated.

Before last week, the only reports of bird flu in recent months in the U.S. in recent months were sporadic appearances in backyard flocks or among wild birds such as ducks, geese and eagles. While wild birds often show no symptoms of avian influenza, infections in them are a concern to the poultry industry because migrating birds can spread the disease to vulnerable commercial flocks.

"I don't doubt that we will have more cases," South Dakota State Veterinarian Beth Thompson said in an interview Tuesday. "I would be very pleasantly surprised if we're done because migration is just starting."

Bird flu last year cost U.S. poultry producers nearly 59 million birds across 47 states, including egg-laying chickens and turkeys and chickens raised for meat, making it the country's deadliest outbreak ever, according to USDA figures. The outbreak caused spikes in egg and turkey prices for consumers and cost the government over \$660 million.

The toll from a 2015 outbreak, deemed the most expensive animal health disaster in U.S. history with over \$1 billion in costs to the government, was nearly 51 million birds in 15 states.

Bird flu infections in humans are relatively rare and aren't considered a food safety risk. But as it hits other species, including some mammals, scientists fear the virus could evolve to spread more easily among people. Cambodia this week reported its third human death from bird flu this year.

Agriculture officials consider this year's cases to be part of last year's outbreak, which reached the U.S. in February 2022 after spreading in Europe. The U.S. has imposed periodic restrictions on poultry imports from Europe to limit the potential for spread. Thompson said the virus never completely went away, unlike in 2015, and that the version now circulating is essentially the same that spread last year.

"We're just encouraging bird owners to make sure they're increasing their biosecurity practices because avian flu is still out there and it's easy to contract," said Bailee Woolstenhulme, spokesperson for the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

However, producers have kept their biosecurity tight for several years, and there is little more that farmers can do beyond the steps they have already taken to try to keep the virus out of their flocks. The main strategy is to prevent droppings of wild birds from being tracked into poultry barns on workers' footwear and clothing, or from hitchhiking on farm equipment, mice, small birds and even dust particles.

This was Utah's first case this year, Woolstenhulme said, but 16 turkey farms, one egg farm and several backyard flocks were affected in the state last year.

South Dakota producers lost nearly 4 million birds last year. Iowa, the hardest-hit state, with nearly 16 million birds lost, hasn't recorded a case since March.

Ukraine President Zelenskyy at NATO defense ministers meeting seeking more support to fight Russia

By LORNE COOK and LOLITA BALDOR Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — For the first time, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy joined a meeting of more than 50 defense leaders from around the world Wednesday to make a personal pitch for military aid, in the face of lagging political support in the U.S. and new pressure on allies to send weapons to bolster Israel's war with Hamas.

His presence underscored growing concerns about cracks in what has been staunch international backing for Kyiv in its war against Russia's invasion, and worries that Ukrainian forces haven't made measurable progress in the counteroffensive, as winter closes in.

"Next Monday, we will mark the 600th day of our resistance to Russia's full scale aggression against our people, against Ukraine. And today, no one can say for sure how many more days we will have to defend our independence and to defend our identity," Zelenskyy told the gathering as they opened the meeting. "But we can already say several things which I think are important. First, Putin will not achieve Ukraine. Second, Russia cannot afford a new arms race. And third, democracy can win this battle."

The meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, hosted by the U.S., comes as Ukraine is desperately seeking more weapons to help its troops regain ground from Russian forces before the muddy weather sets in. But political chaos in Congress stalled approval of new Ukraine funding, and there has been growing opposition among some lawmakers to any increase in spending.

Speaking as he entered NATO headquarters, Zelenskyy noted the Israel war, and said Ukrainians understand such tragedy. But he was also quick to detail Ukraine's ongoing need for air defense systems and long-range missiles "to push Russia out of our land."

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters traveling with him to Brussels that support for Ukraine continues unabated. He said a number of allies will announce they are sending additional weapons and other support to Kyiv. A key demand has been more air defense systems and munitions.

"The energy, in my view, is still there," said Austin. "And I will reassure them that we remain committed to this."

He echoed those thoughts as he opened the meeting, asserting that Ukraine is making steady progress in the war. And he said allies during this meeting will focus not only on meeting Kyiv's immediate needs but also on setting up plans to coordinate investments in Ukraine's future force.

The contact group is the main forum for raising contributions of weapons, equipment and training for Kyiv's war effort. It meets about once a month, in person and virtually, and this is the 16th gathering.

Zelenskyy, who was greeted with applause as he entered the building, went immediately into a private session with Austin and U.S. Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Speaking to reporters as he came in, Zelenskyy reiterated his country's need for long-range missiles and ammunition.

"It's very important that there are priorities. There are air defense systems. These are not just basic words. These are very concrete things and we need them," Zelenskyy said.

Following that meeting, the 31 allies and Ukraine will take part in the first NATO-Ukraine Council at this level. The forum was formally established in July as part of efforts to bring Kyiv closer to the alliance. It allows NATO and Kyiv to discuss issues of common interest and concern.

The new package of U.S. aid includes AIM-9M missiles for air defense, counter-drone systems, munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), artillery, electronic warfare equipment, demolition munitions, anti-armor systems and more than 16 million rounds of small arms ammunition.

The weapons are provided under presidential drawdown authority, so will be taken from Pentagon stocks and delivered quickly to the battlefield.

ACT test scores for US students drop to new 30-year low

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY AP Education Writer

High school students' scores on the ACT college admissions test have dropped to their lowest in more than three decades, showing a lack of student preparedness for college-level coursework, according to the nonprofit organization that administers the test.

Scores have been falling for six consecutive years, but the trend accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students in the class of 2023 whose scores were reported Wednesday were in their first year of high school when the virus reached the U.S.

"The hard truth is that we are not doing enough to ensure that graduates are truly ready for postsecondary success in college and career," said Janet Godwin, chief executive officer for the nonprofit ACT.

The average ACT composite score for U.S. students was 19.5 out of 36. Last year, the average score was 19.8.

The average scores in reading, science and math all were below benchmarks the ACT says students must reach to have a high probability of success in first-year college courses. The average score in English was just above the benchmark but still declined compared to last year.

Many universities have made standardized admissions tests optional amid criticism that they favor the wealthy and put low-income students at a disadvantage. Some including the University of California system do not consider ACT or SAT scores even if submitted.

Godwin said the scores are still helpful for placing students in the right college courses and preparing academic advisors to better support students.

"In terms of college readiness, even in a test-optional environment, these kinds of objective test scores about academic readiness are incredibly important," Godwin said.

At Denise Cabrera's high school in Hawaii, all students are required to take the ACT as juniors. She said she would have taken it anyway to improve her chances of getting into college.

"Honestly, I'm unsure why the test was ever required because colleges can look at different qualities of the students who are applying outside of just a one-time test score," said Denise, a 17-year-old senior at Waianae High School.

She's looking at schools including the California Institute of Technology, which implemented a five-year moratorium on the standardized test score requirements during the pandemic. Denise said she knows the school is not considering scores but she doesn't want to limit her options elsewhere.

About 1.4 million students in the U.S. took the ACT this year, an increase from last year. However, the numbers have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Godwin said she doesn't believe those numbers will ever fully recover, partly because of test-optional admission policies.

Of students who were tested, only 21% met benchmarks for success in college-level classes in all subjects. Research from the nonprofit shows students who meet those benchmarks have a 50% chance of earning a B or better and nearly a 75% chance of earning a C or better in corresponding courses.

A Chinese Australian journalist detained for 3 years in China returns to Australia

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — A Chinese Australian journalist who was convicted on murky espionage charges and detained in China for three years has returned to Australia, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Wednesday.

Cheng Lei, 48, worked for the international department of China's state broadcaster CCTV. She has reunited with her two children in Melbourne, Albanese said.

Her return comes ahead of Albanese's planned visit to Beijing this year on a date yet to be announced. He will become the first Australian prime minister to visit the Chinese capital in seven years.

Albanese said Australia had traded nothing with China for Cheng's release.

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"Her release follows the completion of judicial processes in China," he said.

China's Ministry of State Security said that Cheng had been approached by a foreign organization in May 2020 and provided them with state secrets she had obtained on the job in violation of a confidentiality clause signed with her employer. A police statement did not name the organization or say what the secrets were.

A court in Beijing convicted her of illegally providing state secrets abroad and she was sentenced to two years and 11 months, the statement said. She was deported Wednesday after serving her sentence, presumably because she had already been detained for that long .

"Her return brings an end to a very difficult few years for Ms. Cheng and her family," Albanese said. "The government has been seeking this for a long period of time and her return will be warmly welcomed not just by her family and friends but by all Australians."

The FreeChengLei account on X, formerly known as Twitter, posted a photo of Cheng with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Australia's ambassador to China, Graham Fletcher.

The post included a quote, apparently from Cheng, that read: "Tight hugs, teary screams, holding my kids in the spring sunshine. Trees shimmy from the breeze. I can see the entirety of the sky now! Thank you Aussies."

Albanese's government has been lobbying for the release of Cheng and another Chinese Australian held in China since 2019, Yang Hengjun.

Bilateral relations have improved since Albanese's center-left Labor Party was elected after nine years of conservative rule. Beijing has lifted several official and unofficial trade barriers on Australian exports.

Albanese's reference to China's judicial system suggested that Cheng had recently been sentenced after she was convicted in a closed-court trial last year on national security charges.

Questioned by a reporter, Albanese said China was not acknowledging through Cheng's release that she posed no threat or had been wrongfully detained.

"No, China would have not have said that that's the position. China would say that the judicial processes have been completed in China," Albanese said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that the Chinese judicial system tried the case "in accordance with the law, fully safeguarding the rights enjoyed by the person concerned in accordance with the law."

Albanese said he spoke to Cheng in Melbourne, where her children have been living with her mother, and that they discussed a letter she had written to the Australian public in August to mark the third anniversary of her detention. The Chinese-born journalist spoke in her letter about her love for her adopted country.

In the letter, she also described her living conditions in detention in China, saying she was allowed to stand in sunlight for just 10 hours a year.

"She is a very strong and resilient person ... and when I spoke with her she was delighted to be back in Melbourne," Albanese said.

Albanese did not say whether Yang was also likely to be released.

"We continue to advocate for Dr. Yang's interests, rights and wellbeing with the Chinese authorities at all levels," Albanese said.

Yang, a 58-year-old writer and democracy blogger, told his family in August he fears he will die in a Beijing detention center after being diagnosed with a kidney cyst, prompting supporters to demand his release for medical treatment.

Yang has been detained in China since January 2019, when he arrived in Guangzhou from New York with his wife and teenage stepdaughter.

Yang received a closed-door trial on an espionage charge in Beijing in May 2021 and is still awaiting a verdict.

Yang's friend, University of Technology Sydney academic Feng Chongyi, said on Wednesday a verdict had been postponed for three months 11 times and the next possible ruling was January.

He said Cheng's release was good news for Yang. "I do hope Yang is treated in the same way. Given Yang's poor health, his release is actually more urgent," Feng said.

Israeli strikes demolish entire Gaza neighborhoods as sealed-off territory faces imminent blackout

By JOSEPH KRAUSS and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinians in the sealed-off Gaza Strip scrambled to find safety Wednesday, as Israeli strikes demolished entire neighborhoods, hospitals ran low on supplies and a power blackout was expected within hours, further deepening the misery of a war sparked by a deadly mass incursion of Hamas militants.

Airstrikes smashed entire city blocks to rubble in the tiny coastal enclave and left unknown numbers of bodies beneath mounds of debris. The bombardment raged on even though militants are holding an estimated 150 people — soldiers, men, women, children and older adults — who were dragged into Gaza during the weekend attack.

Israel has vowed unprecedented retaliation against the Hamas militant group ruling the Palestinian territory after its fighters stormed through the border fence Saturday and gunned down hundreds of Israelis in their homes, on the streets and at an outdoor music festival.

The war, which has already claimed at least 2,100 lives on both sides, is expected to escalate — and compound the misery of people living in Gaza, where basic necessities and electricity were already in short supply.

Israel has stopped the entry of food, water, fuel and medicine into the territory — a 40-kilometer-long (25-mile) strip of land wedged among Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians. The sole remaining access from Egypt was shut down Tuesday after airstrikes hit near the border crossing.

As Palestinians crowded into U.N. schools and a shrinking number of safe neighborhoods, humanitarian groups pleaded for the creation of corridors to get aid in, warning that hospitals overwhelmed with wounded people were running out of supplies.

“There is no safe place in Gaza right now,” journalist Hasan Jabar said after three Palestinian journalists were killed in the bombardment of a downtown neighborhood home to government ministries, media offices and hotels. “I am genuinely afraid for my life.”

Gaza’s power authority says its sole power plant will run out of fuel within hours, leaving the territory without electricity after Israel cut off supplies. Palestinians there have long relied on generators to power homes, offices and hospitals, but have no way of importing fuel for those either.

The U.N.’s World Health Organization said that supplies it had pre-positioned for seven hospitals have already run out amid the flood of wounded. The head of the medical aid group Doctors Without Borders said surgical equipment, antibiotics, fuel and other supplies were running out at two hospitals it runs in Gaza.

In one, “we consumed three weeks worth of emergency stock in three days, partly due to 50 patients coming in at once,” Matthias Kannes, the aid group’s head of mission in Gaza, said Wednesday. He said the territory’s biggest hospital, Al-Shifa, only has enough fuel for three days.

Israel has mobilized 360,000 reservists and appears increasingly likely to launch a ground offensive into Gaza, with its government under intense pressure from the public to topple Hamas, which has ruled the territory since 2007. That goal was considered unachievable in the past because it would require a reoccupation of the Gaza Strip, at least temporarily.

“We will not allow a reality in which Israeli children are murdered,” Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said in a meeting with soldiers near the southern border on Tuesday. “I have removed every restriction — we will eliminate anyone who fights us, and use every measure at our disposal.”

Exchanges of fire over Israel’s northern borders with militants in Lebanon and Syria, meanwhile, pointed to the risk of an expanded regional conflict.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday warned other countries and armed groups against entering the conflict. The U.S. is already rushing munitions and military equipment to Israel and has deployed a carrier strike group to the eastern Mediterranean as deterrence.

Israeli airstrikes late Tuesday struck the family house of Mohammed Deif, the shadowy leader of Hamas’

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military wing, killing his father, brother and at least two other relatives in the southern town of Khan Younis, senior Hamas official Bassem Naim told The Associated Press.

Deif has never been seen in public and his whereabouts are unknown.

In a new tactic, Israel is warning civilians to evacuate neighborhood after neighborhood, and then inflicting devastation, in what could be a prelude to a ground offensive.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said Israeli airstrikes destroyed the entire al-Karama neighborhood in Gaza City, with a "large number" of people killed or wounded. It said medical teams were unable to reach the area because all roads to it were destroyed. Rescue officials say they have struggled to enter other areas as well.

In another neighborhood, Palestinian Civil Defense forces pulled Abdullah Musleh out of his basement together with 30 others after their apartment building was flattened.

"I sell toys, not missiles," the 46-year-old said, weeping. "I want to leave Gaza. Why do I have to stay here? I lost my home and my job."

On Tuesday afternoon, Hamas fired barrages of rockets toward the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon and Tel Aviv. There were no immediate reports of casualties. On Tuesday night, a group of militants entered an industrial zone in Ashkelon, sparking a gunbattle with Israeli troops, the military said. Three militants were killed, and troops were searching the area for others.

Four previous rounds of Israel-Hamas fighting between 2008 and 2021 all ended inconclusively, with Hamas battered but still in control.

"The objective is for this war to end very differently from all of the previous rounds. There has to be a clear victory," said Chuck Freilich, a former deputy national security adviser in Israel. "Whatever has to be done to fundamentally change the situation will have to be done," he said.

Hamas officials have said they planned for all possibilities, including a punishing Israeli escalation. Desperation has grown among Palestinians, many of whom see nothing to lose under unending Israeli military occupation and increasing settlements in the West Bank, a 16-year-long blockade in Gaza and what they see as the world's apathy.

Days of clashes between rock-throwing Palestinians and Israeli forces in the West Bank have left 15 Palestinians dead, but Israel has clamped down heavily on the territory, preventing movement between communities. The violence also spread into east Jerusalem, where Israeli police said they killed two Palestinians who hurled stones at police late Tuesday.

The Israeli military said more than 1,200 people, including 155 soldiers, have been killed in Israel, a staggering toll unseen since the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria that lasted weeks. In Gaza, 950 people have been killed, including 260 children and 230 women, according to authorities there; Israel says hundreds of Hamas fighters are among them. Thousands have been wounded on both sides.

The bodies of roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were found on Israeli territory, the military said. It wasn't clear whether those numbers overlapped with deaths reported by Palestinian authorities.

In Gaza, more than 250,000 people have fled their homes, the U.N. said, the most since a 2014 air and ground offensive by Israel uprooted about 400,000. The vast majority are sheltering in schools run by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees. Damage to three water and sanitation sites have cut off services to 400,000 people, the U.N. said.

Tens of thousands of people in southern Israel have been evacuated since Sunday.

Under heavy bombing, Palestinians in Gaza move from place to place, only to discover nowhere is safe

By ISSAM ADWAN Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Over 180,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are packed into U.N. shelters as Israeli warplanes pound the tiny territory of 2.3 million people after their Hamas militant rulers launched an unprecedented weekend attack on Israel.

Among them is 27-year-old Sabreen al-Attar. She sprang into action when she heard rocket after rocket

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whoosh over her farmland in Beit Lahiya just south of the Israeli border on Saturday. She knew from experience that Israeli retaliation would be swift and severe.

Grabbing her children, al-Attar rushed to one of the dozens of shelters set up in schools run by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City. There, blasts of unprecedented intensity punctuated hours of steadily declining conditions Monday as food and water ran out.

"When I escape, I do it for my children," she said, her hands trembling. "Their lives rest on my shoulders."

But residents say there is no real escape in Gaza, which has been under a suffocating 16-year blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt. When war breaks out, as it has four times since the Hamas militant group seized power in 2007, even U.N. facilities that are supposed to be safe zones risk becoming engulfed in the fighting. The United Nations said that an airstrike directly hit one of its shelters Sunday and damaged five other schools-turned-shelters on Monday. There was no immediate word of casualties.

In the downtown Rimal area, Gaza City's bustling commercial district with high-rises home to international media and aid organizations, al-Attar hoped she would be safe. Rimal had until then not been an immediate Israeli target, unlike border towns or densely populated refugee camps.

But as the Israeli military went neighborhood to neighborhood with rapid and intensifying airstrikes, the heavy bombardments reached the heart of Gaza City, transforming the affluent neighborhood into an uninhabitable desert of craters. Rimal was also hit by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza's bloody 2021 war, but not to this extent.

Israeli bombs that struck Gaza's flagship Islamic University, government ministries and high-rises in Rimal, starting Monday afternoon, also blew out the windows of al-Attar's shelter, shattering glass everywhere, she said. Life there, crammed with 1,600 others, was full of danger and deprivation but al-Attar said she had no choice but to stay, telling her boys — 2-year-old Mohammed and 7-year-old Nabil — to keep away from the windows.

"The night was very, very difficult," she said Tuesday. "We have nowhere else to go."

The bombing in Rimal and the potential risks of sheltering in U.N. schools highlighted the desperate search by Gaza civilians for refuge, with the territory's safe spaces rapidly shrinking. There are no civilian bomb shelters in Gaza. Ahead of the Israeli military's warning to civilians on Monday that Rimal would be hit, families staggered into the streets with whatever belongings they could carry and without a destination.

In a briefing Tuesday, Israeli army spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht suggested Palestinians should try to leave through the Gaza border crossing with Egypt — a seemingly impractical suggestion.

While Hamas officials operating the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing said Tuesday that Gazans who had registered in advance could cross into Egypt, the number of those allowed to travel has typically been small. That has led to backlogs and waiting times of days or weeks, even in calm times.

"There is never a Plan B here," said 31-year-old Maha Hussaini, as she watched terrified Rimal residents flood her Gaza City neighborhood further south just as bombs began to fall there, too. Israel accuses Hamas of endangering Gaza's civilian population by placing weapons and missile launchers in densely populated areas. It also accuses them of using civilians as human shields. So far, the Gaza toll stands at about 700 dead and thousands wounded, according to Gaza health officials, a punishing response to the militant group's attack that has killed over 900 Israelis. More than 150 Israeli civilians and soldiers have been taken captive.

Israel says it takes pains to avoid civilian casualties as it targets Hamas sites in Gaza, which is heavily built up and has scant open space. Israel accuses Hamas of endangering Gaza's civilian population by placing weapons and missile launchers in densely populated areas. It also accuses them of using civilians as human shields.

But the military long has carried out airstrikes in crowded residential neighborhoods, inevitably harming civilians and civilian infrastructure. Hamas authorities on Monday reported the destruction of seven mosques and 15 civilian homes that killed many members of the same family.

The Israeli defense minister also has ordered a "complete siege" on the already blockaded Gaza Strip, vowing to block food, water and fuel from the territory.

"None of us even know what 'safe' means in Gaza," said 28-year-old Hind Khoudary, who was hunkered down in the upscale Roots Hotel as deafening explosions thundered.

"These are not people with (militant) affiliations, these are people from higher classes, foreign organizations and media," she said of those around her. "But on days like this, there is zero difference."

Residents described a dangerous dance around the heavy Israeli bombing — fleeing home, crashing at relatives' apartments, fleeing again to U.N. schools and then starting all over again in an attempt to find some sense of safety.

"It is better than dying," said 37-year-old Muhammad al-Bishawi, exhausted as he hustled between a U.N. shelter in Gaza City and his home in Beit Lahiya to secure food and other supplies before returning.

On Saturday after the massive Hamas attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Gaza civilians of the horrors to come, promising to unleash the full force of the Israeli military on the strip.

"Get out now," he said, addressing Palestinians in Gaza. "Because we will operate everywhere."

Khoudary was listening to him as the airstrikes intensified, trapped in her home with nowhere to run.

"Why didn't he tell us where to flee?" she asked. "Because we'd really like to know."

Quake in Afghanistan leaves rubble, funerals and survivors struggling with loss

By EBRAHIM NOROOZI Associated Press

ZINDA JAN, Afghanistan (AP) — Nurullah crossed the border into Iran to earn money for his family, like so many men from his village in western Afghanistan.

On Sunday, he stood on the side of the road crying.

The 55-year-old was heading home to bury his wife, three children and a grandchild killed a day before, when an earthquake left at least 2,000 people dead in Afghanistan's Herat province.

On Wednesday, another quake of the same magnitude 6.3 struck nearby, in the same region in Herat where the initial quake hit on Saturday. It is not yet clear what further damage it caused to the already devastated region.

The hearses arrived, following Nurullah's directions to find the remote village, and mourners took the dead to the cemetery.

Nurullah's sister Maahzaad, 53, kept repeating her daughter's name.

She had a son, who she'd already lost to war and misfortune. Now she had lost her only remaining child, a young woman married three months earlier.

Nurullah — many Afghans use only one name — got out of the car and people came over to welcome and hug him.

In the nearby village of Naib Rafi, people picked up debris after coming from elsewhere to help survivors and pull bodies from the rubble.

The entire village of around 300 homes was destroyed, leaving nothing but mounds of dirt. Almost all of the 2,500 residents were killed or hurt, except men who were working outside when the earthquake hit.

One man lost 12 members of his family. While 11 bodies had been pulled from the rubble, he could not find the body of his 4-year-old daughter.

After searching for it for two days, he gave up and called for help.

Sometimes dead animals could be seen among the ruins. In the twilight, a man with a blanket wrapped around him walked around crying and talking to himself. Mullah Abdul Basir said he was working outside the village when the quake struck, killing five members of his family.

"When I left home," he said, "everyone was fine. My children were playing in the yard. When I returned, there was nothing."

Survivors were mostly those who were working outside when the quake struck: The dead were mostly children, women and old people who could not leave the house.

People were searching the debris when a cleric asked them to start digging graves, and it took a day to dig enough with a front-end loader, a bulldozer and many people.

People stood on the hilltops outside the next village, burying hundreds of bodies. A man who had lost his wife and child embraced his wife's grave, crying silently. A boy sat in the crowd next to his brother's grave, mourning and reminiscing. A man handed his own child's body to his father and said: "Here, come bury your grandson." Another man who had lost his father cried and said that he'd lost not only his father, but his teacher and his guide. A little girl begged for people to show her her younger brother's face before burying him. As it got dark outside the village of Naib Rafi, bodies were spread out in the plain, as people were putting them in the graves. Hundreds of bodies were laid in the trenches. The only sound was the noise of picks, shovels, and digging machines.

Unprecedented Israeli bombardment lays waste to upscale Rimal, the beating heart of Gaza City

By ISSAM ADWAN Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Collapsed buildings, mangled infrastructure, streets turned into fields of rubble.

Scenes of violence and destruction in the long-blockaded Gaza Strip have filled the world's airwaves throughout four wars and countless rounds of hostilities between Israel and Hamas militants. But this conflict, Palestinians say, is different.

On Tuesday, following a night of intense bombardment, residents were struggling to grasp the sheer scale of damage inflicted on Gaza City's upscale Rimal neighborhood, with its shopping malls, restaurants, residential buildings and offices belonging to aid groups and international media far from the territory's hard-hit border towns and impoverished refugee camps.

Israel has hit Rimal, also home to Hamas government ministries, in the 2021 war, but never like this.

Israeli bombs blew out walls and ripped off roofs of upper-class apartment towers. They toppled trees that had lined the sidewalks. They uprooted streets that had teemed with businessmen hustling to work and vendors hawking roasted nuts. They leveled mosques and university buildings and wrecked high-rise offices of companies and organizations like Gaza's main telecommunications company and Bar Association.

Among those broad boulevards full of beauty salons, falafel shops and pizzerias beat the heart of Gaza City. For many, the magnitude of the devastation there, affecting the territory's middle and upper classes, had symbolic significance.

"Israel has destroyed the center of everything," said Palestinian businessman Ali al-Hiyak from his home near Rimal. "That is the space of our public life, our community."

"They are breaking us," he added.

After Gaza's Hamas rulers mounted the deadliest attack on Israel in decades, killing over 1,000 people and taking dozens hostage in a multi-pronged offensive, Israel unleashed what Gaza residents described as the most intense bombing campaign in recent memory, with hundreds of airstrikes Monday night.

"These sounds are different," 30-year-old Saman Ashour in Gaza City texted as she lay awake in a neighborhood north of Rimal, listening to the roar of explosions. "It's the sound of revenge."

Residents said the Israeli military struck some buildings without first firing warning missiles as a precaution. The civilian death toll has been rapidly rising. Overall, Gaza health officials have reported the airstrikes have killed over 800 people and wounded thousands more. Israel has also cut off Gaza's water supplies and electricity, worsening the territory's already abysmal humanitarian conditions.

The Israeli military's Arabic spokesperson, Avichay Adraee, said that Israel was trying to "evacuate civilian populations from areas where Hamas has a military presence" before unleashing "powerful destruction."

That tactic is evident from staggering drone footage that shows vast swaths of central Gaza City reduced to nothing but dirt craters and ruins from demolished buildings.

But most Palestinian civilians did not evacuate. There are no bomb shelters. Israel and Egypt tightly control the enclave's borders and have not let anyone out. U.N. shelters are rapidly filling up.

After the militant group's unprecedented attack on Israeli civilians and soldiers, which stunned and terrorized a country long seen as invincible, analysts said it was clear the group bet all of its chips no matter the consequences. Israel was now waging a war not to repel Hamas, like in past rounds, but to destroy it.

"The strategic prospect is to annihilate, destroy and demolish the military capacity of Hamas," said Kobi Michael, a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, an Israeli think tank. "Hamas brought this on the heads of the Gazans."

"If Israel is not aggressive enough," he added, "that will only drag us to another front and to another conflict."

But Palestinians in Gaza see the Israeli military's wrath as collective punishment.

"We're talking about damage to hospitals that can't even run without fuel, the total demolition of homes and infrastructure," said Iyad Bozum, spokesman for Gaza's Interior Ministry. "At the end of this there will be nothing left to even reconstruct. It will be impossible to live here."

The strikes on Rimal early Tuesday killed ordinary residents like shopkeepers and local journalists and destroyed dozens of homes.

Issa Abu Salim, 60, was seething as he stood amid the debris of his home, his clothes filthy with the dust of the destruction.

"Our money is gone. My identity cards are lost. The entire house, all four floors, is lost," he said. "The most beautiful area, they destroyed it."

Lidia makes landfall as Category 4 hurricane with 140 mph winds near Mexico's Puerto Vallarta resort

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Hurricane Lidia made landfall as an "extremely dangerous" Category 4 storm Tuesday evening with winds of 140 mph (220 kph) near Mexico's Pacific coast resort of Puerto Vallarta, and then moved inland, still as a powerful hurricane.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Lidia's eye appeared to have reached land near Las Penitas in the western state of Jalisco. The area is a sparsely populated peninsula.

The hurricane then moved south of Puerto Vallarta to a point inland about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of the resort, and about 90 miles (150 kms) west of the capital of Jalisco state, Guadalajara.

Lidia remained a powerful hurricane even after moving over land, with winds of 105 mph (165 kph) late Tuesday. Jalisco and Nayarit states reported downed trees and power lines, as well as landslides over some highways in the region.

Lidia was moving east-northeast at about 17 mph (28 kph), and forecasters predicted it could still be a Category 1 hurricane when it brushed by Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city, around midnight.

Jalisco Gov. Enrique Alfaro said via the platform X an hour and a half after Lidia made landfall that the storm had generated "extraordinary rain and high surf" in various places, but that so far there were no reports of injuries or deaths.

The state had 23 shelters open, he said. The Puerto Vallarta city government said a few dozen people had gone to shelters there.

In 2015, Hurricane Patricia, a Category 5 hurricane, also made landfall on the same sparsely-populated stretch of coastline between the resort of Puerto Vallarta and major port of Manzanillo.

Lidia was expected to soak the region with heavy rain, and the hurricane center warned of possible flash flooding.

The center forecast rainfall totals of 4 to 8 inches with localized totals of 12 inches possible in some places in the state of Nayarit, southern portions of the state of Sinaloa, and coastal areas of Jalisco.

Local authorities canceled classes in communities around the coast. The expected impact comes one day after Tropical Storm Max hit the southern Pacific coast, hundred of miles away, and then dissipated. Rains from Max washed out part of a coastal highway in the southern state of Guerrero.

Internal conflicts and power struggles have become hallmarks of the modern GOP

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — After Ohio Republicans bolstered their statehouse majority last year due to their dominating showing in the midterm elections, they split into rival camps over who should lead the lower chamber.

The division between younger, more impatient conservatives and more traditional ones was only settled when Democrats crossed party lines to end a standoff over who would become speaker of the Ohio House.

Since then, despite their power over all levels of state government, Ohio Republicans have been convulsed by infighting as party leaders censured everyone who had voted for their new speaker, Republican Jason Stephens. Amid the divisions, the Legislature managed to pass only 10 bills this year.

"Childish would be my word," said Republican state Rep. Sara Carruthers of her colleagues who persist in opposing the speaker or refuse to attend caucus meetings. "We're on the right path, doing the right things, wanting to get good legislation passed and he's helping them do that. And then, bam, it blows up."

From Columbus to Phoenix to the halls of Congress, the Republican Party has been stuck in a prolonged internal conflict, with power struggles and primary challenges becoming as much of a GOP staple as tax cuts and tough-on-crime rhetoric.

In Michigan, the chair of one county party told police he was "kicked in the crotch" by a rival during a party meeting. In Arizona, Democrats last year swept four statewide races after insurgent Republicans won their party's nomination. In Texas, the Republican attorney general, after successfully fighting off removal from office following his impeachment by the GOP-controlled state House, this week suggested he could request criminal charges against some in his own party for allegedly violating state privacy laws.

The party scuffling peaked last week when a small group of conservative U.S. House members banded with Democrats to depose Speaker Kevin McCarthy, leaving the post vacant just as war broke out in the Middle East.

The internal tussle over who will become House speaker — a position that is second in the constitutional line of succession to the presidency — exemplifies the perpetual chaos inside GOP ranks. McCarthy was the fifth member of his party to hold the speaker's position in the 19 years the GOP has controlled the House of Representatives since 1995, and the first to be ousted in a vote. In contrast, during the eight years Democrats controlled the House during that time, they had a single speaker, Rep. Nancy Pelosi.

Democrats have plenty of their own internal conflicts too — currently New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez has rebuffed calls from some inside his party to step down after his indictment on corruption charges last month, triggering multiple primary challenges. But Democrats have seen nothing like the perennial GOP internal clashes.

Republicans have had an aggressive wing of activists who have challenged the establishment ever since former congressman Newt Gingrich moved from being a congressional backbencher to House speaker in 1995, after he targeted members of his own conference for not being conservative enough.

"On the right, there's been a push, certainly since the Tea Party movement, to shift how Washington operates," said Jenny Beth Martin, a veteran activist who runs Tea Party Patriots Action, which has repeatedly clashed with the GOP establishment. "To get a shift like that to happen, you need to push against the people on your side who support the status quo before you confront the other side."

Many Republican politicians also cite a media environment, especially on the right, that rewards polarizing, grievance-filled rhetoric. On Monday, McCarthy blamed his ouster on "a few individuals that love a camera more than they love the American public."

But, in the end, the conflict comes from the party's base. Repeated polls have shown Republican voters are more opposed to compromise than Democratic ones, laying the groundwork for repeated struggles.

"You have a party consisting of constituencies that see themselves as under siege — white Christians who see a country that is less white Christian, working-class people who see a country where all advantages go to the college-educated," said Jack Pitney, a political scientist at Claremont McKenna College in California.

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In contrast, Democratic constituencies — immigrants and their children, African Americans and younger college graduates — see themselves as having brighter prospects.

"It's the coalition of the ascendant versus the coalition of the resentful," Pitney said.

The fight played out nationally in 2022, as a wave of insurgent Republican candidates, often backed by former President Donald Trump, beat party picks in key swing state primaries, only to fall short on Election Day.

Most dramatically, in Arizona, insurgent Republicans who castigated the more moderate members of their own party — who had once supported the late Sen. John McCain — won nominations for governor, U.S. Senate, secretary of state and attorney general. All of them lost to Democrats last November.

Arizona is one of several states where hardline activists forced out established Republican leaders as the party struggled in elections. That also happened in Michigan, where activists only increased their hold on the state party after a disastrous midterm cycle when their own insurgent candidates got crushed by Democrats. One of those candidates, secretary of state nominee Kristina Karamo, became party chair as feuding became so intense that a physical fight broke out at a party gathering earlier this year.

In Ohio, some contend the Republican dysfunction is a product of the party's new dominance in the state.

"It's easy to agree and compromise when you need each other to overcome the Democrats," said Ryan Stubenrach, a GOP strategist in the state. "But when there are no real Democrats in power, you don't have to agree with each other and you start fighting with each other."

It's not just the House speakership that's pitted Republican against Republican. After the state supreme court rejected seven rounds of new legislative and congressional maps as illegally favoring the GOP, some legislative Republicans threatened to impeach then-Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, a member of their own party who had cast key swing votes in the cases.

When the state redistricting commission reconvened last month to fix the maps, business was stymied for days by Republican infighting over who should be the panel's co-chair.

"This is a civil war that has been happening since 2015," said David B. Cohen, a political science professor at the University of Akron's Bliss Institute of Applied Politics. "It began in earnest when Donald Trump entered the fray and when he became the party's nominee. Then, when he became president, there was a transformation that took hold across the country and a lot of old-school Republicans were forced out."

Carruthers said she ran for state office to pass policies that would improve the state, but the party feuding is getting in the way.

"Nobody gets 100% of what they want. You have to negotiate," she said. "And it's not that we're doing liberal bills, I mean, my god. But it's still not good enough."

Having ousted Kevin McCarthy, House Republicans are hitting trouble trying to nominate a new speaker

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stalemated over a new House speaker, the Republican majority is scheduled to convene behind closed doors to launch internal party voting but lawmakers warn it could take hours, if not days, to unite behind a nominee after Kevin McCarthy's ouster.

The two leading contenders Wednesday for the gavel, Majority Leader Steve Scalise and Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan, appear to be splitting the vote among their Republican colleagues. They outlined their visions at a lengthy candidate forum ahead of the private balloting.

McCarthy, meanwhile, who had openly positioned himself to reclaim the job he just lost, told his colleagues not to nominate him this time. Instead, at Tuesday's late evening candidate forum, he read a poem from Mother Teresa and delivered a unity prayer.

"I don't know how the hell you get to 218," Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, said afterward, referring to the majority vote typically needed to seize the gavel. "It could be a long week."

House Republicans took the majority aspiring to operate as a team, and run government more like a

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business, but have drifted far from that goal. Just 10 months in power, the historic ouster of their House speaker — a first in the U.S. — and prolonged infighting has brought the House to a standstill at a time of crisis at home and abroad.

Now, as House Republicans push ahead toward snap elections Wednesday aimed at finding a new nominee for speaker, the hard-right coalition of lawmakers that ousted McCarthy has shown what an oversized role a few lawmakers can have in choosing the successor.

"I am not thrilled with either choice right now," said Rep. Ken Buck, a Colorado Republican who voted to oust McCarthy.

Both Scalise and Jordan are working furiously to shore up support. Both are easily winning over dozens of supporters and could win a majority of the 221 Republicans.

But it's unclear if either Scalise or Jordan can amass the votes that would be needed from almost all Republicans to overcome opposition from Democrats during a floor vote in the narrowly split House. Usually, the majority needed would be 218 votes in the 435-seat House, but there are currently two vacancies, dropping the threshold to 217.

Many Republicans want to prevent the spectacle of a messy House floor fight like the grueling January brawl when McCarthy became speaker.

"People are not comfortable going to the floor with a simple majority and then having C-SPAN and the rest of the world watch as we have this fight," said Rep. Kat Cammack, R-Fla. "We want to have this family fight behind closed doors."

Some have proposed a rules change that Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., the interim speaker pro tempore, is considering to ensure a majority vote during closed balloting Wednesday before the nominee is presented for a full floor vote.

McCarthy himself appeared to agree with a consensus approach. "They shouldn't come out of there until they decide that they have enough votes for whoever they bring to the floor," McCarthy said.

But short of a rules change, Republican lawmakers would be expected to agree to a majority-wins process — whichever candidate wins the internal private vote would be given the full backing of the Republicans on the House floor.

It's no guarantee — with trust low among House Republicans and tensions high, those normal protocols could be challenged. Both Scalise and Jordan indicated they would support the eventual nominee, lawmakers said. But many lawmakers remained undecided.

While both are conservatives from the right flank, neither Scalise nor Jordan is the heir apparent to McCarthy.

Scalise as the second-ranking Republican would be next in line for the gavel and is seen as a hero among colleagues for having survived severe injuries from a mass shooting during a congressional baseball practice in 2017. Now battling blood cancer, the Louisianan is not a clear lock.

"We're going to go get this done," Scalise said as he exited the candidate forum. "The House is going to get back to work."

Jordan is a high-profile political firebrand known for his close alliance with Donald Trump, particularly when the then-president was working to overturn the results of the 2020 election, leading to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Trump has backed Jordan's bid for the gavel.

Scalise and Jordan presented similar views at the forum about cutting spending and securing the southern border with Mexico, top Republican priorities.

Several lawmakers, including Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who engineered McCarthy's ouster said they would be willing to support either Scalise or Jordan.

"I think it's a competitive race for speaker because we've got two greats," said Rep. Andy Barr, R-Ky.

Barr said he was working to help secure votes for Scalise, but would be comfortable with either candidate.

Others though, particularly more centrist conservative Republicans from districts that are narrowly split between the parties, are holding out for another choice.

"Personally, I'm still with McCarthy," said Rep. David Valadao, a Republican who represents a California district not far from the former speaker's district.

"We'll see how that plays out, but I do know a large percentage of the membership wants to be there with him as well."

McCarthy headed into the evening forum insisting he was not, at the moment, a candidate for speaker. But the California Republican gave a nod to his own short track record as speaker — being ousted by the far-right flank after he led Congress to approve a stopgap spending bill to prevent a disruptive federal government shutdown.

"I think it's important whoever takes that job is willing to risk the job for doing what's right for the American public," McCarthy said.

For now, McHenry is effectively in charge. He has shown little interest in expanding his power beyond the role he was assigned — an interim leader tasked with ensuring the election of the next speaker.

The role was created in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to ensure the continuity of government. McHenry's name was at the top of a list submitted by McCarthy when he became speaker in January.

While some Republicans, and Democrats, are open to empowering McHenry the longer he holds the temporary position, that seems unlikely as the speaker's fight drags on.

McHenry told reporters it's "my goal" to keep to the schedule to hold a House speaker election on Wednesday. He quickly gaveled the House in and out of a brief session Tuesday, with no business conducted.

Republicans are divided on far-right move to remove McCarthy as House speaker, an AP-NORC poll shows

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The unprecedented ouster of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has left no consensus among Republicans about whether his removal was the right move as the party struggles to coalesce around a new leader, according to a new poll.

Only one-quarter of Republicans say they approve of the stunning decision by a small group of House Republicans to remove the California lawmaker from his post during a vote last week. Three in 10 Republicans believe it was a mistake for a small faction of the party, and all Democrats, to support a motion ejecting McCarthy from the speakership.

"It's just chaos," Betsy Young, a Republican from Oregon, told The Associated Press. "And I don't think it's helpful."

About 4 in 10 Republicans (43%) say they neither approve nor disapprove. That is according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted after McCarthy became the first speaker in history to be voted out of the role.

The political upheaval in Congress has left Americans as a whole split on the issue — if they have an opinion at all — with some saying McCarthy had it coming and others warning of the precedent such action could set for future speakers. Overall, a quarter of Americans said they approve, a quarter disapprove and about half say neither.

Thomas Adkins, a Republican from North Carolina, told the AP that the former speaker "relinquished his leadership" when he made a deal with congressional Democrats to fund the government last month while facing a looming shutdown deadline.

"That's sort of going over to the enemy in my thinking, so in that respect, I thoroughly disapprove of the speaker's actions," the 84-year-old said.

Kevin Fry, a Republican from Indiana, echoed those sentiments, saying McCarthy "didn't keep his word" to the party when he said he would not negotiate on cutting spending and other conservative priorities. "When you give your word and everybody relies on that, then you know, you need to be held accountable," the 64-year-old added.

It is the same argument the eight far-right members who voted for McCarthy's removal made on the floor of the House last week. That decision and Democrats' willingness to join along has since thrown the House and its Republican leadership into disarray as the majority is now rushing to vote in a new speaker

this week to lead them during this divisive moment.

But Young, who considers herself a moderate Republican, calls the reasoning for McCarthy's removal "stupid," resulting in a stain on the GOP moving forward.

"(Democrats and Republicans) are supposed to work together, and they forget that," she said. "They're in their own bubble and they forget that the rest of the country is not Washington, or it's not the state capitals."

The poll shows that conservative Republicans are more likely than those who describe themselves as moderate or liberal to approve of the move to remove McCarthy, 31% to 16%. Even among conservatives, though, 33% said they disapprove.

A quarter of Democrats also disapprove of McCarthy being removed, despite all their representatives voting in favor of the motion. Thirty percent of Democrats approve.

Deedee Gunderson, a Democrat from New Mexico, said that while she's not a fan of McCarthy and how he has governed, she's worried that his ouster has given more power to the extremes of the Republican Party.

"I think they are trying to destroy this government," she said.

Following McCarthy's removal, 39% of Republicans say they have an unfavorable view of the former speaker. That's up slightly from 25% in an AP-NORC poll conducted in January.

The fight over congressional leadership also comes after the chamber narrowly avoided a government shutdown by passing a short-term funding bill that delays its fiscal deadline until mid-November. That conflict over government spending and financial priorities is expected to resume in the coming weeks, with U.S. aid to Ukraine against Russia's invasion one of the major issues at play. The poll shows 69% of Republicans — but just 37% of Democrats — think the U.S. government is spending too much on Ukraine aid.

Overall, a majority of Americans continue to say U.S. spending is too high, but have little appetite for cuts to major programs. And Americans are split on which party would do a better job handling the federal budget, with 27% saying Democrats and 26% Republicans. A third of Americans say they trust neither party.

"Our spending is so out of control that I can't believe how much debt we've incurred on both sides," Fry said. "I don't think that's necessarily a Democratic or Republican issue."

Olympic gymnastics champion Mary Lou Retton is in intensive care with pneumonia

By The Associated Press undefined

Olympic gymnastics champion Mary Lou Retton has pneumonia and is in intensive care in a Texas hospital.

Retton's daughter, McKenna Kelley, shared Retton's condition in an Instagram post on Tuesday. Kelley said the 55-year-old Retton, who became the first American woman to win the Olympic all-around title, is "fighting for her life" and not able to breathe on her own.

Kelley started a fundraising campaign on Retton's behalf for medical expenses. Kelley wrote that Retton does not currently have medical insurance.

Retton was 16 years old when she became an icon of the U.S. Olympic movement during her gold medal-winning performance at the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles. Retton, who grew up in Fairmont, West Virginia, also won two silver and two bronze medals at those Olympics to help bring gymnastics — a sport long dominated by eastern European powers like Romania and the Soviet Union — into the mainstream in the U.S.

Retton, a mother of four, currently lives in Texas. She retired from competitive gymnastics in 1986 and did numerous commercial endorsements. She also made several film and television appearances, including a stint on "Dancing with the Stars."

She and her husband, Shannon Kelley, divorced in 2018.

Palestinians scramble for safety as Israel pounds sealed-off Gaza Strip to punish Hamas

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and ISSAM ADWAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli warplanes hammered the Gaza Strip neighborhood by neighborhood Tuesday, reducing buildings to rubble and sending people scrambling to find safety in the tiny, sealed-off territory now suffering severe retaliation for the deadly weekend attack by Hamas militants.

Humanitarian groups pleaded for the creation of corridors to get aid into Gaza and warned that hospitals overwhelmed with wounded people were running out of supplies. Israel has stopped entry of food, fuel and medicines into Gaza, and the sole remaining access from Egypt shut down Tuesday after airstrikes hit near the border crossing.

The war, which has claimed at least 1,900 lives on both sides, is expected to escalate. The weekend attack that Hamas said was retribution for worsening conditions for Palestinians under Israeli occupation has inflamed Israel's determination to crush the group's hold in Gaza. New exchanges of fire over Israel's northern borders with militants in Lebanon and Syria on Tuesday pointed to the risk of an expanded regional conflict.

Hamas militants stormed into Israel on Saturday morning, slaying hundreds of residents in homes and streets near the Gaza border and bringing gunbattles to Israeli towns for the first time in decades. Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza hold about 150 soldiers and civilians hostage, according to Israel.

Israel stepped up its offensive on Tuesday, expanding the mobilization of reservists to 360,000. Israel's military said it had regained effective control over areas Hamas attacked in its south and of the Gaza border.

A looming question is whether Israel will launch a ground assault into Gaza — a 40-kilometer-long (25-mile) strip of land wedged among Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea that is home to 2.3 million people and has been governed by Hamas since 2007.

Rescue officials in Gaza said "large numbers" of people were still trapped under the remnants of leveled buildings, with rescue equipment and ambulances unable to reach the area.

On Tuesday, a large part of Gaza City's Rimal neighborhood was reduced to rubble after hours of airstrikes the night before. Residents found buildings torn in half or demolished to mounds of concrete and rebar. Cars were flattened and trees burned out on residential streets transformed into moonscapes.

Palestinian Civil Defense forces pulled Abdullah Musleh out of his basement together with 30 others after their apartment building was flattened.

"I sell toys, not missiles," the 46-year-old said, weeping. "I want to leave Gaza. Why do I have to stay here? I lost my home and my job."

The Israeli military said it struck hundreds of targets in Rimal, an upscale district home to ministries of the Hamas-run government, universities, media organizations and the aid agency offices.

In a new tactic, Israel is warning civilians to evacuate neighborhood after neighborhood, and then inflicting devastation, in what could be a prelude to a ground offensive. On Tuesday, the military told residents of the nearby al-Daraj neighborhood to evacuate. New explosions soon rocked it and other areas, continuing into the night.

Fighter jets returned multiple times to another neighborhood, al-Furqan, striking 450 targets in 24 hours, the Israeli military said.

One blast hit Gaza City's seaport, setting fishing boats aflame.

"There is no safe place in Gaza right now. You see decent people being killed every day," Gaza journalist Hasan Jabar said after three Palestinian journalists were killed in the Rimal bombardment. "I am genuinely afraid for my life."

On Tuesday afternoon, Hamas fired barrages of rockets toward the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon and Tel Aviv. There were no immediate reports of casualties. On Tuesday night, a group of militants entered an industrial zone in Ashkelon, sparking a gunbattle with Israeli troops, the military said. Three militants were killed, and troops were searching the area for others.

Israel's new tactics could point to its new objective.

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Four previous rounds of Israel-Hamas fighting between 2008 and 2021 all ended inconclusively, with Hamas battered but still in control. This time, Israel's government is under intense pressure from the public to topple Hamas, a goal considered unachievable in the past because it would require a reoccupation of the Gaza Strip, at least temporarily.

"The objective is for this war to end very differently from all of the previous rounds. There has to be a clear victory," said Chuck Freilich, a former deputy national security adviser in Israel. "Whatever has to be done to fundamentally change the situation will have to be done," he said.

The devastation also sharpened questions about Hamas' strategy and objectives. Hamas officials have said they planned for all possibilities, including a punishing Israeli escalation. Desperation has grown among Palestinians, many of whom see nothing to lose under unending Israeli control and increasing settlements in the West Bank, a 16-year-long blockade in Gaza and what they see as the world's apathy.

Hamas may have been counting on the fight to spread to the West Bank and possibly for Lebanon's Hezbollah to open a front in the north. Days of clashes between rock-throwing Palestinians and Israeli forces in the West Bank have left 15 Palestinians dead, but Israel has clamped down heavily on the territory, preventing movement between communities. The violence also spread into east Jerusalem, where Israeli police said they killed two Palestinians who hurled stones at police late Tuesday.

Brief exchanges of fire across Israel's northern border have taken place nearly daily. Palestinian militants fired rockets into northern Israel from Lebanon and from Syria on Tuesday, each bringing Israeli artillery and mortar fire in return. But so far they have not escalated.

In hopes of blunting the bombardment in Gaza, Hamas has threatened to kill one Israeli civilian captive any time Israel targets civilians in their homes in Gaza "without prior warning."

The militants' attack stunned Israel with a death toll unseen since the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria — and those deaths happened over a longer period of time. It brought horrific scenes of Hamas militants gunning down civilians in their homes, on streets and at a mass outdoor music festival, while dragging men, women and children into captivity.

The Israeli military said more than 1,000 people, including 155 soldiers, have been killed in Israel. In Gaza, 900 people have been killed, including 260 children and 230 women, according to authorities there; Israel says hundreds of Hamas fighters are among them. Thousands have been wounded on both sides.

U.S. President Joe Biden said Tuesday at least 14 U.S. citizens were killed in Hamas' attack and that Americans are among those being held hostage in Gaza. Biden, who spoke earlier in the day with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said "there is no justification for terrorism."

Biden added an apparent warning to Hezbollah, saying, "To any country, any organization, anyone thinking of taking advantage of the situation, I have one word: Don't."

The State Department announced that Secretary of State Antony Blinken would travel in the coming days to Israel to deliver a message of solidarity and support.

Hamas responded to Biden, saying his administration should "review its biased position" and "move away from the policy of double standards" over Palestinian rights to defend themselves against Israeli occupation.

The bodies of roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were found on Israeli territory, the military said. It wasn't clear whether those numbers overlapped with deaths reported by Palestinian authorities. Tens of thousands of people in southern Israel have been evacuated since Sunday.

In Gaza, more than 200,000 people have fled their homes, the U.N. said, the most since a 2014 air and ground offensive by Israel uprooted about 400,000. The vast majority are sheltering in schools run by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees. Damage to three water and sanitation sites have cut off services to 400,000 people, the U.N. said.

The U.N.'s World Health Organization said that supplies it had pre-positioned for seven hospitals in Gaza have already run out amid the flood of wounded. The head of the medical aid group Doctors Without Borders said surgical equipment, antibiotics, fuel and other supplies were running out at two hospitals it runs in Gaza.

'Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour' will be a blockbuster — and might shake up the movie business

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Greg Marcus has been in the movie business for years but he never expected to be urging moviegoers to take out their phones during a film — let alone to be crafting friendship bracelets in preparation for an opening weekend.

But there the chief executive and chair of the Marcus Corporation is in a promotion for his theater chain headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, stringing beads together while humming "Shake It Off."

Movie theaters are readying for an onslaught like they've never seen before, beginning Friday when "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" debuts. The concert film, compiled from several Swift shows at Southern California's SoFi Stadium, is expected to launch with \$100 million, or possibly more. Advance ticket sales worldwide have already surpassed \$100 million.

Swifties will descend. Dancing will be encouraged.

"This is different," says Marcus. "Take your phone out. Take selfies. Dance, sing, get up, have a good time. We want to create an atmosphere."

Concert films, of course, aren't anything new. Just last month, the Talking Heads classic "Stop Making Sense" returned to theaters for a decades-later encore. But "The Eras Tour" heralds something new and potentially game-changing in the movie industry.

Two of the biggest stars on the planet — Swift and Beyoncé — are heading into cinemas in first-of-their-kind deals made directly with AMC Theaters that circumvent Hollywood studios and which, for now, leave streamers waiting on the sidelines.

But how did the once declared-for-dead multiplex become the go-to place this fall a pair of stars previously at home on Netflix?

When studios began diverting some of their titles to streaming platforms, movie theaters began thinking harder about how they could fill their screens — a question exacerbated this autumn by an actors strike that's led to the postponement of big releases like "Dune: Part Two."

Movie theaters are increasingly not just a marquee of movie showtimes but a big-screen stage for a variety of visual media. BTS earlier this year released a concert film, with higher ticket prices and limited showtimes. The Metropolitan Opera has for years done popular live broadcasts in theaters.

Few acts can do what Swift and Beyoncé can. Their expected success is unlikely to be replicated. But "The Eras Tour" could be the start of an expansion of what, exactly, a movie theater can be. Think the Sphere, only much cheaper and in most towns.

"You could say we're in the movie business, but really we're in the getting-together-with-other-people business," says Marcus. "The more we do of it, the more the customers will think about it and the more talent will go: This is something I could do."

Swift's camp was motivated to get the film out even as her stadium tour continues internationally. The tour, which is projected by Pollstar to gross some \$1.4 billion, crashed Ticketmaster's site, saw sky-high resale mark-ups and left many fans priced out.

The movie, directed by Sam Wrench, would be a way for millions more to experience the Eras Tour. Adult tickets are being sold for \$19.89, a reference to her birth year and 2014 album, a re-recording of which is due out Oct. 27. That's higher than the average movie ticket but several thousand less than many tickets to see Swift live.

It's arriving uncommonly fast, too, just a little over two months since the SoFi shows. Speed was one reason Swift's father, Scott Swift, is said to have sought out a direct deal with AMC. Swift produced the film, herself, and, with 274 million followers on Instagram, didn't need a studio to promote it.

The pop star's apparent relationship with Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce has only further brightened the spotlight on the movie. According to ad tracking firm iSpot, TV ads for the film ran only a few dozen times as of Oct. 6, including several spots during NFL broadcasts. (A Marvel movie, by comparison, might run several thousand TV commercials.)

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Ticket sales will be split 43% with theaters and 57% shared by Swift and AMC — with the lion's share of that going to Swift. The film will play exclusively in theaters for at least 13 weeks — longer than many Hollywood releases do now. AMC CEO Adam Aron has called the deal "a coup for AMC" on social media.

Both AMC and representatives for Swift declined to discuss the film's release.

After a premiere in Los Angeles on Wednesday, there won't be any advance screenings until the movie begins playing at 6 p.m. local time Friday. Most wide-release movies open with Thursday showings and Friday daytime screenings. It's another wrinkle in a nontraditional release that's challenging Hollywood norms.

"Innovation comes out of challenging times in this business. We're seeing a lot of changes, some subtle, some not so subtle," says Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore. "It seems like, right now, there are no rules when it comes to being successful."

Dergarabedian believes the two concert films should help lift the North American box office to more than \$9 billion in 2023, up from the \$7.4 billion of last year and edging closer to the \$11.4 billion of 2019.

"It really opens up the idea that other types of content can play really well in a movie theater," he says.

Some of those changes have been facilitated by the abolishment of long-held antitrust restrictions governing movie distribution. After more than 70 years of regulating divisions between exhibition and distribution, the Paramount consent decrees were terminated in 2020 at the urging of the Department of Justice, with a two-year sunset period that ran until last year.

"Innovation had effectively been stunted," says Makan Delrahim, the former antitrust chief at the Justice Department who proposed ending the consent decrees.

Delrahim believes "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" — as a movie distributed by a theater chain, with non-traditional ticket prices — could "fuel new business models to save the exhibitors."

"There will be more appetite to experiment different models for theatrical distribution," Delrahim says. "The industry needs it and, frankly, so do consumers."

Meanwhile, "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" is poised to become the biggest concert film ever in about two days of release. Not accounting for inflation, 2011's "Justin Bieber: Never Say Never" holds that mark with \$73.1 million across its entire run. Accounting for inflation, it will be harder for "The Eras Tour" to catch "Woodstock," which grossed \$50 million in 1970, a total that translates to nearly \$400 million today.

In Marcus' theaters, like many other chains, there will be friendship bracelet stations. Sound systems have been modified for more of a concert feel. And while Marcus grants it will be strange to see an AMC logo before a film playing in his theaters, he doesn't particularly mind.

"I'm just happy it's there," he says.

After one week without a House speaker, Republicans appear no closer to choosing a new leader

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Republican majority is stuck, one week after the ouster of Speaker Kevin McCarthy, with lawmakers unable to coalesce around a new leader in a stalemate that threatens to keep Congress partly shuttered indefinitely.

On Tuesday evening, two leading contenders for the gavel, Majority Leader Steve Scalise and Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan, outlined their visions behind closed doors at a lengthy candidate forum. But they appeared to be splitting the vote among their Republican colleagues.

McCarthy, meanwhile, who had openly positioned himself to reclaim the gavel he just lost, told his colleagues during the private meeting not to nominate him this time. Instead, he read a poem from Mother Teresa and delivered a prayer.

"I don't know how the hell you get to 218," Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, said afterward, referring to the majority vote typically needed to seize the gavel. "It could be a long week."

House Republicans took the majority aspiring to operate as a team, and run government more like a business, but have drifted far from that goal. Just 10 months in power, the historic ouster of their House

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speaker — a first in the U.S. — and the prolonged infighting it has unleashed are undercutting the Republicans' ability to govern at a time of crisis at home and abroad.

Now, as House Republicans push ahead toward snap elections Wednesday aimed at finding a new nominee for speaker, the hard-right coalition of lawmakers that ousted McCarthy has shown what an oversized role a few lawmakers can have in choosing the successor.

"This is a hard conference to lead," said Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark. "A lot of free agents."

Both Scalise and Jordan are working furiously to shore up support. Both are easily winning over dozens of supporters and could win the majority of Republicans, about 110 votes.

But it's unclear if either Scalise or Jordan can amass the 217 votes that would be needed in a floor vote to overcome opposition from Democrats. There are currently two vacancies in the 435-seat House.

Many Republicans want to prevent the spectacle of a messy House floor fight like the grueling January brawl when McCarthy became speaker.

"We're in a similar situation that we were back in January," said Doug Heye, a former Republican leadership aide, adding the political optics of the feud look "terrible" to American voters.

Some have proposed a rules change that Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., the interim speaker pro tempore, is considering to ensure a majority vote during closed balloting Wednesday before the nominee is presented for a full floor vote.

McCarthy himself appeared to agree with a consensus approach. "They shouldn't come out of there until they decide that they have enough votes for whoever they bring to the floor," McCarthy said.

But short of a rules change, Republican lawmakers would be expected to agree to a majority-wins process — whichever candidate wins the internal private vote would be given the full backing of the Republicans on the House floor.

It's no guarantee — with trust low among House Republicans and tensions high, those normal protocols could be challenged. Both Scalise and Jordan indicated they would support the eventual nominee, lawmakers said. But many lawmakers remained undecided.

"I am not thrilled with either choice right now," said Rep. Ken Buck, a Colorado Republican who voted to oust McCarthy.

While both are conservatives from the right flank, neither Scalise nor Jordan is the heir apparent to McCarthy.

Scalise as the second-ranking Republican would be next in line for the gavel and is seen as a hero among colleagues for having survived severe injuries from a mass shooting during a congressional baseball practice in 2017. Now battling blood cancer, the Louisianan is not a clear lock.

"We're going to go get this done tomorrow, and the House is going to get back to work," Scalise said as he exited the meeting.

Jordan is a high-profile political firebrand known for his close alliance with Donald Trump, particularly when the then-president was working to overturn the results of the 2020 election, leading to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Trump has backed Jordan's bid for the gavel.

Scalise and Jordan presented similar views at the forum about cutting spending and securing the southern border with Mexico, top Republican priorities.

Several lawmakers, including Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who engineered McCarthy's ouster said they would be willing to support either Scalise or Jordan.

"I think it's a competitive race for speaker because we've got two greats," said Rep. Andy Barr, R-Ky.

Barr said he was working to help secure votes for Scalise, but would be comfortable with either candidate.

Others though, particularly more centrist conservative Republicans from districts that are narrowly split between the parties, are holding out for another choice.

"Personally, I'm still with McCarthy," said Rep. David Valadao, a Republican who represents a California district not far from the former speaker's district.

"We'll see how that plays out, but I do know a large percentage of the membership wants to be there with him as well."

McCarthy headed into the evening forum insisting he was not, at the moment, a candidate for speaker. But the California Republican gave a nod to his own short track record as speaker — being ousted by the far-right flank after he led Congress to approve a stopgap spending bill to prevent a disruptive federal government shutdown.

"I think it's important whoever takes that job is willing to risk the job for doing what's right for the American public," McCarthy said.

For now, McHenry is effectively in charge. He has shown little interest in expanding his power beyond the role he was assigned — an interim leader tasked with ensuring the election of the next speaker.

The role was created in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to ensure the continuity of government. McHenry's name was at the top of a list submitted by McCarthy when he became speaker in January.

While some Republicans, and Democrats, are open to empowering McHenry the longer he holds the temporary position, that seems unlikely as the speaker's fight drags on.

McHenry told reporters it's "my goal" to keep to the schedule to have hold a House speaker election on Wednesday. He quickly gaveled the House in and out of a brief session Tuesday, with no business conducted.

Rep. Santos faces new charges he stole donor IDs, made unauthorized charges to their credit cards

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. Rep. George Santos stole the identities of donors to his campaign and then used their credit cards to ring up tens of thousands of dollars in unauthorized charges, according to a new indictment filed Tuesday.

He then wired some of the money to his own personal bank account, prosecutors said, while using the rest to inflate his campaign coffers.

The 23-count indictment replaces one filed in May against the New York Republican charging him with embezzling money from his campaign and lying to Congress about his wealth, among other offenses.

In the updated indictment, prosecutors accuse Santos of charging more than \$44,000 to his campaign over a period of months using cards belonging to contributors without their knowledge. In one case, he charged \$12,000 to a contributor's credit card and transferred the "vast majority" of that money into his personal bank account, prosecutors said.

Santos is also accused of falsely reporting to the Federal Elections Commission that he had loaned his campaign \$500,000 when he actually hadn't given anything and had less than \$8,000 in the bank. The fake loan was an attempt to convince Republican Party officials that he was a serious candidate, worth their financial support, the indictment said.

"As alleged, Santos is charged with stealing people's identities and making charges on his own donors' credit cards without their authorization, lying to the FEC and, by extension, the public about the financial state of his campaign," U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said in a statement.

Santos came out of a two-hour Republican conference at the U.S Capitol and told reporters he had no comment on the superseding indictment. "I was in conference like everyone else, without my phone, so I have nothing to say," he said. He has previously maintained his innocence, claiming he is the victim of a "witch hunt."

The new charges deepen the legal peril for Santos, who likely faces a lengthy prison term if convicted. So far, he has resisted all calls to resign, insisting he intends to run for reelection next year.

Santos' personal and professional biography as a wealthy businessman began to unravel soon after winning election to represent parts of Long Island and Queens last year, revealing a tangled web of deception.

In addition to lying to voters — about his distinguished Wall Street background, Jewish heritage, academic and athletic achievements, animal rescue work, real estate holdings and more — Santos is accused of carrying out numerous schemes meant to enrich himself and mislead his donors.

He was initially arrested in May on a 13-count federal indictment, which charged him with using funds

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earmarked for campaign expenses on designer clothes and other personal expenses and improperly obtaining unemployment benefits meant for Americans who lost work because of the pandemic.

Free on bail while awaiting trial, Santos has described his litany of lies as victimless embellishments, while blaming some of his financial irregularities on his former campaign treasurer, Nancy Marks, who he claims "went rogue."

Last week, Marks, a longtime Long Island political bookkeeper, pleaded guilty to a fraud conspiracy charge, telling a judge she helped her former boss hoodwink prospective donors and Republican party officials by submitting bogus campaign finance reports.

Tuesday's indictment said Marks and Santos were involved in the same scheme to fake a \$500,000 campaign loan in order to meet a benchmark that would unlock additional support from a Republican Party committee. Santos has now also been charged with recording fake donations from at least 10 people, all his or Marks' relatives, as part of the same effort to make the campaign look like it hit those fundraising goals.

Santos was not initially charged in the criminal complaint against Marks, but was identified in court papers as a "co-conspirator."

The new indictment alleges a multi-part fraud by Santos, who allegedly duped both his donors and his family members.

In one instance, Santos allegedly swiped the credit card information of one of his contributors, who had already donated \$5,800 to the campaign, to give himself an additional \$15,800 in payments, the indictment said. Because the unauthorized charges exceeded contribution limits under federal law, Santos listed the additional payments as coming from his own unwitting relatives, prosecutors allege.

The credit card fraud scheme began in December 2021, prosecutors said, shortly after Santos failed to qualify for a Republican Party program that would have provided financial and logistical support to his second congressional campaign.

In text messages to Marks at the time, he described himself as "lost and desperate," prosecutors said.

Financial questions have continued to swirl around Santos, who claimed to be rich but spent much of his adulthood bouncing between low-paying jobs and unemployment, while fending off eviction cases and two separate criminal charges relating to his use of bad checks.

A separate fundraiser for Santos, Sam Miele, was also previously indicted on federal charges that he impersonated a high-ranking congressional aide while soliciting contributions for the Republican's campaign.

Prosecutors said Miele, 27, impersonated the former chief of staff to GOP Rep. Kevin McCarthy, who at the time was the House minority leader, by setting up dummy email addresses that resembled the staffer's name.

Miele's attorney, Kevin Marino, previously predicted his client would be exonerated at trial.

Fraud trial: Trump acknowledged penthouse size at 11,000 square feet, not 30,000 he later claimed

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump signed a document 30 years ago that gave the true size of his New York penthouse which was later listed as far larger on financial statements, according to evidence Tuesday at the former president's civil business fraud trial.

The evidence appeared in an email attachment shown as Allen Weisselberg, the former finance chief of Trump's company, testified in New York Attorney General Letitia James' fraud lawsuit against Trump and his Trump Organization. Trump denies any wrongdoing.

The attachment was a 1994 document, signed by Trump, that pegged his Trump Tower triplex at 10,996 square feet — not the 30,000 square feet later claimed for years on financial statements that were given to banks, insurers and others to make deals and secure loans.

Weisselberg said he recalled seeing the email but not the attachment, explaining that the attachments were documents he already had on file in the company's offices. But in any event, he said, he didn't pay

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much mind to the apartment's size because its value amounted to a fraction of Trump's wealth.

"I never even thought about the apartment. It was de minimis, in my mind," Weisselberg said, using a Latin term that means, essentially, too small to care about.

"It was not something that was that important to me when looking at a \$6 billion, \$5 billion net worth," said Weisselberg, whose questioning will resume after an ex-bank official testifies Wednesday.

Later, Weisselberg was asked about an appraisal that came in \$230 million below what Trump's financial statements showed for his Seven Springs estate north of New York City. Weisselberg said he was aware of the appraisal but didn't think the disparity was worth flagging to the outside accountants who prepared the statements.

Nevertheless, Weisselberg acknowledged signing documents certifying that financial summaries given to banks to meet loan requirements were "true, correct, and completely and fairly" represented Trump's financial condition.

Weisselberg repeatedly said he couldn't remember whether he discussed the financial statements with Trump while they were being finalized. The ex-CFO said he reviewed drafts "from a 30,000-foot level" (9,100-meter level) but paid special attention to something "very important" to Trump: the descriptions of his properties.

"It was a little bit of a marketing piece for banks to read about our properties, how well they're taken care of, that they're first-class properties," said Weisselberg, who added that Trump scrutinized the language used in such descriptions.

"He might say, 'Don't use the word "beautiful" — use the word "magnificent,"' or something like that," Weisselberg testified.

Meanwhile, in Trump's election interference case in Washington, prosecutors on Tuesday urged the judge to protect prospective jurors' identities, citing the former president's "continued use of social media as a weapon of intimidation in court proceedings." Trump lawyer John Lauro declined to comment.

In that federal criminal case, Trump has pleaded not guilty to illegally plotting to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

In New York, Weisselberg said Tuesday he learned of the Trump Tower penthouse size discrepancy only when a Forbes magazine reporter pointed it out to him in 2016. He testified that he initially disputed the magazine's findings but said he couldn't recall whether he directed anyone to look into the matter.

"You don't recall if you did anything to confirm who was right?" state lawyer Louis Solomon asked.

Weisselberg said he did not.

As Forbes zeroed in on the apartment size question in 2017, emails show, a company spokesperson told another Trump executive that, per Weisselberg, they weren't to engage on the issue. A week later, Trump's 2016 financial statement was released, using the incorrect square footage.

Over the years, Trump Organization executives had greatly boosted their estimate of the apartment's value for reasons ranging from the boss's fame to comparing it to an asking price on another triplex — though that other one ultimately sold for 60% less, another former exec testified last week.

When The Wall Street Journal wrote about the \$135 million listing for a property near Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida in 2018, Weisselberg wrote a note telling a staffer to hang onto the article and "see what it ends up selling for."

Asked Tuesday to explain, Weisselberg testified: "Anybody can ask anything for a dollar amount. That doesn't mean it's going to sell."

Weisselberg, testifying as a prosecution witness, is also a defendant in the lawsuit. He took the stand after a recent jail stint for evading taxes on perks he got while working for Trump.

James' lawsuit alleges that Weisselberg engineered Trump's financial statements to meet his demands that they show increases in his net worth and signed off on lofty valuations for assets despite appraisals to the contrary.

Trump attended the first three days of the non-jury trial last week but hasn't returned since.

Weisselberg left a New York City jail six months ago after serving 100 days for dodging taxes on \$1.7

million in extras that came with his Trump Organization job, including a Manhattan apartment, school tuition for his grandchildren and luxury cars for him and his wife.

During sworn pretrial questioning in May, Weisselberg, 76, testified that he was having trouble sleeping, started seeing a therapist and was taking a generic form of Valium as he tried to "reacclimate myself back to society."

Trump, in a pretrial deposition in April, said his former longtime lieutenant was liked and respected, and "now, he's gone through hell and back."

"What's happened to him is very sad," Trump said.

In a pretrial ruling last month, Judge Arthur Engoron found that Trump, Weisselberg and other defendants committed years of fraud by exaggerating the value of Trump's assets and net worth on his financial statements.

As punishment, Engoron ordered that a court-appointed receiver take control of some Trump companies, putting the future oversight of Trump Tower and other marquee properties in doubt. An appeals court on Friday blocked enforcement of that aspect of Engoron's ruling, at least for now.

The civil trial concerns allegations of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records. James is seeking \$250 million in penalties and a ban on Trump doing business in New York.

Star witness Caroline Ellison says FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried hoped to be US president someday

By KEN SWEET and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Caroline Ellison, the tech executive who ran Sam Bankman-Fried's hedge fund while sometimes dating him, testified Tuesday that he directed her to commit crimes before his cryptocurrency empire collapsed last November. She also revealed that her former boss thought he might be U.S. president someday.

With Bankman-Fried watching from his courtroom seat, Ellison, 28, said at the New York City trial that she committed fraud, conspiracy to commit fraud and money laundering with Bankman-Fried and others as they stole from customers and investors in FTX, a company Bankman-Fried started, and lenders to his hedge fund, Alameda Research.

"He directed me to commit these crimes," she said of Bankman-Fried.

Repeatedly, Ellison made clear that Bankman-Fried was behind the biggest financial moves in his companies, to the point that bitcoins he created were sometimes called "Sam's coins."

She described him as "very ambitious" and envisioning eventually leading huge companies and using his money influentially, especially in politics.

He even thought there was a 5% chance he'd become president someday, Ellison said.

"When you say president, what are you referring to?" asked Assistant U.S. Attorney Danielle Sassoon.

"Of the United States," Ellison answered.

Shortly after Ellison's highly anticipated turn on the witness stand began, she was asked to identify Bankman-Fried in the courtroom. The bespectacled Ellison stood and scanned the courtroom for a long minute, at first unable to spot him, before gesturing his way with a flip of her hand and saying he was "over there wearing a suit."

The appearance of Bankman-Fried, who sat with his lawyers, has changed dramatically recently as he has lost weight and trimmed his well-known wild coif into a tightly cropped look more traditional among financial professionals.

Bankman-Fried, 31, could face decades in prison if he is convicted of charges lodged against him when he was brought to the United States from the Bahamas last December. He has pleaded not guilty.

Bankman-Fried was one of the world's wealthiest people on paper, with an estimated net worth of \$32 billion, when his cryptocurrency businesses collapsed as investors and customers sought to empty their accounts last November. Bankruptcy proceedings followed as prosecutors alleged that stolen funds were used to fund his businesses, make donations and contribute to political campaigns in the hopes of influ-

encing cryptocurrency regulation in Washington.

Ellison testified under a cooperation deal that could win her leniency at sentencing. It could also be pivotal when the jury decides Bankman-Fried's fate on the seven counts he faces.

Bankman-Fried has been jailed since August, when Judge Lewis A. Kaplan concluded he'd tried to influence Ellison and other potential trial witnesses and could no longer be trusted to await trial under a \$250 million bond and confinement to his parent's Palo Alto, California, home.

As Ellison testified, several of her friends or online fans were in attendance. In an overflow courtroom where spectators could watch on a television monitor, some of them, smiles on their faces, rushed toward a screen to see her up close.

Ellison, a Stanford University graduate who majored in math, met Bankman-Fried while working as an intern at the investment firm Jane Street before joining his company soon after he formed Alameda Research in 2017.

She said she discovered that the company was "in much worse shape than I realized," a place suffering large losses with lenders pulling out a lot of their money and over half the staff quitting.

Ellison said she asked Bankman-Fried why he had not warned her and he "apologized and he said that he hadn't known how to tell me."

Ellison seemed composed throughout the testimony, even when it touched on her romantic relationship with Bankman-Fried. By fall 2018, soon after she joined Alameda, "we started sleeping together on and off," she said. By summer 2020, they were in a romantic relationship that they kept secret, she added.

By summer 2021, they had broken up, but they resumed the relationship in fall 2021, letting people know this time, before splitting for good in spring 2022, she said.

Eventually, Bankman-Fried installed Ellison as chief executive at Alameda, where she was paid \$200,000 in salary. Her biggest bonus of \$20 million came in 2021.

Ellison said Bankman-Fried set up systems that enabled Alameda to withdrawal unlimited sums of money from FTX accounts and he "directed us to take FTX money to repay our loans."

She said Alameda eventually withdrew up to \$14 billion from FTX, although some was paid back.

Some money, she said, went to political donations, including \$35 million funneled through one political operative to Republican candidates and another \$10 million that Bankman-Fried steered to President Joe Biden, money that she said Bankman-Fried thought bought him a measure of influence and recognition.

Ellison's testimony immediately followed testimony over three days from Gary Wang, an FTX cofounder and another key figure in Bankman-Fried's inner circle. He also testified under a plea agreement with prosecutors that he was directed by the defendant to set up software loopholes that allowed Alameda to drain FTX accounts of unlimited funds.

Biden's hopes for establishing Israel-Saudi relations could become a casualty of the new Mideast war

By AAMER MADHANI and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than three weeks ago, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sat beside President Joe Biden and marveled that a "historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia" seemed within reach — a diplomatic advance that he predicted could lead to lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Biden was equally optimistic, telling Netanyahu during their meeting in New York, "If you and I — 10 years ago — were talking about normalization with Saudi Arabia, I think we'd look at each other like, 'Who's been drinking what?'"

Now, the outbreak of war between Israel and the Palestinians after a devastating Hamas attack on Israeli soil is threatening to delay or derail the yearslong, country-by-country diplomatic push by the United States to improve relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

The so-called normalization push, which began under former President Donald Trump's administration and was branded as the Abraham Accords, is an ambitious effort to reshape the region and boost Israel's

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standing in historic ways. But critics have warned that it skips past Palestinian demands for statehood.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Hamas attacks may have been driven in part by a desire to scuttle the United States' most ambitious part of the initiative: the sealing of diplomatic relations between rivals Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Middle East's two greatest powers share a common enemy in Iran, a generous military and financial sponsor of Hamas.

Such a pact between Jerusalem and Riyadh would be a legacy-defining achievement for Biden, Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It's one that could pave the way for even more Arab and Muslim-majority nations to abandon their rejection of Israel since its 1948 founding in lands long inhabited by Palestinians. Under Trump, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco all signed on to normalization agreements with Israel.

But the startling attack by Hamas — and much of the Arab world's response to it — has also raised new questions about whether Palestinian ambitions for sovereignty can be put aside while the U.S. tries to help Israel move ahead with improving relations with the rest of its Middle East neighbors.

With Netanyahu vowing to turn all Hamas hideouts in Gaza into rubble, the region is now bracing for even more death and destruction and an expansive military operation by Israel. Biden in an address Tuesday condemned the Hamas operation as "sheer evil."

"We're going to see a rather significant operation from air, land and sea that costs many, many, many lives," said Steven Cook, a senior fellow for Middle East and Africa Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. "I think this dynamic of normalization will likely slow down or come to a halt, at least for a period of time."

The attacks were a shock to American, Israeli and Saudis officials, who all were riding high on the prospect that an Israeli-Saudi agreement was starting to come into focus.

Netanyahu, in a CNN interview last month, called the potential pact "a quantum leap" for the region. The Saudi crown prince also noted the steady progress, telling Fox News Channel, "every day we get closer."

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan noted at a recent event hosted by The Atlantic that challenges in the Mideast remained, but the amount of time he was spending on crisis and conflict in the region compared with his recent predecessors was "significantly reduced."

"The Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades," Sullivan said.

In a matter of days, that optimism has vanished.

Social media showed crowds take to the streets with Palestinian flags in Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait and elsewhere in the hours after the Hamas attack. A policeman in Egypt's coastal city of Alexandria opened fire on Israeli tourists, killing two Israelis and one Egyptian.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry in a statement soon after the attacks did not condemn Hamas. Instead, the ministry noted that it had repeatedly warned that Israel's "occupation, the deprivation of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights, and the repetition of systematic provocations" led to this moment.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby declined to comment on the Saudi response.

"We still believe that normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia is not only good for the people of those two nations but for the American people and for everybody else in the region, and we have every intention to continue to encourage a process where normalization can occur," Kirby said.

Yousef Munayyer, who heads the Palestine-Israel program at the Arab Center, a Washington think tank, said the Saudis in their statement were reminding the administration that "we've been telling you guys over and over again that if you ignore the Palestine issue the region's going to explode. And I think there's just been a tremendous amount of hubris on the part of the Biden administration thinking they could do that."

To be certain, Biden and U.S. officials have privately made clear to Netanyahu that any deal needed to include significant concessions for Palestinians, although members of Netanyahu's far-right coalition have made clear that an independent Palestinian state is not something they'd abide.

The Saudis had said they, too, expected Israel to make concessions. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said "there is no other way" to solve the conflict than by establishing a Palestinian state.

Other allies in the region had also underscored that Palestinian concerns could not be overlooked.

King Abdullah II of Jordan, whose country in the early 1990s became the second Arab nation after Egypt

to sign a peace deal with Israel, told a global summit last month that the prospect of a normalization deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel offered promise for the Middle East but no guarantee of stability in itself.

"This belief, by some in the region, that you can parachute over Palestine, deal with the Arabs and work your way back — that does not work," the Jordanian king said then. "And even those countries that have Abraham Accords with Israel have difficulty moving publicly on those issues when Israelis and Palestinians are dying. So unless we solve this problem, there will never be a true peace."

U.S. officials say they intend to press ahead, but they also acknowledge efforts are unlikely to bear fruit while there is an active conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The State Department announced Tuesday that Blinken will travel to Israel and Jordan Wednesday through Friday to consult with senior officials.

Analysts note that the Saudis have reason not to walk away from efforts at forging a normalization deal.

Mark Dubowitz, CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said that in the long term bin Salman is looking to diversify the oil-rich kingdom's economy and strengthen its security. As part of any pact, Saudi Arabia is pushing Biden for a nuclear cooperation deal and defense guarantees from the U.S.

"He needs normalization and will continue to move forward," Dubowitz predicted. Of the crown prince, Dubowitz added, "the Saudis had better be careful because they are playing with fire in Washington."

Biden interview in special counsel documents investigation suggests sprawling probe near conclusion

By ERIC TUCKER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's interview with prosecutors over his handling of classified documents signals that a sprawling investigation that has included questioning of some of his closest aides and at least one cabinet member is nearing a conclusion.

The White House revealed Monday night that Biden was interviewed on Sunday and Monday by special counsel Robert Hur's team, meaning he was fielding questions from investigators during the same hours that his administration was consumed by the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. It's a familiar dynamic for a president who over the last year has had to fulfill his duties as commander in chief while dealing with scrutiny over his own classified records retention and the legal problems of his recently indicted son, Hunter.

"As president, he has to do multiple things at once," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters Tuesday.

Agents and prosecutors typically save interviews of subjects for the final days of an investigation, a sign that Hur's nine-month-old probe is likely near the end. Because Hur is a Justice Department special counsel, the conclusion of the probe will likely be accompanied by the release of a report laying out his team's findings. A Justice Department spokesman declined to comment Tuesday on the interview or when the investigation might end.

The investigation so far appears to present no legal jeopardy for Biden. There has been no public indication that he or anyone else in his orbit intentionally mishandled classified documents. In addition, Justice Department legal opinions have held that sitting presidents cannot be indicted.

But the political cloud surrounding the issue isn't going anywhere. The investigation is on course to wrap up in the heart of Biden's reelection campaign. And Republican front-runner Donald Trump, indicted by a different Justice Department special counsel over his own mishandling of classified documents, has repeatedly claimed Biden has received special treatment.

Since being appointed to the job last January, Hur and his team have cast a broad net, interviewing current and former Biden aides about the mechanics of how documents with classified markings were processed and stored. Among those questioned, according to people familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the probe, are former chief of staff Ron Klain, national security adviser Jake Sullivan, former White House Counsel Dana Remus and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The investigation has centered on how roughly 25 to 30 documents with classification markings, from Biden's time as vice president and as a senator, wound up stored improperly in his Delaware home and in

a private office in Washington he used after his service in the Obama administration. Some of the documents were found during searches of his office and Wilmington home by Biden's lawyers and others during an FBI search that Biden's team agreed to voluntarily.

Even as Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed a special counsel to investigate potential crimes in how the documents were handled, Biden and his team have sought to play down the severity of the matter. The president has said he was unaware that he had the records and insisted "there's no there there" to the investigation.

From the start, the investigation unfolded alongside a far more perilous probe of Trump's handling of classified documents. Though the existence of the investigation may have blunted Biden's ability to forcefully castigate Trump for his own mishandling of classified records, it seems to have had little bearing on the Justice Department's decision to charge Trump.

The former president was indicted in June on charges that he illegally retained top secret government documents at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, and obstructed government demands to give them back. While Trump claims that he was being prosecuted for political reasons by the Biden administration's Justice Department, the indictment against him lays bare significant allegations of obstruction and intentional mishandling that have been absent from the Biden investigation.

Where the Trump probe has been laden with moments that hinted at the legal jeopardy he faced, including testimony before a secret grand jury by one of Trump's lawyers, there's been no public sign in the Biden investigation that prosecutors are even using a grand jury, an essential vehicle for seeking an indictment. The absence of a grand jury could also suggest that the interviews prosecutors are doing have all been voluntary in nature and that they have not needed to rely on subpoenas to secure sit-downs with witnesses.

Ian Sams, a spokesperson for the White House counsel's office, said in a statement that the interview with Biden was voluntary. "As we have said from the beginning, the President and the White House are cooperating with this investigation," he said.

It is hardly unprecedented for sitting presidents to be interviewed in criminal investigations.

President George W. Bush sat for a 70-minute interview as part of an investigation into the leak of the identity of a CIA operative. President Bill Clinton in 1998 underwent more than four hours of questioning from independent counsel Kenneth Starr before a federal grand jury.

Special counsel Robert Mueller's team negotiated with lawyers for Trump for an interview when he was president but Trump never sat for one. His lawyers instead submitted answers to written questions.

Vikings to put Justin Jefferson on injured reserve for minimum 4-game absence, AP source confirms

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings will place wide receiver Justin Jefferson on injured reserve, according to a person with knowledge of the decision, forcing the 2022 NFL Offensive Player of the Year to miss at least the next four games because of a hamstring injury.

The person confirmed the decision to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Tuesday because the Vikings had not finalized the move.

Jefferson slipped on the U.S. Bank Stadium turf while trying to make a cut on his route during a third-down pass deep in Kansas City territory and limped slowly to the sideline after grabbing the back of his right leg in the fourth quarter of the 27-20 loss to the Chiefs.

Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell, speaking to reporters on Monday, made it clear the team would be extra cautious with their most important and extremely competitive player.

"We're going to have to, medically, make a good decision and help almost protect him from himself a little bit in a way, where we have to take care of him and get him back to 100%," O'Connell said.

Without Jefferson, Kirk Cousins and the Vikings will have to lean hard on rookie Jordan Addison, their first-round draft pick who is off to a promising start. Fellow wide receivers K.J. Osborn and Brandon Powell will have their roles elevated, and tight end T.J. Hockenson will be even more vital on third downs.

Addison has 19 catches for 249 yards and three touchdowns in his first five games.

"I'm very confident in that group," O'Connell said.

The Vikings could hardly have had a worse setback after losing four of their first five games, all by eight points or fewer. Their entire offense is built around Jefferson, who has set all kinds of all-time records just five games into his fourth NFL season. He has 36 catches for 571 yards and three touchdowns and never has missed a game in his career until now.

Minnesota (1-4) plays at Chicago (1-4) on Sunday.

X promises 'highest level' response on posts about Israel-Hamas war. Misinformation still flourishes

By MATT O'BRIEN and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

The social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, says it is struggling with a flood of posts sharing graphic media, violent speech and hateful conduct about the Israel-Hamas war. But it has received a broadside of criticism, including from a top European Union official, questioning the adequacy of the response.

Outside watchdog groups said misinformation about the war abounds on the platform, whose workforce — including its content moderation team — was gutted by billionaire Elon Musk after he bought it last year.

Fake and manipulated imagery circulating on X include "repurposed old images of unrelated armed conflicts or military footage that actually originated from video games," said a Tuesday letter to Musk from European Commissioner Thierry Breton. "This appears to be manifestly false or misleading information."

Breton, the EU's digital rights chief, also warned Musk that authorities have been flagging "potentially illegal content" that could violate EU laws and "you must be timely, diligent and objective" in removing it when warranted.

San Francisco-based X didn't immediately respond to a request for comment about Breton's letter.

A post late Monday from X's safety team claimed it is treating the crisis with utmost effort: "In the past couple of days, we've seen an increase in daily active users on @X in the conflict area, plus there have been more than 50 million posts globally focusing on the weekend's terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas. As the events continue to unfold rapidly, a cross-company leadership group has assessed this moment as a crisis requiring the highest level of response."

That includes continuing a policy frequently championed by Musk of letting users help rate what might be misinformation, which causes those posts to include a note of context but not disappear from the platform.

The struggle to identify reliable sources for news about the war was exacerbated over the weekend by Musk, who on Sunday posted the names of two accounts he said were "good" for "following the war in real-time." Analyst Emerson Brooking of the Atlantic Council called one of those accounts "absolutely poisonous." Journalists and X users also pointed out that both accounts had previously shared a fake AI-generated image of an explosion at the Pentagon, and that one of them had posted numerous antisemitic comments in recent months. Musk later deleted his post.

Brooking posted on X that Musk had enabled fake war reporting by abandoning the blue check verification system for trusted accounts and allowing anyone to buy a blue check.

Brooking said Tuesday that it is "significantly harder to determine ground truth in this conflict as compared to Russia's invasion of Ukraine" last year and "Elon Musk bears personal responsibility for this."

He said Musk's changes to the X platform have made it impossible to quickly assess the credibility of accounts while his "introduction of view monetization has created perverse incentives for war-focused accounts to post as many times as possible, even unverified rumors, and to make the most salacious claims possible."

"War is always a cauldron of tragedy and disinformation; Musk has made it worse," he added. Further, Brooking said via email "Musk has repeatedly and purposefully denigrated the idea of an objective media, and he made platform design decisions that undermine such reporting. We now see the result."

Part of Musk's drastic changes over the past year included removing many of the people responsible for moderating toxic content and harmful misinformation.

One former member of Twitter's public policy team said the company is having a harder time taking action on posts that violate its policies because there aren't enough people to do that work.

"The layoffs are undermining the capacity of Twitter's trust and safety team, and associated teams like public policy, to provide needed support during a critical time of crisis," said Theodora Skeadas, one of thousands of employees who lost their jobs in the months after Musk bought the company.

X says it changed one policy over the weekend to enable people to more easily choose whether or not to see sensitive media without the company actually taking down those posts.

"X believes that, while difficult, it's in the public's interest to understand what's happening in real time," its statement said.

The company said it is also removing newly created Hamas-affiliated accounts and working with other tech companies to try to prevent "terrorist content" from being distributed online. It said it is "also continuing to proactively monitor for antisemitic speech as part of all our efforts. Plus we've taken action to remove several hundred accounts attempting to manipulate trending topics."

Linda Yaccarino, whom Elon Musk named in May as the top executive at X, withdrew from an upcoming three-day tech conference where she was scheduled to speak, citing the need to focus on how the platform was handling the war.

"With the global crisis unfolding, Linda and her team must remain fully focused on X platform safety," X told the organizers of the WSJ Tech Live conference being held next week in Laguna Beach, California.

Biden confirms Americans among hostages captured in Israel, condemns 'sheer evil' of Hamas militants

By AAMER MADHANI, TARA COPP and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday confirmed that U.S. citizens are among the hostages captured by Hamas as he condemned the militant group for the "sheer evil" of its shocking weekend assault on Israel.

"Our hearts may be broken but our resolve is clear," said Biden, who compared the brutality of the Hamas militants to that of the Islamic State terrorist group. He added: "Let there be no doubt. The United States has Israel's back. We'll make sure the Jewish and democratic state of Israel can defend itself today, tomorrow as we always have."

The president coupled his unflinching defense for Israel with only a glancing reference to the suffering that innocent Palestinians are enduring from Israel's barrage of retaliatory fire on the Gaza Strip, where the Hamas attack was launched. That hardline approach could prove more difficult to sustain going forward if, as expected, the humanitarian crisis for the Palestinians worsens as Israel expands its military operation to root out Hamas.

Biden took note of the impact on Americans as well. He said the number of U.S. citizens confirmed to have been killed in the fighting has reached 14, up from 11 reported previously. U.S. officials said that death toll could increase further as some 20 Americans remain unaccounted for.

"There's no justification for terrorism. There's no excuse," Biden said. "Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination. Their stated purpose is the annihilation of the state of Israel and the murder of Jewish people. They use Palestinian civilians as human shields."

Hamas responded to Biden's remarks with a statement defending its actions, saying they were fighting against an occupation and defending Palestinians' right to self-determination. Hamas called on Biden to "move away from the policy of double standards" when it comes to Israel.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris spoke by phone earlier Tuesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss the unfolding situation. Biden outlined the actions he and other allies have taken to support Israel in the aftermath of the attack and expressed his horror about "sickening" reports of torture inflicted by militants on civilians.

Biden, in his public remarks and statements since Hamas launched its attacks, has repeatedly empha-

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sized his shock over the breadth and brutality of the Hamas assault — a blitz by land, sea and air that surprised Israeli and U.S. intelligence and that has killed hundreds Israelis and left even more wounded.

Retaliatory strikes by Israel on the Gaza Strip have also left hundreds of dead and wounded Palestinians in the blockaded 141-square-mile area, one the poorest places in the world. The death toll was expected to grow as Israel pummeled Gaza with airstrikes and sent tens of thousands of Palestinians fleeing into U.N. shelters.

Biden said he has directed his team to share intelligence and military experts to consult and advise Israelis.

He renewed his warnings to adversaries who might want to exploit the turmoil. "Let me say again to any country, any organization, anyone thinking of taking advantage of the situation," Biden said. "I have one word: Don't."

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the U.S. does not know the precise number of Americans taken hostage. He said that the U.S., at the moment, has no plans of putting U.S. troops on the ground.

"As president I have no higher priority than the safety of Americans being held hostage around the world," Biden said.

Biden is also dispatching his top diplomat to Israel to show U.S. support after the attacks, the State Department said Tuesday.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Secretary of State Antony Blinken would travel in the coming days to deliver a message of solidarity and support. He said Blinken will also "talk about what additional resources we can give them."

Blinken will leave Wednesday and is expected to arrive Thursday.

The White House on Monday confirmed that it has already begun delivering critically needed munitions and military equipment to Israel, and the Pentagon was reviewing its inventories to see what else can be sent quickly to boost its ally in the war against Hamas.

The Ford carrier strike group has arrived in the far Eastern Mediterranean, within range to provide a host of air support or long-range strike options for Israel if requested, but also to surge U.S. military presence there to prevent the war from spilling over into a more dangerous regional conflict, officials said.

The Pentagon has said that the U.S. warplanes, destroyers and cruisers that sailed with the Ford will conduct maritime and air operations which could include intelligence collection, interdictions and long-range strikes.

Along with the Ford, the U.S. is sending the cruiser USS Normandy and destroyers USS Thomas Hudner, USS Ramage, USS Carney and USS Roosevelt, and the U.S. is augmenting Air Force F-35, F-15, F-16, and A-10 fighter aircraft squadrons in the region.

Sullivan said the U.S. has already replenishing munitions for Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system from U.S. stock that was already staged in country. The U.S. was in the process of sending additional interceptors and the administration was looking at additional ways it can help augment Israel air defense capabilities, Sullivan said.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters traveling with him Tuesday to a Ukraine contact group meeting in Brussels that a small group of U.S. special operations forces is also working with the Israelis to help with planning and intelligence.

Americans have had a gloomy outlook on Biden's performance on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Six in 10 Americans (61%) disapproved of how Biden was handling the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, according to an August poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About one-third (35%) of U.S. adults approved, which was slightly lower than Biden's overall approval rating of 42% in the same poll.

Four in 10 Americans (44%) said the U.S. gives about the right amount of support to Israel in the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say the U.S. should offer more support to Israel. Four in 10 Americans (42%) said the correct amount of support is given to the Palestinians. Democrats and Independents were more likely than Republicans to say the

Palestinians should receive more support.

The current crisis seems certain to further test public sentiment about Biden's Mideast foreign policy approach.

The Biden White House has pointed to its handling of the last conflict between Israel and Gaza in 2021 as playing a crucial part in limiting the length and loss of life in a war that stretched over 11 days and killed at least 250 people in Gaza and 13 in Israel.

During the 2021 conflict, Biden limited his public commentary while pressing Netanyahu in private to end it. His behind-the-scenes effort played out even as some of the president's fellow Democrats pressured him to speak out against the Israelis as the death toll climbed in Gaza and as tens of thousands of Palestinians were displaced by the aerial bombardment, White House officials said at the time.

But this conflict is unlikely to end so quickly. Domestic and international pressure could quickly mount on Biden to pressure Netanyahu to wind down operations to prevent the suffering of innocent Gazans.

Netanyahu said Saturday that civilians in Gaza should leave areas near where Hamas is operating as the Israeli military planned to take defining action against the the militant group.

Sullivan said U.S. government officials have discussed details with Israel and Egyptian officials about where people in Gaza should go.

But Biden seemed to make clear that he's not asking Netanyahu to show restraint.

"Like every nation in the world, Israel has the right to respond, indeed has a duty to respond to these vicious attacks," Biden said.

Biden's second try at student loan cancellation moves forward with debate over the plan's details

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's second attempt at student loan cancellation moved forward Tuesday with a first round of negotiations to help guide the administration to a new plan.

The Biden administration vowed to try again after the Supreme Court rejected an earlier plan in June. In opening remarks at Tuesday's hearing, Under Secretary of Education James Kvaal said the debt crisis threatens to undercut the promise of higher education.

"Student loan debt in this country has grown so large that it siphons off the benefits of college for many students," Kvaal said in prepared remarks. "Some loans made to young adults stretch into retirement with no hope of being repaid. These debt burdens are shared by families and communities."

Biden directed the Education Department to find another path to loan relief after conservatives on the high court ruled that he couldn't cancel loans using a 2003 law called the HEROES Act.

The latest attempt will rest on a sweeping law known as the Higher Education Act, which gives the education secretary authority to waive student loans, although how far that power extends is the subject of legal debate.

The Education Department hopes to settle the dispute by adding federal rules that clarify when the secretary can waive student loans. To change those rules, however, the department is required to assemble a committee of outside negotiators to help hash out details.

The first day of negotiations, held virtually, lasted more than five hours but appeared to bring the department no closer to clarity. Much of the discussion centered on the shortcomings of existing student loan cancellation programs or problems caused by student loan interest.

Department officials repeatedly intervened to say those problems don't fall under the scope of the current process.

The negotiators all come from outside the federal government and represent a range of viewpoints on student loans. The panel includes students and officials from a range of colleges, along with loan servicers, state officials and advocates including the NAACP.

It's unclear who will be eligible for forgiveness under the new plan and how much relief they would get. Those details will be decided after the administration takes input from the negotiators, who meet in a

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series of sessions scheduled to continue into December.

Responding to suggestions from the panel, administration officials said they aren't considering blanket cancellation.

"We are not looking at a broad-based debt cancellation where we are going to wipe off debt in its entirety. We are looking at individual ways that the secretary can exercise the authority to grant waivers," said Tamy Abernathy, who leads a policy group in the department.

She later clarified that the department's next proposal "could cancel some borrowers' debt completely, but it could not cancel all borrowers debt completely."

At the end of the process, negotiators will vote on a proposed rule drafted with input from their discussions. If they reach consensus on a proposal, the department will move forward with it. If they don't, the agency will propose its own plan, which can be finalized after a public comment period.

The Education Department routinely uses negotiated rulemaking to enact federal regulation, and it's required for any regulation related to student financial aid. It can be a long and painstaking process, and it often finishes without consensus among negotiators.

Biden has called for a new plan to help "as many borrowers as possible," but it's unclear whether it will be as expansive as his first proposal. That plan would have canceled up to \$20,000 in federal student loans for borrowers with incomes below \$125,000 or couples below \$250,000.

Republicans rallied against the cancellation, saying it would add an unfair benefit for college graduates at the expense of millions of taxpayers who didn't attend college. In 2022, about 47% of Americans age 25 or older had at least an associate degree, along with 15% who went to college but had no degree, according to the Census Bureau.

The administration plans to finalize the new rule sometime next year, but Education Secretary Miguel Cardona has declined to say if it will be in place before next fall's presidential election. In a recent interview with The Associated Press, he said he's working "as quickly as possible."

He also noted that the court's ruling "will have to factor in to the steps we take moving forward."

Some legal analysts see the court's decision as a rejection of any mass cancellation without action from Congress. The court concluded that the education secretary has power "to make modest adjustments and additions to existing provisions, not transform them."

As a starting point for negotiators, the Education Department published an issue paper outlining some of the primary questions that will be up for debate. It offers few clues on the department's vision for loan cancellation, but it identifies five groups of borrowers who may be in need of relief.

Negotiators are being asked how the agency should help:

- Borrowers whose interest grows so much that their balances exceed what they initially owed;
- Those who are eligible for loan cancellation under existing income-driven repayment plans but have not applied for those programs;
- Those who borrowed loans to attend college programs that didn't lead to jobs with enough earnings to repay their loans;
- Borrowers with older loans taken out before Congress created benefits meant to ease the burden of student debt;
- Those who face hardships "that the current student loan system does not adequately address."

It also asks negotiators to discuss the types of factors that would merit loan cancellation. The paper notes that, when deciding whether to collect on debt, some other federal agencies consider whether it "would be against equity and good conscience," or if it would "impose financial hardship."

At a White House briefing last week, Biden drew attention to the problem of ballooning interest. Many college graduates have been making payments for years, he said, "but because of interest, they still owe more than they originally borrowed."

"My administration is doing everything it can to deliver student debt relief to as many as we can, as fast as we can," Biden said.

The negotiators will meet virtually for two-day sessions on Nov. 6 and Dec. 11.

US Border Patrol has released thousands of migrants on San Diego's streets, taxing charities

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Over five years, the largest U.S. city on the Mexican border developed a well-oiled system to shelter asylum-seekers.

That system is being tested like never before as U.S. Customs and Border Protection releases migrants to the streets of California's second-largest city because shelters are full. Since Sept. 13, about 13,000 have been dropped at transit stations with notices to appear in immigration court at their final destinations in the U.S., with about 500 more arriving daily.

Migrant aid groups blame a mix of circumstances for the shelter crunch: reduced government funding; CBP's practice of sending migrants from Texas and Arizona to be processed in San Diego; and a surge in illegal crossings. Last week, President Joe Biden's administration advanced plans for a border wall in Texas' Rio Grande Valley and said it would resume deportation flights to Venezuela.

Before they are released in San Diego, some migrants being dropped off have been waiting between a double-layer border wall or camping under Border Patrol watch in remote mountains east of the city. CBP closed a major pedestrian border crossing from Tijuana, Mexico, on Sept. 14 and assigned more officials to processing migrants.

"Many do not know where they are, that this is San Diego, this is (the) San Diego region, the nearest airport is San Diego and how to get to their final destination. That is what we're trying to provide support with," said Paulina Reyes-Perrariz, managing attorney for Immigrant Defenders Law Center's cross-border initiative.

Illegal crossings topped a daily average of more than 8,000 last month after a lull following the start of new asylum restrictions in May had diminishing impact and people from dozens of countries, notably Venezuela, were drawn by prospects of jobs and safety.

Similar to other U.S. border cities, about 95% of migrants in San Diego quickly move to other parts of the country. That's a sharp contrast to cities far from the border, such as New York and Chicago. But the constant churn of exhausted, disoriented migrants from more than 100 countries has created other strains that the San Diego County government calls "an unprecedented humanitarian crisis."

Last week, after a community recreation center could no longer handle the flow of migrants, the Border Patrol resumed drop-offs at a transit center. Arrivals from China, India, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and many west African countries filled a parking lot to charge phones, eat, use the bathroom and wait for free shuttle buses to the airport. "Is California far from here?" an Eritrean man asked volunteers.

Shuttles were announced in Spanish and Arabic. Al Otro Lado, a group aiding migrants, is seeking volunteers who speak Russian, Pashto, Creole, French, Portuguese, Amharic, Hindi, Mandarin, Somali, Turkish and Vietnamese.

"It's a brief moment of intervention before they can move on to be connected with their loved ones," said Kate Clark, senior director for immigrant services at Jewish Family Service of San Diego.

Shelters still accommodate families with young children, members of the LGBTQ+ community, the elderly and medically frail. The drop-offs are largely for single adults.

Since 2018, Jewish Family Service of San Diego and Catholic Charities together have helped more than 430,000 migrants in the region.

But Catholic Charities of San Diego recently halved capacity at the two hotels where it houses migrants to about 800 people, who stay an average of less than two days, said CEO Vino Pajaror. "The major issue" is less federal funding as San Diego competes with New York and other cities for support to aid migrants, he said.

Jewish Family Service has maintained shelter capacity at about 950 at a hotel and another large facility.

CBP did not respond to questions about the drop-offs. The Department of Homeland Security said last month that it has given \$790 million for migrant shelters this year and asked Congress for an additional

\$600 million.

Aid groups say government support is needed even for the services at the San Diego transit center parking lot, where migrants get travel advice from volunteers over the steady noise of railroad crossing bells and bus horns. County supervisors voted Tuesday to spend \$3 million to provide airport shuttles, internet connectivity, snacks and other basic services to migrants for three months.

The Border Patrol dropped off about 400 migrants by early afternoon one recent day as airport shuttles left about every hour. Overnight camping is prohibited. Migrants with flights within 24 hours are encouraged to wait at the airport.

The parking lot was a brief stop for Pedro Cardenas, 30, who was booked on a red-eye flight to Newark, New Jersey, after a grueling trip from Guayaquil, Ecuador. Smugglers squeezed about 14 migrants in a vehicle meant for five, forcing them to go hours without water or a bathroom break.

Cardenas, a mechanic on mining equipment, said violence and lack of work prompted him to leave his wife and child behind. He hopes to return with savings to buy land in Ecuador.

"I feel safer," he said. "I feel happy but sad at the same time because I am not with my family."

As night fell, volunteers at a church with room for 40 people sought to make sure no one would sleep on the streets. Rincon Marin, 26, arrived too late in the day for a flight to his final destination in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and accepted the church's offer with a fellow Colombian who was headed to Columbus, Ohio.

"Happy, content," Marin said to describe his feelings before rushing off to brush his teeth at a portable sink and squeeze into a car on his way to overnight lodging.

FACT FOCUS: Misinformation about the Israel-Hamas war is flooding social media. Here are the facts

Associated Press undefined

In the days since Hamas militants stormed into Israel on Saturday morning, a flood of videos and photos purporting to show the conflict have filled social media, making it difficult for onlookers from around the world to sort fact from fiction.

While plenty of real imagery and accounts of the ensuing carnage have emerged, they have been intermingled with users pushing false claims and misrepresenting videos from other events.

Among the fabrications, users have shared false claims that a top Israeli commander had been kidnapped, circulated a doctored White House memo purporting to show President Joe Biden announcing billions in aid for Israel, and pushed old and unrelated videos of Russian President Vladimir Putin with inaccurate English captions.

Here is a closer look at the misinformation spreading online — and the facts.

CLAIM: Nimrod Aloni, a top general in the Israeli army, was captured by Hamas militants during a deadly incursion Saturday into southern Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip.

THE FACTS: There's no truth to this claim, a spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces confirmed. Aloni was seen Sunday at a meeting of top Israeli military officials.

The erroneous claim that Aloni was one of the hostages taken by Hamas spread widely online Saturday after the militant group attacked Israel.

"Palestinian resistance fighters capture Israeli commander Nimrod Aloni along with dozens of other Israeli soldiers as the resistance fighters attacked neighbouring occupied towns and Israeli check posts near Gaza," stated one Instagram post that received more than 43,000 likes.

But Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the IDF's chief military spokesman, told reporters on Saturday that claims Aloni was captured are "not true."

Aloni clearly appears 10 seconds into a video posted to the Israeli military's official YouTube channel of top IDF officials discussing the war on Sunday. Sunday's date can be seen on a slide in the background. The IDF also published online four images from the meeting. The one on the lower right shows Aloni on the far right.

The Israeli army confirmed to The Associated Press that Aloni is the man in the video and image.

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Hamas militants are holding Israeli civilians and soldiers hostage in Gaza, the Israeli military has confirmed. The militants have cautioned that they will kill a hostage every time Israel's military bombs civilian targets in the Gaza Strip without warning.

— Associated Press writer Melissa Goldin in New York contributed this report.

CLAIM: A memo shows that President Joe Biden just announced he is sending \$8 billion in military aid to Israel.

THE FACTS: An image of a memo being widely shared online was fabricated, and Biden has not made any such announcement, the White House confirmed on Monday.

Social media users began sharing the altered image in the wake of Saturday's surprise attack on Israel by Hamas.

It appears to show Biden authorizing Secretary of State Antony Blinken to direct up to \$8 billion in aid, as Israel formally declared war Sunday.

The purported memo is formatted like other orders posted on the White House website, complete with the blue-and-white White House logo at the top and Biden's name at the bottom.

"BREAKING! Biden signs order to send \$8 BILLION in Military Aid to Israel," wrote one user who shared the memo on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

But the widely shared memo is a fake, Sean Savett, a White House spokesperson, confirmed Monday. The funds released to Iran are also not related to Hamas' attack, the office also maintains.

The memo appears to be a doctored version of an order Biden issued providing war assistance to Ukraine this summer.

Much of the language mirrors that July 25 missive, including the title: "Memorandum on the Delegation of Authority Under Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961."

The real memo called for up to \$400 million for Ukraine in its ongoing war with invading Russian forces. Biden's name appears in the center of the fake document, rather than the right side as in the original.

Savett, in his emailed reply, also pointed to Biden's call over the weekend with Israel President Benjamin Netanyahu, in which the Democrat reiterated that help was on the way to bolster Israel and that more assistance would arrive in the coming days.

The administration deployed the USS Gerald R. Ford, the Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier, which sailed to the Eastern Mediterranean on Sunday carrying approximately 5,000 sailors and a deck of fighter jets. It was accompanied by a group of cruisers and destroyers in a show of force and support for Israel.

— Associated Press writer Philip Marcelo in New York contributed this report.

CLAIM: A video shows Hamas fighters parachuting onto a sports field before attacking Israeli citizens during the group's surprise attack on Israel.

THE FACTS: While Hamas did employ paragliders to get some fighters across the border between Gaza and southern Israel, the footage of the sports field shows parachute jumpers in Cairo, Egypt, and has been online since at least September.

The clip shows people strapped to multi-colored parachutes descending onto a crowded sports field complex filled with children and families, many in red sports jerseys.

"Hamas paraglided amongst Israeli citizens and proceeded to massacre them," text on the video clip reads. One post of the misleading footage on TikTok was viewed more than 38,000 times.

But this footage has been online since at least Sept. 27, when it was posted to TikTok with the location tag "Egypt."

Details of the video also point to Egypt as the location — a person is wearing a blue shirt that reads "El Nasr SC" on the back, the name of a sporting club in northeastern Cairo.

Images of the club on Google Maps match the scene of the video — as well as several other clips of the event from the same TikTok user — with both showing a bright blue fence around a sporting ground next to a paved area with green and blue plastic seats.

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The parachuters land on a larger soccer pitch surrounded by tall field lights. The field matches photos posted to the club's Facebook page and footage of its soccer team's matches, including a distinctive red building with a blue fence on top at one end that can be seen in the TikTok clip at around 19 seconds.

Other TikTok users shared footage of a parachuting similar scene around the same time, with "El Nasr" in the caption in Arabic.

The crowd of onlookers in the clip circulating online also doesn't seem distressed by the arrival of the parachuters, as one might expect if they were an invading force. In fact, many women and children are seen running towards them, phones in hand taking videos and photos of the aerial display.

CLAIM: Two videos show Russian President Vladimir Putin warning the U.S. to "stay away" from the latest Gaza war.

THE FACTS: Both videos circulating online are months-old clips of Putin speaking about the Russia-Ukraine war, not the conflict in the Middle East, which have been miscaptioned in English.

Both videos show Putin speaking in Russian, with false English captions saying he was warning the U.S. to refrain from helping the Jewish state.

"America wants to Destroy israel as we destroy ukraine In past," the captions on one video state. "I am warning America. Russia will help palestine and america can do nothing." One TikTok post that shared the clip had received approximately 11,600 views as of Monday.

A caption on another video of Putin, filmed in a different location, similarly reads: "I am warning america to stay Away from palestine israel war."

But the two clips long predate the latest Israel-Hamas war and make no mention of Israel at all.

The first shows Putin at a meeting of Russia's Human Rights Council in December 2022, where, amid discussions about the war in Ukraine, he responded to a question about the country's potential use of nuclear weapons, as the AP reported at the time. The footage was featured by multiple other newsoutlets with similar translations.

In the second, Putin is speaking at a February 2023 event marking the 80th anniversary of the World War II Soviet victory over Nazi German forces in the battle of Stalingrad. In his remarks, he compared this threat to Germany's then-recent decision to supply Ukraine with tanks, the AP reported at the time. Several media outlets also featured the footage in similar reports.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday that Russia is "extremely concerned" by the "spiral of violence" in Israel. Mikhail Bogdanov, Russia's deputy foreign minister and former ambassador to Israel and Egypt, told the state Tass agency Saturday that Moscow has been in touch with "all parties (of the conflict), including Arab countries" and was urging for "an immediate cease-fire and peace."

— Melissa Goldin.

Damage to gas pipeline, telecom cable connecting Finland and Estonia caused by 'external activity'

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Damage to an undersea gas pipeline and telecommunications cable connecting Finland and Estonia appears to have been caused by "external activity," Finnish officials said Tuesday, adding that authorities were investigating.

Finnish and Estonian gas system operators on Sunday said they noted an unusual drop in pressure in the Balticconnector pipeline after which they shut down the gas flow.

The Finnish government on Tuesday said there was damage both to the gas pipeline and to a telecommunications cable between the two NATO countries.

Speaking at a news conference Tuesday, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo stopped short of calling the pipeline leak sabotage but said it could not have been caused by regular operations.

"According to a preliminary assessment, the observed damage could not have occurred as a result of normal use of the pipe or pressure fluctuations. It is likely that the damage is the result of external activ-

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ity," Orpo said.

Finland's National Bureau of Investigation was leading an inquiry into the leak, Orpo said, adding that the leak occurred in Finland's economic zone. According to Estonian authorities, the damaged area of the data cable owned by the Finnish mobile operator and Internet service provider Elisa is likely located in Estonia's economic zone, and Estonia's military was investigating the matter.

In the Estonian capital, Tallinn, Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur told reporters Estonian authorities received photos confirming that the damage in the Balticconnector is "mechanical" and "human-made."

"This damage must have been caused by some force that was not created by ... a diver or a small underwater robot; the damage is more massive," Pevkur said, adding that seismologists have previously stated there was no explosion at the incident site.

Heidi Soosalu, seismologist at the Estonian Geological Service, told the Estonian public broadcaster ERR on Tuesday that neither Estonian nor Finnish seismic stations registered anything resembling explosions during the time period the Balticconnector developed a suspected leak.

The incident comes just over a year after the Nord Stream gas pipelines running between Germany and Russia in the Baltic Sea were damaged by explosions believed to be sabotage. The case remains unsolved.

"Finland is well prepared," Orpo said. "Protecting critical infrastructure is already a very important issue with the change in the security environment, and attention has been paid to it. In the background, among other things, a wide network of actors has been built to secure critical infrastructure."

Asked by a reporter whether the government suspected Russian involvement in the latest incident, Orpo said he didn't want to speculate on potential perpetrators before authorities completed the investigation in Finland.

Earlier, Finnish Sauli Niinistö said in a statement that the "damage to the underwater infrastructure has been taken seriously and the causes have been under investigation since Sunday." He said he was in contact with allies and partners, including NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

Stoltenberg wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that he had spoken with Niinistö "on damage to undersea infrastructure." He said NATO is sharing information and "stands ready to support Allies concerned."

The pipeline incident was likely to be put on the agenda for a NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday.

Estonia's Navy told The Associated Press that they were conducting an investigation on the pipeline together with the Finnish military in the Gulf of Finland. They wouldn't comment further, saying the operation was led by the Finns.

The 77-kilometer-long (48-mile-long) Balticconnector pipeline runs across the Gulf of Finland from the Finnish city of Inkoo to the Estonian port of Paldiski. It is bi-directional, transferring natural gas between Finland and Estonia depending on demand and supply. Most of the gas that was flowing in the pipeline early Sunday before closure was going from Finland to Estonia, from where it was forwarded to Latvia, Estonia's gas system operator Elering said.

The 300 million euro (\$318 million) pipeline, largely financed by the European Union, started commercial operations at the beginning of 2020.

Gasgrid Finland said the Finnish gas system is stable and the supply of gas has been secured through the offshore support vessel Exemplar — a floating liquefied natural gas terminal at the southern Finnish port of Inkoo.

Elering said Estonian consumers were receiving gas from Latvia after the shutdown of the pipeline.

While Europe currently has filled 97% of its gas storage capacity for the winter, security of supply still depends on deliveries of pipeline gas and LNG.

"When it comes to gas, Europe is in for a safe winter," said Simone Tagliapietra, energy analyst at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. "However this depends on the integrity of its pipeline and LNG infrastructure. Sabotage or disruptions could have severe consequences. Developments at the Balticconnector in Finland are very concerning with this regard."

Natural gas prices on Europe's TTF benchmark rose 15% on Monday and more than 12% on Tuesday to the highest level since March. But Tuesday's price of 49.40 euros (\$52.44) per megawatt hour is still seven

times lower than record highs seen in late August after Russia's cutoff of most gas supplies to Europe during the war in Ukraine spurred an energy crisis.

The Amazon antitrust lawsuit is likely to be a long and arduous journey for the FTC

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon is heading into one of its biggest sales events of the year — Prime Day — with a lawsuit hanging over its head that accuses it of preventing sellers from hawking their merchandise at lower prices on other sites.

The Federal Trade Commission's long-awaited antitrust case is the agency's most aggressive move yet to tame the market power of Amazon, a company that's become synonymous with online shopping and fast deliveries.

Under chair Lina Khan, the agency hasn't been shy about taking big swings against some of America's biggest companies and testing the limits of competition law to reverse what many of her supporters see as decades of weak antitrust enforcement. But that approach has also led to some high-profile setbacks, most notably in the FTC's bid to block Microsoft's takeover of Activision Blizzard and Meta's acquisition of the virtual reality startup Within Unlimited. The FTC is appealing the judge's ruling in the Microsoft case.

The Amazon case, which was backed by 17 states, marks a full-circle moment for Khan, who is finally confronting the company she scrutinized in an influential scholarly paper she penned as a Yale Law student. In the paper, which was called "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox" and released in 2017, Khan argued the prevailing way of looking at anticompetitive conduct by the impact it has on prices was insufficient in the modern economy. Instead, she pushed for a more progressive approach that examines how corporate concentration impacts the broader market.

Two years ago, Khan was tapped to lead the FTC by President Joe Biden, whose administration has taken a tougher stance on antitrust enforcement. That same year, Amazon unsuccessfully sought to get her recused from agency probes against the company, arguing she was too biased.

Now, her agency must prove in court both that Amazon is a monopoly and is using its dominance to prevent competition from flourishing in the marketplace.

"If we succeed, competition will be restored and people will benefit from lower prices, greater quality, greater selection as a result," Khan said during a recent call with reporters.

A final decision in Amazon case will likely come years down the road, assuming the lawsuit isn't dropped under a new administration, dismissed by a judge or ends in a settlement akin to the one Amazon reached with European regulators last year. A similar lawsuit filed last year by the state of California is set to go to trial in 2026. The District of Columbia also tried to sue Amazon on antitrust grounds before, but its lawsuit was dismissed by a federal judge last year.

Experts say the FTC faces a few hurdles in its own case, including convincing the court which slice of the market Amazon is allegedly monopolizing.

In the 172-page complaint filed in federal court, the government paints a picture of an institution that strong-arms sellers and exercises monopoly power in what it calls the "online superstore market" and "online marketplace services." This isn't the entire U.S. e-commerce sector, of which Amazon is estimated to control about 40%. But rather, the agency is describing the types of single-destination online stores that offer a large array of products, and allows sellers to access a significant number of shoppers.

In a blog post responding to the lawsuit, Amazon General Counsel David Zapolsky accused the FTC of attempting to "gerrymander alleged market" to portray Amazon as something it's not. He said consumers buy over 80% of all retail products in physical stores and that Amazon was "just a piece of a massive and robust retail market" that offers options to consumers and sellers. Brick-and-mortar retailers, online stores and newer buy-online-pick-up-in-store options, he says, are all competing vigorously with each other.

Online, Amazon has been facing growing competition from traditional retailers including Walmart, and Chinese shopping sites Shein and Temu, which became popular by offering ultra-cheap goods. There are

also platforms like Etsy and Shopify that are enabling small businesses to sell directly to consumers, and specialist retailers like Wayfair.

"Whichever way you look, there are companies competing with Amazon," said Neil Saunders, managing director at GlobalData Retail.

Besides the jargon around market definitions, the substance of the agency's complaint focuses on Amazon's growing fees on third-party sellers and its ramifications on consumers. It accuses the e-commerce company of squeezing sellers through various fees and employing a massive web-crawling apparatus that punishes them for offering lower prices on other sites. The FTC also alleges Amazon keeps sellers dependent on services that have allowed it to collect billions in revenue every year.

Zapolsky counters that Amazon — just like any store owner that doesn't want to promote bad deals — doesn't highlight listings that aren't competitively priced. He also said the services the company provides to sellers are optional.

The Amazon case comes as federal prosecutors and state attorneys general are in the middle of a 10-week trial trying to prove Google rigged the market in its favor by locking in its search engine as the default choice in a plethora of places and devices. That case was brought by the Department of Justice and marks the biggest U.S. antitrust trial since regulators went after Microsoft and its dominance of personal computer software a quarter century ago.

Maurice Stucke, a former senior advisor at agency during Khan's tenure, said even though there have been some notable antitrust cases, there hasn't been that much case law around monopolization in the past few decades, limiting the examples the FTC can draw from for its Amazon lawsuit. And even if the FTC wins its lawsuit years down the line, he said changes in the market could make it possible for Amazon to maintain its dominance without engaging in the activities the agency is alleging.

"Once you get to relief, it might be too little too late," said Stucke, who currently teaches law at the University of Tennessee.

For her part, Khan has dodged questions about whether the agency would try to break up Amazon. She said its focus right now is on establishing liability. The lawsuit, though, does call for "structural relief," which means the agency could — down the road — ask the court to change the way Amazon works in minor or major ways.

Overall, there has not been a lot of monopolization cases that have ended in a court ordering a company to divest itself, said Sean Sullivan, a professor at the University of Iowa College of Law who teaches antitrust law.

"Judges are trying really hard to do the right thing," he said. "But they're also conscious that if they make a mistake, that type of remedy is potentially very costly and would have massive economic ramifications."

Aid groups scramble to help as Israel-Hamas war intensifies and Gaza blockade complicates efforts

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Humanitarian groups are scrambling to assist civilians caught in the war between Israel and Hamas and determine what aid operations are still safe to continue — efforts that are being complicated by an intensified blockade of Gaza and ongoing fighting.

Two days after Hamas militants went on a rampage that took the world by surprise, Israel increased airstrikes on Gaza and blocked off food, fuel and other supplies from going into the territory, a move that raised concerns at the United Nations and among aid groups operating in the area home to 2.3 million people. Hamas, in turn, pledged to kill Israelis it abducted if the country's military bombs civilian targets in Gaza without warning.

Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands wounded on both sides, and aid groups operating in the region say there are needs both in Gaza and Israel.

More than 2 tons of medical supplies from the Egyptian Red Crescent have been sent to Gaza and efforts are underway to organize food and other deliveries, according to an Egyptian military official, who

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spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the press. But the United Nations and other aid groups are pleading for more access to help Palestinians who find themselves in the middle of intense fighting.

The UN and other aid agencies were talking with Egypt to send humanitarian aid to the besieged Gaza through a crossing point between the strip and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, an Egyptian official and aid worker said Tuesday. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization said Tuesday medical supplies it has in seven hospitals in Gaza had already been used up and it was reprogramming funds to purchase more from local markets.

Doctors Without Borders, which is still operating in Gaza, has to rely on supplies it already has inside the territory because it can't bring any more in, said Emmanuel Massart, a deputy desk coordinator with the organization in Brussels.

The group — which says it only runs programs in Palestinian areas since Israel has strong emergency and health services — reported Monday that it provided treatments to more than 50 people following airstrikes at the Jabalia refugee camp located north of Gaza City. In addition to helping patients in Gaza, it said it was donating medical supplies to other clinics and hospitals, which have become overcrowded with patients and are experiencing shortages of drugs and fuel that can be used for generators.

If Doctors Without Borders is not able to resupply fairly quickly, Massart said, it will run out of supplies it can use to operate on patients who might be wounded. He also said since the facilities the organization uses are running on generators due to the low supply of electricity, cutting off fuel will present a "huge problem."

"If there is no fuel anymore, there is no medical facilities anymore because we cannot run our medical facility without the energy," Massart said.

The war has also been deeply disruptive to work Mercy Corps has been doing to provide people in Gaza with necessities like food and water, said Arnaud Quemine, the Middle East regional director for the organization. Right now, he said the team on the ground is trying to find a scenario that would enable them to get back to work. The blockade of food and other supplies into Gaza is a major worry.

"We are very concerned with the way things are going at this point because it looks like it's going to get worse — very soon," Quemine said. The sealing of Gaza, he said, will create "humanitarian needs very quickly."

Governments have also been weighing how to respond.

As the fighting intensified, the European Union on late Monday reversed an earlier announcement by an EU commissioner that the bloc was "immediately" suspending aid for Palestinian authorities. Instead, the 27-nation group said it would urgently review the assistance it provides in the wake of Hamas' attacks on Israel. Two European countries — Germany and Austria — said they were suspending development aid for Palestinian areas.

Meanwhile, some organizations are stepping up aid efforts in Israel, which has seen displacement because of the violence.

Naomi Adler, CEO of Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, said a trauma center in Jerusalem that's owned by the organization is treating wounded Israeli soldiers and civilians. About 90% of the patients in the center right now are soldiers, who are typically the first to be brought in for traumatic injuries, Adler said. But the center also accepts anyone who's wounded or injured in the country.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish humanitarian organization, said on Sunday that it was activating its emergency response team in Israel, where it runs programs to support people with disabilities, the elderly and children and families who've been impacted by the war and prior conflicts. The organization said it was working with its partners, including in the Israeli government, to address what it called an unprecedented emergency.

JDC's CEO Ariel Zwang said among other things the nonprofit is helping teachers, social workers and other caregivers provide support to those who've suffered trauma and tragedies from the events of the past few days. She said it will help nurse teachers, for example, explain to children why some of their classmates are suddenly missing.

"If you're a teacher now, if you know the children are traumatized, you need special skills and special training in order to manage what you're experiencing and provide for the emotional needs, which are extraordinary at this time, of your youngest charges," Zwang said.

One organization that helps Palestinian children is shifting its focus, too. Steve Sosebee, the president of Palestine Children's Relief Fund, a U.S.-based charity that helps children in need travel to the U.S. for medical treatment, said given the war, the fund is now looking away from long-term programs and toward more urgent needs for food, medication, clothing and other types of basic humanitarian aid. But like others, he noted the blockade and security risks to its Gaza staff makes it more challenging to do that.

"There are no areas of security, there are no safe havens," Sosebee said. "And therefore, it's very difficult for us to be out in the field providing humanitarian aid when there are no safe places from the constant bombing and attacks that are taking place over the last 72 hours."

The future of electric vehicles looms over negotiations in the US autoworkers strike

By TOM KRISHER and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER Associated Press

WAYNE, Mich. (AP) — On the picket lines at a Ford factory west of Detroit, many striking workers don't think the electric vehicle revolution is coming for their jobs — at least not in the near future.

But just in case, they're backing United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain's quest to unionize EV battery factories at Ford and Jeep maker Stellantis, matching a breakthrough concession made by General Motors last week.

So far, neither Ford nor Stellantis has agreed to the change, which would pull employees at all 10 U.S. battery factories proposed by Detroit automakers into national contracts with the UAW, all but assuring they'll be unionized.

Fain also wants workers at the plants to make top UAW assembly plant wages, which now are \$32 per hour.

With the UAW strike now in its fourth week, EVs and their potential impact on job security have become central to union negotiations with the automakers. Contract talks are likely to determine whether those plants — mostly joint ventures with South Korean battery companies — are union, which may have long-lasting consequences as the auto industry transforms itself.

"The battery plants are going to be the make-or-break issue," said Sam Abuelsamid, a mobility analyst for Guidehouse Insights. "It's going to be a critical factor for them to get good labor agreements at these plants."

In short, if electric vehicles replace gas-powered ones, most UAW workers at engine and transmission plants will lose their jobs. And if lower-paying battery plants aren't union, workers won't have anywhere to get the same wages and benefits.

Ford and Stellantis thus far don't want to pay top union wages, fearing that will push up their costs over Tesla and other competitors with nonunion battery plants mainly in the U.S. South. That could make Detroit's EVs more expensive and harder to sell.

The issue, festering for months behind pay and cost-of-living increases, restoration of retirement benefits for new hires and even a 32-hour workweek, became huge Friday when GM agreed to unionization.

Stellantis didn't comment directly on GM's move, but Ford said workers will have to choose once they are hired at plants that haven't been built yet. Although Ford said it's willing to work with the union, the company said it's investing billions in battery plants that have to operate "at sustainably competitive levels."

Last month, Ford CEO Jim Farley accused the union of using the battery plant issue to hold a potential contract agreement hostage. Ford has decided to locate three of its four proposed battery plants in Kentucky and Tennessee, states where workers and politicians could be more hostile to the UAW. The company has put on hold a fourth plant to be built in Michigan by Ford itself.

Before GM changed its stance, the automakers said they have South Korean joint venture partners at nine of 10 battery factories, and those partners have to be at the bargaining table.

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Automakers are telling workers their jobs are secure, but the union doesn't see that in the transition to electric vehicles, Fain said. Instead, the companies want to pay "poverty wages" at the new plants and drive down pay in the industry, he said.

"It's really hard to envision a future for us where we have no piece of the battery," said Fain, adding that 20% — almost 30,000 — of the union's 146,000 members at the Detroit Three now work in factories that make internal combustion engines and transmissions.

Farley and other auto executives have said that because EVs have fewer moving parts, they will require 30% to 40% fewer workers to assemble than gasoline vehicles. But GM CEO Mary Barra insists there will be enough work to bring everyone along.

A study by Carnegie Mellon University backs her up, in part, finding that it will take more labor to build electric vehicle batteries, motors and drivelines than engines and transmissions for combustion engine vehicles.

On the picket line at the Ford plant in Wayne, Michigan, where Bronco SUVs and Ranger pickups are made, workers questioned whether people would buy EVs because of their limited travel range and lack of charging stations. But they also see a future where buyers could switch, and they think wages at the battery plants should match what they make.

"They're part of Ford and should be unionized as well," said Chris Jedrzejek, who has worked for the company 23 years. "I'm sure that Ford would rather not have their battery plants unionized, but with the actions of GM, they set the precedent."

He doesn't believe the company line that higher-wage union battery plants would make Detroit's EVs too pricey. The pay at nonunion Toyota assembly plants, for instance, is similar to the top wage of UAW workers, he said, although Jedrzejek concedes that many Ford workers have better benefits such as pensions.

"I think it's just a bunch of rhetoric just to try to scare us into signing a bad deal," he said.

Worker Todd Lauerman, who has been with Ford a dozen years, said making the battery plants union is crucial because fewer workers may be needed to build EVs, and the issue has to be settled this year because if the plants start running and aren't union, "it's going to be a lot harder to get it in the next contract."

It's likely GM agreed to unionize its four U.S. battery plants because workers probably would have voted for the union anyway, Abuelsamid said. The UAW, he said, will use this to try to organize other Korean-owned battery plants.

One GM plant in northeastern Ohio already has voted for the UAW, two more are right next to GM assembly plants in Tennessee and Michigan, and the fourth is near South Bend, Indiana, not far from other GM factories.

"They may have thought they were going to get unionized one way or another, let's just get it done," said Harry Katz, a professor of collective bargaining at Cornell University.

Stellantis' staying quiet may mean it's willing to work a deal, but Ford's public statements so far indicate it will fight bringing its plants into the national UAW contract.

Katz, though, thinks Ford will eventually have to agree to the template set by GM. "On a matter of principle like this, I don't see them agreeing to anything other than the pattern," he said.

Without organizing the battery plants, union wins on wages and benefits could be only temporary because membership would decline if the battery factories are nonunion, said Marick Masters, a business professor at Wayne State University.

"It could turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory if inroads aren't also carved out at the nonunionized factories that will play a pivotal role in the industry's future," Masters said.

Wall Street Journal reporter loses appeal and will stay in a Russian jail at least through November

MOSCOW (AP) — Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich lost an appeal Tuesday to be released from jail on espionage charges, meaning he will remain behind bars at least through Nov. 30.

Gershkovich, 31, had a mostly blank expression as he appeared in the defendant's glass cage in Moscow City Court in blue shirt, T-shirt and jeans. He marked six months in custody on Sept. 29.

It was the second time in less than a month he had appeared before a judge to appeal an August decision to extend his pre-trial detention through November. On Sept. 19, the court declined to hear the appeal, citing unspecified procedural violations.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow said in a statement that it was "deeply disappointed" that Gershkovich's appeal was rejected, adding: "Evan should be released."

The journalist was detained in March while on a reporting trip to the city of Yekaterinburg, about 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) east of Moscow.

The court proceedings are closed because prosecutors say details of the criminal case are classified.

Russia's Federal Security Service alleged Gershkovich, "acting on the instructions of the American side, collected information constituting a state secret about the activities of one of the enterprises of the Russian military-industrial complex."

Gershkovich and the Journal deny the allegations, and the U.S. government has declared him to be wrongfully detained. Russian authorities haven't detailed any evidence to support the espionage charges.

He is being held at Moscow's Lefortovo prison, notorious for its harsh conditions. Gershkovich is the first American reporter to be charged with espionage in Russia since 1986, when Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for U.S. News and World Report, was arrested by the KGB.

Analysts have pointed out that Moscow may be using jailed Americans as bargaining chips after U.S.-Russian tensions soared when Russia sent troops into Ukraine. At least two U.S. citizens arrested in Russia in recent years — including WNBA star Brittney Griner — have been exchanged for Russians jailed in the U.S.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has said it will consider a swap for Gershkovich only after a verdict in his trial. In Russia, espionage trials can last for more than a year.

Former baseball MVP Steve Garvey joins California US Senate race, gives GOP ballot dash of celebrity

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Former baseball MVP Steve Garvey joined the race Tuesday to succeed the late California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, giving Republicans a splash of star quality on the ballot in a heavily Democratic state where the GOP hasn't won a Senate race in 35 years.

Garvey, 74, launched his campaign with a video lush with baseball imagery that recalled his career as a perennial All-Star who played for the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres. It also signaled he would lean toward the political center in a party dominated by former President Donald Trump, the leading GOP presidential candidate who could share the ballot with Garvey next year.

"I never played for Democrats or Republicans or independents. I played for all of you," Garvey said in the video, in which he also alluded to problems vexing the state from homelessness to crime. "It's going to be a common sense campaign."

In an interview, Garvey said he voted for Trump in the past but had not settled on a pick in the unfolding 2024 presidential contest. He did not answer directly when asked if he considered himself part of the Trump wing of the GOP. Trump lost California in landslides in 2016 and 2020, though he had support from millions of Republican and conservative-leaning voters in the state.

"I'm running the Steve Garvey campaign," he said. "We need to bring people together again."

Garvey's entrance into a race gives Republicans a recognized name to many Californians, even though he may be unknown to millions of younger voters. He played his last major league game in 1987 after an

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18-year major league career, and he was National League MVP in 1974.

Still, he will face the challenges of any first-time candidate: raising millions of dollars for TV advertising and building an organization to turn out voters in a field of candidates that already includes Democratic U.S. Reps. Katie Porter, Adam Schiff and Barbara Lee. The race could be further complicated if Sen. Laphonza Butler, whom Gov. Gavin Newsom recently appointed to the seat following Feinstein's death, chooses to run.

He struck a series of familiar Republican positions, including calling for temporarily closing the border with Mexico, at a time when polls indicate widespread frustration with President Joe Biden's handling of immigration. He was critical of the state's push to ban the sale of most new gas-powered cars by 2035, saying "that's not realistic."

On abortion, an issue Democrats hope will galvanize the party's base after the Supreme Court last year overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, Garvey said he does not support a nationwide abortion ban.

"The people of California have spoken ... on abortion, and as their representative, I pledge to always uphold the voice of the people," he said. When asked if he supported abortion rights, he added, "The people have spoken, and I will pledge to uphold that."

As a Republican, he inevitably starts as a longshot. Democrats hold every statewide office and dominate the legislative and congressional delegations. Republicans — who are outnumbered about 2-to-1 by Democratic voters in the state — haven't won a statewide race for any office since 2006.

California runs a primary that sends the two candidates with the most votes to the general election, regardless of political party. In California's last two Senate races, GOP candidates performed so poorly that only Democrats appeared on the November ballot. The last Republican to win a Senate race in the state was in 1988.

However, given the large number of candidates who will divide the vote in the March 5 primary, it's possible Garvey could slip into the November general election. He'd need to consolidate Republican and conservative voters behind his candidacy, and he has competition from attorney Eric Early, who previously has run unsuccessfully for state attorney general and Congress.

Garvey confirmed in June that he was considering entering the Senate race, and his candidacy was widely expected.

Garvey has flirted with the possibility of entering politics before, including after his retirement from baseball, when he teased a possible U.S. Senate run but never became a candidate.

In the interview, he said he was motivated to run this time by the "quality of life stress" that has spread throughout the state, and added his campaign would be anchored to reducing crime, improving education and working to lasso inflation and trim soaring gas prices.

He faulted long-running school closings during the pandemic for falling student test scores.

For young children, the extended school shutdowns "not only obstructed their pathways to learning, but to social interaction," he said. "We're behind in both of those areas."

When Garvey confirmed in June he was considering the race, Early issued a statement saying the former baseball star "has more personal baggage than Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner," an apparent reference to 1980s sex scandals that sullied Garvey's reputation as "Mr. Clean," a moniker that referred to his buttoned-down image from his Dodger days. At the time he admitted to having two children with women he wasn't married to.

Asked about that period, Garvey said, "I think our life is a journey. I think there are chapters. Sure, I've gone through a difficult time here and there. I've learned from it. And I think I've been stronger."

Afghans still hope to find survivors from quake that killed over 2,000 in western Herat province

By EBRAHIM NOROOZI and OMID HAQJO Associated Press

ZINDA JAN, Afghanistan (AP) — Clinging to hope that finding survivors was still possible, Afghan rescuers and villagers kept digging through rubble in western Herat province on Tuesday, three days after one of the deadliest earthquakes in the region left more than 2,000 dead.

Elsewhere in Herat, people were digging graves for loved ones killed in Saturday's 6.3 magnitude quake. On a barren field in the district of Zinda Jan, a bulldozer removed mounds of earth to clear space for a long row of graves.

"It is very difficult to find a family member from a destroyed house and a few minutes to later bury him or her in a nearby grave, again under the ground," said Mir Agha, from the city of Herat, who had joined hundreds of volunteers to help the locals.

Across kilometers (miles) of dusty hills, there was little left of villages besides rubble and funerals.

In Naib Rafi, a village that previously had about 2,500 residents, people said that almost no one was still alive besides men who were working outside when the quake struck. Survivors worked all day with excavators to dig long trenches for mass burials.

Janan Sayiq, a spokesman for the Afghan Taliban government's national disaster authority, said the quake killed and injured thousands but couldn't provide a breakdown for the casualties. Earlier, Taliban officials said more than 2,000 had died across Herat.

The epicenter was about 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of the city of Herat, the provincial capital, the U.S. Geological Survey said. Several of the aftershocks have been strong, including one on Monday that caused residents of the city to rush out of their homes once again.

The United Nations said the Zinda Jan district was the worst-affected area, with 1,294 deaths and 1,688 injuries. In addition, 485 people — 191 men and 294 women — are missing. Six schools are also reported to have been destroyed, said the U.N.

Nearly 2,000 houses in 20 villages were destroyed, the Taliban have said. The area hit by the quake has just one government-run hospital.

As winter approaches, the new disaster is likely to make it even harder for people to meet basic needs, such as shelter, food and medicine, aid groups have warned.

It is not clear how much foreign aid has reached Herat since Saturday. The global response has been slow. Much of the world is wary of dealing directly with the Taliban-led government and focused on the deadly escalation between Israel and the Palestinians in the aftermath of the surprise attack by Gaza militants on Saturday.

Pakistan has pledged to send blankets, tents, and medicines, and China is reported to have offered cash and other forms of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Other foreign governments said they will work with aid agencies on the ground to help with rescue and recovery, and Afghans have launched fundraising campaigns.

Authorities in Kabul did not respond to questions about how much aid has arrived from overseas.

In a statement, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies urged the media not to turn away from Afghanistan. "Your reporting can bring back attention to Afghanistan and the Afghan people's untold stories of resilience and need," an IFRC statement said.

"Afghanistan needs you — now, more than ever. Please, let's not add 'forgotten' to the long list of tragedies that this resilient nation has already endured," IFRC spokesperson Tommaso Della Longa said in the statement.

The Taliban's justice ministry has urged national and international charity foundations, businesses and Afghans to gather aid for the province.

"Due to the extent of damages and casualties caused by this incident, a large number of our compatriots in Herat province need urgent humanitarian aid," the ministry said in a statement.

The Taliban-appointed deputy prime minister for economic affairs, Abdul Ghani Baradar, and his team

visited the quake-affected region on Monday to deliver "immediate relief assistance" and ensure "equitable and accurate distribution of aid," authorities said.

During his trip, Baradar assured a gathering of officials and elders that the government has mobilized all available resources.

"Various ministries and departments are working tirelessly to provide urgent assistance and build shelters for those who have lost their homes," said Baradar. He highlighted their commitment to transparently distributing the collected aid to deserving individuals, including the establishment of a dedicated commission.

Baradar also appealed to international aid institutions and agencies to provide all possible assistance, emphasizing the urgency of their support during this profound tragedy.

The Taliban's supreme leader has made no public comments about the quake.

Top U.N officials in Afghanistan also went to Zinda Jan to assess the extent of the damage. In neighboring Pakistan, the government held a special session to review aid for Afghanistan, including relief teams, food, medicine, tents and blankets.

Vital infrastructure, including bridges, was destroyed and emergency response teams have been deployed to provide humanitarian assistance, the International Rescue Committee said.

More than 35 teams from the military and nonprofit groups are involved in rescue efforts, said Sayiq, from the disaster authority.

Afghans are still reeling from other recent disasters, including the magnitude 6.5 earthquake in March that struck much of western Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, and an earthquake that hit eastern Afghanistan in June 2022, flattening stone and mud-brick homes and killing at least 1,000 people.

IMF outlook worsens for a 'limping' world economy. Mideast war poses new uncertainty

By PAUL WISEMAN and DAVID MCHUGH AP Business Writers

The world economy has lost momentum from the impact of higher interest rates, the invasion of Ukraine and widening geopolitical rifts, and it now faces new uncertainty from the war between Israel and Hamas militants, International Monetary Fund warned Tuesday.

The IMF said it expects global economic growth to slow to 2.9% in 2024 from an expected 3% this year. The forecast for next year is down a notch from the 3% it predicted back in July.

The deceleration comes at a time when the world has yet to fully mend from a devastating but short-lived COVID-19 recession in 2020 and now could see fallout from the Middle East conflict — particularly to oil prices.

A series of previous shocks, including the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, has slashed worldwide economic output by about \$3.7 trillion over the past three years compared with pre-COVID trends.

"The global economy is limping along, not sprinting," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said at a news conference during the organization's annual meeting in Marrakech, Morocco.

The IMF expectation of 3% growth this year is down from 3.5% in 2022 but unchanged from its July projections.

It's "too early" to assess the impact on global economic growth from the days-old war between Israel and the militant Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza, Gourinchas said. He said the IMF was "monitoring the situation closely" and noted that oil prices have risen by about 4% in the past several days.

"We've seen that in previous crises and previous conflicts. And of course, this reflects the potential risk that there could be disruption either in production or transport of oil in the region," he said.

If sustained, a 10% increase in oil prices would reduce global economic growth by 0.15% and increase global inflation by 0.4%, Gourinchas said.

"But again, I emphasize that it's really too early to jump to any conclusion here," he added.

So far, the increase in oil prices has been "fairly muted," said Commerzbank commodities analyst Carsten Fritsch. He noted the absence of declarations of support for Hamas from key oil producers Saudi Arabia,

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the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Iraq, which would make it unlikely that they would restrict supply in response to the war.

So far, the world economy has displayed “remarkable resiliency,” Gourinchas said, at a time when the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks worldwide have aggressively raised interest rates to combat a resurgence in inflation.

The hikes have helped ease price pressures without putting many people out of work. That combination, he said, is “increasingly consistent” with a so-called soft landing — the idea that inflation can be contained without causing a recession.

The IMF sees global consumer price inflation dropping from 8.7% in 2022 to 6.9% this year and 5.8% in 2024.

The United States is a standout in the IMF’s latest World Economic Outlook, which was completed before the outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas. The IMF upgraded its forecast for U.S. growth this year to 2.1% (matching 2022) and 1.5% in 2024 (up sharply from the 1% it had predicted in July).

The U.S., an energy exporter, has not been hurt as much as countries in Europe and elsewhere by higher oil prices, which shot up after Russia invaded Ukraine last year and jumped more recently because of Saudi Arabia’s production cuts. And American consumers have been more willing than most to spend the savings they accumulated during the pandemic.

Things are gloomier in the 20 countries that share the euro currency and are more exposed to rising energy prices. The IMF downgraded eurozone growth to 0.7% this year and 1.2% in 2024. It actually expects the German economy to shrink by 0.5% this year before recovering to 0.9% growth next year.

That’s below even Russia’s economy, which the IMF predicts will expand 2.2% this year before dropping to 1.1% growth next year.

The Chinese economy, the world’s second biggest, is forecast to grow 5% this year and 4.2% in 2024 — both downgrades from what the IMF expected in July.

China’s economy was expected to bounce back this year after the communist government ended draconian “zero-COVID” lockdowns that had crippled growth in 2022. But the country is struggling with troubles in its overbuilt housing market.

The IMF again expressed concern that the countries of the world were breaking into geopolitical blocs that could limit international trade and economic growth globally.

The United States and its allies have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and have sought to become less reliant on Chinese imports as tensions with Beijing grow.

The IMF noted that last year countries imposed nearly 3,000 new restrictions on trade, up from fewer than 1,000 in 2019. It sees international trade growing just 0.9% this year and 3.5% in 2024, down sharply from the 2000-2019 annual average of 4.9%.

Today in History: October 11, Anita Hill publicly accuses Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 11, the 284th day of 2023. There are 81 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Oct. 11, 1991, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Anita Hill accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexually harassing her; Thomas re-appeared before the panel to denounce the proceedings as a “high-tech lynching.”

On this date:

In 1614, the New Netherland Co. was formed by a group of merchants from Amsterdam and Hoorn to set up fur trading in North America.

In 1809, just over three years after the famous Lewis and Clark expedition ended, Meriwether Lewis was

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found dead in a Tennessee inn, an apparent suicide; he was 35.

In 1884, future first lady Eleanor Roosevelt was born in New York City.

In 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered the city's Asian students segregated into their own school. (The order was later rescinded at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt, who promised to curb future Japanese immigration to the United States.)

In 1968, Apollo 7, the first manned Apollo mission, was launched with astronauts Wally Schirra (shih-RAH'), Donn Fulton Eisele and R. Walter Cunningham aboard.

In 1984, Challenger astronaut Kathryn D. Sullivan became the first American woman to walk in space as she and fellow Mission Specialist David C. Leestma spent 3 1/2 hours outside the shuttle.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev opened two days of talks in Reykjavik, Iceland, concerning arms control and human rights.

In 2002, former President Jimmy Carter was named the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 2005, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said it had finished pumping out the New Orleans metropolitan area, which was flooded by Hurricane Katrina six weeks earlier and then was swamped again by Hurricane Rita.

In 2006, the charge of treason was used for the first time in the U.S. war on terrorism, filed against Adam Yehiye Gadahn (ah-DAHM' YEH'-heh-yuh guh-DAHN'), also known as "Azzam the American," who'd appeared in propaganda videos for al-Qaida.

In 2014, customs and health officials began taking the temperatures of passengers arriving at New York's Kennedy International Airport from three West African countries in a stepped-up screening effort meant to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus.

In 2017, the Boy Scouts of America announced that it would admit girls into the Cub Scouts starting in 2018 and establish a new program for older girls based on the Boy Scout curriculum, allowing them to aspire to the Eagle Scout rank.

In 2020, LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Miami Heat to win the NBA finals in six games as the NBA wrapped up a season that sent players to a "bubble" at Walt Disney World in Florida for three months because of the pandemic.

In 2021, Jon Gruden resigned as coach of the Las Vegas Raiders following reports about messages he wrote years earlier that used offensive terms to refer to Blacks, gays and women.

In 2022, NASA announced that a spacecraft that plowed into a small, harmless asteroid millions of miles away succeeded in shifting its orbit, a test aimed at fending off any more dangerous asteroids in the future.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry is 96. Actor Amitabh Bachchan is 81. Country singer Gene Watson is 80. Singer Daryl Hall (Hall and Oates) is 77. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., is 73. Actor-director Catlin Adams is 73. Country singer Paulette Carlson is 72. Original MTV VJ Mark Goodman is 71. Actor David Morse is 70. Actor Stephen Spinella is 67. Actor-writer-comedian Dawn French is 66. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Steve Young is 62. Actor Joan Cusack is 61. Rock musician Scott Johnson (Gin Blossoms) is 61. Comedy writer and TV host Michael J. Nelson is 59. Actor Sean Patrick Flanery is 58. Actor Lennie James is 58. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Chris Spielman is 58. Country singer-songwriter Todd Snider is 57. Actor-comedian Artie Lange is 56. Actor Jane Krakowski is 55. Actor Andrea Navedo is 54. Actor Constance Zimmer is 53. Rapper MC Lyte is 53. Bluegrass musician Leigh Gibson (The Gibson Brothers) is 52. Figure skater Kyoko Ina is 51. Actor Darien Sills-Evans is 49. Actor/writer Nat Faxon is 48. Actor Emily Deschanel is 47. Actor Matt Bomer is 46. Actor Trevor Donovan is 45. Actor Robert Christopher Riley is 43. Actor Michelle Trachtenberg is 38. Actor Lucy Griffiths is 37. Golfer Michelle Wie is 34. Rapper Cardi B is 31.