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October 2023 Calendar

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.

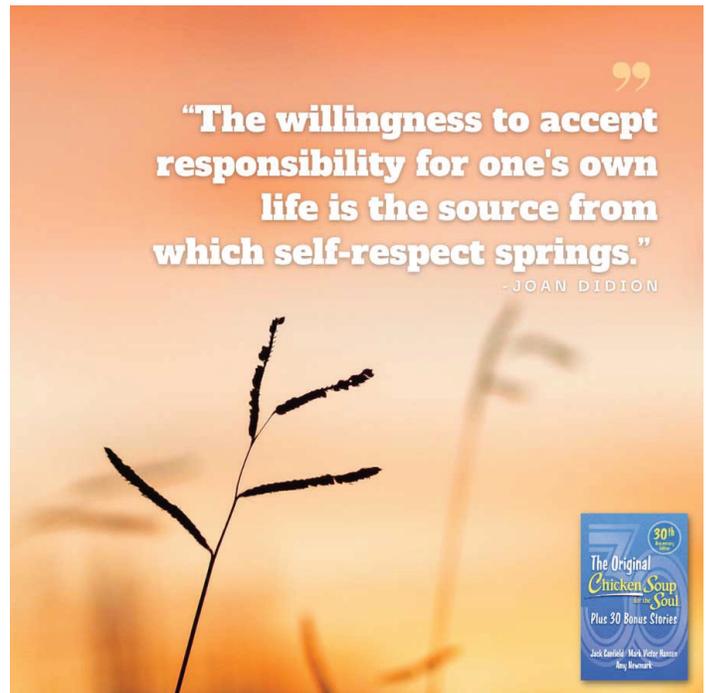
Girls Soccer Pep Rally, 1 p.m.

Girls Soccer send-off, 1:30 p.m.

Football hosts Mobridge-Pollock, 7 p.m.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



Saturday, Oct. 14

State Soccer Championship Game at Brandon Valley, 11 a.m. (Groton Area vs. Tea Area)

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Pumpkin Fest at City Park, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

Sunday, Oct. 15

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Freshmen meet with pastor, 1 p.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion (St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.), Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

charges of accepting bribes and providing "sensitive U.S. Government information" to aid the Egyptian government, a superseding indictment noted.

Rudolph Isley, one of the founding members of the Isley Brothers, died at his home in Olympia Fields, Illinois, at the age of 84.

North Korea has reacted to the arrival of a U.S. aircraft carrier battle group in South Korea, saying it is "an undisguised military provocation" and hinting at the use of nuclear weapons to defend itself.

U.K. regulators have approved Microsoft's revised \$69 billion offer to buy 'Call of Duty' publisher Activision Blizzard, paving the way for the deal to close by Oct. 18.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, another Russian Black Sea Fleet vessel was reportedly damaged in annexed Crimea this week, as the Crimean Wind Telegram channel shared photos and videos of a Russian Buyan class M corvette Grad, which is equipped with a Kalibr system, engulfed in smoke..

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

New Hampshire Republican Party is set to host the 'First in the Nation Summit' in Nashua, featuring several presidential candidates, including former Vice President Mike Pence, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, among others. Donald Trump will skip the Granite State event.

Taylor Swift's concert film, Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour, is set for a global release. The film broke AMC records for advance ticket sales and has already exceeded \$100 million in global advance ticket sales earlier this month.

Consumer sentiment data for October is due at 10 a.m. ET. Economists expect sentiment to drop further this month to 67.4 after a decline to 68.1 in September..

TALKING POINTS

"The message that I bring to Israel is this: you may be strong enough on your own to defend yourself, but as long as America exists, you will never, ever have to. We will always be there by your side," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his visit to Israel on Thursday.

"[It is] shameful that a man like that, a former US president, abets propaganda and disseminates things that wound the spirit of Israel's fighters and its citizens," Israeli Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi denouncing former President Donald Trump's remarks after he seemingly praised Lebanese Islamist militant group Hezbollah for being "very smart" after it launched a missile attack on Israel.

"Some people don't see me as a woman at all, which is why receiving this honor from a queer publication like Attitude means so much more to me. No matter how hard I try or what I wear, or what I say, or what surgeries I get, I will never reach an acceptable version of womanhood by those hateful people's standards. But as long as I have the queer community, that sees me for my truth, I'm gonna be OK," Dylan Mulvaney, a transgender activist and influencer, recently winning the Woman of the Year award from British magazine Attitude.

Groton Area has super clean sweep over Deuel

Groton Area's volleyball teams did not lose a single set from junior high to high school Thursday night as the Lady Tigers had a super clean sweep over Deuel Cardinals.

Groton Area won the varsity match, 25-15, 25-19 and 25-15. The match was tied six times and there were just two lead changes.

Rylee Dunker was 22 of 24 in attacks with 14 kills and had one assisted block, one dig and one ace serve. Anna Fjeldheim was 17 of 18 in attacks with 10 kills and she had eight digs. Chesney Weber was 16 of 17 in attacks with seven kills and she had one dig, one assisted block and one ace serve. Sydney Leight had two kills, was 12 of 13 in serves with one ace serve and had eight digs. Emma Kutter had two kills. Carly Guthmiller was 11 of 15 in serves with two ace serves and she had 22 digs. Laila Roberts had seven digs and one kill.

Hope Bjerke led Deuel with three kills and two blocks while Jose Anderson and Annika Kriz each had four kills and Alayna Carlson had two blocks and one kill.

Groton Area, now 14-4, will travel to Langford on Monday. The Tigers will not participate in the Milbank Tournament on Saturday due to the state soccer championship game.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Justin Hanson and Ryan Tracy doing the color commentary. The coverage was sponsored by Agtegra, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric.

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-21 and 25-19. The match was tied twice with one lead change. Jaedyn Penning led Groton Area with 12 kills and an ace serve while Talli Wright had four kills, Faith Traphagen, Kella Tracy and Liby Althoff each had a kill and a block, Taryn Traphagen had a kill and an ace serve and Emerlee Jones and Chesney Weber each had a kill.

Alayna Carlson and Camdyn Peterreins each had three kills for Deuel.

Fans of Jaedyn Penning sponsored the broadcast on GDILIVE.COM.

Groton Area won the C match, 25-14 and 25-13. Taryn Traphagen led the Tigers with nine kills while Liby Althoff had three ace serves and a kill, Emerlee Jones had two kills and two ace serves, Leah Jones had four kills, McKenna Tietz had a kill and two ace serves, Brenna Imrie had two ace serves and Ashlynn Warrington and Hannah Sandness each had an ace serve.

Evangalina Gratz led Deuel with five ace serves.

The match was broadcast on GDILIVE.COM sponsored by fans of Emerlee Jones.

Groton Area won the eighth grade match by identical scores of 25-20. The seventh graders won their match, 25-7 and 25-12.

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Anna Fjeldheim
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



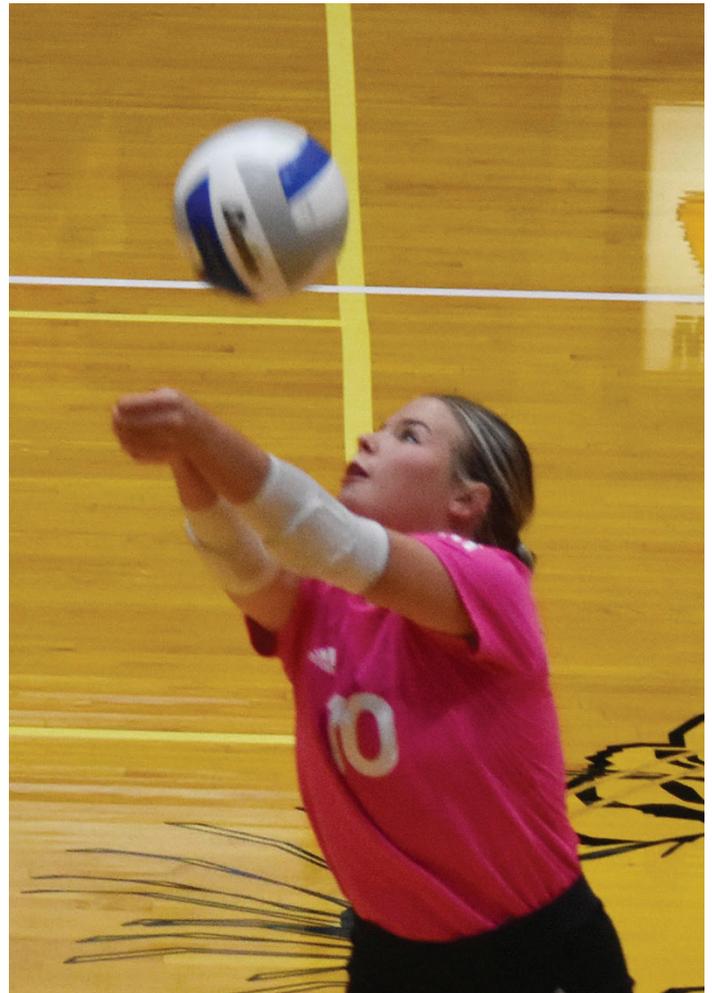
Sydney Leicht
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Carly Guthmiller
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Elizabeth Flihs
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Laila Roberts
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Rylee Dunker

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How To Watch The 2023 State Soccer Championships

SDPB Radio | By Nate Wek
Published October 11, 2023 at 3:53 PM CDT

Brandon Valley high school in Brandon, South Dakota will play host to the 2023 SDHSAA state soccer championships.

All of the games will air live on SDPB2-TV, and stream live online at sdpb.org/soccer and on YouTube.

Championship Schedule

Class A Girls | Tea Area vs Groton Area - 11 am CT

Class A Boys | Tea Area vs Sioux Falls Christian - 1 pm CT

Class AA Girls | Mitchell vs Harrisburg - 5 pm CT

Class AA Boys | Lincoln vs O'Gorman - 7 pm CT

GDILIVE.COM

GT
Groton Area
Tigers

Friday Oct. 13, 2023
at Groton Area



Football game sponsored by Agtegra, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R&M Farms

Lake Region Marching Festival

Friday, 10 a.m., Groton Area Arena

Free Viewing on

GDILIVE.COM



Part 4

GOP factions lead to turbulent times in D.C.

Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

This is the last 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:

Dusty Johnson, newly elected to the U.S. House, sat with his sons on the House floor on Jan. 3, 2019, as longtime Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi was voted Speaker of the House.

The Democrats had picked up 41 seats, their biggest gain since the post-Watergate election of 1974. That meant Johnson and North Dakota Rep. Kelly Armstrong, at-large members from ruby-red states who were not averse to working across the aisle, would face hard choices as Democrats accelerated oversight of the Trump administration.

A penchant for pragmatic politics helped connect Armstrong and Johnson as time went on, but so did their differences.

"I always say that the reason Dusty and I hang out is because I've sworn more in one sentence than he has in his entire life," said Armstrong, a criminal attorney and North Dakota state senator before running for Congress.

"But there aren't a ton of people in D.C. that get both policy and politics, and Dusty is one of them. Not just South Dakota politics but Washington politics, the pressure points, why things are the way they are. You can be the biggest policy wonk in the world, but if you don't understand that part of it, you won't get anything done."

Friction arrived less than two months into Johnson's first term. He was one of 13 Republicans who voted to block Trump's national emergency declaration for the Southern border, citing constitutional concerns over executive expenditures without legislative approval.

Democrats and moderate Republicans saw Johnson's vote – later negated by Trump's veto – as a principled stand against an overzealous president obsessed with building "the wall" while stoking hysteria about illegal immigration and ignoring the separation of powers.

Trump's supporters, of which there are many in South Dakota, saw it differently. Johnson's office received thousands of calls characterizing the representative as a RINO (Republican in Name Only), a turncoat or worse.

"We absolutely have to secure the border, and I'm fully committed to a physical barrier being a part of the solution," Johnson told News Watch. "But my oath of office is to the Constitution, which says that it's Congress that has the power of the purse. I get that we're in an era where bumper-sticker slogans seem to win arguments, but I'm going to back the Constitution even when it gets me in trouble."

The 2020 election and its aftermath, with cries of election fraud and the grievance-fueled assault on the Capitol, confirmed the fears of political conventionalists that democratic institutions were imperiled.

While some Republicans, including Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, called out Trump's election lies as damaging to the country, Johnson's public comments steered more toward a lack of respect for constitutional norms.

He voted to certify the election in the early morning hours of Jan. 7, pointing out that Congress' role in the counting of electoral votes from the states is an administrative and largely ceremonial act.

"Congress is not given a super veto over the decision of the states with regard to elections," said Johnson. "Everybody who voted that day understood that for Republicans, there was a popular vote and there

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was a principled vote, and you had to make a decision about what kind of politician you were going to be.”

A week later, Johnson voted against impeaching Trump for “incitement of insurrection,” reasoning that Trump was leaving office anyway and the process would further divide the country. He also referenced the previous year’s racially charged police brutality protests, some of which turned violent.

Johnson’s desire to move on was understandable.

He saw efforts to interrupt the peaceful transfer of power and violence on city streets as signs of an eroding civic landscape. From his view, though, there was little evidence of amelioration after Biden took over.

“I think the conflict of the 2020 election could have been an opportunity for some soul-searching for America,” Johnson told News Watch. “It was a chance for us to figure out how to come together, how to focus on an agenda that was more centered around shared American values. That clearly hasn’t happened. I mean, I’ve got a number of disappointments about President Biden, but one of the biggest is that he has not tried to govern as a uniter. I don’t think even his staunchest defenders could claim that the Inflation Reduction Act and the American Rescue Plan were attempts to find common ground. They were thoroughly partisan exercises. Of course, I don’t want to lay all the blame for continuing partisanship at the feet of the president. There are lots of knuckleheads in both parties, and I’m frustrated with all of them.”

Johnson’s criticism of Biden was not enough to quell concerns in South Dakota, where reactionary Republicans trumpeting themes of election fraud gained influence.

The upsurge was evident at the party’s 2022 state convention in Watertown.

Monae Johnson, who publicly refused to acknowledge Biden’s victory, was tabbed for secretary of state in a landslide over incumbent Steve Barnett, telling delegates that election integrity “is all on our hearts and minds.”

Howard, the state legislator, tried to seize the moment with her 2022 primary challenge. She noted that Dusty Johnson was among 35 House Republicans who voted in favor of an independent commission to investigate the Jan. 6 riot. He also opposed stripping Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, one of Trump’s most arduous GOP critics, of her House leadership position.

Dusty Johnson focused on rural economic issues and blasted Biden’s social spending. But vulnerabilities were exposed in a race pitting a well-known incumbent against “the least effective legislator in modern South Dakota history,” as Johnson characterized Howard.

“I’m never going to be scared of a primary,” Johnson said. “I mean, everybody gets a primary in this modern Republican party. Kristi Noem had a primary, John Thune had a primary. Anybody who thinks that by acting in a certain way they can gain a free pass doesn’t understand modern politics. At some point, you just go do the right thing and figure out what that means politically later.”

That mentality steered Johnson and Armstrong to the Republican Main Street Caucus, one of five ideological House factions referred to in “The Godfather”-like parlance as the “five families.” The House Freedom Caucus is the smallest and yet the most well-known of these groups, manning the far-right flank.

Johnson serves as chair of the 75-member Main Street Caucus, touting a pragmatic approach to coalition-building and fiscal policy rather than its previous identity as “moderate,” a loaded word in certain circles these days.

It’s an important distinction amid Republican infighting and partisan feuds, with the government shut-down just the latest example. According to a recent Fox News poll, overall approval of congressional job performance stands at 19%.

It could be enough to make the familiar confines of Pierre and the machinations of state government look appealing by contrast as the 2026 gubernatorial election draws nearer.

“Dusty’s not a guy who’s a Washington animal,” said Schaff. “That doesn’t mean he’s not a serious legislator. In fact, I think he’s more serious than probably 90% of Congress. But you also get a sense that he doesn’t love it the way some people do, and he might be looking for a way out.”

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

New property rights coalition plans to lobby for eminent domain restrictions

Group forms in response to carbon-dioxide pipeline proposals

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 12, 2023 5:37 PM



South Dakota Farmers Union President Doug Sombke discusses eminent domain concerns during a press conference Oct. 12, 2023, at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls. The press conference was held to announce the launch of the South Dakotans First coalition. (Joshua Haiar/South

Dakota Searchlight)

SIOUX FALLS — A statewide coalition has formed to pursue restrictions on the use of eminent domain for projects such as carbon dioxide pipelines.

The group introduced itself during a press conference Thursday at the Denny Sanford Premier Center.

The politically diverse coalition, named South Dakotans First, consists of the South Dakota Farmers Union, Dakota Rural Action, Landowners for Eminent Domain Reform, and various landowners.

Farmers Union President Doug Sombke told South Dakota Searchlight the coalition will advocate for property rights generally. But its creation is a response to Summit Carbon Solutions' filing of eminent domain proceedings against more than 150 landowners for a proposed multi-state carbon dioxide pipeline. Summit has said the eminent domain actions have since been withdrawn.

"Eminent domain" refers to the power to access private property for public use, provided the owner is given just compensation.

Summit's project

Summit applied for a permit to construct a pipeline in February 2022. The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission denied the application last month, citing the route's conflicts with ordinances in four counties that mandate minimum distances between pipelines and existing homes, businesses and other features.

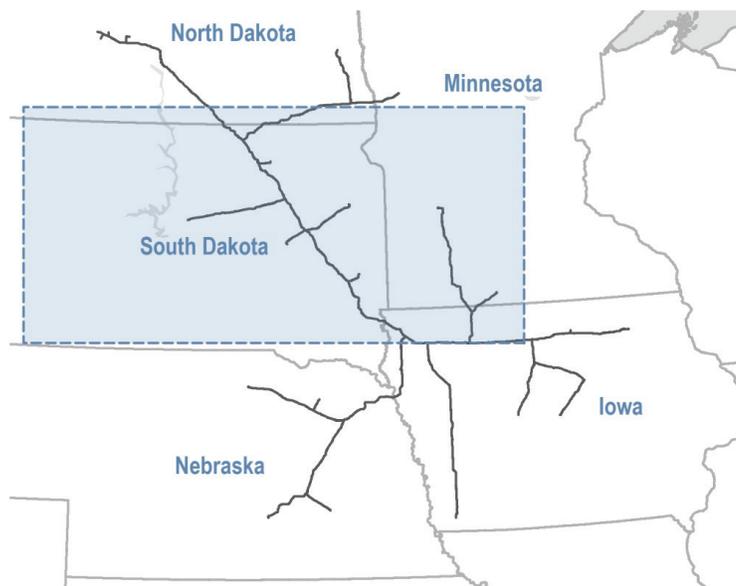
Summit plans to reapply after identifying a new route that complies with the county ordinances. That's why South Dakotans First sees the upcoming legislative session in Pierre, which begins in January, as a vital time to pass reform laws.

"Just because you put a permit application in, that doesn't mean you get to trespass on peoples' land," Sombke said.

Sombke said the definition of "public use" will be stretched beyond its original intent if it allows companies like Summit to use eminent domain without delivering a commodity the general public uses – like water, gas or electricity.

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The originally proposed route of the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline. (Courtesy of South Dakota PUC)

Summit seeks to capture carbon dioxide emitted from 31 ethanol plants in multiple states and transport it in liquid form to an underground sequestration site in North Dakota. The multi-billion-dollar project is eligible for billions in tax credits from the federal government, as incentives for removing heat-trapping carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Sombke said mitigating climate change is arguably a "public use," but carbon is not a commodity when it's being buried underground.

"If people want to do stuff about carbon in the atmosphere, they need to do it in a way that works with the landowners," Sombke said. "The majority of people, people in the middle, they are with us on that."

Last legislative session, proponents of the pipeline said some of the CO₂ would be used to carbonate soft drinks and make products including dry ice, which are commodities the public uses.

Rep. Karla Lems, R-Canton – who owns land

the pipeline would cross – was in attendance at Thursday's press conference. She sponsored a failed bill last winter that would have barred eminent domain for carbon pipelines. This winter, she plans to support a bill that would ban pipelines from using eminent domain until they have a permit from the Public Utilities Commission. Lems and Sombke said a number of other bills are in the works but are not ready to be shared.

Sombke shared the results of an online survey the coalition funded – conducted by Embold Research. It surveyed 1,037 likely general election voters in the state from Sept. 5 to 10 and found that 85% of people familiar with eminent domain oppose its use for "private purposes." Additionally, nearly 90% of voters surveyed don't think Summit should be allowed to use eminent domain to complete the project.

Summit responds

The coalition is bracing for opposition. Proponents of the pipeline have said anti-eminent domain legislation would "change the rules in the middle of the game."

Sabrina Zenor, a spokesperson for Summit, said in an emailed statement that nearly 75% of affected landowners have signed voluntary easement agreements giving access to the company.

"Our goal is 100% voluntary easement agreements, providing fair compensation and respectful land management," she wrote. "This project is about opening new markets for South Dakota ethanol and corn farmers."

Zenor referenced multiple court decisions that she said support Summit's right to use eminent domain. She said a poll of 2,000 registered voters nationwide by the Renewable Fuels Association showed 50-55% of respondents support carbon pipeline projects, and roughly one in five voters express strong support.

Legislators look ahead

Rep. John Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, and Rep. John Sjaarda, R-Valley Springs, attended the Thursday event.

Hansen said the upcoming legislative session is "shaping up to be less about Democrats versus Republicans, and really about who is going to stand up for the individuals that they represent, and who is going to just shill for corporations who come and fund their campaigns with donations."

Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, did not attend Thursday's event. He was part of the state Senate committee that unanimously rejected the bill that would have prevented carbon pipeline projects from using eminent domain. The bill had already passed the House of Representatives

40-28, but it was defeated 9-0 in the Senate Commerce and Energy Committee.

Schoenbeck said the people associated with South Dakotans First have “worn everybody out and they’re just going to have to wait until we get to Pierre” to see how Senate leadership reacts to their new efforts.

Doug Sombke said South Dakotans First also plans to support the people living near and opposed to the newly proposed state prison location south of Harrisburg.

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

Remote tractor diagnosis, disease-resistant pigs: Panel talks tech influence on ag

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 12, 2023 5:55 PM



From left, Christoph Bausch of SAB Biotherapeutics, Alan Young of Medgene and Chad Yagow of John Deere, at a panel on agriculture and technology on Oct. 12, 2023, in Sioux Falls. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

Searchlight)

tion in Brazil,” Yagow said. “We try to understand all the jobs that are going on there, and how Deere can add to the value that the customers are trying to generate.”

Implement dealers have had to adapt, as well, he said. Dealers can now get alerts from the smart farm machinery working the fields, then alert the owner to the issue “before a lot of them even know they have a problem.”

Sometimes Deere employees can “remote” into a software system to make adjustments without needing to make a trip to a farm. The company’s “precision upgrade” packages can be retrofitted to older machinery, he said, opening up the high-tech tools to farmers who can’t afford to drop tens of thousands of dollars on new equipment.

SIOUX FALLS – Agriculture has already been remade by precision technology, but the rapid proliferation of algorithmic machine-learning tools will continue to alter industry norms for years to come.

That was among the key takeaways from a panel of ag experts at the South Dakota Bio-tech summit and annual meeting on Thursday at the Minnehaha Country Club.

Chad Yagow of John Deere told the audience that precision agricultural tools can now help farmers do things like apply the ideal amount of fertilizer to the spot where a seed is planted, rather than to an entire row.

For John Deere, the shift toward computer-assisted crop cultivation has reshaped the way the iconic farm brand does business, from a “hard iron company to a technology company.”

Yagow is one of 25 agronomists on staff now to help fine-tune the company’s analytical tools – quite a jump from the two employed eight years ago.

“We’ve switched to a production system mentality, where we take a look at, say, soybean production in the Midwest, or cotton production in the Delta, or sugarcane produc-

On the animal agriculture side, advances in computing power have allowed veterinarians to respond to and quash disease by adding the genetic sequence of a new or localized version of a virus into adaptable "platforms," according to Alan Young of Brookings-based Medgene.

Young's company has a federally approved platform technology, which he likens to a Keurig coffee maker. Adding a new virus to the platform returns a new vaccine, much like the coffee machine can make any flavor plopped into its holster.

"We actually have more advanced technology now in animal health than we do for humans," Young said, owing in part to the ability to test new treatments in animals without the rigorous consent processes attached to human medication trials.

Animal agriculture has gone a step further with genetically altered animals, trailing decades behind plant technologies like herbicide-resistant seed. Pigs can be born resistant to porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) through gene editing, and scientists recently released a study on bird flu-resistant chickens.

Regulatory issues and public perception can stand in the way, Young said.

"All of this has to be borne out with the challenges of getting that from the bench, through the regulatory environment and ultimately, implementation in the field and public acceptance," Young said.

Moderator Christoph Bausch of SAB Biotherapeutics in Sioux Falls said the yearslong regulatory process can be daunting, but he also said that making the investment of time and treasure it takes to push through a novel technology can pay off.

Among other things, SAB uses genetically modified cattle to make medicine for humans. Cattle immune systems respond to disease as human immune systems would, making it possible to test vaccines without a threat to the health of human test subjects.

It took years to get approval for the approach, but it was worth it inasmuch as being first can serve as a guidebook for others.

"You can essentially write the book on your technology," Bausch said.

SAB is currently focused on producing treatments for Type 1 diabetes, Bausch said, which is a form of diabetes present at birth. The goal is to delay the onset and progression of the disease, and the company has the financial support of investors like the JDRF Type-1 Diabetes Fund.

"We are on our way for Type-1 diabetes," he said.

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

Biotech panel: Patient needs must come first in adoption of artificial intelligence, advanced tech

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 12, 2023 5:03 PM

SIOUX FALLS – Virtual visits have saved Sanford Health patients more than 25 million miles of travel by allowing them to skip the trip to a clinic, the company's chief digital officer said on Thursday.

But electronic medical records have made for less-efficient health care operations – at Sanford and across the health care industry, said Sanford's Jared Antczak.

There's often far more data collected than necessary, and its collection can gum up the gears of patient care.

Change is necessary, Antczak said, "so providers can spend less time looking at their screens, and more time interacting with patients."

"That's what they went to medical school for, that's what many of them were motivated by, that's what they aspired to when they became physicians," he said.

The gulf between the possible and the practical in health technology was a recurring theme in a panel

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Jon Oh of Avera speaks to a guest after a panel at the 2023 South Dakota Biotech Summit in Sioux Falls. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

discussion at the South Dakota Biotech summit and annual meeting at the Minnehaha Country Club in Sioux Falls.

Antczak was joined by Jon Oh, the vice president of data and analytics at Avera, in a panel moderated by Avera's vice president of hospital pharmacy and lab services, Tom Johnson.

Data analysis, AI

The mountains of electronic health care data now available and the emerging tools to analyze them are potentially transformative, the panelists said, not actually transformative.

Not yet, anyway.

"We are on the cusp of being able to use data at a large scale as technology advances and data science advances continue to move forward," Antczak said. "But it has to be done in an ethical way. It has to be done in a way that our patients' interests are first and foremost."

Sanford has more than a decade of information on 1.5 million patients across four states, which Antczak called "a treasure trove for data scientists." One avenue being explored, he said, is "risk stratification," through which the data

can be analyzed to be proactive and address likely health issues.

Social factors account for half of any patient's health risks, he said, so connecting patterns of geography and demography to health indicators could help providers connect people with preventative care before problems emerge.

"We're just scratching the surface of that," he said.

Sanford is also piloting the use of some existing artificial intelligence technologies. Artisight is an operating system that uses multiple cameras to collect data and analyze factors like a patient's gait to predict falls, and Sanford has begun testing it in some nursing units.

Camera monitoring, or "telesitting," has been around for years, Antczak said.

"This is taking that to another level, where I'm proactively nudging the nurse to say, 'Hey, go pay attention to room 334. There's a potential issue here, make sure that patient is assisted,'" Antczak said.

Potential vs. implementation

But Antczak and Oh, the Avera data lead, said several times that a notable share of existing and emerging health care technologies seem more helpful than they are.

Oh cited a radiology result alert he received from his patient portal app a few years ago as an example. The test results included a finding tagged with an unfamiliar medical term. Concerned, he asked a radiologist friend, who told him it was probably nothing to worry about.

Ask your doctor to be sure, his friend said.

"Well, the follow-up appointment wasn't for two weeks," Oh said. "So you know what I did for those two weeks? I searched Google. Word of caution, folks: Do not do that."

The notification, ostensibly a means by which to keep Oh informed, played out as an anxiety-inducing portal to misinformation. The anecdote shows why connecting the dots between tech and patient needs ought to be at the heart of any decisions to adopt or innovate, Oh said.

"Our only goal is to provide the best care for patients, and that's it," Oh said. "Nothing else should be considered in my opinion."

AI has emerged as a go-to suggestion for health care issues, Oh said, but it's not always necessary. Sometimes, simpler is better.

The inefficiencies borne of electronic record keeping, he said, can be cataloged without complex algorithms. Avera recently ran a study on the number of clicks its providers made in the course of their day. A third of those clicks had nothing to do with patient care, and more to do with answering questions or ticking boxes wholly unrelated to a patient's issue.

"Technology in itself, I think, has a lot of value – if it is understood and if it is implemented correctly," Oh said. "So far, there's not a whole lot of that."

Obstacles to adaptation

Regulatory issues and the high price of approved technology tools stand as other hurdles to effective tech use in hospitals.

Avera trained an AI model on 10,000 radiology scans to identify pneumonia, Oh said. But the health system can't use that information without FDA approval. That would require a legal team and a team of academic researchers to hit all the expected marks to earn that approval.

That's expensive and time-consuming enough to nearly match the unaffordable price point for the existing technologies that can do the same work, Oh said.

"We can do it, but we can't really get it to work for us," he said.

Oh also said it's important to remember that not all patients have the same comfort level with or access to the kinds of tools now available. Care at a clinic isn't helpful if the patient doesn't have transportation. Virtual care only works for people with internet access, smartphones or computers.

Solutions that leave out groups of patients or push them beyond their comfort level aren't ideal.

"We need to make sure we're not making assumptions about our patients," Oh said.

Virtual care and online patient portals are now common and expected, said Johnson, the panel's moderator.

That doesn't mean everyone wants to use them.

"My parents, who are in their mid-80s, are not interested in virtual," Johnson said. "Visits to the physician has become sort of one of their hobbies. I guess it works for them."

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.



Jared Antczak of Sanford Health speaks to a guest after a panel at the 2023 South Dakota Biotech Summit in Sioux Falls. (John Hult/South Dakota

Searchlight)

Scalise drops out of race for U.S. House speaker

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA AND JENNIFER SHUTT - OCTOBER 12, 2023 7:47 PM



House Majority Leader Steve Scalise speaks to reporters as he leaves a House Republican caucus meeting at the U.S. Capitol on Oct. 12, 2023, in Washington, D.C. (Win McNamee/Getty Images)

WASHINGTON — Louisiana Republican Rep. Steve Scalise withdrew from the race for U.S. House speaker on Thursday evening, just one day after his colleagues nominated him for the role.

“Our conference still has to come together and it’s not there,” Scalise told reporters. “I was very clear we have to have everybody put their agendas on the side and focus on what this country needs. This country is counting on us to come back together, this House of Representatives needs a speaker and we need to open up the House again.”

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan was the only other declared candidate for speaker. He was narrowly beaten by Scalise during the conference vote Wednesday and quickly pivoted to backing Scalise while encouraging those who supported him to back Scalise as well.

After announcing he would withdraw his nomination, Scalise did not say whether he

would back Jordan for speaker.

“I’m sure there will be a lot of people that look at it,” Scalise said of future candidates for speaker. “But it’s got to be people that aren’t doing it for themselves and their own personal interests.”

While Scalise got a majority of the 221 votes during the closed-door conference meeting, more than a dozen Republican lawmakers said they wouldn’t vote to elect him speaker on the floor.

Scalise announced his decision to step aside following the second meeting of the House Republican Conference on Thursday. The group met for about three hours in the afternoon and then regrouped in a room in the Capitol building’s basement around 7:30 p.m. Eastern.

Georgia’s Marjorie Taylor Greene and Virginia’s Bob Good, repeatedly said they wouldn’t back Scalise during a floor vote.

The U.S. House has been without a speaker for more than a week after eight GOP lawmakers and Democrats voted to remove California Rep. Kevin McCarthy from the post after just nine months.

The chamber has been essentially frozen since then, with North Carolina Rep. Patrick McHenry filling the role of speaker pro tempore.

The pro tem job, created following the 9/11 terrorist attacks to ensure continuity of government, is not clearly defined in House rules.

A House procedure expert told States Newsroom during an interview on Thursday that the chamber could temporarily elect McHenry, or any other House member, to the role if they wanted to begin moving resolutions or bills.

Some House Republicans have begun suggesting the party do just that if they cannot elect a speaker on the floor soon.

Ariana covers the nation’s capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

There's still no speaker of the U.S. House. Could Patrick McHenry be the solution?

SD's Rep. Johnson: 'Quit looking for excuses not to vote for somebody'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND ASHLEY MURRAY - OCT. 12, 2023 6:25 PM

WASHINGTON — Louisiana Republican Rep. Steve Scalise stepped into a closed-door meeting at the U.S. Capitol Thursday to negotiate with more than a dozen holdout Republicans in his quest to become the next speaker of the House, though dissent only seemed to grow following the three-hour session.

On Thursday night, Scalise announced he was dropping out of the race.

No vote on the House floor for a speaker had been scheduled as of Thursday night, with the weekend looming. Both the House and Senate are scheduled to be in session next week.

As Scalise's support eroded, a push began among some in the House GOP to give Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry of North Carolina more legislative authority, especially with the White House preparing to send Congress a supplemental funding request to help Israel, Ukraine, Taiwan and U.S. border security.

Arkansas Rep. Steve Womack told reporters he believes the chamber should try to empower McHenry to do more on the floor than he has so far, though he acknowledged there isn't much precedent.

"If we can, because I think that's where we are right now in terms of our ability to advance a candidate to become the 56th speaker," Womack said, adding that he didn't "see the light at the end of that tunnel."

Former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who was ousted on Oct. 3, handpicked McHenry for the role of speaker pro tem, created after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to ensure continuity of government. But this is the first time since the House has used a speaker pro tem in this way.

A U.S. House procedure expert said during an interview with States Newsroom on Thursday that while the role of speaker pro tem was created following the 2001 attacks, it was done so against the constitutional backdrop that the House elects its speakers.

"But it uses those broad terms of 'necessary and appropriate' to give the flexibility to that person in the event of an unforeseeable catastrophic event," said the expert, who spoke on background with States Newsroom to discuss the authorities of the speaker pro tem.

Before the role of speaker pro tem was created, the House Clerk would have stepped into the role in the event of a vacancy, but the expert said "that was something that was not viewed favorably" by the task force that looked at continuity of Congress issues following 9/11.

The rule — which says the speaker pro tem "may exercise such authorities of the Office of the Speaker as may be necessary and appropriate to that end" — is "purposely vague," the expert said.

"So it gives a little flexibility, but within that tight window of we must do the election, the election is paramount," the expert said. "What you must remember is that the constitutional imperative is that the House chooses its speaker, not the former speaker chooses its speaker."

The expert said that the House could vote to give McHenry, or any other member, the authority to bring



U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., arrives to a House Republican Conference meeting at the U.S. Capitol on Oct. 12, 2023, in Washington, D.C. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

(Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

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up resolutions and bills and run the chamber if members elected that person the speaker pro tem for a set amount of time, or until the House elects a speaker.

But it would be a "very bad idea" for McHenry or any other non-elected speaker pro tem to try to exercise broader authority over the House, the expert said.

"He currently is the person holding the gavel and making decisions, but I would expect there would be multiple challenges," the expert said.

'Swamp concern'

Texas Rep. Chip Roy said whether the House would vote to give McHenry more authority is "palace intrigue" and a "swamp concern."

"If something happens, we can act and that's just the bottom line. And you can temporarily empower the speaker pro tem, you can do anything with a majoritarian body," Roy said. "My point is the high-stakes drama that is trying to be pushed out there about 'Oh my gosh, there's world events going on, so therefore, just pick any pilot for the plane.' That's not a good model."

"So we need to figure out what we need to do. Let's pick the right speaker. Let's unite and move forward," Roy said.

Roy, who unsuccessfully tried to change House GOP rules this week to prevent a speaker nominee from going to the floor without 217 votes, said he wants the party's debate to stay private for now.

"I'm happy to keep having a conversation behind closed doors — not like that's some sort of nefarious thing — but as a Republican Conference, like we're doing. And figure it out."

Roy was one of the holdout far-right conservatives who pressed McCarthy into a handshake, backroom deal in January in order to secure the votes to become speaker.

Some want a public debate

Other House Republicans, however, are calling to move the debate to the floor, as violence continues in the Middle East following last weekend's attack on Israel by Hamas and Israel retaliates, and as Ukraine continues to resist the Russian invasion.

The lawmakers are also faced with a fast approaching Nov. 17 deadline to renew government funding.

House Foreign Affairs Chair Michael McCaul has grown impatient and is calling for a floor vote, even though Scalise doesn't have the support to win.

"At the end of the day, we elected the speaker designee and you know, we may just have to bring it to the floor and have another episode like we had with McCarthy," he said.

It took McCarthy 15 rounds of voting to become speaker in January.

"One of the biggest threats I've seen in that room is we can't unify as a conference and put the speaker in the chair," McCaul said.

Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene said neither Scalise or his opponent in the race for speaker, Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, could get to 217 on the floor at the moment, though she called on leaders to begin that process immediately.

"It's a waste of time, continuing to go in there, behind closed doors. We are elected by the people, we represent the people, we need to be on the House floor and we can fight this out on the House floor," Greene said.

Scalise's blood cancer diagnosis is part of the reason Greene said she supports Jordan.

"When you're in a tight game and there's a lot of pressure happening, you don't put an injured player or a sick player on the field," Greene said. "That is not the right thing to do for that player. And it's not the right thing to do for the team."

Scalise's doctors have given him approval to return to work inside the Capitol and told the lawmaker he's doing phenomenally well, according to comments from Scalise, who has said he's ready to take on the role of speaker.

Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma pushed back the notion that Scalise should not run for speaker because he is undergoing cancer treatments.

"The sciences of battling cancer have advanced dramatically in the last 20 years, I am confident that he

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can physically handle it," Lucas said.

Florida Rep. Mario Díaz-Balart said the process shows "democracy in action," but added that it's important to get a speaker elected quickly given all of the world events.

"Every day that we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing, is a day that's a green light to the administration — to the chaos of the administration, to the weakness of the administration," Díaz-Balart said. "So, obviously, my preference is to do it as soon as possible."

SD's Johnson: 'settle on somebody'

Tennessee Rep. Andy Ogles said following the three-hour-long meeting Thursday afternoon that no members who oppose Scalise have changed their positions.

"We should have started at eight o'clock this morning, we should stay until two in the morning. But instead we're having this 'Kumbaya' session that's not productive," he said. "We need to start casting votes."

South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson said the situation at the Southern border and the war in Israel were good reasons for House Republicans to "get our act together."

"I think all members, myself included, need to quit looking for excuses not to vote for somebody and just realize that in a majoritarian institution, which the Republican Conference is, we got to settle on somebody, and then we got to go get them elected speaker," Johnson said.

Florida Rep. Byron Donalds said he believes House Republican "members have to just come to a consensus agreement."

Donalds deferred to McHenry, when asked when the House would schedule a vote to elect a speaker.

Rep. Victoria Spartz of Indiana said if Scalise is the nominee on the floor and the vote goes to multiple ballots she will vote for him in the first round. After that, she will reassess, she said.

Tennessee's Rep. Tim Burchett, one of the eight members who voted to oust McCarthy, told reporters he felt optimistic about the conference reaching an agreement.

"We'll get there," Burchett, a Scalise supporter, said.

"I think (Scalise) is working very hard toward that, and I've talked to several people this morning that have had conversions, not toward Christianity, toward Scalise," Burchett said.

Rep. John Rutherford of Florida joined several of his other Republican colleagues in calling for the speaker vote to move to the floor.

"As long as we can hide out behind closed doors in the anonymity of a closed room, nobody's gonna be held accountable so nobody's going to change their mind," Rutherford said.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Thursday, when asked about the speaker's race, that it was a process for House Republicans to figure out themselves, noting President Joe Biden had no role.

"It is their process," Jean-Pierre said of House Republicans. "What we're seeing is certainly shambolic chaos that we're seeing over there on the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue, and they need to get their act together. There's a lot of work that needs to be done on behalf of the American people."

Jacob Fischler and Samantha Dietel contributed to this report.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Legislators in 49 states ask SCOTUS to preserve access to abortion pill

South Dakota Democrats Duba and Wittman are among signers

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS - OCTOBER 12, 2023 4:23 PM

A group of more than 600 Democratic legislators from 49 states have signed an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court urging the justices to overturn an appellate court decision that would roll back access to mifepristone, one of two drugs used to safely terminate early pregnancies and treat miscarriages.

The amicus brief, also called a "friend of the court" brief, was organized by State Innovation Exchange's Reproductive Freedom Leadership Council and assembled over the past week, said Jennifer Driver, the group's senior director of reproductive rights. Driver said State Innovation Exchange, also known as SIX, provides tools and resources for state legislators to advocate for progressive public policies after being

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elected to office.

Driver said SiX did ask Republican legislators to sign on as well, but didn't manage to garner any bipartisan support.

Every state, with the exception of Mississippi, had Democratic legislators who signed their names to the brief, with the highest number of participants from Illinois, followed by North Carolina, New York and Colorado. Driver said 13 state representatives from Arkansas also signed on.

There are two signers from South Dakota: Democratic Reps. Linda Duba and Kady Wittman, both of Sioux Falls.

"This statement should say that across the country, in almost every state, there are legislators that are saying their ability to protect their community should not be interfered with," Driver said. "Even in ruby red states, there are legislators who are still fighting for abortion access, and they understand the ramifications of what happened in Dobbs and what could happen in this case."

Upholding 5th Circuit would mean reinstating prior restrictions on pill

The Supreme Court has not yet accepted the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine's case against the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, but the court already involved itself in April by temporarily blocking the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision. If the high court declines to hear the case or upholds the appellate court's ruling, the FDA's rules that allowed expanded access of mifepristone would be struck down.

That would include the ability for providers to prescribe the medication via telehealth or send the medication in the mail, and it would decrease the time limit from 10 weeks of pregnancy to seven weeks. The results of most pregnancy tests are not reliable until after an individual has already missed a period at four weeks of pregnancy.

It would also require patients to see providers at three separate clinic appointments in person, which would be especially difficult for those traveling from one of the 14 states with abortion bans to access care.

The Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine is a group of four anti-abortion organizations and four doctors that formed in 2022 and incorporated in Amarillo, Texas. U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, who is in Amarillo, made the initial ruling that would have revoked mifepristone's approval in its entirety, leading some to conclude the plaintiffs chose to incorporate there for a favorable outcome in Kacsmaryk's court.

The plaintiffs are represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a religious conservative group that recruits and trains attorneys to litigate cultural issue cases, including abortion, anti-LGBTQ legislation and what they consider violations of Christian religious freedom. The same organization was also involved in the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision overturning the constitutional right to an abortion.

The attorneys have argued the FDA illegally approved mifepristone in 2000, and have repeatedly contended that the drug is unsafe and responsible for many deaths — a claim that is not backed by credible sources. According to the FDA, 28 deaths out of an estimated 5.6 million people in 23 years have been associated with mifepristone's regimen for terminating a pregnancy, which is a markedly lower rate than many common FDA-approved drugs, like Tylenol and Viagra. And as the FDA notes, that small number includes fatal cases "regardless of causal attribution to mifepristone," including people who died from homicide, suicide, and pulmonary emphysema.

Legislators in Minnesota, North Carolina take the lead on brief

In the Dobbs decision, authored by Justice Samuel Alito and issued in June 2022, the justices in favor of overturning Roe v. Wade said the regulation of abortion should be left to the states, "in accordance with the views of its citizens," just as it was prior to the Roe ruling in 1973.



Packages of Mifepristone tablets are displayed at a family planning clinic on April 13, 2023, in Rockville, Maryland. (Photo illustration by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

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"It is time to heed the [U.S.] Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives," Alito wrote.

That's one of the reasons why the legislators decided to submit the brief, said Minnesota Democratic state Sen. Erin Maye Quade, one of two lawmakers leading the effort. While the legislators who signed on aren't saying they agree with the Dobbs decision or the Supreme Court's interpretation of the law, the justices' own logic for the decision demonstrates that federal courts should not come between state laws on the issue of abortion.

"This [case] gives them an opportunity to decide whether abortion is really going to be up to states or not," Maye Quade told States Newsroom on Tuesday.

The representatives and senators also argue that elected officials rely on the FDA's authority to approve medications on the market, and allowing the 5th Circuit's ruling to stand would undermine that authority. In a state like Minnesota, which is almost entirely surrounded by states with abortion bans, access to mifepristone is vital, Maye Quade said. Following Texas' implementation of its abortion ban prior to the Dobbs ruling in 2022, Minnesota started to see an increase in patients seeking care. Maye Quade said there was a 20% increase in the state in 2022, and in 2023, the numbers continue to increase.

The other lawmaker leading the case is Rep. Julie von Haefen, a Democrat in North Carolina's General Assembly. The legislature in North Carolina passed Senate Bill 20 earlier this year, banning abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy and requiring patients to receive counseling at least 72 hours before the termination is scheduled to take place. A report issued Wednesday by the Guttmacher Institute showed between June and July, when the law went into effect, abortions decreased by 31%. North Carolina was an access point for many people in surrounding states, von Haefen said, and that drop was jarring.

"We just believe that the Supreme Court made this decision in Dobbs, and they have to step in and say, 'No more, we have to leave these decisions to state legislators,'" von Haefen said.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court's docket, attorneys for the plaintiffs are scheduled to file their brief in opposition to the court taking the case by Nov. 9.

Kelcie Moseley-Morris is an award-winning journalist who has covered many topics across Idaho since 2011. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Idaho and a master's degree in public administration from Boise State University. Moseley-Morris started her journalism career at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News, followed by the Lewiston Tribune and the Idaho Press.

Federal pilot project will buy local bison meat for tribal food aid

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - OCTOBER 12, 2023 11:23 AM



Bison graze on a snow covered pasture in Corson County. (Makenzie Huber, South Dakota Searchlight)

Heather Dawn Thompson is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. She's also the USDA's director of tribal relations.

"This pilot is an important step to use government procurement flexibly for the benefit of our tribal and smaller producers and their surrounding communities," she said in a news release.

Bison are an important traditional food source for many Indigenous people. The entity undertaking the pilot project is the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

The USDA says some low-income Native American households don't use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — formerly known as food stamps — because they

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don't have easy access to federal offices or authorized food stores. The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations acts as a stand-in program, making shipments to 276 tribes and utilizing tribal or state agencies to enroll recipients and distribute the food.

Tom Vilsack, secretary of USDA, said the goal of the pilot program is not only introducing more locally raised bison into food offerings, but also bolstering tribal economies by buying the meat locally.

"USDA recognizes the role its purchasing power can play in providing access for smaller, local and tribal producers," Vilsack said in the news release.

The four producers awarded contracts under the pilot project are connected to four reservations in South Dakota:

Akicita Consulting (owned by the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe), \$14,079.

Brownotter Buffalo Ranch (operating on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation), \$162,360.

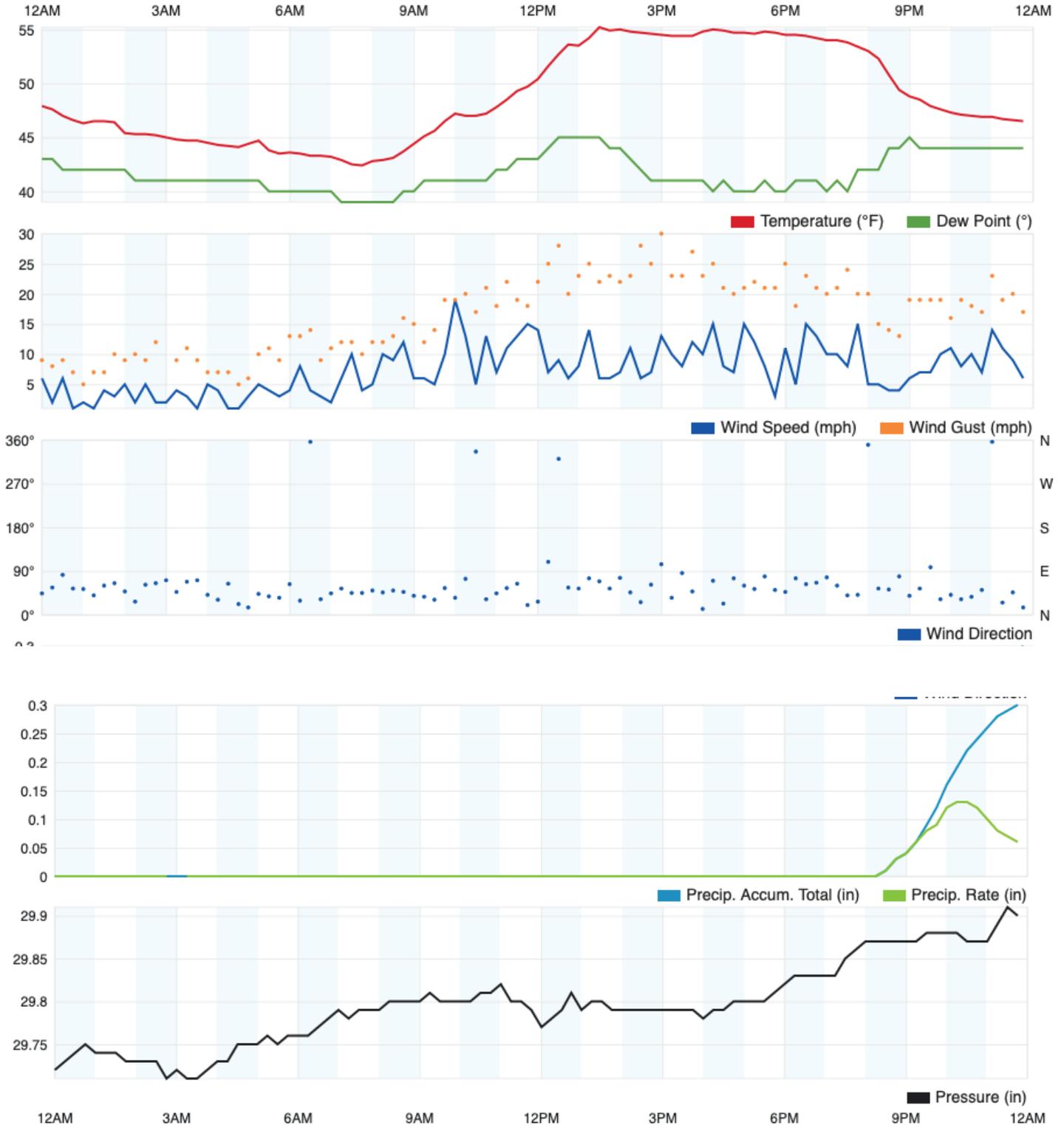
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Buffalo Authority Corporation (owned by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), \$66,916.32

Dakota Pure Bison (operating on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation), \$254,581.50.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Fri Oct 13	Sat Oct 14	Sun Oct 15	Mon Oct 16	Tue Oct 17	Wed Oct 18	Thu Oct 19
47°F 40°F	51°F 36°F	52°F 30°F	54°F 35°F	61°F 43°F	61°F 41°F	54°F 38°F
NNE 29 MPH	N 11 MPH	N 9 MPH	SW 8 MPH	S 11 MPH	S 13 MPH	NNW 13 MPH
90%					20%	20%



Wind Gusts & Precipitation Timing

October 13, 2023
3:29 AM

Key Messages

- Wind Advisory remains in effect early this morning - gusts between 40 and 50 mph to start the day.
- Winds will be on a slow, steady decline through the course of the day.
- Rainfall continues through the day as well, with heaviest rainfall shifting towards eastern South Dakota/western Minnesota. Potentially upwards of an additional inch of moisture in this area...with a 1/2" or less for the rest of the forecast area.

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

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

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	10/13 Fri					10/14 Sat				
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	90	80	65	50	35	15	5	5	5	5
Britton	95	85	80	70	60	25	10	5	5	5
Brookings	80	65	50	40	40	45	50	45	30	30
Chamberlain	90	70	45	40	35	40	25	20	20	20
Clark	85	65	80	65	55	30	15	10	5	10
Eagle Butte	25	20	20	20	20	20	25	25	10	10
Ellendale	60	70	55	40	30	15	5	5	5	5
Eureka	50	45	45	35	25	20	10	5	5	5
Gettysburg	60	55	40	35	30	35	25	30	30	25
Huron	90	70	55	45	45	35	30	20	10	10
Kennebec	85	70	40	40	35	35	30	30	25	25
McIntosh	10	5	10	10	15	15	10	10	0	0
Milbank	95	90	80	80	80	55	30	20	10	10
Miller	100	95	60	55	40	35	20	15	15	15
Mobridge	30	30	25	20	20	20	15	15	5	5
Murdo	80	65	30	30	35	35	35	40	20	20
Pierre	65	55	35	30	25	30	35	40	35	35
Redfield	95	80	70	55	35	20	10	5	5	5
Sisseton	100	95	85	80	75	35	10	5	5	5
Watertown	85	75	85	80	80	50	30	15	10	10
Webster	90	75	90	80	65	25	10	5	5	5
Wheaton	95	90	75	75	75	45	10	5	5	5



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Low pressure will continue to bring gusty winds and rainfall to the region this morning, but with a slow decline in winds and coverage of rainfall through the course of the day. The core of most rainfall will also shift towards eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota through the day.

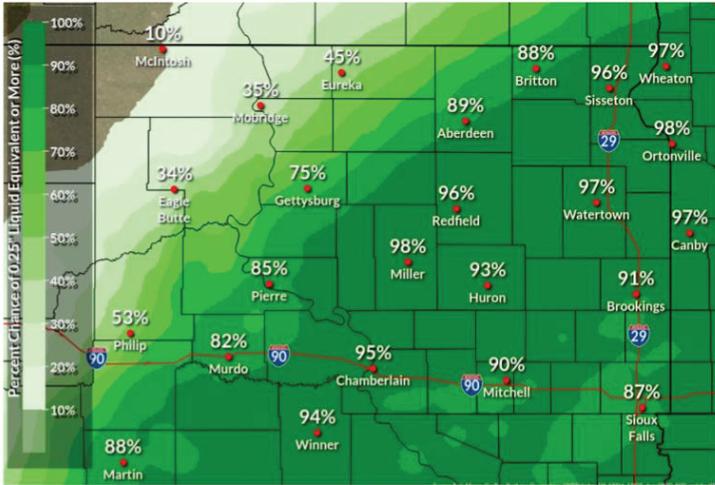
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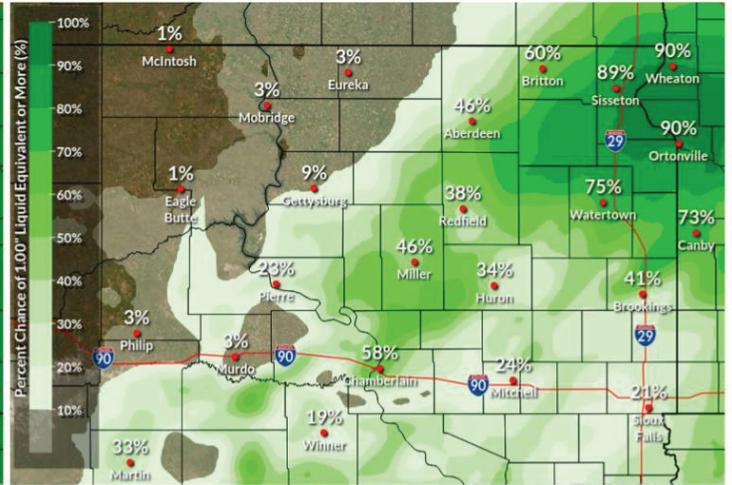


Potential Precipitation Totals For Today

October 13, 2023
4:59 AM



Probability of exceeding 1/4" Today



Probability of exceeding 1" Today

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 55 °F at 1:32 PM

Low Temp: 42 °F at 7:34 AM

Wind: 30 mph at 2:54 PM

Precip: : 0.29

Day length: 11 hours, 08 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 87 in 1958

Record Low: 10 in 1909

Average High: 61

Average Low: 35

Average Precip in Oct.: 0.98

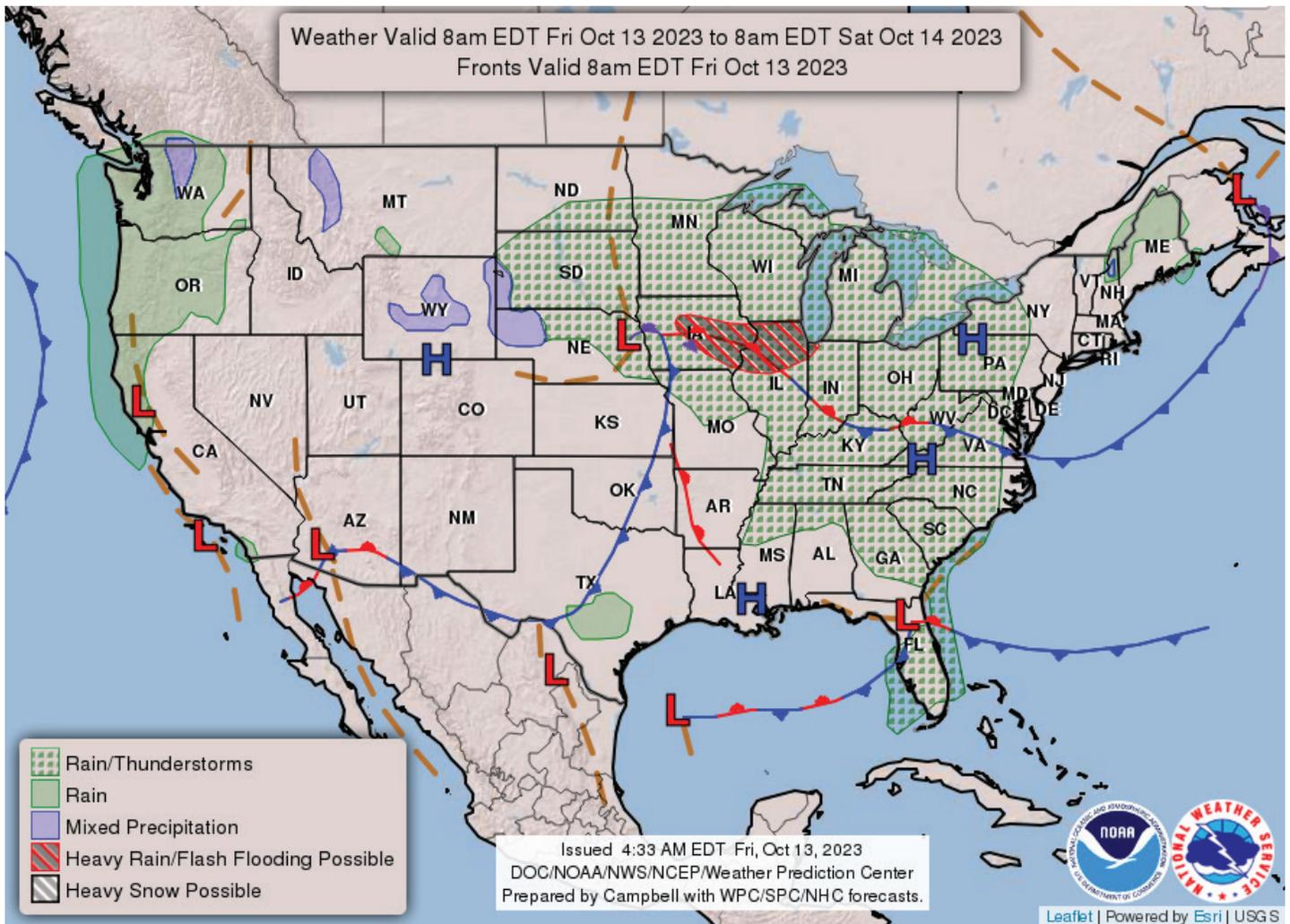
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.35

Average Precip to date: 19.31

Precip Year to Date: 22.12

Sunset Tonight: 6:52:40 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45:53 AM



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Today in Weather History

October 13, 1966: Late season thunderstorms brought hail and high winds to southeast South Dakota, causing extensive damage to some soybean fields. The greatest damage was in the Garretson area. The strong winds also damaged many utility lines along with many farm structures. Lightning struck a church at Lake Andes, and the resulting fire destroyed it. The storms occurred from late on the 13th to the morning of the 14th.

1846 - A great hurricane tracked across Cuba, Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia and Pennsylvania. The hurricane inflicted major damage along its entire path, which was similar to the path of Hurricane Hazel 108 years later. The hurricane caused great damage at Key West FL, and at Philadelphia PA it was the most destructive storm in thirty years. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1983: Severe weather in Falls Church, VA, produced 2-3 tornadoes and caused \$1 million in damages.

1986 - Four tornadoes struck southeastern Virginia late in the night causing three million dollars damage. Tornadoes at Falls Church VA caused a million dollars damage. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1987 - Fifteen cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 34 degrees at Meridian MS, 28 degrees at Paducah KY, and 26 degrees at Beckley WV. Another surge of arctic air entered the north central U.S. bringing snow to parts of Wyoming and Colorado. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A total of forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. and the Upper Midwest reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins WV and Marquette MI where the mercury dipped to 18 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Sixteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 80s and low 90s from the Southern and Central Plains to the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast. Evansville IND and North Platte NE reported record highs of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2006: The October 2006 Buffalo storm was an unusual early-season lake effect snowstorm that hit the Buffalo, New York area, and other surrounding areas of the United States and Canada. Downtown Buffalo reported 15 inches from this event. Depew and Alden record 24 inches, the most from this lake effect storm.

2011: Three tornadoes hit central and Eastern Virginia on this day. One of the EF1 tornadoes caused damage to the Sylvania Plantation home that was built in 1746. The storm peeled the roof off the house.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GET UP AND GO ON

Little Lola was having a hard time learning to skate. Every time she got up and started to skate, she fell. The bruises were multiplying and covering all of the available space on her knees, hands, and elbows.

A neighbor passing by watched her try and try again. Finally, he approached her and asked, "Why don't you give up?"

"Because," she cried with tears streaming down her cheeks, "my father didn't give me these skates to give up with but to go on with."

Our Lord gives us His gracious favor and wonder-working power to "go on with." A good example of this is the Apostle Paul. God did not remove His affliction. He did promise, however, to provide His strength, courage, and power to him wherever he was, no matter what, "to go on with."

No matter what we believe to be our weaknesses, He wants to give us help and hope, endurance and victory. When we willingly admit our weaknesses and limitations to God, we are forced to depend upon Him for our effectiveness and accomplishments. Surrendering to Him when we need His help forces us to admit our inabilities and His abilities. Admitting our limitations enables us to develop our Christ-likeness, deepen our respect for God's presence and power in our lives, and encourages us to a deeper sense of worship.

Prayer: Father, we truly need Your involvement in our lives. When we are weak - give us Your strength; when we are down - raise us with Your power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10



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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.10.23

3 8 17 46 63 7

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$48,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 6 Mins 16
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.23

3 6 9 17 51 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,700,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.12.23

11 15 22 28 29 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 36 Mins 17
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.23

2 7 8 16 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$22,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 36
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.23

3 40 51 59 66 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 5
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.23

22 24 40 52 64 10

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 5
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Christian def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-21, 25-21, 15-25, 28-26
Avon def. Centerville, 25-23, 25-22, 25-16
Baltic def. Sioux Valley, 25-8, 25-20, 25-21
Belle Fourche def. Red Cloud, 25-12, 25-15, 25-4
Bowman County, N.D. def. Bison, 25-17, 25-13, 25-19
Bridgewater-Emery def. Gayville-Volin High School, 25-19, 20-25, 25-20, 25-19
Burke def. Gregory, 26-24, 18-25, 25-17, 27-25
Canton def. Vermillion, 25-14, 25-17, 25-10
Chester def. Madison, 25-18, 25-17, 25-13
Deubrook def. Arlington, 22-25, 25-23, 20-25, 25-9, 15-8
Douglas def. Hot Springs, 25-16, 25-11, 25-18
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-14, 25-14, 25-19
Estelline/Hendricks def. Castlewood, 25-20, 28-26, 23-25, 25-23
Faith def. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, 25-12, 25-14, 25-14
Florence/Henry def. Wilmot, 22-25, 25-12, 25-14, 25-15
Garretson def. Tea Area, 25-17, 25-16, 23-25, 25-13
Groton Area def. Deuel, 25-15, 25-19, 25-15
Hamlin def. Britton-Hecla, 25-11, 25-11, 25-10
Harding County def. McIntosh, 25-15, 25-11, 25-20
Harrisburg def. Aberdeen Central, 25-12, 25-17, 30-28
Herreid/Selby Area def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-18, 25-18, 25-17
Hill City def. Wall, 25-7, 30-28, 25-22
Hulett, Wyo. def. Edgemont, 24-26, 25-23, 25-22, 25-22
James Valley Christian def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-14, 25-16, 25-16
Kadoka Area def. Jones County, 25-16, 25-10, 25-19
Lemmon High School def. New England, N.D., 25-17, 27-25, 25-22
Milbank def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-9, 25-14, 25-15
Mobridge-Pollock def. Sully Buttes, 25-12, 25-18, 25-20
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. West Central, 25-21, 25-17, 25-20
Northwestern def. Potter County, 25-17, 25-18, 25-17
Omaha Nation, Neb. def. Flandreau Indian, 25-0, 25-0, 25-0
Parkston def. Parker, 25-15, 25-14, 25-23
Platte-Geddes def. Chamberlain, 25-8, 25-11, 25-10
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-21, 15-25, 25-19, 26-24
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Huron, 25-21, 25-17, 25-8
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Brookings, 25-14, 26-24, 25-9
Sioux Falls Washington def. Watertown, 25-23, 20-25, 25-21, 25-14
St. Thomas More def. Custer, 25-20, 25-21, 22-25, 26-24
Sturgis Brown def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-14, 25-20, 25-16
Tri-State, N.D. def. Waubay/Summit, 25-20, 25-22, 25-14
Wagner def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-20, 25-9, 25-18
Warner def. Faulkton, 25-13, 25-15, 25-14
Webster def. Redfield, 16-25, 20-25, 25-21, 25-22, 15-9

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White River def. Colome, 25-12, 25-11, 25-11
Winner def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-20, 25-19, 25-19
Wolsey-Wessington def. Wessington Springs, 25-17, 25-8, 25-11
Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D. def. Langford, 25-19, 25-12, 25-16

PREP FOOTBALL

Lower Brule 50, Crow Creek Tribal School 0
Omaha Nation, Neb. 50, Marty Indian 0

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

Biden awards \$7 billion for 'clean hydrogen' hubs across the country to help replace fossil fuels

By MATTHEW DALY and MARC LEVY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Clean-energy projects in seven states from Pennsylvania to California have been selected by the Biden administration for a \$7 billion program to kickstart development and production of hydrogen fuel, a key component of President Joe Biden's agenda to slow climate change.

His goal is to establish seven regional "hydrogen hubs" to help replace fossil fuels such as coal and oil with cleaner-burning hydrogen as an energy source for vehicles, manufacturing and generating electricity.

Biden is expected to make the official announcement during an economic-themed visit to Philadelphia on Friday.

The White House calls clean hydrogen "essential to achieving the president's vision of a strong clean energy economy" and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. by 2050.

"As a clean fuel, hydrogen complements the role played by other clean energy sources, like wind and solar, to help the U.S. reduce emissions in energy-intensive sectors of the economy: steel and cement production, heavy-duty transportation, and shipping," the White House said in a statement.

The seven hubs selected by the administration will spur more than \$40 billion in private investment and create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs, the White House said, including many high-paying union jobs.

There were 23 finalists for the hydrogen fuel program. The projects selected are based in California, Washington, Minnesota, Texas, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Illinois.

The infrastructure law Biden signed in 2021 included billions of dollars to develop so-called clean hydrogen, a technology that industry and clean-energy advocates have long pushed as a way to reduce planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions produced by fossil fuels.

Some environmentalists call hydrogen a false solution because it frequently relies on natural gas or other fossil fuels as feedstocks.

Energy companies say fossil fuels can serve as feedstocks if the projects capture the carbon dioxide produced and keep it out of the atmosphere, a technology that has yet to be produced at commercial scale.

States and businesses have been competing for federal dollars in the new Energy Department program, which will create regional networks of hydrogen producers, consumers and infrastructure. The intent is to accelerate the availability and use of the colorless, odorless gas that already powers some vehicles and trains.

Among those selected were the Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub, based in West Virginia, and the Philadelphia-based Mid-Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub. Pennsylvania, a battleground state of the highest importance to the Democratic president in next year's election, is in line to benefit from both projects.

Biden has made Philadelphia a regular stop for both official and campaign events, and partners in the proposed Philadelphia-area hub have labor unions that are key Biden supporters. The West Virginia-based hub includes major Pittsburgh-based natural gas companies that are active in the region's prolific Marcellus Shale reservoir, including the parent company of the operator of the controversial Mountain Valley Pipeline in West Virginia and Virginia.

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The \$6.6 billion project to transport natural gas through Appalachia is supported by Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat who was a key vote for last year's sweeping legislation that included deep investments in climate programs. Opponents say the pipeline would emit the equivalent climate pollution of 23 coal-fired power plants and erode forest land along its 303-mile path.

The hub also includes a \$1.6 billion facility under construction in northern Pennsylvania that is working to produce near-zero emissions hydrogen from natural gas.

"This is a big, big deal for ... Appalachia in particular, because these facilities are all based in areas where coal was king," said Perry Babb, president of KeyState, an owner and developer of the Pennsylvania site.

Partners in the Appalachian hub say it could produce hydrogen from methane using heat, steam and pressure while capturing the carbon dioxide it would generate.

The Mid-Atlantic hub is supported by Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Officials say the goal is to be as climate-friendly as possible by making hydrogen through electrolysis — splitting water molecules using renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power, as well as nuclear power.

Other projects selected include the Alliance for Renewable Clean Hydrogen Energy Systems in California, which will produce hydrogen from renewable energy and biomass. The project is intended to provide a blueprint for decarbonizing public transportation, heavy duty trucking and port operations — key emissions drivers in the state and major sources of air pollution.

The Gulf Coast Hydrogen Hub will be centered in Houston, long the energy capital of the United States. The hub plans large-scale hydrogen production from both natural gas and renewables.

The Minnesota-based Heartland hub seeks to decarbonize fertilizer used in agriculture and advance use of clean hydrogen in electric generation and for cold climate space heating. It also plans to offer equity ownership to tribal communities and local farmers.

The Midwest hub in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan will use hydrogen in steel and glass production, power generation, heavy-duty transportation and sustainable aviation fuel. The hub plans to use renewable energy, natural gas and nuclear energy.

The Pacific Northwest hub, based in eastern Washington, will use hydropower and other renewable resources to produce clean hydrogen.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., called the hub "great news for the Pacific Northwest," adding that it will create thousands of jobs and "make sure that Washington plays a leading role in growing the green hydrogen economy."

Nearly every state had joined at least one proposed hub, and many have been working together, hoping to reap the economic development and thousands of jobs they would bring. Big fossil fuel companies, renewable energy developers and researchers in university and government labs are involved, too.

Environmental groups are skeptical, arguing that while hydrogen is a clean-burning source of power, it takes a great deal of energy to produce. When it's made with electricity from coal or natural gas, it has a bigger carbon footprint than simply burning the source fuel.

"Hydrogen is another bait-and-switch from an administration that continues to break its promises to aggressively tackle climate change and help communities achieve a just, equitable transition to renewable energy," said Silas Grant, a campaigner with the environmental group Center for Biological Diversity.

Russian authorities detain 3 lawyers for imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny after raids

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russian authorities on Friday detained three lawyers representing imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny after searching their homes, the politician's allies said.

The move was an attempt to "completely isolate Navalny," his ally Ivan Zhdanov said on social media. Navalny, 47, has been behind bars since January 2021, serving a 19-year prison sentence but has been able to get messages out regularly and keep up with the news.

The raids targeting Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin and Alexei Liptser are part of a criminal case on charges

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of participating in an extremist group, Zhdanov said. All three were detained after the search, apparently as suspects in the case, Navalny's team said on Telegram.

Independent Russian media also reported a raid at a law firm that employs another of Navalny's lawyers, Olga Mikhailova. According to reports, she is currently not in Russia.

Navalny, currently in Penal Colony No. 6 in the Vladimir region east of Moscow, is due to be transferred to a "special security" penal colony, a facility with the highest security level in the Russian penitentiary system, his spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh told The Associated Press.

"If he won't have access to lawyers, he will end up in complete isolation, the kind no one can really even imagine," she said.

If his lawyers end up in jail, Navalny will be deprived not only of legal representation but also of his "only connection" to the world outside of prison, Yarmysh said:

"Letters go through poorly and are being censored," she said. With Navalny being held in a special punitive facility in the colony, he is not allowed any phone calls and hardly any visits from anyone but his lawyers, she said, "and now it means he will be deprived of this, as well."

For many political prisoners in Russia, regular visits from lawyers — especially in remote regions — are a lifeline that allows them to keep in touch with loved ones and supporters, as well as reporting and pushing back against abuse by prison officials.

Navalny is President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe, campaigning against official corruption and organizing major anti-Kremlin protests. His 2021 arrest came upon his return to Moscow from Germany where he recuperated from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. He has since been handed three prison terms, most recently on the charges of extremism.

Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation and a vast network of regional offices were outlawed that same year as extremist groups, a step that exposed anyone involved with them to prosecution.

Navalny has previously rejected all the charges against him as politically motivated and accused the Kremlin of seeking to keep him behind bars for life.

Kobzev was due in court Friday, along with Navalny, for a hearing on two lawsuits the opposition leader had filed against the penal colony where he's being held. Navalny said at the hearing, which was later adjourned until November, that the case against his lawyers is indicative "of the state of rule of law in Russia."

"Just like in Soviet times, not only political activists are being prosecuted and turned into political prisoners, but their lawyers, too," he said.

Israel orders unprecedented evacuation of 1 million in Gaza as possible ground offensive looms

By ISABEL DeBRE, EDITH M. LEDERER and WAFAA SHURAFSA Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military told some 1 million Palestinians on Friday to evacuate northern Gaza and head to the southern part of the besieged territory, an unprecedented order applying to almost half the population ahead of an expected ground invasion against the ruling Hamas militant group.

The U.N. warned that so many people fleeing en masse — with just a 24-hour deadline — would be calamitous. Hamas, which staged a shocking and brutal attack on Israel nearly a week ago and has fired thousands of rockets since, dismissed it as a ploy and called on people to stay in their homes.

The evacuation order, which includes Gaza City, home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, sparked widespread panic among civilians and aid workers already running from Israeli airstrikes and contending with a total siege and a territory-wide blackout.

"Forget about food, forget about electricity, forget about fuel. The only concern now is just if you'll make it, if you're going to live," said Nebal Farsakh, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza City, as she broke into heaving sobs.

The war has already claimed over 2,800 lives on both sides and sent tensions soaring across the region. Israel has traded fire in recent days with Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, sparking fears of an ever wider conflict, though that frontier is currently calm.

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Weekly Muslim prayers brought protests across the Middle East, and tensions ran high in Jerusalem's Old City. The Islamic endowment that manages a flashpoint holy site in the city, the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, said Israeli authorities were barring all Palestinian men under the age of 50 from entering.

Israel has bombarded Gaza round-the-clock since a weekend attack in which Hamas fighters stormed into the country's south and massacred hundreds, including killing children in their homes and young people at a music festival. Militants also snatched some 150 people and dragged them into Gaza.

Hamas said Israel's airstrikes killed 13 of the hostages in the past day. It said the dead included foreigners but did not give their nationalities.

Israeli military spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari denied that, telling Al-Jazeera Arabic that "we have our own information and do not believe the lies of Hamas."

Israel said Thursday it would allow no supplies into Gaza until Hamas frees the hostages.

The military urged civilians in Gaza's north to move south — an order that the U.N. said affects 1.1 million people. The military continued Friday to carry out strikes across the territory and has given no indication it will halt operations in the south.

Israel said it needed to target Hamas' military infrastructure, much of which is buried deep underground. Another spokesperson, Jonathan Conricus, said the military would take "extensive efforts to avoid harming civilians" and that residents would be allowed to return when the war is over.

Hamas militants operate in civilian areas, where Israel has long accused them of using Palestinians as human shields. A mass evacuation of civilians, if carried out, would leave their fighters exposed as never before.

But U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said it would be impossible to stage such an evacuation without "devastating humanitarian consequences." He called on Israel to rescind any such orders, saying they could "transform what is already a tragedy into a calamitous situation."

Hamas, meanwhile, called on Palestinians to stay in their homes, saying Israel "is trying to create confusion among citizens and harm the cohesion of our internal front." It called on Palestinians to ignore what it said was "psychological warfare."

Gaza's Health Ministry said it was not possible to evacuate the many wounded from hospitals, and that hospital staff would not heed the warning.

"We cannot evacuate hospitals and leave the wounded and sick to die," spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said. In the event of severe Israeli strikes, he said there was simply no other place in the Gaza Strip to take and treat patients.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, also said it was not evacuating its schools, where hundreds of thousands have taken shelter. But it relocated its headquarters to southern Gaza, according to spokesperson Juliette Touma.

Pressed by reporters on whether the army would protect hospitals, U.N. shelters and other civilian locations, Hagari, the Israeli military spokesperson, warned that "it's a war zone."

He added: "If Hamas prevents residents from evacuating, the responsibility lies with them."

Clive Baldwin a senior legal adviser at the New York-based Human Rights Watch, said "ordering a million people in Gaza to evacuate, when there's no safe place to go, is not an effective warning."

"The roads are rubble, fuel is scarce, and the main hospital is in the evacuation zone," he said. "World leaders should speak up now before it is too late."

The evacuation orders were taken as a further signal of an already expected Israeli ground offensive, though Israel has not yet announced such a decision.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to "crush" Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007. His government is under intense public pressure to topple the group rather than merely bottle it up in Gaza as it has for years.

A visit by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday, along with shipments of U.S. weapons, offered a powerful green light for Israel to drive ahead with its retaliation. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Israel on Friday.

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Still, a ground offensive in densely populated and impoverished Gaza would likely bring even higher casualties on both sides in brutal house-to-house fighting.

Farsakh, of the Palestinian Red Crescent, said there was no way so many people could be safely moved — especially those with ailments.

“What will happen to our patients?” she asked. “We have wounded, we have elderly, we have children who are in hospitals.”

Beyond the immediate fear and logistical difficulties, the order has deep resonance in Gaza, where more than half of the Palestinians are the descendants of refugees from the 1948 war surrounding Israel’s creation, when hundreds of thousands fled or were expelled from what is now Israel. That exodus is deeply seared into their collective memory.

Already, at least 423,000 people — nearly one in five Gazans — have been forced from their homes by Israeli airstrikes, the U.N. said Thursday.

Neighboring Egypt has meanwhile taken “unprecedented measures” to reinforce its border with Gaza and prevent any breaches, a senior Egyptian security official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters.

Egypt, which made peace with Israel decades ago and has long served as a regional mediator, is staunchly opposed to resettling Palestinians on its territory, both because of the costs involved and because it would undermine their quest for an independent state. The Rafah crossing from Gaza into Egypt, the only one not controlled by Israel, has been closed because of airstrikes.

Hamas’ unprecedented assault last Saturday, and days of heavy rocket fire since, have killed more than 1,300 people in Israel, including 247 soldiers — a toll unseen in Israel for decades. The ensuing Israeli bombardment has killed more than 1,530 people in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Israel says roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were killed inside Israel, and that hundreds of the dead in Gaza are Hamas members.

French media say a teacher was killed and others injured in a rare school stabbing

PARIS (AP) — French media say that a teacher has been killed and children injured in a stabbing in a school in northern France.

French President Emmanuel Macron is heading to the scene in the city of Arras.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin says that the attacker was arrested.

French broadcasters France Info and BFM report that the attacker was a former student and that a teacher and two others were injured. Such school attacks are rare in France.

A vice president of the lower house of parliament, Naima Moutchou, said the National Assembly “expresses its solidarity and thoughts for the victims, their families and the educational community as we learn that a teacher has been killed and several others have been injured.”

Factory fishing in Antarctica for krill targets the cornerstone of a fragile ecosystem

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

ABOARD THE ALLANKAY off Antarctica (AP) — The Antarctic Endeavour glides across the water’s silky surface as dozens of fin whales spray rainbows from their blowholes into a fairy tale icescape of massive glaciers.

But as a patrol of environmentalists approaches the Chilean super trawler in an inflatable boat, the cruder realities of modern industrial fishing come into view.

From one of the ship’s drain holes, a steaming pink sludge cascades into the frigid waters of the Southern Ocean. It’s the foul-smelling runoff from processing the 80-meter (260-foot) factory ship’s valuable catch: Antarctic krill, a paper-clip-sized crustacean central to the region’s food web and, scientists say, an

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important buffer to global warming.

“What’s coming out of the side are the remnants of the ecosystem,” says Alistair Allan, an activist for Australia’s Bob Brown Foundation, as he looks on from the inflatable boat. “If this was off the coast of Alaska, it would be a national park. But since it’s down here at the bottom of the world, where no one is watching, you have ships almost running into whales feeding on the same things they’re fishing.”

While krill fishing is banned in U.S. waters due to concerns it could impact whales, seals and other animals that feed on the shrimp-like creatures, it’s been taking place for decades in Antarctica, where krill are most abundant. It started in the 1960s, when the Soviet Union launched an industrial fleet of trawlers in search of an untapped protein source that could be canned like sardines.

Surging demand for nutrient-rich krill — for feeding farm-raised fish, omega-3 pills, pet food and protein shakes — combined with advances in fishing and the still unknown impact from climate change has some scientists warning the fishery is at a critical juncture and in urgent need of stricter controls. But any further action is mired in geopolitical wrangling as Russia and China look to quickly expand the catch.

Two Associated Press journalists spent more than two weeks at sea in March, at the tail end of the Southern Hemisphere’s summer, aboard the Dutch-flagged Allankay, operated by the conservation group Sea Shepherd Global, to take a rare, up-close look at the world’s southernmost fishery.

It’s a harvest that by its very nature operates at the extremes — hundreds of miles from any port.

This story was supported by funding from the Walton Family Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Starting every December, around 10 to 12 mostly Norwegian and Chinese vessels brave the rough seas whipping across the tip of South America to descend upon the South Orkney Islands, a desolate chain of rocky outcrops. From there, as temperatures warm, the fleet follows the massive swarms of krill toward the South Pole, fishing at the foundation of the fragile ecosystem’s food web.

Under a conservation agreement developed almost two decades ago, the krill catch has soared: from 104,728 metric tons in 2007 to 415,508 metric tons in 2022, as larger, more sophisticated vessels have joined the chase. Those levels were below internationally agreed conservation limits.

A U.S.-led coalition has been calling for more restrictions and marine reserves as krill’s vital role as food for other species and in removing large amounts of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere comes into focus. But it has met stiff opposition from China and Russia, which have made no secret of their geopolitical ambitions in the white continent.

Direct competition with marine mammals seems inevitable — a reality dramatically underscored when four juvenile humpback whales were entangled by a Norwegian krill boat in 2021 and 2022.

While the end of commercial whaling has allowed populations to rebound, a new study by the University of California, Santa Cruz found that pregnancy rates among humpback whales in Antarctica have been falling sharply — possibly due to a lack of krill, their main prey. Chinstrap penguins and fur seals face similar stresses.

THE BOUNTY BELOW

Jars of krill line the windowsills in Deborah Steinberg’s lab, their pink hue faded but their shells intact. Collected on a U.S. icebreaker, they fuel her research at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. On a recent visit, a technician unscrews one of the jars, empties the formaldehyde and rinses the krill under running water, a dozen fitting in the palm of his hand.

Tiny but bountiful, Antarctic krill make up one of the planet’s largest biomasses, nourishing everything from fish to marine mammals and seabirds.

“All those iconic images we associate with Antarctica of whales, seals and penguins -- it’s a megafauna hotspot, and it’s because of krill,” Steinberg said.

Lesser known is krill’s important role fighting climate change.

Every year, krill remove as much as 23 megatons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, according to

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new research published by the World Wildlife Fund. That's the equivalent of taking off the road 5 million cars every year.

The carbon cleansing starts with phytoplankton that absorb greenhouse gases burned by humans, says Emma Cavan, a biologist at Imperial College London who co-authored the report. Krill feed on the microscopic plants and then transport fertilizing nutrients to the ocean floor in the form of waste and their molting shells.

"Antarctic krill are worth more to nature and people left in the ocean than removed or lost through sea ice disappearance," said Cavan, who recently submitted her estimates for peer review.

Krill aren't just a bulwark against climate change — they're victims, too.

At Steinberg's lab, researchers are examining how warming oceans — Antarctic krill need water colder than 4 degrees Celsius (39 Fahrenheit) to survive — are altering krill's life cycle. It's a task made more urgent by a record loss in sea ice this year.

Already, in the northernmost stretches of Antarctica where fishing activity is concentrated, populations have declined as krill migrate toward cooler waters closer to the South Pole, according to Steinberg. Other scientists say further research is required, questioning whether there's evidence for a shift poleward and, if there is one, the cause of it.

"There are surprises all the time," Steinberg said. "And the fact that we are still learning about the effects of ocean warming on the population means we need to be very, very cautious."

REGULATING KRILL

Much of the fight over krill is taking place thousands of miles away from the fishing grounds, in a former 19th century boarding school on the Australian island of Tasmania. It's there, in the headquarters of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, or CCAMLR, that delegates from 27 member states are gathering this month to continue negotiations over a long overdue refresh of the krill management plan.

The organization, established by treaty in 1982, has emerged as a model for science-based cooperation on the high seas — lawless waters that comprise nearly half the planet.

But even some of the group's boosters say it has failed to take into account the effects of climate change.

"CCAMLR's mandate is conservation — it's right there in the name," said Claire Christian, executive director of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, a Washington-based group that represents environmental organizations at CCAMLR proceedings. "It's not to enable fishing."

One reason for the stalling is geopolitical wrangling. At the organization's last annual meeting, Russia and China blocked a proposal by the U.S. that would restrict potentially dangerous unloading of krill at sea to cargo vessels. Moscow and Beijing are also pushing to expand fishing more quickly and in June teamed up to sink a proposal for a Texas-sized reserve along the Antarctic Peninsula, an area teeming with wildlife and tourists.

The quarreling threatens to undermine conservation goals because all decisions must be unanimous. Currently, less than 5% of the Southern Ocean is protected — well behind CCAMLR's target and not nearly enough to meet a United Nations goal to preserve 30% of the world's oceans by 2030.

But with quotas likely to increase under any new management system some see a silver lining in the deadlock.

"The irony is that if certain members aren't agreeing to the new framework, the catch limit won't change," said Dirk Welsford, an Australian government researcher who chairs CCAMLR's scientific committee. "It would require a nation to go rogue."

CRUDE TO KRILL OIL

The Antarctic Provider lords over the loading dock at the port of Montevideo, Uruguay, dwarfing semi-trucks and forklifts that race around the 168-meter (550-foot) cargo ship that gathers krill from vessels at sea. A crane springs from the ship's hold dangling a dozen white sacks, each containing half a metric ton of Antarctic krill -- now labeled "Product of Norway."

This is the first stop on krill's journey from remote wilderness to international commodity. From this South American hub, shipments of whole dried krill spread across the globe — to feed processors and salmon

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farms in Europe, Canada and Australia, pet food manufacturers in China and a former ice cream factory in Houston which produces 80% of the world's krill oil.

Dominating that supply chain is Aker BioMarine, a Norwegian company responsible for about 70% of the global krill catch by volume. It's also driving innovation, having recently introduced continuous fishing with long, cylindrical nets attached to vacuums that have the capacity to suck up 1,200 metric tons of krill per day, although the company says its most advanced ship currently averages about 500 metric tons per day - the equivalent daily diet for about 150 humpback whales.

The company touts its environmental stewardship. Among other initiatives, it funds marine research, supports the creation of marine reserves and says it has reduced its carbon emissions by 50% in the last decade. It also boasts the industry's top eco-label for sustainability.

But when it comes to fishing in Antarctica, emotions run high.

"Some people believe we shouldn't fish at all, we should all be vegetarians, we shouldn't be in Antarctica," CEO Matts Johansen said in an interview near Oslo, Norway, arguing that krill is a sustainable source of protein for a growing global population. "There is no single solution."

Johansen said fears of an explosion in fishing are misplaced as the industry isn't even catching all that's allowed. He sees consolidation, not growth, in the industry because of the huge investments required.

"If you look at our numbers over the last 15 years, it's not very good advertising," Johansen said, noting that his company has been unprofitable.

Aker BioMarine's financial wherewithal depends on another, cruder type of oil: Norway's massive natural gas and petroleum exports.

Seafood is only 3% of the asset value of Aker BioMarine's parent, an industrial conglomerate, Aker ASA, that includes Norway's largest privately controlled energy company.

But it's a project dear to Aker BioMarine's billionaire founder, Kjell Inge Røkke, who got his start in fishing in Alaska in the 1990s.

The bulk of Aker BioMarine's harvest ends up in tiny pellets used in fish pens around the world. In addition to speeding up growth, krill contains astaxanthin, a pigment that gives salmon a pinker color.

"The fish love it," said Brett Glencross, technical director of IFFO, a trade organization for the marine ingredients industry. "It's like dipping your Brussels sprouts in chocolate to get kids to eat their vegetables."

Fish farming is big business — about half of the world's seafood is now farm raised as the oceans have been emptied of wild-caught fish.

Krill, while an expensive ingredient, can help ease rising pressure on wild fish stocks also used in aquaculture, like anchovies and sardines, said Jesse Trushenski, chief scientist at Boise, Idaho-based Riverence Farms, the U.S.' largest trout producer.

"It's important to have all the options on the table," said Trushenski, whose company does not use krill. "When I have an entire pantry to work with, there's more flexibility."

KRILL OIL PILLS

Beyond feeding seafood, Aker BioMarine's big push is selling krill oil capsules, which were introduced in the early 2000s, amid growing interest in omega-3 fatty acid supplements and their purported role in promoting heart, brain and joint health.

It describes its mission of placing pills on the shelves of drug stores around the world with almost evangelical fervor.

"We're in business to improve human and planetary health," boasts a recent presentation for investors.

But the jury is out on how effective they are. And omega-3 supplements — krill or otherwise — haven't been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Johansen says studies show krill oil contains health benefits not found in traditional fish oil, including fat molecules that Aker BioMarine says make it easier to deliver omega-3 to the brain, heart and liver. It also contains choline, an essential nutrient for regulating memory and mood.

"Krill is packed with important nutrients so that we can stay healthy, live long and contribute to society," said Johansen.

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William Harris, a professor at the University of South Dakota who helped invent a test that measures fatty acids in red blood cells, said he's "agnostic" about where people get their omega-3.

"Krill is fine. Fish oil is fine," he said. In addition, he said many common foods, like eggs or mushrooms, are loaded in choline in orders of magnitude more than krill pills.

Krill also typically contains lower levels of omega-3s than fish, so more must be harvested to have the same fat content, according to GOED, a Salt Lake City, Utah-based group representing the omega-3 industry.

INDUSTRY CHANGES

Criticism of the krill fishery's management and environmental toll has spurred some reform.

In the absence of more stringent regulation, the Association of Responsible Krill harvesting companies, whose members are responsible for 90% of the krill taken from Antarctica, adopted in 2018 a number of self-imposed restrictions.

They include the creation of no-take zones near the Antarctic Peninsula that overlap with penguin breeding colonies. The group has also agreed with calls from groups including the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project to come up with stricter rules on at-sea transfers of catch between vessels and the study of climate change on krill.

Still, the group thinks quotas could be much higher.

It points out that currently less than 1% of the estimated 60 million metric tons of krill found in the main Antarctic fishing grounds — an area larger than the U.S. — is being caught. That leaves the remaining 99% for whales and other animals.

"If you look at those numbers, it's clear we could fish more," said Javier Arata, a Chilean trained biologist who heads the industry group.

However, a leading marine biologist the industry once relied on to burnish its environmental credentials has since denounced krill fishing.

Helena Herr, who studies whales at the University of Hamburg, was invited in 2021 by Arata's group to serve on an advisory panel. She accepted with the hope that she could help mitigate the effects of krill fishing on the Antarctic ecosystem.

She resigned after a year, disgusted by what she viewed as the industry's narrow focus on the buffer zones.

"The more I learned about the voluntary commitment and its review process, the more I perceived the voluntary commitment as a 'green-washing' initiative," she said in a resignation letter to her fellow panel members, a copy of which she provided the AP, using a term that refers to businesses making inaccurate claims that its actions are friendly to the environment.

Today, she believes that krill fishing should be banned.

"The buffer zones don't decrease the overall fishing effort. They just relocate it," she said in an interview. "People claim they know about biomass and the distribution of krill. But the data is based on such vague assumptions that we don't really know what we're doing."

Others have similar doubts.

Whole Foods, the supermarket chain that prides itself on sustainable sourcing and is now owned by Amazon, pulled krill pills from its shelves in 2010 over concerns about the fishery's environmental impact. And the World Wildlife Fund, which between 2007 and 2017 partnered with Aker BioMarine, lending its panda logo to promote the company's products, has recently lodged concerns about the industry's continued certification.

Aker BioMarine in a promotional video says the amount of bycatch — unwanted fish and marine species other than krill — that it unintentionally nets on one of its ships in an entire year would fit into a "small bucket." However, data it reported to CCAMLR put that the amount of annual bycatch — although small compared to other trawl fisheries — in the order of several metric tons per ship.

When the AP pointed out this discrepancy to Johansen, he said that the claim appeared to be a mistake and the company would look into fixing its promotional material. "The key message that we're trying to convey, and maybe it's oversimplified in that picture of a bucket, is the bycatch in the krill fishery is extremely low," he said.

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The stakes are high.

In 2021, three juvenile humpback whales became entangled in a net used by Aker BioMarine's Antarctic Sea within the span of two months.

Following these incidents — the first whale deaths reported by a Norwegian krill ship — Aker BioMarine reinforced a rope barrier to repel large mammals. However, despite this modification, a fourth whale entanglement occurred on the same vessel the next season.

In addition, every year, across the industry, dozens of seabirds collide with the trawlers' metal cables, sometimes suffering deadly injuries.

"The marine foragers are there for the same reason the boats are: because there's lots of krill," said Ari Friedlaender, a University of California, Santa Cruz biologist who has spent 25 years researching whales in Antarctica. "Some level of conflict is inevitable."

Friedlaender was among 17 authors of a recent study concluding that competition for krill and shrinking sea ice are threats to the reproductive rates of humpback whales. The peer-reviewed research, based on a measure of hormones in the blubber of female whales, found that pregnancies rise and fall sharply based on krill availability.

The burning of dirty fossil fuels to fish in such remote waters also carries a heavy carbon footprint. Producing a single metric ton of krill emits an average 3,800 kilograms (8,400 pounds) of carbon dioxide, according to the Virginia-based Global Feed LCA Institute, an industry-led initiative that tracks the environmental costs of hundreds of feed ingredients. That's more than six times the pollution associated with fishing for Peruvian anchovy, a popular ingredient for fish feed.

Johansen downplayed such comparisons, saying Aker BioMarine's own carbon footprint is much lower than the industry average and falling fast thanks to innovations in its engines. By 2050 it aims to eliminate the burning of fossil fuels altogether and power its fleet with hydrogen-based fuels currently in development.

"We are going to be one of those first companies that use that," he pledged.

SUSTAINABILITY

With an approaching storm threatening hurricane-force winds, the Allankay abandons the krill fleet and finds shelter in a quiet cove protected by the craggy rim of a still active underwater volcano.

A stone's throw from a few lounging sea lions, rusting storage tanks, boilers and beached harpoon boats lay testament to Deception Island's past as a Norwegian whaling station. Here, between 1911 and 1931, were culled some of the 3 million whales killed last century as part of a mass slaughter that nearly drove them to extinction.

A century later, its blanket of blubber no longer lighting up the world, whaling has all but ended and many once endangered species are thriving.

Capt. Peter Hammarstedt, the campaign director for Sea Shepherd Global, sees an infinitely more complex threat hanging over the still recovering ecosystem — one as unassuming as krill-fed farmed salmon or health supplements on supermarket shelves.

"Most people know sustainability when they see it," says Hammarstedt, "and it does not look like a fleet of ships traveling thousands of miles, to the bottom of the world, to take out the very building block of life in the Antarctic ecosystem for products we simply do not need."

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Keyton reported from off Antarctica and in Montevideo, Uruguay, and Ski, Norway; JoNel Aleccia in Los Angeles and Helen Wieffering and Fu Ting in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Muslims gather at mosques for first Friday prayers since Israel-Hamas war started

By The Associated Press undefined

In Muslim communities across the world, worshippers gathered at mosques for their first Friday prayers since Hamas militants attacked Israel, igniting the latest Israel-Palestinian war.

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CLERICS IN PAKISTAN GIVE EMOTIONAL SERMONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIANS

In the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, a cleric at the pro-Taliban Red Mosque pleaded with God to send special help to the Palestinians.

"Oh Allah destroy Israel! Break it apart into pieces," urged Abdul Aziz in an emotionally charged sermon in a packed mosque, where around 900 worshippers had congregated for Friday prayers.

The mosque has links to the Pakistani Taliban and is known for backing calls to help the Afghan Taliban across the border. In July 2007, government forces laid siege to the mosque in a deadly military crackdown that killed at least 100 people.

In his special prayers and sermon, the Aziz asked God to help all those who wanted to join the jihad, or holy war, in the Palestinian territories.

"Oh Allah make it easy for them to reach there, and bless us with the death of a martyr," he declaimed, his voice reverberating through the mosque's loudspeakers.

Similar sermons were held at mosques throughout the country, including the major urban centres of Karachi and Lahore. Radical Islamist parties held anti-Israel rallies after Friday prayers.

People prayed for a Palestinian victory and clerics used their sermons to motivate worshippers to keep Palestinians in their prayers even if they couldn't join the fight against Israel.

Pakistan has no diplomatic relations with Israel because of the issue of Palestinian statehood.

— Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Pakistan

MALAYSIANS RALLY IN KUALA LUMPUR IN SOLIDARITY

Some 1,000 Muslims rallied in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, after Friday prayers to show solidarity with the Palestinians. Chanting "Free Palestine" and "Crush the Zionists," they burned two effigies draped with Israeli flags.

"This Israeli-Palestinian issue is more than a religious issue, it's a humanitarian issue," said Yasmin Hadi Abdul Halim, a student.

Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, 98, was among those attending the event.

"Seventy-five years ago, they took away Palestinian land to establish Israel. Not satisfied, they continued to take more land," Mahatjir said.

"It's not just about seizing land. The people of Palestine are subjected to torture, murder, imprisonment, and long detentions. Hamas did what they did due to decades of oppression (by Israel)."

Dozens more people attended a smaller rally outside the U.S. Embassy that shut its doors to visitors as a security precaution. The rallies ended peacefully.

— Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

IN INDONESIA, PRAYERS FOR GOD'S PROTECTION AND FOR THE ABSENT

Islamic leaders in Indonesia appealed to all mosques in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation to pray for peace and safety for the Palestinian people.

The chairperson of the Indonesian Mosque Council had urged all mosques to perform the Qunut Nuzilahto prayer, one made for protection, to ask for God's help so that "the conflict in the Gaza Strip would end quickly."

The appeal from the nation's former Vice President Jusuf Kalla is in line with most Indonesian Muslims, who stand with Palestinians. The prayer was held along with the Salat Al-Ghaib, or prayer for the absent.

In a sermon at Abu Bakar Al Shidiq, one of the most conservative mosques in Jakarta, a cleric called for mobilizing "our power and efforts to help the Muslims in Palestine."

"Prayer is a weapon for devout Muslims," he added, "For those of us who have not been given the opportunity by God to take up arms to defend the honor and religion of our Muslims brothers, then we can take up our weapons by raising our hands asking God for His blessings."

More than 200 people also rallied in front of the National Monument in Indonesia's capital on Friday, waving banners expressing solidarity with the Palestinians.

— Niniek Karmini and Edna Tarigan, Jakarta, Indonesia

Tens of thousands protest after Muslim prayers across Mideast over Israeli airstrikes on Gaza

By ISABEL DEBRE and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Tens of thousands of Muslims demonstrated Friday across the Middle East in support of the Palestinians and to protest against the Israeli airstrikes pounding the Gaza Strip, underscoring the risk of a wider regional conflict erupting as Israel prepares for a possible ground invasion there.

From Amman, Jordan, to Yemen's capital, Muslims poured out onto the streets after weekly Friday prayers. At Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Israeli police had been permitting only older men, women and children to the sprawling hilltop compound for prayers, trying to prevent the potential for demonstration as tens of thousands attend on a typical Friday.

An Associated Press reporter watched police allow just a Palestinian teenage girl and her mother into the compound out of 20 worshippers who tried, some of them even over the age of 50. Young Palestinian men who were refused entry gathered at the steps near Lion's Gate, their eyes downcast, until police shouted at them and shepherded them out of the Old City altogether.

"We can't live, we can't breathe, they are killing everything that good is good within us," Ahmad Barbour, a 57-year-old cleaner in a clean white thobe, said, seething, after police blocked him from entering for prayers. "Everything that is forbidden to us is allowed to them."

The mosque sits in a hilltop compound sacred to both Jews and Muslims, and conflicting claims over it have spilled into violence before. Al-Aqsa is the third-holiest site in Islam and stands in a spot known to Jews as the Temple Mount, which is the holiest site in Judaism.

In Baghdad alone, tens of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square in the center of Baghdad for protests called by the influential Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr.

"May this demonstration ... terrify the great evil, America, which supports Zionist terrorism against our loved ones in Palestine," Sadr said in an online statement.

Across Iran, a supporter of Hamas and Israel's regional archenemy, demonstrators protested. In Tehran, the capital, protesters burned Israeli and American flags, chanting: "Death to Israel," "Death to America," "Israel will be doomed," and "Palestine will be the conqueror."

In Yemen's capital of Sanaa, held by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels still at war with a Saudi-led coalition, live television footage showed demonstrators crowding streets and waving Yemeni and Palestinian flags. The rebels' slogan long has been: "God is the greatest; death to America; death to Israel; curse of the Jews; victory to Islam."

After prayers in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, some worshippers stepped on American and Israeli flags, in a sign of disrespect.

US defense secretary is in Israel to meet with its leaders and see America's security assistance

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was in Israel on Friday for meetings with senior government leaders and to see firsthand some of the U.S. weapons and security assistance that Washington rapidly delivered to Israel in the first week of its war with the militant Hamas group.

Austin is the second high-level U.S. official to visit Israel in two days. His quick trip from Brussels, where he was attending a NATO defense ministers meeting, came a day after Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in the region. Blinken is continuing the frantic Mideast diplomacy, seeking to avert an expanded regional conflict.

Austin met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and was also to meet with Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and the Israeli War Cabinet.

Also Friday, the Israeli military directed hundreds of thousands of residents in Gaza City to evacuate "for their own safety and protection," ahead of a feared Israeli ground offensive. Gaza's Hamas rulers

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responded by calling on Palestinians to “remain steadfast in your homes and to stand firm” against Israel.

Defense officials traveling with Austin said he wants to underscore America’s unwavering support for the people of Israel and that the United States is committed to making sure the country has what it needs to defend itself.

A senior defense official said the U.S. has already given Israel small diameter bombs as well as interceptor missiles for its Iron Dome system and more will be delivered. Other munitions are expected to arrive Friday.

Austin has spoken nearly daily with Gallant, and directed the rapid shift of U.S. ships, intelligence support and other assets to Israel and the region. Within hours after the brutal Hamas attack across the border into Israel, the U.S. moved warships and aircraft to the region.

The USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier strike group is already in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and a second carrier was departing Friday from Virginia, also heading to the region.

Austin declined to say if the U.S. is doing surveillance flights in the region, but the U.S. is providing intelligence and other planning assistance to the Israelis, including advice on the hostage situation.

A day after visiting Israel to offer the Biden administration’s diplomatic support in person, Blinken was in Jordan on Friday and held talks with Jordanian King Abdullah II. They did not speak to reporters after the meeting. Blinken then went on to a meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has a home in Amman, the Jordanian capital, before leaving for Qatar.

Blinken discussed Hamas’ attack last Saturday with the king and efforts to release all hostages the militants seized, as well as efforts to “prevent the conflict from widening,” State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

The U.S. top diplomat “underscored that Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people’s right to dignity and self-determination and discussed ways to address the humanitarian needs of civilians in Gaza while Israel conducts legitimate security operations to defend itself from terrorism.”

The monarch rules over a country with a large Palestinian population and has a vested interest in their status while Abbas runs the Palestinian Authority that controls the West Bank.

According to a palace statement, Abdullah stressed the need to open humanitarian corridors for medical aid and relief into Gaza while protecting civilians and working to end the escalation of the conflict.

He appealed against hindering the work of international agencies and warned against any attempts to forcibly displace Palestinians from Gaza and elsewhere, or to cause their internal displacement.

Earlier on Friday, Israel’s military had told some 1 million Palestinians living in Gaza to evacuate the north, according to the United Nations — an unprecedented order for almost half the population of the sealed-off territory ahead an expected ground invasion by Israel against the ruling Hamas.

The king also urged for the protection of innocent civilians on all sides, in line with shared human values, international law, and international humanitarian law.

In Doha, Qatar’s capital, Blinken is to meet later Friday with Qatari officials who have close contacts with the Hamas leadership and have been exploring an exchange of Palestinian prisoners in Israel for the release of dozens of Israelis and foreigners taken hostage by Hamas during the militants’ unprecedented incursion into southern Israel last weekend.

Blinken will make a brief stop in Bahrain and end the day in Saudi Arabia, a key player in the Arab world that has been considering normalizing ties with Israel, a U.S.-mediated process that is now on hold.

He will also travel to the United Arab Emirates and Egypt over the weekend.

911 calls from deadly Lahaina wildfire show residents’ terror and panic in a desperate bid to escape

By CLAUDIA LAUER, REBECCA BOONE and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Audio of 911 calls from a deadly August wildfire released late Thursday by Maui County authorities reveals a terrifying and chaotic scene as the inferno swept through the historic town of Lahaina and people desperately tried to escape burning homes and flames licking at cars in gridlocked

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traffic.

The 911 calls were released to The Associated Press in response to a public record request. They cover a period from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Aug. 8 as the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century, whipped by powerful winds from a passing hurricane, bore down on the town.

At least 98 people were killed and more than 2,000 structures were destroyed, most of them homes, leveling a historic town that once served as the capital of the Hawaiian kingdom and a port for whaling ships. Many drivers became trapped on Front Street, surrounded on three sides by black smoke and a wall of flames. They had moments to choose whether to stay or jump into the ocean as cars exploded and burning debris fell around them.

Hawaiian Electric, the state's electric utility company, has acknowledged its power lines started a wildfire on Maui, but faulted county firefighters for declaring the blaze contained and leaving the scene, only to have the flames rekindle nearby.

The county and the families of some victims have sued Hawaiian Electric, saying the utility negligently failed to shut off power despite exceptionally high winds and dry conditions.

The pleas for help came one right after another, people calling because they were stuck in cars on Front Street, trapped by fallen trees and power lines blocking evacuation routes or worried about loved ones who were home alone. Again and again, overwhelmed dispatchers apologized to callers but said there was no one available to send to their location, assuring them emergency responders were working to extinguish the fires.

Roughly two-thirds of the known victims who died in the fire were 60 or older, according to a list from Maui County. The calls reflect the helplessness of the situation for those who needed help getting out quickly.

In one call at 3:31 p.m., a woman said her daughter already called about an 88-year-old man who was left behind in their house and she wanted emergency personnel to know the sliding doors were unlocked.

"He would literally have to be carried out," she told the dispatcher. "I just had to leave him because I had the rest of my family in the car."

A dispatcher said they would update the fire department.

Two minutes later, a woman called from the Hale Mahaolu Eono group senior residence. She was one of four people left at the facility without any cars as the flames pushed closer, she told the dispatcher.

"Are we supposed to get evacuated?" she asked the dispatcher, panic clear in her voice.

"OK ma'am, if you feel unsafe, listen to yourself and evacuate," the dispatcher replied. No emergency vehicles were available to help, the dispatcher said, because all available units were fighting the fire.

As cinders rained around her, the woman tried to flag down people driving past to get a ride out while staying on the line with the dispatcher.

One car stopped but wouldn't wait while she gathered her things. She eventually flagged down another passing woman. It wasn't clear from the call what happened to the remaining people at the residence.

Multiple people died at the senior home, authorities would later learn.

Another large wildfire was burning elsewhere on Maui, spreading resources thin as calls for help poured in. As the disaster in Lahaina progressed, frustrations increased. One dispatcher briefly chastised a man when he called to report his elderly parents were stuck in their burning home at 4:56 p.m.

"Why did they not call us direct? They should have called us direct," the dispatcher said, saying that would make it easier to find their location. She also said the man should have told them to leave the house sooner.

"Yes, we've been trying to tell them — my dad was trying to fight the fire," the man said. "The last words he said is, 'I love you. We're not going to make it.'"

At times dispatchers also showed careful compassion, working to soothe terrified callers.

"My mom and my baby are still out there," one sobbing caller told a 911 dispatcher at 4:44 p.m. "They got out of their car and they headed up the street."

The dispatcher coaxed the frantic woman to provide the street name where she last saw her mother and child.

"We have officers over there, OK?" the dispatcher said.

Authorities redacted names and addresses from the recordings to avoid releasing personally identifying

information.

The audio clips echo a refrain heard from many survivors: They were unable to escape, even by car, because of traffic and blocked roads.

One caller said cars were being routed into a gated parking lot and were forced to turn around. Another said they were routed onto a dirt road behind the Lahaina Civic Center, but also found their way blocked by a locked gate. A third caller told dispatchers they needed to open a road on a south side of town, warning that the blocked exit would result in people dying.

One woman told a dispatcher that she was on Front Street and saw a house on fire, but couldn't advance. "We're caught in massive traffic and we're covered in ashes and embers and there's a lot of people honking and trying to get out of the road," the caller said.

The dispatcher apologized and said firefighters were trying to get there.

"It's just really scary," the caller said.

At 5:25 p.m., more than two hours after the fire began consuming homes, it appeared some dispatchers still didn't have a full understanding of what was happening in the city. One dispatcher told a caller who was stuck in traffic that emergency workers were busy "because Lahaina has a couple of house fires going on right now."

"If you're safe, you need to stay there. If you're not safe, you need to find some way to get to the ocean," she told the caller.

High winds wreaked havoc the night and early morning hours before the fire. One downed power line sparked a fire in dry grass near a Lahaina subdivision around 6:30 a.m.

Firefighters declared it contained a few hours later, but the flames rekindled some time between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. and soon overtook the town.

Around that time, many had lost cellphone service. Power was also out across West Maui, rendering emergency warnings on social media or television stations largely futile. The island's emergency siren system — another way authorities can communicate urgency in a time of danger — was never activated.

For some, emergency dispatchers were their only contact with the world beyond the burning town. Later even that connection was lost.

Just after midnight on Aug. 9, Maui County announced on Facebook that the 911 system was down in West Maui. Instead, the county wrote, people should call the Lahaina Police Department directly.

Many who struggled against Poland's communist system feel they are fighting for democracy once again

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Dariusz Stola began working with Poland's anti-communist Solidarity movement in 1983. He was just 19 but already appalled by the way the regime imposed its harsh censorship, not just on political thought but culture as well.

A member of his church choir would give him a stack of 200 opposition newspapers with uncensored texts on culture and history for distribution to locations where flowers in windows or other signs signaled that it was safe.

Now a historian specializing in the communist era, he sees strong parallels with the current populist government, particularly the way it spreads "systematic lies" and propaganda against its political opponents, using taxpayer-funded public media.

"I have déjà vu," Stola said in an interview from his home in Warsaw. "I recognize the patterns which I remember from communist Poland."

Since the Law and Justice party came to power in 2015, it has sought to imprint its nationalistic, ultra-conservative viewpoint on the country, threatening to deprive independent organizations of funding and creating parallel institutions staffed with loyalists.

Stola has first-hand experience. As director of Warsaw's Jewish history museum, he lost his job after he refused to go along with some of the government's demands. He believes his resistance helped preserve

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the museum's independence.

Thirty-four years after the first partly free elections in 1989, many in Eastern Europe are gripped with anxiety.

The collapse of Soviet-backed communist rule triggered euphoria and a belief that a new age of democracy was here to stay. Ex-prisoners of conscience like Lech Walesa in Poland and Vaclav Havel in the former Czechoslovakia became prime ministers and presidents.

The fragility of democratic institutions raises concern for many Poles before they vote in a national election Sunday viewed as the most important since 1989. The democratic erosion of recent years in Poland follows a path first taken by Hungary.

The vote's significance extends well beyond Poland's borders. The country is a member of NATO and the EU, staunchly pro-American and one of Ukraine's strongest allies in the war against Russia.

These elections "will decide Poland's future for decades," Adam Bodnar believes. As Poland's former human rights ombudsman, he sought to hold Law and Justice to account during its first years in power.

This year, for the first time, he's an election candidate, seeking a seat in the Senate for the opposition Civic Coalition. An expert on constitutional law, Bodnar, 46, says he believes the ruling party is turning Poland into a "semi-authoritarian state," along the same lines as Hungary.

"Over the last years, different institutional safeguards have been either demolished or politically subordinated to the interest of the ruling party," Bodnar said.

Since it won power in 2015, Law and Justice has faced repeated allegations from the European Union and human rights groups that it is eroding democratic norms. The EU has accused the Polish government of undermining the rule of law with an overhaul of the courts and judicial bodies that weakens the separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary.

Already, political scientists say the elections will not be fully fair because of the way the party has strengthened control over state bodies, dismantling the guardrails in ways big and small.

Ahead of the election, gas prices have fallen, although the state oil company denies manipulation. The central bank has cut interest rates twice despite high inflation. State TV runs constant negative coverage of the opposition while lauding the government's programs. Political appointees now sit on the state electoral commission and the Supreme Court, which must certify the election results.

Nonetheless, Poland's civil society remains vibrant: in the past eight years, protesters have taken to the streets over the changes to the courts, widespread logging in Europe's last primeval forest, new restrictions on abortion and the subsequent deaths of pregnant women.

The EU is maintaining the pressure, withholding billions of euros (dollars) in funding. The government in Warsaw insists the EU has no right to meddle in its internal affairs, while EU leaders say that Poland must respect judicial independence. The Polish government has reversed some contentious changes but not enough to get the money.

While many judges remain independent, at times ruling against the authorities, others have been suspended for rulings the government disliked.

The judicial takeover has also affected women's rights.

In 2016, when the party tried to impose a near-total ban on abortion with a new law, mass protests erupted and parliament backed down. Later, the constitutional court, dominated by Law and Justice loyalists, removed one of the few legal justifications for an abortion, cases of fetal defects.

Many were appalled by the way the party used the court to circumvent parliament to push through an unpopular measure. Women led huge protests, despite the COVID-19 restrictions on mass gatherings.

Despite the stirrings of discontent, the ruling party still enjoys considerable support. Many like its promises to defend traditional Catholic values, even though its cozy relationship with the church is also driving away young Poles. A system of patronage in which the party distributes jobs and contracts has won the loyalty of many. Social spending on families with children and pensioners has cemented some support, even though the public health and education systems are in crisis.

Law and Justice's leaders reject accusations of democratic backsliding, depicting critics as unpatriotic

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or as elites angry at having lost power. In 2019, it won 44% of votes, but recent polls put its support at about 35%.

Three opposition groups together are expected to win more votes, but are divided by a failure to run on a single ticket. Because of their divisions, they are unlikely get the first shot at forming a governing coalition from the president, who is loyal to Law and Justice.

Meanwhile, a rising far-right party could hold the balance of power.

Bodnar, the lawyer, worries that if Law and Justice wins another term, it will accelerate its takeover of the lower courts, universities, local government and private media — plans already in the pipeline.

The party has also sought to harness fears over migration. After tens of thousands of migrants arrived at Poland's eastern border, the government declared a state of emergency, pushing migrants back into Belarus, restricting asylum claims and building a fence on the border.

The human tragedy is now the subject of an award-winning feature film that has enraged the Polish government. The prime minister called it "a collection of blatant lies," while the justice minister compared it to Nazi propaganda.

One of those working to protect the rights of refugees is Danuta Kuron. Now 74, she and her late husband Jacek Kuron were leading dissidents under the communists. She worries that a third term for Law and Justice will allow it to tighten its control of the courts, and judges will start issuing rulings favorable only to the authorities, even when not supported by law.

"This is our great concern," she said.

Kuron is appalled by the restrictions on asylum but she doesn't hold the ruling party solely responsible for the deterioration of politics. Rather, she considers the parliamentary and party system fundamentally flawed, believing it fails to give due weight to social solidarity.

Among the politicians who got their start in the anti-communist Solidarity movement was Jaroslaw Kaczynski of Law and Justice, Poland's de facto leader. Stola, the historian, says the party developed a sense that a government can rule as it wishes as long as it wins elections and serves the majority, even if democratic checks and balances are violated.

"There was a potential in the Solidarity movement for many things," Stola said. "Including this."

On Oct. 10, less than a week before the election, two of Poland's top military commanders resigned, reportedly over the government's attempts to politicize the army as well.

For Kuron, the actions of Law and Justice bring back memories of 1981, when the communists declared martial law to suppress Solidarity.

Poland's democracy is battered but not broken. But if the election outcome is close, especially if Law and Justice loses, she fears the military could once again be used to quell dissent — with potentially disastrous effects, not just for Poland but the rest of Europe as well.

Hamas practiced in plain sight, posting video of mock attack weeks before border breach

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

Less than a month before Hamas fighters blew through Israel's high-tech "Iron Wall" and launched an attack that would leave more than 1,200 Israelis dead, they practiced in a very public dress rehearsal.

A slickly produced two-minute propaganda video posted to social media by Hamas on Sept. 12 shows fighters using explosives to blast through a replica of the border gate, sweep in on pickup trucks and then move building by building through a full-scale reconstruction of an Israeli town, firing automatic weapons at human-silhouetted paper targets.

The Islamic militant group's live-fire exercise dubbed operation "Strong Pillar" also had militants in body armor and combat fatigues carrying out operations that included the destruction of mock-ups of the wall's concrete towers and a communications antenna, just as they would do for real in the deadly attack last Saturday.

While Israel's highly regarded security and intelligence services were clearly caught flatfooted by Hamas'

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ability to breach its Gaza defenses, the group appears to have hidden its extensive preparations for the deadly assault in plain sight.

"There clearly were warnings and indications that should have been picked up," said Bradley Bowman, a former U.S. Army officer who is now senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington research institute. "Or maybe they were picked up, but they didn't spark necessary preparations to prevent these horrific terrorist acts from happening."

The Associated Press reviewed and verified key details from dozens of videos Hamas released over the last year, primarily through the social media app Telegram.

Using satellite imagery, the AP matched the location of the mocked-up town to a patch of desert outside Al-Mawasi, a Palestinian town on the southern coast of the Gaza Strip. A large sign in Hebrew and Arabic at the gate says "Horesh Yaron," the name of a controversial Israeli settlement in the occupied Palestinian West Bank.

Bowman said there are indications that Hamas intentionally led Israeli officials to believe it was preparing to carry out raids in the West Bank, rather than Gaza. It was also potentially significant that the exercise has been held annually since 2020 in December, but was moved up by nearly four months this year to coincide with the anniversary of Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza.

In a separate video posted to Telegram from last year's Strong Pillar exercise on Dec. 28, Hamas fighters are shown storming what appears to be a mockup Israeli military base, complete with a full-size model of a tank with an Israeli flag flying from its turret. The gunmen move through the cinderblock buildings, seizing other men playing the roles of Israeli soldiers as hostages.

Michael Milshtein, a retired Israeli colonel who previously led the military intelligence department overseeing the Palestinian territories, said he was aware of the Hamas videos, but he was still caught off guard by the ambition and scale of Saturday's attack.

"We knew about the drones, we knew about booby traps, we knew about cyberattacks and the marine forces ... The surprise was the coordination between all those systems," Milshtein said.

The seeds of Israel's failure to anticipate and stop Saturday's attack go back at least a decade. Faced with recurring attacks from Hamas militants tunneling under Israel's border fence, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proposed a very concrete solution — build a bigger wall.

With financial help from U.S. taxpayers, Israel completed construction of a \$1.1 billion project to fortify its existing defenses along its 40-mile land border with Gaza in 2021. The new, upgraded barrier includes a "smart fence" up to 6-meters (19.7 feet) high, festooned with cameras that can see in the dark, razor wire and seismic sensors capable of detecting the digging of tunnels more than 200 feet below. Manned guard posts were replaced with concrete towers topped with remote-controlled machine guns.

"In our neighborhood, we need to protect ourselves from wild beasts," Netanyahu said in 2016, referring to Palestinians and neighboring Arab states. "At the end of the day as I see it, there will be a fence like this one surrounding Israel in its entirety."

Shortly after dawn on Saturday, Hamas fighters pushed through Netanyahu's wall in a matter of minutes. And they did it on the relative cheap, using explosive charges to blow holes in the barrier and then sending in bulldozers to widen the breaches as fighters streamed through on motorcycles and in pick-up trucks. Cameras and communications gear were bombarded by off-the-shelf commercial drones adapted to drop hand grenades and mortar shells — a tactic borrowed directly from the battlefields of Ukraine.

Snipers took out Israel's sophisticated roboguns by targeting their exposed ammunition boxes, causing them to explode. Militants armed with assault rifles sailed over the Israeli defenses slung under paragliders, providing Hamas airborne troops despite lacking airplanes. Increasingly sophisticated homemade rockets, capable of striking the Israeli city of Tel Aviv, substituted for a lack of heavy artillery.

Satellite images analyzed by the AP show the massive extent of the damage done at the heavily fortified Erez border crossing between Gaza and Israel. The images taken Sunday and analyzed Tuesday showed gaping holes in three sections of the border wall, the largest more than 70 meters (230 feet) wide.

Once the wall was breached, Hamas fighters streamed through by the hundreds. A video showed a lone Israeli battle tank rushing to the site of the attack, only to be attacked and quickly destroyed in a

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ball of flame. Hamas then disabled radio towers and radar sites, likely impeding the ability of the Israeli commanders to see and understand the extent of the attack.

Hamas forces also struck a nearby army base near Zikim, engaging in an intense firefight with Israeli troops before overrunning the post. Videos posted by Hamas show graphic scenes with dozens of dead Israeli soldiers.

They then fanned out across the countryside of Southern Israel, attacking kibbutzim and a music festival. On the bodies of some of the Hamas militants killed during the invasion were detailed maps showing planned zones and routes of attack, according to images posted by Israeli first responders who recovered some of the the corpses. Israeli authorities announced Wednesday they had recovered the bodies of about 1,500 Hamas militants, though no details were provided about where they were found or how they died.

Military experts told the AP the attack showed a level of sophistication not previously exhibited by Hamas, likely suggesting they had external help.

"I just was impressed with Hamas's ability to use basics and fundamentals to be able to penetrate the wall," said retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Stephen Danner, a combat engineer trained to build and breach defenses. "They seemed to be able to find those weak spots and penetrate quickly and then exploit that breach."

Ali Barakeh, a Beirut-based senior Hamas official, acknowledged that over the years the group had received supplies, financial support, military expertise and training from its allies abroad, including Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. But he insisted the recent operation to breach Israel's border defenses was home-grown, with the exact date and time for the attack known only to a handful of commanders within Hamas.

Details of the operation were kept so tight that some Hamas fighters who took part in the assault Saturday believed they were heading to just another drill, showing up in street clothes rather than their uniforms, Barakeh said.

Last weekend's devastating surprise attack has shaken political support for Netanyahu within Israel, who pushed ahead with spending big to build walls despite some within his own cabinet and military warning that it probably wouldn't work.

In the days since Hamas struck, senior Israeli officials have largely deflected questions about the wall and the apparent intelligence failure. Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the chief spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces, acknowledged the military owes the public an explanation, but said now is not the time.

"First, we fight, then we investigate," he said.

In his push to build border walls, Netanyahu found an enthusiastic partner in then-President Donald Trump, who praised Netanyahu's Iron Wall as a potential model for the expanded barrier he planned for the U.S. Southern border with Mexico.

Under Trump, the U.S. expanded a joint initiative with Israel started under the Obama Administration to develop technologies for detecting underground tunnels along the Gaza border defenses. Since 2016, Congress has appropriated \$320 million toward the project.

But even with all its high-tech gadgets, the Iron Wall was still largely just a physical barrier that could be breached, said Victor Tricaud, a senior analyst with the London-based consulting firm Control Risks.

"The fence, no matter how many sensors ... no matter how deep the underground obstacles go, at the end of the day, it's effectively a metal fence," he said. "Explosives, bulldozers can eventually get through it. What was remarkable was Hamas's capability to keep all the preparations under wraps."

Biesecker reported from Washington and El Deeb from Beirut. AP reporters Jon Gambrell in Jerusalem, Lori Hinnant in Paris, Beatrice Dupuy in New York, and Aaron Kessler and Fu Ting in Washington contributed.

Biden is talking about green energy and jobs in Pennsylvania again. Will his message break through?

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is returning to Pennsylvania to use the critical battleground state again as a backdrop for some of his favorite political themes, championing steep increases in public works spending and detailing how bolstering green energy can spur U.S. manufacturing.

This time, he'll be in Philadelphia to announce that it will be one of the regional hubs selected to produce and deliver hydrogen fuel that can run factories, ports and other facilities to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The program will eventually include hydrogen production hubs around the country — a key component of the Biden administration's clean energy plan — and will be paid for using \$7 billion from the sweeping infrastructure package that cleared Congress in 2021.

The world has changed since Biden visited a familiar place to talk up familiar topics, though. The war between Israel and Hamas has scrambled geopolitics and potentially reshuffled a 2024 presidential race beginning to heat up. Getting the public's attention could be a tall order given the focus on fighting and atrocities in Gaza and the Americans among those being held hostage by Hamas.

Other domestic matters also are competing for political attention, with the fight over choosing the next Republican House speaker potentially imperiling continued U.S. aid to Ukraine and a United Auto Workers strike entering its fifth week. On top of all that, the president's son, Hunter, is facing federal gun charges and Biden himself recently sat for interviews with a special prosecutor investigating his handling of classified documents — though that may signal the case is nearing a conclusion.

Any struggle to shift attention to Biden's domestic agenda highlights larger questions about the president's overall reelection strategy and whether messaging primarily built around the president's policy accomplishments and ability to govern can compete with ever-changing world events that shake up the political stakes in real time.

"Will the country care? In the political class, in the news-absorbing part of the population, nationally? No," Cathal Nolan, director of the International History Institute at Boston University and the author of several books on diplomatic and military history, said of Biden's hydrogen production announcement.

"But I don't think that's what infrastructure speeches are about, ever," Nolan added. "I think it's about the local impact."

Indeed, allies contend Biden should stay on political message as he seeks reelection, stressing steady governing even in a time of crisis and focusing on how the government is improving middle-class lives as he heads into a potential rematch with Donald Trump, who has a commanding lead in the 2024 Republican presidential primary.

The Philadelphia speech is part of what his administration is calling the third installment of Biden's Investing in America Tour, which will see the president, Vice President Kamala Harris and key Cabinet members travel the country to promote economic policies. Biden heads to Colorado on Monday.

"When there's an international crisis, you've got to be leading," said Joel Rubin, who was an Obama administration State Department official and a veteran of Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign. "The fact that he's going to continue to be out there demonstrates leadership."

Friday's trip notwithstanding, Biden has made the situation in Gaza a priority, speaking frequently with his foreign advisers and with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He met with Jewish community leaders at the White House this week and has said that "the U.S. has Israel's back" while decrying the "sheer evil" of Islamic militants.

"There's a lot we're doing. A lot we're doing," Biden said of U.S. efforts to rescue American hostages, noting that he couldn't discuss such efforts publicly given security concerns.

The president also announced other policy efforts this week, including steps to curb "junk fees," and he met with CEOs.

Rubin said the Biden administration has championed a "foreign policy for the middle class," which emphasizes domestic economic and industrial strength and reinvigorating global alliances. That helps explain

the thought process behind Friday's speech, he said.

"Communicating why his policy is working for the American people economically ... that undergirds American national power overseas. You take that away, you have nothing," said Rubin, who also founded J Street, a liberal Jewish advocacy group in Washington, and is running for Congress in Maryland.

Biden's reelection campaign has joined the White House in stressing that being president always means juggling multiple pressing concerns. Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "The president has to do multiple things at once."

She noted that Biden "has been engaged in the horrific situation in Israel" but, in Philadelphia, "He's going to continue to talk about what he's doing to bring back manufacturing, to create good-paying jobs."

"That is something Americans also want to hear," Jean-Pierre said.

Still, selling Biden's economic agenda to voters wasn't easy even before the outbreak of war in Gaza. Just 36% of U.S. adults approved of Biden's handling of the economy in August, slightly lower than the 42% who approved of his overall performance, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Whatever the message, the president can help himself politically Friday just by staying focused on Pennsylvania, said longtime Democratic strategist Robert Shrum.

"If he wins the state he's very likely to win reelection," Shrum said. "So they can do the event in Philadelphia and get a lot of attention for it."

Biden appears to be betting on that strategy, heaping Pennsylvania with attention that has included a visit per month recently — acutely aware that it is one of a few toss-up states where outcomes can really sway the election, along with Georgia and Arizona, as well as perhaps Wisconsin and Michigan.

Since formally announcing his reelection bid in April, Biden addressed some of the nation's largest unions at the Philadelphia convention center after they jointly endorsed him in June, the only 2024 campaign rally he's held so far. He returned to Philadelphia in July, visiting a shipyard where he talked up how organized labor would lead a major push toward embracing green energy.

He made an August trip for a funeral to Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he was born, and was in Philadelphia last month for an ALF-CIO Labor Day event.

"It's the power of incumbency that he can work policy speeches into places that he's going to," said Mustafa Rashed, a Philadelphia-based Democratic strategist. "Everything is about 2024 at this point."

A music festival survivor fleeing the attack, a pair of Hamas militants and a deadly decision

By ALON BERNSTEIN and SAM MCNEIL Associated Press

KIBBUTZ RE'IM, Israel (AP) — The two militants were just ahead of him, spraying gunfire from their motorcycle at passing cars. One militant was driving, the 50-year-old man said, and the other sat behind, shooting at any target he saw. At least one wore body armor.

"He didn't see me," Michael Silberberg said. So Silberberg made a decision.

He and two friends had already managed to escape the slaughter at the Tribe of Nova music festival, where hundreds of militants from the Palestinian group Hamas had swarmed through crowds, killing at least 260 people and taking an unknown number hostage.

They survived another attack a few minutes later, with two hiding in a roadside air-raid shelter while the other hid outside.

Soon after that they were driving away in Silberberg's car, trying to get far from the massacre, when they saw the motorcycle.

"I knew it's either I hit him or I know I die, or other people die, or somebody will die," Silberberg said.

So he stepped on the accelerator and slammed into the motorcycle with his four-door sedan.

The shooter, he said, died immediately. The driver survived, but they left him crawling in the street badly injured.

"They were neutralized," Silberberg said.

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The men quickly drove away, with the vehicle's front end badly dented, the car alarm blaring and smoke billowing from everywhere. They drove like that for 20 minutes until they reached a friend's house and found safety.

Silberberg, an Israeli-born German, said he had long been politically liberal, hoping for a peace that gave Palestinians their own homeland.

"You know: 'All good. Let's live all together. Let's give them the land.'"

But not anymore.

"My mind has changed. I'm sorry — I'm not sorry," he said, sitting in his seafront Tel Aviv apartment where he and his two friends hunkered down after the attack.

"You can't make peace with these people," he said. "They don't want to coexist with us. They want to kill us."

Early Saturday morning, Hamas militants based in the Gaza Strip blasted through the Israeli security fence and streamed into Israel. The attack killed more than 1,300 people in Israel, with subsequent Israeli airstrikes killing more than 1,530 people in Gaza. Israel says roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were killed inside Israel.

In the days since the assault, Israel has hammered the Gaza Strip with airstrikes as it prepares for a possible ground assault. Israel has also cut off food, fuel and medicine from Gaza's 2.3 million people, leading aid groups to warn of an impending humanitarian catastrophe. Israel says the siege will remain in place until the hostages are freed.

The Tribe of Nova festival, held in the semi-wooded fields outside Kibbutz Re'im, just a few miles from Gaza, was one of the first Hamas targets.

Videos show militants arriving on trucks and motorcycles, with gunmen charging into crowds and firing on people as they tried to flee into the fields.

Israeli communities near the festival also came under attack, with Hamas gunmen kidnapping people — soldiers, civilians, the elderly and young children — and killing scores of others.

The carnage stunned Israel, which had not seen bloodshed like this for decades.

On Thursday, a man who had been tending bar at the festival came back to the scene of the attack. He said he had no choice.

"I feel I owe them, you know, all the people that were here and murdered," Peleg Horev told an Associated Press journalist allowed to visit the scene. "I'm alive, I stayed alive. I have to tell their story. Each and every one of them."

The bodies have been cleared away from the festival grounds, but the wreckage of the attack is everywhere.

Bullet-riddled cars, many with their windows shot out, are scattered through the festival area and nearby roads. Clothing spills from broken suitcases. A woman's shirt remains in a tree where it had been hung to dry. A pair of eyeglasses sit on a windowsill. Ticket booths are pocked with gunfire.

"Lost and Found" announces a festival poster hanging from a fence. "Camping Area," says another.

Leaves blow in a gentle breeze as soldiers patrol the area, occasionally dropping to the ground at the sound of distant gunfire. Security forces worry that militants could attack again, or that some could still be hiding in the fields and brush.

Peleg escaped by walking for hours, deeper into Israel. He avoided the roads, where many who tried to escape by car were killed when they were stuck behind other vehicles that had come under attack.

"All of this time you're hearing gunshots and screaming from afar," he said. "We just go as far as we can as fast as we can."

He is deeply shaken by the reality that he survived and so many others did not.

"I owe them, really."

Mahomes throws TD pass, Kelce has big game with Swift watching again as Chiefs beat Broncos 19-8

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Patrick Mahomes knows the Kansas City Chiefs' offense is still trying to put everything together.

It was evident in the way they struggled against Denver on third down Thursday night. The way they kept getting bottled up in short-yardage situations. And in how they failed time after time to turn red-zone trips into touchdowns.

"Luckily for us," Mahomes said, "our defense is playing great."

So great that Mahomes' lone touchdown pass and Harrison Butker's four field goals were enough to squeak out a 19-8 victory over the Broncos, whose own woeful offense could only manage 197 yards behind a shaky performance from Russell Wilson.

"We have guys that are starters on other teams that are trying to find a way on the football field, and when they get on the field, they're making plays," Mahomes said of the Kansas City defense. "And they're playing with confidence."

Mahomes finished with 306 yards passing and an interception, and a big chunk of his production went to Travis Kelce, who had nine catches for 124 yards with Taylor Swift again cheering him on from an Arrowhead Stadium suite.

Still, the inability of the Chiefs (5-1) to score touchdowns rather than field goals nearly proved costly.

Butker's first three field goals helped them to a 16-0 lead, but Wilson's touchdown pass to Courtland Sutton — ruled incomplete but overturned upon review — with about six minutes remaining kept the Broncos (1-5) alive. And when Javonte Williams bulled into the end zone for the 2-point conversion, what had been a one-sided shutout was a one-possession game.

The Broncos' league-worst defense couldn't make a stop, though. Mahomes converted third-and-2 with a 28-yard pass to Rashee Rice, and that put Butker in position for a 52-yard field goal with 1:55 left that put the game away.

"Our defense was incredible tonight, as it has been," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "But we have to take care of business in the red zone. We had a lot of yards, positive yards, but you can't stall down there."

The Broncos have not beaten the Chiefs since Sept. 17, 2015, the year Peyton Manning led Denver to the Super Bowl. That was six head and interim coaches ago, and nothing changed with Sean Payton leading them Thursday night. In a league built for parity, their losing streak is the fourth-longest for any team against another in NFL history.

"I'm disappointed but I'm not discouraged," Payton said. "Offensively we struggled throwing the ball. Our third-down numbers were poor. The turnovers, against a team like this, it's going to be tough to win the game, and yet we were still in it going into the fourth quarter. Sometimes you don't know how a game is going to unfold."

As bad as the Broncos' defense has been this season, it was Wilson and their offense that kept dragging them down. He had 37 yards passing in the first half, and the only drive Wilson led past midfield ended on fourth down.

The Chiefs weren't doing a whole lot better.

Their first three forays into the red zone netted three points, thanks to an interception by Justin Simmons and a failed tush push out of a field-goal lineup on fourth down. Mahomes, who has struggled by his standards all season, only found his rhythm once in the first half, when he ended a 62-yard drive with a short touchdown pass to Kadarius Toney.

Butker made it 13-0 at the break when he drilled a 60-yard field goal as time expired.

The Chiefs' red-zone woes continued in the second half. They began by swiftly marching downfield and setting up first-and-goal at the Denver 8, but that soon turned into fourth-and-goal at the 7-yard line and Butker had to kick another field goal.

That was all Kansas City could muster until his clinching kick in the final minutes.

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Thanks to the defense, that was all the Chiefs needed.

"I thought we did a lot of good things, just obviously red zone and some third downs we didn't execute at a high enough level," Mahomes said. "I still think there were a lot of good things we can take from it."

SWIFT IN THE HOUSE

Swift watched Kelce and the Chiefs for the third time Thursday night. The two began a relationship a few weeks ago, when he invited Swift to a Chiefs game after failing to meet her during her Eras Tour. Swift flew in from Los Angeles, where she walked the red carpet on Wednesday night for the premiere of her concert film.

SACK SITUATION

Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones had a sack in his eighth straight regular-season game, which trails only his own 11-game streak in 2018 for the longest in franchise history. With at least one in his first five this season, Jones broke the club record to start the season held by Hall of Famer Derrick Thomas.

INJURIES

Broncos: TE Greg Dulcich, who had just come off injured reserve, left in the fourth quarter with a hamstring injury. It's the same injury that landed Dulcich on IR after hurting it in Week 1 against the Raiders.

Chiefs: S Justin Reid, who had an interception earlier in the game, briefly left in the second half. WR Justin Watson left in the fourth quarter with an elbow injury sustained while trying to make a diving catch.

UP NEXT

Broncos: Host Green Bay on Oct. 22.

Chiefs: Host the Los Angeles Chargers the same day.

Some want to grant temporary House speaker more power as Republican gridlock stalls Congress

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Rep. Patrick McHenry took the House speaker's gavel for the first time, he slammed it down with such force at adjournment that it gained viral internet attention as the defining image of a House in turmoil.

But since his abrupt appointment as speaker pro tempore last week following the unprecedented ouster of Kevin McCarthy from the top spot, the North Carolina Republican has wielded the gavel with extreme care, making no attempts to test the limits of his unusual role.

Day after day, McHenry, in his signature bow tie, follows a standard routine — gaveling the House into session, receiving a prayer from the chaplain and having a lawmaker recite the Pledge of Allegiance, before quickly gaveling out again. In doing so, he is technically keeping the House active but in a suspended state as both parties wait for Republicans to reach consensus on who will be the next new speaker.

But as the House nears a second week stuck on pause, and Republicans struggle to unite around a candidate, many lawmakers are growing antsy. Some Republicans are urging McHenry to interpret his powers more broadly, if that's what it takes to get the House working again, even if it means setting a new precedent that could ripple down through congressional history.

"We are in uncharted waters, but it's also very clear that we do not want to have a speaker pro tem who is leading policy. That's not the role," said Rep. Zach Nunn, R-Iowa. "But there is also not a need for the American people's voice to be silenced because Congress can't function."

McHenry has been tight-lipped about how he views his role as the speaker pro tempore, trying to push Republicans towards uniting behind a speaker. During a closed-door Republican meeting Thursday night where Majority Leader Steve Scalise withdrew his nomination for speaker, McHenry joked with lawmakers that he would lock them in a room and withhold food and water until they united behind a leader, according to Rep. Marc Molinaro, who was in the room.

"That's the goal," McHenry said earlier Thursday when asked if he would put a vote for speaker on the House floor.

As an unelected leader, McHenry is navigating a political crisis without precedent in U.S. history. House

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Republicans are gridlocked with no end in sight, a war is escalating in Israel and Palestine and the U.S. government is ticking closer to a shutdown. The 10-term lawmaker, who is a close McCarthy ally, is trying to both soothe tempers in the Republican conference while dealing with mounting pressure to act to show America's global strength.

"There is some thought that in the interest of national security — because we're in a dangerous time and we have to get a national security aid package to Israel — that we could somehow empower McHenry to have more authorities," said Rep. Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee.

McCaul is pushing for action on a bipartisan resolution to express support for Israel. Under normal circumstances, such legislation, which bears no weight of law, would pass easily. But McCaul and others have had to contemplate arcane legislative procedures just to push it to the floor, underscoring just how dysfunctional the House has become.

Some Republicans are pushing for McHenry to bring the Israel resolution to the House floor, arguing that it is within his scope of powers because the resolution has no force of law.

Others say McHenry's powers shouldn't stop there.

One group of centrist GOP lawmakers, led by Ohio Republican Rep. David Joyce, is preparing a resolution that would explicitly grant McHenry some power to bring legislation to the floor, endowing his role with new and defined authority.

"What's taking place in the world — it's important that we take time to empower the present speaker who's there under rules that were never really officially developed," said Joyce earlier this week.

McHenry was named to the role of speaker pro tempore by McCarthy as part of a process established in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Never before used, the system was designed as a way to keep Congress functioning if leaders and lawmakers were killed or incapacitated. When he became speaker, McCarthy drafted a list of who should succeed him should something happen — and McHenry's name was at the very top.

But the crisis now facing the House is hardly what was envisioned — the office of speaker left vacant not due to death or incapacitation, but due to intense infighting within the House majority that has made governance next to impossible.

While Joyce is pushing to empower McHenry for a period of up to 90 days during which a speaker pro tempore would be empowered to advance legislation, it is not clear whether Republicans could unite around even a temporary leader.

Hardline conservatives and mainstream Republicans alike said Thursday they wanted to stay focused on electing a new speaker, and many are likely to resist handing McHenry more authority.

Democrats, meanwhile, have argued that McHenry's role was created for the sole purpose of electing a new speaker, on guard against a new precedent in the House that they fear could someday be abused.

Rep. Jim McGovern, the top Democrat on the House Rules Committee, posted on social media that McHenry's "job is to guide the House toward the election of a new Speaker. That's it."

But outside the Capitol, experts in congressional law say Congress has the power to follow or violate its own rules, especially when there is no precedent for the current situation. House rules can essentially be overruled with support from a majority of members.

"Congress has the power to do what it wants here," said Josh Chafetz, a professor of law and politics at Georgetown Law School.

It's an argument that may catch on in the House as lawmakers grow restless with their inability to act. Republicans were left flummoxed after Scalise withdrew his nomination Thursday after spending the day in closed-door meetings trying to overcome opposition from hardline conservatives.

"It's really frustrating. I want to be here every day getting work done," said Rep. Jen Kiggans, a Virginia Republican, earlier Thursday. "And we're not getting work done."

The Supreme Court avoided disaster when a hunk of marble fell in a courtyard used by justices

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court avoided a catastrophic accident last year when an enormous piece of marble at least two feet in length crashed to the ground in an interior courtyard used by the justices and their aides, according to several Supreme Court employees.

The incident, which the court still fails to acknowledge publicly, took place in the tense spring of 2022, as the court already was dealing with death threats and other security concerns and the justices were putting the final touches on their stunning decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Justice Elena Kagan and her law clerks had been in the courtyard earlier in the day, the employees said.

No one was injured when the marble fell, the employees said. The piece was easily big enough to have seriously injured someone, they said. It was much larger than the basketball-sized chunk that fell near the court's front entrance in 2005.

The weight of the marble that fell is unknown, but the Georgia marble used in the court's four interior courtyards weighs about 170 pounds per cubic foot, according to Polycor, which owns the quarry that provided the marble.

The employees spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because court policy forbids all but a small number of employees from speaking to reporters on the record.

Supreme Court spokeswoman Patricia McCabe would not provide any details about the incident or even confirm that it had taken place. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the building was closed at the time to the public and members of the news media who regularly cover the court.

Each of the four courtyards has fountains and columns that resemble those on the outside of the building. There are tables and chairs where employees can have lunch or work on nice days.

The courtyards are closed for restoration work that could cost nearly \$35 million, budget requests to Congress show. The court had planned to redo the courtyards well before the marble fell. The work has been ongoing, mostly in the evening after court workers have left for the day.

In addition to restoring the marble, workers also are updating fountains, plumbing and electrical systems that date to the building's opening in 1935.

In November 2005, marble molding fell from the facade over the entrance to the court, landing on the steps near visitors waiting to enter the building on a Monday morning. No one was hurt then, either.

Chief Justice John Roberts made a joking reference to the 2005 incident when he spoke at Drake University's law school three years later.

The building was then undergoing a thorough renovation that would cost roughly \$120 million and last until 2011.

"Now, there were a lot of reasons that we had to renovate the building, including the fact that we were literally losing our marbles," Roberts said, as quoted in a university news release. "The occasional chunk of marble would dislodge and fall from above, threatening to shorten life tenure."

After years of erasure, Black queer leaders rise to prominence in Congress and activism

By AYANNA ALEXANDER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington this summer, a few Black queer advocates spoke passionately before the main program about the ongoing struggle for LGBTQ+ rights. As some of them got up to speak, the crowd was still noticeably small.

Hope Giselle, a speaker who is Black and trans, said she felt the event's programming echoed the historical marginalization and erasure of Black queer activists in the Civil Rights Movement. However, she was buoyed by the fact that prominent speakers drew attention to recent efforts to turn back the clock on LGBTQ+ rights, like the attacks on gender-affirming care for minors.

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And despite valid concerns around the visibility of Black queer advocates in activist movements, progress is being made in elected office. This month, Sen. Laphonza Butler made history as the first Black and openly lesbian senator in Congress, when California Governor Gavin Newsom appointed her to fill the seat held by the late Dianne Feinstein.

Rectifying the erasure of Black queer civil rights giants requires a full-throated acknowledgment of their legacies, and an increase of Black LGBTQ+ representation in advocacy and politics, several activists and lawmakers told The Associated Press.

"One of the things that I need for people to understand is that the Black queer community is still Black," and face anti-Black racism as well as homophobia and transphobia, said Giselle, communications director for the GSA Network, a nonprofit that helps students form gay-straight alliance clubs in schools.

"On top of being Black and queer, we have to also then distinguish what it means to be queer in a world that thinks that queerness is adjacent to whiteness — and that queerness saves you from racism. It does not," she said.

In an interview with the AP, Butler said she hopes that her appointment points toward progress in the larger cause of representation.

"It's too early to tell. But what I know is that history will be recorded in our National Archives, the representation that I bring to the United States Senate," she said last week. "I am not shy or bashful about who I am and who my family is. So, my hope is that I have lived out loud enough to overcome the tactics of today."

"But we don't know yet what the tactics of erasure are for tomorrow," Butler said.

Butler is a bellwether of increased visibility of queer communities in politics in recent years. In fact Black LGBTQ+ political representation has grown by 186% since 2019, according to a 2023 report by the LGBTQ+ Victory Institute. That included the election of now-former New York Representatives Mondaire Jones and Ritchie Torres, who were the first openly gay Black and Afro-Latino congressmen after the 2020 election, as well as former Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

These leaders stand on the shoulders of civil rights heroes such as Bayard Rustin, Pauli Murray, and Audre Lorde. In accounts of their contributions to the Civil Rights and feminist movements, their Blackness is typically amplified while their queer identities are often minimized or even erased, said David Johns, executive director of the National Black Justice Coalition, a LGBTQ+ civil rights group.

Rustin, who was an adviser to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a pivotal architect of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, is a glaring example. The march he helped lead tilled the ground for the passage of federal civil rights and voting rights legislation in the next few years.

But the fact that he was gay is often reduced to a footnote rather than treated as a key part of his involvement, Johns said.

"We need to teach our public school students history, herstory, our beautifully diverse ways of being, without censorship," he said.

An upcoming biopic of Rustin's life will undoubtedly help thrust the topic of Black LGBTQ+ political representation into the public conversation, said Shay Franco-Clausen, a commissioner of Alameda County in California.

"I didn't even learn about those same leaders, Black leaders, Black queer leaders until I got to college," she said.

The film, titled "Rustin," debuts in select theaters Nov. 3 and Netflix on Nov. 17.

Some believe the erasure of Black LGBTQ+ leaders stems from respectability politics, a strategy in some marginalized communities of ostracizing or punishing members who don't assimilate into the dominant culture.

White supremacist ideology in Christianity, which has been used more broadly to justify racism and systemic oppression, has also promoted the erasure of Black queer history. The Black Christian church was integral to the success of the Civil Rights Movement, but it is also "theologically hostile" to LGBTQ+ communities, said Don Abram, executive director of Pride in the Pews.

"I think it's the co-optation of religious practices by white supremacists to actually subjugate Black, queer,

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and trans folk," Abram said. "They are largely using moralistic language, theological language, religious language to justify them oppressing queer and trans folk."

Not all queer advocacy communities have been welcoming to Black LGBTQ+ voices. Minneapolis City Council President Andrea Jenkins said she is just as intentional in amplifying queer visibility in Black spaces as she is amplifying Blackness in majority white, queer spaces.

"We need to have more Black, queer, transgender, nonconforming identified people in these political spaces to aid and bridge those gaps," Jenkins said. "It's important to be able to create the kinds of awareness on both sides of the issue that can bring people together and that can ensure that we do have full participation from our community."

Black LGBTQ+ leaders are also using their platforms to create awareness about groundbreaking historical figures, especially Rustin. Maryland Delegate Gabriel Acevero and several LGBTQ+ advocates fought to get the only elementary school in his district named after Rustin in 2018. He has also urged Congress to pass legislation to create a U.S. Postal Service stamp depicting Rustin.

"Black queer folks have contributed to so many movements that we do not get acknowledgment for," Acevero said. "And this is why we should not only ensure that our elders get their flowers, but we should push to have their names and statues built ... so that they are not forgotten."

Japan's government asks a court to revoke the legal religious status of the Unification Church

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's government asked a court Friday to revoke the legal status of the Unification Church after an Education Ministry investigation concluded the group for decades has systematically manipulated its followers into donating money, sowing fear and harming their families.

The request submitted to the Tokyo District Court asks for it to issue a dissolution order revoking the church's status as a religious organization. Education Ministry officials submitted 5,000 pieces of documents and evidence in cardboard boxes to the court to support its request.

The process involves hearings and appeals from both sides and would take a while. If the order is approved and its legal status is stripped, the church could still operate but would lose its tax exemption privilege as a religious organization and would face financial setbacks.

The request was made a day after Education Minister Masahito Moriyama announced a panel of experts had endorsed the revocation request based on the findings of the ministry's investigation into the church's fundraising tactics and other allegations.

The Japan branch of the South Korea-based church, which officially calls itself the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, earlier condemned the government's decision.

"It is our deepest regret that the Japanese government made the serious decision based on distorted information provided by a leftist lawyers' group formed for the purpose of destroying our organization," the church said in a statement late Thursday. "It will be a stain in Japan's Constitutional history."

As part of the Education Ministry investigation, officials interviewed more than 170 people allegedly harmed by the church's fundraising tactics and other problems. The church failed to respond to dozens of questions during the seven inquiries, Moriyama said Thursday.

The church tried to steer its followers' decision-making, using manipulative tactics, making them buy expensive goods and donate beyond their financial ability and causing fear and harm to them and their families, Moriyama said Thursday.

The tactics seriously deviated from the law on religious groups, in which the purpose of the churches' legal status is to give people peace of mind, he said. "The activities are wrongful conducts under the Civil Code and their damages are immense."

The Agency for Cultural Affairs found 32 cases of civil lawsuits acknowledging damages totaling 2.2 billion yen (\$14.7 million) for 169 people, while the amount of settlements reached in or outside court totaled 20.4 billion yen (\$137 million) and involved 1,550 people, Moriyama said.

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Japan has in place hurdles for restraining religious activities due to lessons from the prewar and wartime oppression of freedom of religion and thought.

The investigation followed months of public outrage and questions about the group's fundraising and recruitment tactics after former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's assassination last year. The man accused of shooting Abe allegedly was motivated by the former prime minister's links to the church that he blamed for bankrupting his family.

Decades of cozy ties between the church and Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party were revealed since Abe's assassination and have eroded support for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government. Kishida told reporters Thursday that the government's decision to seek the revocation order was made carefully based on facts and was not political, denying speculation it was intended to shore up dwindling public support.

The Unification Church obtained legal status as a religious organization in Japan in 1968 amid an anti-communist movement supported by Abe's grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi.

The church has acknowledged excessive donations but says the problem has been mitigated for more than a decade. It also has pledged further reforms.

Experts say Japanese followers are asked to pay for sins committed by their ancestors during Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, and that the majority of the church's worldwide funding comes from Japan.

If the church's status is revoked, it would be the first under civil law. Two earlier cases involved criminal charges — the Aum Shinrikyo doomsday cult, which carried out a sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway, and the Myokakuji group, whose executives were convicted of fraud.

GOP's Scalise ends his bid to become House speaker as Republican holdouts refuse to back the nominee

By LISA MASCARO, FARNOUSH AMIRI, STEPHEN GROVES and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Steve Scalise ended his bid to become House speaker late Thursday after hardline holdouts refused to back the party's nominee, throwing the GOP majority into deeper chaos and leaving the chamber still unable to function.

Scalise told GOP colleagues at a closed-door evening meeting of his decision and pointedly declined to announce backing for anyone else, including his chief rival, Rep. Jim Jordan, the far-right Judiciary Committee chairman backed by Donald Trump who had already told colleagues he no longer would seek the job.

Next steps are uncertain as the House is essentially closed while the Republican majority tries to elect a speaker after ousting Kevin McCarthy from the job.

"I just shared with my colleagues that I'm withdrawing my name as a candidate for speaker-designee," Scalise, the House majority leader, said as he emerged from the closed-door meeting at the Capitol.

Scalise, R-La., said the Republican majority still has to come together and "open up the House again. But clearly not everybody is there."

He had been working furiously to secure the votes after being nominated by a majority of his colleagues, but after hours of private meetings over two days and late into the evening it was clear many other Republican lawmakers were not budging from their refusal to support him.

Asked if he would throw his support behind Jordan, Scalise said, "It's got to be people that aren't doing it for themselves and their own personal interest."

Scalise spoke candidly of the perspective on life he said he has gained from surviving being shot in 2017 and said he would push quickly for a resolution. "But it wasn't going to happen. It wasn't going to happen today. It wasn't going to happen tomorrow. It needs to happen soon, but I've withdrawn my name," he said.

Frustrations were boiling over and some lawmakers simply walked away as the political crisis spiraled and now threatens to leave the Republican majority in turmoil for the foreseeable future.

Scalise had been laboring to peel off more than 100 votes, mostly from those who backed Jordan. But many hard-liners taking their cues from Trump have dug in for a prolonged fight to replace McCarthy after

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his historic ouster from the job.

The hold-outs argued that as majority leader, Scalise was no better choice, that he should be focusing on his health as he battles cancer and that he was not the leader they would support. The House closed late in the night, with lawmakers vowing to meet again early Friday.

McCarthy said afterward that Scalise would remain as majority leader but had no other advice for his colleagues. The California Republican had briefly floated a comeback bid but that seems uncertain.

"I just think the conference as a whole has to figure out their problems, solve it and select the leader," he said.

The House is entering its second week without a speaker and is essentially unable to function during a time of turmoil in the U.S. and wars overseas, and the political pressure increasingly is on Republicans to reverse course, reassert majority control and govern in Congress.

The situation is not fully different from the start of the year, when McCarthy faced a similar backlash from a different group of far-right holdouts who ultimately gave their votes to elect him speaker, then engineered his historic downfall.

But the math this time is even more daunting, and the problematic political dynamic only worsening.

Scalise — who is seen by some colleagues as hero for having survived the 2017 shooting, when a gunman opened fire on lawmakers at a congressional baseball game practice — won the closed-door Republican vote 113-99.

But with the House narrowly split 221-212, with two vacancies, Scalise could lose just a few Republicans to reach the 217 majority needed in the face of opposition from Democrats who will most certainly back their own leader, New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries. Absences heading into the weekend could lower the majority threshold needed.

"We will come together and we will move forward for the good of the country," Jordan said afterward.

Attention now focuses on Jordan and his backers instantly revived calls for party members to get behind the Ohio Republican, who is a founding leader of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus.

"Make him the speaker. Do it tonight," said Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind. "He's the only one who can unite our party."

But the firebrand Jordan has a long list of detractors who started making their opposition known. Other potential speaker choices were also being floated.

Some Republicans proposed simply giving Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., who was appointed interim speaker pro tempore, greater authority to lead the House for some time.

Rank-and-file Republicans left Thursday night's meeting angry, overwhelmed and with their heads spinning about what to do next.

"I'm a freshman caught up in this maelstrom," said Rep. Mark Alford, R-Mo. "We're a ship without a rudder right now. And I'm thoroughly disappointed in the process. And I just pray to God that we find something."

Exasperated Democrats, who have been watching and waiting for the Republican majority to recover from McCarthy's ouster, urged them to figure it out, warning the world is watching.

"The House Republicans need to end the GOP Civil War, now," Jeffries said.

"The House Democrats have continued to make clear that we are ready, willing and able to find a bipartisan path forward," he said, including doing away with the rule that allows a single lawmaker to force a vote against the speaker. "But we need traditional Republicans to break from the extremists and partner with us."

As Congress sat idle, the Republicans spent a second day behind closed doors, arguing and airing grievances but failing to follow their own party rules and unite behind the nominee.

Rep. Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, said the meetings had been marked by "emotional" objections to voting for Scalise.

Some Republicans simply took their Chick-fil-A lunches to go.

Earlier in the day, Jordan had given his most vocal endorsement yet to Scalise and announced he did not plan to continue running for the leadership position. But it was not enough to sway the holdouts.

Handfuls of Republicans announced they were sticking with Jordan, McCarthy or someone other than Scalise.

Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, reaffirmed his support for Trump as speaker; the position does not need to go to a member of Congress.

Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, repeatedly discussed Scalise's health during a radio interview that aired Thursday.

"Well, I like Steve. I like both of them very much. But the problem, you know, Steve is a man that is in serious trouble, from the standpoint of his cancer," Trump said on Fox News host Brian Kilmeade's radio show.

Scalise has been diagnosed with a form of blood cancer known as multiple myeloma and is being treated.

"I think it's going to be very hard, maybe in either case, for somebody to get," Trump said. "And then you end up in one of these crazy stalemates. It's a very interesting situation."

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

But others said it was time for Republicans to get out from behind closed doors and vote.

"Stop dragging it out," said Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., on social media. "If Kevin McCarthy had to go 15 rounds then the next Speaker should be able to do the same or more if they have to."

Sam Bankman-Fried's lawyer fails to hurt credibility of the government's star witness at fraud trial

By KEN SWEET The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sam Bankman-Fried's lawyer did little to dent the credibility of the government's key witness in the former crypto mogul's fraud trial Thursday, meandering through a cross-examination of Caroline Ellison that at times left even the judge puzzled and impatient.

During the prior two days of testimony, the prosecution presented Ellison as a high-level insider who had, at Bankman-Fried's direction, overseen the improper borrowing of funds from customers at the FTX crypto exchange run by Bankman-Fried. The funds often were used for investments at an affiliated trading firm, Alameda Research, that was headed by Ellison, Bankman-Fried's one-time girlfriend.

Bankman-Fried's lead defense attorney, Mark Cohen, was expected to try to shift the blame for the problems at Alameda to Ellison, following up on his opening statement in the trial where he said Bankman-Fried didn't commit fraud and instead was trying to clean up a mess largely created by his lieutenants.

Cohen, however, seemed to struggle in his questioning of Ellison, failing to knock any holes in her testimony. He repeatedly changed topics, changed dates of discussion, often seemingly at random.

Several times, Judge Lewis A. Kaplan had to ask Cohen where he was going with his questions or what exactly he was talking about.

After Ellison finished testifying, prosecutors brought out a former software developer at Alameda who largely backed up what Ellison told the jury.

"I was utterly shocked," said Christian Drappi, who worked for a year at the crypto trading firm and was present when Ellison came clean to Alameda employees in November 2022 that the trading firm had been using FTX customer funds. Exchanges like FTX are supposed to segregate customers' deposits from any bets they place in the markets.

Ellison spent much of her testimony on Tuesday and Wednesday walking the jury through how she repeatedly had to tap into the customer deposits at FTX to solve problems at the hedge fund or at the exchange. FTX deposits would be withdrawn to pay for new investments or political donations, or to hide steep losses on Alameda's balance sheet, she testified. All of this was done at the direction of Bankman-Fried, she said.

When the losses at Alameda became so big in November 2022, it became necessary to shut down the trading firm and sell FTX to potentially save the two entities from bankruptcy. Ellison held a all-hands meeting that week, which was recorded by an Alameda employee and given to government investigators.

In those audio tapes played for the jury, Alameda employees asked Ellison whether the decision to bor-

row FTX customer funds was a "YOLO" decision, an acronym meaning "you only live once," implying that it had been done impulsively.

No, Ellison told employees, on those tapes. It was done over a period of years.

Drappi testified he resigned 24 hours later after that meeting.

Ellison, 28, pleaded guilty to fraud charges in December, when Bankman-Fried was extradited to the United States from the Bahamas. Bankman-Fried, 31, has pleaded not guilty to fraud charges.

Initially confined to his parents' Palo Alto, California, home under terms of a \$250 million bond, Bankman-Fried has been jailed since August after Judge Kaplan concluded that he had tried to improperly influence potential witnesses, including Ellison.

Rudolph Isley, founding member of Isley Brothers and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member, dies at 84

By The Associated Press undefined

Rudolph Isley, a founding member of the Isley Brothers who helped perform such raw rhythm and blues classics as "Shout" and "Twist and Shout" and the funky hits "That Lady" and "It's Your Thing," has died at age 84.

"There are no words to express my feelings and the love I have for my brother. Our family will miss him. But I know he's in a better place," Ronald Isley said in a statement released Thursday by an Isley Brothers publicist. Further details were not immediately available.

A Cincinnati native, Rudolph Isley began singing in church with brothers Ronald and O'Kelly (another sibling, Vernon, died at age 13) and was still in his teens when they broke through in the late 1950s with "Shout," a secularized gospel rave that was later immortalized during the toga party scene in "Animal House." The Isleys scored again in the early 1960s with the equally spirited "Twist and Shout," which the Beatles liked so much they used it as the closing song on their debut album and opened with it for their famed 1965 concert at Shea Stadium.

The Isleys' other hits included "This Old Heart of Mine (Is Weak for You)," later covered by Rod Stewart, and the Grammy-winning "It's Your Thing." In the 1970s, after younger brother Ernest and Marvin joined the group, they had even greater success with such singles as "That Lady" and "Fight the Power (Part 1)" and such million-selling albums as "The Heat Is On" and "Go for Your Guns."

Rudolph Isley left the group in 1989, three years after the sudden death of O'Kelly Isley, to become a Christian minister. He was among the Isleys inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

Sen. Menendez is accused of being an unregistered agent of Egypt's government in updated indictment

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey was charged Thursday with conspiring for years to act as an agent of the Egyptian government while he held a powerful role in shaping U.S. foreign policy, putting the Democrat in deeper legal trouble as he continues to reject calls to resign.

The superseding indictment in Manhattan federal court accuses Menendez of violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which requires people to register with the U.S. government if they act as "an agent of a foreign principal." As a member of Congress, Menendez was prohibited from being an agent of a foreign government.

The new charge comes weeks after Menendez and his wife were accused of accepting bribes of cash, gold bars and a luxury car from three New Jersey businessmen who wanted the senator's help and influence over foreign affairs.

The new indictment says a conspiracy occurred from January 2018 to June 2022, alleging that Menendez "promised to take and took a series of acts on behalf of Egypt, including on behalf of Egyptian military

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and intelligence officials." It said he conspired to do so with his wife, Nadine, and a business associate and fellow defendant, Wael Hana.

According to the indictment, Hana and Nadine Menendez also communicated requests and directives from Egyptian officials to Menendez.

Hours after the latest charge was revealed, Menendez issued a statement, saying it "flies in the face of my long record of standing up for human rights and democracy in Egypt and in challenging leaders of that country, including President (Fattah) El-Sisi on these issues."

"I have been, throughout my life, loyal to only one country — the United States of America, the land my family chose to live in democracy and freedom," he added. "Piling new charge upon new charge does not make the allegations true. ... I again ask people who know me and my record to give me the chance to present my defense and show my innocence."

The new charge brought fresh calls for Menendez to resign. Democratic Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania said in a statement that senators should vote to expel Menendez because "we cannot have an alleged foreign agent in the United States Senate."

But a vote to expel was unlikely before trial. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has not called on Menendez to resign and has not commented on the new charge.

The charge comes as more than 30 Senate Democrats — including his home state colleague, Democratic Sen. Cory Booker — have called on him to resign. Menendez has remained defiant, telling colleagues in a closed-door luncheon two weeks ago that he will not leave the Senate.

Menendez has not said whether he will run for reelection next year. At least one Democrat, New Jersey Rep. Andy Kim, has already jumped into the primary, and the head of Senate Democrats' campaign arm, Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, has called on Menendez to resign, signaling that he may not receive campaign assistance traditionally available to incumbents. Kim on Thursday urged the Senate to expel Menendez.

The indictment alleged that in May 2019, Menendez, his wife and Hana met with an Egyptian intelligence official in Menendez's Senate office in Washington. During the meeting, they discussed an American citizen who was seriously injured in a 2015 airstrike by the Egyptian military using a U.S.-made Apache helicopter, the indictment said.

Some members of Congress objected to awarding certain military aid to Egypt over that episode and the perception by certain lawmakers that the Egyptian government was unwilling to fairly compensate the injured American, according to the indictment.

Shortly after the meeting in Washington, the Egyptian official texted Hana that if Menendez helped resolve the matter, "he will sit very comfortably." Hana replied, "Orders, consider it done," the indictment said.

Prosecutors noted that a search of Hana's cellphone had "revealed thousands of text messages, many via an encrypted application, with Egyptian military and intelligence officials, pertaining to various topics, including Menendez, and including requests and directives for Hana to act upon."

And they said for the first time that Nadine Menendez began at least in 2018, the same year she started dating the senator, to have "meetings and direct communications with multiple Egyptian officials, at least some of whom she understood were intelligence officials, and received requests from them, and conveyed information and requests from them to Menendez."

Attorney Danny Onorato, who represents Nadine Menendez, said in a statement that she denies all allegations in the superseding indictment, "including the claim that she acted as an agent of any foreign government. We will fight all these charges, as appropriate, in court."

In an email, Hana's attorney, Lawrence Lustberg, said the "new allegation that Wael Hana was part of a plot concocted over dinner to enlist Senator Menendez as an agent of the Egyptian Government is as absurd as it is false."

Menendez and his wife have pleaded not guilty to the charges lodged against them last month. Hana pleaded not guilty last month to charges including conspiracy to commit bribery.

After Hana's company was granted a lucrative monopoly by the Egyptian government to certify that all meat imported into that country met religious requirements, prosecutors said, Menendez urged U.S. agriculture officials to stop questioning the deal.

Menendez was accused of trying to interfere in two criminal cases, pushing prosecutors to either drop an investigation or give leniency to friends of his associates. In return, prosecutors said, one businessman, Jose Uribe, bought Nadine Menendez a \$60,000 luxury car. Uribe has pleaded not guilty.

In both the old and new indictments, prosecutors said Menendez, after meeting with an Egyptian official, lobbied then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to increase American engagement in stalled negotiations involving Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to build a dam over the Nile River, a key foreign policy issue for Egypt.

The indictments said that while Menendez was chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he took several steps to secretly aid Egyptian officials. That included ghostwriting a letter to fellow senators encouraging them to lift a hold on \$300 million in aid to Egypt. He relinquished the chairmanship of the committee after the earlier indictment against him was unsealed last month.

He was also accused of passing along information about employees at the U.S. Embassy in Egypt and transmitting nonpublic information to Egyptian officials about military aid.

Menendez, 69, has insisted that he did nothing unusual to assist Egypt and that prosecutors had misunderstood the work of a senator involved in foreign affairs.

Authorities who searched Menendez's home last year said they found more than \$100,000 worth of gold bars and over \$480,000 in cash — much of it hidden in closets, clothing and a safe.

The Justice Department in recent years has stepped up its criminal enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, a law enacted in 1938 to unmask Nazi propaganda in the United States that requires people to disclose to the Justice Department when they advocate, lobby or perform public relations work in the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government or political entity.

According to the new indictment, Menendez himself made multiple requests from 2020 to 2022 for the U.S. to investigate a former member of Congress for allegedly failing to register as a foreign agent, saying in a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland that it was "imperative that the Justice Department ensure he is held to account."

Ford says it's at the limit on how much it can spend to get new contract with striking autoworkers

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — A top Ford executive says the company has reached the limit of how much money it will spend to get a contract agreement with the striking United Auto Workers union.

Kumar Galhotra, president of Ford Blue, the company's internal combustion engine business, told reporters Thursday that Ford stretched to get to the offer it now has on the table.

His comments are starkly different from those made by UAW President Shawn Fain Wednesday when he announced an escalation of the union's strike by walking out at Ford's largest and most profitable factory. The apparently widening labor rift indicates that Ford and the union may be in for a lengthy strike that could cost the company and workers billions of dollars.

Fain said on Wednesday that Ford told UAW bargainers for nearly two weeks that it would make another counteroffer on economic issues. But at a meeting called by the union, the company didn't increase its previous offer, Fain said. "Ford hasn't gotten the message" to bargain for a fair contract, Fain said in announcing the walkout by 8,700 workers at the company's Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville.

"We've been very patient working with the company on this," he said in a video. "They have not met expectations, they're not even coming to the table on it."

Galhotra called Ford's offer "incredibly positive" and said Ford never indicated to the union that it would be increased.

"We have been very clear we are at the limit," he said on a conference call with reporters. "We risk the ability to invest in the business and profitably grow. And profitable growth is in the best interest of everybody at Ford."

The company has a set amount of money, but is willing to move dollars around in a way that might fit

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the union's needs, he said, adding that he still thinks it's possible to reach a deal.

The escalation of the strike came nearly four weeks after the union began its walkouts against Ford and Detroit counterparts General Motors and Jeep maker Stellantis on Sept. 15, with one assembly plant from each company. The union later added 38 parts warehouses at GM and Stellantis, and then three Ford and Stellantis assembly plants, involving a total of 33,700 workers.

On Thursday, Fain hinted at further action against Stellantis.

"Here's to hoping talks at Stellantis today are more productive than Ford yesterday," Fain wrote on X, formerly Twitter, without saying what might happen.

A person with direct knowledge of the talks said the union met with Stellantis Thursday morning and was to return for more talks in the afternoon. The person, who didn't want to be identified because he is not authorized to discuss negotiations, said talks were active with GM and Stellantis, but he was not aware of any negotiations with Ford.

So far the union has not announced any further job actions, although Fain is set to brief the membership in a video appearance Friday morning.

Ford's sprawling truck plant in Kentucky makes heavy-duty F-Series pickup trucks and large Ford and Lincoln SUVs, the company's most lucrative products. The vehicles made at the plant generate \$25 billion per year in revenue, more than Southwest Airlines and Marriott, the company said.

Ford said the expanded strike puts 13 other Ford plants that supply or receive parts at risk, as well as 600 parts supply companies that would have to lay off workers. In all, the strike at Kentucky Truck affects 100,000 workers, the company said.

The company said many Super Duty truck chassis cabs are used to build emergency vehicles such as ambulances. If those can't be manufactured or parts can't be produced "we're jeopardizing more than just Ford profits," said Ted Cannis, CEO of Ford's commercial vehicles unit.

Last week the union said Ford's general wage offer is up to 23% over four years. GM and Stellantis were at 20%. But Fain said none was high enough.

Anthony Spencer, who has worked at the truck plant for eight years, said the surprise walkout would get Ford's attention.

"We know it's going to hit them. We lose a lot of millions of dollars every day that we don't run," said Spencer, who is the local union's recording secretary and helped organize the walkout.

"This is a historic moment," Spencer said on the picket line Thursday morning, adding that the local hasn't been on strike since 1976. "We've got people that's got 30, 35, 40 years — they've never been on strike. So the morale is good."

He said there were a few sticking points with negotiations that prompted the strike, including the unionization of Ford's electric vehicle workers and employee raises.

"We all know if we ever go EV, we're going to lose a lot of members that build engines, transmissions, and they got to have a place to go," Spencer said.

CFRA analyst Garrett Nelson wrote in a note to investors that the strike escalation at Ford likely means that the walkout will go on for a long time "as the UAW leadership attempts to drive the best possible labor deal."

The move also makes it likely that the union will soon target other key truck and SUV plants from GM and Stellantis, he wrote.

Thus far, the union has decided to target a small number of plants from each company rather than have all 146,000 UAW members at the automakers go on strike at the same time.

Last week, the union reported progress in the talks and decided not to add any more plants. This came after GM agreed to bring joint-venture electric vehicle battery factories into the national master contract, almost assuring that the plants will be unionized.

Battery plants are a major point of contention in the negotiations. The UAW wants those plants to be unionized to assure jobs and top wages for workers who will be displaced by the industry's ongoing transition to electric vehicles.

Since the start of the strike, the three Detroit automakers have laid off roughly 4,800 workers at factories

that are not among the plants that have been hit by the UAW strikes.

Separate companies that manufacture parts for the automakers are likely to have laid off workers but might not report them publicly, said Patrick Anderson, CEO of the Anderson Economic Group in Lansing, Michigan.

A survey of parts supply companies by a trade association called MEMA Original Equipment Suppliers found that 30% of members have laid off workers and that more than 60% expect to start layoffs in mid-October.

As Israel battles Hamas, all eyes are on Hezbollah, the wild card on its northern border

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Will Lebanon's heavily armed Hezbollah militia join the Israel-Hamas war? The answer could well determine the direction of a battle that is bound to reshape the Middle East.

Hezbollah, which like Hamas is supported by Iran, has so far been on the fence about joining the fighting between Israel and the Gaza Strip's Islamic militant rulers. For the past six days, Israel has besieged Gaza and hammered the enclave of 2.3 million Palestinians with hundreds of airstrikes in response to a deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel.

Israel, which has vowed to crush Hamas, is now preparing for a possible ground offensive. While the country's political and military leaders weigh the next move, they are nervously watching Hezbollah on Israel's northern border and have sent troop reinforcements to the area. Hezbollah, with an arsenal of tens of thousands of rockets and missiles capable of hitting virtually anywhere in Israel, is viewed as a far more formidable foe than Hamas.

Israel is anxious that opening a new front in the country's north could change the tide of the war, with Hezbollah's military caliber far superior to that of Hamas. But the fighting could be equally devastating for Hezbollah and Lebanon.

The possibility of a new front in Lebanon also brings back bitter memories of a vicious monthlong war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 that ended in a stalemate and a tense detente between the two sides. Lebanon is in the fourth year of a crippling economic crisis and is bitterly divided between Hezbollah and its allies and opponents, paralyzing the political system.

Israel is especially worried about Hezbollah's precision-guided missiles, which are believed to be aimed at strategic targets like natural gas rigs and power stations. Hezbollah is also battle-hardened from years of fighting alongside President Bashar Assad's troops in neighboring Syria.

At the same time, Hamas and Hezbollah have grown closer as Hamas leaders have moved to Beirut in recent years. While Hezbollah has largely remained on the sidelines, people close to the group say an Israeli ground offensive could be a possible trigger for it to fully enter the conflict with devastating consequences.

Qassim Qassir, a Lebanese analyst close to the group, said Hezbollah "will not allow Hamas' destruction and won't leave Gaza alone to face a ground incursion."

"When the situation requires further escalation, then Hezbollah will do so," he told The Associated Press.

An official with a Lebanese group familiar with the situation, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said Hezbollah fighters have been placed on full alert.

Hezbollah and Israel have targeted military outposts and positions in brief rocket and shelling exchanges on the border since the outbreak of the Gaza war. Three Hezbollah fighters were killed Monday, while Israeli officials said one Israeli soldier was killed in an anti-tank missile attack two days later.

Three Israeli soldiers were killed and five were wounded in a skirmish with Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants who crossed the southern Lebanese border into Israel. Hamas also claimed responsibility for firing several rockets into Israel from southern Lebanon.

Anthony Elghossain, a senior analyst with the Washington-based New Lines Institute, said that while neither Israel nor Hezbollah appears to want to enter "significant and sustained armed conflict," there is a risk of escalation — even without a ground invasion of Gaza — if either side makes a miscalculation and

oversteps the usual rules of engagement.

With an eye toward Hezbollah, U.S. President Joe Biden has warned other players in the Middle East not to join the conflict, sending American warships to the region and vowing full support for Israel.

"He's backed up that warning with the deployment of our largest carrier group, the Gerald R. Ford, as well as again making sure that Israel has what it needs and that we also have appropriate assets in place," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Thursday during a stop in Israel.

While Hezbollah officials and legislators have threatened escalation, their leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has remained silent since Hamas' surprise weekend attack. The group in its public statements has said that they are continuing to monitor the situation. A spokesperson for Hezbollah did not respond to requests for comment.

An Israeli military spokesman, Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, said in a video briefing posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the situation is "relatively stable on the northern front."

"We are monitoring the situation so that it doesn't change," he said. "We are deployed in significant numbers, strength and capabilities ... and we are very vigilant to any attempt by Hezbollah to escalate the situation."

A Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said international governments have urged Lebanese authorities to keep the crisis-hit country away from a new war.

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati called Thursday on all Lebanese groups to exercise self-restraint and not to be pulled into "Israel's plans," an apparent message to Hezbollah. He said Lebanon condemns "criminal acts committed by Israel" saying that it is "wiping out children and civilians" and called on the international community to work on ending hostilities.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly warned that they would unleash vast destruction in southern Lebanon if war breaks out with Lebanon.

Israel in 2006 flattened large parts of villages, towns and cities in southern Lebanon and entire blocks in Beirut's southern suburbs. Following the war, Lebanon received an influx of international funding, including from wealthy Gulf countries, for reconstruction.

However, as Hezbollah has gained power, Lebanon's ties with Gulf monarchies have soured and the international community has grown frustrated with rampant corruption and mismanagement. On top of that, Lebanon's government institutions are cash-strapped and dysfunctional.

"If war were to start now, we would be looking at a much slower and more complicated reconstruction," said Mona Fawaz, a professor of urban studies and planning at the American University of Beirut.

Sony's Access controller for the PlayStation aims to make gaming easier for people with disabilities

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN MATEO, Calif. (AP) — Paul Lane uses his mouth, cheek and chin to push buttons and guide his virtual car around the "Gran Turismo" racetrack on the PlayStation 5. It's how he's been playing for the past 23 years, after a car accident left him unable to use his fingers.

Playing video games has long been a challenge for people with disabilities, chiefly because the standard controllers for the PlayStation, Xbox or Nintendo can be difficult, or even impossible, to maneuver for people with limited mobility. And losing the ability to play the games doesn't just mean the loss of a favorite pastime, it can also exacerbate social isolation in a community already experiencing it at a far higher rate than the general population.

As part of the gaming industry's efforts to address the problem, Sony has developed the Access controller for the PlayStation, working with input from Lane and other accessibility consultants. It's the latest addition to the accessible-controller market, whose contributors range from Microsoft to startups and even hobbyists with 3D printers.

"I was big into sports before my injury," said Cesar Flores, 30, who uses a wheelchair since a car accident eight years ago and also consulted Sony on the controller. "I wrestled in high school, played football.

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I lifted a lot of weights, all these little things. And even though I can still train in certain ways, there are physical things that I can't do anymore. And when I play video games, it reminds me that I'm still human. It reminds me that I'm still one of the guys."

Putting the traditional controller aside, Lane, 52, switches to the Access. It's a round, customizable gadget that can rest on a table or wheelchair tray and can be configured in myriad ways, depending on what the user needs. That includes switching buttons and thumbsticks, programming special controls and pairing two controllers to be used as one. Lane's "Gran Turismo" car zooms around a digital track as he guides it with the back of his hand on the controller.

"I game kind of weird, so it's comfortable for me to be able to use both of my hands when I game," he said. "So I need to position the controllers away enough so that I can be able to use them without clunking into each other. Being able to maneuver the controllers has been awesome, but also the fact that this controller can come out of the box and ready to work."

Lane and other gamers have been working with Sony since 2018 to help design the Access controller. The idea was to create something that could be configured to work for people with a broad range of needs, rather than focusing on any particular disability.

"Show me a person with multiple sclerosis and I'll show you a person who can be hard of hearing, I can show someone who has a visual impairment or a motor impairment," said Mark Barlet, founder and executive director of the nonprofit AbleGamers. "So thinking on the label of a disability is not the approach to take. It's about the experience that players need to bridge that gap between a game and a controller that's not designed for their unique presentation in the world."

Barlet said his organization, which helped both Sony and Microsoft with their accessible controllers, has been advocating for gamers with disabilities for nearly two decades. With the advent of social media, gamers themselves have been able to amplify the message and address creators directly in forums that did not exist before.

"The last five years I have seen the game accessibility movement go from indie studios working on some features to triple-A games being able to be played by people who identify as blind," he said. "In five years, it's been breathtaking."

Microsoft, in a statement, said it was encouraged by the positive reaction to its Xbox Adaptive controller when it was released in 2018 and that it is "heartening to see others in the industry apply a similar approach to include more players in their work through a focus on accessibility."

The Access controller will go on sale worldwide on Dec. 6 and cost \$90 in the U.S.

Alvin Daniel, a senior technical program manager at PlayStation, said the device was designed with three principles in mind to make it "broadly applicable" to as many players as possible. First, the player does not have to hold the controller to use it. It can lay flat on a table, wheelchair tray or be mounted on a tripod, for instance. It was important for it to fit on a wheelchair tray, since once something falls off the tray, it might be impossible for the player to pick it up without help. It also had to be durable for this same reason — so it would survive being run over by a wheelchair, for example.

Second, it's much easier to press the buttons than on a standard controller. It's a kit, so it comes with button caps in different sizes, shapes and textures so people can experiment with reconfiguring it the way it works best for them. The third is the thumbsticks, which can also be configured depending on what works for the person using it.

Because it can be used with far less agility and strength than the standard PlayStation controller, the Access could also be a gamechanger for an emerging population: aging gamers suffering from arthritis and other limiting ailments.

"The last time I checked, the average age of a gamers was in their forties," Daniel said. "And I have every expectation, speaking for myself, that they'll want to continue to game, as I'll want to continue to game, because it's entertainment for us."

After his accident, Lane stopped gaming for seven years. For someone who began playing video games as a young child on the Magnavox Odyssey — released in 1972 — "it was a void" in his life, he said.

Starting again, even with the limitations of a standard game controller, felt like being reunited with a

"long lost friend."

"Just the the social impact of gaming really changed my life. It gave me a a brighter disposition," Lane said. He noted the social isolation that often results when people who were once able-bodied become disabled.

"Everything changes," he said. "And the more you take away from us, the more isolated we become. Having gaming and having an opportunity to game at a very high level, to be able to do it again, it is like a reunion, (like losing) a close companion and being able to reunite with that person again."

A doctors group calls its 'excited delirium' paper outdated and withdraws its approval

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

A leading doctors group on Thursday formally withdrew its approval of a 2009 paper on "excited delirium," a document that critics say has been used to justify excessive force by police.

The American College of Emergency Physicians in a statement called the paper outdated and said the term excited delirium should not be used by members who testify in civil or criminal cases. The group's directors voted on the matter Thursday in Philadelphia.

"This means if someone dies while being restrained in custody ... people can't point to excited delirium as the reason and can't point to ACEP's endorsement of the concept to bolster their case," said Dr. Brooks Walsh, a Connecticut emergency doctor who pushed the organization to strengthen its stance.

Earlier this week, California became the first state to bar the use of excited delirium and related terms as a cause of death in autopsies. The legislation, signed Sunday by Gov. Gavin Newsom, also prohibits police officers from using it in reports to describe people's behavior.

In March, the National Association of Medical Examiners took a stand against the term, saying it should not be listed as a cause of death. Other medical groups, including the American Medical Association, had previously rejected excited delirium as a diagnosis. Critics have called it unscientific and rooted in racism.

The emergency physicians' 2009 report said excited delirium's symptoms included unusual strength, pain tolerance and bizarre behavior and called the condition "potentially life-threatening."

The document reinforced and codified racial stereotypes, Walsh said.

The 14-year-old publication has shaped police training and still figures in police custody death cases, many involving Black men who died after being restrained by police. Attorneys defending officers have cited the paper to admit testimony on excited delirium, said Joanna Naples-Mitchell, an attorney and research adviser for Physicians for Human Rights, which produced a report last year on the diagnosis and deaths in police custody.

In 2021, the emergency physicians' paper was cited in the New York attorney general's report on the investigation into the death of Daniel Prude, a 41-year-old Black man. A grand jury rejected charges against police officers in that case.

Excited delirium came up during the 2021 trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who was later convicted in the death of George Floyd. This fall, the term resurfaced during the ongoing trials of police officers charged in the deaths of Elijah McClain in Colorado and Manuel Ellis in Washington state. Floyd, McClain and Ellis were Black men who died after being restrained by police.

The emergency physicians group had distanced itself from the term previously, but it had stopped short of withdrawing its support for the 2009 paper.

"This is why we pushed to put out a stronger statement explicitly disavowing that paper," Naples-Mitchell said. "It's a chance for ACEP to really break with the past."

US and Qatar agree to prevent disbursement of recently unfrozen Iranian funds as Israel-Hamas war rages

By MATTHEW LEE, MARY CLARE JALONICK and SEUNG MIN KIM ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Qatar have reached an agreement that the Qataris will not act on any request from Tehran for the time being to access \$6 billion in Iranian funds that were unblocked as part of a prisoner swap last month, a U.S. official said Thursday.

The move, which stops short of a full refreezing of Iranian funds in Qatar's banking system, follows the deadly attacks by Hamas on Israel and continued Republican criticism of the Biden administration's deal with Iran, in which \$6 billion was unfrozen in exchange for the release of five detained Americans. The official who outlined the understanding between the U.S. and Qatar was not authorized to comment and spoke on condition of anonymity.

U.S. officials have strenuously pushed back against the criticism, noting that the money had yet to be spent by Iran and can only be used for humanitarian needs.

"None of the funds that have now gone to Qatar have actually been spent or accessed in any way by Iran," Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in Israel on Thursday when asked about the funds. "Indeed, funds from that account are overseen by the Treasury Department, can only be dispensed for humanitarian goods — food, medicine, medical equipment — and never touch Iranian hands."

The White House has said it has yet to uncover information that Iran was directly involved in the multi-pronged Hamas operation — the biggest attack on Israel in decades. Even so, Iran is the principal financial and military sponsor of Hamas. U.S. officials have said their intelligence does not show a direct role by Iran and have not pointed blame at Tehran.

As Israel prepares to escalate retaliatory action against Hamas militants for the weekend attacks, the White House announced the U.S. government will begin evacuation flights on Friday for Americans who want to leave Israel.

In a deliberate show of support for Israel, a U.S. official confirmed that U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin plans to visit on Friday, following Thursday's visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Austin is expected to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to determine what additional military aid is needed in the war with Hamas, said the U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive travel details.

Speaking to reporters in Brussels on Thursday, Austin said the U.S. is "working urgently to get Israel what it needs to defend itself, including munitions and our iron Dome interceptor interceptors."

The White House confirmed that the death toll in the fighting now includes at least 27 Americans, while 14 more U.S. citizens in Israel remain unaccounted for. The White House has said a "handful" of Americans are among the dozens of people that Hamas took hostage.

U.S. officials estimate 160,000-170,000 Americans are in Israel, as residents, tourists or in some other capacity. An estimated 500 to 600 American citizens are in Gaza, including people who have been working as humanitarian workers or visiting relatives. Israel has sealed its crossing out of Gaza as part of a harsh siege on the territory since Saturday's Hamas attacks. And Gaza's sole crossing point with Egypt was forced to close after Israeli airstrikes hit nearby.

The U.S. government is arranging for at least four charter flights a day out of Israel, according to people familiar with the planning.

The State Department said it expects to facilitate the departure of thousands of U.S. citizens per week from Israel. The overall security situation, availability and reliability of commercial transportation, and U.S. citizen demand will all influence the duration of this departure assistance. The department asked U.S. citizens in need of evacuation assistance to complete the crisis intake form at travel.state.gov.

There are still some commercial carriers flying in and out of Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport, and ground routes are open to leave Israel. White House officials, however, have voiced concern that those options may not be feasible or affordable for some Americans in Israel who want to leave.

Blinken visited Israel on Thursday to meet with Netanyahu and Israeli citizens. He was joined by the deputy special representative for hostage affairs, Steve Gillen, who will stay in Israel to support the

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efforts to free the hostages.

Blinken said Americans would continue pushing regional countries for a safe passage in and out of Gaza, which could help the hundreds of American civilians trapped in the blockaded enclave.

Israeli defense officials have yet to order a ground invasion of the pummeled territory, but have been planning for the possibility. The military has called over 300,000 reservists into action in preparation.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, who joined from Air Force Two en route to Las Vegas met on Thursday with senior administration officials to discuss efforts to safeguard the U.S., including Jewish, Arab and Muslim communities, following the Hamas attacks in Israel.

Biden administration officials have been speaking with lawmakers about the contours of a supplemental aid package as it continues to determine Israel's needs.

Some key Republicans, including House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, R-Texas, have advocated for a larger package that would lump in funding for Ukraine, Taiwan and border security along with Israel aid, and the White House has started to prepare such a package, according to an official familiar with the deliberations. The person was granted anonymity to speak about private conversations, and no final decisions have been made on a supplemental package.

The White House has indicated that it will send the new request to lawmakers next week, when both chambers are back in Washington. Its legislative affairs staff is set to brief senators on Friday afternoon about "ongoing national security needs," according to another official granted anonymity to confirm a private meeting.

In its quest to crush Hamas, Israel will confront the bitter, familiar dilemmas of Mideast wars

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — As Israel pounds Gaza with airstrikes, prepares for a possible ground invasion and escalates a war sparked by Hamas' unprecedented assault, its leaders will confront many of the same dilemmas it has grappled with over decades of conflict with the Palestinians.

Israeli leaders have pledged to annihilate the Hamas militants responsible for the surprise weekend attack but risk drawing international criticism as the Palestinian civilian death toll mounts. They want to kill all the kidnapers but spare the estimated 150 hostages — men, women, children and older adults — that Hamas dragged across the border and has threatened to kill if Israel targets civilians.

In the end, Israel might decide to reluctantly leave Hamas in power in Gaza rather than take its chances on arguably worse alternatives.

Here's a look at the choices facing Israel going forward.

A RISKY GROUND OFFENSIVE

Israel appears increasingly likely to launch a ground offensive into Gaza, something it has done in two of its previous four wars with Hamas. The Israeli military has invested tremendous resources for such a scenario, even building a training base in its southern desert meant to replicate Gaza's urban landscape.

A ground offensive would send a strong message, and forces operating inside Gaza might have a better chance of killing top Hamas leaders and rescuing hostages.

Such an assault all but guarantees far higher casualties on both sides. And it would involve street-by-street battles with Hamas militants who've had years to prepare tunnels and traps.

Hamas leaders say they planned last weekend's operation for more than a year and have prepared for any scenario, including all-out war. A ground incursion could even play into their hands.

Giora Eiland, a retired general and former head of Israel's National Security Council, said a ground operation would be a "terrible mistake" — soldiers would have to clear every home and remove booby traps from tunnels many kilometers long, all while battling thousands of Hamas fighters.

The army would have to stay in Gaza for months, he said, suffering many casualties "we did not have to."
"THE DEVIL WE KNOW"

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to "crush and eliminate" Hamas. Even if that were

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possible, experts say Israel could come to regret it.

Hamas is deeply rooted in Palestinian society, with an army of fighters, a government in Gaza, and extensive social welfare programs. It has millions of supporters across Gaza, the occupied West Bank and Lebanon, as well as an exiled leadership. Founded in the late 1980s, it survived as an underground armed group for years while Israel was militarily occupying the entire Gaza Strip, before the 2005 withdrawal.

Reoccupying Gaza would leave Israel in charge of governing and providing basic services to 2.3 million Palestinians, while likely battling an insurgency. Removing Hamas from power and then pulling out would leave a vacuum that could be filled by even more radical groups.

"The understanding here in Israel is that there is no other alternative to a Hamas regime. This is the devil we know," said Michael Milshtein, an Israeli expert on Palestinian affairs at Tel Aviv University.

CIVILIANS AND RESTRAINT

In contrast to previous rounds of fighting, Israel has faced few calls for restraint this time around, with the U.S. and other allies expressing horror at Hamas' atrocities and pledging ironclad support.

But that could change as Gaza's misery mounts.

Israeli airstrikes have already demolished entire neighborhoods, killing more than 1,500 Palestinians, including 500 children and 276 women, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Civilians seeking safety have crowded into U.N.-run schools as Israel has laid siege to the territory, barring the entry of food, fuel, water and medicine.

Gaza's sole power station ran out of fuel Wednesday, plunging the territory into darkness.

The last four Gaza wars brought similar death and devastation but lasted just days or weeks, with international pressure and mediators cajoling the two sides into shaky cease-fires. It will likely take much longer this time around, but the same outcome could be inescapable.

"The idea is, go into Gaza, destroy Hamas, make sure this can never happen again. And there's no way to do that without incredible civilian casualties within Gaza," said H.A. Hellyer, senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, a U.K.-based defense think tank.

"Strategically, security-wise, it does not solve the issue of Gaza. It does not address the underlying problem of Gaza."

THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

The underlying problem of Gaza, one that long predates Hamas, is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Even if Israel manages to defeat Hamas — whatever that looks like — roughly 7.5 million Jews and a similar number of Palestinians would still find themselves living in close proximity in Israel and the territories it controls, with most of the Palestinians living under military occupation.

There have been no peace talks in over a decade, and any remaining hope for a two-state solution is even more distant now. Several major human rights groups say Israel's control over the Palestinians amounts to apartheid, an allegation Israel rejects as an attack on its legitimacy.

Palestinians, scarred by their exodus during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, when hundreds of thousands fled or were driven out, are determined to remain in the Holy Land. Neighboring Egypt and Jordan, which made peace with Israel decades ago, are staunchly opposed to resettling them.

As recently as last Friday, the mass deportation of Palestinians, an idea long embraced by Israel's far right, was unimaginable — as was a full-scale invasion by Hamas.

Now it appears all bets are off.

"Israel can make sure that no one lives in Gaza, if that's what it takes," said Eiland, the former head of the National Security Council. "If there is no way to make sure there is a reliable regime there, whatever it is after that, then there will be no one left there."

A 'Zionist in my heart': Biden's devotion to Israel faces a new test

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden had been to Dachau, the infamous concentration camp in Germany, several times before, but he sensed changes when he visited as vice president with a teenaged granddaughter.

"It seemed as though things had been rearranged to make visitors less uncomfortable," he recalled in a memoir published two years after the 2015 visit. "They had softened the cruel edges over the years."

Unwilling to settle for what he believed was a more sanitized experience, Biden asked the guides to bring them to the gas chamber, where they "slammed the door behind us with a frightening clank."

For Biden, it's a direct line from there to the Hamas attacks on Israel, which caused the largest loss of Jewish life in a single day since the Holocaust. In a searing speech from the White House, Biden said the bloodshed "brought to the surface painful memories and the scars left by a millennia of antisemitism and genocide of the Jewish people."

The massacres and kidnappings have sparked a crisis that threatens to engulf more of the Middle East. They've also resonated deeply for the U.S. president, whose devotion to Israel is rooted in a childhood that saw the birth of the Jewish state and in a political career that parallels repeated threats to destroy it.

"He's using all the knowledge of the people and the issues that he's gathered over the last 50 years to handle what's going on right now," said Ted Kaufman, a longtime friend and adviser.

Biden's support for Israel has remained solid over the years even as some corners of his Democratic Party have urged a more critical approach toward the country and its decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory, which is widely viewed as illegal by the international community.

"He's a politician of a generation that probably doesn't exist anymore," said Aaron David Miller, who has advised both Democratic and Republican administrations on the Middle East.

Biden's commitment could be tested if Israel launches an incursion into Gaza, where Hamas is headquartered, in a military operation that would compound the suffering already experienced by Palestinians facing waves of retaliatory bombardment.

For now, Biden has offered only vague admonitions that Israel should follow the rules of war, which United Nations officials say are being violated by its siege tactics leading to dwindling supplies of food, medicine and electricity.

Instead, Biden's focus has been on demonstrating "unshakable" solidarity with Israel, including his remarks during a White House meeting Wednesday with Jewish leaders to talk about combating antisemitism.

"Were there no Israel, no Jew in the world would be ultimately safe," Biden said. "It's the only ultimate guarantee."

During Biden's remarks, he recalled his visits to Dachau, saying some doubted whether it was appropriate to bring his grandchildren, and his children before them, to the concentration camp when they were young. It was important, he said, to demonstrate not only the cruelty of the Holocaust but the apathy that allowed it to take place.

"I wanted them to see," Biden said, his voice rising, his fist rapping on the lectern, "that you could not not know what was going on."

Amy Spitalnick, a leader of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs who attended the Wednesday meeting, said it's clear that Biden "feels it in his kishkes, as my grandmother would have said," using a Yiddish word for gut.

"There was deep appreciation for the moral clarity that the president has had," she said.

It's a lesson that Biden traces to his father, who he describes as having a "preoccupation with the Holocaust." Biden was born in 1942, three years before the end of World War II and six years before Israel's founding, coming of age at a time when the world was reckoning with genocide.

At the dinner table, then-senator Biden recalled during a 1999 hearing on antisemitism in Russia, his father would often talk about "how the world stood silently by in the 1930s in the face of Hitler." Biden added that he is "a Zionist in my heart."

Biden has met every Israeli prime minister over more than five decades in elected office, starting with

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Golda Meir in 1973. It's a story he frequently retells, most recently on Tuesday.

During Biden's first trip to the country after being elected senator, he said Meir sensed his concern about the country's future. As they were posing for a photo after their meeting, Biden recalled, she whispered to him that Israel had a "secret weapon" to protect them — "we have no place else to go."

It was a remark that encapsulated Israel's back-against-the-wall perspective as a new nation surrounded by hostile Arab countries, some of which would invade only weeks later in the Yom Kippur War.

But Biden also recognized another challenge, according to a classified Israeli document describing the meeting and obtained by Israel's Channel 13 in 2020. He told Meir that Israel should begin relinquishing Palestinian territory that had been seized during the Six-Day War of 1967.

Much of that land remains under Israeli control, and Biden acknowledged last year during a visit to Bethlehem, in the occupied West Bank, that there was little immediate hope of advancing the peace process.

Biden also went to Jerusalem during the trip, and his remarks there were a window into how he has tried to balance Israel's imperiled beginnings and its current status as a regional power.

He noted that his first stop after arriving in Israel was Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, so he could "renew our vow of never again."

However, he said, "the Israel of today is not the Israel of 50 years ago," with "new tools that keep Israel strong and secure," not to mention "an ironclad commitment from the United States of America to Israel's security."

Over the years, Biden has projected public support for Israel while also expressing private concerns about some of its actions.

Frank Jannuzi, who worked for Biden when he was chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, remembered how the senator gave explicit guidance that any disagreements with Israel should be handled quietly.

"It was very important in public venues, whether that is before Congress or the media or on the international stage, for the United States to stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel," Jannuzi recalled.

Biden's reason, Jannuzi said, was that "if Israel felt insecure in the world, or isolated, because America had somehow distanced itself, then Israel would be less likely to listen to our advice."

Biden has made rare departures from that approach when dealing with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who leads a right-wing coalition government that includes ultranationalist leaders.

Netanyahu is pushing changes to his country's judicial system in a way that critics say would erode its democracy, and earlier this year Biden said the Israeli leader "cannot continue down this road."

The disagreements have not precluded Biden and Netanyahu from working together toward establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, an effort that could be derailed by the latest fighting.

And since the Hamas attacks on Saturday, Biden and Netanyahu have spoken repeatedly, most recently on Wednesday. Israeli officials and commentators across the political spectrum have expressed gratitude for Biden's backing, undercutting Republican criticism of the White House's approach to the region.

The U.S. president "just set a new standard of support for the Jewish state and the Jewish people in times of tragedy and war," Herb Keinon wrote in the Jerusalem Post.

The U.S. has begun shipping munitions and military hardware to Israel, and an aircraft carrier strike group was deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean in a show of force intended to deter a wider conflict. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Tel Aviv on Thursday.

"We will make sure the Jewish and democratic State of Israel can defend itself today, tomorrow, as we always have," Biden said on Tuesday. "It's as simple as that."

Scientists count huge melts in many protective Antarctic ice shelves. Trillions of tons of ice lost.

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Four dozen Antarctic ice shelves have shrunk by at least 30% since 1997 and 28 of those have lost more than half of their ice in that time, reports a new study that surveyed these crucial "gatekeepers" between the frozen continent's massive glaciers and open ocean.

Of the continent's 162 ice shelves, 68 show significant shrinking between 1997 and 2021, while 29 grew, 62 didn't change and three lost mass but not in a way scientists can say shows a significant trend, according to a study in Thursday's Science Advances.

That melted ice, which usually pens larger glaciers behind it, then goes into the sea. Scientists worry that climate change-triggered melt from Antarctica and Greenland will cause dangerous and significant sea rise over many decades and centuries.

"Knowing exactly how, and how much, ice is being lost from these protective floating shelves is a key step in understanding how Antarctica is evolving," said University of Colorado ice scientist Ted Scambos, who wasn't part of the study.

Scambos said the study gives insight into fresh water that's melting into the Amundsen Sea — "the key region of Antarctica for sea level rise" — that not only adds height to the ocean, but makes it less dense and salty.

The biggest culprits were giant icebergs breaking off in 1999, 2000 and 2002 that were the size of Delaware, he said. The study also looks at ice melting from warm water below.

Ice shelves are floating extensions of glaciers that act "like the gatekeepers" and keep the larger glacier from flowing more quickly into the water, the study's lead author said.

All told, Antarctic ice shelves lost about 8.3 trillion tons (7.5 trillion metric tons) of ice in the 25-year period, the study found. That amounts to around 330 billion tons (300 billion metric tons) a year and is similar to previous studies.

But the overall total is not the real story, said study lead author Benjamin Davison, a glaciologist at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.

What's most important, he said, are the patterns of individual shelf loss. The new study shows the deep losses, with four glaciers losing more than a trillion tons on the continent's peninsula and western side.

"Some of them lost a lot of their mass over time," Davison said. "Wordie is barely an ice shelf anymore."

The Wordie ice shelf, which holds back four glaciers near the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, had a big collapse in 1989, but has lost 87% of its remaining mass since 1997, Davison found. Neighboring Larsen A has lost 73% and Larsen B 57%. The largest of the Larsen ice shelves, Larsen C, has lost 1.8 billion tons (1.7 trillion metric tons) of ice, about one-eighth of its mass.

The biggest loss of all is in the Thwaites ice shelf, holding back the glacier nicknamed Doomsday because it is melting so fast and is so big. The shelf has lost 70% of its mass since 1997 — about 4.1 trillion tons (3.7 trillion metric tons) — into the Amundsen Sea.

The ice shelves that grew were predominantly on the continent's east side, where there's a weather pattern isolates the land from warmer waters, Davison said. The ice shelves on the east were growing slower than the shelves losing ice to the west.

It's difficult to connect an individual ice shelf loss directly to human-caused climate change, but steady attrition is expected as the world warms, he said.

Approaching 80, Billie Jean King is still globetrotting for investment in women's sports

By MELISSA MURPHY AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Billie Jean King is still globetrotting in support of more investment and equity in women's sports.

She attended the Women's World Cup in Australia, kicked off the player draft for the new women's professional hockey league in Toronto and is opening an office in London for a tennis business venture involving the international Billie Jean King Cup.

That's all in the last three months for King, who turns 80 in November.

"We're kind of at a tipping point," King said. "People are actually looking at women's sports like a great investment."

She's part of ownership groups involved with the Los Angeles Dodgers, the NWSL's Angel City FC and the PWHL hockey league that starts in January.

Her busy schedule is reminiscent of the summer of 1973, when a 29-year-old King established the WTA, won the Wimbledon triple crown in singles, doubles and mixed doubles, achieved equal pay at the U.S. Open and beat self-proclaimed chauvinist Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes" match.

On Thursday, King and about 60 athletes will celebrate the 50th anniversary of equal prize money at the U.S. Open and the King-Riggs match at her annual awards dinner for the Women's Sports Foundation in New York.

In August, former President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama attended the U.S. Open at Arthur Ashe Stadium to mark the pay equity milestone.

"Let us remember all of this is bigger than a champion's paycheck," Michelle Obama said during the ceremony on opening night. "This is about how women are seen and valued in this world."

King recently launched the production company "Pressure is a Privilege," a phrase associated with the 39-time Grand Slam winner. She's also an executive producer and host of "Groundbreakers," a documentary about female athletes that airs on PBS on Nov. 21.

There's an effort by members of Congress to award King the Congressional Gold Medal, one of the highest U.S. civilian honors given to individuals whose achievements have a lasting impact in their field.

Here's a Q&A with King, which has been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: It's the 50th anniversary of so many accomplishments in 1973. Talk about that whirlwind.

KING: We started the WTA four days before Wimbledon. I won all three titles at Wimbledon, which for me was a big deal. Then equal prize money came into being, it started in 1972 with us saying we're not coming back (to the U.S. Open in 1973). Then King-Riggs. That's all in 3 months. I can appreciate it since being away from it so long. How the heck did we do that?

AP: You've said the King-Riggs match was about social change, women standing up for themselves in all areas.

KING: It was really about men, too. Because men started to shift a little. Obama was 12 years old when he saw the King-Riggs match. He said it affected him a lot. Guys are much better thinking about their daughters than they used to be. All these things add up.

AP: You're part of ownership groups for pro sports. How did you get involved in women's pro hockey, which will have teams in Boston, New York, Minnesota, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal?

KING: The PWHL, it's really exciting. It took five years. Plus, it took all those years of the other leagues, everyone trying. (U.S. Olympic gold medalist) Kendall Coyne said, 'can you help us?' We need to have a league where the very best players will play. We went to Toronto and I did an opening speech about trailblazers. It was amazing because the families were crying, the players were crying, they said 'we've never been treated like this, it's amazing, we feel like pros for the first time.' There were a lot of little kids there. Kids are going to have an amazing opportunity that the generations before them never had. All three of their networks had it on. It's a religion up there.

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AP: How is investment in women's sports changing?

KING: I'm asking CEOs and everyone now — 'do you invest as much in women as you do in men?' Then it usually gets quiet. But I must say it's better than it used to be. We're really lucky to be with this investment group. The male allies we've had through the years have made such a difference. They have the money and the power. But we're getting there, getting more and more women investors, particularly in soccer. Women's sports, we've all been fighting for it.

AP: What would you like to see in the future for women's sports?

KING: More. And make sure we get girls early in life into sports. It's really about the health issue, more than anything. More jobs, more everything. Women of color and diversity is really important.

We only get 5% of the media. That's where the money is. People always say, 'why doesn't the WTA have as much money as the ATP?' I'm like, really? If you watch a show at night, a sports show, just count how many minutes are on men and how many minutes are on women. We're at 5%. We've got to change that.

A possible Israeli ground war looms in Gaza. What weapons are wielded by those involved?

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli ground offensive in the Gaza Strip would further escalate the war raging since Hamas launched its unprecedented attack, killing hundreds of civilians. A ground invasion also would threaten to draw in the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah from the north. The United States has deployed one aircraft carrier group to the region, with another on the way later this week — reflecting concerns of a widening conflict and meant to establish a force that deters Iran and others.

It would be the the third major ground assault in Gaza since Israel left the seaside enclave in 2005.

Here's what is known about the weapons of those who would be involved.

ISRAEL

Israel's military has long been supported by the United States, with \$3.3 billion in congressionally mandated annual funding, plus another \$500 million toward missile defense technology.

Israel is one of the best-armed nations in the wider Middle East. Its air force includes the advanced American F-35 fighter jet, missile defense batteries including the American-made Patriot, and the Iron Dome missile defense system.

Israel has armored personnel carriers and tanks, and a fleet of drones and other technology available to support any street-to-street battles. Israel trains soldiers on such techniques at its Urban Warfare Training Center, known colloquially as "Mini Gaza."

Israel has some 170,000 troops typically on active duty and has called up some 360,000 reservists for the war — three-fourths of its estimated capacity, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Israel has also long maintained an undeclared nuclear weapons program.

HAMAS

Hamas, the rulers of the Gaza Strip since 2007, do not have the billions of dollars in aid and advanced weaponry of the Israeli military. But the surprise weekend attack included militants on paragliders and grenade-dropping drones, and Hamas can leverage guerrilla warfare tactics that could make any ground assault dangerous for Israeli troops.

Hamas has 15,000 to 20,000 fighters, the International Institute for Strategic Studies estimates. Israel puts the number higher, at up to 30,000 fighters.

The Hamas arsenal includes assault rifles, heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank weapons, as well as longer-range sniper rifles. In the past, Hamas has employed boobytraps and suicide bombers.

Though Israel has a vast missile defense network, Hamas has created a vast supply of locally manufactured missiles with the aim of firing multiple salvos to break through. The Israeli military says over 5,000 missiles have been fired toward the country since the war began. Israeli intelligence in 2021 estimated

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, another militant group operating in Gaza, had some 30,000 missiles in their arsenal. Analysts say there are no signs, yet, that Hamas has developed guided missiles, which can more precisely strike at targets.

HEZBOLLAH

The Iranian-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah sits just across Israel's northern border. Since Hamas' attack, there have been limited exchanges of fire between Hezbollah and Israel, but no wide-scale offensive. But the forces Hezbollah could bring remain a concern for Israel.

Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, had boasted that the group has 100,000 fighters, though other estimates put its troop strength at less than half that.

Hezbollah holds a vast arsenal "mostly of small, man-portable and unguided surface-to-surface artillery rockets," according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The U.S. has estimated Hezbollah and other militant groups in Lebanon have some 150,000 missiles and rockets. Hezbollah also has been working on precision-guided missiles.

Hezbollah has previously launched drones into Israel. Its forces also have assault rifles, heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, roadside bombs and other weaponry.

THE UNITED STATES

The U.S. military has sent the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford and its battle group to the eastern Mediterranean to provide air support if needed to Israel with its surveillance aircraft and F-18 fighter jets.

Meanwhile, the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group will leave its homeport of Norfolk, Virginia, and sail for the Mediterranean, potentially doubling the Navy's Israel response.

The U.S. military also maintains a vast network of bases across the wider Middle East. However, because Israel's punishing airstrike campaign on the Gaza Strip has inflamed anger among Muslims in the wider region, the U.S. will likely be asked not to fly any potential air missions out of those nations. That would force the Pentagon to rely on carrier-based launches to provide any support to Israel it may need.

Social Security benefits will increase by 3.2% in 2024 as inflation moderates

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of Social Security recipients will get a 3.2% increase in their benefits in 2024, far less than this year's historic boost and reflecting moderating consumer prices.

The cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, means the average recipient will receive more than \$50 more every month beginning in January, the Social Security Administration said Thursday. The AARP estimated that increase at \$59 per month.

"This will help millions of people keep up with expenses," said Kilolo Kijakazi, Social Security's acting commissioner.

About 71 million people — including retirees, disabled people and children — receive Social Security benefits.

Thursday's announcement follows this year's 8.7% benefit increase, brought on by record 40-year-high inflation, which pushed up the price of consumer goods. With inflation easing, the next annual increase is markedly smaller.

"Compared to last year's 8.7% increase, this is going to feel small and the perception is that its not keeping up with the inflation and the higher costs that retirees are still seeing," said Martha Shedden, president of the National Association of Registered Social Security Analysts.

On top of that, an anticipated increase in Medicare premiums for 2024 will eat into the Social Security cost-of-living bump.

Medicare hasn't announced the increase for traditional Medicare, but said the cost of Medicare Advantage plans is expected to remain stable.

Still, senior advocates applauded the annual Social Security adjustment.

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"Retirees can rest a little easier at night knowing they will soon receive an increase in their Social Security checks to help them keep up with rising prices," AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins said. "We know older Americans are still feeling the sting when they buy groceries and gas, making every dollar important."

Social Security is financed by payroll taxes collected from workers and their employers. The maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll taxes will be \$168,600 for 2024, up from \$160,200 for 2023.

Retirees whose sole income comes from Social Security are not subject to taxes on that income.

Nancy Altman, president of Social Security Works, an advocacy group for the social insurance program, said that the COLA is a "reminder of Social Security's unique importance" and that "Congress should pass legislation to protect and expand benefits."

However, the program faces a severe financial shortfall in the coming years.

The annual Social Security and Medicare trustees report released in March said the program's trust fund will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2033. If the trust fund is depleted, the government will be able to pay only 77% of scheduled benefits, the report said.

There have been legislative proposals to shore up Social Security, but they have not made it past committee hearings.

A March poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that most U.S. adults are opposed to proposals that would cut into Medicare or Social Security benefits, and 79% of people polled said they oppose reducing the size of Social Security benefits.

The Social Security Administration is still without a permanent leader. President Joe Biden in July nominated former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley to lead the agency.

The COLA is calculated according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index, or CPI. But there are calls for the agency to instead use a different index, the CPI-E, which measures price changes based on the spending patterns of the elderly, like health care, food and medicine costs.

Any change to the calculation would require congressional approval. But with decades of inaction on Social Security and with the House at a standstill after the ouster of Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., seniors and their advocates say they don't have confidence any sort of change will be approved soon.

The cost of living adjustments will have a big impact on people like Alfred Mason, an 83-year-old Louisiana resident. Mason said that "any increase is welcomed, because it sustains us for what we are going through."

As inflation is still high, he said, anything added to his income "would be greatly appreciated."

Why Russia is engaged in a delicate balancing act in the Israel-Hamas war

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israel-Hamas war has forced Russia into a delicate balancing act, with Moscow urging a quick end to the fighting without apportioning blame.

The careful stand is due to Russia's long ties to Israel, the Palestinians and other regional players, and it reflects the Kremlin's hope to expand its clout in the Middle East by playing peacemaker.

Russia also tried to cast the hostilities as a failure of U.S. policy, and it hopes they will be a distraction for Washington and its allies from keeping up military support for Ukraine.

A look at the Kremlin's messaging about the war and its relations with those in the region:

WHAT IS RUSSIA SAYING ABOUT THE WAR?

President Vladimir Putin said the war was rooted in the inability to create a sovereign Palestinian state in line with U.N. resolutions that he called a "gross injustice." He noted that Israel's settlement policies have exacerbated the situation.

Putin called it a reflection of what he called a glaring failure of the Washington's peacemaking efforts, charging the U.S. has focused on offering economic "handouts" to Palestinians while paying little attention

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to their fundamental issues related to statehood.

He urged the Israeli government and Hamas not to target civilians and emphasized that every effort must be made to quickly end the war, saying an escalation would raise grave risks.

The carefully calibrated statements by Putin and his lieutenants reflect an effort by Moscow to maintain good ties with both Israel and the Palestinians. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov emphasized that Moscow must maintain a "balanced approach" and talk to both parties, noting that it should allow Russia to help broker a settlement.

While jockeying as a potential peacemaker, Moscow also hopes the fighting will distract Washington and its allies from the war in Ukraine and eventually erode Western support for Kyiv.

Peskov even taunted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, saying he must feel jealous about how the U.S. is now forced to focus on military assistance to Israel.

HOW HAS MOSCOW'S MIDEAST POLICY EVOLVED?

Throughout the Cold War, Moscow strongly backed the Palestinians and other allies in the Arab world against Israel, giving them military and political support.

The Soviet Union broke diplomatic ties with Israel after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Moscow's policies began to shift as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reshaped foreign policy and relations with Israel were restored shortly before the 1991 collapse of the USSR.

In the decade after the Soviet breakup, Russia's global influence ebbed amid an economic meltdown and political turmoil that forced the Kremlin to turn inward.

After Putin took power, he sought to revive old Middle Eastern alliances while maintaining warm ties with Israel. Russia joined a quartet of Middle East peacemakers along with the United States, the European Union and the United Nations, but it played a minor role in efforts, compared with the U.S.

In 2015, Moscow sent its warplanes and troops to its old ally, Syria, teaming with Iran to shore up President Bashar Assad's regime amid a civil war. The Russian intervention allowed Assad to reclaim control over most of the country and helped expand Moscow's clout in the Middle East.

HOW CLOSE ARE RUSSIA AND ISRAEL?

After the Soviet breakup, Russia and Israel have steadily expanded trade and other contacts and strengthened their security ties.

More than 1 million people from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union have moved to Israel, a development that Russian and Israeli officials described as a major factor in cementing ties.

Moscow's relations with Israel remained strong amid Russia's operations in Syria even as the Israeli military frequently attacked Iranian forces that had teamed up with Russian troops in the country.

Even though Russian and Israeli militaries maintained deconfliction channels amid the fighting in Syria, a Russian reconnaissance aircraft was shot down in 2018 by Assad's forces responding to an Israeli airstrike, killing all 15 people aboard, an incident that briefly strained ties.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has posed a major test for Russian-Israeli relations. Israeli authorities have walked a fine line, voicing support for Kyiv but refusing to provide it with weapons. Many Israelis were angered by Putin's claim that Zelenskyy, a Jew, was actually a neo-Nazi. The Russian president also has praised Israeli mediation efforts early in the fighting.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu explained his government's reluctance to send military equipment to Kyiv by emphasizing the need to maintain security contacts with Moscow in Syria and voicing concern the weapons supplied to Ukraine could end up in Iranian hands, a statement that angered Ukrainian officials.

HOW DID RUSSIAN-PALESTINIAN TIES EVOLVE?

During the Cold War, Moscow was the Palestinians' main backer, offering them political, economic and military support. The Soviet Union provided generous subsidies, helped train Palestinian forces and provided them with weapons.

While those ties weakened after the Soviet Union's collapse as the Kremlin focused on domestic challenges, Putin has moved to revive them.

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Moscow has repeatedly hosted Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, but also has reached out to Hamas. Several Hamas leaders have visited Moscow, including Ismail Haniyeh, who held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in September 2022.

WHERE DO RUSSIA AND IRAN COOPERATE?

The leaders of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution denounced the Soviet Union as a "lesser Satan" as opposed to "the great Satan" — the United States. But after the the Soviet collapse, Russia and Iran forged close ties. Moscow built Iran's first nuclear power plant and deepened ties with Tehran as its tensions with the West soared.

Relations with Iran grew even closer amid the Syrian war when they teamed up to back Assad's government.

Amid the war in Ukraine, Iran has provided Moscow with hundreds of Shahed exploding drone s that the Russian military has used against Ukraine's energy facilities and other key infrastructure. Iran also has reportedly shared its drone technology with Russia, which built a facility to produce them.

In return, Moscow is expected to offer Iran advanced fighter jets and other modern weapons.

WHAT OTHER ALLIANCES HAS MOSCOW SOUGHT?

As part of efforts to expand its global clout, Russia has moved to bolster ties with Iran's main regional rival, Saudi Arabia.

Even though Russia backed Syria's Assad while the Saudis were backing his foes, Moscow and Riyadh have managed to narrow their differences on Syria and expand cooperation on other issues.

Putin has forged strong personal ties with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the two edged closer as U.S.-Saudi relations became mired in disputes in recent years.

Putin's ties with bin Salman paved the way for an OPEC+ deal to cut oil output that was spearheaded by Moscow and Riyadh and helped bolster sagging oil prices to the benefit of oil producing countries.

\$1.765 billion Powerball jackpot goes to lucky lottery player in California

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A player in California won a \$1.765 billion Powerball jackpot Wednesday night, ending a long stretch without a winner of the top prize.

The winning numbers were: 22, 24, 40, 52, 64 and the Powerball 10. The winning ticket was sold at Midway Market & Liquor in Frazier Park, according to the California Lottery.

Phone calls Wednesday night and Thursday morning to Midway Market & Liquor went unanswered. Frazier Park is an unincorporated mountain community of about 2,600 residents. It's about 75 miles (121 kilometers) north of Los Angeles.

"The phone's been ringing off the hook, people saying congratulations. Pretty crazy," the store's night worker, identified only as Duke, told KCAL-TV.

"Somebody owes me a truck," he said with a smile. "A lot of customers come in, you know they come in every day to get their tickets, religiously. And a lot of them ... said: 'Oh, if I win I'm gonna get you a new truck.' So where's my truck? I'll be waiting."

He expected the winner will be a local resident.

Before someone won the giant prize, there had been 35 consecutive drawings without a big winner, stretching back to July 19 when a player in California matched all six numbers and won \$1.08 billion.

The jackpot is the world's second-largest lottery prize after rolling over for 36 consecutive drawings. That streak trails the record of 41 draws set in 2021 and 2022. Final ticket sales pushed the jackpot beyond its earlier advertised estimate of \$1.73 billion for Wednesday night's drawing.

The only top prize that was ever bigger was the \$2.04 billion Powerball won by a player in California last November.

Powerball's terrible odds of 1 in 292.2 million are designed to generate big jackpots, with prizes becoming ever larger as they repeatedly roll over when no one wins. And wins in recent months have been few

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and far between.

That didn't bother those eager to plunk down their money on Wednesday for a long-shot chance at instant wealth.

Robert Salvato Jr., a 60-year-old electrician, bought 40 Powerball tickets at a hardware store in Billerica, Massachusetts.

"I would take care of family and give my cat that extra leg that she needs and make her a good kitty," said Salvato, who got married on Saturday.

"I could give her a ring on every finger, I guess," Salvato said of his new wife.

Nevada is among the five states without Powerball, so friends Tamara Carter and Denise Davis drove from Las Vegas across the state line into California to buy tickets. But the line was so long at their first stop that they gave up and went in search of another store.

"The line was about three hours long," Carter estimated. "I was waiting for maybe a half hour, and it didn't move."

The jackpot has grown enormous due to a long dry spell. The previous winning Powerball ticket was sold on July 19, and it was worth \$1.08 billion after 39 drawings without a jackpot win.

At the same hardware store as Salvato, Kevin Button seemed to understand the long odds as he bought a ticket.

"I only buy them usually when the jackpot's high," Button said. "Seems to have been pretty high quite often lately. So I've tried quite a few times and haven't even won a free ticket. But maybe tonight's the night."

In most states, a Powerball ticket costs \$2 and players can select their own numbers or leave that task to a computer.

The \$1.765 billion jackpot is for a sole winner who opts for payment through an annuity, doled out over 30 years. Winners almost always take the cash option, which for Wednesday night's drawing was estimated at \$774.1 million.

Winnings would be subject to federal taxes, and many states also tax lottery winnings.

Powerball is played in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Today in History: October 13

33 Chilean miners rescued after 69 days underground

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Oct. 13, the 286th day of 2023. There are 79 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 13, 2010, rescuers in Chile using a missile-like escape capsule pulled 33 men one by one to fresh air and freedom 69 days after they were trapped in a collapsed mine a half-mile underground.

On this date:

In 1775, the United States Navy had its origins as the Continental Congress ordered the construction of a fleet.

In 1792, the cornerstone of the executive mansion, later known as the White House, was laid by President George Washington during a ceremony in the District of Columbia.

In 1932, President Herbert Hoover and Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes laid the cornerstone for the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington.

In 1943, Italy declared war on Germany, its one-time Axis partner.

In 1960, the Pittsburgh Pirates won the World Series, defeating the New York Yankees in Game 7, 10-9, with a home run hit by Bill Mazeroski.

In 1972, a Uruguayan chartered flight carrying 45 people crashed in the Andes; survivors resorted to feeding off the remains of some of the dead in order to stay alive until they were rescued more than two months later.

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In 1974, longtime television host Ed Sullivan died in New York City at age 73.

In 1999, in Boulder, Colorado, the JonBenet Ramsey grand jury was dismissed after 13 months of work with prosecutors saying there wasn't enough evidence to charge anyone in the 6-year-old beauty queen's slaying.

In 2003, the U.N. Security Council approved a resolution expanding the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Afghanistan.

In 2007, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, after meeting with human-rights activists in Moscow, told reporters the Russian government under Vladimir Putin had amassed so much central authority that the power-grab could undermine its commitment to democracy.

In 2011, Raj Rajaratnam (rahj rah-juh-RUHT'-nuhm), the hedge fund billionaire at the center of one of the biggest insider-trading cases in U.S. history, was sentenced by a federal judge in New York to 11 years behind bars.

In 2016, Bob Dylan was named winner of the Nobel prize in literature.

In 2017, President Donald Trump accused Iran of violating the 2015 nuclear accord, but did not yet pull the U.S. out of the deal or re-impose nuclear sanctions. (Trump would pull the U.S. out of the deal the following May and restore harsh sanctions.)

In 2021, U.S. officials said they would reopen land borders to nonessential travel starting in November, ending a 19-month freeze because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In 2022, the House Jan. 6 committee voted unanimously to subpoena Donald Trump, demanding the former president's personal testimony as it unveiled startling new video from his closest aides describing his multi-part plan to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Today's Birthdays: Gospel singer Shirley Caesar is 86. Singer-musician Paul Simon is 82. Musician Robert Lamm (Chicago) is 79. Country singer Lacy J. Dalton is 77. Actor Demond Wilson is 77. Singer-musician Sammy Hagar is 76. Pop singer John Ford Coley is 75. Actor John Lone is 71. Model Beverly Johnson is 71. Producer-writer Chris Carter is 67. Actor and former NBA star Reggie Theus (THEE'-us) is 66. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., is 65. R&B singer Cherrelle is 64. Singer/TV personality Marie Osmond is 64. Rock singer Joey Belladonna is 63. NBA coach Doc Rivers is 62. Actor T'Keyah Crystal Keymah (tuh-KEE'-ah KRYSS'-tal kee-MAH') is 61. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Jerry Rice is 61. Actor Christopher Judge is 59. Actor Matt Walsh is 59. Actor Reginald Ballard is 58. Actor Kate Walsh is 56. R&B musician Jeff Allen (Mint Condition) is 55. Actor Tisha Campbell is 55. Olympic silver medal figure skater Nancy Kerrigan is 54. Country singer Rhett Akins is 54. Classical crossover singer Paul Potts is 53. TV personality Billy Bush is 52. Actor Sacha Baron Cohen is 52. R&B singers Brandon and Brian Casey (Jagged Edge) are 48. Actor Kiele Sanchez is 47. Former NBA All-Star Paul Pierce is 46. DJ Vice is 45. Singer Ashanti (ah-SHAHN'-tee) is 43. R&B singer Lumidee is 43. Christian rock singer Jon Micah Sumrall (Kutless) is 43. Olympic gold medal swimmer Ian Thorpe is 41. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., is 34. Actor Caleb McLaughlin (TV: "Stranger Things") is 22.